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# TOPOPHILIA

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## ILLUSTRATED RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Claire Sargent  
May 2021.

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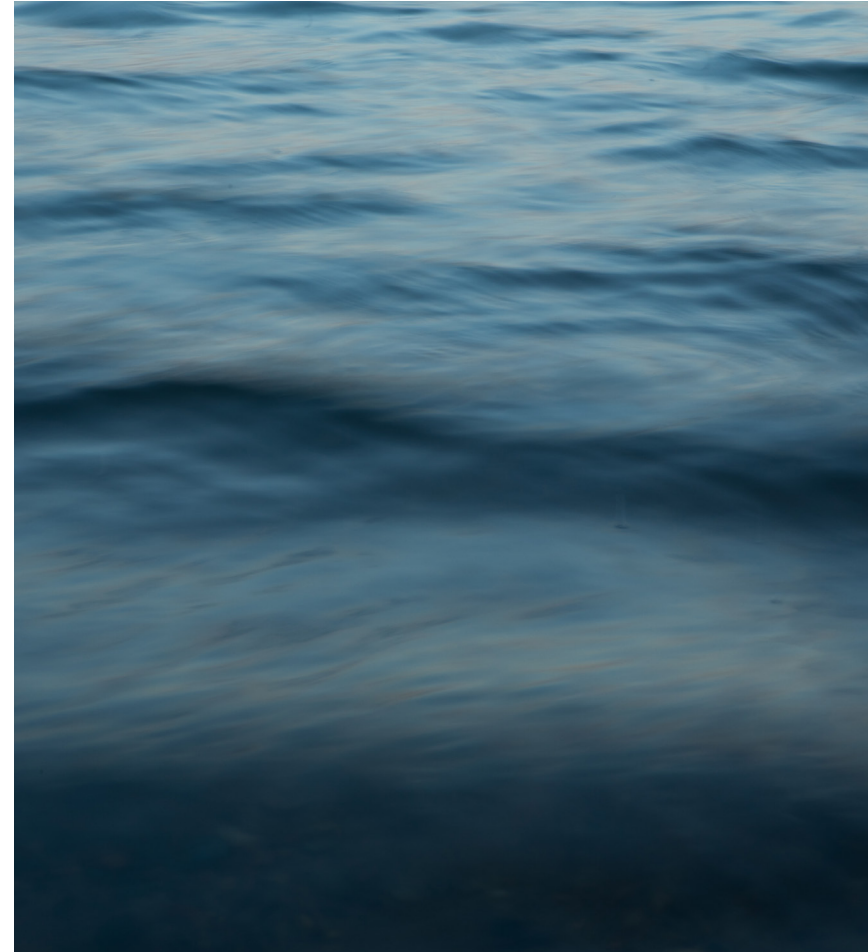
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# TOPOPHILIA:

FROM GREEK  
TOPOS 'PLACE'  
AND PHILIA  
'LOVE OF'

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HUMAN LOVE  
OF PLACE



(Front cover) and (above). SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.

# WHY EXPLORE HUMAN LOVE OF PLACE?

**SOCIAL CONNECTION IS A CORE HUMAN NEED BUT PLACES MAKE US WHO WE ARE; ON AN EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL LEVEL.**

A relatively new term, the poet W H Auden is thought to be one of the first to coin the phrase 'topophilia' in 1948 when he described how people experience a strong sense of place, often involving their identity and an underlying sense of belonging.

As soon as we understand how wide reaching topophilia is, its importance becomes clear.

My own relationship with place has had a profound impact on my life. The stories we tell about places often say as much about who we are, as about where our feet are firmly planted.

**“There are places where we feel calm or provide us with space to think; places we feel a deep pull towards or that have a physical effect on us... places where we feel ‘at home’ or that make us feel complete; places to restore us or inspire us.”**

**National Trust ‘Places that make us’ Report**

# OBJECTIVES

To **explore**:

- **What do places really mean to people?**
- **Why do we have deep visceral connections to places?**

Research carried out by the University of Surrey, commissioned by the National Trust concludes there are three main reasons why we have deep connections to places:

## **1. Connections to our formative years**

First memories, strong sense of belonging and identity as well as self-discovery.

