



3 Reasons to Dwell

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Thursday October 6 – Sunday October 30

About the work

3 Reasons to Dwell is a show about what it means to be haunted by memories, objects and sites, and what it is like to fear ghosts, curses and floods.

As part of my recent exploration on the theme of haunted houses and haunted selves, I have taken to dwelling with feelings of disquiet longer than is my natural impulse, resisting the temptation to brush them aside. While at first this was uncomfortable, over time I have become attuned and drawn to these places of unease. I now find they are beautiful and I mine their layers for personal and cultural meaning. As I dwell deeper, I discover long-buried secrets and hidden insights that conjure both tender and volatile associations.

The implications of climate-magnified floods terrify me. I live next to the Loddon river in Newstead and have seen five floods since we moved here over 20 years ago. Each time the levee has held and yet each time it has been confronting. The formidable mass of racing, muddy water has surged, dumped, and roared only metres from our home. When eventually the floodwaters recede, they reveal the paths of least resistance taken by the deluge. You can see their rushing courses in the still-flattened grass, and this redefines the significance of the topographical features of the landscape as unfamiliar. It is uncanny to see the paths on which the irresistible flow of water would take you, should you find yourself washed away. Some most certainly lead to death.

In *A River in My House* we arrive after the rush of the flood, while its stilled waters take uninvited measure of a home. These houses have been inundated by illusion. All of the images in this exhibition are digital composites. Sometimes I do little to hide my manipulations, yet because we are accustomed to reading photographs as true, my houses feel both right and wrong at the same time.

As source imagery for *A Curse on My House*, *A River in My House* and *Secret House* I photographed houses that I felt already existed in liminal states. These were often derelict and abandoned homes around my district. Sometimes I would go driving or walking in search of them. Other times they would present themselves unexpectedly as I moved about on other business. I was hungry for them as they fed me new stories and visual materials. Each discovery was rapture. I felt like I could see beyond a veil that many others couldn't. My shadowlands were right here.



The curse in *A Curse on My House* references a family curse I grew up with that said we would never own our own home. It is a form of family secret, a *folie a deux*, a manifestation of inherited poverty and trauma, a justification for inertia, and a source of hopelessness and shame. Jacques Derrida said that an impossible inheritance assigns an infinite responsibility. The houses in these works map such a timeless and elusive place, that of my interior ghost town.

Secret House is a true story made of many true stories. The same can be said of all the works in this show. They are all composites: blurring fact and fiction in confounding ways to suggest the truth is rarely universal, knowable, or stable, and concealing the intensely personal whilst intimately exploring it.

The images of water in *A River in My House* and *Body of Water* portray my current interest in mirroring, and the spectral nature of reflective water. Dams represent our human effort to harness the wildness of water and provide sustenance through dry periods. Small dams look both beautiful and vulnerable to me, hopeful of receiving sustaining rains and fearful of drought. From living in the country through multiple drought and flood cycles, I know the bone dry dam haunts the dam that is brimming today. These works describe the water cycle in simple form, from cloud, to rain, to dam, to vapour again. The title reminds us that 55-60% of human bodies are water and over 70% of the earth's surface is covered by bodies of water. It alludes to the simultaneously present-absent bodies of ghosts, and a fugitive body of thought. Dammed water is symbolic of the conscious mind and what little we know of our vast unconscious self.

One of the things that currently interests me is engaging some of the less visible aspects of art presentation as additional spaces for expression and contemplation. When read in order, the collective titles of *A Curse on My House* and *A River in My House* form two poems. All the works in *3 Reasons to Dwell* are ghost stories.

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