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# An accumulation of care: affect in the role of the contemporary curator

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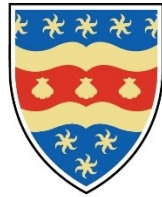
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University of Plymouth

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

***An accumulation of care:***  
**affect in the role of the contemporary curator**

by

**Sara-Jayne Parsons**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfillment of the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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Signed:

Date: March 9, 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Jones', written in a cursive style.

**Sara-Jayne Parsons**

***An accumulation of care: affect in the role of the contemporary curator***

This research portfolio investigates an affective approach to contemporary curatorial practice that is shaped by an accumulation of care. By retracing my working methods and noticing small shifts or interruptions, I reveal transformative, incremental changes in my work as a curator. I introduce curatorial practice where care is described as the physical and intellectual concern for objects in a museum, and consider traditional narratives ascribed to the role of a curator. I then propose an expanded understanding of care in curatorial practice that goes beyond stewardship to encompass engagement, empathy and allyship. Adopting a posthumanist methodological strategy which negotiates subjectivity and supports an untangling of remembered and recorded autobiographical details, I examine threads of care found in material evidence of exhibitions, commissions, and texts. These case studies call attention to aspects of affective labour in curatorial practice that weave across three main areas: exhibition-making as a collaborative experience; the curator as critical friend; and promoting social justice through intersectional perspectives in curatorial practice. This fresh exploratory model employs close scrutiny of subjective experience, through which I expose an embodied accumulation of actions that highlight the agency of affect. In the scope of the investigation from 2005 to 2020, threads of curatorial care emerge, interweave, overlap, and inform each other at various stages of my professional development and in different contexts. Case studies demonstrate exhibition-making at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, a non-profit arts centre in the UK, and the Art Galleries at TCU, a private liberal arts college in Fort Worth, Texas, USA. Comprising previously published texts and photographic documentation of exhibitions, this research portfolio charts new terrain by suggesting a novel, creative framework for the critique of contemporary curatorial practices.

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## Introduction

Working as a curator since 2005, my professional approach has developed as a flexible and organic response to experience and curiosity. I have organized over thirty public exhibitions, mostly developed in seeking answers to theoretical propositions, questions of context of production, or a remit posed by an employer. Significantly, they were produced in a kunsthalle context, with a focus on commissioning new works with artists, and liberated from more traditional curatorial preoccupations with the care of a collection. Each opportunity brought a new set of challenges to my practice and my curatorial role expanded as a result; from a specialist exhibition-maker to that of a cultural producer, encompassing commissioning new works and live programming.<sup>1</sup>

Critical investigation of this personal trajectory traces the evolving nature of my curatorial practice by elucidating and exposing significant moments of change, shift or disruption. In this process, exhibitions, commissions, and publications function as indexical evidence of habits and reactions acquired through subjective experience; the material results of socially mediated interactions that are relational and embodied.<sup>2</sup> These sensibilities reveal an expanded curatorial practice shaped by an accumulation of care when

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<sup>1</sup> My practice also includes attendant activities such as fundraising, audience development, strategic planning, hosting artist residencies, and mentorship of artists and emerging curators.

<sup>2</sup> Use of the terms “subjective experience,” “subjectivity” or “the subjective” throughout this text, refer to the attributes of my “becoming” formed by personal feelings, ideas and perceptions of reality, characterized by interconnectedness and a dynamic process of flux; I am not a fixed ‘thing.’ My “in process” state is continually being formed by my affective relationships and social interactions. At this moment I ascribe to Rosi Bradotti’s posthuman affirmation of relational community and accountability. Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, 49-50.

discussed in relation to each other.<sup>3</sup> This web of care goes beyond stewardship of artworks to encompass engagement, empathy and allyship with people.

At this moment, a posthuman methodological strategy, that contemplates subjectivity as a dynamic process and considers an affective curatorial approach, suggests the most useful means for me to explore and express what is experienced in my practice. This position allows for a non-linear understanding of career progression and traces the untidy assemblage of curatorial agency shaped by transformative encounters. An investigation of affect also results in a richer, critical overview of professional practice that recognizes and values knowledge derived from lived experience.