## **2. Connections to significant others**

Family, friends, loved ones; places which have helped us learn about each other, our relationship, or ourselves.

## **3. Places for the here and now**

Often close to home, frequently visited, offers escapism or appreciation for nature.

But how deep do these feelings go?

I'll seek out people in my community and further afield to **collaborate** with – those who can resonate with the theme of topophilia and who have a deep visceral connection to a place, as well as working with possible **partners** such as the National Trust, who I have existing connections with.

I'll be using this project to **experiment** and drive my creativity forward by using different image making processes, materials and mediums.





# HOW WILL MY PRACTICE EXPLORE THESE QUESTIONS?

A series of micro-projects (currently given working titles) will enable me to fully investigate the key questions above, while aligning to my studies for the next three modules (as shown in the project plan).

## The 'what':

- **People and place** - what do places really mean to people? The stories behind the connections.
- **Psychogeography** - the wandering 'flâneuse'.

## The 'why':

- **The pull of place** - research shows that key areas of emotional processing in the brain are activated by a place deemed to be special by someone, supporting the feelings of a deep visceral connection.
- **Home** - calling both Australia and the UK home, I'll be interrogating my own sense of identity and belonging.

There will be cross-over between the projects once they are further developed but each will have its own look and feel.



# PEOPLE AND PLACE

## Work in progress

I've identified some local people as a test for how this project might work. I'm in the process of responding (through my work) to some of the places they have a deep connection to before meeting them. My plan is to start local but then travel further afield in the UK to feature places I don't know.



SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.



## Visual strategies and methods

The local 'test' places are well known to me so I'll experiment with different methods to push myself creatively, finding ways to illustrate the personal stories of these people and challenging notions of the 'picturesque' in the process.

Exploring ideas around dynamic coastlines, quick, or violent tides, riverbeds, reeds, and time; I'll use flash and moonlight to expose light sensitive materials - something that intrigued me in a talk by London Alt Photo group recently. I'm also inspired by Stephen Gill's images (see inspirations).

SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.







SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.

# PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

## Work in progress

Using my local postcode as a starting point, I'll be exploring villages, embracing my inner 'flâneuse' and the concepts of psychogeography - wandering and looking for visual connections that can be made between the various places.

**"A branch railroad is as valuable as a Roman wall....a neo-Tudor teashop as interesting as a Gothic Cathedral."**

**AUDEN, W H. 1948.**



SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.







### Visual strategies and methods

I'll develop a type of window metaphor – a 'window of time' which will be consistent across all the images. 'Golden hour' is typically embraced by photographers due to the warmth of light at the day's end. I'll be shooting on a medium format film camera in order to slow down the process - much like the tempo of life in some of these villages – in contrast to the fast-paced street photography often associated with psychogeography and walking in cities.



# THE PULL OF PLACE

## Work in progress

I'm researching people who have identified feelings of topophilia. The House Manger at National Trust property 575 Wandsworth Road in London has [previously documented](#) such experiences and is keen to be involved in the project.

I'll be researching more subjects like this, including volunteers at conservation and heritage sites.



SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.





(L-R) SARGENT, 2021.



## Visual strategies and methods

While completing the 'Sustainable Strategies' module, I am planning to experiment with layering of images, possibly using multiple exposures. I'll be experimenting with concepts of deep connections in a conceptual way, working with both the subject and the place they have chosen.

I'll be interviewing the National Trust House Manager about her experience of topophilia and connection to the property before progressing.

