

Pathologies of Time I

The Royal Newcastle Hospital

Miranda Lawry



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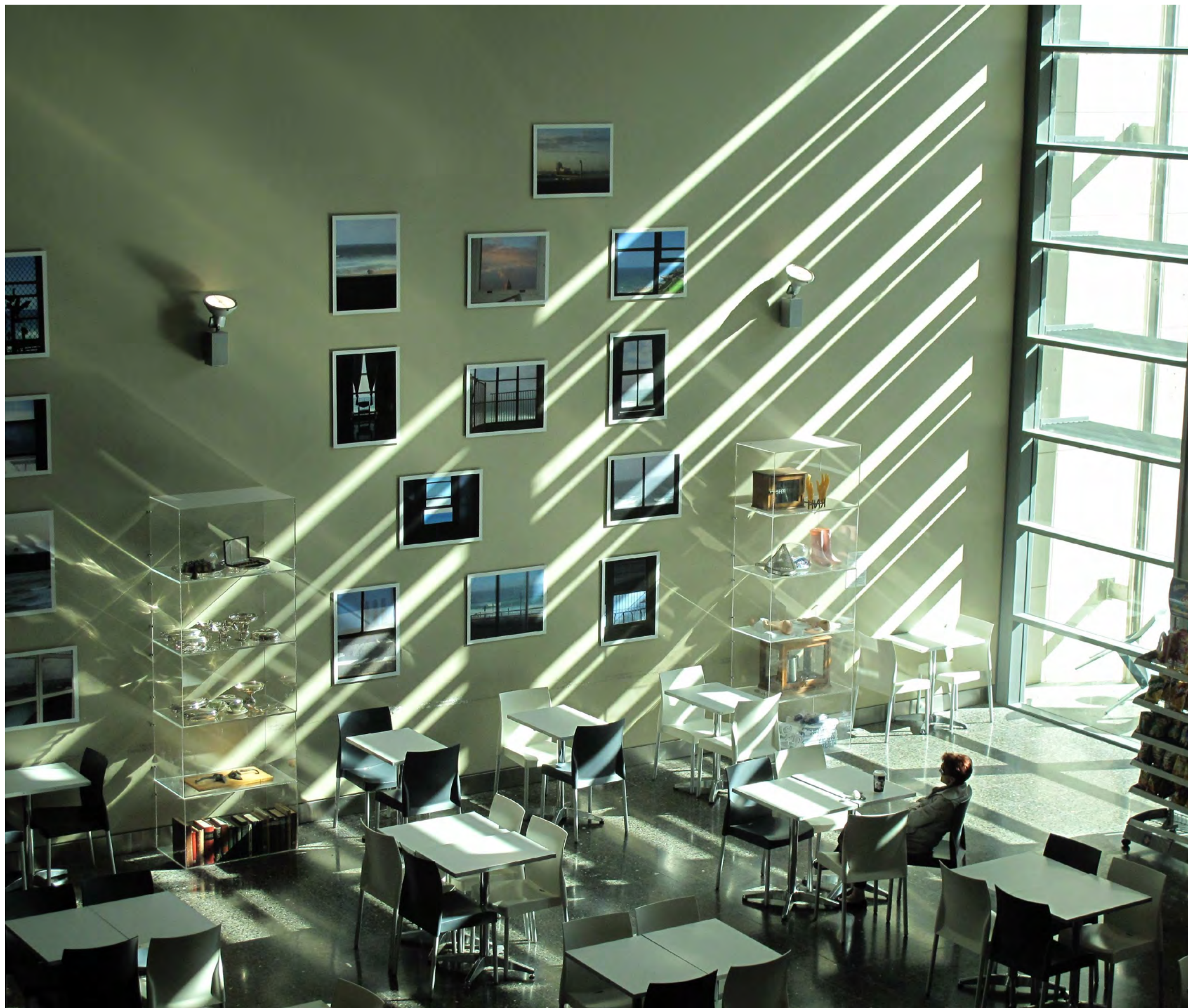
The Royal Newcastle Hospital
1817 - 2005

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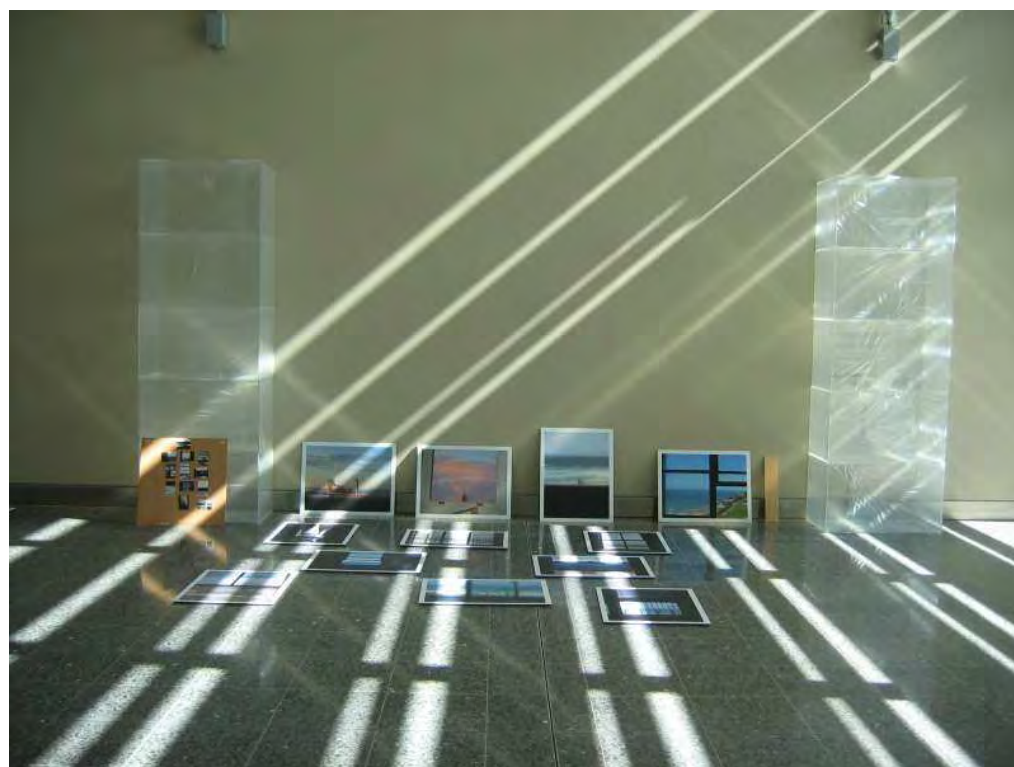


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Moving the Royal - Framing the Memories

This art installation was conceived as a response to the closure of a hospital. Its voice is sourced directly from the staff whose lives have been entwined in its history. It is hoped that the memories of the site and the guardianship of the objects empower them all to move forward with a strong connection to their past.

The photographic images are interpretations of exact window views from where staff were invited to recall their most vivid memories of their workplace. The salt-encrusted window glass through which the vision of the surrounding landscape is revealed suggests both an imagining of the individual gaze and a reminder of the atmospheric conditions that compromised the buildings physical strength and ultimate longevity.

