I know what I like

lovely mug ugly mug

The mugs I really hate

The mugs I really hate and don't want to go near. are twee, badly designed, thoughtless graphics splattered over everything. With no relationship to the form and actually then all I see is immensely irritating tweedy waste of time graphic design.

I think my view on care homes are places that are filled with horrible mugs. It's the kind of mediocre meaningless.

I think we've got rid of the obscenities that we have had for presents. They don't stay around very long.

What I have chosen

That's Janice Tchalenko, a ceramicist I worked with at Camberwell, (who) set up a company at Darington on how to do patterns and designs which she didn't make herself, but had some of the qualities of a personally handmade product,

I like the colours. I like the pattern, partly because of accidents. I'm quite happy not to have it all the time. I wouldn't put that on my wall. I don't want that intensity. So, this is a small unit. which is like a kind of icon, you might say, that sits there.

And: it's the kind of shape and the kind of pattern that Is a memory trigger for me, so if I suddenly see somebody else with it, I'll know exactly where and what it was. I'd have some of the associations

Pattern is a trigger for me

Positive and negative. I like relief from pattern as much as I like pattern

That kind of speckle is reminiscent of what's called salt glaze, which is where, in the firing the different elements within the glaze separate out. And you get these kind of special effects happened in the firing . Here, it is actually applied in the commercial production is stoneware.

It has memories of what I used to get involved in because although I wasn't a ceramics artist, I worked alongside them for about eight years at Camberwell and got quite intrigued by the things that they were doing.

What does it feel like ?

I don't have an overpowering fetish about it in terms of - it must be there at 12 o'clock for my midday cup of tea every day.

it's more that it's an old friend - if I for some reason broke it, if in 10 years' time, I saw one, that would be a kind of vestige of old friend creeping in, I guess.

This is my indifferent mug

The cheapest plain mug from Woolworths.

That's not my 'hate' mug, That's my indifferent one.

Yes, I think if somebody gave me a cup of tea in it, … well yes, thank you. Tea is more important than the mug,

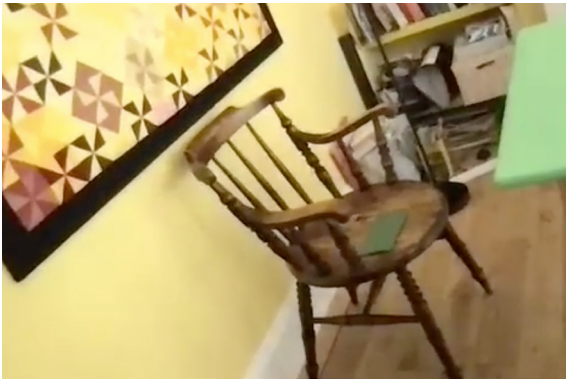
As I bring it up to my face and look at it, ..No it doesn't affront me. It's very neutral.

What is it about the shape?

If you're dealing with vessels of one sort or another, and you have handles joining in ceramics, and the idea of how does this shape join with that one? When you actually come down to doing it, you think you can just kind of stick it on. There's a handle, there's a pot : stick it on. You have to think beyond that, because it's not just what you see, it's also what you imagine you feel.

It's low. I can get one finger in. There is room. But if it's really hot, I have to adjust my fingers otherwise it will burn. It doesn't twist .

Whereas that handle rotates. That actually has got some advantage because that's got a traditional handle where (your fingers) don't touch. You actually do keeps your fingers away from the thing. entirely



Do you have other things of similar qualities ?

We have got an idiosyncratic set of chairs.

They're not a set in any sense at all.

We never started - to build up sets because when we- get older, we would never have wanted to stick to the (same) so we've got an idio-syncratic chairs

So this a folding table. That's just playing games on the basis of - we needed a folding table, but. I wouldn't go and buy anything other than the camping table that we have. This is a lockdown excuse for doing something different. It's called burr oak – that's where the branches are growing out of the wood Its just a plank made out of that. The split down the middle is where it folds.

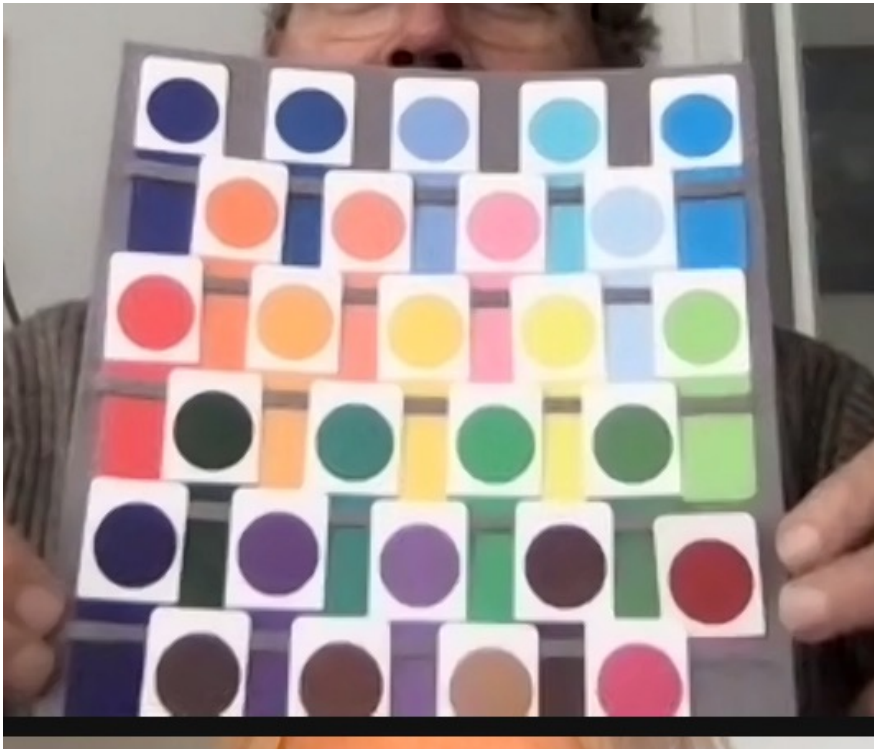
It's complicated because it was designed on the fly. - We had to start with having- a nice piece of wood and - the only way, you can do that is to fold it .So what mechanism could be used? - I had to kind of botch your standard mechanism. So it wasn't properly designed. It wasn't designed as a structure fully rolled out- it was two principles, that I looked up and neither of them quite fitted the problem. o Normal gate leg tables, have two sides. The legs are far enough apart and the vertical is near enough to one set of legs though, if I lean towards me it moves easier way than another...

