Fondazione Cerruti:
Phonograms

Jeremy Deller
Untitled

Hello, good morning, good afternoon or good evening. My name's Jeremy Deller and this is my little guide to the Cerruti Foundation house. It's more of a journey, really, but I will be referring to some objects in the house, I promise. Also, if you can hear the piano in the background, that's me playing it. Well, not really playing, more doodling around with it. I played piano a little bit as a child, but that's the first time in maybe… 45 years I've been let loose on a piano, and it was actually a very nice experience.

The thing is, I find these things quite annoying. I never do them when I'm in museums or exhibitions, and the people that do seem to clog up the way. So how do you make an audio guide that's not irritating? Well, I'm going to try and do that, but I can't guarantee. You know, I've only been here—I've visited once for a couple of hours. I'm not an expert on the building, its history or any of the work in it. But we will start in the basement looking at a book. It's not even clear to me if the book is open, but there's a book in the basement. So let's go down there.

So, in the basement of the house, when I came for a visit, I was looking at an atlas. It's in a cabinet. There's 11 volumes. It's called *The Great Atlas*, from 1662, by John and William Blaeu. I think that's how you pronounce it.

It has the whole of Europe in it in great detail, to the point where there's even a small village on the east coast of the UK which I go near to every year. It's in the county of Norfolk and it's called Eccles. That's where we are now.

That's me walking along a gravel path near the village. It's incredibly hot. You know what the summer was like in 2026. It was incredible. It was horrible, actually. It was like something out of one of the illustrations in the other books in this house, of hell on earth. Well, it was for me anyway. I don't like the heat.

Just down the road from here, maybe 30 minutes' drive, there was a huge fire that was nearly engulfing a nuclear power station. So it was kind of apocalyptic.

The village of Eccles doesn't exist anymore. It was washed away by the sea a few hundred years ago. So I'm more or less now standing on it, in the sea.

Just up from here is another village which maybe soon will be washed away into the sea. And now I'm going to climb up the church tower to get a view of the coastline.

This church, St Mary's, has a big graveyard with a mass grave of 119 sailors who drowned 220 years ago. And that too will sink into the sea at some point. And now there's talk of all the graves being dug up and being buried elsewhere, so those 118 sailors will soon be buried twice because they might be drowned twice if they're not careful—or if we're not careful.

When I came to visit and I was looking at the books, there are some very old medieval religious books. And in them there were psalms or religious texts set to music. And so I'm just going to play you one of them. I've just notated the song.

This is what it sounded like on an organ.

And this is what it sounds like on a different kind of keyboard. Something a bit more contemporary.

There are also a lot of books about astronomy. And just by chance, when I was there on my holiday, it was the eclipse, or the partial eclipse of the sun. So I had to go to a big public viewing, which was actually a lot of fun. That's where we are now.

It's surprising how impressive it was. There was an astronomer there who turned up with his telescope and gave everyone a look through it.

"Stand in front of it so the sun doesn't explode."

There he is.

"That's the filter."

Explaining how it is that if you look through his telescope, you're not going to get blinded by the sun.

"So I put it on the very strong light, and then I took a felt-tip pen."

People were very excited.

"It was every single one of his pinholes. Just behind it."

"A chore, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it was. It took me a bit of a while. It worked. And then you get a much, much better picture. So if you look in there, you see it's fantastic."

This chaotic sound is of an amusement arcade in Great Yarmouth, which is close by. It's a big seaside town, very brash, very colourful. And in the background, you can just hear a killer riff from a pop song from the '90s. It's by Cathy Dennis. It's called "Touch Me (All Night Long)". Listen, here it is. I've just remade it. What is it about those two notes that is just so fantastic?

I mean, who knows? Cathy Dennis also wrote "Toxic", which was performed by Britney Spears, and "Can't Get You Out of My Head" by Kylie Minogue. So she's one of the greatest songwriters of all time, in my opinion.

I'm in Great Yarmouth because there's a theatre here which weirdly floods like Eccles flooded, but it floods twice a day. It's got a stage from 1902 or something like that that sinks, and then it's flooded with water as part of the show. It's the only one left in Britain. It's an amazing sight. In a way, Great Yarmouth and all these seaside towns are a little bit like where you are

in the Cerruti house, which kind of is a confection, in a way. It's not quite what it seems. It's a fantasy. But I love the seaside in Britain for being a fantasy.

"Yellow 3 and 1, yellow 31. Blue 4 and 1, blue 41."

That sound you can hear in the background, that's the sound of money, or it's the sound of money that Francesco Cerruti made. It's machinery in a bookbinder's. Because he made his money binding books, but mass production, not specialist books like the ones in his collection. In fact, the one he made most of his money on, I think, was the Yellow Pages. Which is funny, really, because if you ask anyone under the age of 40 about the Yellow Pages, they won't know what you're talking about. They'll look at you strangely, and then when you tell them what it was, they might look at you even more strangely.

So the Yellow Pages, a bit like the village of Eccles, which disappeared into the sea, is no more, really. It's just a memory.

But the sound is good. And from that, you can make other sounds.

So I'll leave you with this little song, based on the sound of… Mr Cerruti's machinery.