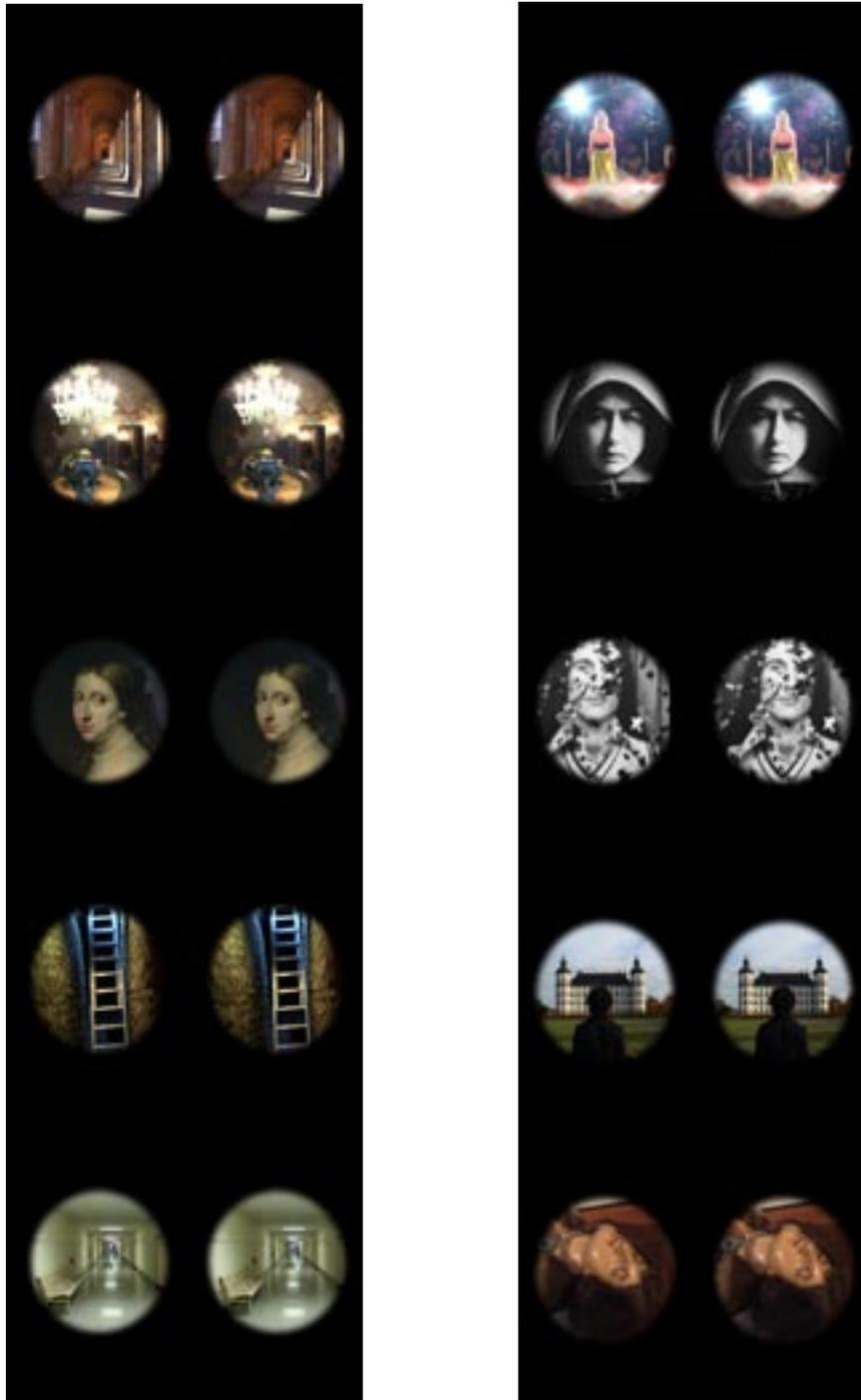




Invite card: ***It has to be this way***, Matt's Gallery 21 January - 15 March 2009

It has to be this way, Matt's Gallery 2009

In 2001 Christine Parkes went missing in Rome. Two years previously she had suffered catastrophic memory loss after a moped accident. Permanent damage to both her short and long term memory rendered her unable to decipher her experiences, as a result of which her life disintegrated around her. In ***It has to be this way***, Lindsay Seers searches for her missing step-sister through their shared archive of photographs and papers. The shortcomings of the archive as a document are exacerbated by Seers' inability to clarify precisely what had transpired between her step-sister and a fateful character known as S, save for indications the pair had been involved in alchemical practices relating to Neoplatonism inspired by Christine's research into the life of Queen Christina of Sweden.