Colour

What you've got is really quite interesting because what you've got are the colours, the checkerboard and you've got them against white and grey ,and against each other.

When I looked at that I thought, this been set out like that, as a kind of a matrix of some form? But whether it was or not, it's really quite interesting seeing that kind of combination, because you start reading colours together.

Mid-tone grey means that you can look up and down the tonal scale as well as at the chroma. If you had a room for doing colour matching and things you would use that background.

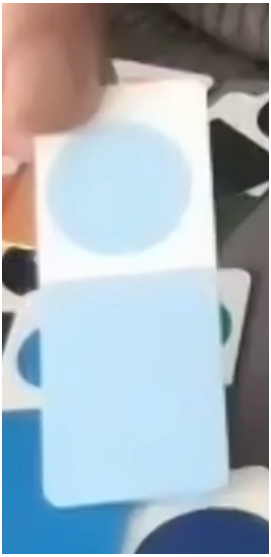


It isnt hate or like/dislike

As I add more it's, not a single decision anyway. This group, has got some lighter inflections but some stronger color balance. I was thinking about anchoring things around the grey.

I wanted the kind of 'jumps in certain colours . The three-way jumps – blues, purple moving to purple, and I wanted black as an anchor. Most combinations would arouse some level of interest. There would not be very many occasions when I wouldn't bother using them

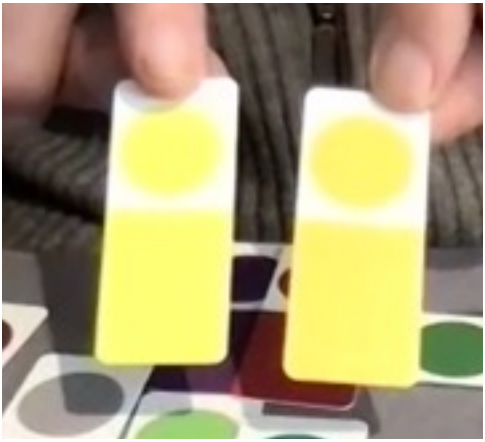
But actually, I see this one's got the same



I can’t say I dislike

Except, probably for most purpose, .I’d have least use for that one.

It’s not got there…it’s not light enough, off color enough, blue enough to do most of what I’d want with a colour, but I would use it. There is nothing here I wouldn’t bother using.



We've got a green table, in a yellow room, and the yellow room is different from the yellow room next door to it. , which is more of this sort - next to each other. So the kitchen isn't like that, but it is slightly, and the dining room isn't like that, but it is slightly. So (here) we've got close pairing of colours 9 and 16. 16 is more lemon yellow - more green. 9 is more towards cadmium.

We started off with thinking it could be just the same colour, but couldn't repeat it. As we couldn't repeat it, we decided to make it noticeably different, but only slightly .

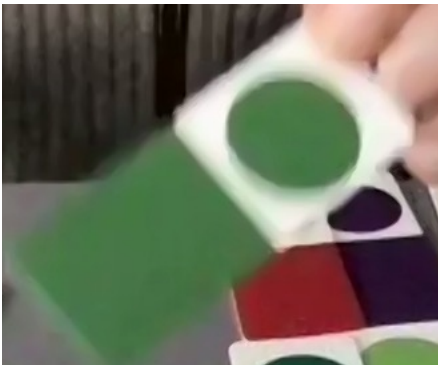
There is a bit more light in the kitchen than there is in the other room. So we used a colour, it's called 'Dutch yellow' that didn't object to

You can see yellows even in low light

There is a bit more light in the kitchen than there is in the other room. So we used a colour, it's called 'Dutch yellow' that didn't object to being darker. If a room is darker the colour still works. Colours don't work if the room is dark. They lose the colour.

You can see they're going down to grey. There's a colour, a duchess grey., where there's almost no colour left. it's a kind of like the evening painting by Rembrandt or something like that, where basically the colours have seeped out of everything. But you can see, it was once yellow.

The things that stand out like the lady in a yellow dress in a Dutch interior (Vermeer?)

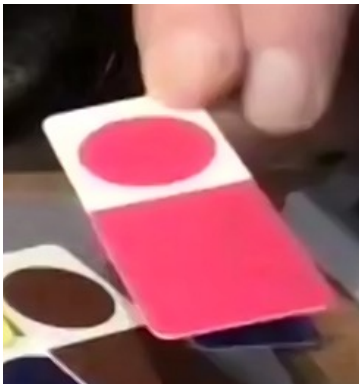


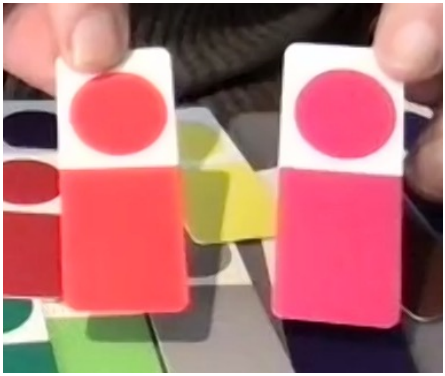
I would always, be careful about that

And those two, are moving towards the Victorian wainscot colours, which I wouldn't use very often.

Green tends to disappear very quickly. If you half close your eyes, an awful lot of these colours disappear. The greens, the browns the dark blues.

The one that I didn't like (21). We did do that colour, or a version of that colour knocked back, as the colour of a table. What was. It was called 'Irish pub'.