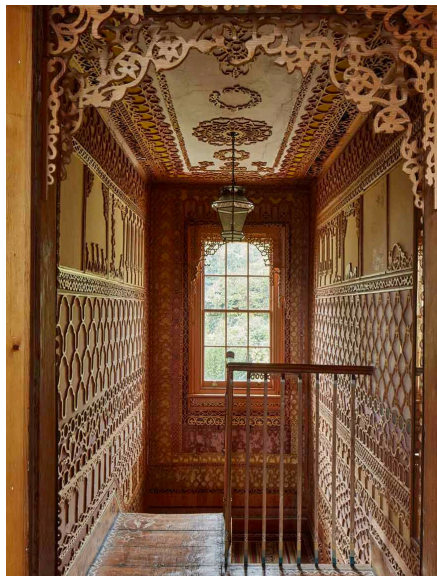


Fig 1. National Trust Images / David Clarke. Interior of 575 Wandsworth Road, London.

# HOME

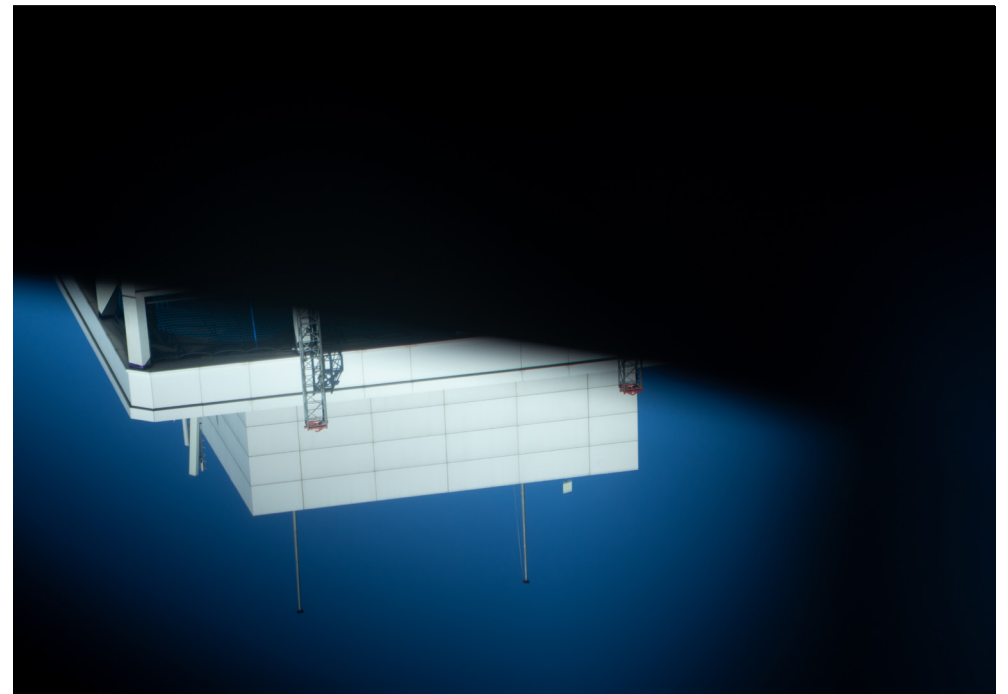
## Work in progress

### Room 2108.

Returning to Sydney recently for a short time has given me a unique insight into ideas about home.

To complete Covid quarantine requirements, I stayed in a hotel room under the control of NSW Police for 14 days.

A window but no fresh air; a view of Sydney but unable to step outside the room. Arriving 'home' like never before.







