Unheimlich

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we are not alone in being alone

Critical Rationale

Unheimlich is a deeply personal project that stems from a subconscious desire to meticulously stage photographic scenes and subsequently position myself into these instinctively. This project explores themes of loneliness, by serving as a therapeutic outlet – allowing myself to work through feelings of isolation, anger and disassociation connected to my individual experiences since moving to London. It developed from the realization of how the challenges and fears I have faced during the past 3 years influenced me as an individual, living in a metropole like London.

Conceptually, each image and its scene relate to the narrative about living in a place that you want to call your home, a place you want to embrace as the place you belong – yet you feel like again and again the roots you are trying to grow become displaced and uprooted. This series abstractly visualizes the situations in which I felt like I didn't fit in – as if the soil I was trying to grow in was unviable.

Unheimlich translates into Uncanny, a feeling first described by Sigmund Freud in his essay *The Uncanny* (Freud, 1919) – where he explores the unsettling feeling of something which at the same time feels both familiar and strange. According to him, this sensation is connected to an individual's childhood defenses to cope with anxiety and fear. My research into this concept and feeling led me to further understand why this project arose from the unconscious desire to step into the image. It was an uncanny way in which a repressed impulse re-emerged, triggered by the loneliness and isolation that I have felt during my time living in London over the past 3 years – even today it continues to influence my artistic practice.

The staged scenes utilize elements from tableau photography – purposefully utilizing lighting, composition, props including myself as the "actor" – in such a way to shape the dramatic effect and feeling of the image. I want to primarily capture the audience's focus through the image and its uncanny (unheimlich) feeling. My images aim to separate the viewer from their surroundings, creating a transfixing effect which stops them from feeling connected. Hereby, creating the urge for them to reflect on their own experience of loneliness. A hybrid visual tableau – taking inspiration from Hannah Starkey and Philip-Lorca diCorcia - this cinematic series, freezes singular moments in time. Yet, they aren't isolated, as they do not stand alone. Following each other, this set of four scenes – during day and nighttime – wishes to create a space that not only showcases my vulnerability but also resonates with others who share similar experiences.

Along with this, the element of sound reinforces the feelings of detachedness. By playing recordings of my stream of consciousness in these situations I further support the feeling out of place. These recordings represent another vulnerable element to the project and are therefore recorded in German, my first language. Leading me to take comfort in the element of safety and protection that this language provides for me.

Within the exhibit of this project, the sound recordings are shared through directional sound speakers – which create a beam of sound, leading to the sound only being audible in one location. The power of creating an "invisible separation" of the audience from their surroundings, is a powerful tool in supporting the isolating message I want to convey with this project.

Accompanying the interplay of image and sound is *The Archive*. By process of cataloguing *The Archive* further supports the staged narrative scenes, by creating a space where objects of importance can exist. These objects serve as proof of the people and things that are dear to me – reminding myself and simultaneously the viewer that by looking around what you have you can realize that the feeling of loneliness is not eternal. The Archive is exhibited as prints within the exhibit and in the form of a ring-bound catalogue. A place for all the images to exist together physically.

These feelings were especially heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst periods of lockdown and social restriction meant "places with younger populations tended to have the highest levels of loneliness" (Payne, 2021) This research confirms that during this time nearly two-thirds of students reported a worsening in in their mental health and well-being. "Over a quarter report feeling lonely often or always, a significantly higher amount than the adult population (8%)." Not only did this massively affect the connections I made, subsequently these hindrances and restrictions, prevented me from connecting, turning into the feeling that it was because of me.

Therefore, *Unheimlich* is more than a collection of images, it is a cinematic exploration of loneliness and solitude. By controlling every part of the photograph, I am taking control of the feelings of dislocation and trying to find comfort in sharing these fears - hereby shaping the view of the audience completely. I want to display what this loneliness looked for me, peering over me like a dark cloud full of cold rain, following me step by step, no matter where I lived or went. It's my visual journey through the emotions and situations connected to life in a vast city like London.

I invite the audience to reflect on their own experience of loneliness. Ultimately, I am taking the first step and would like to share these feelings with the audience, simultaneously wanting to raise awareness that there are many of us going through situations and feelings like these.

Therefore lastly, I want to tell you:

We are not alone in being alone.

Body of Work:



Triptych 1
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass



Triptych 2
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass



Triptych 3
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass



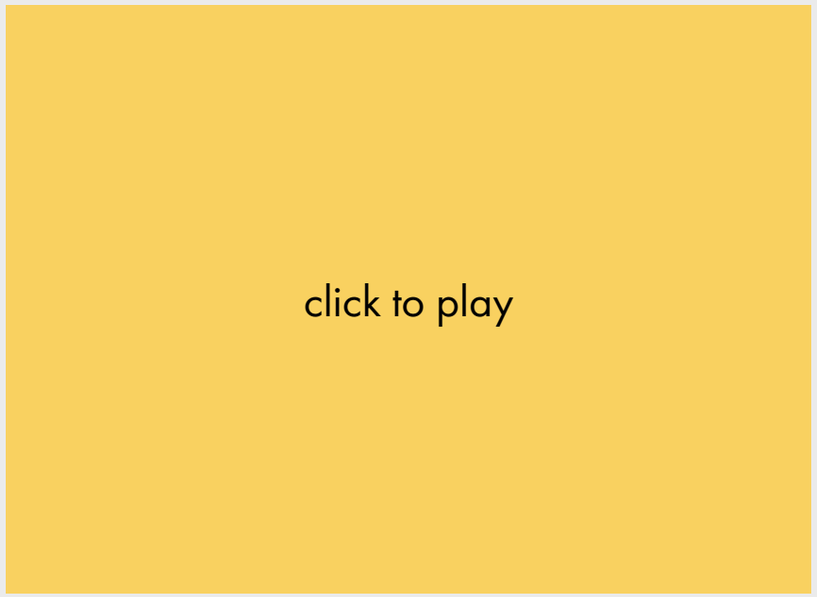
Triptych 4
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass

