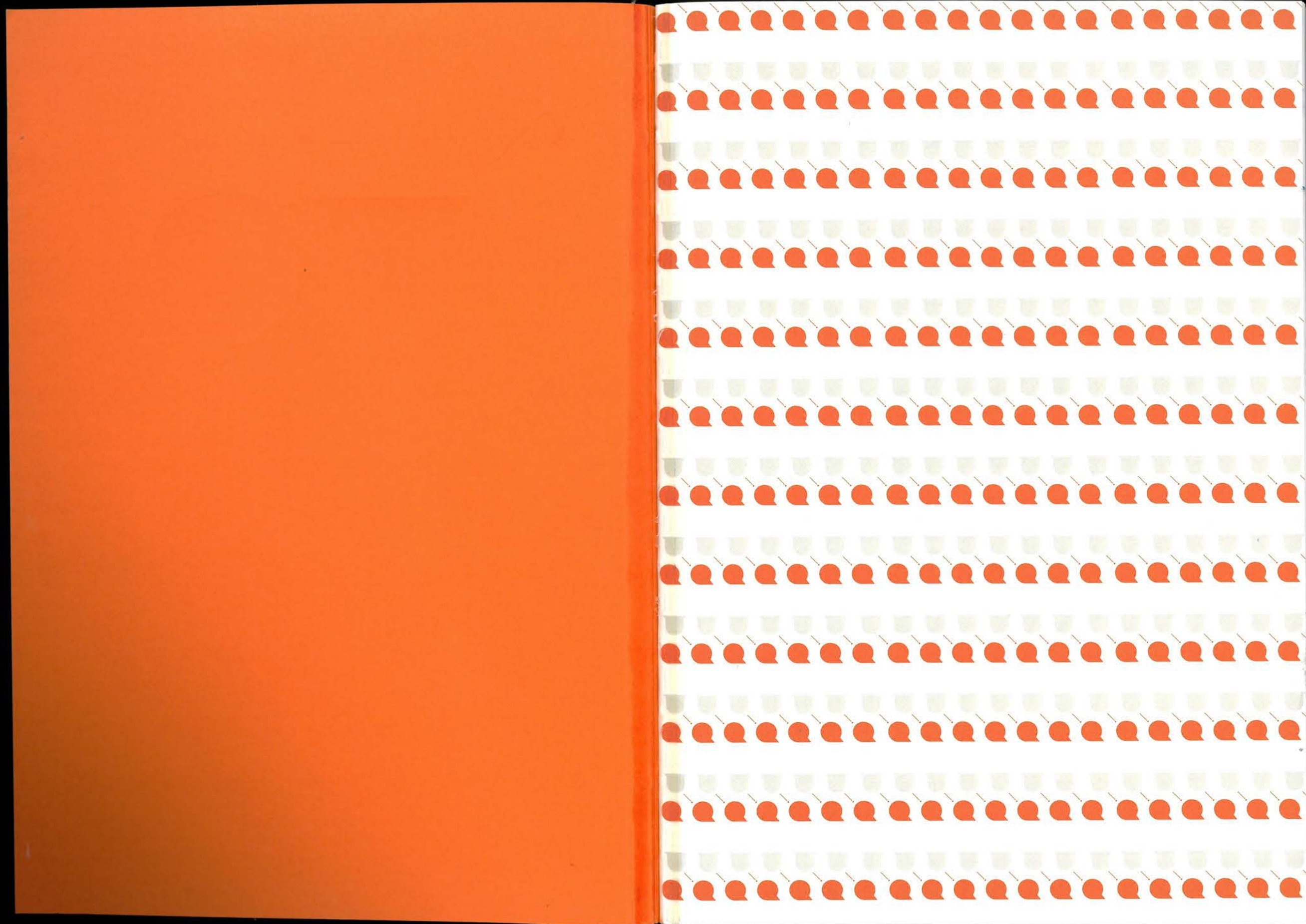




# UNKNOWN QUANTITIES

ART & DESIGN  
CULTURAL CRITICISM  
& POLITICS





# UNKNOWN QUANTITIES

# EDITORIAL

## UNKNOWN QUANTITIES

---

There is that wonderful moment before beginning a meaty new novel, when the crisp pages beg to be thumbled, to become dog-eared. Obscure characters, their psychologies and dramas are sustained in embryonic balance. The cover suggests, the blurb invites, but the book remains an unknown quantity, slowly revealing itself with every turn of the page. We have tried to capture that leisurely joy of reading, and to apply it to the increasingly fast-paced arenas of cultural criticism and graphic design. In our times of pithy reflections in 140 characters, trolling commenters and uncaptioned visual blogs, we invite you to slow down a little bit.

This journal not only brings together culture and design, but also presents a series of articles and features that are best enjoyed on the page, designed to surprise and delight with each

subsequent perusal. We wanted to think across the visual and the textual, tracking ideas and images through different locations where creative, innovative and critical thinking take place.

A collaboration between students at Central Saint Martins on the MA Culture, Criticism and Curation and MA Communication Design courses, this is a student-led publication with an outward focus. Ambitious young voices share a platform with professionals, establishing an unexpected dialogue but in fact recreating the dynamic that is at the heart of a thriving institution. This first issue of **Unknown Quantities** explores themes of regeneration, gentrification, interdisciplinarity and collaboration, especially across art and science. We welcome you to it and we hope you are excited to turn these pages. We have had great fun filling them.

# CONTENTS

04

## SHARING IS CARING

by Antonio de la Hera and Owen Lacey

16

## COMPOSING SIOBHAN DAVIES

by Nick Kimberley

22

## ODOURS GIVE VOICE TO THE SILENCE

by Apolline Saillard

37

## THE SEMI-DIVINE

by Cooper Gage

44

## AXNS COLLECTIVE CURATED SPACE

64

## INTERDISCIPLINARITY

by Dan Callwood

67

## POLARITIES OF PRACTICE

by Rob Kessler

88

## KING'S CROSS WALKS

by Sara Dimmitt

77

## ON KING'S CROSS

by Ella Wearing

92

## SPATIAL STORIES

by Chi Nguyen

102

## THROUGH THE GLASS WINDOW

by Melissa Fielding

106

## STORYBOARDING: TOOLS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

by Ryo Terui

118

## A PLACE FOR YOU AND ME

by Rudy Leenders

## APPROPRIATION CONTRACT

In this contract **Owen Lacey** will be further referred to as "the Original", and **Antonio de la Hera** will be further referred to as "the Appropriator". The term "appropriated work" refers to a work produced by the appropriator within the practice of the Original.

Hereby the Original agrees to allow for his practice to be appropriated by the Appropriator.

### Production

1.1 - All produced and unproduced appropriated works contribute to the practice of the Original. 1.2 - The production of appropriated works must be reported to the Original within two weeks of the final production stage. 1.3 - An image of all appropriated works must be sent to the Original from the Appropriator within two weeks of informing the Original of completion. 1.4 - The Original has no obligation to provide any funds to the total production costs of appropriated works, except in the case of direct involvement of the Original in the exhibiting or conceptualising of the work. In the exceptions the Original and the Appropriator must come to an agreement via 'rock, paper, scissors'. 1.5 - For any appropriated works produced in editions, one artist's proof must be sent to the original within two weeks of the completed production of the entire edition. 1.6 - Any sponsorship, commissions, or external funds received for the production of an appropriated work must be reported to the original on the back of a postcard within two weeks of confirmation. 1.7 - An appropriated work must be titled 'OL' followed by the production number [e.g. the third appropriated work would be titled 'OL 03']. Further titles may be added within brackets to the discretion of the Appropriator. 1.8 - The Original reserves the right to consider and present an appropriated work or works as one of his own.

### Exhibition

2.1 - All exhibited appropriated works must be reported to the Original by the Appropriator in an email with an image of the empty gallery attached. 2.2 - The original is not obliged to contribute to the overall exhibiting cost of an appropriated piece, with the exception of a work in which a collaboration has taken place. In this exception an agreement must be reached through a game of poker (Texas hold 'em). 2.3 - The appropriator must send an image of the exhibited appropriated work or works to the original within two weeks of the end of the exhibition. 2.4 - An appropriated work must always be exhibited with a copy of this contract or alternatively a specific certificate of appropriation for the appropriated work. The contract or certificate must be present within 2 metres of the work, or as an attachment to the mandatory reading handed out to all guests. 2.5 - Should the appropriator present an appropriated work in an exhibition, the original reserves the right to consider said exhibition as one of his own.

### Reproduction

3.1 - All reproduction of works must occur with the agreement of the Original, who must notify the Appropriator of his decision within 4 days in an email addressed 'Dear Colleague' and with the title of the appropriated work as the subject. 3.2 - The Appropriator must send a copy of the reproduction of the appropriated work to the Original's home address within two weeks of publishing. 3.3 - Under no circumstances is the Original is not obliged to contribute to any reproduction costs of an appropriated work. 3.4 - The Original reserves the right to consider and present any reproduced appropriated work or works as one of his own.

### Ownership

4.1 - An appropriated work must be sold with a specific certificate of appropriation signed by both parties. The certificate must include title and exhibition, as well as the estimated value by each the Original and the Appropriator. 4.2 - Term 4.1 does not apply to appropriated works made in editions, which need to be clearly stamped with an edition number. The Original must receive regular updates to any known sales of editions within two weeks of sales in the form of an SMS. 4.3 - All profit generated by the sale of an appropriated work must be divided in two parts, the Original received one, and the Appropriator receives another. In the case that the profits need to be split into more parties, the Original must always receive an amount greater than or equal to that of the Appropriator. 4.4 - If the Original wishes to purchase the appropriated work from the Appropriator he is not obliged to pay more than the production costs which must be verified with a receipt.

### Further Conditions

This contract does not give permission to the Appropriator to claim works produced by the Original. Further revisions to this contract may be made with the agreement of either parties. The Appropriator must send a reminder to the Original with his eternal gratitude expressed in manifold manners.

The signature below states that both the Original and the Appropriator agree with the terms and conditions stated above in regards to all future appropriated works.

The Original

Date:

The Appropriator:

Date:

Reproduction of the contract between Owen Lacey and Antonio de la Hera

# SHARING IS CARING

by  
ANTONIO DE LA HERA

+

OWEN LACEY  
BOSS MEN

Collaboration, integration, appropriation:  
Antonio de la Hera and Owen Lacey reveal the  
pleasures of artistic joint enterprise.

**T**he duo first met while studying at the University of Westminster in 2010. They would eventually grade predictably adequately under the gaze of their bearded tutor, Approach Gallery and Bloomberg painter Stuart Cumberland, who would later have little to no effect on their respective practices. Their collaboration happened by chance nearing the end of the year 2012, a significant year for these artists culminating in an exhibition at the SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin. They would later go on to show in various exhibitions around the United Kingdom including Liverpool, London and Edinburgh.

It was while in Berlin that the duo put pen to paper to contractually agree upon an appropriational formula. The formula would later be described by fellow artist and contemporary visionary Laura O'Neill (Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2013) as "that's great".

**De la Lacey**

Antonio de la Hera  
Helen Savage piece 1  
(I wanted this piece  
to be grand), 2013  
Vinyl Transfer on Wall



**De la Hera  
is the Boss**

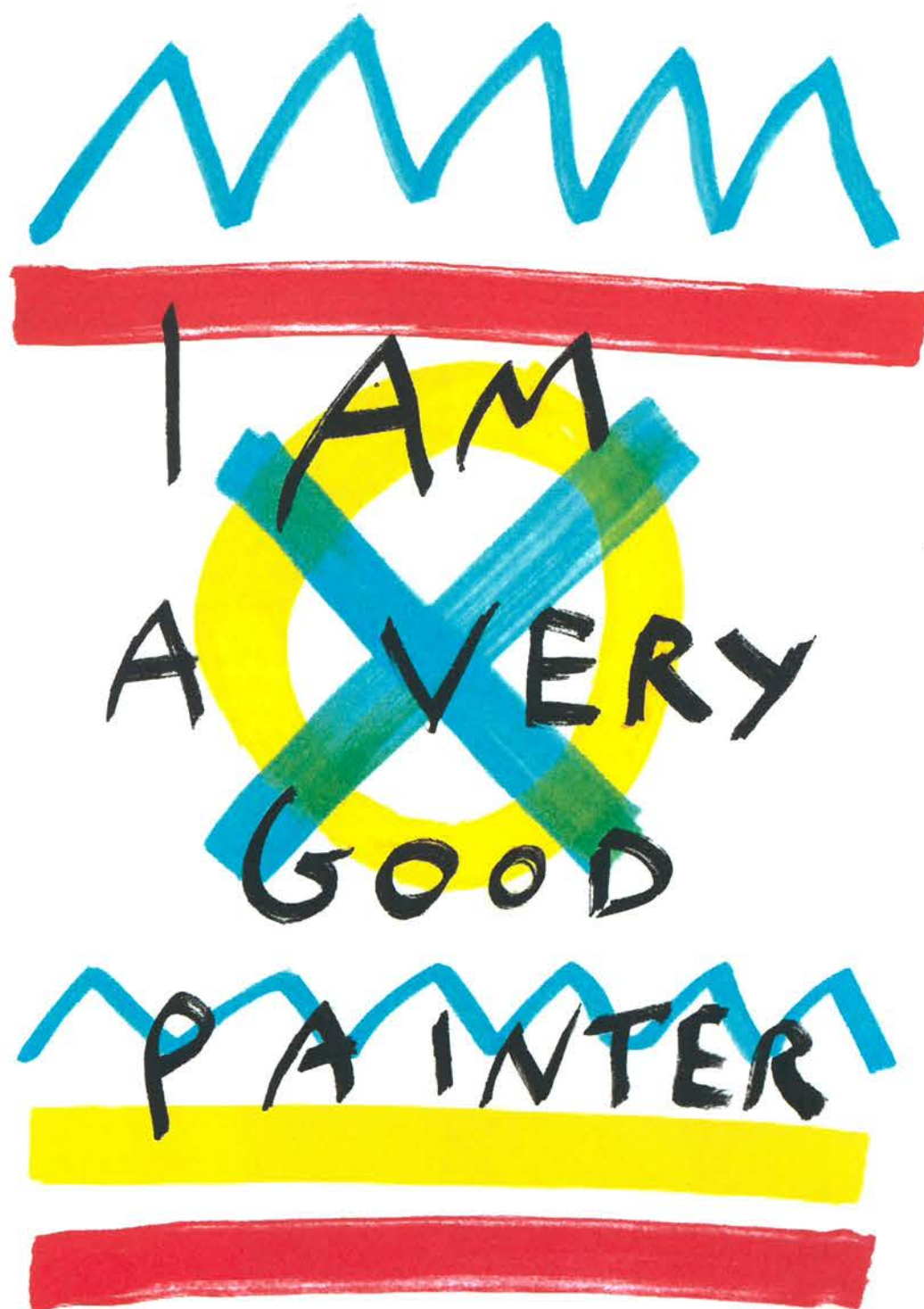
You may have never heard of him, or you may have done, or you may just not of known what you were seeing was him. He is a man with little recognition of what he does, but he definitely does do. Except for this one day where he did not do. He didn't do or be seen doing for 24 hours, none did, so you may have just not caught him on the wrong day. When I first met Antonio de la Hera back in 2010, in the days before the day he did not do, I remember looking at his luscious beard and thinking to myself, "now there is an artist". All the better did it get when I was introduced to him. I will never forget the first words he said to me, "Hey I'm Antonio".

Listening to that Spanish/Dutch accent pour out of his bearded mouth I knew that he was the real deal, a true artist. And with a name like Antonio de la Hera who would argue! He had it all: the name! The accent! The Beard! It was some of the greatest most poignant words I had ever heard with the possible exception of Hans-Ulrich Obrist saying, "Hello how are you?"

Stuart Cumberland seems like a nice enough fellow, but de la Hera is the boss.

**De la Hera made films.  
De la Hera made appropriations.  
De la Hera made contracts  
De la Hera was in sync.**





Owen Lacey  
I am a very good painter, 2013  
Uni Posca on Paper

**Owen Lacey  
is the best  
artist ever**

When I told my father about the best artist ever, Owen Lacey, he laughed. To his Spanish ear it was Owen Lazy. It took me a while to explain to him that I was offended, and that Owen was too. Owen is not Lazy. He is the best artist ever.

They all write books about Owen. He's a pretty big deal, just ask his gallery. I often don't really understand his art because it is very highbrow. It was all too much to explain to my father. And in Spanish nonetheless.

**Owen doesn't walk like a person, he walks like an artist.  
Owen doesn't dress like a person, he dresses like an artist.  
Owen doesn't speak like a person, he speaks like an artist.  
The best artist. Ever.**

As with most artists, the world is lagging behind. Owen is observant, deviously genius and ferociously productive. Some have told me that they think he is simply trying to let us all know that he is on the way, that he is starting to make waves. Hans-Ulrich Obrist couldn't find any further questions to ask him other than, 'How are you?'

In 2012 Owen Lacey was unstoppable. Meerkats turned yellow. Lights and switches turned yellow, bricks turned yellow, and most amazingly of all, toilet paper turned yellow. What bigger dream is there than to wipe with a real Lacey?





Antonio de la Hera  
Owen Lacey piece 3 (beer) Beer, Beer bottle, Beer Label.  
Courtesy of the Artists, and Ward Brewing

And it was  
all yellow

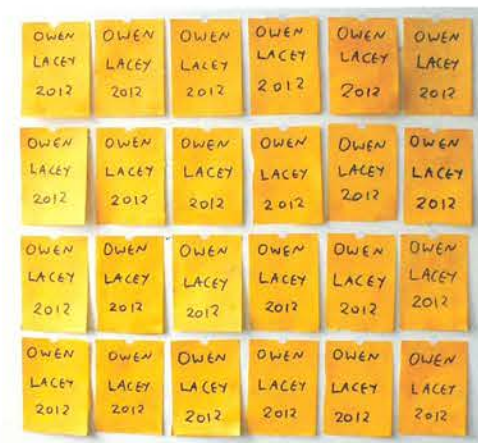
Nothing gets my juices flowing as much as seeing an Owen Lacey 2012 piece of work, sitting there, yellow, taunting me, covered in my name. Owen Lacey 2012 was a six-month long project that started in July of 2012. The premise of the project was that I, Owen Lacey, only used the colour yellow to create work. The work displayed often contained my name hand-written in black pen. The 2012 project was fueled by the university environment it was created in, with lots of young aspiring artists trying to make a name for themselves without coming across too arrogantly, but trying to find a way to sell yourself while still maintaining some kind of self-respect, resulting in a practice that wasn't too annoying to your peers.

I did the complete opposite by crassly branding myself with the colour yellow and posting it across the whole campus. This

included frequently sending Owen Lacey 2012 cards to every tutor and creating a large supply of unfiltered yellow works. Soon enough the colour yellow became a sign of my work, so much so that the name didn't need to be literally attached to the colour. Crossing the street and seeing a yellow car would scream Owen Lacey at you, since I had infiltrated your subconscious.

Within the Year of 2012 the yellow work was shown in six shows in London and Berlin. The piece ended at the end of 2012.

He (Antonio) began taking over Owen Lacey 2012 in 2013, and since then he's done a better job than I ever did in 2012. Even though he could never be Owen Lacey 2012, he surpassed me in the execution of my concept. This success might be considered Owen's own, since his original Owen Lacey 2012 works conveyed the concept so well that Antonio could readily improve it. Or perhaps it could be considered Antonio's success, since he saw a potential in the work that was yet to be manifest. The work didn't require a lot of effort in a sense. A simple combination of the right shade of yellow and Owen's trademark name was sufficient. Could a four or five year-old do it? Probably. There is an ease in the concept that could remind someone of Martin Creed, Piero Manzoni or John Baldessari, that facilitates the production and reception of the works. There is power in manifesting Owen's name so loud and clearly, louder and more clearly than Owen ever did, that is extremely seductive and satisfying.



Owen Lacey, 2012 Owen Lacey flyers  
Paint on Paper



12

It's not every day you get to be somebody else. Take advantage of their history, their track record, their image. Spin it in a narrative of your own. There are politics involved, but we're not so worried about that.

When de la Hera is Lacey, it isn't copying. Each piece is bespoke for a space and idea. There is no repetition like you'll find in a printed magazine or newspaper. Each piece comes from something outside of Lacey, some space he has yet to cover, paint and sign. They are originals.

When de la Hera is Lacey, he isn't stealing his identity. Copyright infringement would never stand in a courtroom between Lacey and de la Hera, since they would both be the defendant and the prosecutor. They could exchange seats for different parts of the ceremony, and finally have to pay for half of the legal fees anyway.

Being Owen Lacey is not a collaboration. There is sometimes dialogue but choices are

made separately. Permission is something that has already been handed over. Authority is in the hands of many parties. Lacey has chosen not to protect his name further: There is a risk attached in letting someone have a complete creative decision in work created with your name plastered all over it. A risk or a sort of blind and seemingly stupid trust that nothing bad will happen. An arrogant trust if you believe that your concept is either impossible to mutate, destroy, improve or take out of context to the point of ridicule. Perhaps de la Hera is just a very nice guy.

The permission that Lacey gives de la Hera is not a gift. It was requested, shared yes, but confined by limits of authoritative permission. De la Hera is lucky to be able to use Lacey's language in a pure state to explore and redirect comments directly back at him. A conversation is impossible to stop from igniting, and a competition itches in the background. The speed and



Owen Lacey  
Owen Lacey Van, 2012  
Paint on van

13

context with theoretical underpinning that Lacey gives to de la Hera is exchanged for a promotion and labour-free production. No one might have heard of Lacey, but he is the best artist ever. And others want to make works using his name.

When de la Hera makes a Lacey, it is Lacey who speaks. Sometimes only Lacey can be present, and sometimes only de la Hera can be present. But it is always Owen Lacey's name that is visible in the work. Who would read Owen Lacey as Antonio de la Hera? It's just got too many vowels (Antonio we mean, there's nothing wrong with Owen's name). But there is nothing to lose, there is no author, there are no hierarchies, there is no labour. The work has a story, and the story is in the work.

**When de la Hera makes a Lacey, it is a Lacey. It's a Lacey as far as a Lacey can be a Lacey. When a de la Hera is a Lacey it is also a de la Hera.**

# Down by law

The mutual and incredible friendship shared by the two artists should have been enough to tell the readers or anyone who happens to know the pair that Lacey was happy to have de la Hera have his concept, that de la Hera was content with the possibility of being in the shadow of Lacey, that Lacey was happy to allow de la Hera to put his name everywhere, and that de la Hera was happy to have Lacey gain from his treacherous labour.

It isn't clear why there was such a significant need in a contract, and why there are so many tedious terms and conditions to which both have to adhere to at all times. It doesn't even provide a humorous note. Contracts never do. The choice to take Lacey's significant oeuvres and redirect them in any direction can be taken by any artist, at any time, and with no real need to ask Lacey (or de la Hera) for permission. In fact, de la Hera is not the only one to make or conceive works in the name of Owen Lacey.

Debbie Lacey made the first in the forthcoming line of Owen Lacey shirts. A yellow cotton t-shirt, size small, with Owen Lacey 2012 printed in the front inaccurately in a green check metallic colour. Isabelle Southwood (BNC 2013) conceived a work where instead of calling it "Owen Lacey", "Owen Lacey" would refer to Lacey as "Owen Lacey, sorry I mean 'The Owen

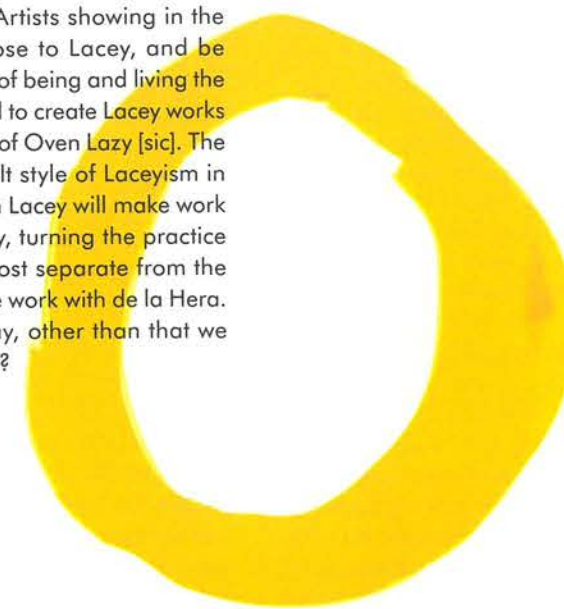


Original and Appropriator sharing one of their brews. Note Debbie Lacey's Owen Lacey 2012 shirt handsomely fitting the artist.

Lacey". Laoise Meek said in reference to a show Lacey was in called *Synonym*, "Oh you should just put in a pile of cinnamon". Which he did. Joss Heierli, Curator of the Bombast Gallery, who Lacey enjoyed working closely with, told Lacey to paint a whole wall of his gallery yellow for an exhibition to commemorate Bombast's final show in the space, so he did. Dominic Roylance-White thought of a piece which he described as "beautiful". A yellow Owen Lacey 2012 lighter. Indeed, it's simple to produce or imagine works that Owen Lacey would make, but it takes Lacey, or de la Hera perhaps, to make them.

The duo plan to take advantage of this surplus of creative spirit they are harvesting in their peers. They plan to open and run a gallery, The Owen Lacey Gallery, directed by "The Owen Lacey" and Antonio de la Hera. Artists showing in the space will be brought close to Lacey, and be given firsthand experience of being and living the Lacey Life, and encouraged to create Lacey works inspired by and in the style of Owen Lazy [sic]. The gallery will create a default style of Laceyism in which even the artist Owen Lacey will make work in the style of Owen Lacey, turning the practice into its own persona, almost separate from the artist himself, much like the work with de la Hera.

What can we really say, other than that we happen to really get along?



# COMPOSING SIOBHAN DAVIES

16

by  
NICK KIMBERLEY



This article originally appeared in the Spring 1997 issue of *Dance Now*. It formed part of a celebration of the first 25 years of Siobhan Davies's career as a choreographer. We have not updated the article, preferring to leave it as a testimony to how three composers (Kevin Volans, Matteo Fargion, Gerald Barry) felt in 1997 about collaborating with Davies.

Composing Siobhan Davies



Sean Hudson, Photo of a performance of *Bank*.  
Music by Matteo Fargion, 1997

17

Igor Stravinsky, who knew whereof he spoke, once said, "Choreography, as I conceive it, must realise its own form, one independent of the musical form though measured to the musical unit. Its construction will be based on whatever correspondences the choreographer may invent, but it must not seek merely to duplicate the line and beat of the music." He was talking about Nijinsky's choreography for *The Rite of Spring*, choreography which disappointed the composer, who felt that Nijinsky "restricted the dance to rhythmic duplication of the music and made of it an imitation." Egalitarian for once in his life, Stravinsky was insisting that dance be music's equal.

The balance of power has shifted somewhat and few choreographers today view their work as an attempt to "imitate" music, although they may strive for "rhythmic duplication". Of course, many seek a purity, if purity it be, that entails dispensing with music altogether. Others work out their steps, then find pre-existing music to fit. Still

others invite composers to write music for dance they've already created. No doubt there are further variations, but in each of these cases the dance has no opportunity to "imitate" the music, since it is conceived with no reference to music.

