

## Unknown landscapes – Domestic landscapes

Beatty Hallas, project proposal, January 2013



At night, between being awake and asleep, I compose tales of survival. They begin at the close of a journey, with inhospitable weather or terrain and dwindling energy and spirits. At this point a dwelling is sighted. The stories feature myself and my son. The cabin, shack, or treehouse are always abandoned and mark the end of the journey.



From this point on the focus is on making the dwelling habitable. Floorplans and utilities are planned, gardens explored and neighbours introduced. Reworking the homestead so that it is feasible continues until the scenario feels comfortable. After this, it is no longer intriguing, so I contrive a new location and start again.

I have never been within the types of environment I describe, they are composites from acquired knowledge. A preoccupation with existence in the wilderness. The outside world is cruel, but romanticised and exotic. Withdrawal from the weather to build a domestic environment. At the heart of the reverie is the drive to provide: motherhood brings challenges to rehearse and be equipped for. This project is an attempt to harness these imaginings, and evaluate the vulnerabilities and resourcefulness laid bare by them, as a result of bringing a new person into the wide world.

### Proposal



I will make sound recordings recounting these stories as I experience them, before falling asleep. These will be transcribed and presented in a small volume, 'dry matches' (indicative of survival and the warmth of a home). The narrative will appear fitful, as it follows the method used to record it. The booklet will be available in central Brighton from nominated public venues pertinent to the project: a comic shop, an 'outdoor' shop and the children's library (to be publicised, with support from House).



This will be the first time I have used my own stories as the basis for a piece. It will encompass how tales are used to tell others about travel and adventure, as well as their role in education and escape for young and old. I will read from the booklet to my son in the children's library, one weekend – the first time he will have heard them. This private activity will be carried out so others may overhear. The overall project will be caught in glimpses, but the booklet will be available from three venues at the opening hours proposed for the festival. This mixture of arriving at the stories by designation or chance has a kinship to the novel highly attuned to Brighton's landscape, *Brighton Rock*.<sup>\*</sup> Some will head to venues to collect the booklet and others will come across it. Remaining booklets will be put in shopping bags by the venues (dependent on their consent). The different types of venue will bring the project into contact with different crowds.

'... such a shelter as you would be glad to reach in a tempestuous night, containing all the essentials of a house... and everything hangs upon its peg that a man should use...'

*Walden*, Henry David Thoreau, Dover, 1995, p157

'Inside it was dark and the fire glowed on the hearth. Smoke rushed toward the hole in the ceiling, carrying sparks of fire with it'.

*The forest of hours*, Kirstin Ekman, Vintage, 1999, p19.

'... becoming acquainted and swallowing fears and settling down to life in the little cabin...'

*Big Sur*, Jack Kerouac, Harper Perennial, 2006, p19

<sup>\*</sup> '... he had to stick closely to a programme... In his pocket he had a packet of cards to distribute in hidden places along his route.'  
*Brighton Rock*, Graham Greene, Penguin Books, 1971, p5

As a parallel to Mariele's commission, this will feel slighter in scale, itinerant in manifestation and intimate in derivation. It is aligned with her work as it investigates the emotional attributions of landscape and looks at the boundaries of outside and inside. I am interested in landscape as something we are immersed in, with elements that we fabricate ourselves. Entwined with environment, you cannot extricate yourself from it.

Brighton is a town that embraces fantasy. I hope this distribution of dreams will prompt others to ponder on their own faculty for imagination and how making things up is a way of testing how we would actually like to live.

### Potential venues for booklet

**Dave's Comics** '... if you like a good story there will probably be something here for you...' online Jan 13  
5 Sydney Street,  
Brighton,  
BN1 4EN  
Sat 9.30-6, Sun 11-5

**Surf & Ski Sports Ltd** 'adventure travel'  
1-2 Regent Street  
Brighton  
BN1 1UL  
Sat 10-5.30, Sun 11.30-5

**Brighton Children's Library**  
Jubilee Street  
Brighton  
BN1 1GE  
Sat 10-5, Sun 11-5



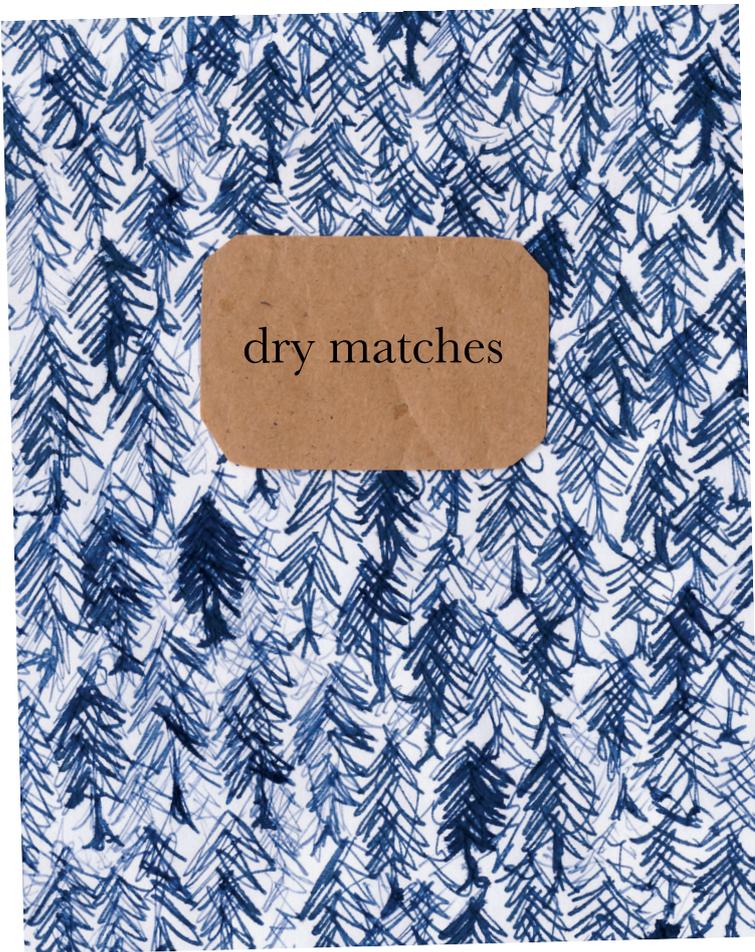
### Budget outline (£4,000)