Sound:

T2



T3



T4



The images *Triptych 2, 3 and 4* are accompanied by directional sound. Once the viewer steps under the speaker the individual files start playing in a loop.

Please click in the middle of the squares to play the audio.

If this is not working click here to download all three WAV files. They are labeled as to which image they accompany.

You can find translations into English on the next page.

Translations

T1

There are so many lines and words in my diary

Yet still, I feel like everything is empty

I try with all my strength to plant my roots, but the world around me moves too fast

Too fast to grow and solidify,

and I'm slowly running out of strength

It can't be so hard, can it?

Not to be alone on my own.

T2

Sometimes I wonder, how can I feel so lonely when such a big part of me is made up of gratitude:

for the people I love

for the memories with these people

Have you ever felt this way?

Because when I look at my reflection,

and simply damn well try to do what everyone

else is trying to do:

find their place

figure out who they are and where they want to be

then it often feels like I'm the only one who doesn't know what they're doing

But as I now hear my own voice,

I realize that it doesn't just work out for everyone.

Because even together, we can be alone.

T3

I only hear silence

The rumble of the city is its quiet cry for help

For its roar drowns out the sobbing,

the tears,

and the inner screams of others

Day in, day out, it isolates them

But it is a privilege to be here,

I wonder to myself

Where so many wish to be.

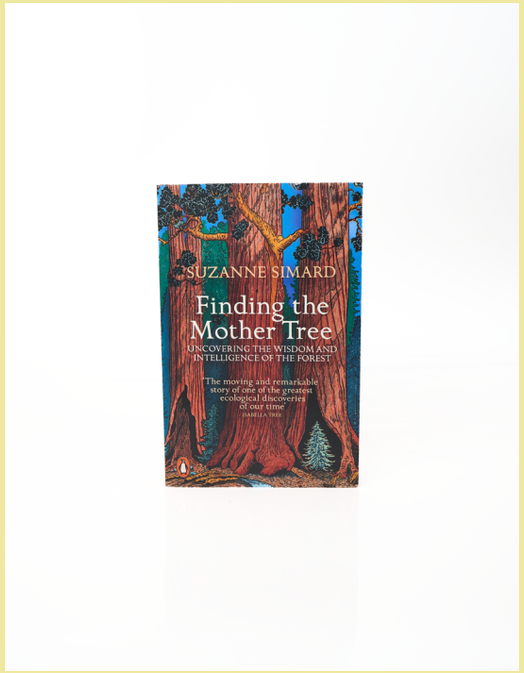
The Archive

The Archive













The Archive 1-6
50 x 65 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in Oak Frames with non-reflective glass

The Archive of this project catalogues objects and literature, that can be found within the series of photos.

These objects hold great personal value to the personal element of my staged scenes, often representing a personal connnection to a place, person or space.

The Archive





The cataloguing of this
is an ongoing process,
like the creation of the scenes of
Series 1 of *Unheimlich*.