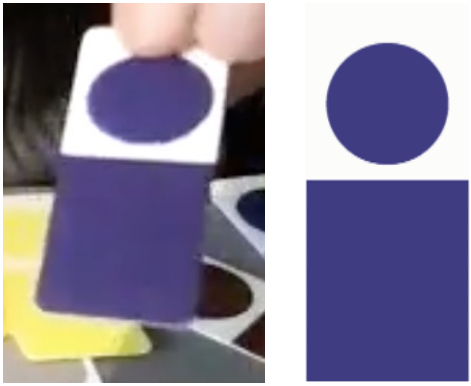


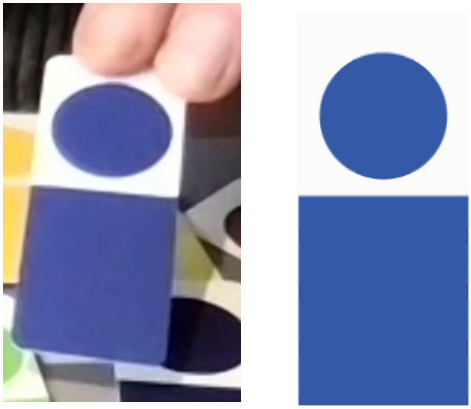
The ones that stand out, are the reds

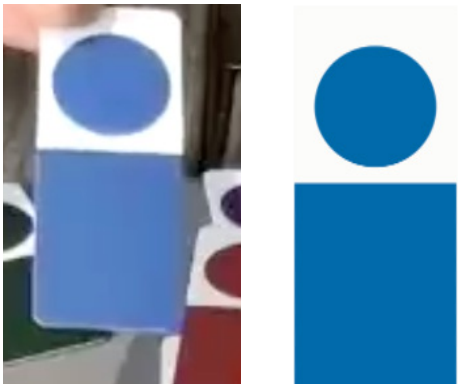
That's always the enticing one (33), because I would never know where to use it, but I quite like it

Whereas that one, (32) if you half close your eyes it starts to disappear.

And this one (4) is rather classic it's kind of pillbox but not quite. if you say you say 'red' probably., it's a ,'child's book' red.





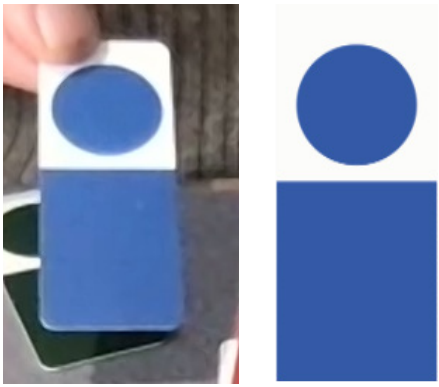


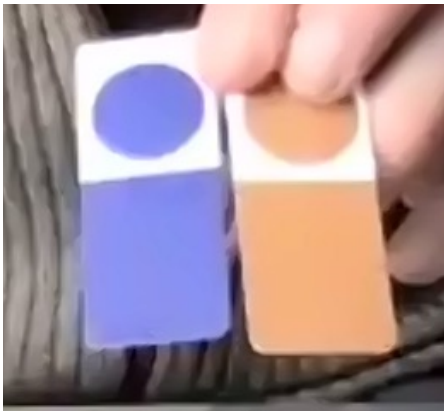
The blues

I prefer the ones that are moving towards another colour. -the ultraviolet or the ultra violet end (27) .

The nearest you can to that is a Prussian blue but not quite (25).

Having said that we did paint a table with almost exactly that colour (25) because it worked . It was in a white room. Blue and white works.





Simple bold colour shapes

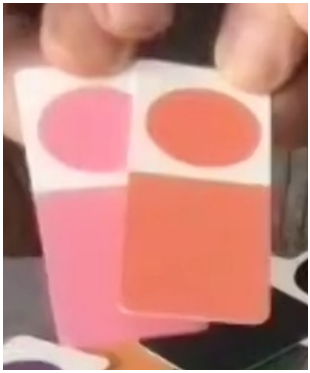
When we did the attic, we wanted lots of light in it,, but didn't want it to be glaring. If you get lots of sun it's glaring. Whereas I didn't want it dark grey because it becomes too sombre in the evening. So it's very light grey with a very slight moss colour in it on the walls (seashell). . Because the room is very sculptural in terms of lots of flat planes that change around, I wanted a shadow colour change. Not doing it by painting but letting the light do it.

I painted the treads of the stairs In that (25) , because it really works in a kind of association with basically a beach hut. Simple plain paint work against a fairly uniform white or grey colour makes very simple bold colours shapes. So beach houses are sort of like that. I especially associate it with light. Holidays are light, sun shining, kind of simple plain colours in sort of steps, or around the windows.

And in the middle of that, a light oak bookcase.

Do you think about colour a lot?

Not continuously, but I think over quite a long periods, both of us have worked things out about colour in the house, not in a kind of an ordered way, but in a way that having done one thing you respond to it with another, so you become a bit braver about using dark and sombre colour. So, the carpet is a kind of grey-blue, which is definitely not the light kind of the beige regime that you sometimes see.



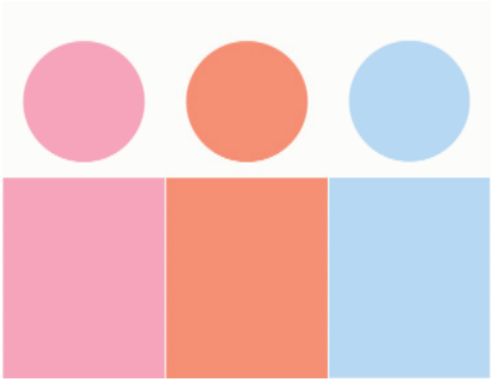
I would have a lot of caution about these two

Simply because they are going towards what I call the 'Elasto-plast' colours, and you want to be careful.

But on the other hand, you put them with something else and you might get into areas, a bit like Japanese/Chinese cartoon character colours.

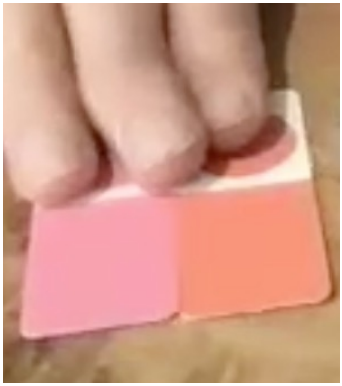
That's a Japanese character.

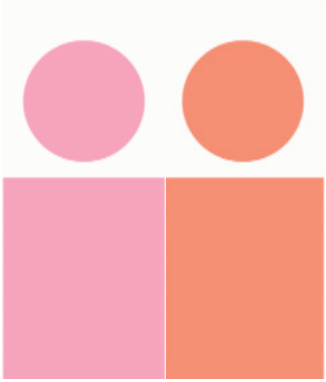
Most combinations would arouse some level of interest. There would not be many occasions when I wouldn't bother using them.



I wouldn't throw any of these colours out

When I put them together, I think – yes, I could do something with that but where would I do it? I don't know. It's not impossible, it doesn't really make me kind of jump for joy.