For Siobhan Davies, on the other hand, the music comes first, in the sense that it is only when she knows the music that she will begin to make her dance. Very often, though perhaps not as often as she would like, that means commissioning a new piece of music: her latest work, *Bank*, has a specially written score by Matteo Fargion (of which more later). Davies's work may not be "measured to the musical unit" in the way Stravinsky prescribed, but it certainly doesn't seek "merely to duplicate the line and beat of the music". Like Stravinsky, Davies insists that both music and dance realise their own form. The stronger the music, the stronger the dance, even if much dance criticism treats the music as an optional extra. What emerges in Davies's work is a mysterious fused whole, in which design also plays its part.



David Buckland, Photo of a performance of *Wild Translations*,  
Music by Kevin Volans, 1995

Mystery is an important element in Davies's work, but for those from outside dance culture, the ineffable symbiosis between music and movement can sometimes bemuse. Composer Kevin Volans recalls his reaction when he first saw Davies's *White Man Sleeps*, danced to his string quartet of the same name: "At first I didn't see much relationship between the dance and the music. I had this notion that people danced to the music, but they never did. Often when the music was very quiet, or almost nothing was happening, they were running around in a furious way, and vice versa. I was very naive and to begin with I found this quite strange. It was only later, when I saw some fairly early Martha Graham, where the dancers danced step for step with some extremely poor music, that I saw how awful it can be if the dance Mickey Mouses the music. Now I realise that there is a counterpoint, that there's a different language in dance, which evolves its own set of rules, which don't necessarily apply one-to-one with the music at all."

Davies has created five pieces to work by Volans; of these, *Signatures* (1990) and *Wanting*

to *Tell Stories* (1993) had music specially commissioned. Volans (who, like all those close to her, calls Davies "Sue") acknowledges that his approach to writing for dance has evolved over the years of working with Davies: "Initially, knowing that a choreographer would work on a piece didn't change the way I thought about the music. In my music for *Signatures*, for example, there were what I think of as almost cinematographic cuts, from very dense writing for the whole ensemble to solo writing. Sue found that difficult to deal with, although I think that in the end it was a fruitful challenge. That piece made me very aware that I couldn't do such dramatic things without causing problems for the choreographer. It's not a problem for me, it's simply something to be aware of. In *Wanting to Tell Stories* I kept cutting short the material I was presenting, 'censoring' it with the new kind of material that follows. That was conscious. I knew it would give her something on which to work with the dancers. Nevertheless I'm always aware that the music should be able to stand by itself, without the dance."

It was through Volans that Siobhan Davies made contact with Matteo Fargion, who has spent much of his working life providing music for dance, most notably for Jonathan Burrows, his collaborator on no fewer than seven occasions. A former student of Volans, Fargion first worked with Siobhan Davies on *The Art of Touch* (1995), in which his *Sette Canzoni* were juxtaposed with harpsichord sonatas by Scarlatti. "It was flattering," says Fargion, "to share the stage with Scarlatti. We have the same birthday, which is a good place to start." As he sees it now, working with Davies "was a turning-point for me. What Sue looks for in music seems to be a rhythmic energy and vitality, a strong sense of mood, changing tempi. I'm thinking of music she's worked with by Kevin, by Gerald Barry, Steve Reich: very solid music. When I started working with her, my music wasn't really like that: I was disappearing into a world of deadpan."

At first, Davies approached Fargion as a kind of consultant, rather than as a composer: "Sue had this idea of working with baroque music, of having 'numbers'. She'd never worked that way before. She wanted to use Scarlatti and asked me to choose some of his music. So out of his 550 sonatas for harpsichord I selected five and then said, 'Now, how about a piece by me to go with them?' There was a string quartet I'd written that seemed to work. I played it to Sue, who was immediately excited, so I set about writing a harpsichord version of it. It was a pretty wild and furious piece, quite high-energy, where my work with Jonathan Burrows had tended to be much sparser."

### The music should be able to stand by itself, without the dance.

Fargion's next collaboration with Davies will be unveiled at the Brighton Festival in May [1997]. The piece, entitled *Bank*, calls for some unusual instruments, which the composer himself will play live. "The music I've written for *Bank* derives from a project for a 25-minute piece called *Bass Drum* written for the percussionist Robyn Schulkowsky. I'd told Sue about it and two weeks later she rang up and said, 'Would you write me a percussion piece?' For my own purposes I'd recorded a

mock-up for *Bass Drum*, with me tapping on a table. It was rough but I became quite fond of the dry sound. I played it to Sue and she liked that kind of sound-world. Then I found two old 1960s suitcases and worked with the sound technician on them, but we couldn't get them to sound good, so now it's going to be for three cardboard boxes. They sound amazing, a strange, dark sound, a mixture of log drum and tabla. I played a lot of cardboard boxes before finding the right ones, and I've got a cellarful of the rejects."

Having discovered the right instruments, three of them, Fargion ordered 20 of each, a new set for each venue. When I spoke to him, he was just beginning to grow the nail on the middle finger of one hand, to allow himself a different sonic texture. Such are the lengths to which a composer will go. At that time, rehearsals for *Bank* had not got under way but he was already thinking in practical terms about how the music and the dance might work together: "My piece, which is called *Donna che beve* ('Woman who drinks'), is dense, very rigorous, and all fast. I feel sorry for Sue trying to keep that energy up, and I'm worried that she may feel daunted by it. It seems to me that lately I've been thinking in terms of experimenting with silence that would let in the dance, as opposed to music that was so solid that there would be no room for anything else. So I've offered to punch some holes, so to speak, in the music, which would mean I'd need to work from visual cues in the dance. We'll see whether she needs it, although I'm aware that it's dangerous to start messing with the music for the sake of the dance. Whatever happens, I'm confident that Sue will remain faithful to the music."

Some composers sense a hierarchy in dance that puts choreography first, music second. That's not how Fargion views his relationship with Davies, nor for that matter with Jonathan Burrows: "Both have a great respect and passion for music, and I've never felt that I'm taking a back seat, that my music is background. Sue comes from the school of choreographers who say, 'Write me a piece and I'll deal with it.' That's a composer's dream. She respects the structure of the music. When I saw *The Art of Touch* rehearsed I thought there was too much going on, and I asked, 'Does it have to be so full?' Quite rightly, Sue didn't pay much heed to my comments. Then when I saw it on stage, I was very moved by it."

Another composer who has worked regularly with Davies is Gerald Barry. The two first collaborated on *White Bird Featherless* (1992), followed by *Trespass* (1996) and *Affections* (also 1996), for the last of which Barry provided piano quartet arrangements of arias and dances from Handel's operas. For Barry, working with Davies has cast his work in a revealing new light: "I think that what first drew Sue to my music was its energy, its sense of line, and we took it from there. For *White Bird Featherless* I excavated pieces from my opera *The Intelligence Park*, pieces that made musical sense, would be interesting dramatically and had an energy, a dynamic. I enjoyed sewing

the whole thing together as a satisfying sequence that had no narrative function: the order depends solely on musical sense, so I suppose it forms a new narrative. Seeing my music in the context of the dance absolutely makes me re-hear it, and especially so with *White Bird Featherless*, where I associated the music with specific characters in the opera. It was exciting and moving to see the music turned inside out, to have prejudices and expectations utterly confounded."

Like Volans and Fargion, Barry has provided Davis with music, which she then takes into the studio to make dance that will fit, though not in the slavish way that Stravinsky decried. Barry

sees his work as collaboration, even if there is no moment when composer and choreographer actually work together: "It has been a process from which I have learnt a lot. You might not call it a collaboration in the traditional sense of the word, but we certainly think of it as a collaboration. It's based on trust. She wants me to do something as strongly as I can, and I want the same from her. It's been a collaboration without tears, with very little back-and-forth. I feel many choreographers peddle a mediocre view of the human body, but Sue's work has an integrity, a cleanness and increasingly a poignancy as well. Often there's an uncluttered directness, a

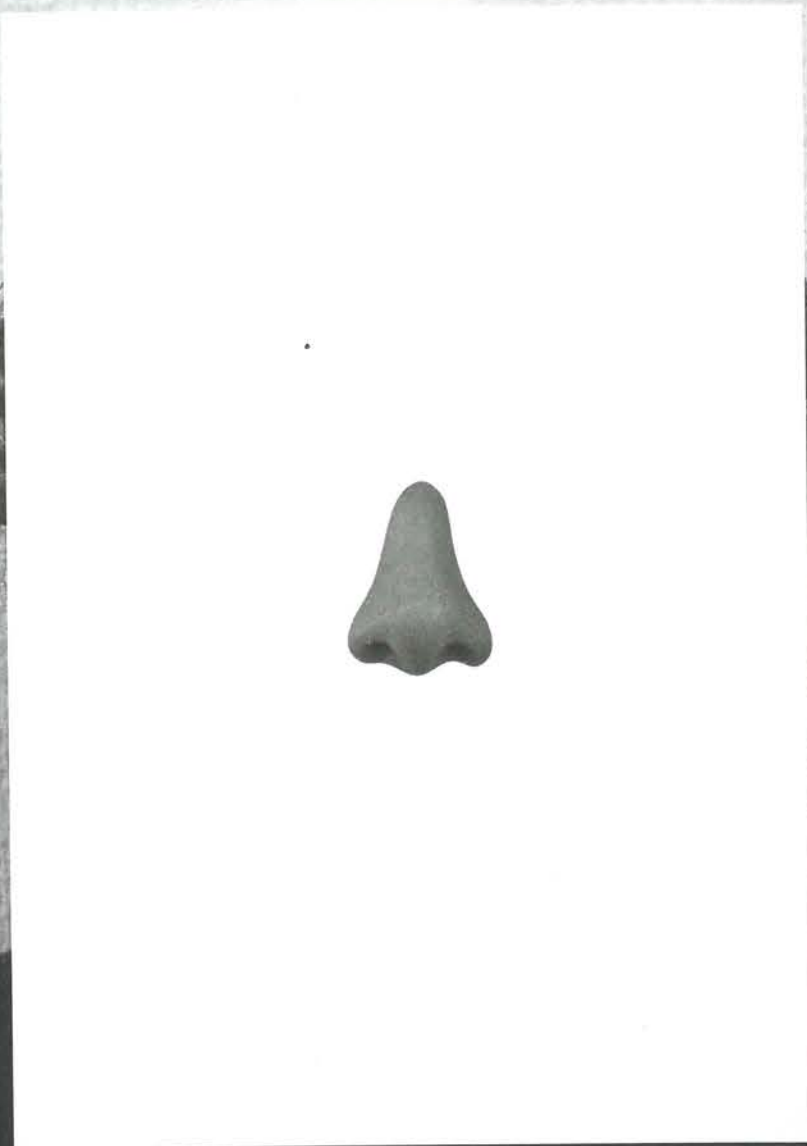
true poetry. I've occasionally watched her work with the dancers in rehearsal, and there was one moment in *Affections* where the dancers adopted a position, almost like a Pietà, the Madonna with the dead Christ, a biblical *tableau vivant*. It was extraordinary to see these bodies, which are so finely wrought, working in this way, to see scenes come alive, change their form, finally become something else. In principle it's not unlike what one does constantly, alone, with music. Chipping away at various configurations of notes."

Each of these composers acknowledges a facet of writing for dance that is not specific to working with Siobhan Davies, but which they nevertheless value. In the words of Matteo Fargion, "Choreographers like Sue have a really important role in commissioning new music. I like the fact that the music is heard by a lot of people, even if you sometimes wonder if they're really paying attention. New music has a kind of 'premiere' culture, where a piece is played once, badly, and then forgotten. With dance, a piece really starts to sound like something after a few dozen performances, and Sue always works with live music, which is a great thing. Working with her is not like spending six months writing a piece, then simply sending it to the performers. Instead you really feel a part of something. That's rare for a composer, and I love it."



**The stronger  
the music,  
the stronger  
the dance.**

David Buckland.  
Photo of a performance of  
*White Bird Featherless*,  
Music by Gerald Barry, 1992



# ODOURS

## GIVE VOICE TO THE SILENCE

by  
APOLLINE SAILLARD



Olfaction, the sense of smell, is often overlooked in favour of sight, hearing, touch or taste. In an interview with olfacto-therapist Patty Canac, Apolline Saillard discovers how scents can transport a patient from coma into consciousness, or from consciousness into altered realities.

In October 2013 I attended the convention Olfaction et perspectives in Versailles. Among the speakers was Sabine Chabbert, the delegate from the Fragrance Foundation (France). She said,

Olfaction is a sensory function which enables people to perceive fragrance, to detect aromatic substances floating in the air, to choose their favourite foods and even to recognise each other. It is vital for the survival of the human race. From a physiological point of view, research has enabled great progress in finding out how olfactory receptors function, how many there are and how the cross-connections between the nerves work. These olfactory molecules are strange little phenomena, sometimes recognisable by their vibrations, sometimes by their shapes, but there are still many aspects of their existence that specialists do not understand.

Research shows that many odours can be perceived by some people but not by others, and genetics may play a role in explaining these different reactions. The evolution of the notion of olfaction and the knowledge of how it works have huge implications in the fields of medicine, psychology, industry, environment, marketing, information and training. We would all gain from discovering or re-discovering this sense, for our well-being, pleasure, health or even our own personal safety.

## INTERVIEW WITH PATTY CANAC

The sense of smell is closely linked to emotions and memory rather than to the analytical cortex, which is primarily activated by the other senses. For this reason I have decided to highlight the sense of smell through olfacto-therapy, a form of therapy that appeared in France in 2002. Below is an interview I did with Patty Canac, olfacto-therapist at Raymond Poincaré Hospital, outside Paris, Tuesday 12 November 2013.

Apolline Saillard: Odours mean a lot to you. Can you tell me why?

Patty Canac: Odours intrigue me; they are intangible, elusive and invisible. They can be fascinating, bewitching or disgusting, but they never leave you unmoved. In spite of this, the sense of smell is often poorly developed. What I like is that odours are invisible and yet they bring you back to something visible, to specific places.

AS: How did the collaboration between the perfume industry and the medical field start?

PC: In 2002, Professor Bussel, a neurologist at the Raymond Poincaré Hospital, decided to contact the organisation, Cosmetic Executive Women [CEW], after a conversation with a patient who had been in a coma for several months.<sup>1</sup> On leaving the hospital this patient said, "If I've come back to life it's thanks to odours." This reaction wasn't the first and even if neurology knows exactly how odours travel through the limbic system, this discipline has never used it for therapeutic purposes. The inclusion of perfume in medical practice has meant that we needed to discuss and understand the powers that odours have and what they could mean for a patient. It was at this point that I was introduced to the hospital which is located next to the l'Institut Supérieur International de la Parfumerie, de la Cosmétique et l'Aromatique Alimentaire [ISIPCA]<sup>2</sup> where I teach people about the sense of smell. Since 2001, a partnership between the medical community and International Flavours and

Fragrances [IFF] has brought olfactory workshops into various hospitals dealing with neurological rehabilitation, cancer services and geriatrics. The workshops offer olfactory stimulation to patients with various traumas.

AS: What is the most inspiring about this partnership?

PC: In the media up until now, odours and fragrances are associated with beauty and well-being, and are orientated towards marketing and an image of oneself through an olfactory signature. It immediately caught my attention to approach fragrances in the medical field and to use them in order to help patients recover when their other senses were impaired. I mainly work on memory problems, behavioural problems and the effects of strokes. In 2013, there have been 11 monthly or bi-monthly workshops in ten hospitals in France. They are led by two olfacto-therapists, Sabine Lecamu and myself, along with the help of 11 voluntary workers from CEW. These volunteers have been able to devote time in hospitals thanks to sponsorship. In the workshops they tell stories based on smells. For example, "On the first day of school Peter opens his pencil case...". By using these introductions they encourage the patients to smell various objects relating to the stories in order to study their reactions and better understand their conditions. When a patient has one of his five senses impaired, we try to re-stimulate it with the other ones.

AS: What is the status of an olfacto-therapist in France? How do you become one?

PC: The term was used for the first time by the Raymond Poincaré Hospital following our workshops; it refers to medical care using smells. Today, our status doesn't benefit from state recognition since to be officially recognised, you must be professionally trained in medicine. Recently, the hospital has agreed to pay therapists in charge of patients with specific olfactory

conditions known as hyposmia. The patients are cared for individually, and are followed up by a neuro-psychologist, a nutritionist and an olfacto-therapist. Other hospitals have wanted to offer this kind of therapy but unfortunately it has not been possible. The company Olfarom was launched following this increasing demand; it is an organisation I set up to train medical teams with the knowledge of olfacto-therapy.

lo

Frédéric was 19. He used to love rugby, friends, all sorts of sweets, and, according to his mother who spent a lot of time at his bedside, "especially spearmint chewing-gum. He used to chew it all day long." Victim of a motorbike accident, he lay in a hospital bed for three months. Since his head trauma, his body was silent and still. He was in a semi-deep coma, and despite everything, the medical team invited me to meet him. I felt emotional when I approached the bed of this injured young man, all his vital functions supplied via pipes. Immobile, eyes fixed on the wall right in front of him, his big body retained the girth of a young man with a healthy appetite. In spite of all the therapeutic tests, he wasn't showing any signs of recovery. Neither the treatments, nor his favourite CDs, nor the pictures of his brother or dog managed to bring any hope of recovery.

Frédéric didn't seem to notice my presence. His face remained expressionless. He looked withdrawn in an unreachable world. When I saw his frozen body, I wondered what I was doing there with my pretty little flasks neatly arranged in my briefcase. I decided to select a strong odour of spearmint, the one evoking his favourite chewing-gum. I waved the soaked stick just under his nose. Right, then left... I waited for a moment... nothing happened. I moved the stick again, right, then left. I thought I saw his right nostril move a little. But it was such a tiny and brief moment, I was not sure. How could I be certain? I soaked the stick in the spearmint flask again. I slowly brought it closer to Frédéric's nostrils. Suddenly, both of them started twitching. No doubt this time! His gaze moved from the wall to my hand holding the spearmint stick, and then he looked into my eyes and started observing me. I must have been pulling a funny face judging from the hint of a smile on his.

op





AS: How does the medical community use this therapy?

PC: Since the intervention from olfactory experts on serious pathologies such as cancer, Alzheimer's, anorexia and autism, various medical teams have growing interests in odours and are exploring them in their therapeutic support. The use of smells in their therapy enables them to use the knowledge gained in our workshops while completing their medical skills.

AS: Can you describe what is in your magic briefcase?

PC: In my briefcase I've got smells referencing "nature and vegetable", such as mushrooms, wood smells, excrement, animals, musky smells or the smells of freshly cut grass and flowers. I also have "home" odours, representing each room of the house: chimney fires, leather armchairs, bathroom scents such as toothpaste, bubble bath, shaving foam; or other key odours like the glue we had in primary school. All the sample odours are provided by the IFF.

AS: Can we say that music therapy is to hearing what olfacto-therapy is to the sense of smell?

PC: Music therapy uses music to help clients improve their health physically, emotionally and mentally. Listening to music makes you think about a past event; for example, a jazz song could remind you of a moment experienced a couple of years ago at a festival. However, you will not relive and experience this moment again, unlike what happens when you smell an odour. You can travel through time by smelling a specific scent: it is exactly "la madeleine de Proust". For instance if you have a pet that dies, then you can see and smell many other pets but that will not lead you back to yours. On the other hand if we make you smell the exact copy of your pet's smell, that will take you back to the past. The unconscious mind rises up into the conscious.

AS: Do you have any partnerships abroad?

PC: Yes. A few years ago, Jonathan Mueller, a neuro-psychologist from San Francisco, came to France because he was interested in bringing odours into his practice. His research is based around trying to unblock complicated situations with our sense of smell. I couldn't supply him with an olfactory briefcase as Olfarom didn't even

exist at the time, but we approached the olfactory sphere together through several case studies. For example, the case of a 40-year-old patient with depression, who, following a promotion and new responsibilities, suddenly started to suffer from fear and anxiety. Would it be possible to use smells to relieve the patient from it? Maybe smelling a fragrance specifically designed to reassure him on a daily basis could help him.

AS: How do you see the future of olfacto-therapy?

PC: One day, I think it will be given the same status currently given to physiotherapy and osteopathy. I believe it will be established in every specialised neurology hospital.

#### NOTES

1. Since 1996, this public interest organisation supplies free beauty care to patients staying in hospitals, all funded by donations and sponsorship from the perfume and cosmetic industries.
2. Founded in 1970, the International Higher Institute of Perfumery, Cosmetics and Food Flavours. <https://www.isipca.fr/en>.

#### CREDITS

- p22, Apolline Saillard, *Noseshot Mugshot*, 2013, Photograph  
 p27, Apolline Saillard, *Noseshot Mugshot (side view)*, 2013, Photograph  
 p28, Rebecca Hendin, *Untitled*, 2014, Digital Illustration

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

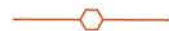
Patty Canac, Christiane Samuel, and Samuel Socquet-Juglard, *Etes-vous au Parfum?: Comment mieux sentir pour mieux vivre*. (Paris, InterEditions, 2008).

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Patty Canac: <http://www.olfarom.com>

# ANOSMIA

by  
APOLLINE SAILLARD, AMY TABARLY  
AND DUNCAN BOAK

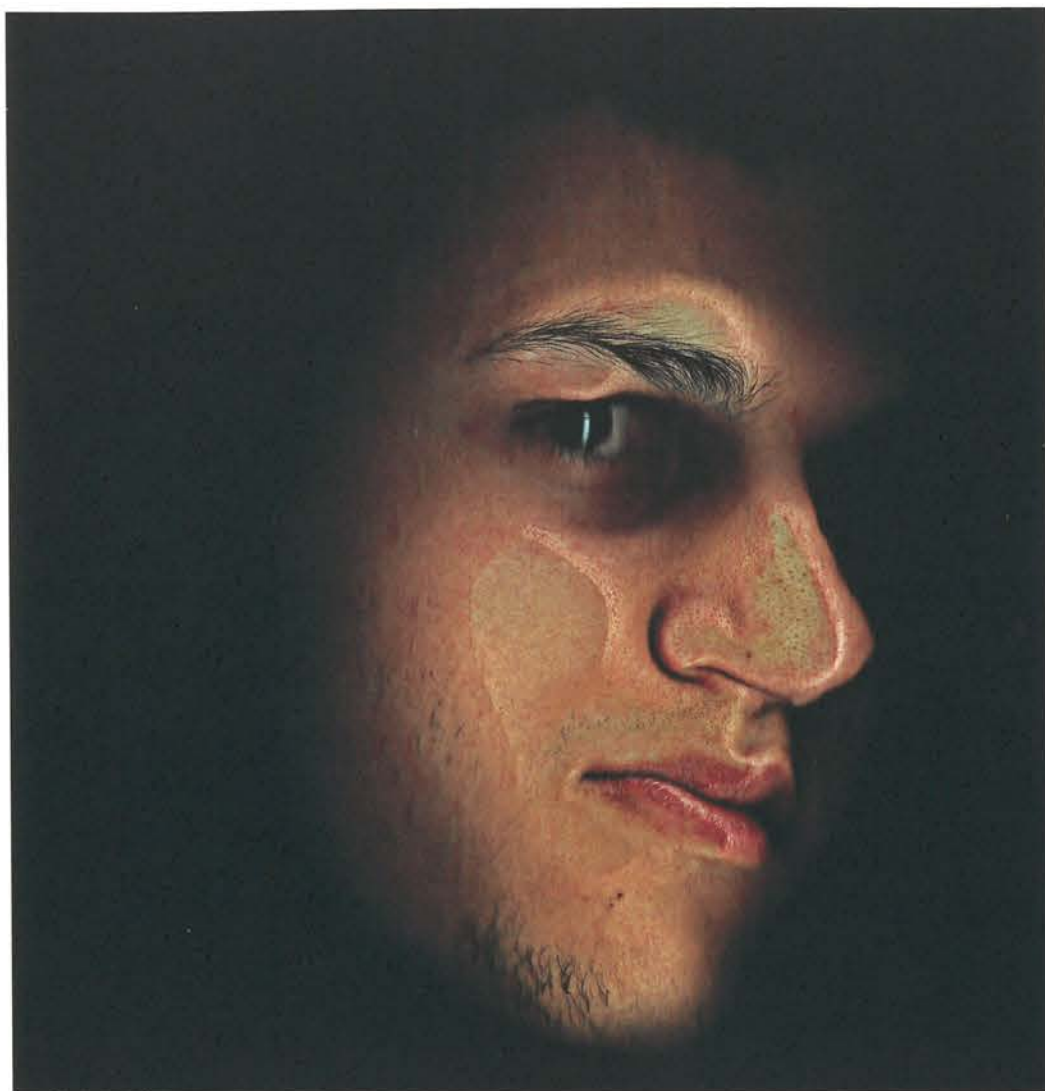


This series of photographs and the  
accompanying text represent anosmia,  
the lack of functioning olfaction.

