

ABSTRACT

How the light enters: Visualising absence and continuity
in the Jacmelian ruinscape

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This practice based research dissertation examines the poetry of place in the 2010 post-earthquake Jacmelian ruinscape in Haiti. I respond to a body of rubble-art produced by Jacmelian artist Anderson Ambroise who used found rubble to memorialise as well as to figure the fragmentation of his hometown. I explore, through the process of drawing on-location, the context out of which these works emerged. The thesis focuses on the concept of ruinscape within theories of trauma and representation to illustrate the ways ruinscape are re-lived in the ordinary daily activities of life, and the ways survivors house the silences of trauma. This thesis departs from the position that life in the wake of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti was not unique, as what occurred is emblematic of what has happened in other previous sites of disaster around the world. I created drawings from the position of a secondary witness by employing various unconventional visual languages in order for them to enter into the “mystery of trauma” of another (Felman 13). If the lived ruinscape, as the thesis argues, is a place of absence and continuity, the visual technologies of graphite and vellum, and light and shadow, evoke as well as capture the loss of life and habitation, as well as the ubiquitous presence of that loss within the extant ruinscape.

Keywords: Kwynn Johnson; Anderson Ambroise; Jacmel; Haiti; rubble-art, ruinscape, trauma and visuality, disaster in place, visual arts.