

**Matthew Varey - *Thoughts on the Bunker Series, 2011***

The bunkers are totems of apology, of remembrance. To evolve now will necessitate a conscious confrontation of errors, apologies for actions taken, a willingness to stand before the wounded and the dead.

The dividing line on which the bunkers sit is the edge over which explorers did not plummet – a nod to our chronic certainty and the inability to understand that those things we are most certain about – the world is flat, the sun revolves around the earth – are the origins of our hubris.

There is a modern evolution from the trench of 1916 to the bunker of 1943 to the condominium tower of 2011, a meandering ascension of a reversed Babel where we are slowly forcing ourselves to speak exactly the same language. In a world that is increasingly threatening, it is perhaps our way to keep an eye on each other – an expression of our unconscious desire for a functional society despite our knowledge of a history of disappointment of interaction. These are powerful graphic statements of a human ability to occasionally contain chaos. For a short time here we have driven away the extraneous and dealt with the essential.

A bunker cannot disappoint – it is what we bring to it and so it is a mirror of our selves - so too a concrete encased condominium, as revealed by the enormous energies poured into decorating and home improvement evident in magazines and on television. World War One, World War Two and the great condo boom of the early 2000's are significant waves of change that have forever altered how people consider their home, how they comprise their home, and how they parent and define their lives. I feel lost next to these places – there is an honest functionality that I admire. It is assumed that for this purpose these are the best things we can build – true expressions of our limits as beings. Yet the melancholy of failed defences of the past reminds me of potential outcomes.

For me, the bunker is the safest possible environment. I have tracked down bunkers in many countries in Europe, including Greece where I lived for a time, and have always had the same reaction when I am inside. Beyond the obvious connections to safety, there is a link for me to home in its purest conceptual sense, and so I see the progression to condominium as quite natural. There is stillness and coolness and a silence that is absolute peace, despite the war related connotations.

The preciousness of fine fired clays and the clumsy psychological weight of the shapes of the bunker pieces in grating disharmony that when observed as a new whole in their stacked-ness, become somehow terrifyingly banal and elegant, fitting into our culture's belief system of what is acceptable in terms of form. But these should not be acceptable; they are in a more literal reading the towers at the gates of hell, the hell of our ability to do barbaric and terrifying things to each other. These are bastions of defence against a retaliation that has been justified by the actions of those who constructed them in the first place, a call and return game like Marco Polo in the pool with children, in the way they attacked then established lines of defence when retreat was inevitable.

The walls are crucial to the understanding- the walls of a home – what is inside, what is outside, the shape, the impregnability or the 'pregnability', the density and quality or lack of quality. It is all about the walls.