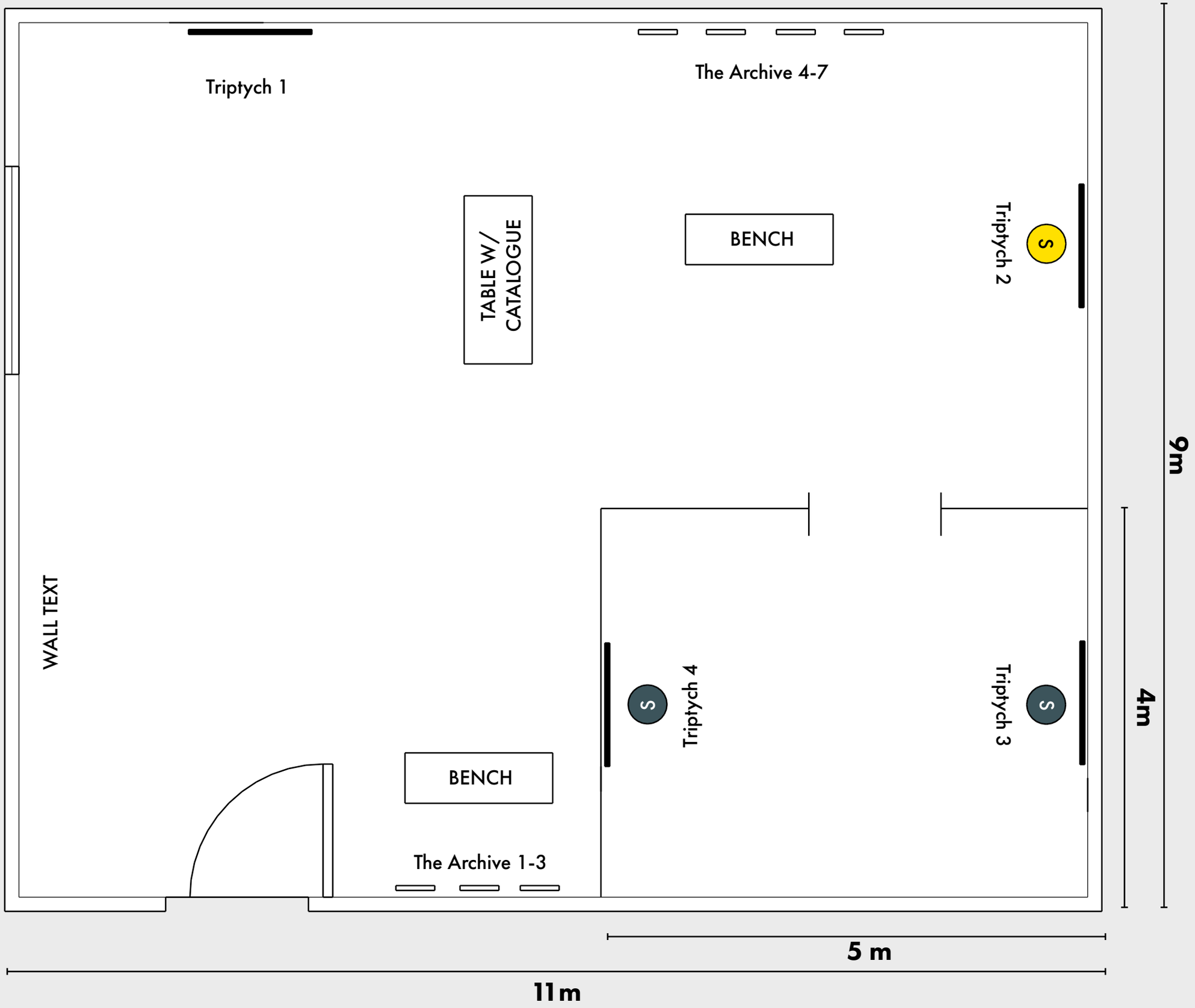




The Archive 7-11
50 x 65 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in Oak Frames with non-reflective glass

Installation of the body of work

The Space - Aerial View



Ideally this body of work is envisioned to be exhibited in a white gallery space.

The space is around 99m^2 with a wall height of at least 3m.

The works are hung at eye-height (middle-point 150cm high).