Hospital staff were also invited to consider an object to be collected and housed inside large perspex display cases that form a cabinet of curios. These diverse objects came from staff desks, wards and treatment rooms and represent an unofficial history of the hospital. Combined with these personal offerings are objects that define the official functions of the hospital including medical instruments and the silverware from the doctors dining room.

This project was funded by the University of Newcastle and Hunter New England Health and is installed in the foyer of The Royal Newcastle Centre, Rankin Park campus, Newcastle 2006.

The artists, Miranda Lawry and Anne Graham thank the staff of the Royal Newcastle Hospital for their generosity in sharing their stories.





















Vital Signs

"I mean we had the most beautiful location and it was really therapeutic. If someone stressed you out or made you angry you walked to a window, took a deep breath, looked at the view, and there you go, you were fine".



"So the views from that hospital were a main part of everyone's lives, patients, staff and family members. I think my favourite memory of the Royal is that I would be looking out that window when the Southerlies would come up the coast. It would be a stiflingly hot day, no air-conditioning, you would have every window opened and there was not a puff of air, then you could see, down the south coast clouds that were forming. We then knew the Southerly was going to hit. There was relief at hand and everyone would be relieved until the storm fully hit and then you would be shutting all windows, packing them with towels. The windows would be rattling or leaking so then all the patients' buzzers would be going so you were frantically going around packing towels into windows. That was fun".



"We used to wheel the patients out, the patients who couldn't get out of bed. We used to wheel them out on the balcony and lie them there and just have the sun, feel the sea breeze and it was just lovely. Because these people couldn't get out of bed, so basically they were stuck, so this really helped with their healing".



"For sure there would be times when I needed time out for myself if I was dealing with a difficult situation. It was quite relaxing to look out that window and get my breath back and just reevaluate how to approach a situation. Look out the window and do that and then I was able to go back into a room and discuss the situation with a patient which really helped myself. I was able to approach people in a calm manner which might not have been the current situation and I found that so helpful".



"From that window we see many cargo ships out on the horizon, beautiful blue sea a strip of yellow sand and people walking along the footpaths and it was a wonderful view. As I said, every morning it would be different. We would start our shift at 7 o'clock and I would be there at quarter to seven without fail every morning. I would look out that window and you could see the local pod of dolphins. There was a pod of dolphins that used to come most mornings and the biggest pod I think I was would have been about 40 dolphins. It was incredible. Usually there would be up to 12- 6 to 12 dolphins, but this day there was a pod of 40 and they were just stretched right out along the beach. Absolutely incredible! I was so lucky to experience that".



"It was 178 years old, the history that most people were very proud of and the place had an atmosphere that you don't find everywhere. It was a really friendly place, everyone knew everyone. I think, yes, it was seven storeys tall but we were all under the one roof and we were all one family and the Royal Family thing came out. That wasn't just a thing. It was really how it felt".



"Yes, one of them is from our window. It's the view from the office next to mine, looking down at a little bit of the car park and across. Yes, yes , well that's the one we always take because its on all our computer screens".



"Everybody was involved in whale watching. As soon as someone saw a whale we would all say "quick, look at the whale". We would ring every ward. Every ward would be contacted so just everybody would be looking out of the windows and I know staff education actually wrote down every sighting of a whale and they tallied up one year and they had seen 300 whales actually. And we saw the white whale, the albino whale. He actually swam past".



"One of the therapeutic things about the Royal was its location, views. If you needed a bit of time out you would go to one of those windows and look out at the ocean. It was very cathartic I suppose. It calmed you down a bit, you got your breath, and particularly the nurses who were there at all times of the day and night so I think it was very important to them because they spent more time than the rest of us there".



"It's a long history which started when I was a child. I was born there but mum worked there so I was in and out of the out-patients department there and then occasionally we were allowed to go into work with her, but that was very old school nursing so you didn't make a habit of that. Nurses didn't have families, least as far as management went they didn't, so I have been trotting in and out of that place for a long time".



"There would be times when I needed time out for myself if I was dealing with a difficult situation. It was quite relaxing to look out that window and get my breath back and just re evaluate how to approach a situation. Look out the window and do that, and then I was able to go back into a room and discuss the situation with a patient which really helped myself, I was able to approach people in a calm manner which might not have been the current situation and I found that so helpful. Also, I believe the views from the hospital had healing powers. We used to put young guys there who had been in motor accidents or bike accidents that were in traction for two to three months. We were able to wheel them out to balconies overlooking Newcastle Beach".



"In summer some of the staff used to go down to the beach in their lunch hour to swim and it could be a problem if they were swimming and lost track of time. There is an urban myth, oh, not a myth, but there were stories that what we would do is hang towels out windows as a signal for staff members to come back. That it was time to leave the water and come back and have a shower for the afternoon rush".



So I think there are lots of little things even looking out over Nobbies. I think if you are really stressed at work or if something is really giving you the pip, you stick your head out the window and it just all goes.



"Well, the window is no longer. It was in the York building before the earthquake in 1989 and it was located in a toilet and I always found it phenomenal that, its so interesting, that one could sit on the loo with this window which had a particular angle so you could look right down King Street, Newcastle, but you could not be seen the other way. It was an open window that you could look through and I found this just fascinating, and I lost that window after the earthquake and so we couldn't really immortalise it on the wall of the Royal Newcastle Centre".



"I've got the little rock that is right down on the shore line and as the waves come in it breaks over the rock and goes back out again. And its often heart shaped, the water around the rock. That's my rock from out of the window from where we used to work".



"Well, if you know it was going to be hot, obviously you plan for it. The only other thing I think is interesting about the climate is when its winter and its really windy or we have big storms the windows used to get blown in so we would have glass shattering. We would know then to ship the patients and then the maintenance people would come up and put a piece of board over that window until they could get the glass replaced".



