



Kay Lawrence

Kay sees all forms of art as a means of communication; art has the ability to connect people and places and lead to greater cultural understanding. Her interdisciplinary art practice critically engages with the anthropological, physical, and spiritual aspects of her surroundings, interweaving image, metaphor, and abstraction. She explores and exploits the dualities and synchronicities produced by the tension-filled dialogue between fibre and digital media. She believes that the use of fibre in her work offers her a type of integrity that digital media cannot offer. Her works engender meaningful viewer responses through the familiarity of the visible and emotionally charged invisible connections inherent in fibre, which she manipulates to influence viewer engagement with her works.

In addition to her residency at Crane Arts, Kay has completed residencies at Red Gate Gallery in Beijing, China; Geidai University of Fine Art, Tokyo, Japan; Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, Peel Island, Australia; and the Sandavinci School of Art and Design, Aimoto, Japan.

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My doctoral research is concerned with how the multi-sensorial qualities of fibre can be combined with digital media to create metaphors that address current social issues. While the two share fluidity, digital media is perceived as more rational, and fibre as more poetic. They also encapsulate the tensions provided by the juxtaposition of old/new technologies, handmade/machine-made, uniqueness/ubiquity.

My research recognises that in most cities, urban sprawl is depleting the natural environment and sites of agricultural production; a practice that needs to be stopped. Further, the existing buildings should be rejuvenated rather than abandoned. Due attention must be given to the complex interrelationships of aesthetics, community, utility, culture, and history, including the need to address changing social and cultural values. These conceptual concerns are at the core of the works that evolved from my Philadelphia residency.

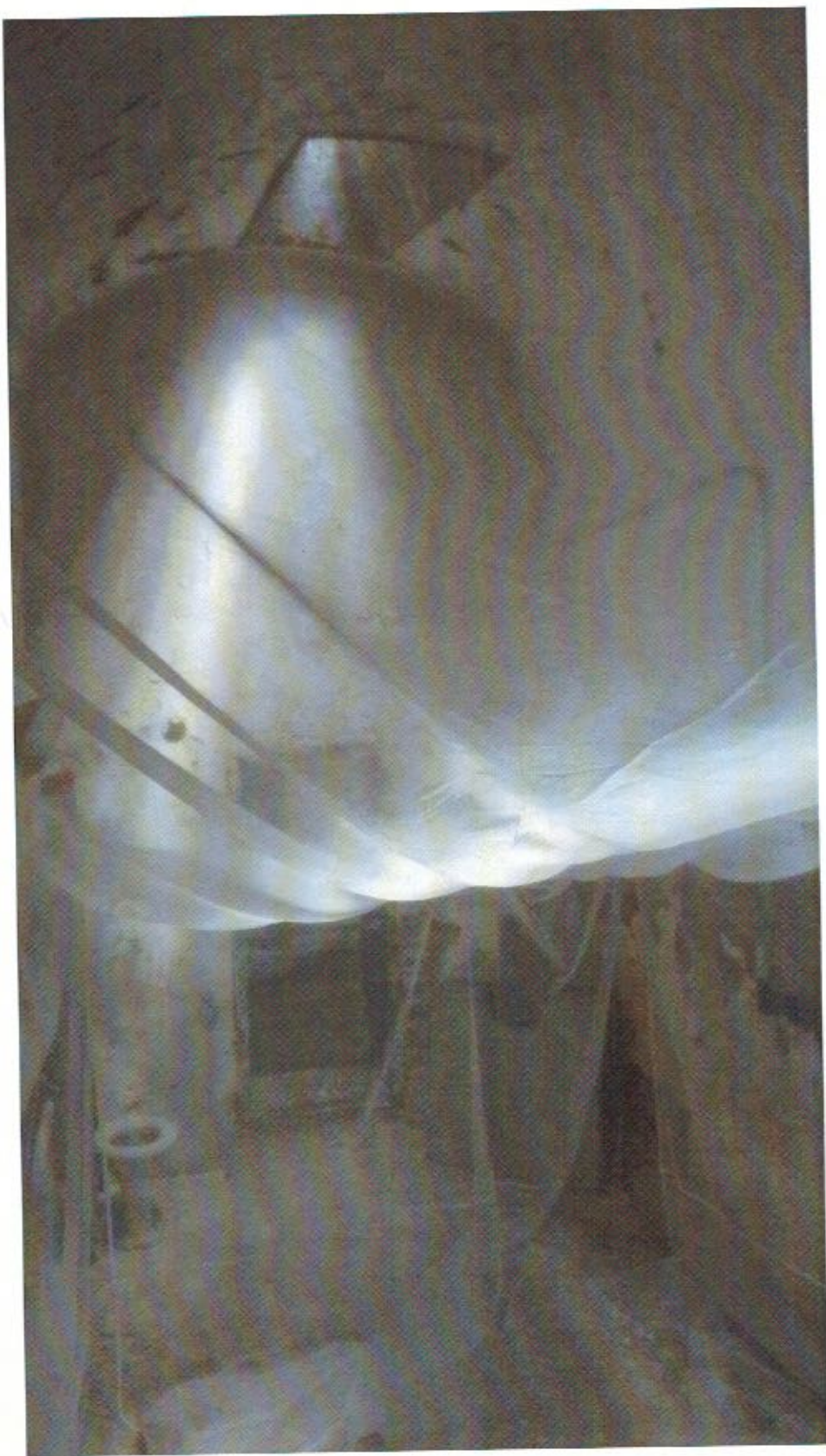
Recognising the historical significance of Philadelphia, I visited a number of historical sites, including the now defunct Eastern State Penitentiary, which has been partially restored and repurposed as a tourist facility. It also

