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<http://wherespeter.otdac.org/>

**Opening Times: The invitation for this commission came when you were finishing a large body of work on architect Horace Gifford, how did this affect the work?**

**Richard Healy:** Yes it was weird timing. I had just finished making a film 'The Pines' about Gifford in addition to these sexualised glass drinks pitchers. The project had become really involved so your invitation to make a piece for Opening Times was kind of unfortunate timing as I was only really getting my head around a new subject.

**OT: The British composer Benjamin Britten.**

RH - Yes, Benjamin Britten, in particular his relationship with the tenor Peter Pears and their house in Aldeburgh - The Red House. I was really still feeling my way around this new narrative, however there seemed to be a really interesting opportunity to create something that introduced these new subjects and utilised the qualities of Opening Times. I was really drawn to the informal nature of the online platform and liked the idea that this piece could perform as an introduction or a trailer to this larger body of work on Britten and Pears.

**OT: How do you view this project? As a body? As an on-going research driven work? How do you see it developing?**

This piece can be displayed within a larger body of work or on its own. There is a definite structure to the way the video has been organised, but it also feels like a sketch or provisional plan. The work exists online and shares the same space of my practice of using the internet as a research platform, collecting imagery and saving information. The video is almost a choreographed expansion of how I research and use the computer.

Working with video in this direct way, producing footage, editing, over-laying etc. felt like the most straightforward way to start unpicking the subject of Peter Pears - Britten's wayward lover and muse. It was also a way to draw Charlie Porter into the discussion, as he was the person who introduced me to their story. However there is precedence in my practise for this way of working... I am thinking of an on-going series of e-zines that I publish digitally

called 'Make it work for you'. I think of these as manuals for current working ideas and studio strategies - WHERE'S PETER? occupies a similar space.

**OT: With that in mind, does this video work in the same way if presented or viewed outside of a website, in a screening or in a gallery space?**

**RH:** When working on WHERE'S PETER? I was definitely considering the site of Opening Times, looking at the computer desktop and the informality of that location. That said, I think that WHERE'S PETER? could work in an exhibition space. As I mentioned the video works as a provisional introduction to a larger body of work. I am going to make an edition of wool jumpers, plus these glass and rope sculptures. It would be interesting to place WHERE'S PETER? in this context. I still think the intimacy of the 'online' space is important.

All these works, this video, exploring the Red House, jumpers, sculpture - all appear in parallel. There isn't a hierarchy, rather a democracy of form. However, because of it's digital nature there is no reason why WHERE'S PETER could not be reworked, expanded and reissued as this body of work grows. I feel like that about a lot of my work, that is could be amended and redistributed. That idea definitely comes out of working within a digital sphere.

**OT: I guess there is this relation with public and private that you're talking about with the video. Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears were in a class where they could afford to be private about their sexuality, then you have people like Horace Gifford who want to open that space up. Then you have the internet where public and private gets blurred and indistinct - like your desktop for instance. Seeing your desktop is sort of a very intimate and private thing. Like showing someone the things you've left thrown around your bedroom and study.**

**RH:** The shift between the private and the public sphere is certainly there. However there is something that always draws me to the idea of provision - whether that be in an architectural model, a trailer or a private unresolved thought.

I was thinking a lot about how Romanticism fits into digital art. For me the most potent image of the piece is Benjamin Britten walking along the beach front. It is unashamedly romantic and it is that romanticism that drove all of Britten's work. Pears was a world class tenor and travelled most of his life. He was also Britten's muse and his wayward lover. There is a large controversy as to whether Britten contracted Syphilis from Pears. Britten died from heart failure brought on by Syphilis.

**OT: Going back to architecture and thinking about this in relation to your idea of provisionality and sketch, what's your interest in these two things?**

**RH:** I am interested in how people can design the world around them. How design can reflect directly on a way of living. That is what drew me to Horace Gifford's beach houses of the 1970s. They were designed by a gay man for gay men. They reflected an emboldened social presence that these men were enjoying post-Stonewall, pre-AIDS. It was a sexual utopia. Gifford's architecture was about groups in public. This stands in opposition to The Red House, which was the Aldeburgh home of Britten and Pears. This was about creating a private space. These differences could be explained by the advancement of gay liberation, but it is also about class. As Charlie Porter discusses, there is a strata of upper class, gay men that could design their own liberation because of their class. It was a gay culture that existed prior to the gay rights movement of the 1960's, hidden behind architecture - an unseen utopia.

**OT: Where *is* Peter?**

**RH:** Not in Aldeburgh.