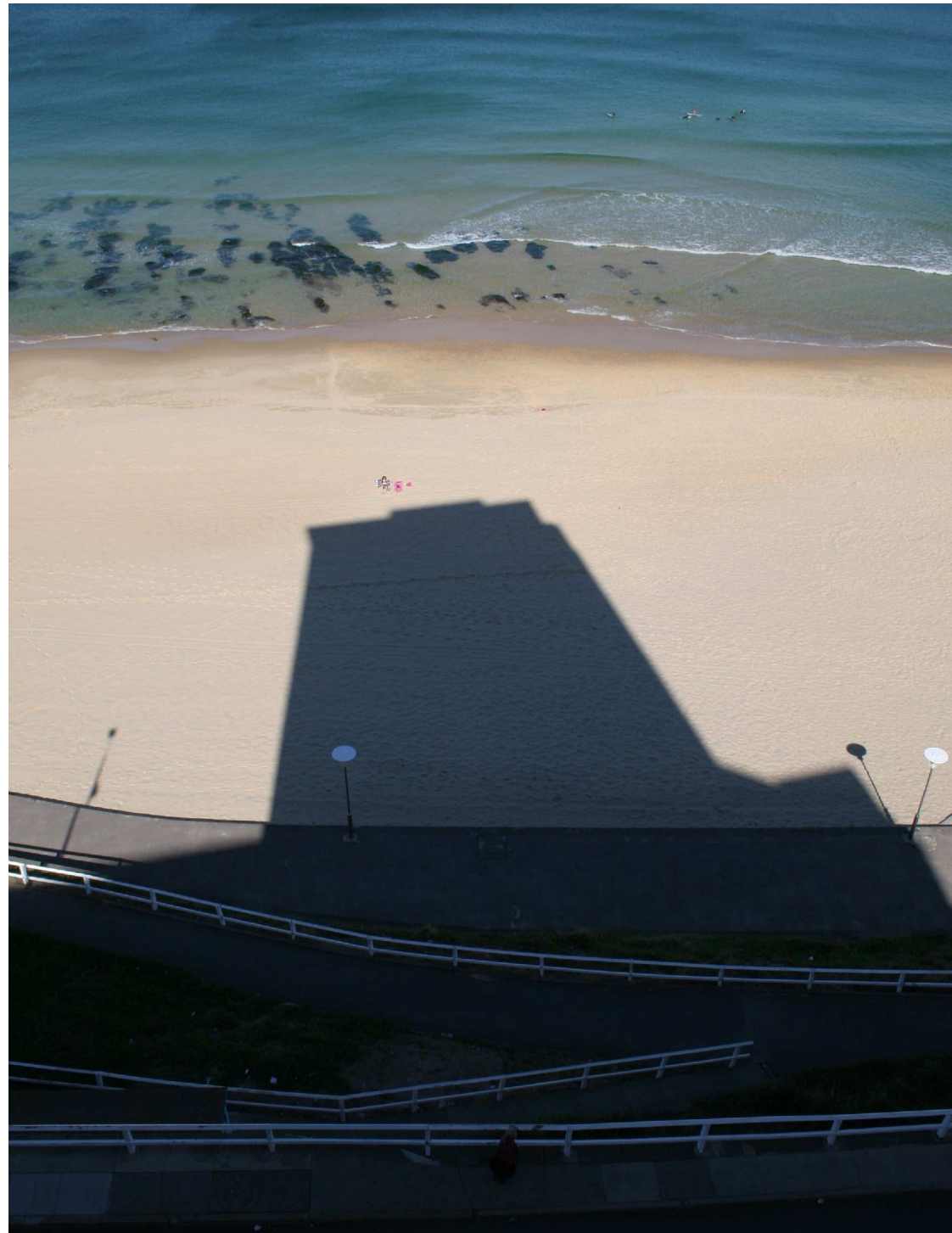
Life Support

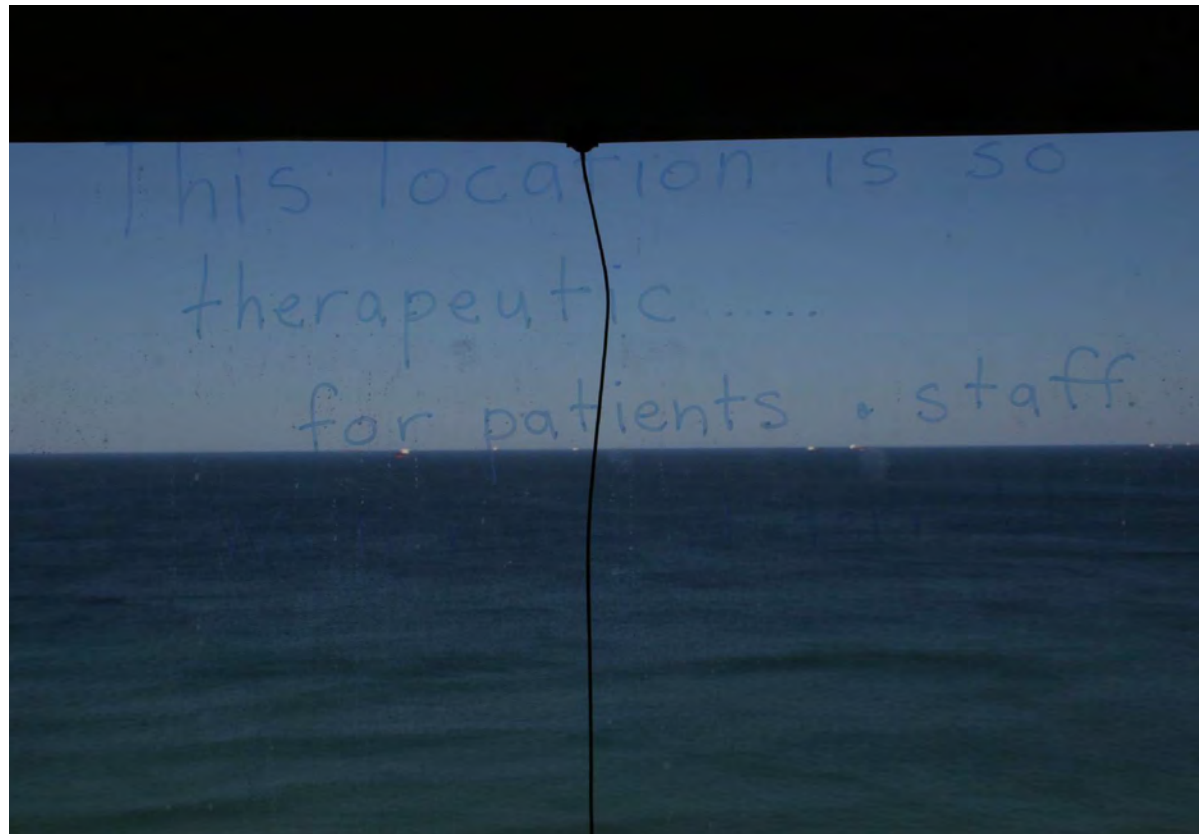


The hospital site exists now as a trace, as an archive, as a place where the absence of memory might suggest notions of oblivion. These images document the remnants of the Royal Newcastle Hospital shortly before it was demolished in mid 2008.

Walking through the once pristin wards I stepped over makeshift beds where the homeless slept, pigeons nesting on cupboard tops and glass shattered across the floor from the relentless storms. The remnants of the life force of the hospital was evidenced throughout. Notice boards with faded paper outlines, painted walls that now revealed cupboards of machinery removed in the relocation and the vast kitchen covered in fine dust and discarded utensils.

The distant voices resounded through the window glass, on which was scrawled in black pen: "this location is so therapeutic for patients and staff".

