



---

*In their own words:*  
**Samuel Fordham**

---



“  
*The videos are from my life, the final  
image is from my mind.*”

***Photography was everything I wanted art to be -***

beautiful, ambiguous, political, historical, contemporary and accessible. It wouldn't take a month to paint a canvas, I could fill it in 125th of a second. That was incredibly exciting.

***It's a very personal piece***

I was going through the process of getting my wife settled status. It occurred to me that if she was deported, our whole relationship would play out through the illusion of the image. This work addresses my mental state, constantly returning to videos of my wife and daughter in the vain hope of feeling closer to them, but ultimately feeling dissatisfied emotionally and physically.

***I wanted to bring the voices of others into the work***

I made this as part of my long-term project that weaves narratives from other families who have had a family member deported.

I use photographs, documents and testimonies.

---

Image: 'I just want to know my daughter better' 2018

C-type photograph on paper on aluminium

© Samuel Fordham

“

***I'm blurring the line between truth and fiction*** ”

***All the titles use verbatim [quoting word for word]***

This title comes from an applicant who has been deported and cannot see his daughter anymore. By combining our stories, I'm blurring the line between truth and fiction. The words echo around your head as you view the work.

***I saw it in my mind and knew immediately I had to make it***

This piece is constructed of three laptops facing the viewer. I photographed it with a large format camera on an exposure of thirty minutes. The screens we can see are playing recordings of my video call conversations with my wife and daughter, though we as an audience are presented with the artifice, and not the videos themselves.

***It has a heightened sense of theatricality***

The long exposure means the camera has seen all of the videos. It felt apt to communicate the cold and silent hand of technology through the camera.

***I hope that conversations around migration and forced deportation will take place as a result of seeing the work***

- or at least, a greater understanding of the prevalence of living through the screen, and what that means for familial life. It's amazing that my work could be displayed in Number 10!

***Dan Holdsworth blew my mind***

Discovering his work was a defining moment in understanding how you could communicate time through the still image.

Holdsworth creates something other-worldly out of a car park - it's so theatrical, with the acid light and melting yellow sky.

Without even thinking about it, I'm doing something similar in this work, taking a very ordinary scene and, through photographic processes, heightening it into something else.



‘Untitled (A Machine for Living),’ C-type photograph on aluminium, 2000 by Dan Holdsworth

© Dan Holdsworth

# What now?

## “**VERBATIM**”: ~~ERASURE~~

**Fordham uses both verbatim and erasure in his work.**

**Verbatim:** to quote someone exactly without changing anything.

**Erasure:** the removal of writing, recorded material, or data.

Although originally used to control what we read and how we are heard, both practices have been subverted by artists to promote freedom of speech and radical creativity.

## **VERBATIM**

Verbatim gives voice to people who would not normally have a platform.

The subjects speak naturally, so their dialogue includes all the ums, pauses, slang, regionalisms, repeated words, and other speech mannerisms that happen in conversation.

## **Honour the ums**

### **Interview a subject on a particular topic**

**Choose a topic:** what do you care about?

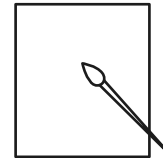
**Find your interviewee:** a real person speaking in their real voice (who consents to being interviewed).

**Record the responses:** the interview must be recorded so that you can transcribe the text exactly.

**Transcribe:** write out the interview and use those words exactly as they are – no changes!

## **Use the words to**

- **Paint on a poster** - look at different graphic styles.
- **Write on a tee shirt** - use yourself to display the words.
- **Make a film** - as a soundtrack, or ask someone to read the transcript while you film them.



## **ERASURE**

Erasure - and also blackout and redaction - are ways to give an existing piece of writing a new set of meanings, questions, or suggestions by removing or obscuring something.

Fordham employs erasure to anonymise documents, and as shorthand to tell us something is official. The long exposure that he uses in his photo bleaches out the content of his personal recordings, leaving just the light.

## Erasure Poetry

Tracey K Smith's 'Declaration' is an example of erasure poetry.

In June 2017, whilst U.S. Poet Laureate, Smith used the American Declaration of Independence from 4 July 1776 to create her poem.

[Here's a transcript of the original document](#)

[Find and listen to Smith reading her poem](#)

Does the poem celebrate, criticise, or subvert the Declaration of Independence?

Do you think this poem speaks only about events in the past, or can you apply the ideas to today?

## Create your own erasure poem/ blackout poem/redacted text

Select an original text to work from.

You might want to use something personal (old school report, email, medical notes, etc)

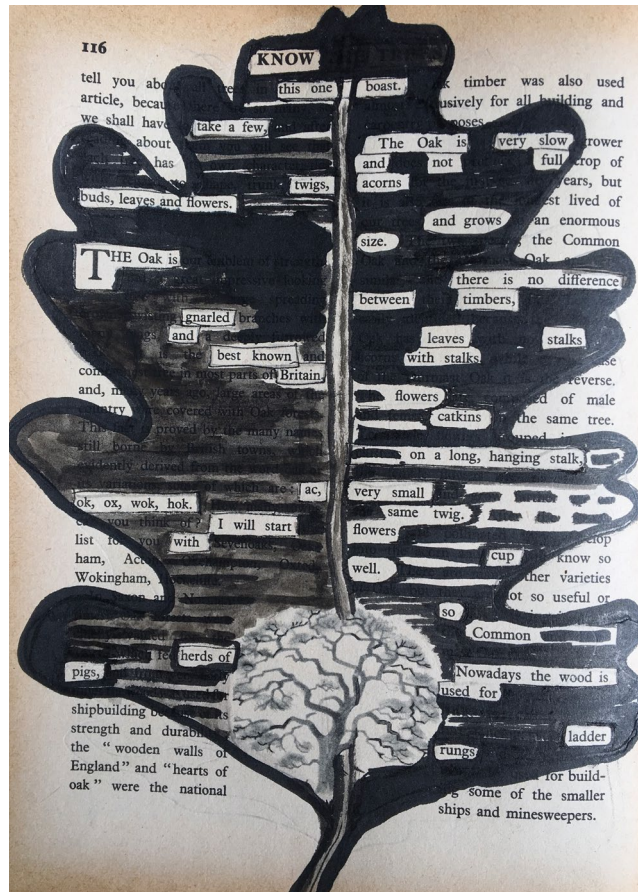
... or something impersonal (newspaper, pages of an old book, instruction manual, etc.)

Ring the words that you want to keep - the possibilities are almost infinite!

Black out [redact] the rest to reveal your selection.

There are different ways to do this - You can type the words you want to keep into a new document.

Or keep the original visible but obscured (for example, by using strikethrough)



Credit: Oak erasure poem by Claire Collison

## What next?

[Refugee Tales](#) - Gathered and communicated experiences of migration, to show the reality of indefinite detention.

[Article explaining Verbatim theatre](#)

The migrant camp near Calais known as the Jungle housed thousands of refugees and hundreds of unaccompanied minors from 2015 until it was bulldozed in late 2016. A verbatim play, written by the founders of a theatre company that sprang up in the camp, is reviewed [here](#).

## Erasure resources

[Steal Like An Artist: TED talk on history of Blackout](#)

[Discover the hidden poems in a page of an old book](#)

[Mary Ruefle](#) is a poet and erasure artist who uses white correction fluid rather than black ink. Here's her book-length erasure poem. [Melody: The Story of a Child](#) © Mary Ruefle

[See Double Press](#) blog showcases a diverse selection of contemporary erasure artists.