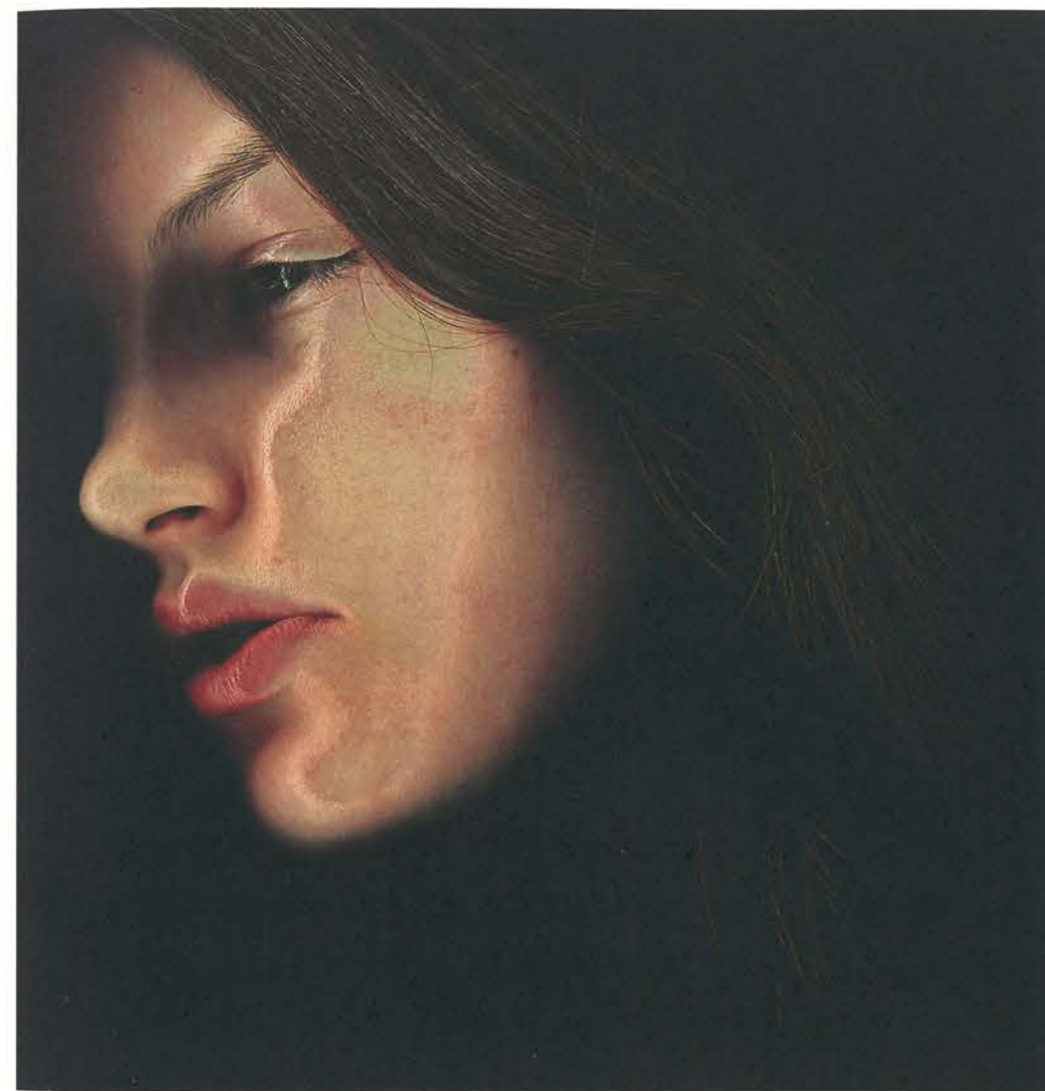
Odours Give Voice to the Silence



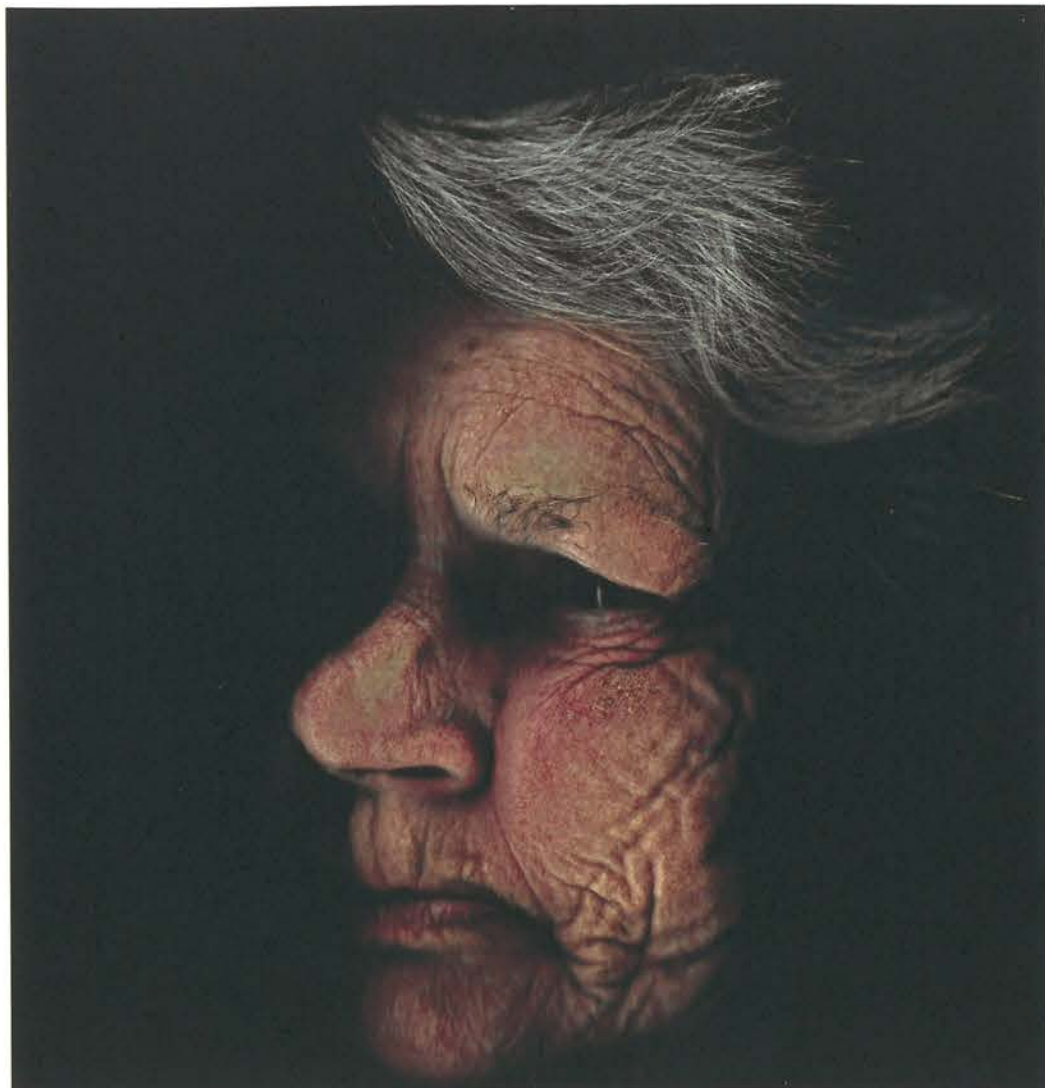
Sarah Kathleen Page, *Mother*, 2013, Photograph



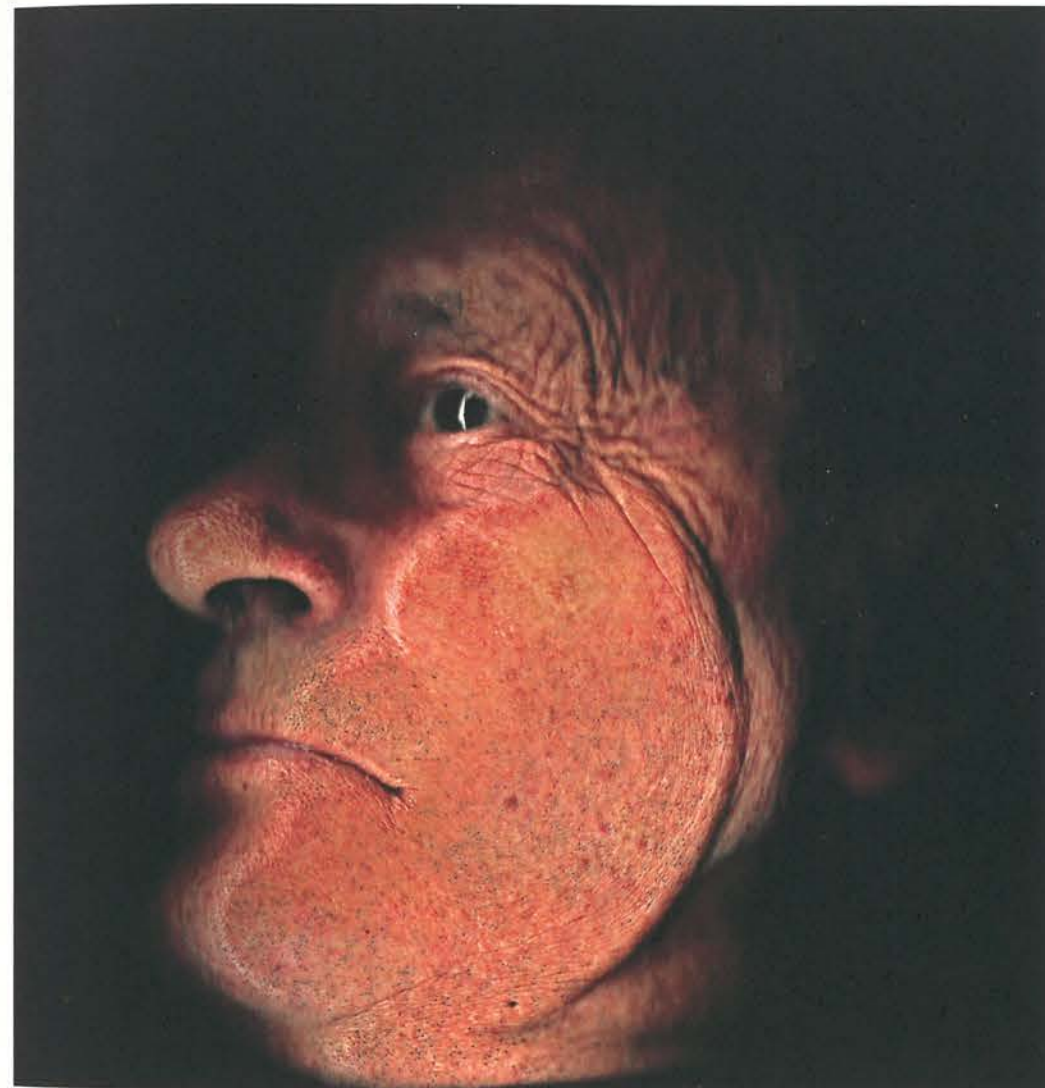
Sarah Kathleen Page, *Partner*, 2013. Photograph



Sarah Kathleen Page, *Myself*, 2013. Photograph



Sarah Kathleen Page, *Grandma*, 2013, Photograph



Sarah Kathleen Page, *Grandad*, 2013, Photograph

Sarah Kathleen Page suffers from congenital anosmia. In other words, Sarah was born with an inability to perceive odours. Never experiencing the most basic and cherished scents of everyday life is a burden she has learned to cope with: "It is a sense that I have been longing to experience for my whole life; the scent of my early morning coffee, my grandad's garden flowers in summertime, the memories of fresh sea air from childhood holidays, but most importantly, the scent of people I love: my partner's skin, my grandma's distinctive perfume and my mother's comforting scent. Daily communication, intimacy and attraction are affected. I can see, hear and touch, but I can't experience life in full."

Affected from birth, Sarah only discovered a community of others with a similar condition when she found Fifth Sense. It was the first time she had heard of any kind of support to benefit sufferers of the condition. Fifth Sense is the first charity working in the area of smell and taste disorders, raising awareness of the importance of something most of us take for granted, our sense of smell. The organisation was founded in 2012 by Duncan Boak, who lost his sense of smell as the result of a head injury. Fifth Sense exists to provide support and advice to smell and taste disorder sufferers, to raise awareness of such conditions, and to play a leading role in educating society on the huge part that the sense of smell plays in our lives.

According to epidemiological studies, smell loss, or anosmia, affects around 5% of the population. It can be congenital or caused by a wide variety of problems such as traumatic head injury or sino-nasal diseases. A decline in our sense of smell can also be an early marker of serious neurological conditions such as dementia and Parkinson's disease. However, it is clear that many people who have lost their sense of smell continue for years without proper treatment, as many doctors are either unaware that treatment options exist or do not take the disorder seriously.

Anosmia has been shown to affect people emotionally and socially, as well as physiologically. A recent survey of Fifth Sense members revealed that 60% of respondents

feel isolated by their condition; 45% suffer from depression and 85% are afraid of being exposed to dangers such as rotten food or gas leaks. The emotional importance of the sense of smell was also highlighted, with 55% saying that their condition had affected their relationship with their partners, family or friends.

Though she lacks one of her five senses, Sarah relies on sight in her career as a photographer, editor and videographer, work she has discovered to be a vital means of communicating about her anosmia disorder. She quickly became a member of the Fifth Sense community, and through her involvement, she produced a series of portraits of people close to her (her mother, boyfriend, and grandparents) and a self-portrait. These images show Sarah at the centre of those who care for her, but each of their faces is pressed against a transparent barrier. Although Sarah is surrounded by love, she is disconnected by her anosmia from those closest to her.

**Many people who have lost their sense of smell continue for years without proper treatment, as doctors are either unaware that treatment options exist or do not take the disorder seriously.**

Fifth Sense aims to support and facilitate research into smell and taste disorders and their treatment to help combat these disorders.

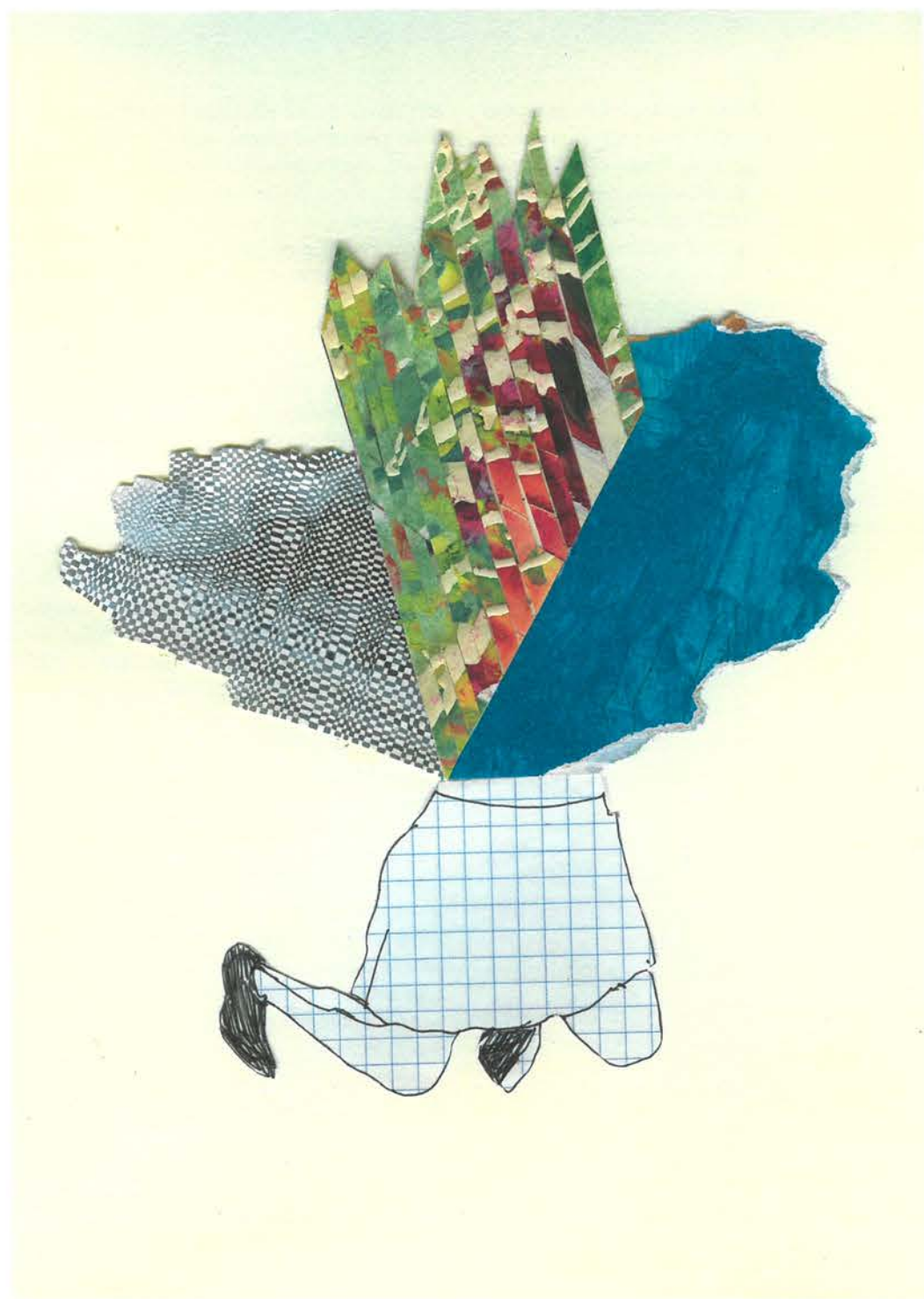
<http://www.fifthsense.org.uk/>  
Info@FifthSense.org.uk

# THE SEMI-DIVINE

by  
COOPER GAGE



**Unknown Quantities** commissioned New York-based artist Cooper Gage to create a series of artworks illustrating the balance between rationality and emotion.



Cooper Cage, *How I wake up*, 2013.  
Paper, Oil Paint, Watercolour, Acrylic



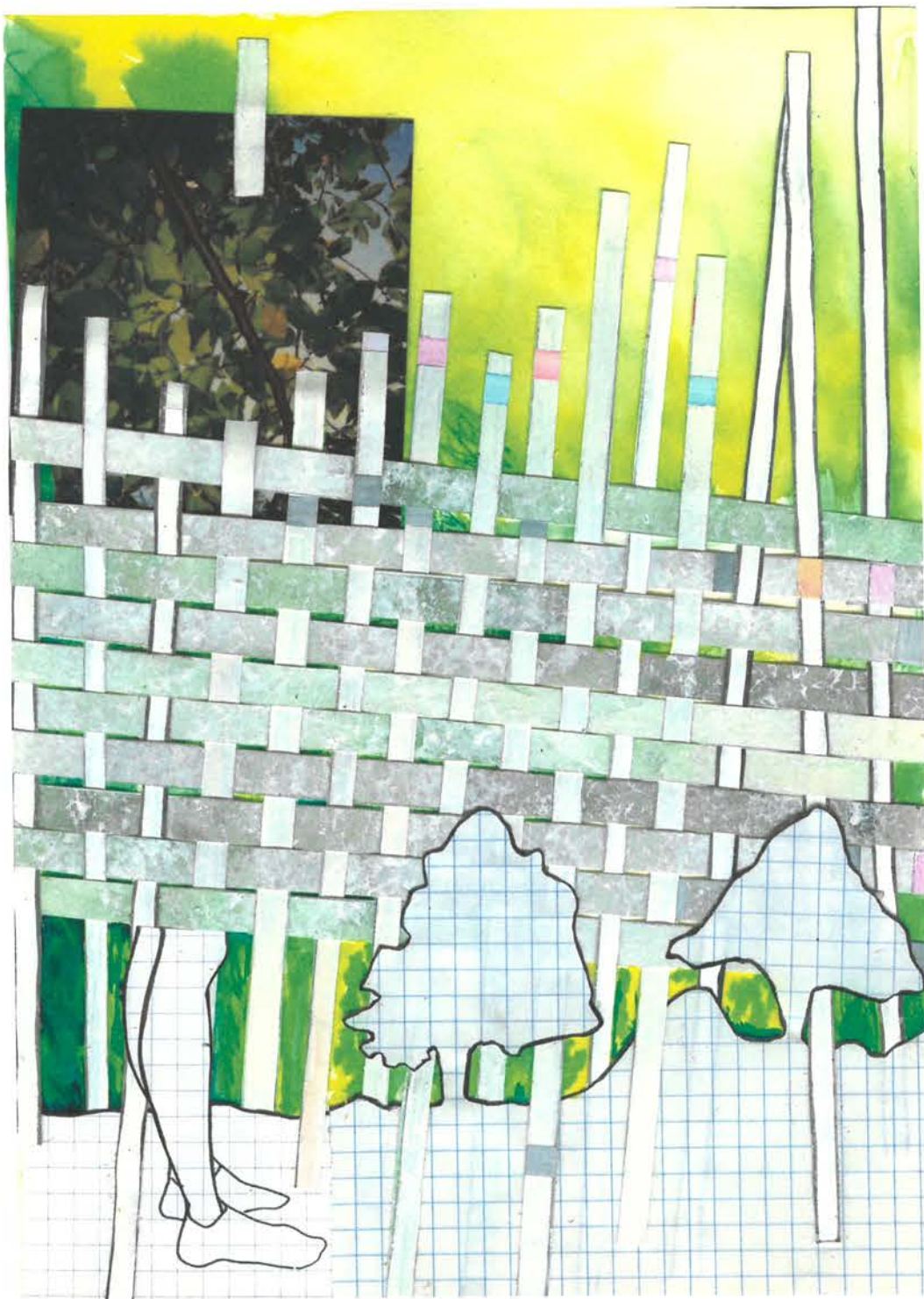
Cooper Cage, *Leaping and thinking*, 2013.  
Paper, Watercolour, Photo Collage



Cooper Cage, *How I think clearly*, 2013.  
Watercolour, Paper



Cooper Cage, *Magic box*, 2013.  
Thread, Paper, Photo Collage, Watercolour



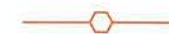
Cooper Gage, *Navigation*, 2013.  
Watercolour, Paper, Photo Collage

I think of the ongoing conversations and scenes in my head as mythical adventures, mythical adventures that are a fantastic reflection of my life in the world. Some of these better combinations of thought and feeling are like my own band of semi-divine creatures. If every moment is a step toward something, these are the ones hanging around my shoulders. They express reactions I think and feel but cannot say or act out in everyday life.

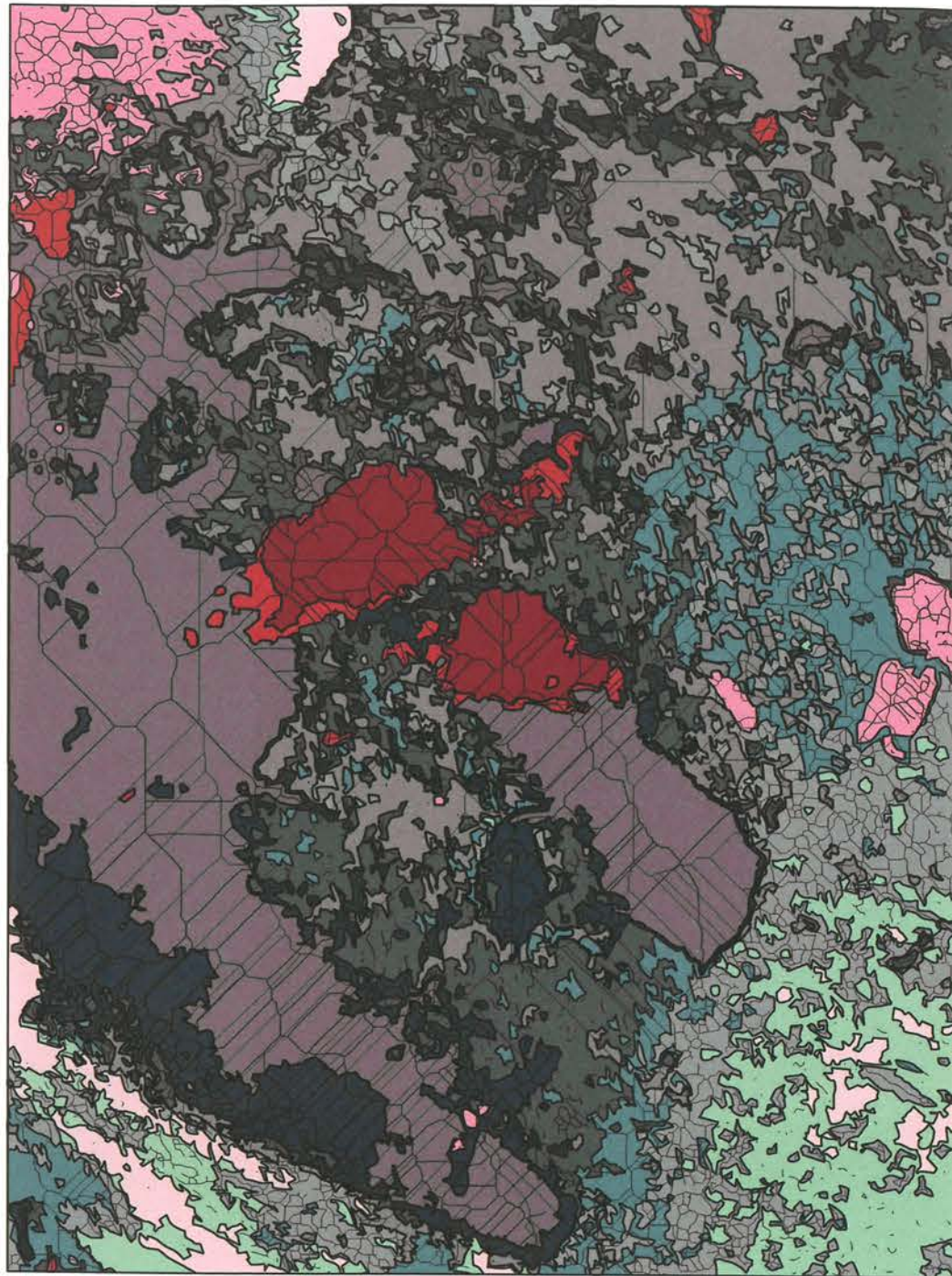
Cooper Gage

CURATED SPACE

# AXNS COLLECTIVE



Founded in 2011, AXNS Collective takes an interdisciplinary approach to public engagement, forging bonds between art and neuroscience. **Unknown Quantities** invited co-founders Cosima Gretton and Rachel Stratton to curate a space to share their work and research.



Jon Adams, 228, 2012,  
digital manipulated photograph

# ART X NEUROSCIENCE

by  
MARTHA CRAWFORD AND COSIMA GRETTON



Neuroscience has become a  
cultural phenomenon.

For decades people have been considering the intersection between art and neuroscience. In recent years, however, blockbuster exhibitions in London such as *Brains* at the Wellcome Collection and the series, *Wonder: Art and Science on the Brain* at the Barbican, have created an exciting and high profile trend. Curatorial collective AXNS (Art X Neuroscience) explores how the two disciplines mutually benefit each other and enrich our understanding of creativity, psychology and the brain. In March 2013, we curated *Affecting Perception: Art & Neuroscience* at the O3 Gallery in Oxford. Featuring ten leading artists who had suffered from neurological conditions, it explored health, the brain and creativity. The exhibition was accompanied by a programme of workshops for Sixth Form students and a seminar series from artists and academics. The aim was to engage the public in academic debate and developments in neuroscience, to explore the basis of creativity and to de-stigmatise neurological conditions.

One impetus for curating *Affecting Perception* was that many recent attempts to explore the intersection in art and neuroscience lacked clearly defined goals. In order to rectify this, AXNS defined three areas of focus: neuroscientific exploration of the neural basis of art, analysis of art to deduce brain functions, and finally, the intersection of art with recent discoveries and conceptual issues in neuroscience.

The first of these areas — and one of our aims as a collective — is to explore the neural basis of the aesthetic experience. In doing so we hope to dispel some of the art world's resistance to this form of analysis, and to show how, when encountering art, understanding neurological processes can increase our appreciation of art rather than diminish it.

Using imaging, researchers have already made interesting observations about which areas of the brain are active when we experience beauty. However, this is a rudimentary technique that does not necessarily provide a satisfactory explanation of what the aesthetic experience is. It is no more helpful than saying that love is caused by a surge of neurotransmitters. We know there is more to it than that.

Part of the reason that trying to find the "neural location" of the aesthetic experience is so unsatisfactory lies in the application of

objective scientific methods to an intrinsically subjective experience. The beauty of a piece of art is embedded in our own unique conscious experience, which cannot be objectively measured or compared to that of others.

A further challenge, from a scientific perspective, to studying what happens when humans interact with art is that it requires a definition of "aesthetic experience", a problematic task since this varies from artwork to artwork. On one side there is the intellectual and visceral experience induced by much conceptual or controversial art; and on the other, the experience of visual beauty. In her essay for the catalogue of *Affecting Perception*, art historian Francesca Bacci explains it as "a dialectic movement between two extremes: on the one hand, a rewarding sensation of recognition, of confirmation of our internal expectations, and on the other the surprise that comes from the subversion of our beliefs."

In the marriage of neuroscience and art, issues often arise from their differing forms of rhetoric. Whereas science requires specific definitions to form hypotheses, art defies this kind of categorisation; thus the two disciplines can sometimes appear at odds. We believe that it is in this white space between the two that each can learn from the other. Clearly science cannot continue to take the same approach to art as it does to its own discipline. It cannot continue to apply complex and little understood concepts in neuroscience to artistic observations. Neuroscience is not ready to make leaps from cellular physiology to cultural phenomena.