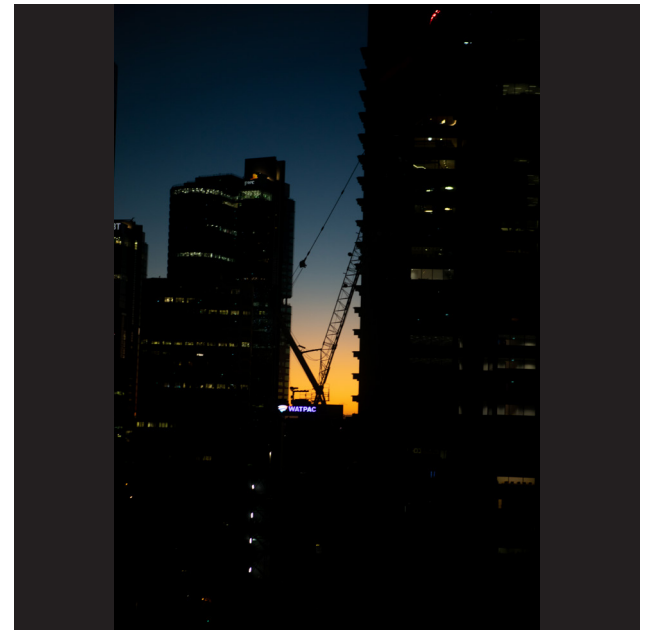
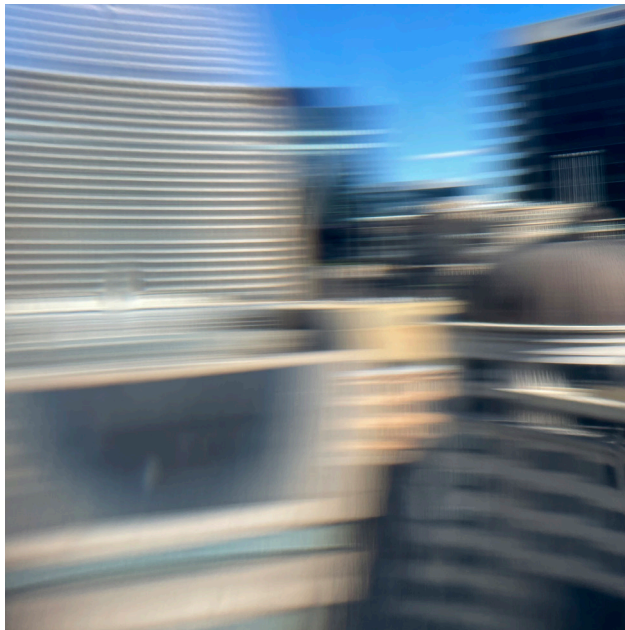
SARGENT, 2021. Untitled. From 'Room 2108'.

### Visual strategies and methods

I've captured writings, images and videos using various techniques and methods to illustrate the full quarantine experience and range of emotions over the 14 days.

While completing the 'Sustainable Strategies' module I'll be investigating how to produce the 'Room 2108' work - possibly looking at zines or interactive booklets which I'd like to share with future occupants of Room 2108 or other quarantine hotels.

As part of this project I'll also be utilising my family archive of photographs and moving images of family holidays which have had a profound impact on me from a very young age.



SARGENT, 2021. Untitled. From 'Room 2108'.

# AUDIENCE

Place and our connection to it is a theme which knows no limits of age or birthplace, time or geography. I want to **communicate** and **share** my work with a wide audience wherever possible. While my images will be experimental and show well known landscapes in a different way, I want to encourage debate around the foundation questions of this project and help celebrate our love of place.

Study modules 'Sustainable Strategies' and 'Collaboration and Professional Locations' will help inform the best strategies for the production, dissemination and consumption of my work as well as how to collaborate effectively and identify appropriate audiences for my work.

**"Places we have the deepest connections to are somehow a reflection of who we are."**

TUAN, Yi Fu. 1990.

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SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.



# INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATION



Fig 2. LAX, Maria. 2020. From 'Some Kind of Heavenly Fire'.

My toponymia research has revealed key people who have written about this topic:

**Yi Fu Tuan**  
**W H Auden**  
**Gaston Bachelard**

And the National Trust commissioned research from the University of Surrey on toponymia.

To help place the projects within identifiable areas of contemporary photography, I have been researching:

**Stephen Gill**  
**Alec Soth**  
**Lucas Foglia**  
**Nadav Kander**  
**Dominika Gesicka**  
**Maria Lax**

There are many other critical thinkers (such as Liz Wells and Lauren Elkin), and photographers I have been looking into as broader research for this project – these can be found online in my [CRJ](#).

# INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATION



Fig 3. GILL, Stephen. 2014. From 'Talking to Ants'.



Fig 4. SOTH, Alec. 2007. S. Alabama. USA.



Fig 5. GESICKA, Dominika. 2020. From 'This is Not Real Life'.

## STEPHEN GILL, ALEC SOTH AND DOMINIKA GESICKA

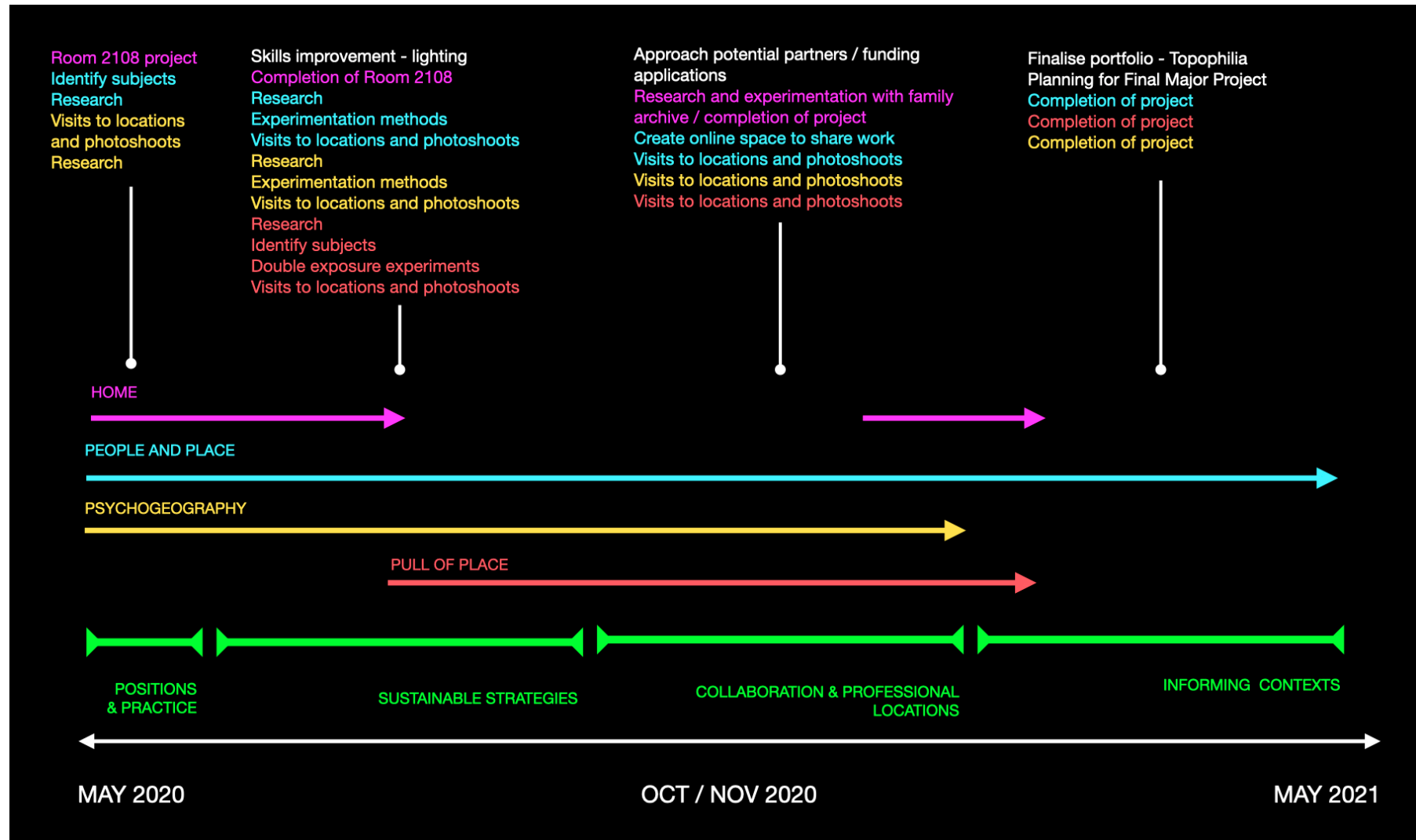
These photographers have each captured elements of topophilia which interest me.