### Situating an Affective Curatorial Practice

The word *curator* comes from the Latin *cura*, meaning “to take care,” and while the profession still largely encompasses traditional roles of care for artworks, the processes and expectations involved in contemporary exhibition-making have become more complex in recent decades.<sup>4</sup> Additional responsibilities are

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<sup>3</sup> “Accumulation of care” is a term devised here in reference to Anna Hickey-Moody’s suggestion that “our subjectivity is the embodied accumulation of our actions,” alongside Gregg and Seigworth’s understanding of affect as a “gathering place of accumulative depositions.” I propose that examination of the role of affect through lived experience can reveal an accrual of behaviors that enable a curator to maintain and sustain relationships with artists, collaborators and audiences. Hickey-Moody, Anna, “Affect as Method: feelings, aesthetics and affective pedagogy,” in Coleman and Ringrose’s *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 2013, 79; Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Siegworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 2010, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). “Curator”. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 7 (11th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 636. Attempts to define and understand the role of the contemporary curator have been lively for some years now and highlight a range of understandings regarding the role. Key texts in this conversation include Carin Kuoni, ed. *Words of Wisdom. A Curator’s Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, (2001); Paula Marincola, ed. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (2007); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A History of Curating* (2008); Karen Love, *Curatorial Toolkit* (2010); Kitty Scott, ed., *Raising Frankenstein: Curatorial Education and Its Discontents* (2011); Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (2012); Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (2012); David Blazer, *Curatorism: How curating took over the art world and everything else* (2014); and Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (2014).

regularly assumed within the role that reflect an expansion of care beyond the physical and intellectual concern of objects in a collection. This affective shift in the role considers the interests and methods of artists as well as institutional initiatives and audiences; it can be characterized as an approach where curators respond to change, and maintain and sustain relationships, as well as managing artworks.<sup>5</sup> This is where that I situate my role as a curator.

The following summary highlights key aspects of my curatorial practice which identify posthuman concerns and reveal an affective approach. For despite recent understandings of artists' use of affective strategies through relational aesthetics or participatory practices, as yet little attention has been given to the concern of affect in the role of the curator.<sup>6</sup> The considerations presented here uniquely reveal the development, growth and agency of affect in my curatorial practice.<sup>7</sup> Throughout, subjective experience is noted in *blue text* to interrupt and draw attention to moments of change and shift in my working habits and understanding of the role of a curator.

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<sup>5</sup> This affective territory of care is influenced by relational aesthetics and participatory art practices which have become popular as innovative modes of creative discourse for curators that value sensory experience and relationships. Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012; Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and relational aesthetics." *October*, 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79; Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presse Du Reel, France; Les Presses Du Reel, 1998; Knudsen, Britta Timm and Carsten Stage. *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 1-3; Martinon, Jean-Paul. *Curating as Ethics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 151-158.

<sup>6</sup> Notably while both Anna Hickey-Moody and Mark Johnson refer to the potential of affect as a methodology for artists, neither consider the subjectivities encountered or engaged by a curator in their daily role. Hickey-Moody, Anna, "Affect as Method: feelings, aesthetics and affective pedagogy," in Coleman and Ringrose's *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 2013, 79-95; Johnson, Mark, "Embodied Knowing through Art" in Biggs and Karlsson's, *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, New York: Routledge, 2010, 141-151

<sup>7</sup> In particular this summary situates these changes around my growing experience of and engagement with social injustice as I moved from working in Liverpool to the more conservative environment in Fort Worth, Texas. For example, exhibition-making to highlight women's rights in Texas, where abortion is currently banned, is a radical act.

## Methodologies of Affect and Care

Subscription to a posthuman condition that negotiates subjectivity and urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are in the process of becoming is helpful to consider when attempting to understand the evolving role of a curator.<sup>8</sup> As Rosi Braidotti suggests, such an approach fosters an affective opening out and allows for multiple connections and lines of interaction.<sup>9</sup> To pursue a methodological position informed by affect then is to seek a tantalizing form of liberation. What can affect do? Can the study of affect illuminate or give insight to curatorial practice?

A philosophical concept focusing on the experiences of the body or embodied experience which originated in the writings of Spinoza (1632-77), the idea of affect has been scrutinized and elaborated upon by posthuman thinkers, particularly Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who describe it as “. . . a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body’s capacity to act.”<sup>10</sup> Essentially, affect is an unconscious response and change in the body that precedes conscious feelings and shapes our decisions. Excitingly, as Gregg and Seigworth point out, there is no single generalized theory of affect: “Because affect emerges out of muddied, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes easy compartmentalisms give way to

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<sup>8</sup> Braidotti, R. *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>10</sup> Deleuze, Gilles & Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, xvi.

thresholds, tensions, blends and blurs.”<sup>11</sup> A study of affect involves exploration of lived experience that traditional academic scholarship has ignored..

