



# clare iles

## home

During the summer of 2005 Clare Iles went to Gujarat, Western India where she met, journeyed and lived with Rabari native gypsies. Meaning 'to live outside', the Rabari are one of only a few surviving groups of nomads. Undertaking this research trip fulfilled a long held ambition for the artist; the people she encountered played out in real time the fantasy of a nomadic lifestyle, roaming and travelling within a society, yet on the edge of another.

Iles too works on the periphery, physically and intellectually. Previously she has undertaken projects with riverboat communities and rural villagers in the UK, working in marginalised sites intended for regeneration and development. Concerned with the reality of everyday life, she is preoccupied by the rituals of daily existence, and in particular the places in which these occur: we sleep in our bedrooms, wash in our bathrooms, eat in our kitchens, travel to work and return home at the end of the day to clean, tidy, relax and, in a way, become the domestic spaces we occupy. Nomadic sensibilities are central to Iles' understanding of domestic life: a home moves, develops and reconfigures with its inhabitant. Home, owner and place can be seen as a whole.

Such principles inform the artist's sculptures, which themselves have increasingly become homes for her. To explore the concept of 'ritual within structure' Iles has started to make constructions that develop over time to accommodate her habits and behaviours. In 2006 she built 'Living in Outside 3', a two-storey structure at Cuckoo Farm Studios, Colchester. She spent six days living with the work as she made it, this experience of it as

a temporary, functioning residence directing daily additions to it. Using reclaimed wood, abandoned furniture and material scraps to construct these spaces, means they also become products of their environment – vibrant assortments of colours and textures that sit comfortably in their surroundings as they seemingly grow from them.

At firstsite Iles intends to develop the live/work idea by moving into the grounds of the Minorities Art Gallery. Over the course of her two-week residency, she will spend her days making a structure to live in at night, using only things sourced from the premises. She will explore the possibilities of the building's cellars and attics: finding forgotten display plinths, pieces of wood, and old furniture to recycle and reclaim.

Through her installation the artist will respond to the previous history of the Minorities as a domestic building. Living within the gallery as it is today will impose a set of rules upon Iles that she wants to abide by as rituals; up and awake by 9, last night's debris packed away before 10 (before the gallery opens), some making, lunch at the café between 12 and 3, more making until 6, locked out and 'home' by 6.30. Iles has set herself an ambitious, challenging task. However it is also real, and this is important to her; she wants to actually experience this as an alternative existence. For two weeks Iles will become the nomad, living on the margins of firstsite, the Minorities and – to a larger extent – Colchester.

Laura Earley, Programmes Co-ordinator, firstsite  
cover image: *Living in Outside 3*