Gill's series 'Talking to Ants' resulted in him finding different ways to photograph his familiar environment of Hackney; one of many challenges I'll be exploring.

Soth's 'Broken Manual' explores those who wish to escape their lives and civilisation. The production of the final 'manual' is an intriguing way to present this work as an underground instruction manual to disappear.

Gesicka's haunting and beautiful series 'This is Not Real Life' is a fascinating look at the world's northernmost city - a place where people come for weeks and stay for years. Like Maria Lax's recent work, her use of lighting, colour and unsettlingly stunning images make me want to know more.

# PROJECT PLAN



# COSTS AND RESOURCES

## **Film, processing and scanning**

35mm (20 rolls) approximately

**£400**

120 (20 rolls) approximately

**£400**

Costs may be reduced depending on new/ expired film.

## **Printing**

Costs are not yet known, approximate budget

**£500**

## **Lighting and flash course**

Costs are not yet known, approximate budget

**£300**

## **Lighting equipment**

Lights can be loaned free of charge /  
much reduced rates

**£100**

## **Travel**

The minimum I expect to drive is 320 miles

**£100**

Trains to London (minimum 4 trips)

**£180**

## **Photographer's time**

Budget minimum 10 hours/week for 12 months

**21 days**





# COLLABORATIONS



SARGENT, 2021. Untitled.

Working collaboratively with subjects, the project will ultimately seek to answer the objectives, or foundation questions.

I'll be looking to partner with organisations wherever possible which align with this project, including:

- **Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO) e.g. The Suffolk Coast**
- **RSPB, Wildlife Trust, National Trust, English Heritage**
- **Local councils**
- **Other partners to be identified, such as Arts Council initiatives and associated organisations**

I'll be embracing digital methods of sharing my work and will be exploring the best methods for the production, dissemination and consumption of my work over the next year.

My studies during the modules 'Sustainable Strategies' and 'Collaboration and Professional Locations' will help to formulate and develop my plans as the project progresses.



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- Fig 1. National Trust Images / David Clarke. Interior of 575 Wandsworth Road, London.  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/575-wandsworth-road>
- Fig 2. LAX, Maria. 2020. From 'Some Kind of Heavenly Fire'.  
<https://www.1854.photography/2020/02/female-in-focus-maria-lax-probes-fact-fiction-and-family-history-in-northern-finland/>
- Fig 3. GILL, Stephen. 2014. From 'Talking to Ants'.  
<http://www.stephengill.co.uk/portfolio/portfolio/nggallery/album-1-2/talking-to-ants>
- Fig 4. SOTH, Alec. 2007. S. Alabama. USA.  
<https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/broken-manual-alec-soth-aaron-schuman/>
- Fig 5. GESICKA, Dominika. 2020. From 'This is Not Real Life'.  
<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/dominika-gesicka-this-is-not-real-life>

## GLOSSARY

**Flâneuse:** noun, from the French. Feminine form of 'flâneur', an idler, a dawdling observer, usually found in cities.  
ELKIN, Lauren. 2016.





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SARGENT, 2021. From 'Room 2108'.

# APPENDIX

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## Impact Assessment Plan

I'll continue to constantly review the impact of this project, considering the following:

- What is the environmental and ecological impact of my practice?
- What will be the physical legacy of my practice?
- What values or messages does my practice communicate?

### The project narrative

While my photographic practice does not relate directly to factors that contribute to the climate and ecological emergency, through the content of this project and overall theme of 'topophilia' there are opportunities to support and possibly play a part in promoting these factors.

The project can communicate the importance of special places and therefore the need to protect and conserve them.