Putting up with it being 'wrong'

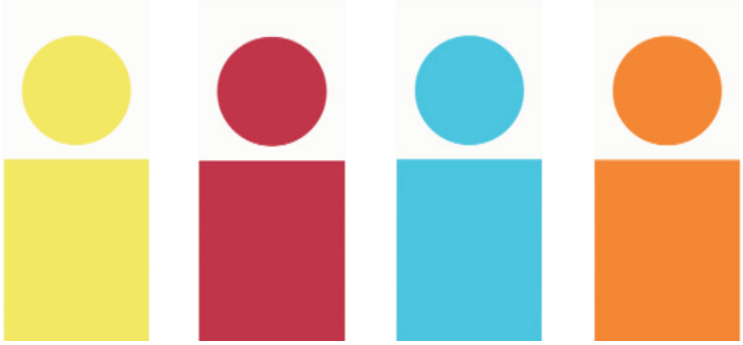
We did do something that was Elastoplast, a bit like them (14+6). It was a bit too dark and a bit too Elastoplast and we changed it within a month for so. Because we couldn't bear the effect. If you put other things with it, it just jarred endlessly.

We have done wrong and then had to live with it. A kind of beige neutral like our sofa, because it costs so much to do it. We've got to do something about changing that, because it's dominating the room. A quick decision in isolation, where you see a colour that's neutral enough to be able to put up with in a shop where quite a few of the colour and pattern options were just over the top. But it is actually a 1970s Habitat drab, Conran drab.

Surfaces

We've always had some of our surfaces basically painted tables. Grannies painted table kind of thing, as a backdrop. Quite early on, we liked the feel of (in a room like a kitchen, which has got lots of stuff scattered around) having a defined colour in the middle of the room, that gives an anchor to it. Even when you've got things scattered all around in bits and pieces. That's what I've always thought about painted tables. They give an anchor, a surface around which you can have more fragmentary things.

So if you get it wrong: I mean, I can imagine that if you got carried away and did that (4) (it's very powerful) .You really would be tying your hands behind your back about what you could put in that room. There aren't many occasions when a red like that could be a background. It's very dominant – red rag to a bull.



What stands out

if you have got reduced eyesight you get completely different colour acuity .Colours that keep standing out would be (16,4,7) if you hardly had any colour acuity.

That red stand outs with everything, but It doesn't take the world over. So faced with those two. There are different ways, you would use them.

I think there was a time when 'Indian red' was used in late 19th century rooms. A red that has got some of this blue quality to it. Maybe shades of going towards that one, even deeper. Then they would offset it by having gold leaf or black, gold, silver floral things on it. That would be very hard to live with – but actually looks quite good. The kind of 'museum wall'.

I would even wear a red shirt

I went to an interview once with a bright red linen shirt .The principal looked at me sitting there, and he said::" Well, you do like them bright don't you.?" I said:" It's my Garibaldi shirt .All his soldiers wore red shirts so you couldn't see the blood". They laughed.

When I was younger I would do much more single colour. I started wearing shirts with a very bold pattern or a single strong colour.

But I will wear quite drab things deliberately because I like the texture or I just don't feel like being flamboyant.

Colour as a foil

You can have a very plain room If you want to use it as a foil for something. I prefer the room to have something to foil with, even if it's only a vase of flowers.

X does it all time-plays games with colour all the time . I look round and there's some new flowers up there on the window sill or on the mantlepiece and it's just because it's some bits that have broken off and they happen to work and the colour just picks up.. perhaps there's a purple edge to some of the things here or it stands out.

Knocked back

Knocked back is either the chroma being knocked down or a less intense, (version) of the same colour. Or a colour that is edged towards another one without becoming the other one. It usually also involves reduced brilliance.

The time when it really shows is when you start looking at atmospheric perspective. So, if you look into the distance, the further things are, the less intense the colour is. When something is a long way away, most of the colour leaches outs and it becomes a version of grey, which is why things like the Russian domes in Moscow which are gold stand out. They are quite startling.

Or even the white tops of houses in in parts of Greece, that, even when all the other colours leached out their brilliance kind of stands out. way and above the general greying of the rest of the surroundings.

There's a combination of things, including an unsatisfactory thing that we've reduced in it's effect. We've got the beige of the fire-place. It's built in, which would mean destroying that fireplace to do anything with it. The tiles are absolutely impossible -unless you get rid of the whole lot. It originally had a mahogany surround with shelves above it.

We cut all the shelves off and just reduced it to quite a nice frame, and then just used that as the feature for the room It already had the curved alcove. We just essentially did things with it, but that is where the kind of grey, low key stuff still allows you to bring things in.

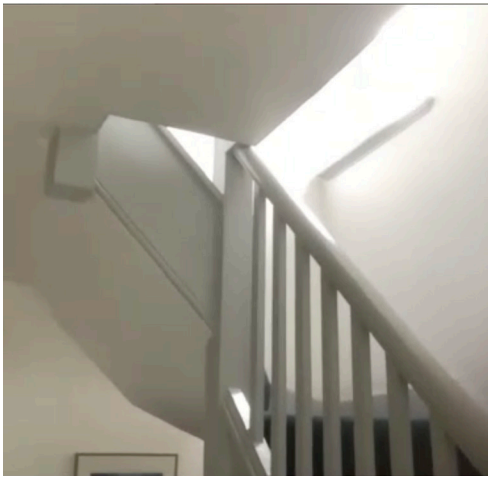
Personal Space

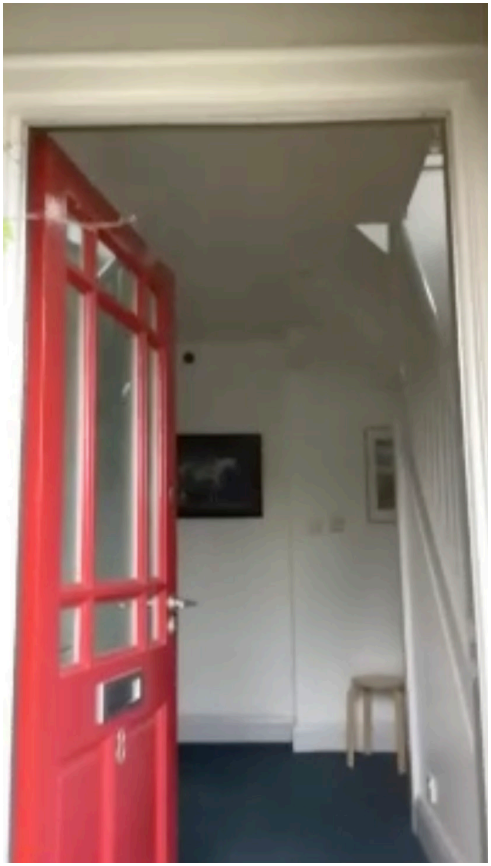
It's not just the spaces that I'm interested in,
it's actually in-between the spaces.