Affect presents a diverse, open-ended set of blurry possibilities for a researcher; potential paths that feel unsteady or areas that have not been previously articulated. Correspondingly, the language of affect varies as the range of approaches to the concept deflect a specific vocabulary.<sup>12</sup> To understand affect in the complex web of my curatorial practice I consider and employ terms such as *transformation*, *interruption*, *encounter*, *trace*, and *untangle*. Used in relation to each other such words suggest moments of change with room for uncertainty or new ways of seeing. Another constructive term is *sticky*, with an understanding based on Sara Ahmed’s assertion that affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects.<sup>13</sup>

The power of affect is made manifest in how an encounter informs our actions and creates change, and an investigation of this process has the potential to reveal new knowledge. How can we understand sensations in the body and draw attention to what moves us? How do we change as the result of such encounters?<sup>14</sup> Anna Hickey-Moody points to the usefulness of “haecceity” or this-ness in the process: an understanding of how unique our experiences

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<sup>11</sup> Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Siegworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 2010, 4, 6-10. In acknowledging an expanding definition of affect, Gregg and Siegworth suggest eight main orientations or areas of investigation where affect theory might be located, ranging from human/non-human practices in nature to politically engaged work that attends to the experience of everyday life.

<sup>12</sup> Massumi, Brian, “The Autonomy of Affect” in *Cultural Critique*, no. 31 (Autumn 1995): 88.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, Sara, “Happy Objects,” in Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Siegworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 2010, 29. Ahmed’s understanding of stickiness is helpful in addressing the frailty of memory. This concept reflects my use of old diaries and notebooks to support and challenge my recollections of events and relationships when writing this summary.

<sup>14</sup> Hickey-Moody, Anna, “Affect as Method: feelings, aesthetics and affective pedagogy,” in Coleman and Ringrose’s *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 2013, 79.

are and that “our subjectivity is the embodied accumulation of our actions.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Gregg and Seigworth refer to affect as a “gathering place of accumulative depositions.”<sup>16</sup> How can this be explored? Where does lived experience figure as part of curatorial practice? I suggest that it is possible to situate and explore these questions in relation to the concept of care, a key and historically defining aspect of curatorial practice.

The expanded role of the curator, as suggested earlier, encompasses a deeper engagement with artists, audiences and institutional initiatives. The idea and definition of care has extended to acts responding to change and maintaining and sustaining relationships; curatorial tasks may include preservation and risk assessment, or nurturing behaviours that encourage artist development. In this way, curatorial practice can be described as an accumulation of care; a sticky accrual of actions stimulated by a need to give or take care, think with care, or grow care.

Long-used definitions of ‘care’ have been revisited in recent years. Writing in 1991, Joan C. Tronto suggested: “On the most general level, we suggest that caring can be viewed as *a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible*. This includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.”<sup>17</sup> Over twenty years later, María Puig de la Bellacasa, using Tronto’s work as a point of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>16</sup> Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Siegworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 2010, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Tronto, Joan. C. *Moral Boundaries. A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. London: Routledge, 1993, 101-110.



departure, explores definitions of care through a posthuman prism.<sup>18</sup> She defines care as the work of maintenance, with ethical and affective implications but speculatively extends her definition to characterize it as transdisciplinary, disruptive work that is relational. Puig de la Bellacasa posits that thinking about care also has the potential to “make visible neglected activities.”<sup>19</sup> The capacity of care as an undervalued affective social safety net is also suggested in the writings of Paige Sarlin who describes “vulnerable accumulation” as an affirmative response to structural precarity.<sup>20</sup>

Usefully the ideas of Puig de la Bellacasa and Sarlin support an understanding of the place of care in the curator’s role as reflected in Michael Hardt’s term “affective labor” [sic], or that which is often immaterial and invisible.<sup>21</sup> In this way, an accumulation of care results from the unglamorous aspects of a curator’s job; threads that hold practice together through a web of learning experiences encircling responsibility.

*My affective labour as a curator often involves hospitality and project management outside of the steps of care needed for artworks.<sup>22</sup> I do these things to diminish the precariousness that sometimes surrounds an artist’s*

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<sup>18</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>20</sup> Sarlin defines vulnerable accumulation as a concept that “accounts for and incorporates both economic and affective registers in its description of processes and activity involved in forms of sociality that arise between people experimenting with social forms outside or in opposition to market forces.” Sarlin, Paige. “Vulnerable Accumulation: A Practical Guide.” *Scapegoat: architectural/Landscape/Political Economy*, no.4 (January 2013): 339.