### Resources and materials

The impact of my photographic practice will be considered from an environmental and ecological perspective when planning resources and materials for this project. To contribute to this, the following equipment has all been purchased as used equipment:

1 x DSLR	1 x Tripod
3 x Lenses	1 x Light stand
1 x Medium format film camera	1 x Soft box
1 x 35mm film camera	Rechargeable batteries
2 x Flash guns and gels	1 x Flash light meter

While film will be used in order to provide experimental opportunities, expired film will be used wherever possible and from suppliers who contribute to good ethical and environmental practices. As part of the project I am keen to improve my lighting skills and I plan to loan any additional lighting equipment needed from a local video and film company, with ISO 14001 certification, rather than purchase new equipment.

### **Transport and accommodation**

Travel will be required for the project but for local travel in Suffolk I'll be utilising existing trips for photoshoots wherever possible in order to reduce my carbon footprint. For places within a 10km radius from my home I'll be cycling to recces and for any shoots where minimal equipment is needed and the weather is good. I'll also be using public transport where possible for any locations further afield, depending on equipment needed.

My car has good fuel economy (6.5L/100km) but I will be considering the most environmentally friendly solutions for every trip - even if local.

### **Suppliers and partners**

Where possible, environmentally friendly suppliers will be used. I don't have a photographic studio but a home office which uses eco-friendly products where possible such as energy-saving monitors and used equipment. Suppliers include:

- Octopus energy (super green tariff, 100% renewable electricity and carbon offset gas).
- Anglia Water (Love Every Drop manifesto).

I'll be creating minimal printing and will investigate digital methods to share my work. I'm actively looking to partner or collaborate with organisations for this project I'll be seeking out organisations whose ethical and environmental practices are in line with these values, e.g. National Trust, RSPB, Wildlife Trust.

### **Carbon budget**

Using the information included in this proposal, I have estimated travelling a minimum of 500km by car over the next year for photoshoots. [MyClimate](#) carbon calculator indicates this equates to 0.139t CO<sub>2</sub>. I'll be using tools such as this to record and keep track of my activities as the project progresses.

My visit to Australia in April/May 2020 was not done as part of this project.

# APPENDIX

## Photography Risk Assessment form

**FALMOUTH**  
UNIVERSITY

Please read the Risk Assessment Guidelines before completing this form which contains further resources, available from [The Photography Centre](#).

- Please save a copy of this form to your computer
- You will need to attach a risk assessment form to your Research Project Proposal and your Final Major Project Proposal.

<b>Photographer's Name:</b>	Claire Sargent	<b>Date(s) of Shoot:</b>	April 2020 – May 2021
<b>Assistants' Names:</b>			
<b>Module Leader:</b>	Jesse Alexander		
<b>Location:</b>	Various locations on Suffolk coast, London, Sydney and other UK locations TBC		
<b>Description of work:</b>	Photographing series of micro-projects for 'Topophilia' project being produced over the next year.		

### Persons at Risk

Identify all those at risk

Technical Staff:	Academic Staff:	Students:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Admin Staff:		Canteen Staff:	
Contractors:	General Public:	Visitors:		Estates Staff:		Library Staff:	
Cleaning Staff:	Emergency Personnel:						

Other:	Anyone travelling with me to locations (where relevant)	Especially at risk:	
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Check list				
Equipment	Flash	Stands/tripods		
Location	Transport to location	Parking	Vehicles/traffic	Weather conditions
Tides	Water			


PRIMARY RISK ASSESSMENT			
Example			
<b>HAZARD</b>	What kind of hazards are there at the site or in your task? <i>i.e. Light stand</i>	<b>RISK OF</b>	What risks do those hazards create? <i>i.e. Light stand falling over</i>
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	How are you going to minimise the risk associated with the hazards you've identified? <i>i.e. weigh down light stand with sandbags</i>		

Please continue your risk assessment, adding additional pages as necessary.