One of the things that made me interested, when I first saw the house wasn't that it was a great house, but it had some interesting bits. And all of these bits have come more strongly in the house in the 30 something years we've been there.

So it's been a 30-year kind of work between us. Not always in a kind of sorted, logical, artistic intentional way, but a way of enhancing certain of the characteristics that we quite liked as we went through discovering more about them. When you keep looking or keep seeing or keep bumping into, and when ...you have got a routine thing to do, (for example) : that's getting a bit dirty, or the paint is coming off, then that's a time when you start saying, well when we look at it like that, we can do this or that or whatever?

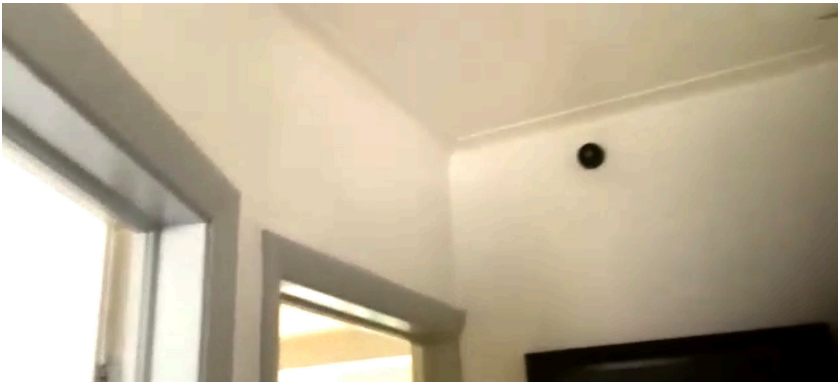
Also because we had two kids in the house when we moved in: it's quite a small place, having four people becoming increasingly active. It worked OK, but when they left home it's turned much more into a group of spaces, where the two of us can be together or be separate.





When we first came there there was a red door, but the inside was quite dark . (You) can see some sense of the darkness - from the outside. The first time we walked in it was not terribly prepossessing but then we realised ...the shape of this space is quite interesting.

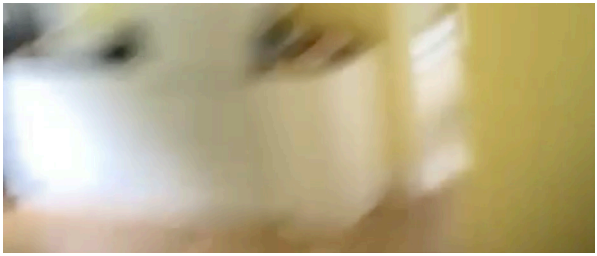
Even when the houses was new to us, things like having a light coming through the window on the stairwell made what was a quite a tatty house look quite interesting.

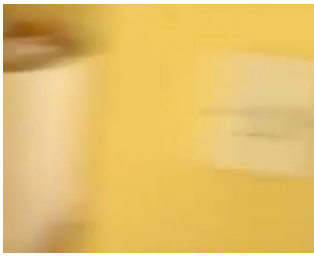


The glass window doors actually let some of the darker areas get illuminated

That kind of sense of shape in a small house means that.. architectural sculptural features really stand out.

I think what we've just done, is taken a fairly ordinary house and just picked up things seen or felt in those kind of little bits of detail and so on.