Elevation and dimensions

Wall 1

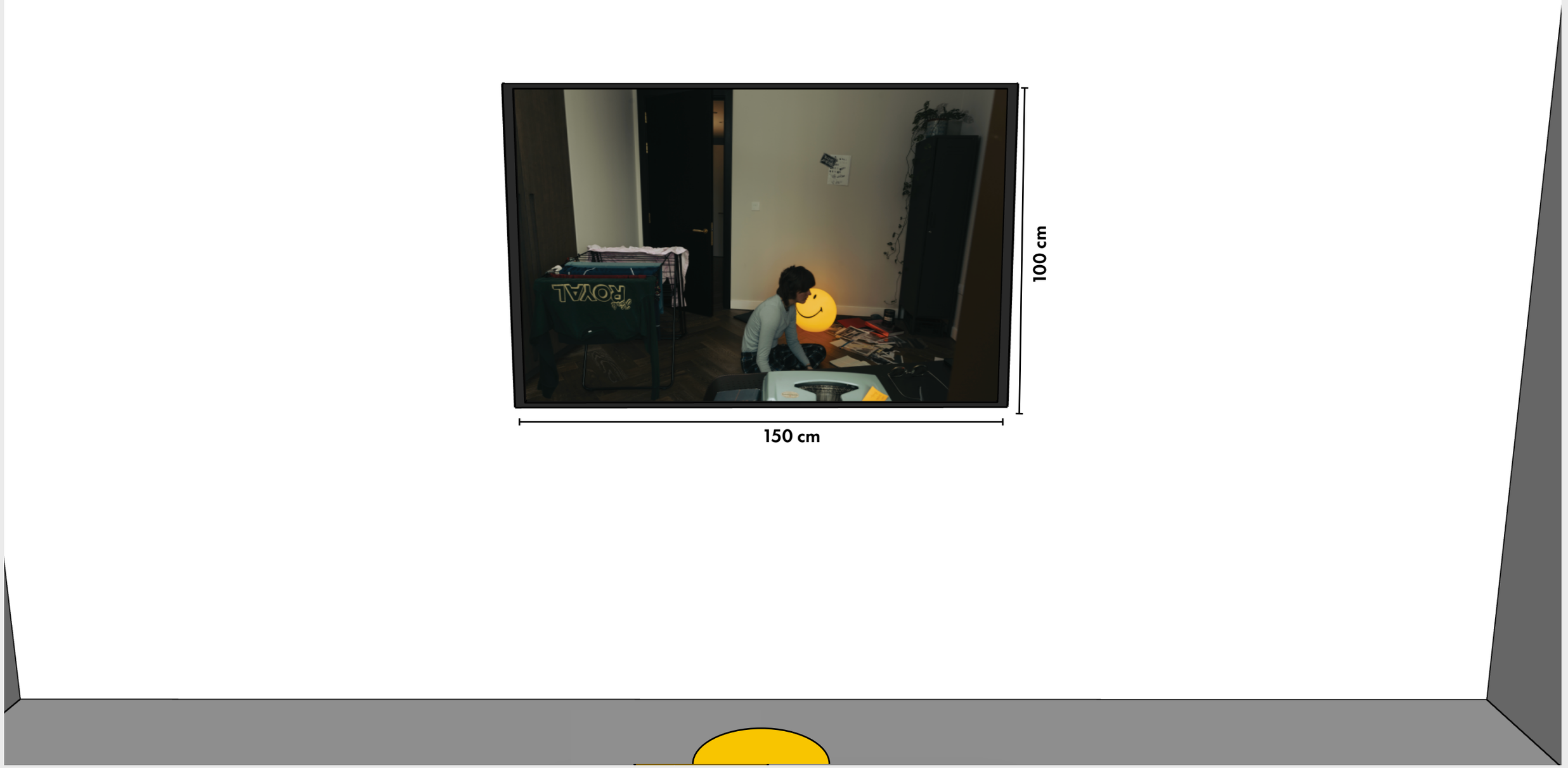




Triptych 1
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass

Elevation and dimensions

Wall 2



Triptych 2
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass

Elevation and dimensions