The second objective in AXNS's mission statement is to explore the neuroscience of perception through art. This is by no means a new phenomenon, nor is it one confined to the sphere of science. Ernst Gombrich and Rudolf Arnheim explored art, perception and visual illusion, and artists have long identified peculiarities in the way our brains perceive the world. They have used these to play with the visual image.

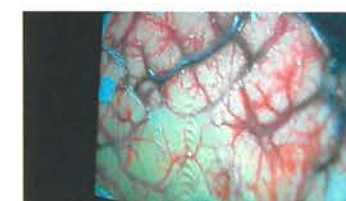
*Affecting Perception* included artists suffering from different neurological conditions that had either influenced their art without intention, or become a source of inspiration. The aim was to explore how the artists' conditions affected their practice and ultimately to show how altered brain function affects perception. We were encouraged to find that visitors left with an insight into the

artists' altered experience of the world, and an appreciation of the fragility of their own reality as a construct of their brain.

Defining artists by their medical conditions is a controversial undertaking which we deliberately highlighted in order to facilitate discussion and even criticism of our project. We tried to avoid imposing misleading interpretations by focusing on connections the artists had already made between their condition and their work. The aforementioned essay by Francesca Bacci discussed issues surrounding medical categorisation. Bacci positioned AXNS among other "historians, critics or curators [who] categorise artists according to a period influenced by events or experiences" and ultimately questioned whether "it [is] so different to define a period of production by physiological, anatomical or pathological brain changes".

De-mystifying and de-stigmatising neurological conditions were the primary goals of *Affecting Perception*. Our feedback indicates that we did achieve this among some members of the public who attended our seminars. One woman, for instance, wrote that her perception of autism had altered and she now viewed it as an "ability not a disability." There were some general misconceptions that we did not manage to dispel, however. Many students at the workshops held on to the belief that "creativity is in the left side of the brain and logic in the right."

Striking the appropriate balance between accessibility and oversimplification is an area that AXNS continues to work on. We question whether it is right to teach students that their capabilities are so anatomically fixed. The dichotomy between left and right further polarises art and science, portraying artists and scientists as if literally inhabiting separate halves of our brain, whereas in truth, artists and scientists are cut from the same cloth: both are curious and explorative, seeking the truths behind our every day experiences.



Jon Adams,  
Stills from video of awake  
craniotomy, 2012

The third part of AXNS's overall mission is the promotion of new artistic projects that explore the discoveries and conceptual issues that arise from brain science. Neuroscience has become a cultural phenomenon and we want to explore how this manifests itself in the arts.

For some artists, it is a conscious association. Artists are increasingly holding residencies in laboratories and hospitals. Jon Adams, one of the artists included in *Affecting Perception*, suffers from Asperger syndrome and has been collaborating with Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, a leading autism researcher at Cambridge University. Likewise artists such as Tereza Stehlikova, Anaïs Tondeur and Rosalyn Driscoll are collaborating

with the newly created Centre for the Study of the Senses at the Institute of Philosophy.

Yet it is our belief that there is a further, less determinable effect of neuroscience on art. We believe that the conceptual ideas that come out of neuroscience are beginning to infiltrate a general zeitgeist. Many artists are beginning to look to media, such as Augmented Reality [AR], that alter perception and produce artworks that are in constant flux. AR is based on the premise that every viewer should have a unique experience and that perception is not a fixed term. This is the same principle that we sought to convey in *Affecting Perception* and explore further in our **Unknown Quantities** article about AR artist, Tamiko Thiel.

*Affecting Perception: Art & Neuroscience* was held at the O3 Gallery in Oxford in March 2013.

Visit [www.axnscollective.org](http://www.axnscollective.org) for upcoming events or follow @axnscollective

# INTERVIEW WITH TAMIKO THIEL

by  
RACHEL STRATTON

Each individual brain constructs its own image of the world, but the phenomenon of Augmented Reality can enable us to see the world as others might. As part of ongoing research into the intersection between AR and neuroscience, AXNS spoke to artist Tamiko Thiel, whose art celebrates the power of individual, site- and time-specific perception.

It is unsurprising that Augmented Reality [AR] is an attractive prospect for new media artists when you consider its power to infiltrate audiences' visual fields and manipulate how they perceive their surroundings.

Tamiko Thiel's work is characterised by the element of "surprise". Her installations have a continual life span that changes with each viewing, whether because of the context in which they are viewed or the programming of the pieces themselves. The metamorphosing aspect of her work resonates with the idea of perception as an individual, fluctuating phenomenon. In *Transformation (Sunflowers)* Thiel makes geo-located flowerbeds appear to the viewer only when they pass a certain location. The flowers alter depending on the position of the viewer and the satellite that happens to be flying overhead. "Just as with photography," Thiel states, "a lot of people might take a photo of the same thing, but the end image and experience are different person to person. That's something that makes AR more variable. Every time you look, there's a different thing to discover, which is not true with traditional art."

Thiel's use of AR to explore individual perception reflects a particular preoccupation for AXNS: how neurological conditions alter perception. One current project aims to create the experience of colour-blindness through an Augmented Reality installation. Working with a family whose late father was colour-blind, she uses anecdotal evidence to reconstruct an impression of his visual field. The piece will demonstrate that perception is a highly individual image constructed by the brain, while highlighting the impossibility of ever really seeing the world as another might.

Many of Thiel's installations are equally concerned with altering perception through ideology. In Harlem-based project *Mi Querido Barrio*, she re-imagined lost murals and street art in their original locations as a means of exploring the once strong and now declining Puerto Rican culture of the area. The piece employed a GPS coordinate system so that the Augmented Reality was only activated in specific locations. The result was that audiences were invited to participate in a form of psycho-geographic mapping of Harlem, in which their experiences of the area were mediated by Thiel's own ideological standpoint. In other words the audience was invited

to "get inside her head". A benefit of this interventionist form of art is a widening of access. As she explained to AXNS, "The kids from this area, one of the poorest of Spanish Harlem, are not interested in going to the uptown museums. They are not going to pay \$30 to go to the Met or MoMA, but all of them want a smartphone because that's the cool thing to have. So all of a sudden you have a museum-shy audience, all with smartphones, and you can get them to look at the graffiti and street art that used to be there."

A similarly site-specific installation, *Art Critic Matrix*, enabled viewers to access alternative art exhibitions, curated by Thiel, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Accessed via an App that only activated within a certain distance of MoMA, the installation showcased artists who would otherwise not have been awarded wall space at MoMA: the ultimate symbol of the American high art establishment. The piece engaged in a radical form of institutional critique that went one step beyond questioning the selection process of creating an artistic canon by transferring power from curators to artists. It further served to make a wider statement about the extent to which our visual world is already "curated" by others.

Much of Thiel's work seeks to draw art outside the museum establishment, in order to serve as a form of protest. *Reign of Gold*, a project made in conjunction with the Occupy movement, enables participants to point their camera at any location and activate a shower of gold coins to fall across the picture. The installation uses a form of AR that reads a person's location via GPS but can be accessed all over the world, making it, as Thiel explained, "available throughout the world, at different sites of protest." Although originally designed for the Wall Street Occupy movement, the piece was recently exhibited in the context of the Istanbul art fair, where, placed in front of pieces such as Damien Hirst's skull, it spoke of the excesses of the art market. Unlike Thiel's site-restrictive pieces, in which participants experience a particular place mediated by Thiel's ideology, *Reign of Gold* taps into a communal ideology and enables participants to apply it at will. It celebrates individuality of perception, while also highlighting the power that can be harnessed from shared perception.

Tamiko Thiel clearly has a vision of the role of AR in the future of visual art. The ability to access







Tamiko Thiel, Carlotta Paolieri, Odolena Kostova, Dave Miller.  
Screenshots from *All Hail Damien Hirst!*, 2012. Screenshot from application

it all over the world makes it a democratising force in the art establishment and strengthens the dialogue between artist and viewer without mediation from institutions. As she said to our interviewer, "Film and photography both used to be very complicated. You used to have to develop your own photographs and now you simply point, click and print. That whole process is so expanded. The same is true of video: everyone goes out and makes little films. I think that video and photography will tell you the direction that AR will go." And how does that impact on her as an artist? "On the one hand," she responds, "there will be more competition but on the other you've got an informed and engaged public. There are still famous photographers, because in the end, it's how you use the medium."

[www.mission-base.com/tamiko/](http://www.mission-base.com/tamiko/)  
[@tamikothiel](https://twitter.com/tamikothiel)

Images on previous pages: Tamiko Thiel,  
*Screenshots from AR Reign of Gold!*, 2011.  
Screenshot from application

# INTERVIEW WITH JON SARKIN

by  
COSIMA GRETTON AND RACHEL STRATTON



American artist Jon Sarkin discusses the effects that neurosurgery has had on his life and his art.

My brain's insane, I got an insane brain.  
 I'm the cerebellar dweller, a grey matter matter.  
 It's not a matter of life and dead though, no you see I'm just a  
 cortex pawn in this here game.  
 A dendrite knight,  
 A nerve cell light,  
 Hell I'm the king of cool of pituitary night.  
 Not some brain dead fool right and wrong,  
 No, I'm just a neural abstraction of this stroke joke song.

Jon Sarkin, "Not Not Making Art", *Affecting Perception*, 2013

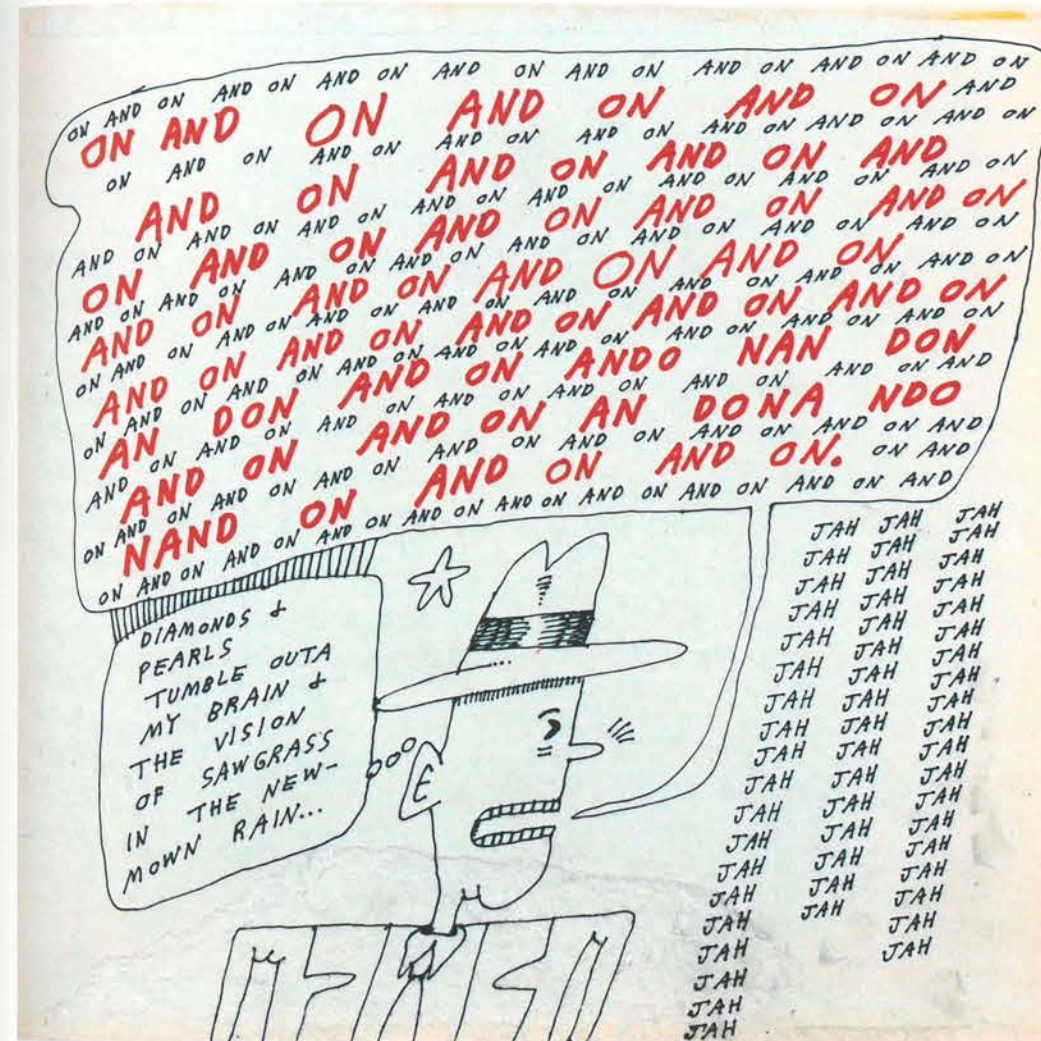
Jon Sarkin creates elaborate drawings and paintings filled with words and images. At the age of 35 Jon, until then a successful chiropractor, suddenly developed unbearable tinnitus. He consulted a number of doctors; a blood vessel had shifted position and the pulsing blood was now stimulating his auditory nerve. A neurosurgeon eventually agreed to operate but warned that it would be risky. Jon suffered a stroke on the operating table. In an emergency procedure, the neurosurgeon had to remove half of an area at the base of his brain called the cerebellum. Jon awoke to find his world completely altered. He was confined to a wheelchair and deaf in one ear; his vision splintered and his balance was permanently skewed. Despite nearly full physical recovery, his thinking was altered, and it became increasingly difficult to maintain the semblance of his former life. Sarkin became obsessed with drawing. Images influenced by comics and popular culture kept coming to him, spilling out of his brain. He was a contributor to AXNS Collective's 2013 exhibition *Affecting Perception*. A version of this interview was published in the catalogue.

Cosima Gretton and Rachel Stratton: Jon, tell us about your life now. How do you think this surgery changed things? Would you say it has affected your art?

Jon Sarkin: The majority of the left side of my cerebellum was removed. That means I not only walk with a cane now, but I'm deaf in my left ear and I have significant lack of coordination in my left hand and my left leg. It also resulted in this mental weirdness that resulted in what I'm doing now.

See, we live in a very left brain-dominated society. I think the left brain, right brain distinctions are generally over-simplified. Our society is definitely pretty "left brained", very sequential, rational and dominant, and so the right brain is kind of subservient to the left. When I had my accident, all of a sudden my left brain was out of

the picture. The right side was now an uncaged beast. I was recently reading a paper about how the prefrontal cortex, where your thoughts and ideas are formed, actually communicates with the cerebellum a lot more than we thought. The cerebellum plays a role in our thinking and cognition. Usually there are billions of cerebellar-cerebro pathways, but about 90% of mine were destroyed. I think what happened was all these cerebellar neurons tried to take over the 90% of neurons that aren't linked to anything, so new pathways formed in novel and unique ways. The brain is so much more dynamic and plastic than we thought. My brain has morphed as the result of my injury and has resulted in some weird neural architecture, which is manifested in my art.



Jon Sarkin, *On and On*, 2012, permanent marker on paper



AXNS Collective Curated Space



CG/RS: You often talk about a compulsion to draw as a kind of obsessive-compulsive action. Could you tell us more about this and how it drives your art?

JS: Some people with OCD need to wash their hands all the time, or turn the lights on and off. My manifestation is my art. I have this obsessive need to persevere. What I do is not at the level of choice, it's not at the level of volition. It's what I do. It's like asking you, "What do you think of gravity, what do you think of breathing?" What I do is at the level of the way gravity works, the way hunger works, the way breathing works. It's like I'm compelled to draw, the way a ball falls to the ground because of gravity. If you add up the amount of time I spend drawing or thinking about it or dreaming about it, it's 168 hours a week. It's all the time. It's all I do. I can't turn it off. So I do derive a kind of satisfaction; I do derive joy out of it. The idea of happiness versus unhappiness falls away, and you're left in this transcended kind a blissful state where time and space just drop away.

CG/RS: Do you feel that this compulsion to create art is how you are trying to communicate something to other people, or is it expelling something from yourself?

JS: If I was on a desert island, I would probably still draw, but it would be very different. It would be really unsatisfying because no one else would ever see it. If you meet someone who doesn't speak English, you're never going to be able to communicate with them as comprehensively as with someone who speaks English, but you try nevertheless. After my injury, I began to speak a different language to most people, but I'm still trying to communicate my innermost state to them. I've developed an ability to take what's inside of me and manifest it into visual form. Most people can't do that; most people don't want to do that. For most people, doing that is extremely anxiety-provoking. For me it is too, but I have no choice in the matter.

CG/RS: In what way do you find it "anxiety-provoking?" Do you find producing art distressing? Yeah, real distressing, but it's more upsetting not to do it. If you tie an OCD sufferer's hands behind their back so they can't wash them, that's not going to be pretty. Not that when they wash their hands they're in a blissful state, but it sure

beats the pent-up anxiety that ensues when they can't manifest their obsession. It's soothing in a very weird way. Art blossoms into something that I like doing, and then it becomes like a therapy. I would say the most valuable thing for me is that it's very distracting. Everything goes away when you're making art, and that's why I'm compulsive about it, because as soon as I stop, I start thinking about stuff. That usually takes me down a road I don't like going down. So it's very therapeutic; it's very purging.

CG/RS: I notice that you use a lot of influences of jazz in your art, and there are certain motifs that come up again and again. Where do your ideas come from?

JS: Let me ask you a question. When you dream, do you decide what to dream? Or do you have certain motifs in your dreams that keep coming to you again and again and again? It's like you're listening to a record, and it skips and skips and skips and skips. I do the same thing over and over again, but the beauty of repetition is that you also get to see the slight subtle change with each repetition. You see, my drawings are not overly thought out or intellectual. For my kind of art, thinking too much is the bane of what I'm about.

CG/RS: The title of your talk is "Not Not Making Art". What do you mean by this?

JS: Find an object and hold it up. [Cosima holds up a pen.] Now put it down and hold up your hand. Now hold up the pen again. The first time you held up the pen was "making art". The second time you negated the pen, so that is "not making art". The third is "not not making art". Although it looks like the first time, it's different because you have the memory of the last time you held the pen up and then without the pen. The action is the same, but the history and meaning are different. It doesn't really make sense, and that's the point. I don't make sense anymore, but I don't make nonsense.

# INTER- DISCIPLINARITY

## A HISTORICAL VIEW

by  
DAN CALLWOOD

Behind the buzzword "interdisciplinarity" lies a hidden history. Historian Dan Callwood probes the political aspects of this burgeoning academic trend.

Interdisciplinary study, "interdisciplinarity", and "transdisciplinarity" are all academic buzzwords that have captured both the imagination and funding. Even a cursory search on JSTOR, the online academic journal service, brings up a wide range of papers that take an interdisciplinary approach to research, mixing fields as diverse as sociology, linguistics, education and environmental sciences. However as an idea, a set of methods and a way of organising research, it deserves to be interrogated and placed in its historical context. What do we mean when we use the term "interdisciplinarity"? What are its historical foundations in the university? Is it an esoteric, scholarly concept? Is it implicated in the power relations that govern all knowledge-generation and dissemination? If interdisciplinary study challenges the institutional and intellectual boundaries of different fields of study, shouldn't we challenge its own foundations?

Interdisciplinarity is the merging of two or more academic fields to create knowledge previously unattainable within the bounds of each established discipline. This creation of knowledge could manifest itself through innovative individual work, through collaboration, or in new fields such as Middle Eastern studies in the humanities, or nanotechnology where physics, chemistry and engineering intersect.

In order to investigate and understand the term, and the organisations and study it has spawned, we need to look at the rise of the ordering of knowledge and academic disciplines themselves. The novelist William Gaddis wrote,

**Knowledge has to be organised so it can be taught, and it has to be reduced to information so it can be organised... In other words this leads you to assume that organisation is an inherent property of knowledge itself, and that disorder and chaos are simply irrelevant forces that threaten it from outside.<sup>1</sup>**

Arguably, this is not the case; ordering knowledge into different disciplines and methodologies only masks the chaos of analysing that information. In order to make sense of this chaos of information, we organise study into

"disciplines". As well as meaning the organisation of knowledge, discipline can also be defined as the training of people (through threat of punishment) to follow codes of behaviour. These definitions intertwine in educational establishments. In the 15th century, "discipline" was a kind of moral instruction that taught self-control. Although contemporary academic faculties do not take this aspect of "discipline" quite so seriously, the term does still reveal the enmeshed relationship of knowledge and power.

Attempts to order knowledge in this fashion date back to the ancient Greeks, who categorised knowledge and suggested a hierarchy for forms of knowledge. Later, the burst of information produced by the Scientific Revolution led scientists to limit themselves to increasingly narrow fields. Knowledge was then tamed by the codifying impulses of the Enlightenment, best encapsulated by the production of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* in 1751.

However, it wasn't until the 19th-century development of the modern university that the state began to sponsor and shape the production and disciplining of knowledge. Even the humanities were under pressure to conform to scientific method in order to tighten their subject areas, leading to the birth of sociology in the 1830s and the development of disciplines such as English, modern languages, politics and economics.

This was not a smooth process; as long as there was an impulse toward specialisation and classification, there was also resistance. Nietzsche, for one, hated the rise of the specialised and professionalised "scholar" at the expense of the wide-ranging "philosopher". He claimed,

**The Declaration of Independence of the man of science, his emancipation from philosophy, is one of the more subtle after-effects of the democratic form and formlessness of life.<sup>2</sup>**

Faced with this ossifying process of specialisation, it's easy to see why "interdisciplinarity" is a worthy idea. Adding the prefix "inter" to the loaded term "discipline" seems at first to change its meaning radically. "Inter" evokes notions of inclusivity, exchange and reciprocity, softening Nietzsche's elitist notion of

philosophy as a higher form of knowledge and privileging collaboration as the means to attain a comprehensive knowledge of the world. This may be bound up with a mistrust and lack of confidence in our faculties to know much outside a narrow sphere of specialisation.

But does the term "interdisciplinarity" really imply a cuddly inclusivity and openness to new ideas, free of internal faculty boundaries and even international borders? The institutional basis that allowed much interdisciplinary study to develop in the 20th century suggests otherwise. During World War II the Allies saw the value of employing the best minds to analyse potential risks and provide knowledge about the enemy. In an atmosphere of total war, academics worked, mostly in secret, for the Office of Strategic Services in the United States or the British Foreign Office's Information Research Department. This collaboration between academia and the state served as a model for knowledge generation in the Cold War. As the state's interest moved to different areas of the world, the state was not concerned with the borders between disciplines that academics had created. Instead, the state brought academics together under "area studies", for example at Columbia University's Russian Institute, created in 1946, and Harvard's Russian Research centre, set up in 1947. During the Cold War, academics from different disciplines were placed together in institutes, which forced exchange, with geopolitical pressures dictating the areas necessary to study, such as the Soviet Union itself, or the Pacific Rim. By encouraging exchange across disciplines, these centres would aim for a kind of totalising knowledge of their field by going beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries. Outside the direct production of knowledge for the state, interdisciplinary study areas such as American Studies diffused influence and "soft power" by promoting a patriotic amalgam of history and literature that spoke of the superiority of American culture.

The history of interdisciplinary study is not all academic collusion with the aims of the state, however. Cultural studies for instance stood at the critical margins of institutions. Rooted in new social movements such as feminism, gay rights and anti-racist movements, it aimed to critique the production of culture and identity by striving for an inclusive notion of "culture" that melted art,

film and literature into it. Since the fall of Soviet Communism, fields such as American studies or the "area" studies set up in the shadow of nuclear war have moved on to critically appraise their past.

Alongside the notions of exchange and the breaking of barriers, interdisciplinary institutes, and the kind of "total knowledge" to which they aspired, evolved in part as instruments of the state. This is not to say that "interdisciplinarity" and its many uses are forever tainted, just that if we recognise that traditional academic disciplines deserve to have their boundaries, assumptions and foundations challenged, then so too does the notion of "interdisciplinarity".

**Does the term "interdisciplinarity" really imply a cuddly inclusivity and openness to new ideas?**

# POLARITIES OF PRACTICE

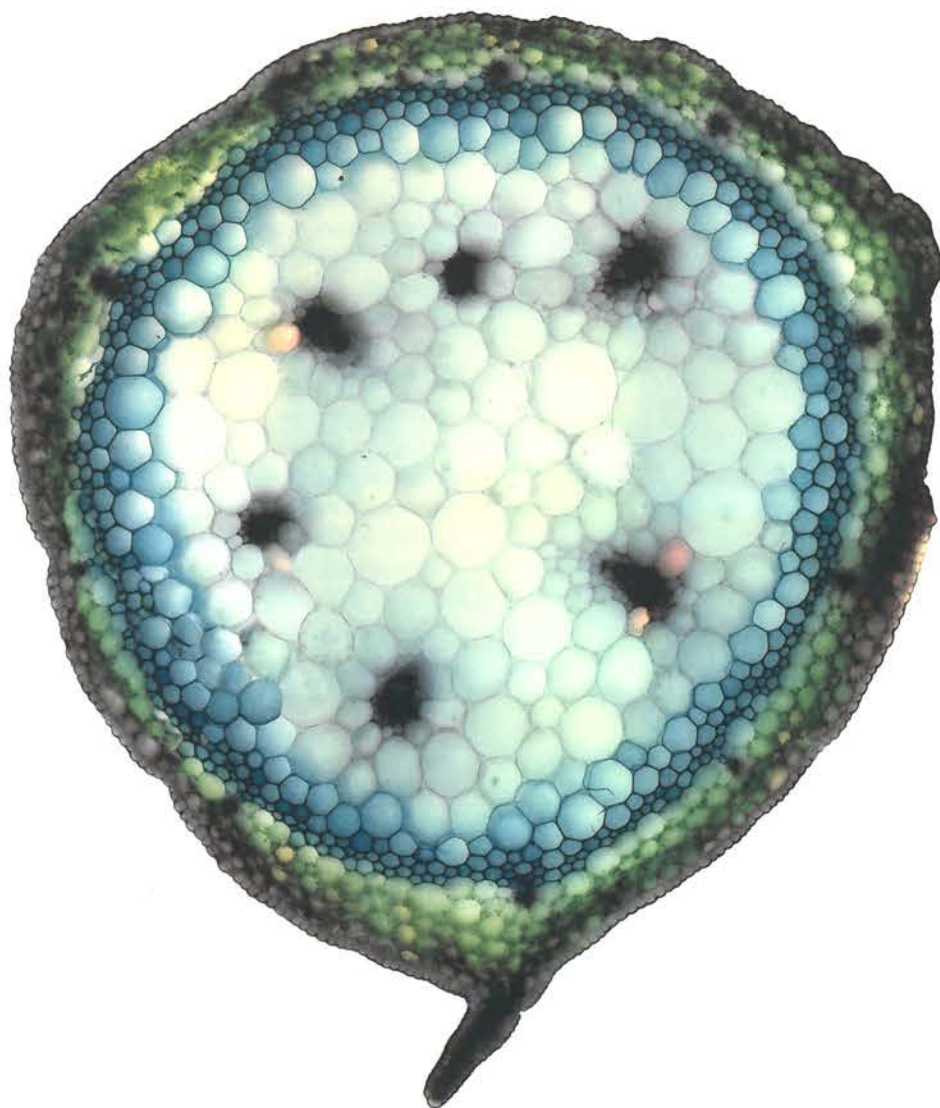
by  
ROB KESSELER



Filtering artistic intuition into scientific lab work, Rob Kessler invites us to see the natural world through different lenses. To accompany his text, **Unknown Quantities** presents a selection of ink drawings from his new series *Zona pellucida*.

