



# Exhibitions

## Trace – Jon England

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 – 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Musgrove Park Hospital is currently undergoing one of the most significant evolutions in its 80-year history as large tranches of the 'Old Building' make way for a new Surgical Centre, due to open in 2024. The works exhibited in 'Trace' represent the first phase of research and development in a longer-term commission, mirroring the redevelopment of the site.



Originating as the United States 67<sup>th</sup> General Hospital during World War Two, the site was taken over at 0001 Hours on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1942 in anticipation of the evacuation of casualties from what came to be known as the D-Day landings. At that time, many of the buildings, now about to be removed, were in the final stages of their construction.

The original cohort of staff, under Unit Director Lieutenant Colonel Roland Moore, consisted of over fifty Medical Officers and one hundred Nurses of the 67<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Portland, Maine, alongside approximately five hundred enlisted men, mainly from Texas and Oklahoma. After training at Fort Bliss, Texas, they travelled in zigzag pattern across the Atlantic on the RMS Queen Elizabeth, landing at Gourock, on the River Clyde, Scotland, on 29 Nov 1942, five days after departing New York.

Then as now, the buildings are a receptacle where most momentous events in 'our' history and so many individual lives have played out. Entrusted with the almost impossible task of encapsulating their legacy

and what it means to those who have passed through them, Jon has sought to explore the space where significant events and the most intense personal moments meet with a collective sense of the whole.

As the hospital goes through its daily rituals of cleansing and ablutions, seeking to remove all ‘traces’ of activity, Jon aims to investigate the points where a cumulative ‘document’ of actions becomes visible – where almost imperceptible traces of use form a ‘portrait’, inscribed within object, artefact, and the fabric of the buildings themselves.

Door protector plates record the meeting of human, object, and infrastructure; deep furrows etched by the daily circulation of cages and trolleys combined with the urgent energy of beds and chairs, or the more irregular ‘mark-making’ of a newly acquired crutch, cast or boot. The marks that we leave behind, as we ourselves are ‘marked’.

Whilst the original kitchens were demolished in 2021 and are temporarily relocated, the production of literally millions of meals has ‘etched’ catering trays with an accumulated ‘archive’ of endeavour. The cleansing and storing of bed linen forms part of a daily regimen, whilst the well-worn buckle of a historic stretcher points to the repetitive act of opening, closing, and fastening and the potentially significant repercussions of the actions that took place in-between.

As Sidney Smith has written in his comprehensive book, ‘A History of Musgrove Military Hospital During World War II and The 67<sup>th</sup> General Hospital’\* – a significant resource in researching for the project – “History continues as the residue of life”.

\*Smith, S. (2010), ‘A History of Musgrove Military Hospital During World War II and The 67<sup>th</sup> General Hospital’. California: Rocket Publishing Company Limited.

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