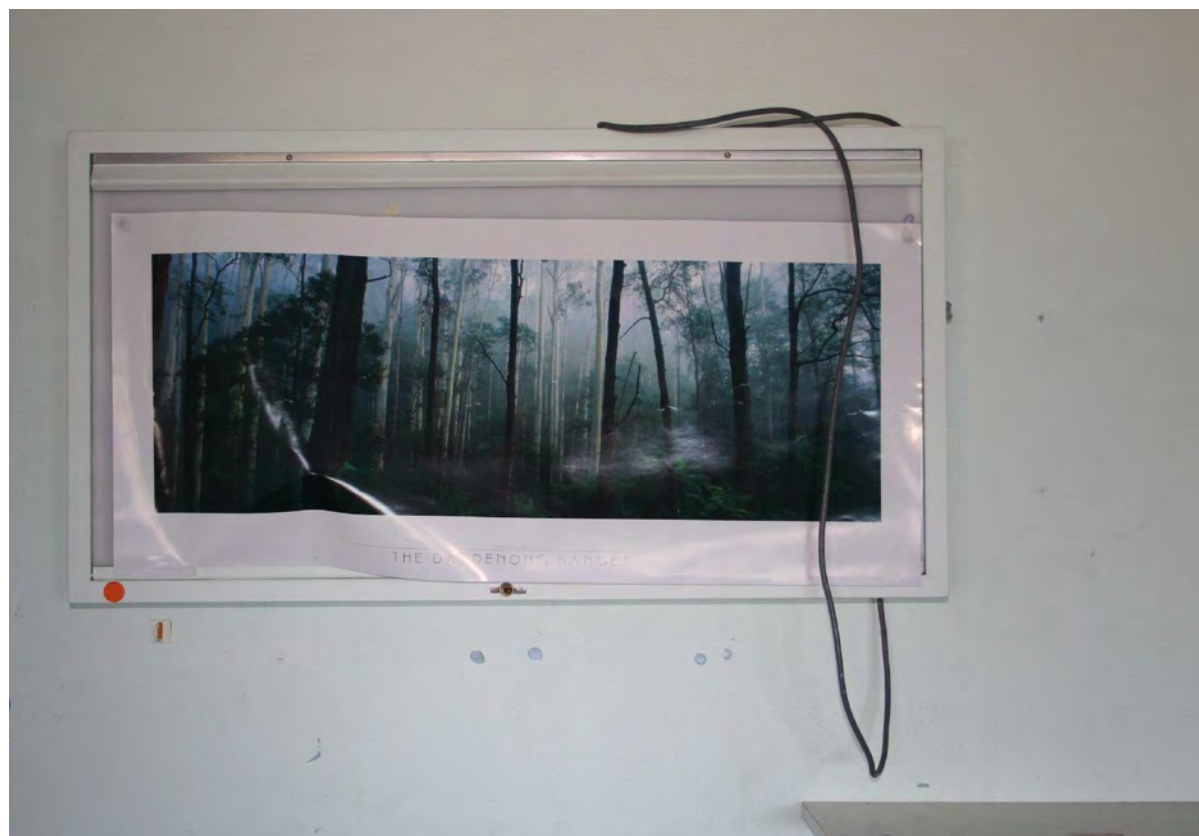












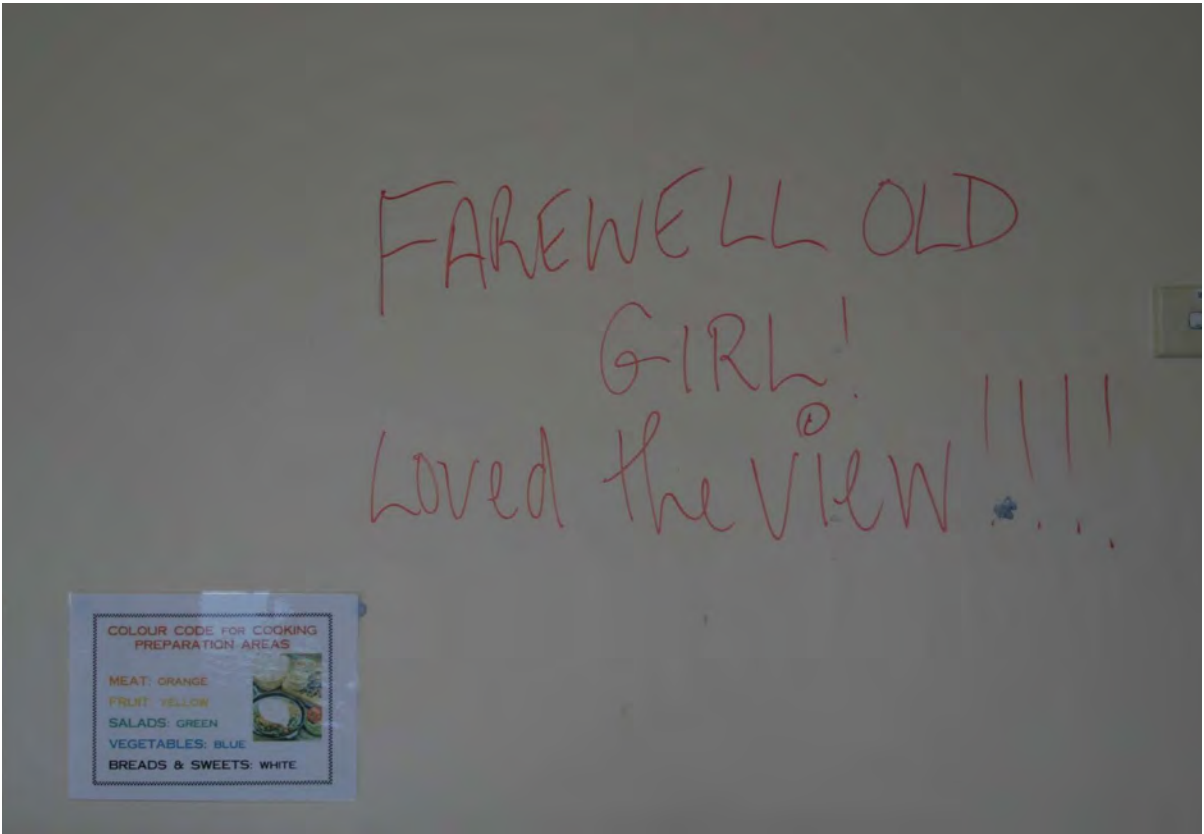






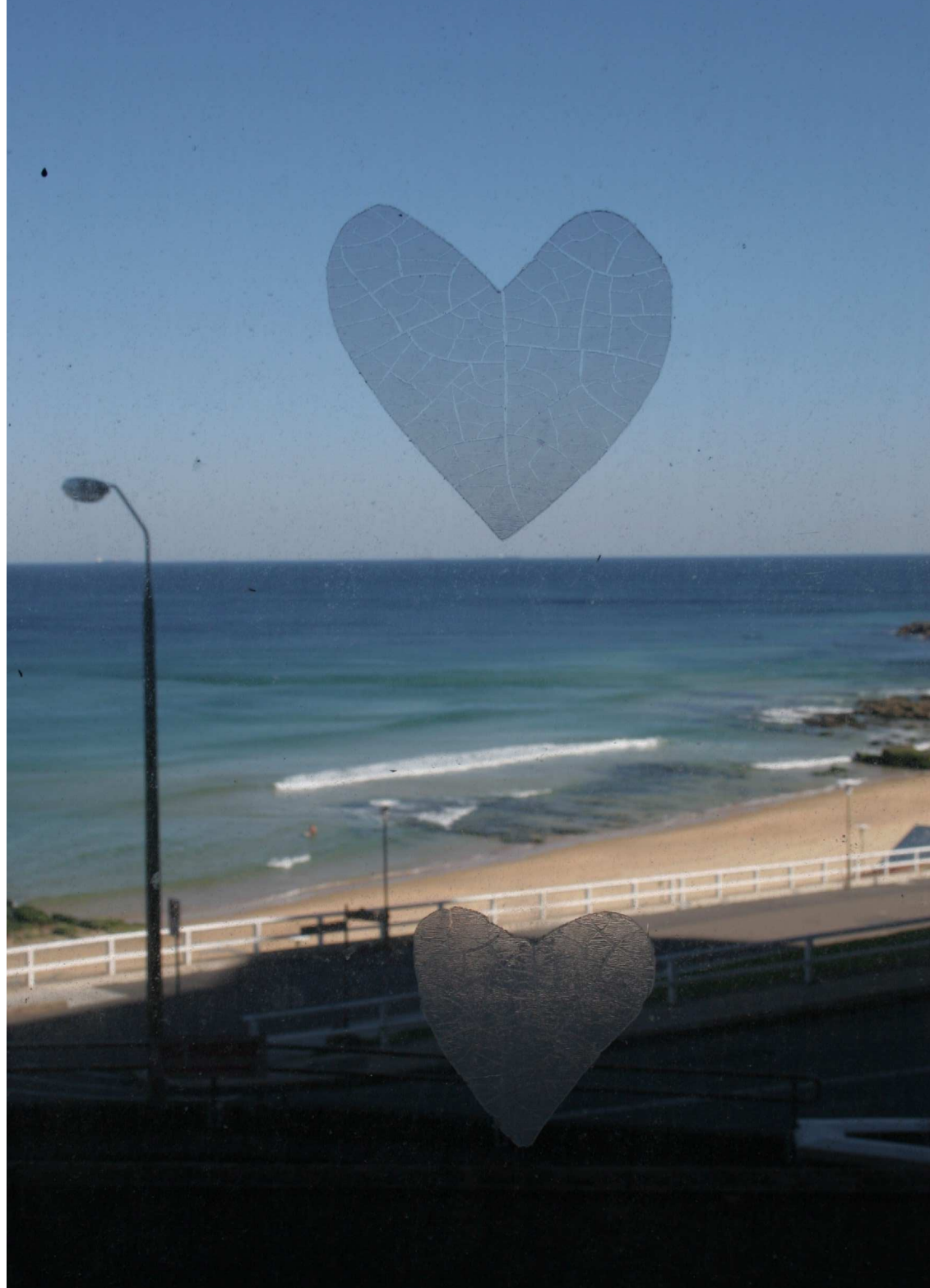


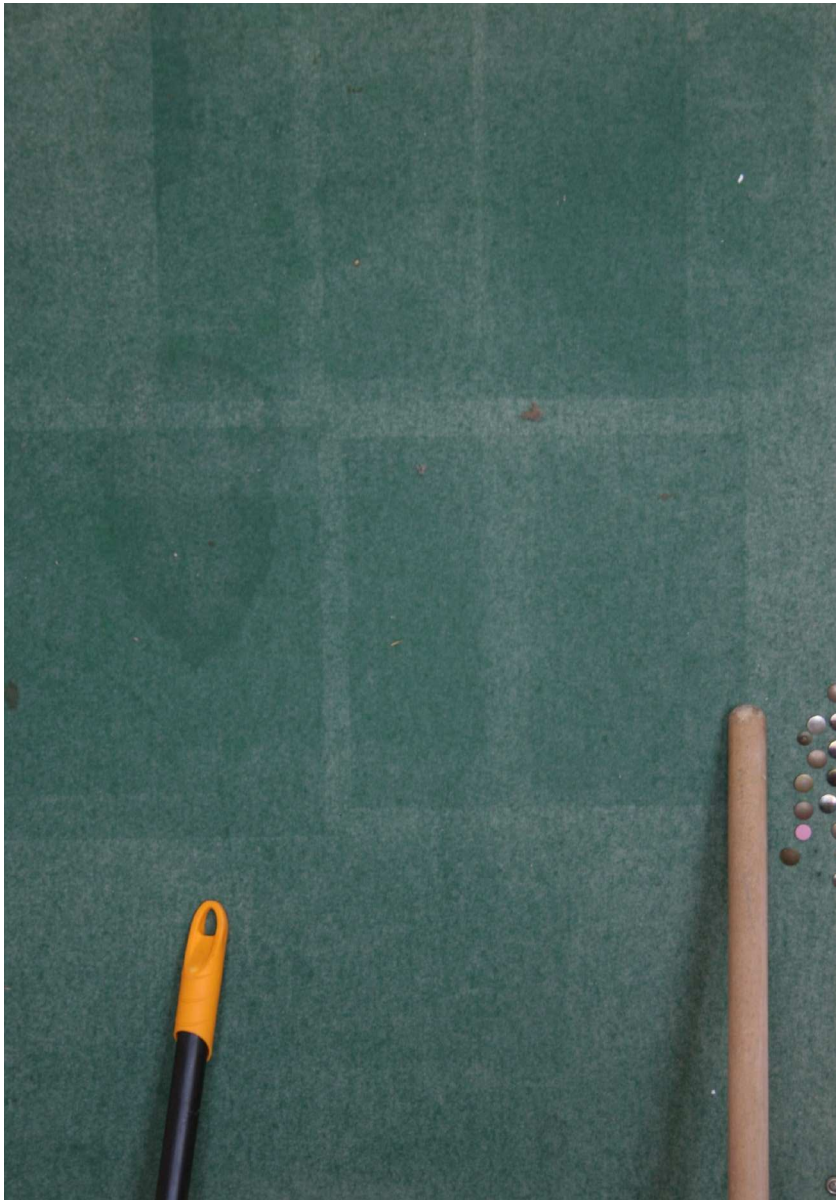


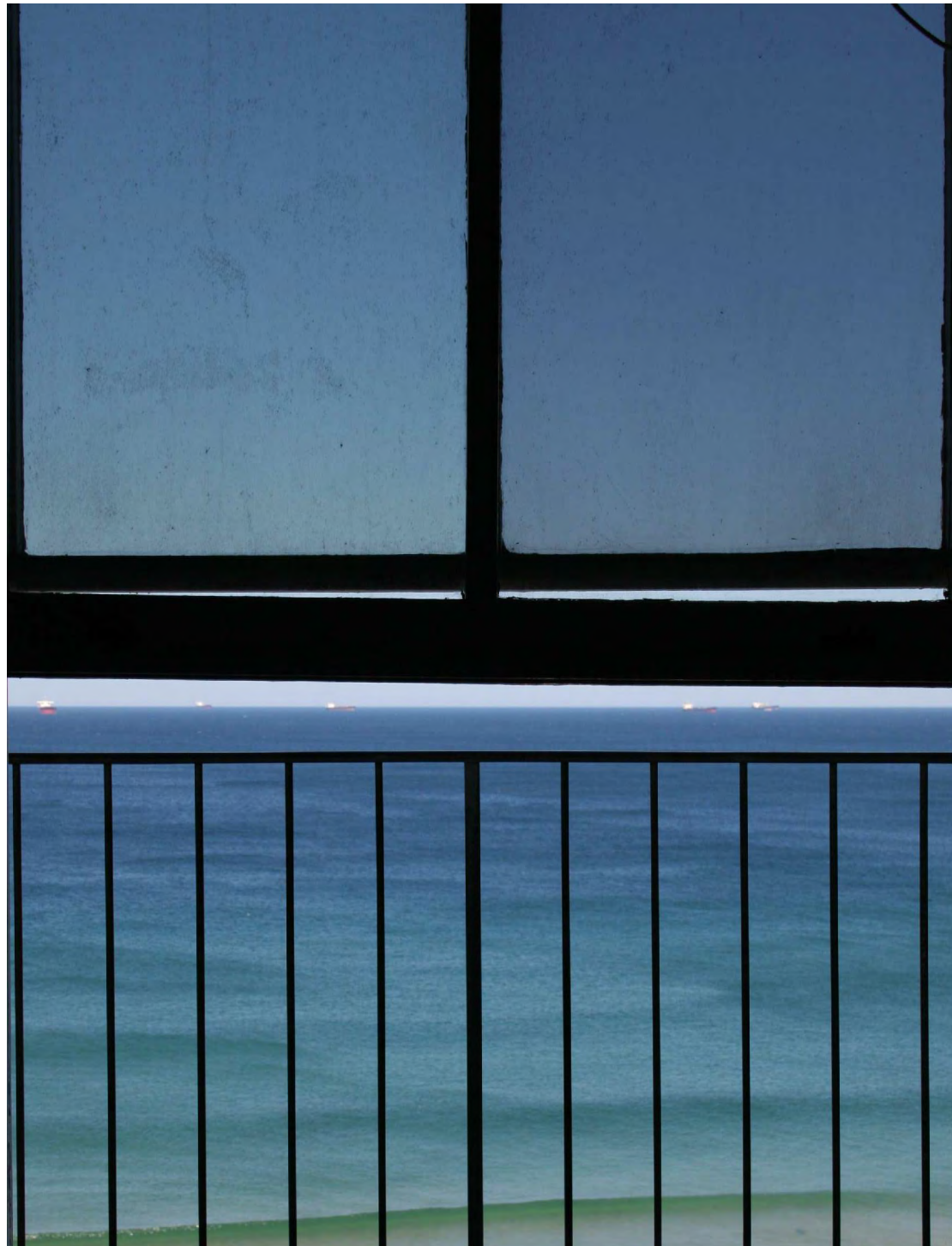


































Last Breath

If the body of a hospital can be described through the vision of its occupants by way of mapping the building through the void of the windows (now demolished) is it possible to imagine other ways of mapping transient processes such as emotion in the construct of a substantial urban space? In interviews conducted with the staff there was consistent reference to the