1. William Gaddis quoted in Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity* (London, Routledge, 2002), p1.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche in *Ibid*, p3.



Rob Kessler, *Naples Garlic*, 2010.  
Stained Stem Section, Photographic Print

When we close our eyes,  
our contact with the world is limited to the  
wrapping of our body.  
With them open, the identity of our wrapping  
arrives as far as we can see.

Giuseppe Penone, 1970

In a recent edition of the journal *Arcade*, I expanded on a discussion following a lecture I gave in Portugal at the Gulbenkian Science Institute.<sup>1</sup> A question from the floor sought a definition of art, which is not something that usually exercises the artistic community. The question did not go away, so I sought to discuss the topic by exploring the parallels between art and science. I wanted to describe our respective practices as both a process and a product, a way of examining the world through a series of filters. The effect of these filters serves to reveal a subject under new conditions, to expose the hidden, to sharpen ambiguity, to conceal the unwanted, and in so doing to provoke alternative observations and arguments. It is a process of subtle distortion and mediation, one of concealing in order to reveal, akin to looking through a smoked glass plate to observe a solar eclipse.

One filter in particular makes subtle but intense shifts in how an object is perceived which seems to resonate with my own practice. The polarising filter, known for its use in sunglasses and for giving its name to Polaroid cameras, has even more spectacular results when used in microscopes. As the names suggest, Scanning Electron Microscopy and Differential Interference Contrast Microscopy offer the possibility to mediate our observations through molecular excitation and the diffraction of light through specimens. Minute organic samples reveal detailed and ornate topographies. Ordinarily colourless crystals take on prismatic hues: the obscure is made apparent, the transparent tangible.

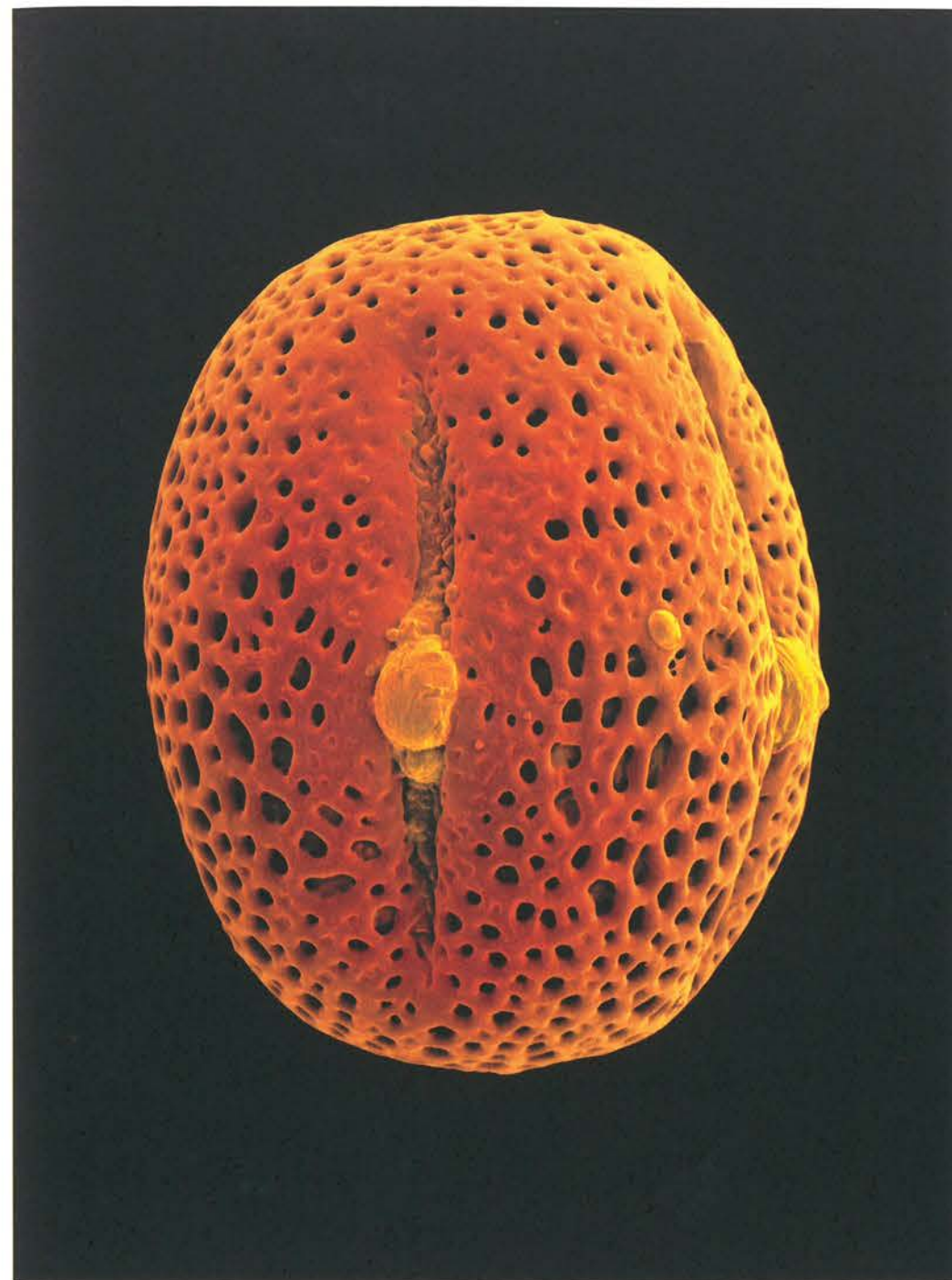
In a work entitled *Rovesciare i propri occhi* ("Reverse your eyes") the artist Giuseppe Penone offers not a filter but a reflector. Filmed wearing mirrored contact lenses that reflected both the landscape and the photographer, "the sensitive

corneal surfaces cease to be like windows and become instead convex screens for an image of what exists beyond, as far as the eye can see".<sup>2</sup> Much time has been given over to musing on the cultural mediation of nature. While my work is also highly mediated and culturally located, this is a means to an end rather than the focus of the enquiry. The intense subtleties of colour and the simultaneous chromatic contrasts become informative and emotive, the intimate complexity of the forms creating an attraction that lands on the eye and penetrates the mind just as a drop of ink pervades a glass of water. In this way the images mesmerise with a visual allure that resonates fiercely and spontaneously on the senses, pre-empting any cultural analysis.

The images serve as an instant neural trigger to excite memory and imagination, as if we are observing an exploding firework in the void of a dark sky. These analogous descriptions are used consciously, reflective of an ambulatory research process that encompasses many forms and strategies in which the end result becomes an intense distillation of many experiences. These experiences, so important in their contribution to the evolution of the work, may not be apparent in the resolution of the completed work, nor are they a requirement for initial engagement. The work demands attention without a *priori* knowledge or theoretical deduction. For example, when confronted by an image of a single grain of pollen it is not important at the point of engagement for the viewer to know from which flower or in which country the specimen was collected. It is not necessary that the viewer be familiar with the microscopy and digital technologies by which the image was created. The image's place in the great canon of botanical illustration or flower painting may be of scant regard. Yet,



Rob Kessler, *Asparagine crystals*. Photographic image taken through a 19th-century Baker Microscope with polarizing filter



Rob Kessler, *Seville Orange*, 2009, Pollen Grain, Hand-coloured Micrograph

not neglecting the pollen's function, it is worth considering how a bee sees a grain of pollen. These further points of reflection may come later. At the instance of first contact, the work must stand on its own, reliant on the disconcerting and ambiguous familiarity it might evoke as well as its seductive modulation of colour and structure. The image guides the eye just as the markings on a flower direct the pollinator. The tactics may be similar but the rewards fulfil different needs.

In common with other animals, our survival instincts have developed through a sophisticated ability to distinguish and respond to complex systems of patterns and signs. Just like Hamlet and Polonius pondering whether a cloud looks like a whale or a weasel, we are instinctively drawn to grafting our own personal experience and memory onto the images and objects before us.

**Hamlet:** Do you see yonder cloud that's almost like a camel?

**Polonius:** By the mass, and it's like a camel indeed. **Hamlet:** Methinks it's like a weasel.

**Polonius:** It is backed like a weasel.

**Hamlet:** Or like a whale.

**Polonius:** Very like a whale

**William Shakespeare, Hamlet.**  
**Act 3, scene 2**

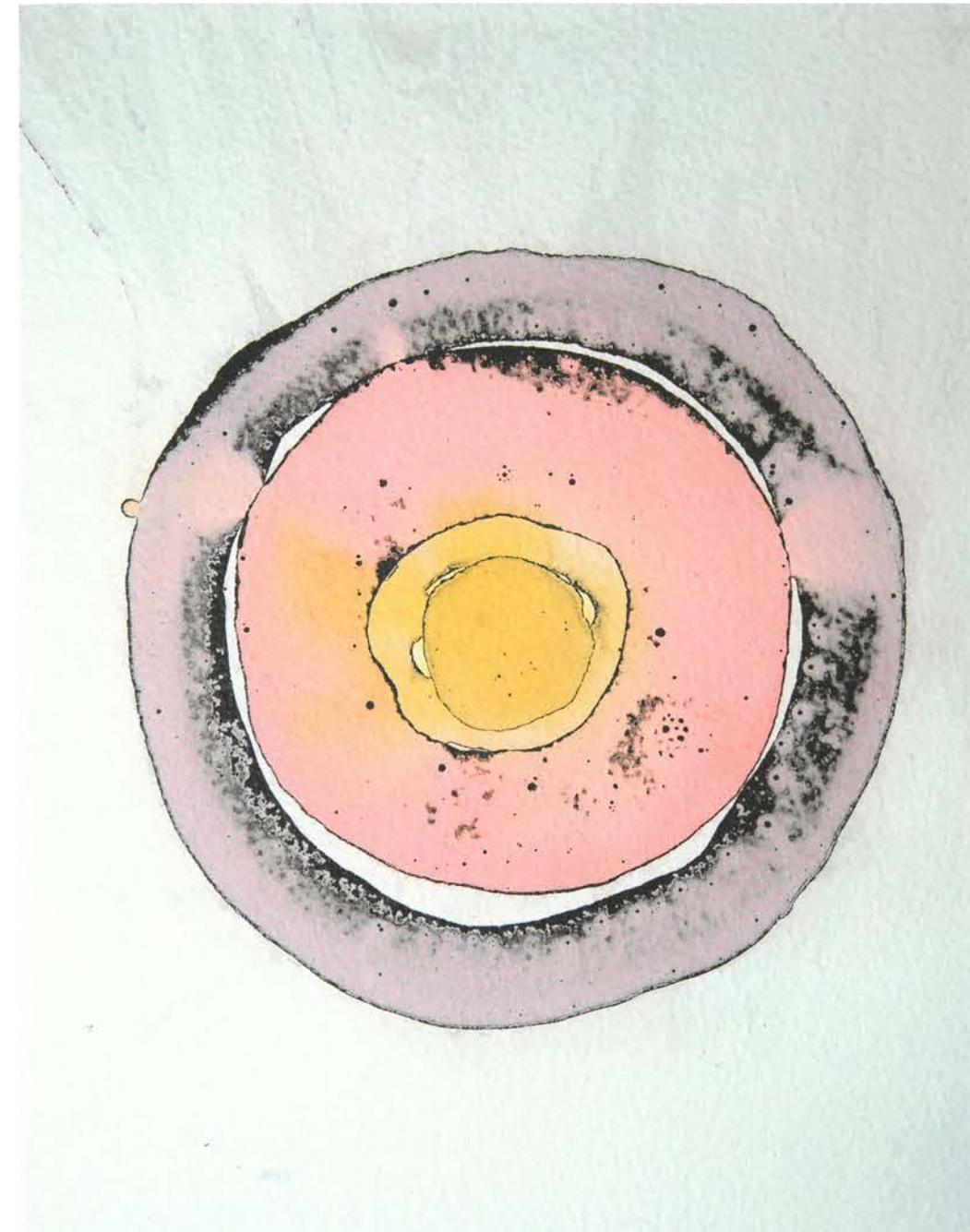
The cognitive stimulus of a single image can trigger an electrochemical process of memory-encoding and retrieval through the 100 billion neurons within the brain. The image floats at that point between artistic conclusion and viewer experience, like a sliver of mica sandwiched between rock. The polarising properties of the artistic and the scientific filter together to illuminate the intangible and serve to reveal the complexities of the world around us and the neurological processes by which we engage with it.

Working with scientists provides access not only to their technologies but affords a glimpse of the world through their lens. However to move beyond the superficial appropriation of scientific knowledge requires understanding partners, access to their labs and above all a willingness to do the work necessary for meaningful engagement. To this end it is essential, wherever possible,

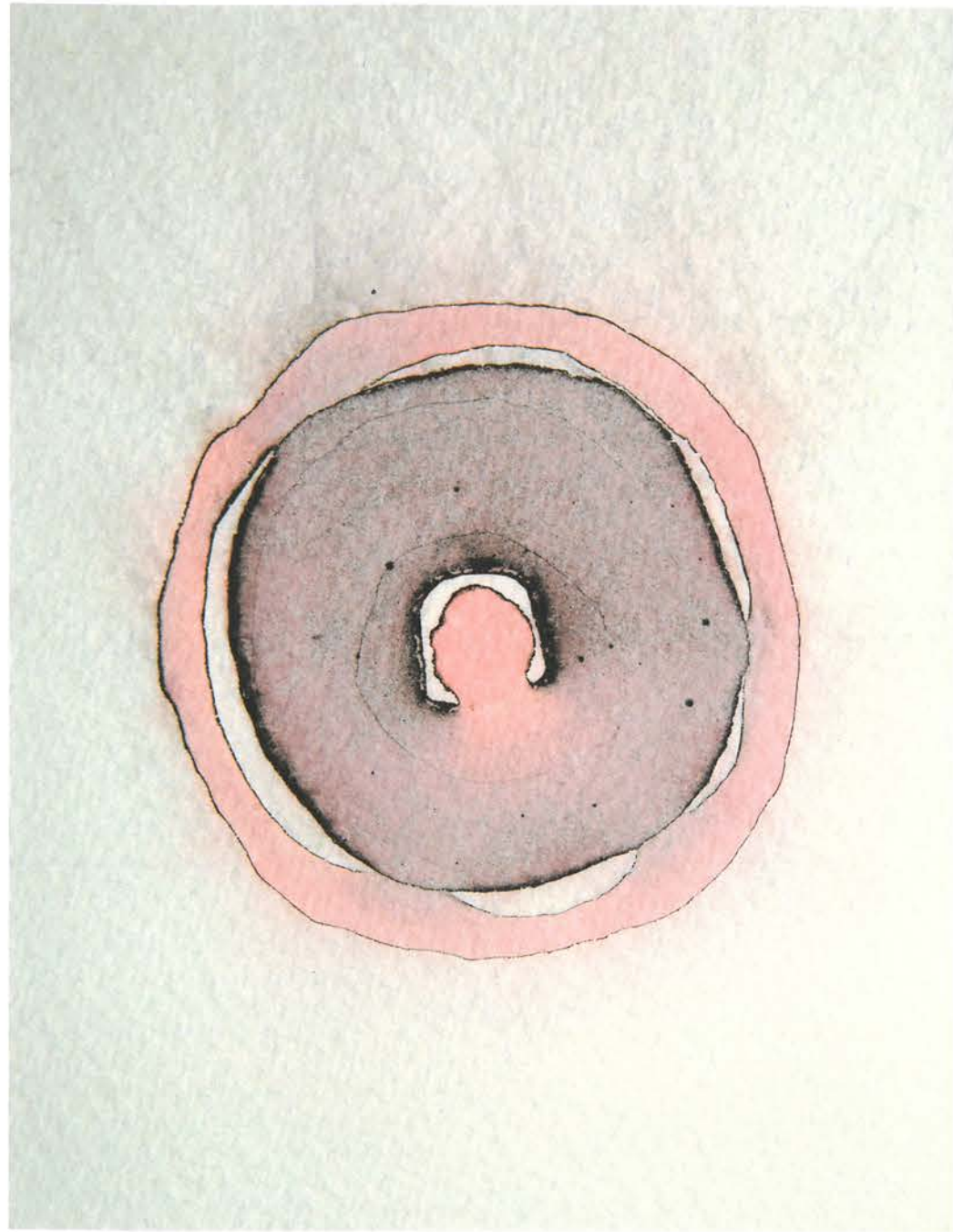
to prepare all lab samples oneself and to control the microscopic imaging processes. In this way the images develop through instinctive and intuitive responses underpinned by a cognitive research encompassing science, culture and art history.

The creative drive comes from a sense of intense curiosity with the living world and an urge to respond to the sense of awe it generates. In biology, the term *transcription* refers to the first stages of gene expression, a fundamental life-sustaining process that has been minutely observed and documented. In art, the transcriptive process has long been a subject of fascination for those interested in the workings of the mind, and we may speculate on whether the "creative gene" can be identified. It is at this point that the strands of logic and intuition intertwine to instigate the creative processes, increasingly occupying the attention of neuroscientists and perhaps some artists too. The artwork in the end may be the creative speculation that evolves through a fusion of artistic and objective reality. It is perhaps as Colleen Boyle describes in her essay "Eyes of the Machine": within photographic images, unseen realities are "a perceptual bridge — an interface — between what we know and what we imagine."<sup>3</sup>

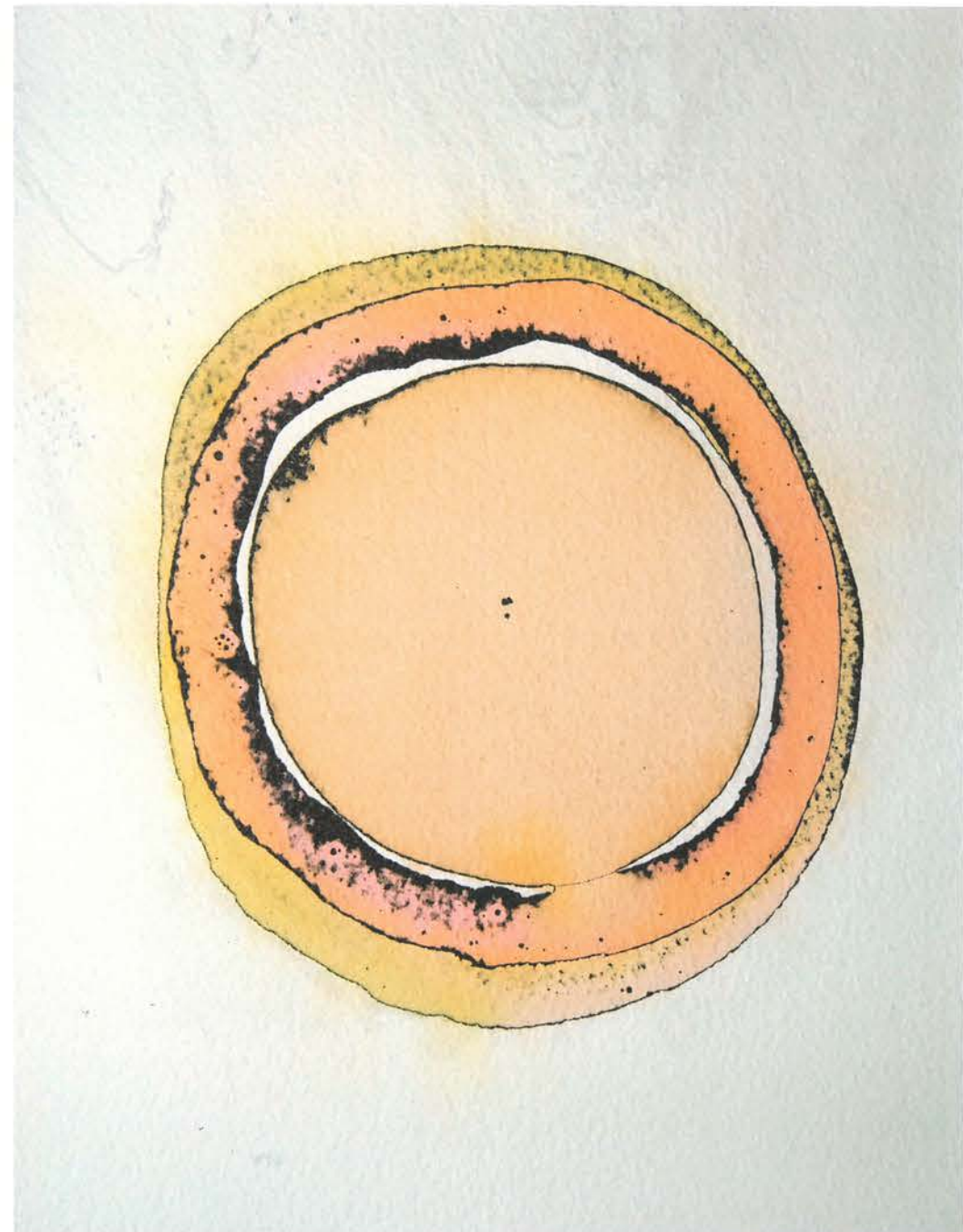
1. Rob Kessler, "Convergent Territories: A Definition of Art for Scientists," *Arcade* 31.3. (July 2013). Available via: <http://arcadenw.org/article/convergent-territories-a-definition-of-art-for-scientists>
2. Jonathan Watkins, *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968-2008* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2013).
3. Colleen Boyle, "Eyes of the Machine: The Role of Imaginative Processes in the Construction of Unseen Realities via Photographic Images," in Daniel Rubenstein, Johnny Golding and Andy Fisher, eds. *On the Verge of Photography: Imaging Beyond Representation* (Birmingham: Article Press, 2013).



Rob Kessler, *Zona Pellucida*, 2013, Ink and aniline dye on paper



Rob Kessler, *Zona Pellucida*, 2013, Ink and aniline dye on paper



Rob Kessler, *Zona Pellucida*, 2013, Ink and aniline dye on paper

UNKNOWN  
QUANTITIES  
IS PRODUCED  
AT CENTRAL  
SAINT MARTINS,  
WHICH IS AT THE  
HEART OF THE  
NEW KING'S CROSS  
DEVELOPMENT. WE  
COMMISSIONED FIVE  
CONTRIBUTIONS  
REFLECTING ON THE  
CHANGING FACE OF  
OUR IMMEDIATE  
LOCATION.

# ON KING'S CROSS

by  
ELLA WEARING



With redevelopment continuing  
at a relentless pace, a new  
King's Cross is emerging but  
local memories linger on. Artist  
Ella Wearing surveys an area that  
she knows well and asks "Who  
are the winners?"

**G**rowing up in the 1990s and early 2000s in the adjacent neighbourhood of Holloway, I associated King's Cross with crime, drugs and prostitution. As a teenager, I was unaware of the scale and wider implications of the King's Cross redevelopment plans, the proposals for which were confirmed with the backing of British property developer Argent in 2000. It was the largest proposed development project of its kind in Europe and had been sparked by the decision in 1996 to move the Eurostar railway terminus from Waterloo to St. Pancras station. At the impressionable age of 15, I went to explore the development site at King's Cross, a seemingly deserted wasteland of boarded-up buildings and vague hints of imminent demolition and construction. Here, I took photographs with my mother's Pentax camera. This was in 2003, and it marked the beginning of my tracking of the area as an artist.

Ten years on, with a large portion of the development plans underway or complete, the new King's Cross is undeniably a more desirable place to go. The transformation of the area includes improvements in the arts and service industries, as well as sensitivity towards existing historical architecture, such as the redevelopment of the redundant Victorian coal drops. All of this is wholly in line with the original proposals. Yet despite these improvements, I was always unsettled by the changes taking place. There are two strands of thought that trigger my unease. The first is subjective: the area, in spite of its reputation of being a bit of a dump, is so closely tied up with my idea of home, a nostalgic notion which is threatened by the shifting image of this new environment. What impact would such a huge urban regeneration project have on surrounding neighbourhoods and local communities like my own? One outcome has been a surge of smaller local development projects, including the endless construction of new housing in order to accommodate the substantial rise in population in surrounding locations. On top of this, the cost of living in the area has risen, spurred on by the increasingly common trend of letting out council flats privately for extortionate rents. The previously troubled estates of my childhood are now home to young professionals and students being squeezed out of their pennies for what was meant to be subsidised social housing. Meanwhile,

local businesses are dwindling in the face of a Tesco and Sainsbury's supermarket influx.

I wonder where the past troubles of the area have gone. As is generally the case with any urban upheaval, a problem does not simply disappear. It re-locates, much in the same way that long-time residents who can no longer afford to live in an "emerging" area are also pushed out. About two years ago, I started to consider how the King's Cross sex trade had miraculously disappeared. I came across a newspaper clipping dating from around 2006 which read, "The sex trade in Market Road, Holloway, has exploded in the last five years because a crack-down in King's Cross has forced prostitutes away from what was Islington's traditional vice area." The solution? Tear down and rebuild the Market Estate. I am not an authority on the current whereabouts of the London sex trade but my guess is it is still operating somewhere in the depths of the city's infrastructure. Equally, I am certain that the new glossy façade of King's Cross has not eradicated such vices but pushed them deeper below the surface, infiltrating less frequented places like the Market Estate.

This brutishness seems to be prevalent in London at the moment, where a rip-it-up, tear-it-down attitude compromises some of the more gradual and organic forms of urban change. This leads to the second strand of my uncertainties about the new King's Cross, primarily its nature as a tightly managed cultural quarter. We can refer to sociologist Sharon Zukin's 1983 book, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, in which she outlines a pattern where the gentrification of deprived, undesirable neighbourhoods often stems from the initial presence of an arts community unable to afford the cost of living elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> We have seen this happen in East London, and it is currently emerging in parts of South East London such as Peckham and New Cross. Whether this cycle of events is good or bad is open to debate, but the important question is: good or bad for whom?

It is no coincidence that the King's Cross developers have decided to capitalise on the arts in their re-branding of the area. This raises possibilities, but also other questions: how will creativity emerge in this prescriptive environment where many artists cannot afford to live? The King's Cross proposal uses and turns Zukin's theory on

its head. Working in reverse, developers start with control, manipulating the environment to their advantage. Zukin suggests that the artist has initial control, which is later seized by the property developer. The artist becomes a pawn in a wider game of economics and social politics. What is not yet clear is whether the incoming arts communities of King's Cross can establish a new identity in the calculated threadwork of this changing district. Perhaps the deliberate inclusion of artists, rather than their exclusion, offers the possibility for artists to have some measure of control, even if ensnared by the trappings of Capitalism. There is potential for something exciting to happen here. While the developers can control the logistics of the built environment, they cannot predict how the settled and incoming communities will make use of this new terrain.