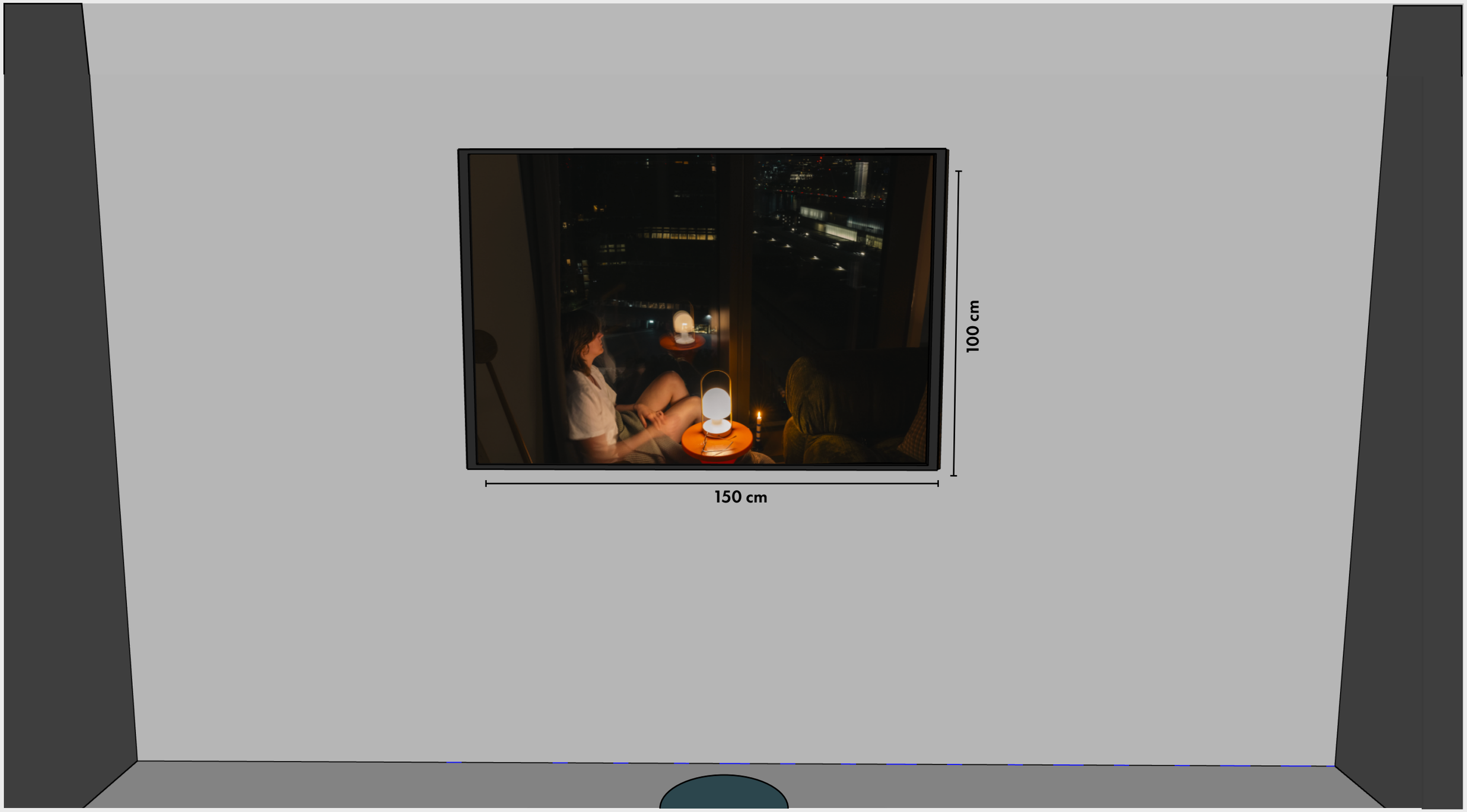
Wall 3



Triptych 3
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass

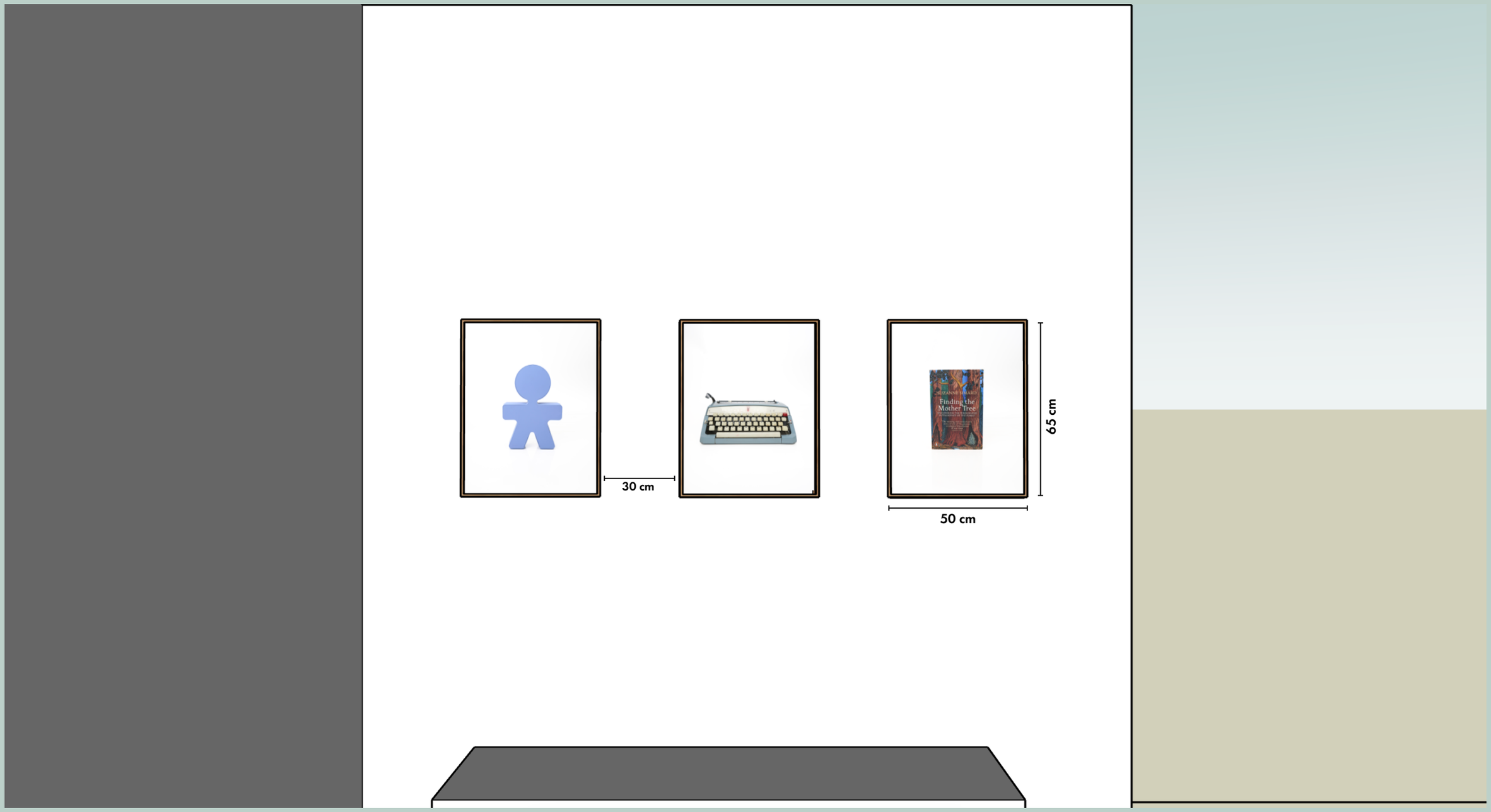
Elevation and dimensions

Wall 4



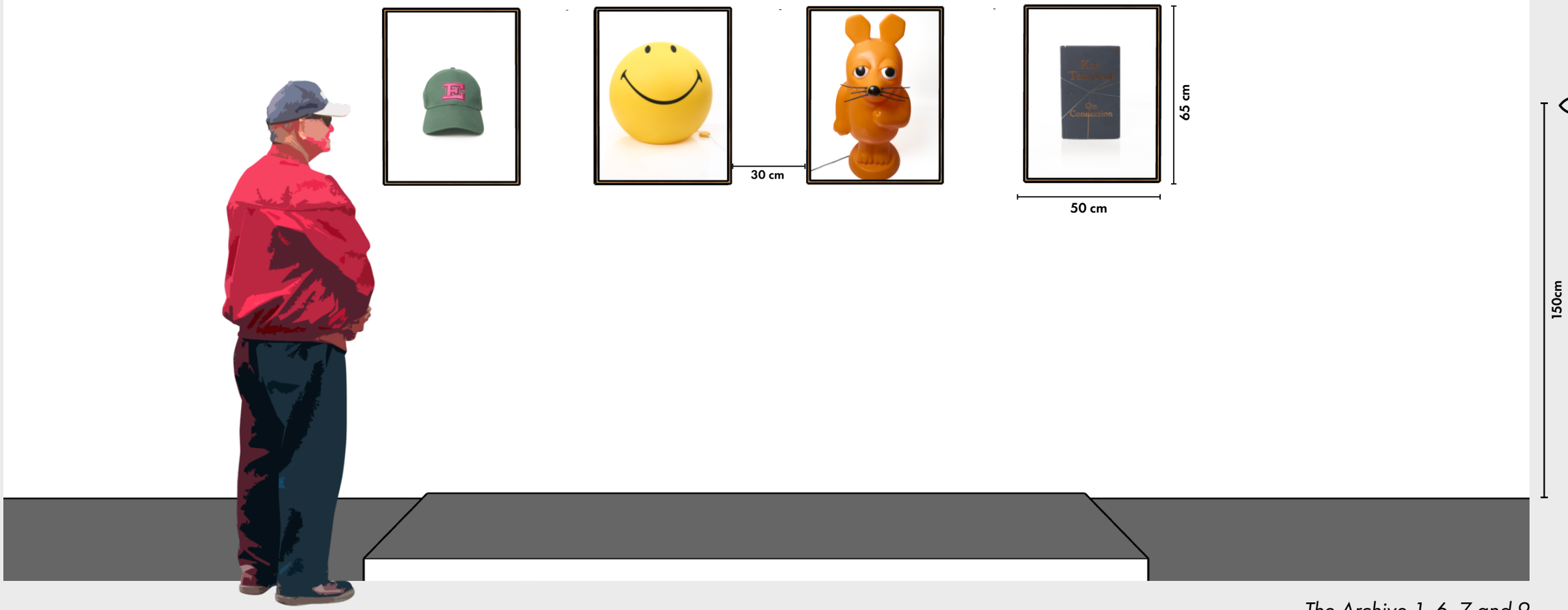
Triptych 4
150 x 100 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in black Aluminium frames with non-reflective glass

The Archive - Installation and Realisation



The Archive 2, 3 and 11
50 x 65 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in Oak Frames with non-reflective glass