windows and, more importantly, to a sense of “breath”. The breath is manifest in this project as having been expressed (physically) by the hospital staff who used the windows to reflect, refresh and re-engage and the external atmospherics that once projected the dynamics of wind, rain, salt and breeze onto and through the hospital. These atmospherics imposed more permanent physical effects on the structure, and more temporary effects on the physiology and psychology of the patients and staff.

The demolition of the Royal Newcastle Hospital. 2008











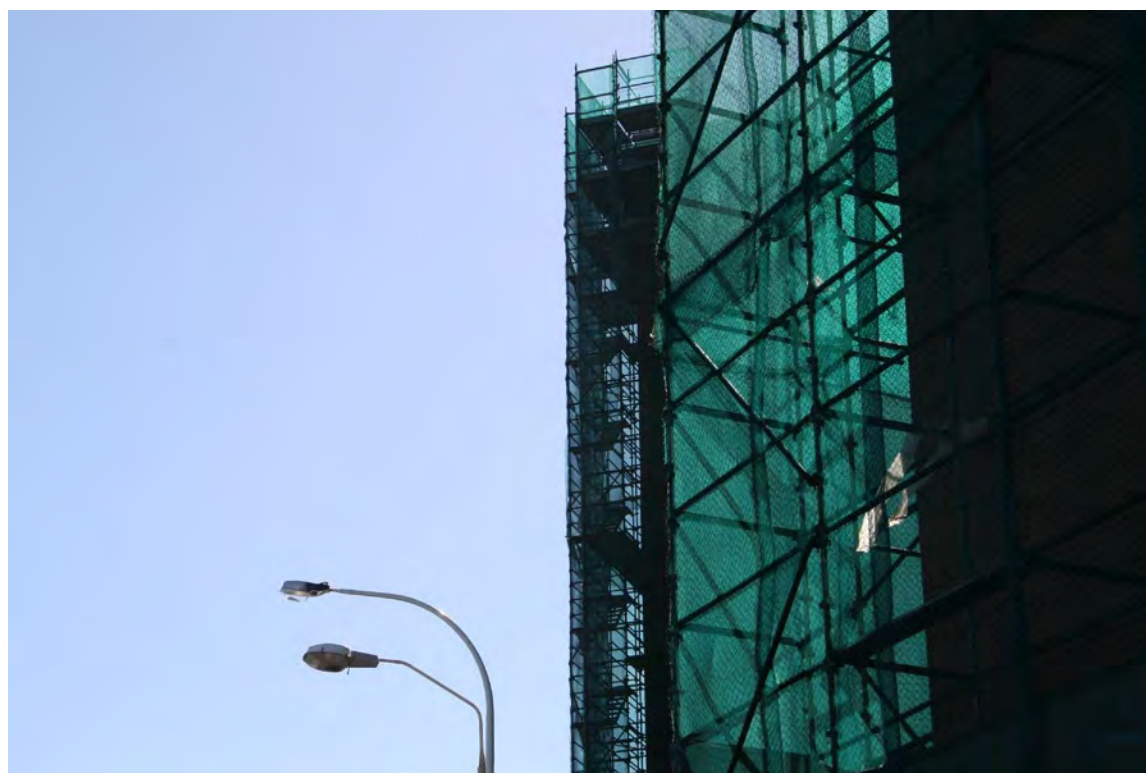
















Today, the legend of The Royal and its irresistible ocean views is once again being brought back to life. Be the first to hear the whispers of the rolling waves as an absolute luxury beachfront apartment lifestyle beckons. Once the enchantment takes hold, you may never want to leave. Join one of Australia's strongest growth regions.

The promotional invitation from Mirvac advertising the sale of the new apartments on the redeveloped Royal Newcastle Hospital site 2009

Autopsy

"Moving the Royal-Framing the Memories". Installation commission installed in the foyer of the Royal Newcastle Centre (Rankin Park campus) of Hunter New England Health, Newcastle 2006.