**This brutishness seems to be prevalent in London at the moment, where a rip-it-up, tear-it-down attitude compromises some of the more gradual and organic forms of urban change.**

**How will creativity emerge in this prescriptive environment?**

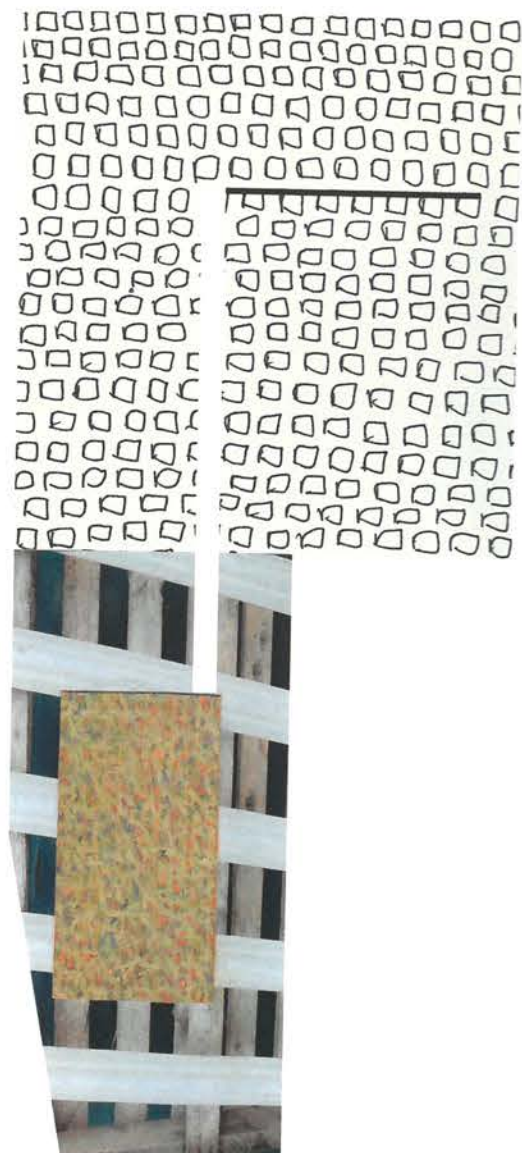
1. Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (London, Radius, 1988).



Ella Wearing, *Vice I*, mixed media digital collage, 2013



Ella Wearing, *Vice II*, mixed media digital collage, 2013



Ella Wearing, *Re | Construct '08*, mixed media digital collage, 2013



Ella Wearing, *De | Construct '03*, mixed media digital collage, 2013



Ella Wearing, *Merge '08/'13 (York Way) I-II*, digital print (plates), 2013



Ella Wearing, *Merge '08/'13 (York Way) III-IV*, digital print (plates), 2013



Ella Wearing, *Merge '08/'13 (York Way) V-VI*, digital print (plates), 2013



Ella Wearing, *Merge '08/'13 (York Way) VII-VIII*, digital print (plates), 2013

# KING'S CROSS WALKS

by  
SARA DIMMITT



Guide-lecturer David Williams can lead you through the streets of London's hidden histories. He tells Sara Dimmitt what the new King's Cross means to him.

Any Bond villain would be jealous of his detailed knowledge of London's hidden back alleys and unassuming tree-lined squares.

In the short time I've known David Williams, I've learned that he's a first-rate storyteller. It makes him compelling company. He acquired this skill through his experience in journalism, documentary scriptwriting and directing, and he puts it to good use on the historical walks he gives as a London guide. Indeed, any Bond villain would be jealous of his detailed knowledge of London's hidden back alleys and unassuming tree-lined squares. He has perfected the art of turning the city-dweller's humdrum daily commute into an exploration of the past, weaving in and out of streets and alleys, under railway arches, and through layers of history that often remain buried under London's skyline.

What Williams's walks offer are explorations of space and time. Spanning roughly two hours, they focus on particular neighbourhoods of London, ranging between Limehouse and Soho, Bethnal Green and King's Cross. His commentary serves as a narrative connecting physical detail and historical memory and is peppered with the kind of visual details that would be difficult to pick up on your own: the figure of Little Dorrit in a Southwark church's stained glass window, perhaps, or Banksy's *Yellow Lines Flower Painter* on a wall tucked away off Bethnal Green Road.

In drawing our attention to details we may have missed, he often finds he is forging a link

between a family's past and present. As he says, "An interest in genealogy makes them think 'I wonder where my dad or my granddad came from?' On historical walks you can get people to understand and realise something about the history of the place, and in many cases that affects them. They feel an affinity for it."

This sort of grassroots exploration and celebration of a neighbourhood's history balances somewhere between flânerie and purposeful searching. It generates a poignancy that is either complement or contrast to the redevelopment of King's Cross. As Williams explains, "The demands of development are nothing new to King's Cross." In fact, he suggests, the area's history is largely defined by "the conflict between the old ways, established communities, the under-privileged." In the mid-19th Century, it was the railroad companies who cleared the neighbourhoods north of what are now King's Cross and St Pancras stations, building a network of railways that became the backbone of British rail travel.

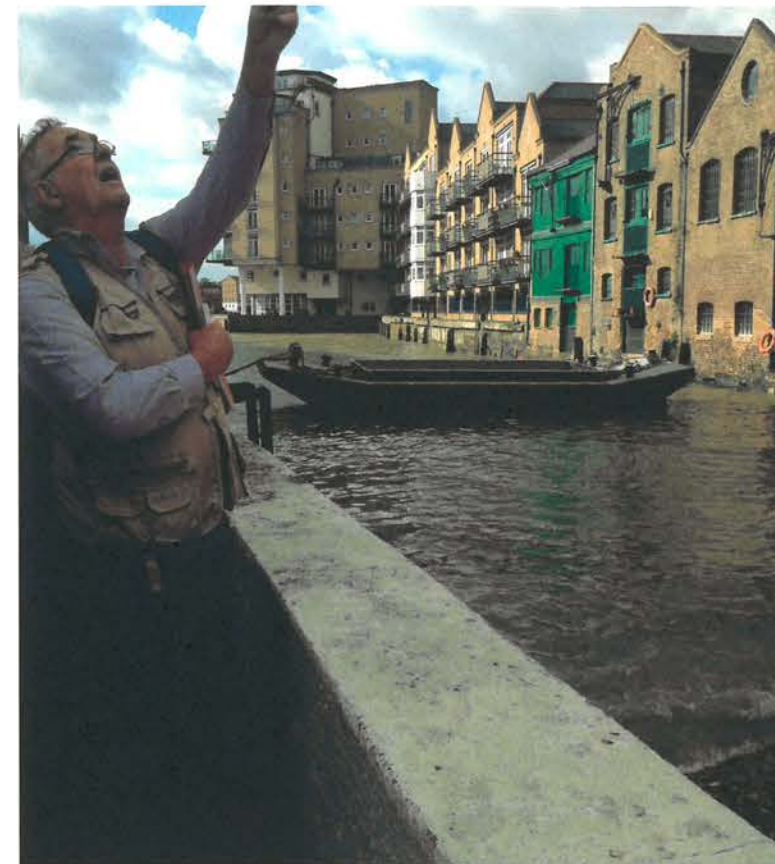
Over the past 30 years King's Cross may not have enjoyed the most salubrious reputation. Williams acknowledges that people unfamiliar with its recent redevelopment may "think it dirty or smelly. It's not too many years back when it was an area of seedy hotels and strange people in long mackintoshes with caps pulled over their eyes."

King's Cross's new identity as a travel, commercial and cultural hub is inescapably tied up with the area's industrial past. In an effort to maintain links to that identity, developers are re-imagining many of the area's architectural remnants, turning the old granary building into an art school and re-purposing the gasholders as housing. They are also encouraging arts organisations to take up residence in the neighbourhood.

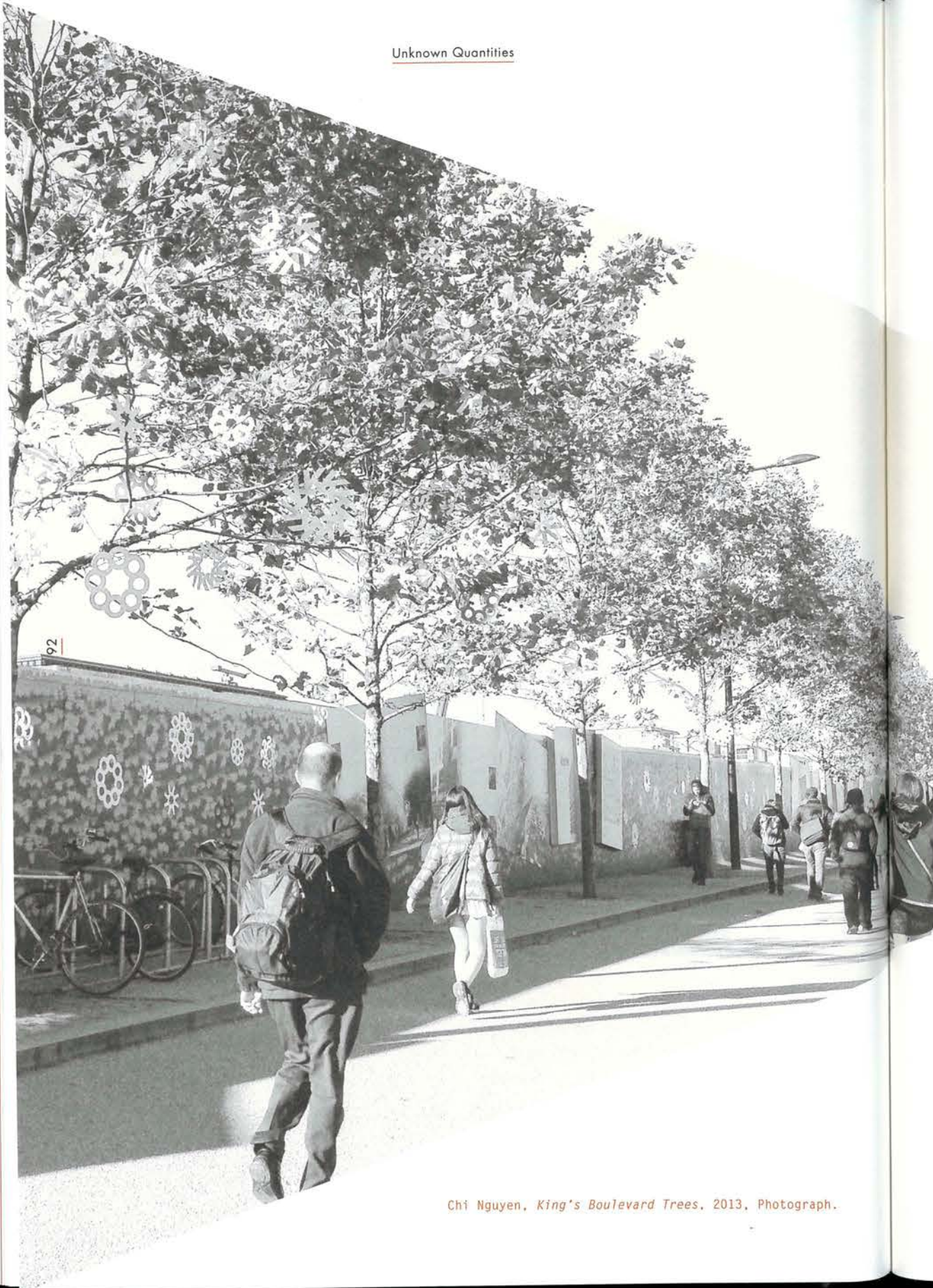
The future vitality of King's Cross is hardly in doubt, but in the midst of all of this activity we sometimes require a pause, a space to shed the protective layer we have grown in response to the sensory overstimulation of living in a city. This kind of pause can be particularly difficult to achieve in a buzzing and rapidly changing area like King's Cross, where the race to finish construction muffles the stories told by quieter side streets.

At the end of our conversation, Williams explains how he sees the future of the area: "I don't view change as being a problem. Change fuels London." I do have certain suspicions that some of these buildings are not what they should be; they spoil the sight lines, but every city has to continually change. If you are going to take an area like King's Cross — or Docklands or Battersea — and turn it into what it's becoming, there are people who are going to be left behind." David Williams offers a way of locating those potentially lost histories through poetic explorations of the past that show you how to think in new ways.

**Williams explains how he sees the future of the area: "I don't view change as being a problem. Change fuels London."**



David Williams on a historical tour around Limehouse

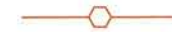


Chi Nguyen, *King's Boulevard Trees*. 2013. Photograph.

# SPATIAL STORIES:

## RE-WRITING KING'S CROSS

by  
CHI NGUYEN



Chi Nguyen looks behind the promotional rhetoric to find out what is really happening with the King's Cross development.

"An extraordinary piece of London is taking shape. The 67 acres north of King's Cross Station is being transformed into a new part of the city."

"The historic, cast-iron structures will create a stunning setting for the new apartments, many with fantastic views over the water."

"The Granary Building is now the stunning new home of the world famous arts college – Central Saint Martins – part of the University of the Arts London."

94

The platitudes above are part of the King's Cross regeneration's promotional rhetoric, which can be read in the pamphlet "Past Times" distributed by the King's Cross Visitor Centre. In addition to "extraordinary" and "stunning", the future of the King's Cross development area is described with such positive phrases as "innovative", "intelligent design", "highest quality", "attractive" and "impressive". By contrast, the descriptors for King's Cross pre-transformation, from the Victorian era up until ten years ago, are decidedly negative, eg, "poor quality", "polluted", "detrimental", "decline" and "contaminated". Many of the textual representations paint the regeneration as a heroic act that will save this northern part of London and change it for the better. The imagery of a better King's Cross is subsequently reinforced by multi-media visuals (architectural renderings, LED-lit models, short films) that present this preferred future.

**D**ominant spatial discourse shapes public conception of the built environment, its history and its future, and how we understand, speak about and interact with it.<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of urban space or a building's meaning is tied to the discourse that occurs before, during and after construction. However, there is an often uncontested uniformity to the kinds of spatial stories that are predominantly told and the way that they are told. Because city-building is commonly viewed as an act of tremendous complexity, the voices that dominate spatial discourse tend to be limited to professional circles of experts and the knowledge-elite, such

as the city planner, the developer, the marketing department, the architect and the architectural critic. As a consequence, the stories that emerge take on a conventional form: information-based, prescriptive and didactic, ideologically driven and authoritatively delivered. They are typically disseminated via a linear, single channel of communication and by extension an imposing channel of influence.

Yet, running parallel to these official accounts are other spatial stories, belonging to the marginal, the everyday or the spaces of difference. These stories call into question the authenticity or resonance of the larger narrative. Contemporary

urban theory takes a lead from Michel de Certeau, the influential French cultural critic, and Kevin Lynch, the American urban planner. In their seminal essays, they assert that the city has its own rhetoric and legible order, against the vision and ideals of urban planners and managers.<sup>2</sup> There is a dissonance between the language of the "conceptual city" (Certeau) and the "spatial syntax" (Lynch) and "practice of everyday life" (Certeau), in which patterns of movement and engagement defy intentions. Still, the heterogeneous qualities, finer grain experiences and stories of public space often get muted under the weight of the dominant voice.

In King's Cross, as in many politically and socially significant urban areas undergoing transformation, such discursive tensions are at a high. There is the official narrative, and then there are the sub-narratives and the counter-narratives. Taking a critical survey of the existing semiotic landscape of the King's Cross regeneration, I am arguing here that this dominant discourse and the design of its communication obscure, displace and devalue other narratives. In the new King's Cross, the dynamics of meaning-making (and meaning-extracting) signpost the semiotic processes by which spatial discourse is managed and controlled. These processes ultimately limit the production of meaning of place to specific socio-political agendas.

Two prominent examples of the King's Cross discourse are examined: the hoardings on King's Boulevard and the promotional leaflets distributed by the King's Cross Visitor Centre. In what follows I draw out the in-place meaning produced by the dominant discourse through three specific filters: power (who is the asserting authority?); value (what values are being privileged?); and heritage (which preferential and revisionist history is being presented, and why?).<sup>3</sup>

Upon entering the south end of King's Boulevard, either via the main road or exiting from King's Cross St Pancras tube station, visitors are immediately met with the beehive sounds of a construction site, the movement of cranes and pulleys, and the hurried traffic of other pedestrians. The aural and visual stimulation is quickly intensified by the ubiquity of the information environment: construction site hoardings, directional signs, business advertisements, and health and safety notices. While most construction site

hoardings are painted plain white with a few informative announcements and notices, King's Cross is an immersive narrative environment. As Sarah Thompson has suggested in her study of *Signs in the City*, development sites like King's Boulevard act as "information and communication spaces [that] 'speak' in terms of the city we live in, or will soon live in".<sup>4</sup> The sophistication of the signs and the hoarding, and their specific placement in the physical world, heavily influence visitors' engagement with the King's Cross site, and their approach to and interpretation of the development.

Larger-than-life-size storybooks decorate the walls of the King's Boulevard hoarding, which itself is covered in a wallpaper pattern of graphically drawn green leaves. Here is iconographic story telling: viewers are looking inside the actual pages of the King's Cross story, and are invited to literally read about the urban spaces and the forthcoming transformation. At the same time, the leafy wallpaper produces an impression of greenery along the length of the Boulevard, an imagery strengthened by the presence of real trees lining the path. The viewer is projected into the iconic space of a forest as an extension of the story-book setting.

The elaborate sign-and-signify system in operation here, the in-place meanings and context-dependency of these signs provide several notable disclosures about the subtle agency of the spatial discourse.<sup>5</sup> First, the hoarding's greenness evokes a condition that does not materially exist on the site. It contradictorily suggests that this physical space, despite being distinctly urban, and against the noises of heavy construction, is actually a natural environment. King's Cross is currently the largest building site in Europe, with a total of 67 acres of development and new construction. It is very much a *built* rather than a *natural* environment, yet the story associates the regeneration with nature. The storybooks themselves are composed of images of sun-soaked, glossy cityscapes that are in turn full of blue skies, green spaces and tree-lined parks and promenades. This takes no account of the geo-climatic reality of being in London, a city that rarely sees sunshine and blue skies. The ambivalent reading disengages the viewer from the site and demands that she abstract herself from the actuality of her immediate surroundings in order to project

95

herself into the future King's Cross. The discourse here romanticises nature and uses it as a persuasion tool to naturalise the built environment, to cleanse and purify it for commercial readiness.

The storybook setup also makes legibility and meaning-extraction difficult. It is unclear whether the story is to be interpreted as fiction or non-fiction; there is a conflict of reading since text and image contradict one another. While the image content of the pages is suggestive and illustrative, representing an aspirational future, rather than being photographic documentary depictions, the text content is presented as pithy, fact-based information. Here will be this building, over there will be that building, people will eat, live and work here or there. There is an efficiency of communication and an overt attempt to adopt a friendly, informal tone, a type of vernacular "writing which mimics the spontaneous quality of speech", in Markus and Cameron's words, and simulates intimacy, and therefore empathy, between author/speaker and reader/audience.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the ambiguity remains: who actually is the author of these books, and more precisely, who is the intended reader? Is the author the architect or is it Argent, the developer? Authorship can perhaps be vaguely attributed to an omnipresent "they": whoever is in charge and responsible for the development. As for readership, is the reader

a current or future resident/worker of King's Cross? Is she an occasional or infrequent visitor to the area? But by the same token, there is a strong sense of the *not*-audience of the discourse. The homogeneity of social representation in the story-book's architectural renderings makes it clear who the story-book is *not* directed at: current King's Cross residents who come from diverse cultural and income backgrounds. The subjects are instead of a particular social stratum, the young, affluent middle-class. However, it is left deliberately ambiguous whether this is the precise audience that is being addressed.

The ambiguity at King's Boulevard, regarding who is speaking and to whom, reflects the power and relationship asymmetry between subjects and objects of discourse.<sup>7</sup> The uncertainty of who is speaking and who is spoken about, or spoken for, or spoken to, or even who is allowed to speak, precludes active dialogue. In this sense, the story-book as a communicative tool is only a monologue, an exposition that can have no resolution, and that has little evaluative merit because we can neither measure intention nor response when the identity of author and reader remains anonymous. This effectively tips the power balance towards authorship as it is a one-sided communication, and therefore the meaning of place is tied to the exertion of this authority.



Chi Nguyen,  
The south end of  
King's Boulevard,  
2013, Photograph

This is the striking pattern of the dominant discourse of King's Cross: the silences in the communications. What is not being said, and who is not being addressed, speak loudly about the particular dominant story promulgated about the regeneration. There is deliberate language use or, more appropriately, non-use.

The promotional leaflets distributed by the King's Cross Visitor Centre are a prime example of such linguistic agency, of an underpinning political motivation to the language edits, the word choices and their economy of use. Throughout the promotional rhetoric, there is little mention of the social dynamics that have significantly shaped or will shape the development of the area.<sup>8</sup> Through selective editing, the silences in the text *de-politicise* the contentious history of King's Cross, which is a mixture of industry and class struggles, in order to re-imagine the area as an attractive destination for commercial investment. Prostitution and undesirable underclass activities of a red light district are instead casually, obtusely referred to as "night life". As Markus and Cameron alert us,

**"These are not just random silences. They reflect the purpose of the text, which is to tell a particular story... The issues on which the texts are silent are precisely those which hint at a different story."**<sup>9</sup>

A textual analysis of the "Past Times" leaflet and its use of adjectives, mapped in relation to the timeline of historical events recounted (ie, the frequency of positive versus negative descriptions) reveals that the story being told is historically biased. The descriptions were either neutral or mostly negative up until 2000, the year when Argent was selected to develop the site. As soon as we reach this historical turning point in the text, the language shifts. Negative words disappear altogether, replaced by unqualified positive ones. "Decline" and "poor quality" become "vibrant" and "high quality". The word "stunning" is used on several occasions, even twice in one short paragraph. Ben Campkin, in his essay, "Urban Image and Legibility in King's Cross," refers to such urban erasure as attempts to rebrand the image of place in favour

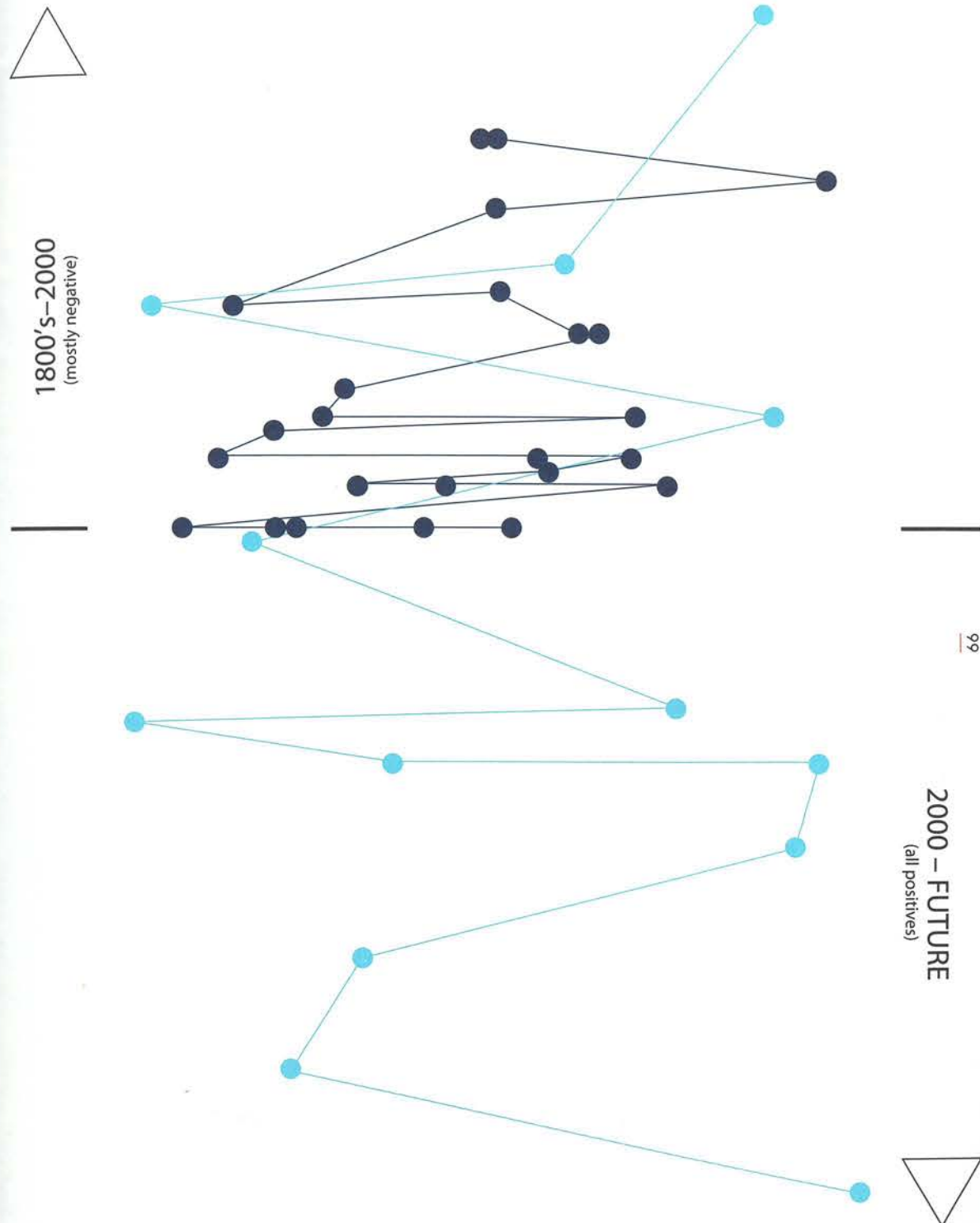
of a particular developer-led, corporate-interest-driven interpretation of place-identity. Since the area's development in the 18th and 19th centuries, the "narrative of decay" continues the tradition of King's Cross being frequently represented as dirty and undesirable; as such it sets up the justification for *improvement*.<sup>10</sup> From negative to positive, the regeneration is rationalised as a correction of urban decay. It is easier to sell more flats if the area loses its drug-use associations.

At the same time, there is a tug-of-war in the King's Cross discourse situated between history and heritage, facts versus fondness. On the one hand, as the story goes, the past was so bad that we have to make it better for future generations: an immutable fact. On the other hand, there were some good aspects of this terrible past that are worthy of heritage designation: fond memory. The leaflets demonstrate a marked romanticisation of the industrial past and the area's "former glory" during the Victorian era. The colour-scheme of the "Past Times" leaflet is awash in monochromes and sepia-tones that evoke nostalgia. In it and consistently across other promotional literature, more content space has been dedicated to the 19th Century than to the two decades preceding the regeneration, which would arguably have greater cultural and social relevance to present-day urban transformation. The collective social memory of recent history is not acknowledged. Instead events that occurred well over 100 years ago take communication priority, although that era is so far removed from present living conditions that it is an intellectual abstraction, facilitating a material and emotional detachment. In a deliberate act of "persuasion and camouflage,"<sup>11</sup> the history of King's Cross has been commodified and sanitised to *legitimise* present political actions. It gives rise to such promotional rhetoric as this: King's Cross will be transformed "from steam engines to the steam of cappuccino machines".

There is no meaningful way to engage with such a vacuous statement. It is a discursive mechanic that works towards exclusion, limiting discourse through detachment and decontextualisation.

