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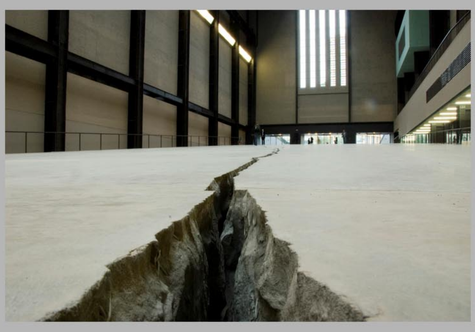
When I enter the Tate Modern Turbine Hall to view Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth* 2007 there are people gathered at the top of the slope. I move to this area and see a very fine fracture in the concrete like you would find on a cracked pavement. The fissure is unsettling since it appears that it is deep and it dramatically runs as far as the eye can see fracturing the floor of the massive turbine hall into two fragments. The crack descends down the slope gradually getting wider and deeper. I walk one side and then the other, crossing over the fissure many times. I am aware of the opening beneath me as I cross and I enjoy the unsettling sensation. It reminds me of Iain Banks's *Walking on Glass* (1990) where the main character will not step on cracks between paving slabs believing they are breaks in this reality leading to another unknown reality.

As I reach the bottom of the slope the crack suddenly runs much deeper and this depth seductively draws my attention in. I feel as if I am looking into an immense gorge or an underworld that pulls me in. I perceive the space in the fissure as much bigger than its actual physical size. In addition, since my gaze is focused so intently on the crack, the space around me of the Turbine Hall has shrunk in significance along with my perception of its grand and dominating scale. In *The Creative Feminine and her Discontents* Juliet Miller (2008: 117) notes that taking up large amounts of space in sculpture is a masculine trait related to the expression of aggression. The grand scale of the industrial Turbine Hall feels eminently masculine but Salcedo's feminine crack threatens to expand to bring this structure down.

The title *Shibboleth* relates to a passage in the bible where the word 'Shibboleth' was used as a password to differentiate between two groups of people in allowing passage across a river. One group could not pronounce the 'sh' and could thereby be excluded from the land the other side of the river. The crack divides the two cultures. I have a strong sense of two different spaces but these are not the two halves of the Tate created by the dividing crack. Instead the two spaces are the crack itself, subterranean below the floor surface, contrasted with the space of the Turbine Hall. The crack creates an additional space to the normal defined limits of the building. Hans Jost Frey proposes, 'Wholeness is the order in which everything has its place and in which nothing is missing or excessive' (1996:27). The crack is an additional space that interrupts the stability of the Turbine Hall. It is both alien to the space and yet an integral part of it. There is a similarity here with the disruption of a broken limb that is ambiguously perceived as both part of the self and alien. The crack is foreign to the structure of the building, an uncertain space that produces fear of the unknown. The crack threatens to annihilate the building and also poses a risk to the viewer who could fall in and be lost into the abyss.

Deep sections of the fissure were created by physically splitting the enormous concrete slabs of the Tate Modern floor, however, I was certain no structural damage would have been allowed to the building due to safety restrictions. This prevented me from truly viewing the crack as a threat to the building. One of my favourite sculptures, on the other hand, does not hold back from risk. Gordon Matta-Clarke's *Splitting* 1974 was reported as being both intensely risky in the making process and in the experience of viewing (Crow 2003: 77). To make the work Matta-Clarke literally sawed an entire house into two from top to bottom. He opened the fissure by cutting a wedge away from the base of one half of the house enabling this side to lean at an angle. I never viewed this work because it was created the year I was born, but the documentation gives an idea of the very real risk.



Matta-Clarke worked on his building artworks with Manfred Hecht, who he had been renovating lofts with for years (Crow 2003: 54). Hecht provided the technical expertise and attempted to keep Matta-Clarke within relative realms of safety. Hecht comments of Matta-Clarke's work, 'It was always exciting working with Gordon - there was always a good chance of getting killed. That's what I liked' (Crow 2003: 77). I think Hecht's comments really sum up the difference between Salcedo and Matta-Clarke. Matta-Clarke was frequently working on the very edge, with real physical risks. This is further recounted by the sculptor Alice Aycock who experienced *Splitting* first hand;

> ...as you'd go further up, you'd have to keep crossing the crack. It kept widening as you made your way up.... by the time you got to the top the crack was one or two feet wide. You really had to jump it. You sensed the abyss in a kinaesthetic and psychological way (Crow 2003: 82).