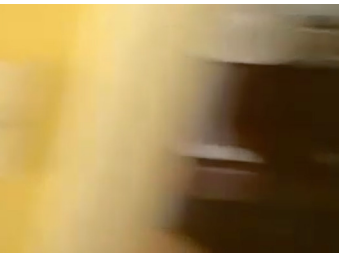


What counted about this, was the movement, from that

and the movement

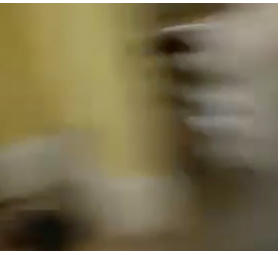
potentially

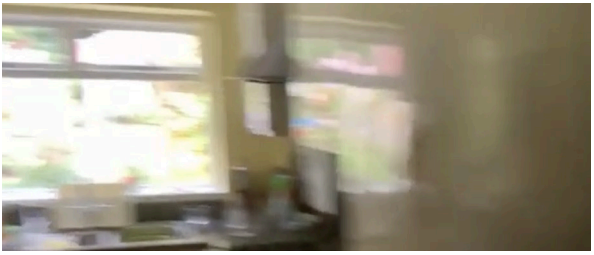
into the garden,

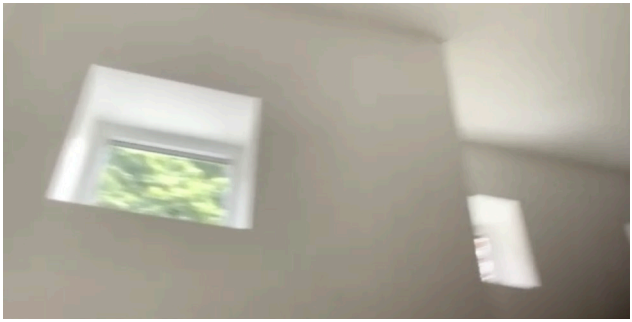


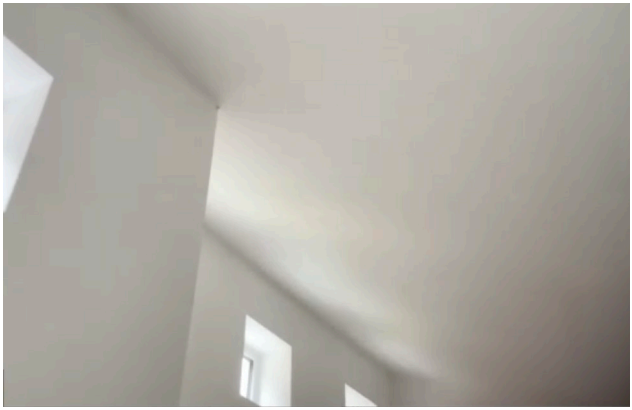
space into this space,

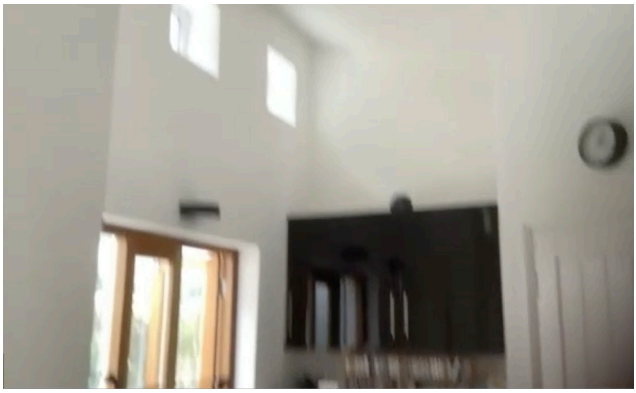
and the movement into the kitchen ..







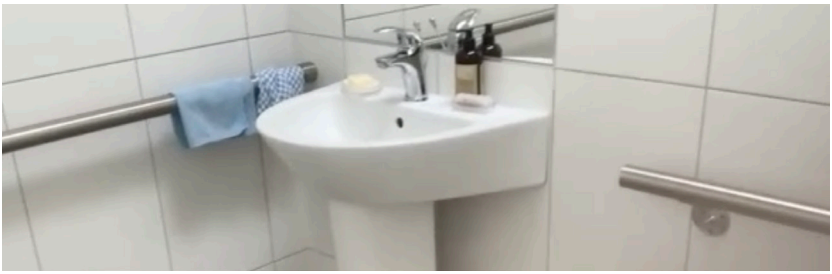


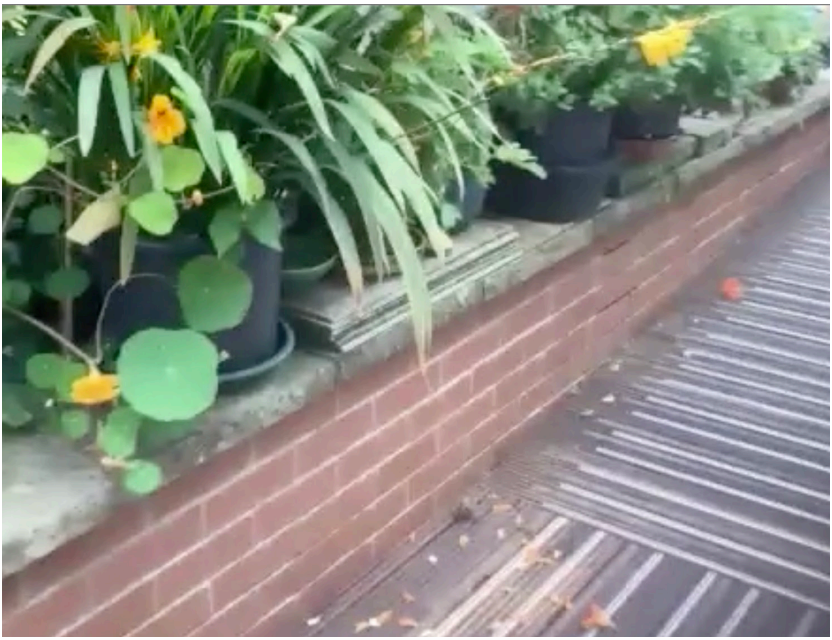


And moving into a space, newly discovered but actually, is architectural in a way that we've never had. It is quite a surprise. Everybody who comes in is startled by it.

We were startled by it .

And it's a surprise everytime I walk in!





It needs visually to look like it's simply a well designed

Stuff that I've done kind of semi-professionally before, has been to say, if you design an object for a certain person or a certain type of (impairment) that isn't the thing you feature. What you want to feature is the desire - what is it that they want to use it to do? What do they want to achieve with it?

The outside deckspace is flat all the way round. You don't realise you're standing six above the ground two feet - which has got some interesting bits to make it join up.

So favourites

Basically again, it's going through spaces. If there is a little bit of sunshine, it's quite delightful.

If it's dark and murky.... then what we do is go around through to here And actually, as you can see, it's much more sunny now, in here. So we will, in the winter, spend more time in this room. Because the sunshine in the afternoon, comes through that window.

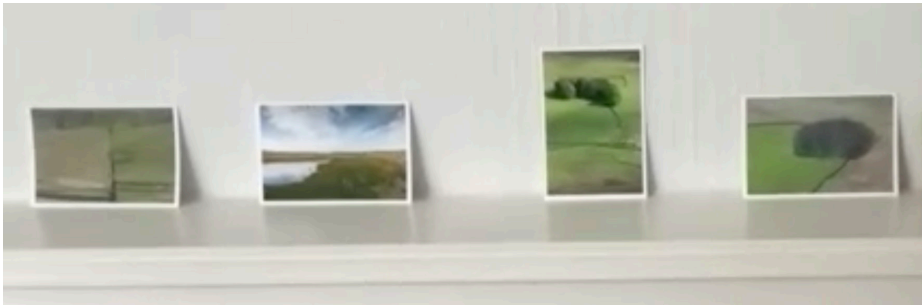
KAFKA

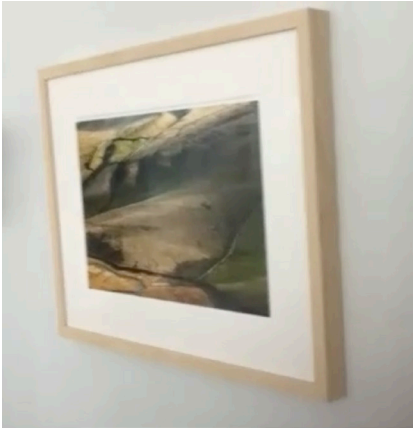
KAFKA

If we eat here. I have this chair.

X has the wicker chair. I can see out the window.: But the wicker chair is more comfortable. So X has comfort !

In the winter this becomes the snug room and if necessary we have the fire on.





Can you tell me about the photos on the mantlepiece?