The dominant discourse of the King's Cross regeneration appropriates the picturesque for purely commercial gains. It has re-imagined the city for a specific albeit vaguely defined audience sanctioned to be here. It does not explicitly deny

## POSITIVE / NEGATIVE ADJECTIVES



access, but through edited narratives and preferential textual-visual treatment of one subject over another, it has provided covert permission for a hegemonic cultural re-writing of King's Cross. As Markus and Cameron write, "In discourse analysis, questions are considered more powerful moves than answers, because the question always constrains the answer."<sup>12</sup> Those in positions of authority have framed King's Cross as a question about a degenerate area in decline. Regeneration is the answer they offer. The edited narratives seek to substantiate this political reasoning and validate political actions. The "author" has constrained the question about King's Cross, defining it as a binary proposition of good or bad, without qualification or contextualisation. As such, the only reasonable answer the public is constrained to have is, "Yes, we want King's Cross to be better than it was before". Well, yes, of course. But what is better? What qualifies as good or bad? For whom is it good or bad? There is no space for these questions-as-answers to be explicitly asked. Legibility of the place has been obscured in the limited transfer of codified "official language" into an informal, superficial vernacular that keeps non-official voices at a distance. Power relations are enacted in question-and-answer inequality. There is a need however to facilitate, in discourse, other kinds of questions and questioning.

**King's Cross will be transformed  
"from steam engines to the  
steam of cappuccino machines".  
There is no meaningful way to  
engage with such a vacuous  
statement.**

#### FURTHER READING

Forty, A. *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. London, Thames & Hudson, 2000.

Littlefield, D. "King's Cross," in *London (Re)generation, AD: Architectural Design*. London, John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

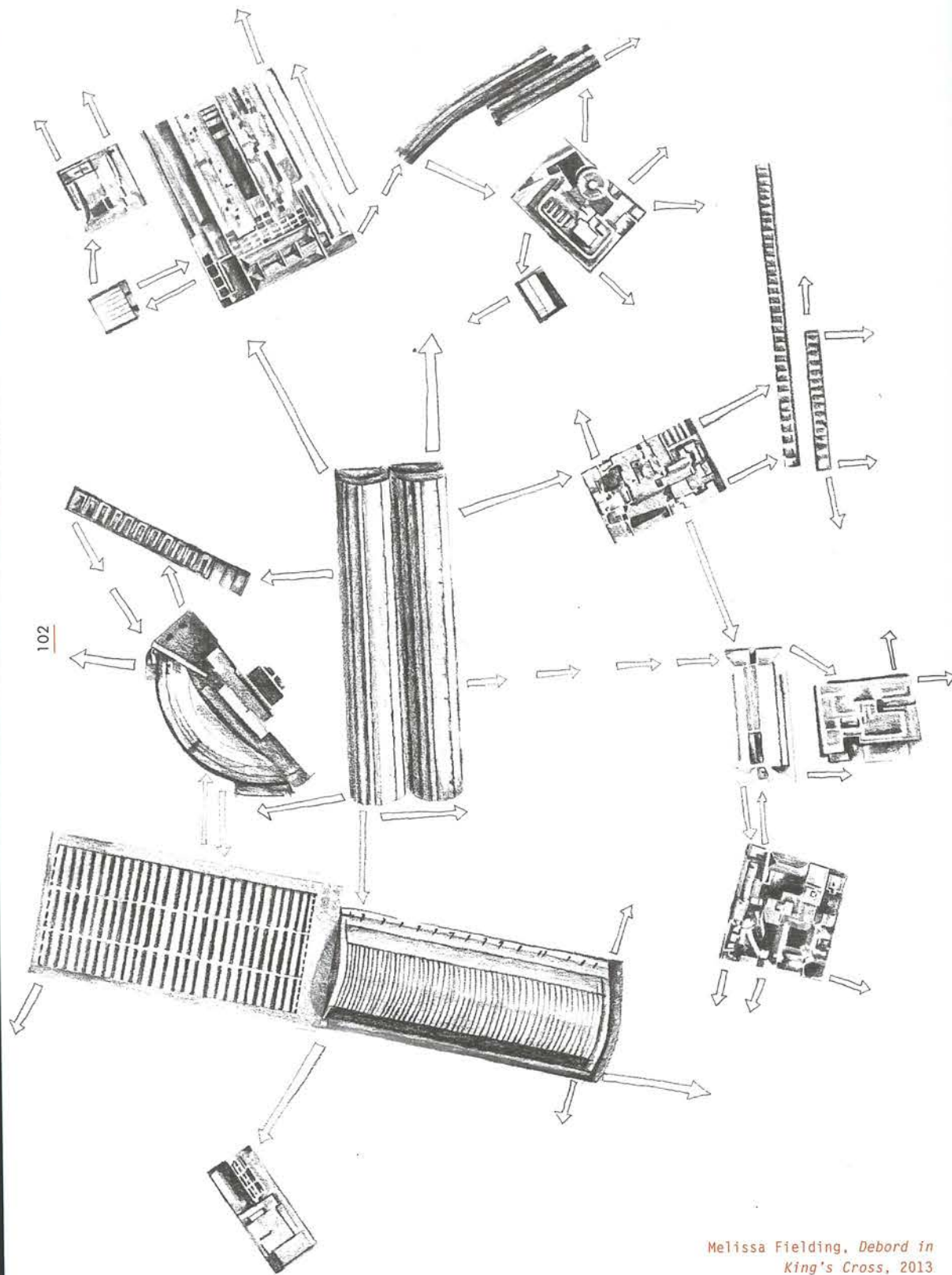
Tonkiss, F. ed *Space, The City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013.

#### NOTES

1. Thomas Markus and Deborah Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces: Buildings and Language* (London, Routledge, 2002).
2. See Michel de Certeau, *Walking the City and Spatial Stories in The Practice of Everyday Life* (London, University of California Press, 1984) and Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA, Technology Press, 1960).
3. Ron Scollon and Susie Wong Scollon, *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World* (London, Routledge, 2003); Markus and Cameron op cit.
4. Sarah Thompson, *Signs in the City: A Social Semiotic Analysis of Development Sites in Southwark, London* (London, MRes Information Environments, London College of Communication, 2011), p4.
5. Scollon and Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, pp1.3.
6. Markus and Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces*, p111.
7. Ibid, p91.
8. A good source for this history is Michael Edwards, 'King's Cross: Renaissance for Whom?' chapter 11 of John Punter, ed, *Urban Design, Urban Renaissance and British Cities* (London, Routledge, 2009).
9. Markus and Cameron, *Words Between the Spaces*, p84.
10. Ben Campkin, "Urban Image and Legibility in King's Cross, London," in *Interventions*, 01/2005, Intellect Ltd, p63.
11. Markus and Cameron, *Words Between the Spaces*, p133.
12. Ibid, p78.



Chi Nguyen, *King's Cross Stories* Poster, 2013, Photograph.

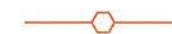


102

Melissa Fielding, *Debord in King's Cross*, 2013

# THROUGH THE GLASS WINDOW

by  
MELISSA FIELDING



Glass has been used throughout the King's Cross regeneration to create a supposedly desirable place to live, work, eat and travel.

103

**G**lass is often the architect's material of revolution, its crystalline form synonymous with Utopian visions of the city. It is viewed as openness, a way for the city to be released of its secrets, removing optical barriers to allow an interchange of light, sight, and security. Its material seems to state: there is nothing to hide, yet also nothing to protect.

Walking around the developing area of King's Cross, the recently renovated buildings and new architectural commissions present a multitude of windows and glass walls. Omnipresent glass and steel are hidden under a facade of light, bright and gleamingly new forms of urbanised living, working and learning on the edge of a mass of North London residences. The use of glass comes into question. Its material dominates the new buildings and affects not only the aesthetics of the area, but it also determines social behaviours.

Over the last century, Utopian connotations of glass have been explored in literature. Futuristic cities paved with glass, floor-to-ceiling walls and vast expansive living all feature in Utopian, and contrastingly, Dystopian novels. Transparency is more often than not represented as uplifting. It alludes to equality, nature and openness. One of the first books on the subject, *Glasarchitektur*, written by Paul Scheerbart in 1914, spoke of the need to eliminate "the closed character of the rooms in which we live".<sup>1</sup> It promoted physical, and consequently political, economical and social freedom. Later on it was Le Corbusier who keenly advocated the use of glass in construction. He famously favoured the horizontal window that would reconfigure the relationship between interiors and exteriors. Glass used in architecture promises unexpected and substantial openings into the private territory of the building.

German critic Walter Benjamin commented, "glass is such a hard, smooth material to which nothing can be fixed... objects made of glass have no 'aura'. Glass is, in general, the enemy of secrets. It is also the enemy of possession".<sup>2</sup> Glass has no hierarchy, no individuality. Benjamin

used the materiality of glass as a potent metaphor for social change. He believed it had the ability to reform social systems, companies and personal exchanges. The invisible is made visible.

The area behind King's Cross Station, the development called St Pancras Square, is destined to be the corporate hub of the newly developed area. Already, modernist-inspired offices are rising above the North London skyline between the two train stations. Simple in form, the uniform rows of rectangular windows reveal themselves through concrete frames, highlighting the vast walls of glass. The glass used in this context is constructed, discursively, as already reflecting the visibility, accountability and accessibility of the future corporation. However, for the new offices of King's Cross, glass is an advantageous prospect: glass as the anti-bourgeois material described by Benjamin ceases to exist. The prospective subjection to the gaze of others is what corporations value. Nearer to the ground, glass-fronted shops and restaurants under construction promise to create a new, highly idealised way of working and living. The sharp contrast of the surrounding residential and shopping areas, including the Caledonian Road and neighbouring estates, reveals that glass is an elite material, synonymous with wealth and increased standards of living.

**Glass used in architecture promises unexpected and substantial openings into the private territory of the building.**

The Central Saint Martins complex, designed by Stanton Williams Architects, suggests a liberating design with vast, cavernous spaces and floor-to-ceiling glass walls. Studios are exposed. Work is exposed. But what is the effect of such exposure on creative processes? You walk around the buildings and see students visible in their studios. What's more, the outside world is visible to them. In a sense it achieves Le Corbusier's dream of uniting two worlds, but is there a cost to creative vision in such a unified working environment? Long before modernism came along, Cornelius Gurlitt, writing in 1888, suggested that:

**The large window has joined the room too intimately to the outside world; human skill in creating large and entirely transparent panes by means of which the dividing line for the eye between the room and the outside world is blurred has increased too much for it not to have impaired the room's artistic seclusion.<sup>3</sup>**

There is now no space to be alone. Space for individual subjectivity has all but been eradicated.

The regeneration of King's Cross has created this new hub of working, dining and living, but the process is global. All over the world districts are being constructed where mutual visibility is the key architectural aim. Surfaces gleam. Inside and outside blur. It seems, however, that the use of glass within buildings has limiting effects. The "visible" becomes stifled, overexposed, part of a new hierarchy. Compared with the surrounding thoroughfares of North London and the residential streets, it might be that all that has been made visible is merely the glass itself.

**There is now no space to be alone. Space for individual subjectivity has all but been eradicated.**

1. Paul Scheerbart, *Glass Architecture*, trans. James Palmes (New York, Praeger, 1972), p41.
2. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* (Volume 2: part 1, 1927-1930) Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass and London, Belknap Press, 2005), p734.
3. Cornelius Gurlitt, *Im Bürgerhause* (Dresden, 1888), quoted in Scott McGuire, "From Glass Architecture to Big Brother", *Cultural Studies Review*, vol 9 no 1 (May 2003), p109.

# STORY<sup>∞</sup> BOARDING<sup>∞</sup>

## TOOLS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

by  
RYO TERUI

**R**yo Terui is a PhD student on the Spatial Practices programme at Central Saint Martins. Terui's research explores how new design tools might be used to increase public engagement in urban regeneration schemes. Using techniques such as visual storyboarding, he hopes to build public involvement in development projects by starting conversations between members of the local community and other stakeholders.

In 2013 Terui ran a series of experimental workshops at a Japanese school in the UK, to examine his methodology. Over a period of five weeks, 30 students aged 17-18 were asked to choose their favourite space around the school and consider how these might be changed or improved. They engaged with other students and staff, sharing their thoughts and getting feedback, before working together to create a visual storyboard that imagined a possible future for the campus, based on their ideas. The storyboards reproduced here come from this project.

Following on from these workshops, Terui is planning a similar project with members of a community group in King's Cross.

## Unknown Quantities

	Teacher	Student K.H.	Student K.H.	Student K.S.
<b>Visual Storyboard:</b>				
Q.1> Feasibility of the final outcome	I could not guess what was going to happen. Especially the second story.	We put so many expectations in the story but I think it is not impossible to make it happen!	It will take costs but I think it is feasible.	Yes
Q.2> What are common themes across the two stories?	Isolation or struggle in foreign land?	I couldn't find common themes in between two stories.	Didn't see football course's story... Sorry...	Both groups are unsatisfied with the current campus's facilities.
Q.3> What are difference between two stories?	The first story seems to tell the whole picture (what those individuals with the second story focus more on the individual characters).	The story from General course is bit surface and more of football class's core but still does connect in the story.	It seems easy to see really different...	The story from the football course told more fun.
<b>Workshop:</b>				
Q.1> Difficult?		We have been living here somehow for long time so to re-recognize our space through this project was slightly confusing but I quite enjoyed it.	Basically, I wanted change whole campus but when I was thinking of the future campus, I had been caught up realistic things like costs so I had limitation for my imagination.	Drawing was not easy for me.
Q.2> What kind of effect gave you by the examples that I showed you? (Students saw no sample)		We had not seen any samples but I guess that if we saw samples, we might be confused or relied on them.	The procedure was well explained verbally by the teacher so I had no problem.	We had no sample when we did drawing but I think our work has originality so that was fine.
Q.3> How did project spark your imagination?		Since we took the class, there are lots of spatial awareness in the campus in daily life.	No difference...	I think I could acquire different point of view.
Q.4> How did the whole process lead to the clear communication?		Yes, when we conducted an interview with local staff, he complained with the colour of a signboard in the corridor. The project provided us with opportunities to communicate local staff.	Through the re-discovering of the campus, I could know staff I didn't talk before and found many new things.	Through this project, I could recognise that all the classmates love football.
Q.5> Through the project, how was the communication between stakeholders?		I am not so good of English but I think I did my best.	I think I could communicate with stakeholders.	Yes
Q.6> How was the collaboration work?		That was fun and enjoyed collaboration work.	It was quite smooth and enjoyed it.	It was quite smooth.
Q.7> What would be next?		If I could use more variety of art supplies, it would be nice.	The classes were perfect!	If we could draw on larger paper, it would be more dynamic!
Q.8> Any hint?		Creating one story by collaboration work!	It was totally different from previous art classes so I really enjoyed this project.	I liked conversation with Mr. Terul.
<b>Exhibition:</b>				
Q.1> What kind of conversation have been generated throughout exhibition?	It was interesting to see how different students had very different ideas but how it does collaborate well. Two stories were really entertaining and it seems to reflect interests ideas of students from both Football & General course. I think I learned the fascination of bringing different ideas and works into one finalized art project.	I have talked some teachers and they said that if the project could trigger to change facilities in real, it would be wonderful!	Talked with students from International School of Creative Arts and they really liked it!	
Q.2> What did you learn from the exhibition?		Some visitors from local area were interested in the exhibition.	That was nice exhibition and I had under with our art work!	Didn't see that.
<b>Communication:</b>				
Q.1> Do the stories and visual communicate effectively/Clearly to audience?	Yes, I think so. It was easy to follow the story with visual works and wakes imagination as you spend time observing it.	The story we made is bit rough but I believe we could tell what we want to the audience.		If audiences know about our football course, they would subscribe to our design plan. But they don't, they would think it is waste of money to improve our favorite places.
Q.2> Can you give me a feedback from teachers/students about how they felt about through visual communication?		A visitor said that using the real campus as a material for the art class is innovative!		

## Storyboarding: Tools for Public Engagement

Student K.S.	Researcher(s)	As Architect	As Artist	
<b>Visual Storyboard:</b>				
Yes	Not for proper illustration to improve the building but students' feedbacks thus about the whole environment.	Not for same.	It would be possible.	Q.1> Feasibility of the final outcome
Both group showed expectation that school should be more effectively utilized to support students' life.	Both stories have the elements of two stories. Ex. a teacher and his girlfriend, and among students.	Background: a problem story, a story and his.		Q.2> What are common themes across the two stories?
Our story focuses more on a more serious.	The story which has done by football course's main focus is football matches. Other one is focusing on more personalities of students.	To me, there is not much difference between them.		Q.3> What are difference between two stories?
<b>Workshop:</b>				
Nothing	I have started with both 1st and 2nd year students but some issues were came up with 1st years so I gave up working with them. Also, it might be a common thing but the students wandered from the main subject sometimes, with sexual/offensive side stories.	Working on group in this age is bit tricky as one person may speak loud and others may not make any contributions. On the other hand this could be also interesting thing about working with different types of groups.	Stories are okay but visuals are very insufficient. You needed to spend more time to teach drawing techniques. Or, you could do more research about art techniques that may easy for ordinary participants.	Q.1> Difficult?
Without samples may be more effectiveness.	Need to find out whether showing one of example (not to influence participants) or as many as I can! Next time show some example and compare the results.	Not necessary.		Q.2> What kind of effect gave you by the examples that I showed you? (Students saw no sample)
More broaden perspectives than before.	It was sufficient and quite exciting stories, especially gave something to overcome for students were the most successful factor.	High school students are in a such a unite stage of the life and it is interesting to hear stories from them.		Q.3> How did project spark your imagination?
	I should have shown more case studies, or some examples of visual storyboards. Or, maybe needed to spend more time for basic drawing to improve whole visual storyboard.			Q.4> How does the whole process lead to the clear communication?
	From the 2nd Week Collecting People's thoughts by students worked quite well. It could allow students to be active rather than passive participants.	Clear		Q.5> Through the project, how was the communication between stakeholders?
	Needed an ice breaker in between students. Especially for 1st year group.	It may be better to show collaboration with school staff more.		Q.6> How was the collaboration work?
	I should have provided students with creative guideline manual before they create stories, to avoid sexual/offensive expressions.		showing other storyboards may not be necessary but showing more detailed, technicals would make students easier to create storyboard.	Q.7> What would be next?
	This was the first time for both students and teachers to have a conversation about their environments with visual communication.	Maybe.		Q.8> Any hint?
	Some students showed too personal sketches at the internal exhibition. It was crucial process to find their common interests and make groups for next steps.	It would be interesting to work with different types of group (ex. different age, background etc.) and see difference on how they communicate and use text and visual. Maybe children use visual more than text and the way they communicate is more direct etc.		Q.1> What kind of conversation have been generated throughout exhibition?
				Q.2> What did you learn from the exhibition?
<b>Communication:</b>				
	Need to think about teenagers rudeness/offensive elements in the stories.	The intention is clear, however I'm not sure if actually communication with high school students went well due to 'teenage shyness'.	To be honest, stories do not make sense to you should have given some guidelines before they started creating stories.	Q.1> Do the stories and visual communicate effectively/Clearly to audience?
				Q.2> Can you give me a feedback from teachers/students about how they felt about through visual communication?