"Charting Memory Framing Memory". An exhibition at the University of Newcastle Gallery 2007

"Art and the Archive". An exhibition by Fine Art researchers from the Arts/Health Research & Practice Centre at the University of Newcastle, John Paynter Gallery, Newcastle 2008

A Fine Line, Podspace Gallery. An exhibition in conjunction with The 2nd ArtsHealth Conference, Newcastle, 2009

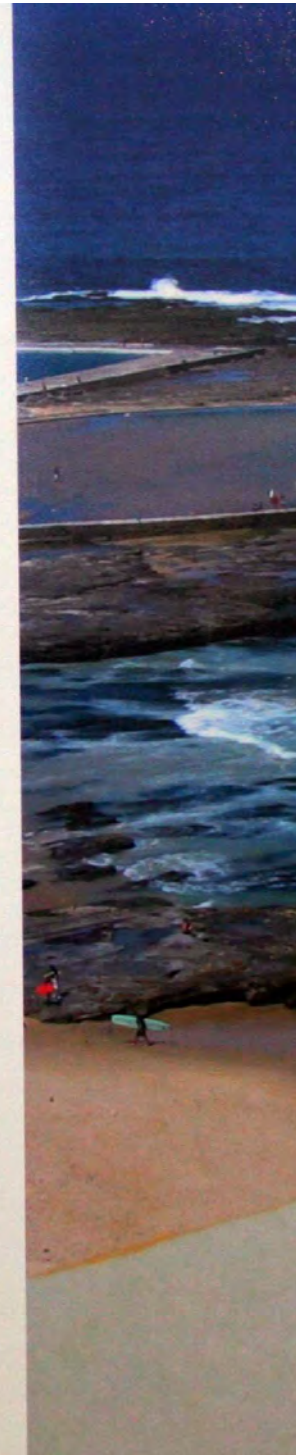


Charting Memory exhibition, The University of Newcastle Gallery 2007

Framing the memories

This work was derived from a collaborative arts project between staff from the University of Newcastle, the staff and community of the Royal Newcastle Hospital and the Arts for Health Program at the John Hunter Hospital, conceived as a response to the official closing of the Royal Newcastle Hospital in March 2006. The original work developed over a twelve month period, incorporates the photographic images of Miranda Lawry and the found objects collected from the staff at the Royal Newcastle Hospital by colleague and Artist, Professor Anne Graham, is currently installed in the foyer of the Royal Newcastle Centre to commemorate the feelings of loss in the community of an important and historical establishment in Newcastle.

In the gallery's recontextualised space Lawry's photographs still resonate strongly with the original intention. They are interpretations of the exact window views where staff were invited to recall their most vivid memories of their workplace. Each window, absent of a figure, is a ghost-like reminder of the lives that were lived in the Royal Newcastle Hospital, and reflects on the very foundations of the hospital's existence. The salt haze through which the views were photographed document the environmental factor, which impacted on the maintenance needs of the Hospital.







Art and the Archive - An exhibition by Fine Art researchers from the Arts/Health Research & Practice Centre at The University of Newcastle

John Paynter Gallery, Newcastle 7th-26th October 2008



Model 107
The Royal Newcastle Hospital, Newcastle, NSW
1900-1910
The Royal Newcastle Hospital, Newcastle, NSW
1900-1910

a fine line: artists respond to the theme of pleasure and pain and the often fine line between

Pod space gallery, Newcastle

October 7th to 24th 2009

In conjunction with The 2nd ArtsHealth Conference, Newcastle, 2009: Arts/Health Pain/Pleasure - the image music text of pain and healing (6th & 7th October) 2009











The Royal Newcastle hospital, Newcastle beach (looking north) 2006



Royal Newcastle Hospital, Newcastle (looking southwest) 2006



The Royal Closing Prosession August 2006



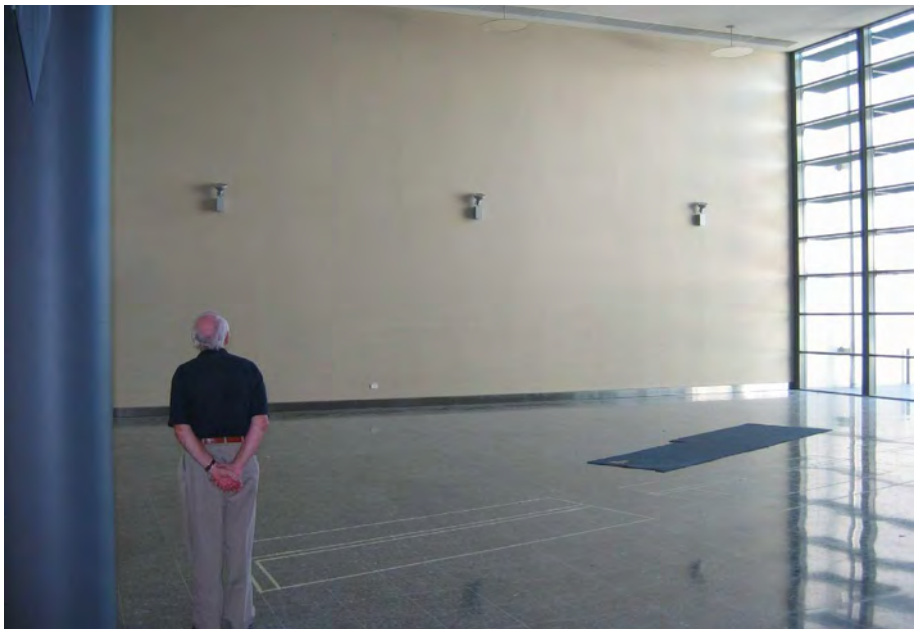
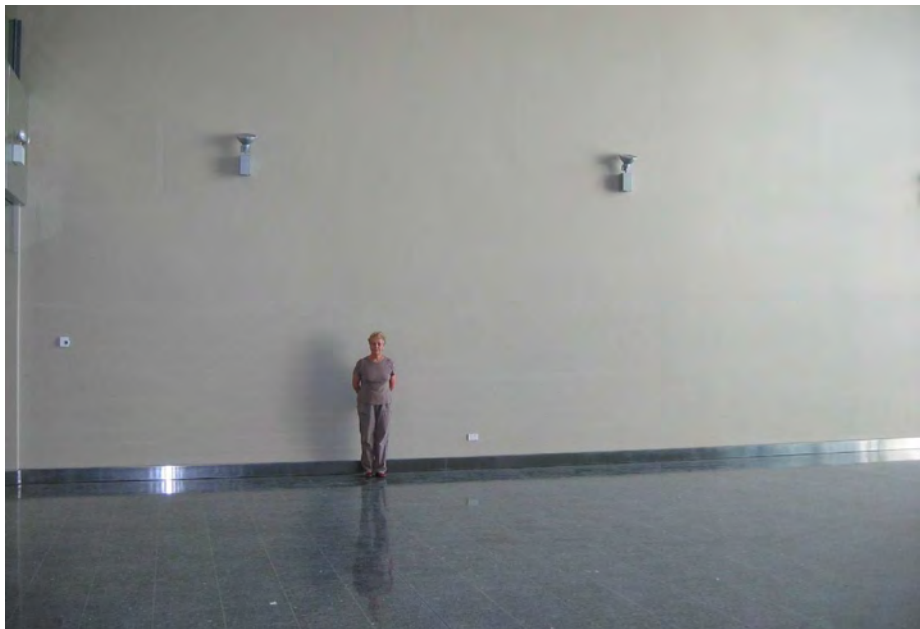
The Royal Closing Prossession August 2006