Alice Aycock's description of the split as an abyss reminds me of Sacks's use of the term in relation to the limbo experienced in breaking his leg. Oliver Sacks also uses Friedrich Nietzsche's description of, 'a chasm, an infinite rift, in reality' (1990: 110). A space beyond what is knowable in which no previous structures of understanding the world are of use. In his first year of college Gordon Matta-Clarke crashed his car on the way home from college with three of his friends in it (Crow 2003: 22). One died and Matta-Clarke himself suffered severe fractures and lacerations to his jaw and had to spend many months convalescing. It is possible that, like Oliver Sacks, he experienced the sense of limbo and this has influenced the work. Severe injury has led other artists or writers to change their aesthetics or subject to deal with breaking and risk.

Similarly to Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth* I see the two spaces as the crack and the house rather than two halves. In Gordon Matta-Clarke's *Splitting* both spaces have a strong psychological and physical presence. The distorting of scale of Salcedo's *Shibboleth* emphasises the power of the crack, but I never felt Salcedo's crack to be a threat to the structure of the building as in Matta-Clarke's. With Matta-Clarke's work the fracture physically threatens the structure and viewer. There is 33 years between these artworks so the difference in physical risk could be attributed to a change in society where risk has been increasingly minimised and decision-making processes around risk transferred from the individual to governmental control. Matta-Clarke did not open *Splitting* to the general public, which is also a factor, however I have seen health and safety legislation in sculpture departments tighten up considerably over the last few decades allowing less room for individual judgement. Downhill mountain biking venues find escape from increasing safety regulations by using disclaimers that place responsibility for risk judgement onto individuals. There is also a culture within the mountain bike community in which those who sue organisations over accidents are ostracized. The real physical risk of Matta-Clarke's is very powerful as it produces an immediate visceral response in the viewer. This is the sense I wanted to introduce to my own sculpture.

Splitting reminds me of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The House of Usher' (2005). The story ends with the death of the only remaining members of the Usher family, the brother and sister, and simultaneously the annihilation of the house. The very end of the story reads,

> ...blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, the fissure rapidly widened... (Poe 2005: 52).

The story revolves around an un-named fear for which it seems the crack provides a physical representation. Roderick Usher is, I feel, on the edge of the abyss; the crack in the house representing his mental state as the fissure threatens to open up. The state of the house is clearly representative of his mental health and it is the risk of complete annihilation threatened by the crack that causes his fear.

> I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect – in terror. In this unnerved – in this pitiable condition – I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR. (Poe 2005: 52).

Roderick Usher's terror is of sliding into the unknown and unstable terrain of mental illness where reason and life are abandoned in order to face the fear of uncertainty. This is similar to Oliver Sacks's experience of injury and the accompanying limbo as a journey of the soul to despair and back. Sacks recalls that at first this involves a very great fear as,

> All the cognitive and intellectual and imaginative powers which had previously aided me in exploring different neuropsychological lands were wholly useless, meaningless, in the limbo of Nowhere. I had fallen off the map, the world of the knowable. I had fallen out of space, and out of time too...Intelligence, reason, sense, meant nothing (1990: 110).

The fissure, as an extra space opening with the homely and safe structure, provides an unsettling glance of what is excluded to create and maintain ontological security. Embracing the risk of uncertainty can enable a renegotiation of the edge between what is included and excluded to maintain ontological security. Deborah Lupton notes that edgework is about renegotiating boundaries of life/death, sanity/insanity and the ordered self/disordered self (2013: 214). In *The Pleasure of the Text* Roland Barthes observes that, 'neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so' (1975: 6-7). What is gained by facing fear in uncertainty is renegotiation of the boundaries created by maintaining ontological security. Experiencing the edge between sanity and insanity can enable what is included each side of the edge to be redefined. In my artwork the viewer can experience risk and breaking which they might not in their everyday life. They are often surprised by positive elements of the experience and I hope this encourages them to reflect on their perception of risk and breaking in their life.

For Gordon Matta-Clarke and Edgar Allan Poe the fissure occurs in houses/homes whereas Doris Salcedo's creates a fissure through an institutional and powerful building (an old power station converted to international gallery). The home represents an area of safety for the self so threatening this safety threatens to destabilise the self. Salcedo's threat is to the institutional and masculine, white, western power structure. This is negotiation of a different edge. In understanding risk it is important to look at what is being risked, who is in control of that risk and who will potentially be affected by it.

making and breaking 'risk'