Figure 01  
Evaluation from the experimental workshop

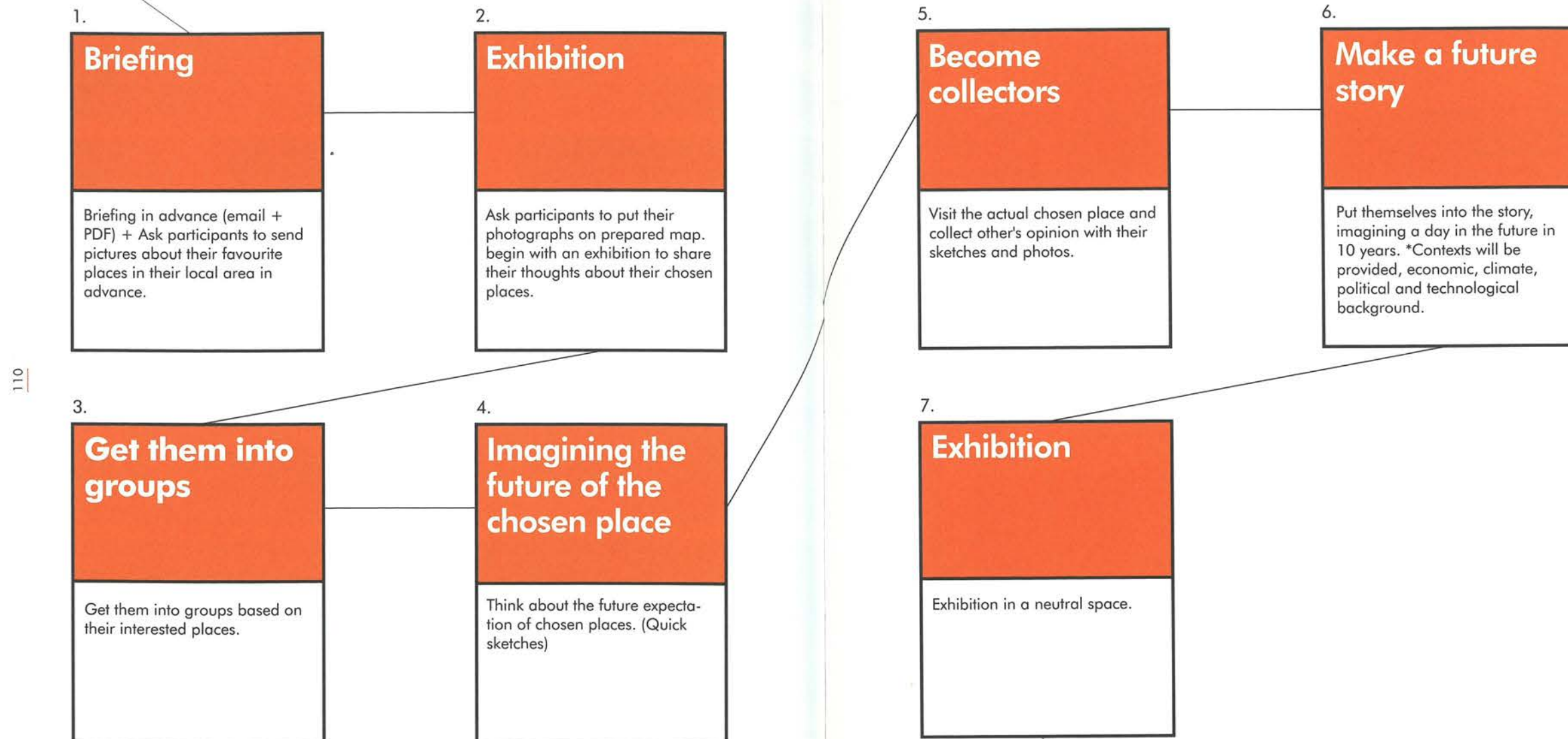


Figure 02  
The structure of the visual storyboarding workshop

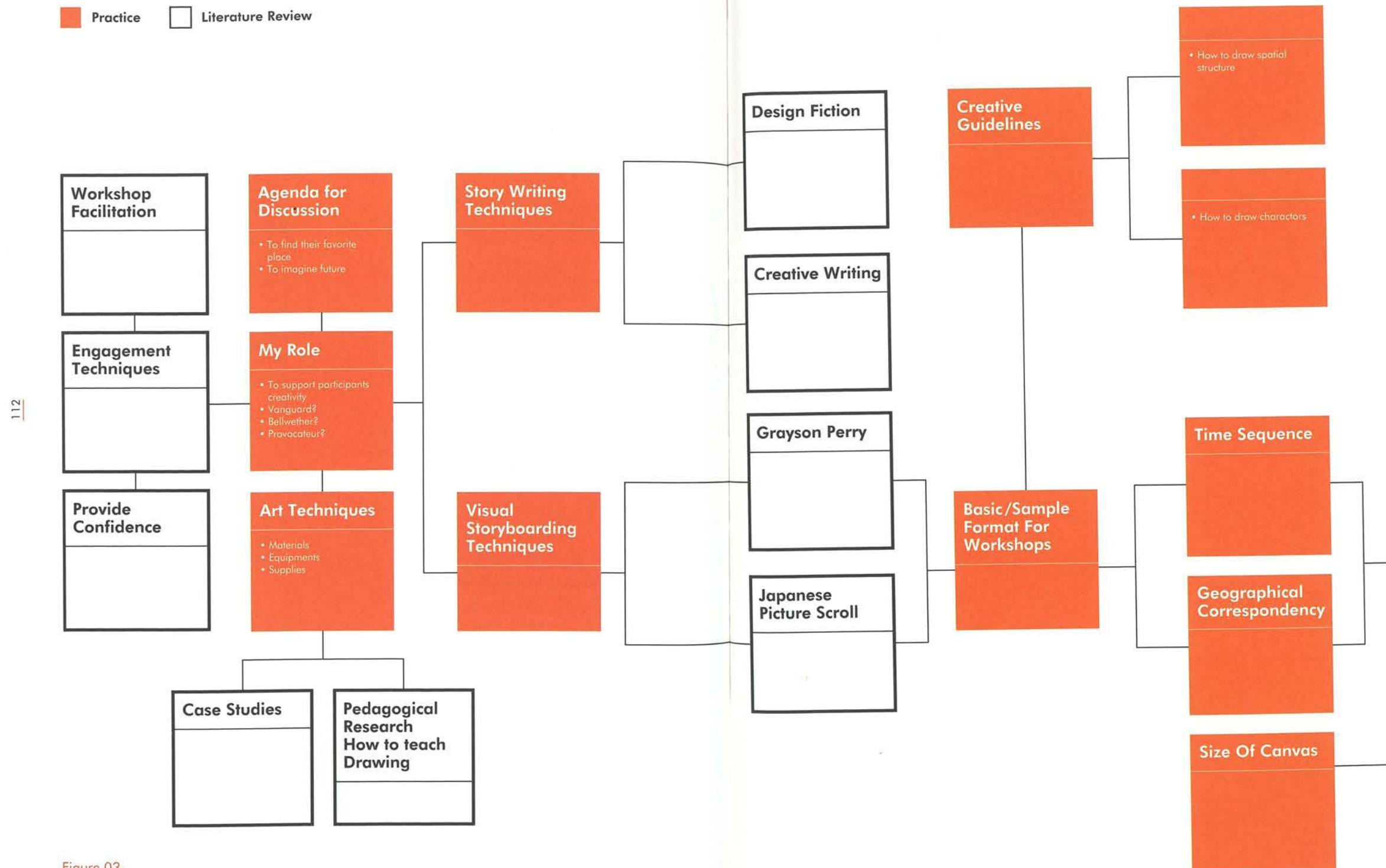


Figure 03  
Landscape of the project

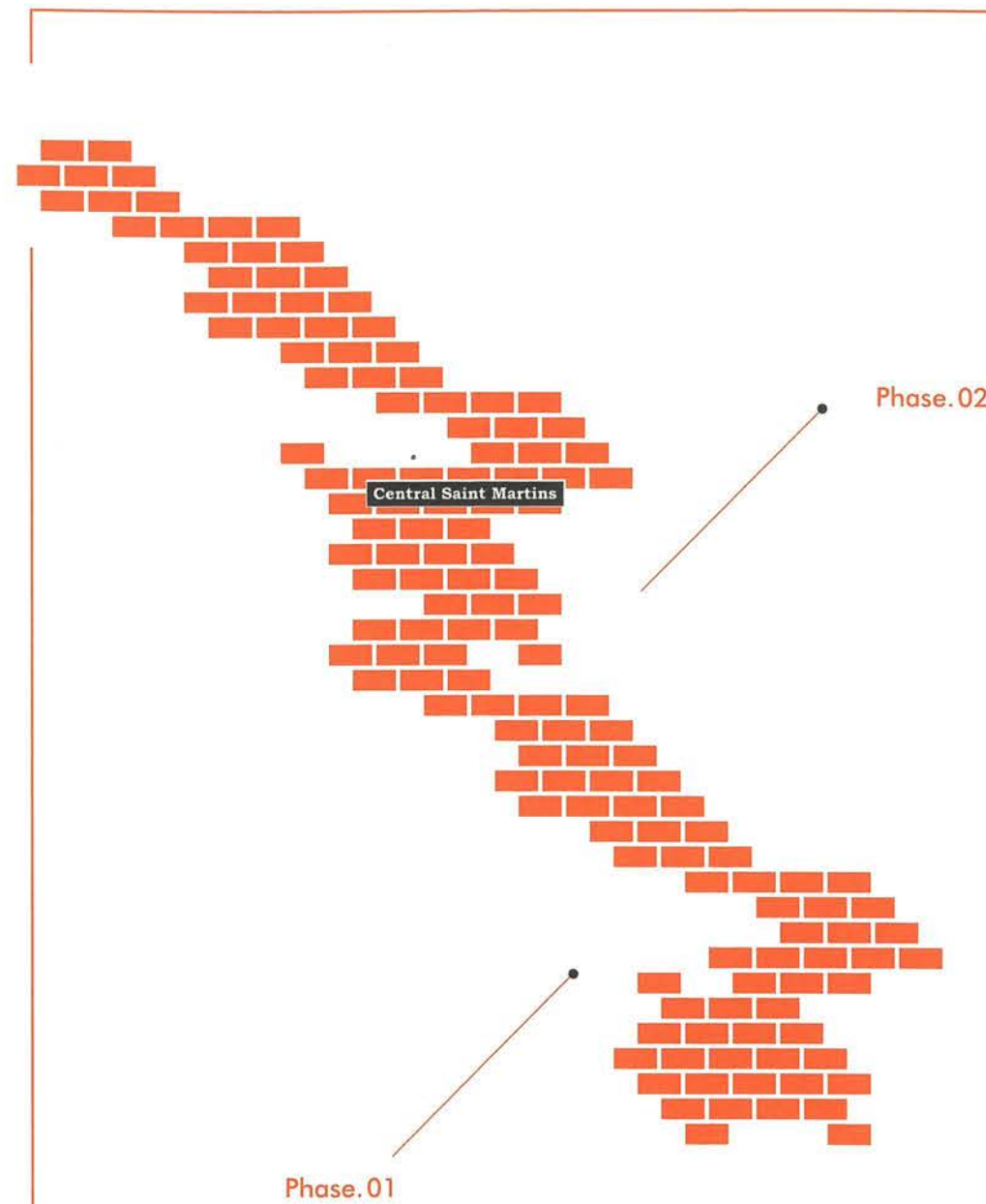
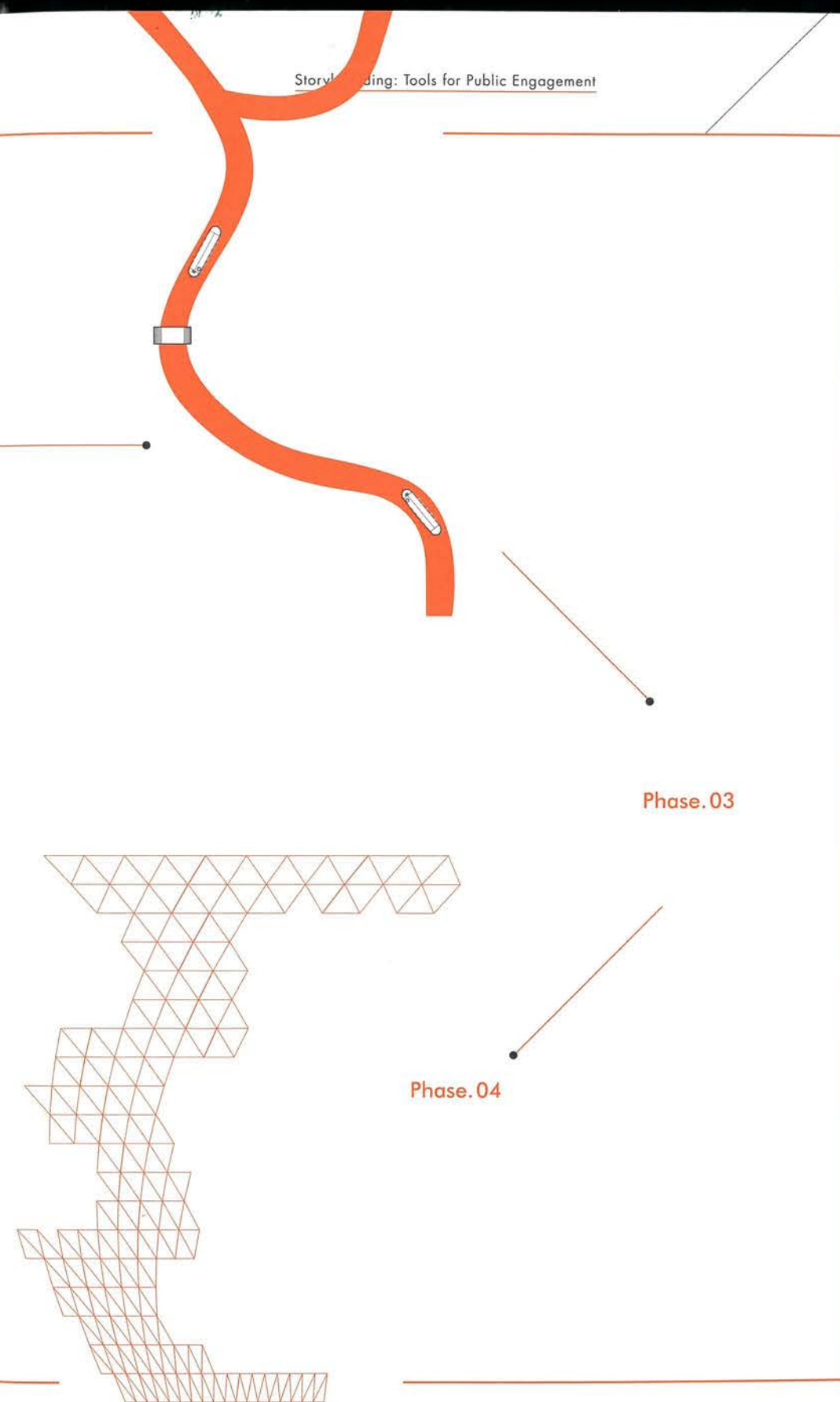


Figure 04  
An example of the canvas for  
co-participatory visual story boarding



## A Day at Campus in 2025: Football Course Context: Background of the Story

- Up to 8 hours is permissible in a day to do outside activities because of the destroyed ozone layer.
- The School is really strict.
- The School has various nationalities as groups. Brazilian and Japanese groups are the two largest groups.
- Half of students are Brazilians in the School.
- Students bet their lunch on a school football game everyday. Winners can have lunch but losers cannot eat lunch that is the rule of the school. This is the life and death game for their daily life. Gaining 100 victories is a stipulation for graduation from the school.
- Brazilian team is a powerhouse because some players have experience playing football as

part of the Brazilian side. This strength keeps away the victory of Japanese team and makes them stressful.

- At that time, Takatani and Yoshie come to the School as transfer students. Takatani belonged to the National Japanese team and Yoshie is a famous fashion model in Japan. Takatani was a national player. Yoshie was famous as a fashion model in the world.
- The Japanese team has been losing games and the fact makes their school life hard... At 6:30 am, they are forcibly woken up by the housemaster every morning, then they have to catch fish for their breakfast. At 8:00 am, they have a meeting in order to form a strategy to win the daily game. Yoshie tells them about the features of the Brazilian team.

### Verse.01 Meeting at Locker Room

The game, Japanese team versus Brazilian team will come very soon. However, they have a problem about the lack of a player, the blank position is the keeper. They are confused and have no idea how to get over this situation... One hand is raised. It is Yoshie's hand. She says I will be the keeper. They are negative for her offer because their opponent is the Brazilian team, this is the strictest team to gain the victory. She knows about it but does not change her mind.

### Verse.02 The Football Match

The Japanese team approach the penalty area by their pass and dribble. Takatani has the ball and pulls the last forward out. Then, the battle goes serious between Takatani and the Brazilian keeper. The keeper attacks Takatani to take the ball. Takatani the Brazilian keeper. The goes to just beside Brazilian goal net; the goal net is not touched by the ball.

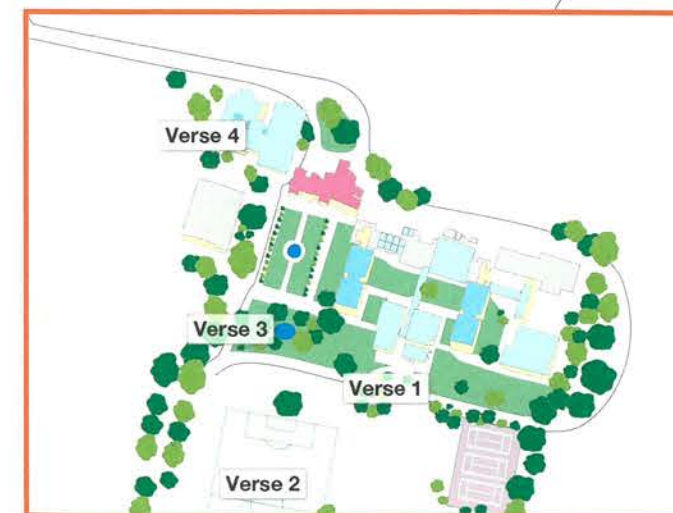


### Verse. 03 Hunting for Lunch

Yet, Japanese team lost the victory. Takatani and Yoshie gives loser team their advice. To win the game, hunting and eating fish at the swamp is best way. Japanese players go to the swamp to hunt fish. However, fish are man-eating fish. Team work is essential to get fish. Japanese players were noticed it by Takatani and Yoshie. Players could get fish by their team-work. Players have known about the importance of collaboration. Thus, any players have no idea to lose the game by Brazilian team.

### Verse. 04 At the Swimming Pool

People enjoy doing water slider, TV and Pub. The pool is the place that Japanese team and Brazilian team can relax with each other without antagonistic mind. Such as night life has no border that is why everyone love it. The pool makes the best time for their prize. Today, all students bask in the after-glow with good relationship and will start next day.



FROM THE ARCHIVE:  
A PLACE  
FOR YOU  
AND ME

by  
RUDY LEENDERS

This essay was originally published in the November 1964 issue of *Silâns* (here called *Silence*), the St Martin's School of Art student magazine run by Barry Flanagan, Alistair Jackson and Rudy Leenders. Essentially a self-published magazine, 16 issues were produced between 1964 and 1965. They explored in them ideas around sculpture, language, politics and what they called 'the unseen', to challenge traditional separations between different forms of art, and between art and society.

A facsimile of all the issues of *Silâns*, edited by Jo Melvin, was published in 2011 by the Lethaby Press at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.

We chose this essay because it tracked issues similar to the ones being discussed now in the redevelopment of King's Cross. It is reprinted with permission from Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection.

..... a Place For You And Me  
Part 1.

There are certain parallels between the architecture of today and sculpture; they are both generally deplorable with some outstanding exceptions, neither gives much thought to its surroundings, the products of both all but ignore the possibilities and the uses of modern technology in new forms and space modern society affords.

For two creative fields which have so much common ground, the ability to ignore each other is astounding. They overlap in so many areas, yet always on different levels, and never touch other than superficially. Both architects and sculptors refer to each other often, and at length, but their co-operation is usually no more than perfunctorily, for the survival of both, as art forms, the sooner they get together the better.

In order to understand what is being done today in architecture, as a sculptor, I have chosen four proposals for new developments or urban renewal. They are chosen, not because they are the best or the most representational, but because they came to my attention at about the same time. Furthermore, all are especially involved with solving a specific set of problems which recur again and again in architecture, pedestrian versus motorcar - space - future development and expansion - in all the proposals the community is involved rather than the individual.

The four projects are: "A Town called Alcan" by Gordon Cullen and Richard Matthew, A.R.I.B.A., an article in "Time" magazine of November 6, 1964, called "The City - Under the knife or all for their own good", from "Zoom", issue No. 4 of "Archigram" by Warren Chalk, Peter Cook and Dennis Crompton, and fourthly from "Architectural Design", No.10, Tokyo 1964, by Gunter Nitschke. Another source, much more on a sculptural level is a book by J.J. Beljon, "Bouwmeesters van Morgen".

The problems faced by townplanners and architects are overwhelming; it is in a way understandable that, in trying to solve so complex a set of technical difficulties, sculpture operating on a human scale is rather overlooked. If one has to allow for the requirements of pedestrians - the monstrous number of motorcars expected in the next few decades, the lack of space to fit everybody into and the need for office and dwelling space etc. etc. - a fountain or the odd reclining nude or even a tree-lined street or grass-covered square are very trivial indeed. Yet somehow the proposed megapolis must be constructed so that it can be used by human beings without their becoming mentally ill in six months. The scale cannot be too vast, yet has to be enormous, nor can it be too high or the whole thing ends up looking like a soul-destroying glass-and-concrete tomb like downtown New York City. Cities of 10 to 20 million inhabitants will be fairly common in the future; Tokyo, including its suburbs is already planning for up to 28 million. This staggering number of people, with the attendant problems of supplies, public services, traffic and transport, entrances and exits (not only to the megapolis itself but to specific areas within it) is obviously one of the most serious threats to the survival of the individual in the 20th century. A look at the bleak anonymity of housing projects in Holland and France will convince anyone of the need, not only to change the basic design of the housing unit and of the street that serves it, but also that of limitation in size of the housing estates.

(2)

Ugliness compounds with remarkable and often uncontrollable rapidity, streets and roadsigns are usually ugly, and the number of both is inestimable; most town-planners are agreed on one thing - the car must go from what are essentially pedestrian areas - therefore, both street and traffic signs can go and be replaced by grass and trees. The whole housing estate can be replanned on the understanding that such an area is no bigger than 10 to 15 minutes by foot in any direction from the centre, including service areas, thus the motorcar remains always on the outside.

The shape of the apartment building and the single family dwelling can be changed to suit modern tastes in economy, form and function. Fibreglass and plastics, monorails and atomic energy are all available now, but are only applied to World Fairs and Olympic Villages. The most modern ideas today's builders can aspire to seem to be reinforced concrete, aluminium and some dark glass, which seems to be "in".

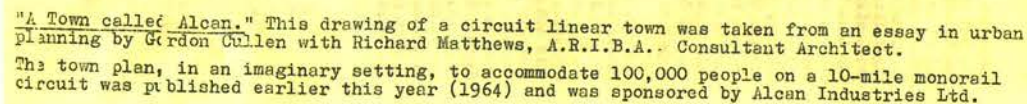
The Circuit Linear town designed by Gordon Cullen is based on wheels and legs, the most important problems in town planning being pedestrians and automobiles, and secondly the exodus to the brave new suburbs.

"A Town called Alcan", in answer to this, is essentially a self-contained super-suburb, admittedly better organised and for more people, but it is for industry and supplies reliant on larger or at least other centres of industry and commerce; it is a satellite town.

The most interesting feature is the circuit linear aspect: "we believe that there exists a definable car/man relationship which results in a self-contained diverse community of about 100,000 people living and working on a 10 mile circuit with a 15 minute contact." What this means is a town strung out in a circle, 10 miles in circumference or approximately 15 minutes by car, and a width of 10 to 15 minutes on foot or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. This is based on the assumption that "it is characteristic of the car to go fast and preferably in a straight line, while pedestrians can easily manoeuvre and use different levels", and so the shortest distance is given to the pedestrian on various levels, but always segregated from the automobile and the longest distance. The circumference is used by road transport, public transport (monorail), and the private motorcar. The resulting society would be self-contained, and it would provide all the employment necessary for its inhabitants, because there will be little or no commuting required for the daily in- and outflow of people, with its transportation problems then avoided.

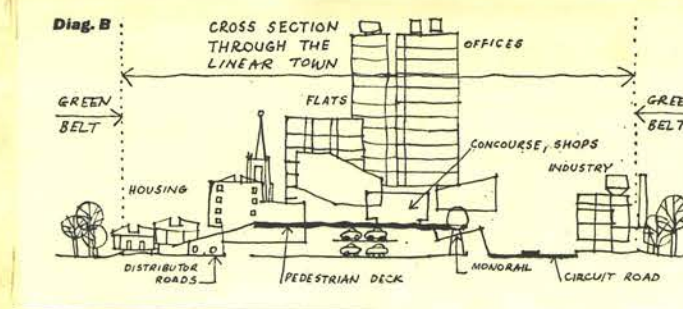
Dwellings are flexible in size and can be adjusted to the need of the family, so contributing to a greater unity of the family, now broken down by the dispersal of the various members. Always assuming that this is desirable or wanted. A problem which is more pressing than Mr. Cullen seems to suggest is the rate at which land is being used for building today. Greenbelts are already studded with pockmarks of industry and the circuit linear town, it is suggested, will halt this indiscriminate use of a valuable asset. One of the great advantages of this proposal is the flexibility with which it can encompass particularly worthwhile parts of the landscape (or features in the countryside) and avoid the blackspots. The whole town can be reduced to its lifeline, where housing or industrial building would destroy the country side forever.

The centre of the circle, being unspoilt parkland, is the most valuable asset of the circuit linear town, as a recreation area, for convalescent centres, and/or whole hospitals, units of schools or rather the entire school, or simply as a relief from human company and the doubtful benefits of society.



Consider this statement: "it (the building of the circuit linear town) would require the imposition of controls on a region and over a long period of time, so that the processes of substitution, preservation and so on would be in accord with democratic usage." There seems to be a contradiction in terms in this statement, in that the imposition of controls is manifestly not democratic and from a study of all the aspects of planning in this proposal, a certain amount of dictatorial power seems necessary.

Nowhere is there a mention of sculpture and painting, or the contribution they can make. It is well known that the technocratic and architectural mind does not readily take to curvature, but if the rectangle is not to dominate another five generations of our society, it is up to planners like Gordon Cullen and Richard Matthews, when they get opportunities like this, to collaborate with sculptors and other plastic artists.



In a recent article in "Time" magazine, the exact opposite of the proposals, in "A Town called Alcan" is shown to be working successfully in large cities in the U.S. The approach there was not to create more and more huge suburbs or new towns, but to halt the decline in population in the existing cities. "Only gradually did it become clear that the sickness of the cities was a kind of heart disease; they have been dying at the centre where the great stores and great buildings and great enterprises are supposed to be." City centres deteriorated after years of mis-use, devoid of inhabitants, who gave cities their atmosphere and flavour, starved of business and consequently the money to regenerate.

However, in turn, a point was reached where the suburbs, now crowded out by refugees from the city, were flooded by the huge population they were to serve in comfort and privacy. Shopping facilities, unable to expand warehouses and parking space, could no longer handle the volume of business. At first a trickle, then a stream of shoppers returned to the as yet anemic (but at least uncrowded) city centres and in time returned to stay.

Then, as the dying cities saw their last chance at regenerating and drawing people to them once more, they embarked upon a program of slum clearance, wanton destruction and imaginative bulldozing, so vast that the city of Philadelphia alone plans to take 30 years to do the job (including keeping up to date).

Public transport replanned and streamlined will bring people back to the city by bus, train and monorail, to conveniently located terminals. Vast underground parking garages will keep the motorcar out of the city centre, and in one case a shopping area is planned in it as well. In most cities the best colonial architecture will survive and enhance the area, which will include high rise apartment buildings in newly planned parks and landscaping.

A new greenery versus dwelling ratio which is revolutionary, in as commercial a society as the U.S. has the full and enthusiastic support of the local populations.

In the plan for a new downtown Philadelphia, traffic-free shopping malls are proposed, but a weird note is struck by the introduction of small electric trolleys for the shoppers; this seems to be part of the rather doubtful philosophy of the planners: "what we lack in open space, we'll make up in convenience".

Other cities obliterated their waterfronts at great expense, and then proceeded to hide the most fascinating asset of any city effectively from view. Many rebuilt areas are not large enough to attract the number of people and the money to make them a success. Expensive apartment buildings stand empty in slum areas, and the slumdweller can't pay the rent; those who can afford the rent do not want a slum on their doorstep, and lack the facilities such as schools and shopping that befit their new estate.

It is hoped that new amenities and accommodation, together with a new stimulating environment, will draw the people back to centres for their new populations "to rediscover the pleasures of urbanity."

Although most of these plans are imaginative, they are essentially commercial in outlook and conception. The main function is to draw shoppers and rent expensive and prestigious office and living accommodation.

The architecture and technology in them does not seem greatly inspiring from the illustrations that accompany the article; they are mostly of the straight-line-and-rectangle-cum-bread-and-butter variety, and few new ideas and shapes stand out.

A notable exception is Eero Saarinen's Gateway Arch in St. Louis and the Washington South-West Development area where an attractive new family dwelling design is used. In all projects, the motorcar and the pedestrian are strictly segregated, although there is not the opposition to the automobile as there exists in other countries. One amazing aspect of these schemes is the interest and enthusiasm of the population. Although initially hard to convince, after intensive campaigns of public lectures, school visits and exhibitions, in nearly all cases redevelopment schemes were endorsed by a large section of the community.

Considering the vast scope and enormous amounts of money available for public building alone, in these projects a bit more experimenting and adventurous thinking would not come amiss.

-0-

I would like to thank Mr. Iliff of Alcan Industries Ltd. for permission to use the illustrations and Mr. Bowen of J. Walter Thompson Co. Ltd. for the time and trouble taken in supplying them.

Rudy Leenders

-0-

Silence -----November 1964

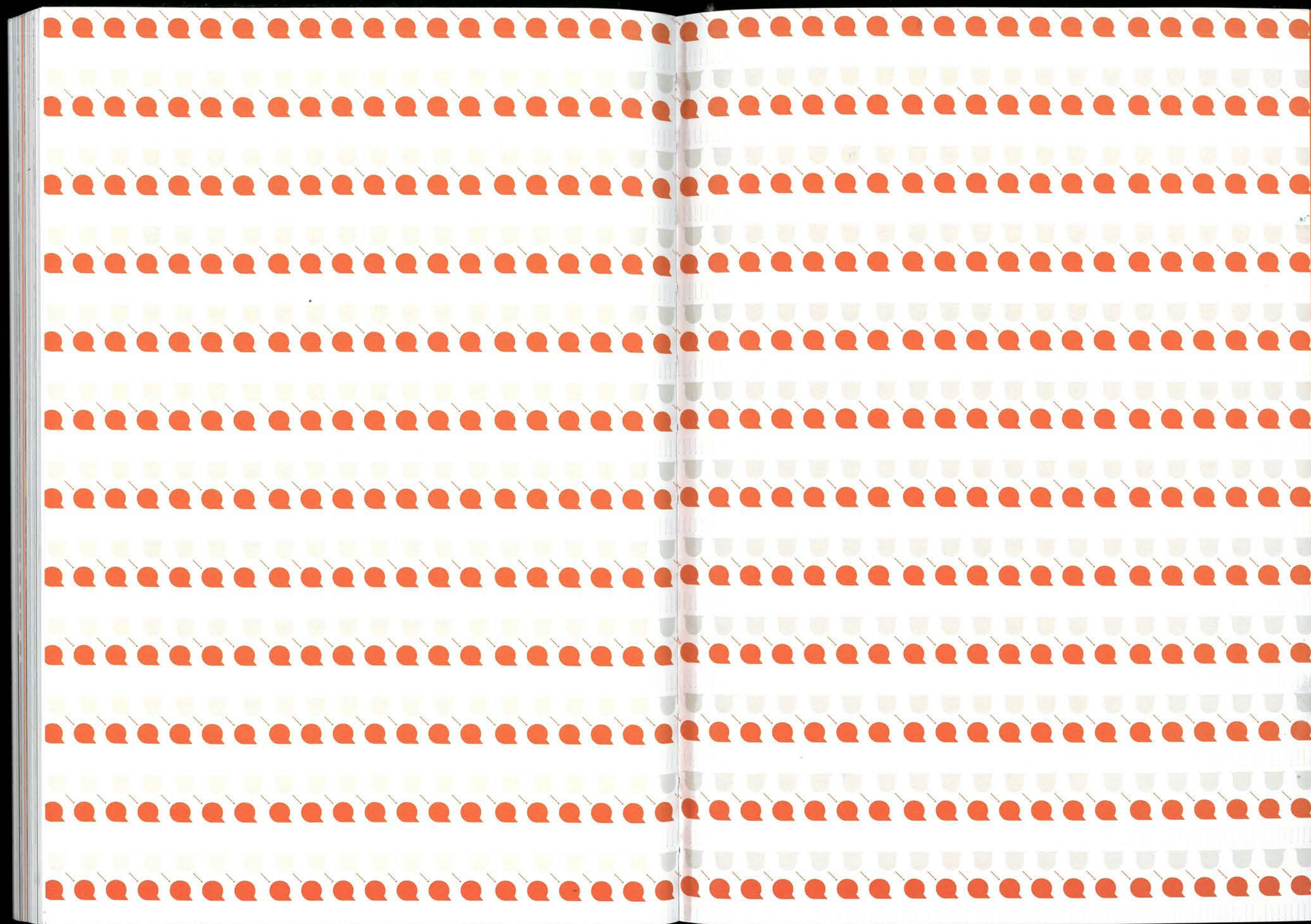
Barry Flanagan

Printed at St. Martin's School of Art.

Alastair Jackson

Typed by Hanna Hyland

Rudy Leenders



Unknown Quantities  
Issue 01

Editorial / MACCC

Charlotte Brooks  
Jen Ideh  
Amy Tabarly  
Melanie Weaver

Tutors

Sam Ashby  
Alison Green  
Nick Kimberley  
Andrea Lioy

Design / MACD

Eunjung Ahn  
Kyung-Hee Baek  
Sukmin Ji  
Chi Nguyen  
Sitao Qiu  
Apolline Saillard

Advice / Thanks

Phil Baines  
Roy Killen  
Richie Manu  
Rebecca Ross  
Judy Willcocks  
Caroline Woodley  
Rebecca Wright

Contributors

AXNS Collective  
Duncan Boak  
Dan Callwood  
Central Saint Martins  
Museum & Study  
Collection  
Sara Dimmitt  
Melissa Fielding  
Cooper Gage  
Rebecca Hendin  
Rob Kessler  
Nick Kimberley  
Owen Lacey & Antonio  
de la Hera  
Chi Nguyen  
Sarah Kathleen Page  
Apolline Saillard  
Ryo Terui  
Ella Wearing

Generous Support

GF Smith  
PUSH

UQ is the first issue of a joint project by MA Culture,  
Criticism and Curation and MA Communication Design,  
Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.

Printed by PUSH, London

The editorial team has gone to every effort to contact  
copyright holders. If any image is incorrectly credited  
please contact UQ

© 2014 the authors and Unknown Quantities  
ISSN 2055-1479

unknownquantities.com  
hello@unknownquantities.com  
facebook.com/UQjournal  
Twitter: @UQjournal

**ual:** university  
of the arts  
london  
central  
saint martins