The Archive - Installation and Realisation

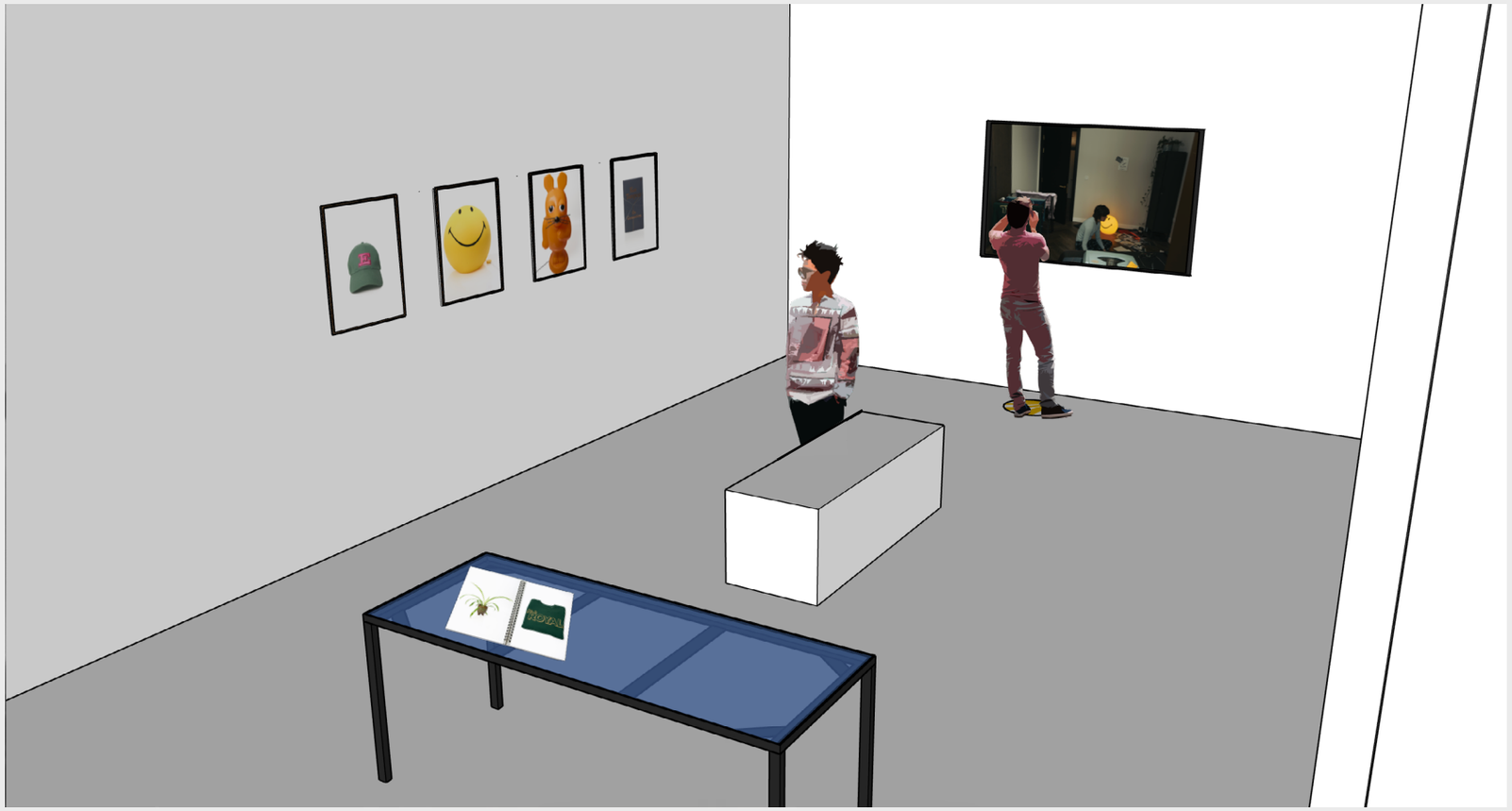


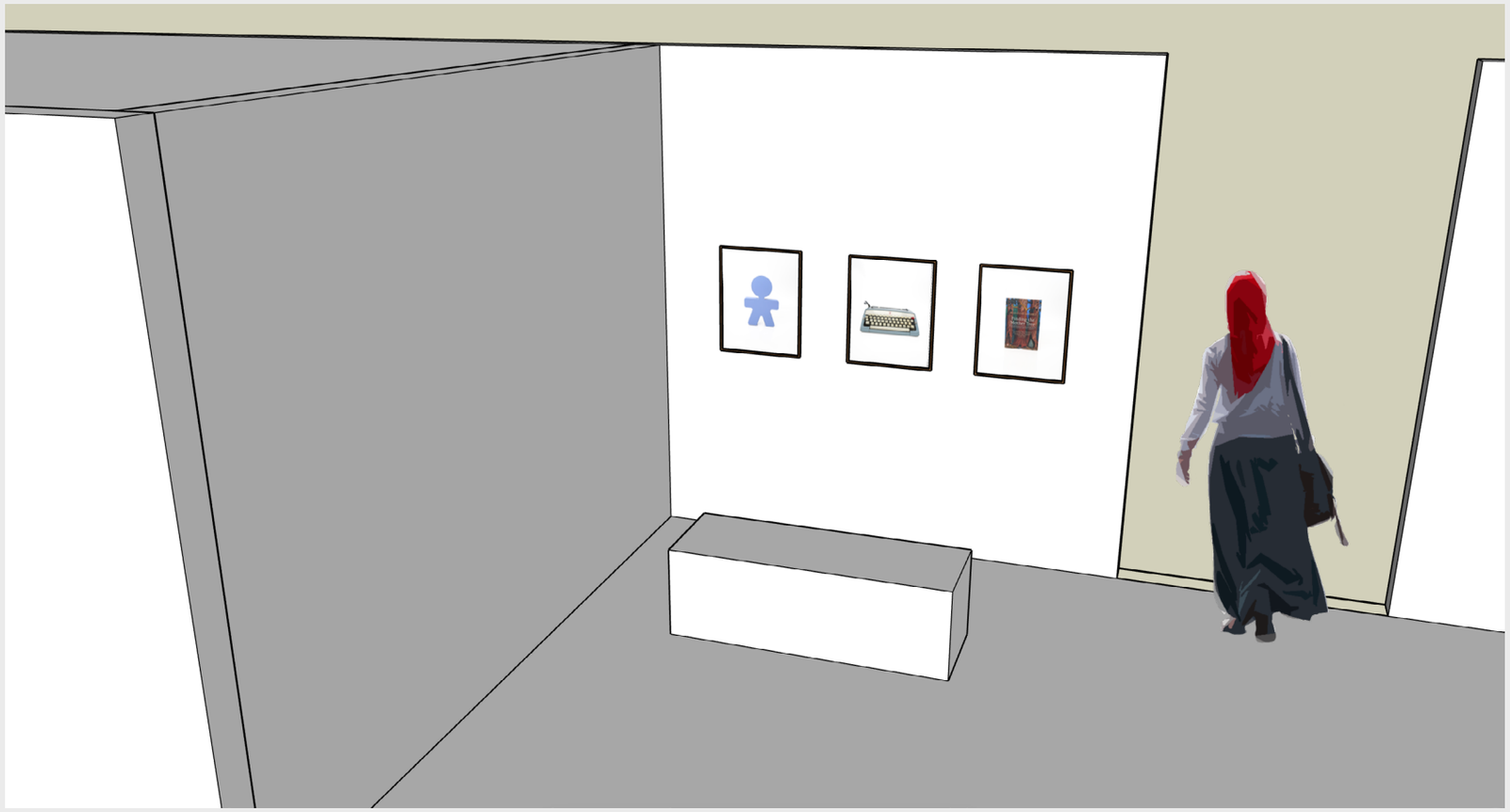
The Archive 1, 6, 7 and 9
50 x 65 cm
Chromira Print on Fujifilm Lustre Paper
Framed in Oak Frames with non-reflective glass

3D view of the Gallery space

The Archive - Catalogue

As not all the objects which are part of *The Archive* are framed within the exhibition - the rest of these will be displayed in a ring-bound book to display the full range of the collection accompanying the main images of the body of work.