Development of stories and refining project approaches £500  
Booklet development, design input £1500  
Liaison with House and venues £300  
Booklet printing (1000 copies), liaison with printer and delivery £750  
Travel to Brighton, based on four journeys £100  
Time spent in Brighton (meetings, reading, distributing booklets) £600  
Contingency £250

There is an urge within me to accommodate and disseminate. It constitutes an extension of goodwill, intimate in that it comes directly or indirectly from me, and is always intended for others. I look at my practice as a series of transactions – a communication involving two or more people that affects all those involved; a personal interaction; an agreement or exchange. These scenarios have a propriety – a fitness or correctness of behaviour – associated with a location and circumstances. This mode of responsiveness does not prescribe how the work will exist, but informs it. For further background to my practice, please see [beattyhallas.co.uk](http://beattyhallas.co.uk).

Beatty Hallas

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The stories contained in this volume are transcriptions from sound recordings made at night before falling asleep.

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(above) display stand in venues  
(left) possibility for front cover  
(below) excerpt from test story

Snow all around. We're going up a hill. There's water to our right, up ahead trees in a semicircle, dark trunks with snow. We're walking slowly. My son's dragging, holding my hand. When I say 'There it is.' he speeds up. Snow is heavy on our feet. We make our way towards the hut. It's made of planks: rough, just nailed together. I can see the front of it, a door in the middle, steps up, nestled in the trees. Slight reflections from the glass windows. Other than that dark. I push towards the door, fingers in my pocket trying to find the key. Numb, struggling to get it out of my pocket. I say 'Come on now. We're here, we've done it, we've found it'. Key goes in the lock and sticks, fingers trying to hold on to it, trying to turn it. My son sinks down onto the ground, squatting in the snow. The key clicks, swings open the door speedily. I say 'Come on', drag the key out of the lock. Lift him through the door. Climb in and shut the door behind me, turn the key, we're in. Cavernous dark space inside. Can feel wooden boards under our feet. We stay still. 'Ok, right let's get some light. Stay here, I'll find the matches. Wait a minute we'll just get this sorted'. I unload the bag from my shoulders. It's long and heavy down my back. I feel it hit the ground, turn it around. Fumble my fingers round to the side pocket and zip. Then inside, for the box of matches. Feels like forever. At last there it is, give it a shake, they're in there. Feel for the rough side of the box and work out which way up the box is so they don't tumble all over the floor. Out comes a match, drag it along the side and a small flame. There's my son's face, blinking at me, saying 'There we go'. Hold it up high. Straight ahead is the mantelpiece, made of wood. Small stumps of candle left on there, move over and light them. The wicks spluttering

but holding. Then light is all around, we can see the room. It's very bare, a few logs and sticks. Scattered around the fireplace. To the left, a window looking out the way we came. A small door leading to a bathroom. To the right of the fireplace a sink. A window out to the back. No furniture. Hanging on the ceiling a drying rack pulled up and down with a rope. 'Right, fire.' I say. 'Let's warm up. We made it'. We drag twigs, sticks, to the fireplace. Pile them up with one or two logs and set it going. They crackle. They're damp but they burn. Soon the warmth starts to come out. My son wiggles closer to the fire. I dig down in my bag for blankets and wrap him 'round. I pull out our bedrolls. I hang them over the drying rack, along with coats, gloves. Anything that feels damp in the bag gets hung up to dry. My son starts to warm up and gets chatty. 'How we going to do this Mum, we haven't got anything.' 'Yes but we're inside now.' 'So we're gonna sleep on the floor like we do outside?' 'Yeah.' 'Ok.' Fire burns hot. We relax. In the bag we have bread and cheese. A small pan of milk starts to heat up on the fire, a few spoons of hot chocolate stirred around, biscuits. We'll have to go shopping soon, there must be a village close by. 'Um, I didn't see any other places around here.' 'There will be some. We'll go and ask.' The biscuits are soft from being carried. They're damp but they're tasty. We look at the fire, popping and hissing. Eventually we're tired. The day has been long. We unroll the bedrolls. Lower them down from the ceiling. Crawl onto them with our clothes and lie by the fire, blankets on top. Holding hot chocolate. There's silence around us. The windows let in a little moonlight, but mostly the orange wobbling glow around the room comes from the fire.