DVD stills from the projection inside the structure

It has to be this way is a work about multiplicity. Voices and places proliferate as the narrative becomes decentred and spreads across time and space; literally, through the installation of the work, but also in its form and content. Differing viewpoints and testimonies shift the fulcrum of interpretation as characters both living and dead act through one another. The work takes us on several journeys by treating history as something that is not fixed but continually reconfigured in the present. There is no clear distinction between personal history and wider historical truths in the work. Following chains of associations and chance encounters, everything seems connected but meaning is never resolved; it exists in flux somewhere between the fragments.





Installation view, Matt's Gallery 2009

The physical structure of the installation is a cardboard and wooden form set on a wooden stage with two three-dimensional 12-pointed stars. This setting evolved from sources relating to both the hermetic arts (cosmology and numerology) and theatre in the Renaissance period. Although the structure relates to The Globe/Swan Shakespearean theatre, its direct influence is from the reconstruction of The Globe in the Borghese Gardens in Rome, rather than the London structure.

Renaissance historian Frances Yates, author of *Theatre of the World*, suggests that Robert Fludd used the Shakespearean theatre as a structure for his esoteric memory system. In ***It has to be this way*** the stories of Christine Parkes and Christina of Sweden are played out in this arena of the memory theatre. But the theatre structure merges with cinema against the blue-coloured backdrop of screen blue – the non-space of film media. The screens of the projection are constituted by two circles forming a binocular. The complete installation is formed of parts that are mutually co-dependent – each element arises in relation to the total work. The book, films and sculptures are not derived from each other but manifest simultaneously, each seeding and repositioning the other.



Installation view, Matt's Gallery 2009



Installation view, Matt's Gallery 2009

The work offers different qualities of voice. In the DVD by M. Anthony Penwill in the gallery reading room (12 minute loop) we are given a perspective on the work's wider conceptual framing, but also local personal experiences of the artist and the gallery. M. Anthony Penwill interviews Michael Newman (Professor of Art Writing, Goldsmiths College, London, Associate Professor in Art History, Institute of Chicago) and Mark Hutchinson (artist and writer). They present their ideas on the themes and approaches informing the work, including memory, photography and theatricality/theatre.



DVD stills from the monitor in the gallery reading room

The structure of the novella, ***It Has To Be This Way*** by M. Anthony Penwill, draws on the archives of both the artist and her sister. The book was written through a process in which a narrative is founded from a selection of photographs; thirty images from the archive of hundreds. The archive from which the photographs were selected contains the sisters' shared research from 1996–1999 on the life of Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689). Inevitably, the archive also reflects the parallel lives of Christine Parkes and Lindsay Seers. M. Anthony Penwill acted as editor for this project and is the author of the resulting publication.



Double page spread from the Novella ***It Has To Be This Way***



Installation view of the monitor embedded in the exterior of the structure



DVD stills from the monitor embedded in the exterior of the structure

Embedded in the exterior wall of the memory theatre structure is another DVD work (13 minute loop) comprised of Christine Parkes' interviews with Swedish academics, which she made in Stockholm, Lund and Kristianstad in 1997. These interviews feature Susanna Åkerman, Marie-Louise Rodén, Eva Nylander and Eva Hættner Aurelius, all of whom have published texts on the subject of Queen Christina. Each of the Swedish scholars struggles to understand Queen Christina's life through texts and objects. Rachel Moore, author of *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* (2000) offers an overview of the material. The resultant DVD reflects Christine's fascination with the representations of Queen Christina in art, film, theatre and historic texts/artefacts.



Installation view of the monitor embedded in the exterior of the structure

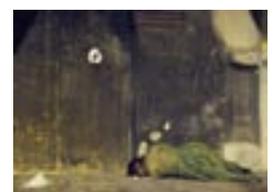


DVD stills from *It has to be this way*



DVD still from *It has to be this way*

The narrative continues: after her accident, Christine Parkes became re-attached to the historical figure of Queen Christina with a different intensity (possibly in the absence of her own identity). Consequently, between 1999 and 2001 she spent her time in search of objects and places associated with Christina. The projection inside the structure (24 minute loop) is pared down to a single point of view: the internal monologue of S. When Christine's materials were recovered from Finland, there were writings that appeared to have been authored by S amongst her papers. Christine could potentially have written these texts, although this is unlikely as they are not in her hand. Lindsay Seers worked with Frederick T. Lindberg to improvise the film's narrative using the writings of S.





Build of the wooden structure before the application of cardboard



3D model of the main structure