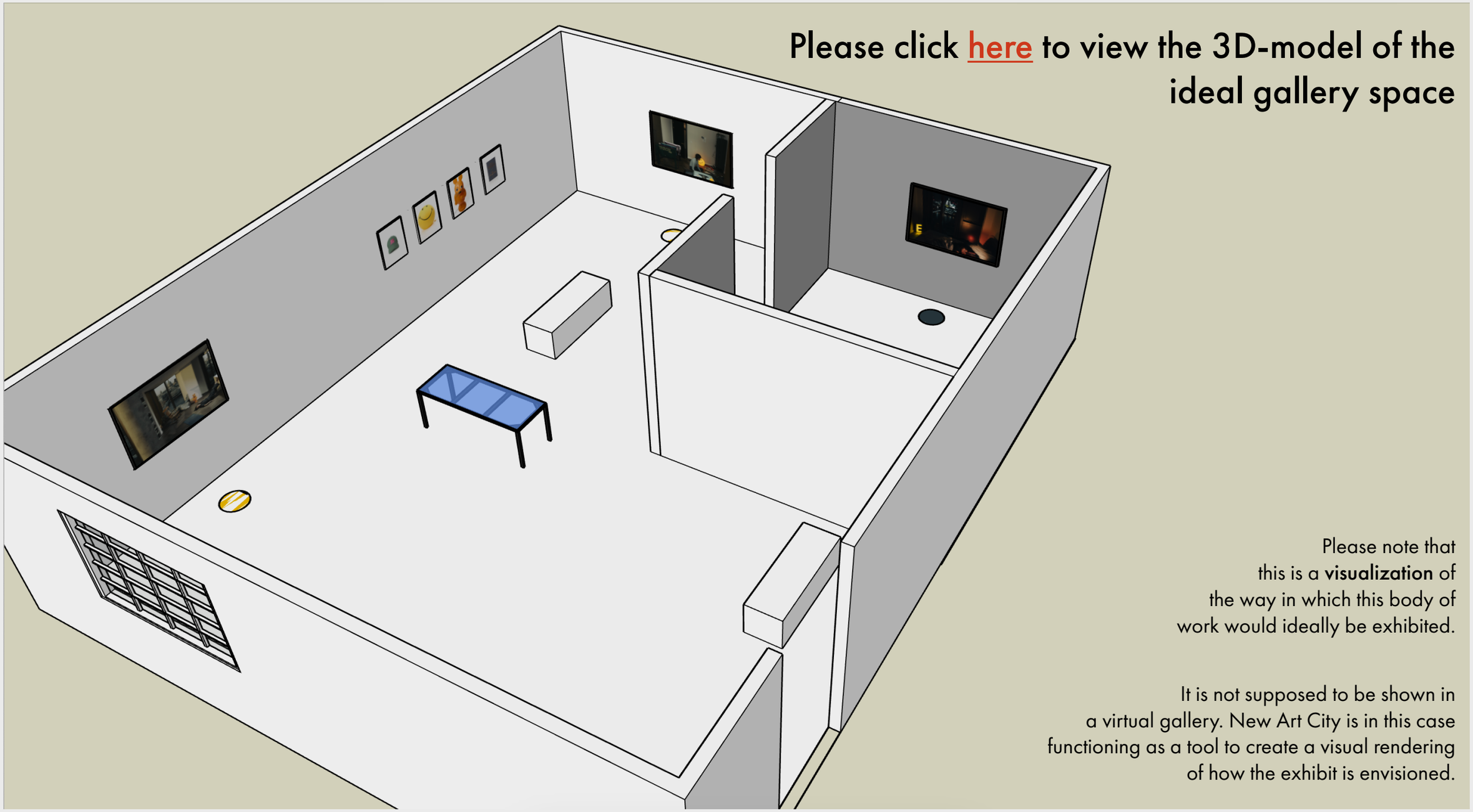


3D view of the Gallery space





Enter the space



Please click here to view the 3D-model of the ideal gallery space

Please note that
this is a **visualization** of
the way in which this body of
work would ideally be exhibited.

It is not supposed to be shown in
a virtual gallery. New Art City is in this case
functioning as a tool to create a visual rendering
of how the exhibit is envisioned.

Bibliography

Campany, D. (2007) The Cinematic. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Payne, C. (2021) Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic, Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic - Office for National Statistics. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/mappinglonelinessduringthecoronaviruspandemic/2021-04-07#:~:text=From%20October%202020%20to%20February%202021%2C%20of%20those%20who%20said,was%20because%20they%20were%20lonely (Accessed: 31 April 2024)

Freud, S. (1991) The Uncanny. The Complete Psychological Works, Vol. XVII (London: Hogarth Press 1955 & Edns.), pp. 217-56.