**Unreal Estates**

Ruth Wallace and KM Elkes

This has been a collaboration of intriguing questions and ambiguous answers.

The first question was which house to choose – A place that bore the quirky imprint of previous occupants? A church conversion of divided architectural lines? A thin, wood-timbered house steeped in Bristol’s history?

We finally decided on an early Georgian house near the docks. Inevitably, more questions arose – do past human dramas leave indelible stains? Is a home furnished as much with memories and forgettings, as it is with sofas and tables and beds? What does the term property mean, when a house is built, like many in Bristol, on the profits of slavery?

As we worked, one final question evolved. How do we, artist and writer in Covid-era separation, respond together? The answer lay in the uneasy nature of the house’s past and in the tension between its clear beauty and the ambiguity of its origins.

Vagueness and uncertainty are part of the narrative process. I welcomed both. And so I studied images, read historical articles, watched videos, all the time gathering word prompts – architectural terms, the vocabulary of slavery, estate agent’s lingo, the language of home-making and memory.

These prompts, alongside Ruth’s brooding, intense charcoal drawings, helped me create the final text – *Viewing Instructions*.