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Documentary Archival Material Related to Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost* in National Gallery of Art Library Installation



Rachel Whiteread casting *Ghost* in 1990, with details of the room at 486 Archway Road. Courtesy of the artist.

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art Library will present a focused installation of archival and documentary materials related to Rachel Whiteread's sculpture *Ghost* (1990) to coincide with the exhibition [Rachel Whiteread](#) in the East Building from September 16, 2018, to January 13, 2019. ***In the Library: Rachel Whiteread's "Ghost"*** is on view from September 17, 2018, to January 11, 2019, in the East Building Study Center, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

About the Library Installation

The installation features ephemera that documents the history of Whiteread's sculpture, including its creation and early exhibitions. It also includes photographs of several generations of former inhabitants of the home from which the sculpture was cast to reveal the human dimension of this seminal work. In addition, a new acquisition for the Gallery's collection of rare books, *Testament* by Irish author Colm Tóibín with images by Rachel Whiteread, will be displayed for the first time.

Ghost (1990) is a plaster cast of the interior of an entire parlor of a Victorian row house at 486 Archway Road in North London, near her childhood home. The house where Rachel Whiteread cast *Ghost*—similar in appearance to the North London house where she grew up—sits along the A1, the major northbound thoroughfare out of London, and was left empty in the late 1980s when a project to widen the roadway called for its demolition. Ultimately, only the houses on the opposite side of the street were torn down, and 486 Archway Road remains standing to this day.

Whiteread has employed casting throughout her career, using a variety of methods and materials. *Ghost* broke new ground. Created over three months in 1990, it was a solid object cast from the negative space of the room. From this disorienting sculpture of an interior void emerges recognizable forms, including a fireplace (complete with soot), the textured grain of skirting boards, and the smooth surface of a window. Whiteread wrote of her intent to "mummify the air in the room," articulating the memorial tones evoked by this quiet, mausoleum-like work. *Ghost*, as Whiteread explains, causes the "viewer to become the wall" as the sculpture's tiers of stacked plaster panels bear the impressions of the room's interior surfaces and face outward, preventing the viewer from penetrating a space once inhabited by human life.

Ghost debuted at Chisenhale Gallery, London, in 1990 and was short-listed for the prestigious Turner Prize in 1991. After appearing in solo shows at the Arnolfini Gallery in 1991 and the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in 1992, it was included in the exhibition *Young British Artists* at the Saatchi Collection in London in 1992. Whiteread's inclusion in this prestigious exhibition established her as one of the leading artists of her generation, and in 1993 she was awarded the Turner Prize for *House* (1993), a concrete cast of the interior of an entire house on Grove Road in East London.

Among the photographs in this installation are snapshots of Graham Whatley's family show them living in the house at 486 Archway Road, including the parlor where *Ghost* was cast. Dating from the 1930s through the 1970s, these images add a personal dimension to Whiteread's sculpture. They draw out the relationship between her personal memory, having grown up in a similar Victorian row house in the area, and the collective memory of all such families who lived and worked here.

Galleria Lorcan O'Neill published the artist book *Testament* in 2015, combining Whiteread's photographs with text by the Irish writer, Colm Tóibín. Influenced by the contrasting portrayals of Mary

in Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* (1518) in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and Tintoretto's *The Crucifixion* (1565) in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco—both in Venice, Italy—Tóibín's one-woman play presents the story of Mary in her role as a mother. Inspired by this humanizing portrait of Mary, Whiteread illustrated the text with photographs she produced expressly for the project. The images of personal objects from her own collection, including her mother's shoes, are consistent with her practice of indexing domestic spaces and objects.

Organized by the National Gallery of Art Library, this installation is curated by Paige Rozanski, curatorial associate, department of modern art, National Gallery of Art, and Yuri Long, rare book librarian, National Gallery of Art.

Library and Rare Books Collection

The National Gallery of Art Library holds more than 400,000 books and periodicals, including more than 15,000 volumes in the rare books collection, with an emphasis on Western art from the Middle Ages to the present, particularly the Italian, Dutch, Flemish, French, German, Spanish, British, and American schools. The collection features an extraordinary range of material, from manuscripts and early printed books to annotated catalogs and price lists, from landmark publications such as Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* to serials produced by Dada artists. Special emphasis is given to the areas of collection catalogs, biographies of artists, manuals on technique and materials, architecture, color theory, the early history of photography, festival books, travel literature, emblem books, and artists' books.

The National Gallery of Art Library was founded in 1941, the year the Gallery opened to the public. In 1979 the completion of a new seven-story facility in the Gallery's East Building and the establishment of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) allowed the library to broaden the purpose and scope of its collection. A major national art research center, the library serves the Gallery's staff, CASVA members, visiting scholars, and researchers.

To access the library, which is open Monday through Friday, visitors must make an appointment. Call (202) 842-6511 or email refdesk@nga.gov for more information.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The

Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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PRESS KIT

Exhibition Press Release

[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 300 kb)

In the Library: Rachel Whiteread's "Ghost"

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