<b>HAZARD</b>	Tides and working near water	<b>RISK OF</b>	Slipping over on mud or getting stuck in mud Caught in fast moving tides or currents if fall into water Equipment falling into water Entry or exit point of photo shoot location being cut off or impacted by the tide
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	Appropriate clothing and footwear to be worn at all times. Recce to coastal locations to be completed ahead of shoots. Awareness of tide times in advance of planning shoots and any adverse weather conditions. Ensure emergency numbers known for coastal emergency crews such as RNLI as well as emergency procedure (see below 'emergency information and procedures'). Limit the need to walk on mud when tide is out – if it must be done follow procedures to ensure safety such as do not work alone, stay close to the river bank and wear appropriate footwear and clothing. If working alone, ensure someone knows my location and shoot days/times. All equipment in use is appropriately secured e.g. attached to tripod, or weighed down with sandbag. Equipment not in use is secured in bags or cases away from the water's edge. Only waterproof camera equipment is to be used in or on the water.		
<b>HAZARD</b>	Working in heritage environment	<b>RISK OF</b>	Risks associated with working in heritage environments, e.g. National Trust properties
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	Photographer will be accompanied at all times by organisation representative and will be given brief induction when entering a property. All equipment being used will be tested. Photographer has previously worked in heritage environments.		
<b>HAZARD</b>	Weather – storms, heavy rainfall, strong winds	<b>RISK OF</b>	Flooding, equipment blown by wind, lightning
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	Review weather forecast when planning shoots and before travelling to shoots – do not photograph during times of potentially hazardous weather. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for weather conditions. Make plans to leave location promptly and safely if unexpected weather hits.		
<b>HAZARD</b>	Personal safety – especially in rural locations alone	<b>RISK OF</b>	Female in remote locations alone comes with potential risk to personal safety Possible theft of equipment
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	Follow usual personal safety procedures involved with being female – no matter where or what time of day/night. Wherever possible do not travel alone at night to remote / secluded locations. Always let someone know where I am working and when - organise a 'check in' and 'out' with them. Be aware of surroundings to limit risk where possible (e.g. take torch to light paths, park the car as safely as possible) Ensure equipment insurance is up to date.		

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<b>HAZARD</b>	Travel to locations / vehicles / traffic	<b>RISK OF</b>	Car accidents, cycling accidents, car breakdowns, car or bike theft
<b>CONTROL MEASURE</b>	Follow procedures relating to car use such as up to date MOT, road tax, serviced, basic maintenance checks of oil and coolant, sufficient petrol. If cycling, ensure bike is well maintained and follow usual procedure for cycling such as wearing appropriate, visible clothing, bike lights. Ensure travel route to location is known before setting off. Leave plenty of time to travel to location.		

<b>On site risk assessment: these are control measures that arose on your shoot</b>	
<b>Emergency Information and Procedures</b>	
<b>Phone</b>	Charged mobile phone with full signal / Nearest Payphone / Landline
<b>Medical Expertise</b>	Ensure documented emergency numbers and locations of nearby hospitals and medical facilities while on shoots
<b>Emergency Procedure</b>	In the event of an emergency dial 999 or 112 ensure that you or someone with you can accurately describe where you are (ideally nearest postcode)
<b>Medical Treatment</b>	Ipswich Hospital, open 24/7
<b>Evacuation procedures</b>	
<b>Incident/accident reporting</b>	All incidents or accidents should be reported to tutor at Falmouth University

Assessment carried out by	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have ensured that I have reviewed the hazards and risks associated with this project and taken necessary steps to remove hazards where possible or reduced the risks associated with the remaining hazards to a minimum.</li> <li>I have recorded the main hazards, risks and control measures in this document.</li> <li>I have ensured that those working with me have been briefed on the nature of the tasks they are to perform, and are aware of the hazards associated with the task and the measures in place to reduce the risks associated with those hazards. (if applicable)</li> <li>I will continually assess hazards and risks 'live' on site to ensure that nothing has been overlooked or has changed since initial assessment.</li> </ul>	
Signed:  	Date: 4 May 2021
Assessment reviewed by	

## Risk Assessment Form