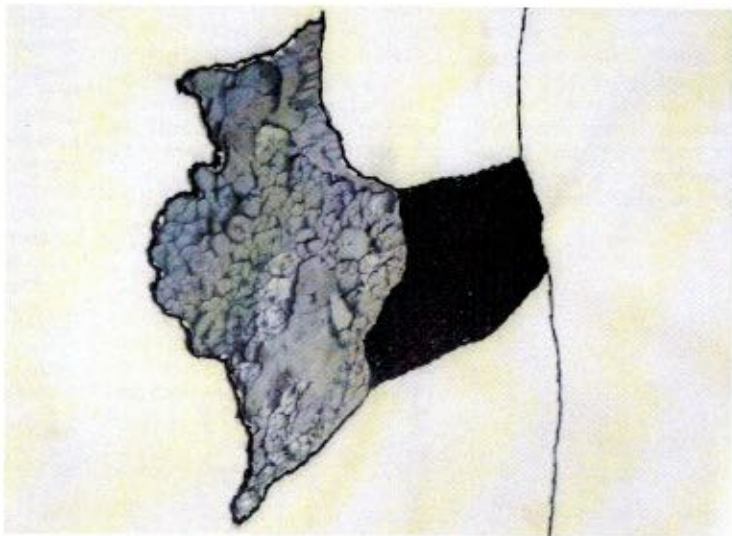
serves as the repository for a number of commissioned works of art each year. I also observed a number of largely deserted, desolate tracts of previous urban inhabitation needing rejuvenation. There was ample evidence of vandalism and significant attempts to counter this through the city's Mural Arts Program.¹

My experience at the Penitentiary underscored my investigations into fractures and dislocations of the time/space continuum and the fragile and ephemeral nature of both life and time, as I felt both constrained and enriched by the weight of layers of history. Most of the buildings bear the scars of years of neglect: abrasion, weathering, peeling, cracking, flaking, and crumbling. The ghosts of the past whispered to me of isolation, exclusion, social stigma, and the poignancy of their harsh and banal daily existence. These layers of history are relevant to any repurposing of historical precincts. In many ways, they reflect the hidden aspects that continue to affect our contemporary society.

References

- 1 See City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, <http://muralarts.org>.





Opposite Kay Lawrence
Penitence #1 2012, on-site
installation at Eastern State
Penitentiary, Philadelphia

Kay Lawrence *Looking into,
Looking from* 2013, digital
image on Epson rag paper,
47.2 x 84cm

Kay Lawrence *Your Silence Gives
Consent* 2013, archival digital
images on Matex and voile,
cotton, and silk thread,
84.3 x 150cm

Kay Lawrence *Untitled (Freda
Frost)* (detail) 2013, inkjet print
on cotton, cotton sheet, silk,
and cotton embroidery,
112 x 84cm