

# Alan Johnston

## **An Outline of Northern Mirror: The Shadow.**

In this long-term project, the continuing development of a dialogue between art, architecture, the urban, and the comparative nature of the 'identified form' has been taken as a substantive goal. This has been undertaken with various collaborative partners, artists, architects, curators, writers, musicians, including Petur Arason, Charles Esche, Thomas Lange, Murdo Macdonald, Joseph Masheck, Shinichi Ogawa, Kiyoshi Okutsu, Takashi Suzuki, Masayuki Yasuhara, Neil Gillespie and Nana Kipiani. Projects have been realised in various situations from Iceland to Japan, in remote locations, in busy urban contexts, and in domestic or public domains. Here in Bury, Greater Manchester, is a particular post-industrial environment, little touched by 'urban regeneration', but very much an identity of a clearly seen past, bringing associations unintended, and surprising in their relationships. This has been reflective of deeper influences in ideas and forms.

Northern Mirror focuses on a further geophysical spread, and examines spatial contexts in very different formats. For example can a historical spatial format be interrelated to the contemporary, fluidly and with relevance, or is its role as a counterpoint? To develop a core focus through contrasting elements. Part of the collaborative remit is to explore aspects of perception, particularly, notions of cognition and ambivalence to find a resolution or answer through exploring this opposite or juxtaposition. These factors are reviewed through the practice of drawing with a particular reference to line and void, and its formation in space. This relates for example by questions raised by Bruno Taut, in 'The Japanese House' about the nature of comparative forms and their particular ambience, in terms of world culture. , they link in a universal comparative. This can be addressed both globally and locally. Can Architecture provide 'a contextual form' for the artist to work within? This in this circumstance implies a kind of operative space, mutually shared and developed. It may be a kind of hyperspace, a non-space, koan like in its content without content, observing perhaps the tone, then the space between the lines and its ensuing ambivalence. This is considered within the conduit of 'Visual Thinking', a form of thought, and expression, developed initially through Reid, then Geddes and Davie, relating to a tactile sense of the spatial. Yet within that, (in this project), in aspects of collaboration there are characteristics, which are shared across the cultural profiles of the partners, which are not formally related through their 'accepted continuities', yet there is throughout their respective forms a related factor, an ambivalence. In attempting to define this, this, an ambivalence courted perceptually, there is a new space created, where the self identifies the realisation of its idiosyncratic form, in its own ambivalent continuity. In both exhibitions and commission, a variety of methods occur to that end. Drawing in architectural collaboration, i.e. wall drawing, which articulates a spatial metaphor, through line and void. Engagement in a new dimension, i.e., restructuring a space specifically to enhance aspects of surface tension. For example in various structures, this means readjusting the surface tension of various walls and manipulating light sources to articulate and develop the texture-light interface as shadow. The nature of particular or local spatial context provides a further dimension in these realised paradigms, bringing a comparative factor into view. In particular, there is the spatial history being addressed. There is also a new development in exploring pulse and sound in the making of a drawing in the architectural context. Has this an aural, (musical?) role? It seems that not only there is a silence in architecture but there is a sense of touch too. The presence and role is touch related as well as sight, observing the space between the lines and the ensuing ambivalence about where this space actually occurs.