These are just 6x4 inch postcard size pictures of things that I've taken, to be used on a larger scale. They just let me keep a kind of a portable record. So I can have a handful of ones to work through, or look through, and I need to look at the real thing or paper thing, rather than just keep seeing them on screen.

What is the value for you of having them on display?

An ego boost! You see them as a group as opposed to seeing them just as a single. We decided to have these slightly abstract looking landscapes.

You don't always want to keep looking at them. You don't sit there looking - but - like you said about your eye being caught by. ...? So I look at them from time to time, and then I look at them properly, and then I don't look at them. And you get a little flicker that says- ah yes you're right, or a bit of reinforcement or well well actually I didn't see that...

I think we probably change the pictures generally. The small ones X will change quite often. The bigger ones we'll move frames around and try them in different places but we're not not running it like a gallery ..

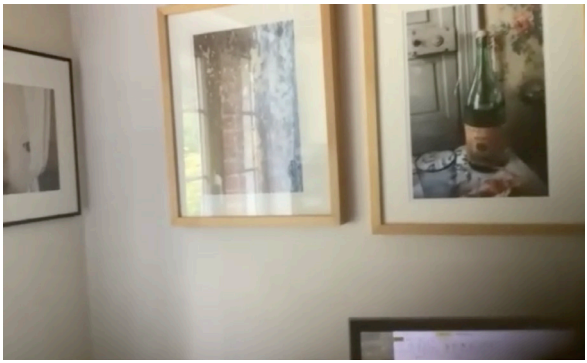
That's my wood workshop

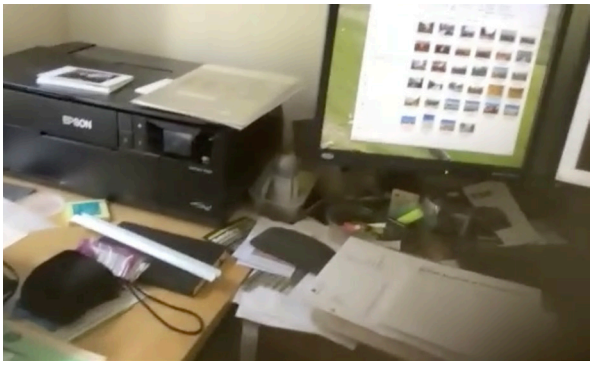
That's one of the hidey holes. I described it to somebody as a kind of a jeweller scale wood workshop. Because it's so tight and... compact.

I do have a ' move it to one side' problem, continually. I put some shelving up. to hold the wood up. I use those pull saws, and they sit on that door to the cupboard.. This (router) folds up and gets hooked up- rests against the wall - and then I can get the whole of the bench available. Just enough space to do layouts of the next table. I couldn't do big things in here. But then, how many big things can you make?

You juggle around, because originally was set up only as a place just to do handwork. There's plenty of room for doing handwork - (but) when I wanted to do other things I had to do some things more like sorting out how you live in a caravan.

If we talk about places where we're separate - X does come down here, but she doesn't do anything in here. So if we can't find where we are and nobody answers a shout, and I'm in here.- if X can hear a machine she knows I can't hear a thing.

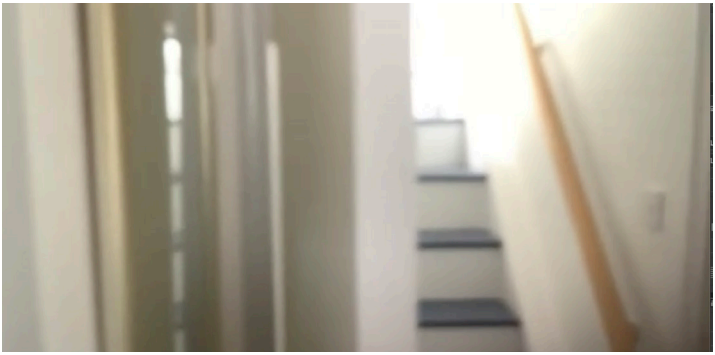


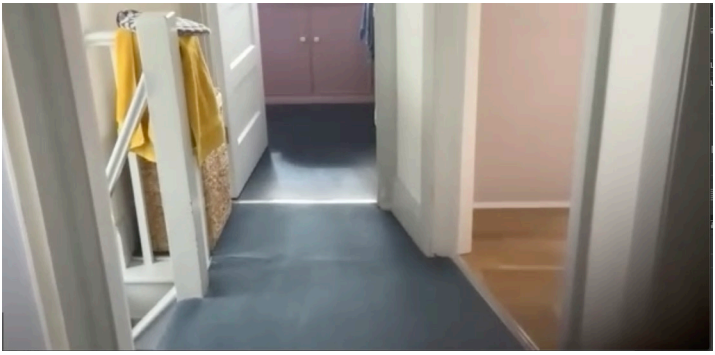

EPSON

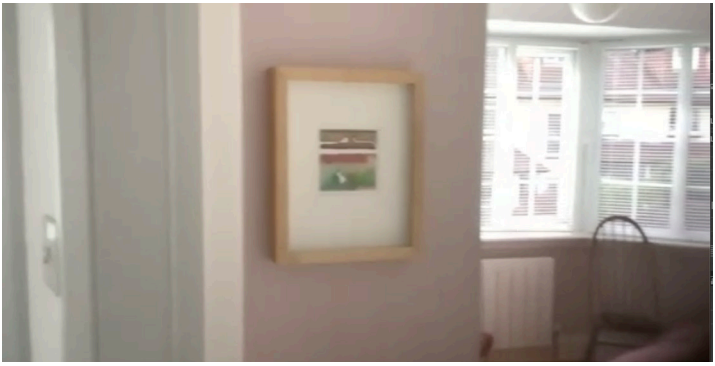
This is the computer room: tiny

With my prints. This is where I sit because I can turn the lights down and I can do the photos on the screen