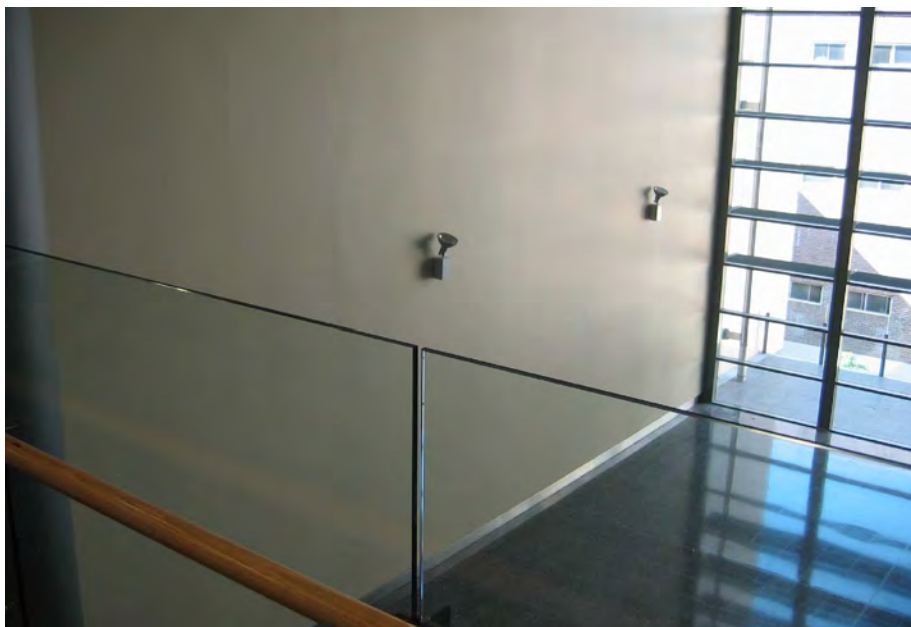




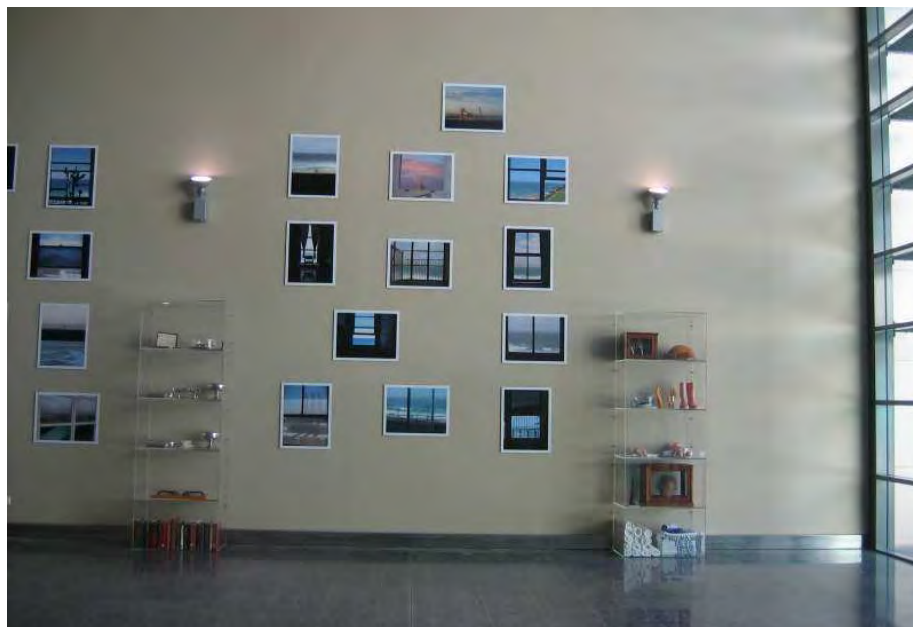
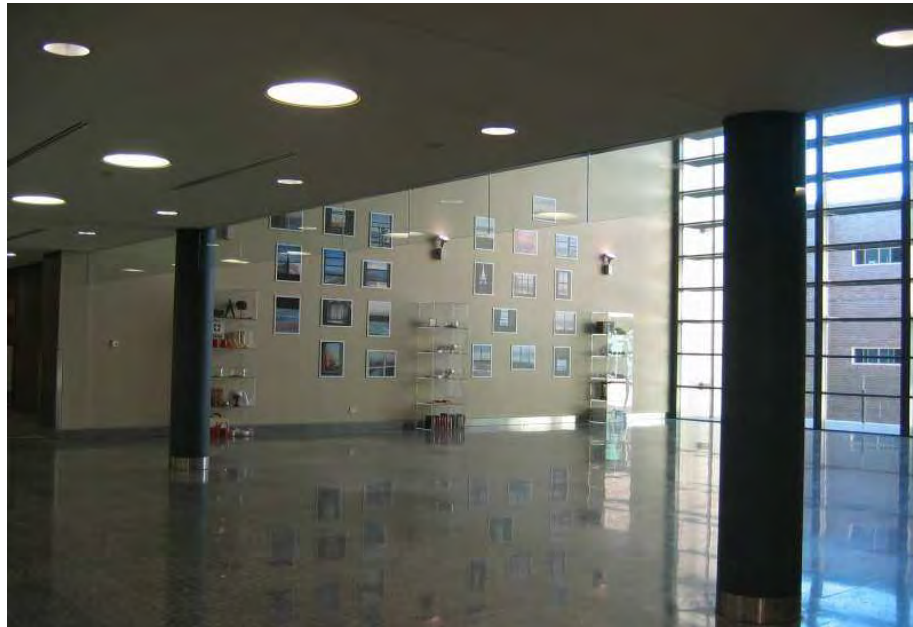


Royal Newcastle Centre, Rankin Park campus Newcastle 2006











6th Floor A Ward, at sunrise

Windows in the cafe

8th floor corridor, windows looking out to sea

Out patients building roof- Nobby's and sand dunes

7th floor CBD view

Office window behind nurses station 6th floor

Window in tearoom 600C

Balcony 600A

Smoking corridor 600A

5th Floor A level - end of corridor

Window in 500A - looking toward the hill

5th floor - Rheumatology Ward

Ships going out of the harbour

5th Floor 500C- behind the desk when the southerly hits

Executive Suite - ships sailing in the window

Toilet window in the demolished Yorke building

Office 8th Floor

7th Floor- cathedral at night

3rd Floor end of corridor looking at whales

4th Floor -OT McCaffery Building, South Newcastle beach

4th Floor McCaffery staff room

600B Nickson Wing- Rehab gym area

1st Floor McCaffery wing

5th Floor - the sea

This project was only made possible by the generosity of the staff at the Royal Newcastle Hospital, John Hunter Hospital and the Royal Newcastle Centre and the vision of Marily Cintra and Pippa Robinson.