And I can still see the garden





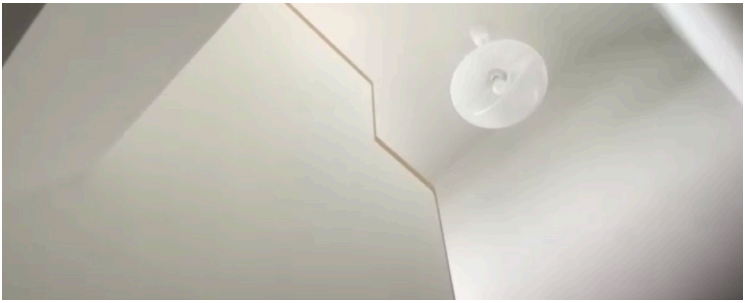


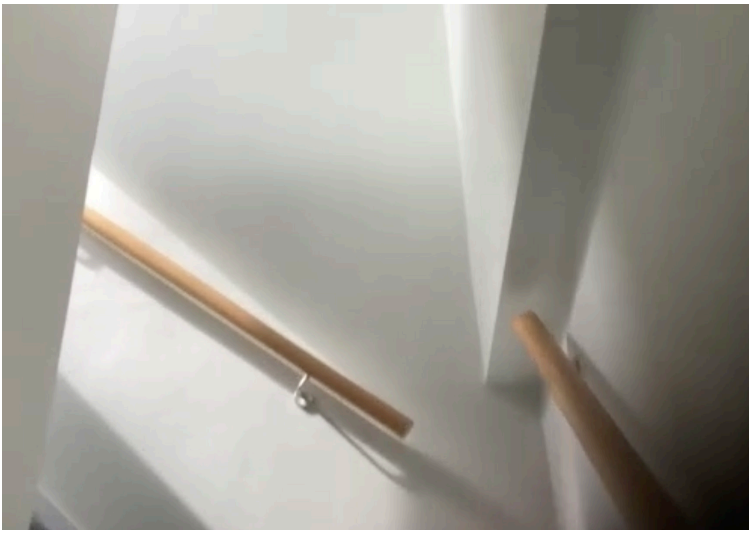
So spaces that are used- I think probably what I find is yes, there are spaces, discrete space that I like, but what I like about most spaces is (when we are visiting other people's houses or whatever) - it isn't the thing as a whole, it's the things you bump in to, as you go around the corner.

So, just that movement of scale, as you just turn your glance around. You haven't seen enough of everything at all, but every so often you think – Stop I want to look again, I want to look again.

So to be able to, as you walk around the house - to kind of have these little flickers of the :'OhI want to look again., I want to look again'.

Then you get peaks- quite big peaks actually - (for example in the bathroom) - just while you are cleaning your teeth you can look at the view!

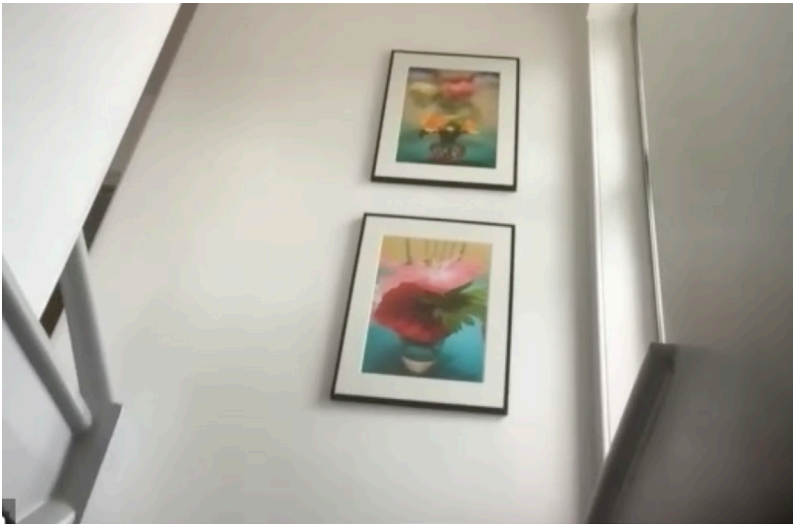




The view up

I deliberately, in putting that book case directly above us here, altered it.. This is the back of the bookcase- you can see the wooden line, that's the top of the bookcase, That's just a game.

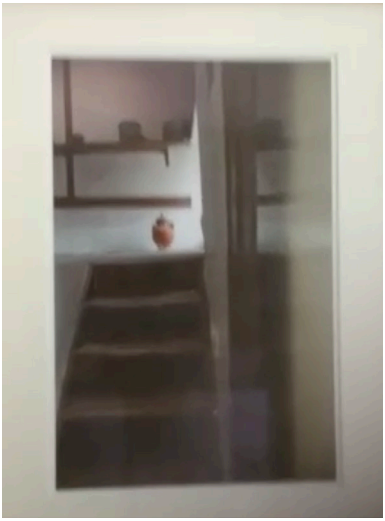
I find that most photos of architectural space work only 10% because actually architectural space works because it moves around you as you go through it. As you're looking up you are seeing shapes and you're seeing scale from different points. So looking up at something or down at something gives you quite different (views). I think I'm just really lucky that we've had a place that responds so quickly to be able to use ordinary household decoration and you can still play those games. So : quite privileged.

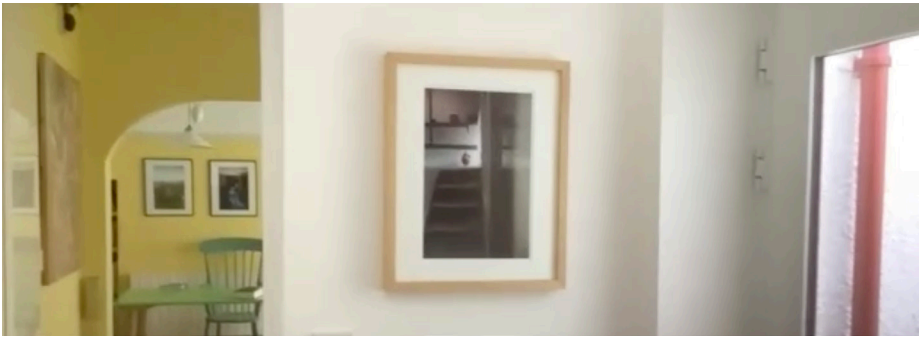


There is borrowed light everywhere.

Yes, so we just play games.

We have put there, simply to get some colour, some photos. We have some discussion about whether it's those or whether it's one of X weavings or something like that. But basically this space up here really does need to have something bright. We did have a big, big Marimekko piece of cloth there at one stage.





Sometimes the spaces are used to make us play a game

So going through this space - is the image that we've got here which is actually a shot from Proust's house of the secreted stairwell to the the food store in the back of the house.

What we've just done is play the game of -doorway - archway- doorway. Three ways - your eye gets pulled. So this has probably been one of the more long standing pictures because - Every time you go past it you get this kind of three way … So the picture is doing more than just being a picture.