<sup>21</sup> Hardt, Michael. “Affective Labor,” in *boundary 2*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Over the last two decades the concept of hospitality been critically examined both through writing and exhibition-making. The following key texts complicate and pose questions about hosting and relationships between artists and curators: Billimore, Yvonne and Jussi Kotela, eds. *Rehearsing Hospitalities. Companion 1*. Berlin: Archive Books, 2019; Von Bismarck, Beatrice and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, eds. *Hospitality: Hosting Relations in Exhibitions*. Berlin: Sternberg press, 2016; and, Tallant, Sally and Paul Domela, eds. *The Unexpected Guest. Art, writing and thinking on hospitality*. London: Art/Books and Liverpool Biennial, 2012; Derrida, Jacques and Anne Dufourmantelle, Anne. *Of Hospitality*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

*practice. These tasks may include booking travel and accommodation; writing letters of recommendation or editing funding applications; hosting meals; helping with a personal crisis involving debt, divorce, childcare, illness or another emotional concern; and so on. In this way, my affective labour can be characterized by empathy and an ethical drive that goes beyond selection of artworks and exhibition-making; it is care work that supports artists' lives and the art they make.*

### Pulling Threads

The following summary attempts to scrutinize various activities in my curatorial practice from 2005 to 2020 shaped by threads of care that accumulate, interweave and inform each other in crucial ways across three areas: collaboration, friendship, and intersectionality. The process of pulling at these entangled threads involves retracing my steps and decisions, noticing small shifts, overlooked moments or encounters that can be recognized as transformative.

Each section of the summary reveals a different aspect of the affective nature of my curatorial practice. In *Exhibition-making as a Collaborative Curatorial Experience* I examine shifts in approach prompted by working with a group of curators in a city-wide Biennial as well as different ways of partnering with artists in a site-specific context. The agency of affect in artist-curator relationships is examined further in *The Curator as Critical Friend* where I

highlight transformative connections and the centring of artist development. Finally, in *Contextualizing Intersectionality: Curatorial Practice and Social Justice*, I consider how a disruptive political event galvanized a renewed approach to curatorial activism, in an attempt to amplify the work of artists of colour and LGBTQIA+ communities. Ultimately, this creative framework, which acknowledges an accumulation of care through diverse and interconnected means, calls attention to affect in the role of the contemporary curator.

## **Exhibition-making as a Collaborative Curatorial Experience**

Curators, particularly in museums, have routinely worked together for many years in practical ways to ensure the smooth organization of large travelling exhibitions through the facilitation of key loan agreements, shared production responsibilities, and pooling of knowledge and resources. More recently, collaborative working arrangements have functioned as a practice of curatorial critique by bringing diverse voices, approaches, and skills together in exhibition-making to avoid a single authorial voice and acknowledge difference.<sup>23</sup> In addition, of relevance here is the notion that affect generates agency in collaboration that extends beyond the presentation of an exhibition or project, and as such there is potential for change or expansion in curatorial practice.<sup>24</sup> In this section I examine shifts in my curatorial approach as a result of working collaboratively within an international biennial and through the process of partnering with an artist in a site-specific context.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> O'Neill, Paul. "Beyond Group Practice," *Manifesta Journal*, 8 (2010): 43.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Lind suggests collaboration is "where some form of conscious partnership takes place, whether interaction, participation, group activity or another sort of intended exchange and process of 'working together,' often with the purpose of generating some sort of agency." Maria Lind, "Complications: On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art," in Nina Möntmann, *New Communities*. Toronto: The Power Plant and Public Books, Toronto, 2009, 54.

<sup>25</sup> The biennial exhibition model has been recognized as highly significant in the development of the role of the curator and ongoing critique of curatorial practices, particularly around group curating and commissioning artists to make new, site-specific works. But at present it is less clear how affect functions within the dynamics of this type of curatorial endeavour. O'Neill, Paul. "Beyond Group Practice," *Manifesta Journal*, 8 (2010): 43.

## Collaborative Curating: Liverpool Biennial

In 2008 the Liverpool Biennial employed a curatorial approach that involved collaboration between local host curators; a working process which had evolved since the first Liverpool Biennial in 1999.<sup>26</sup> It was an important moment in the organization's ten-year history, not only internally as it had grown in staff and expertise, but also externally, for its reputation and profile as an integral part of city-wide plans to celebrate Liverpool's designation as the 2008 European Capital of Culture.<sup>27</sup> Through the Biennial's collaborative approach the *International 08* exhibition presented all new, commissioned work. Projects commissioned by the Bluecoat featured the work of artists David Blandy, Tracey Moffatt, Khalil Rabah and The Royal Art Lodge.<sup>28</sup>

*As Exhibitions Curator at the Bluecoat, I began attending regular Biennial Host meetings in early 2007 and was introduced to the International 08 exhibition*

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<sup>26</sup> The Liverpool Biennial, the largest festival of contemporary visual art in the UK, was first presented in 1999, and organized under the curatorial leadership of Anthony Bond, an Australian-based British curator. This inaugural city-wide multi-venue exhibition featured the work of 61 international artists from 24 countries. Liverpool Biennial's curatorial approach shifted in 2002, from a single curatorial approach to one that employed a collaborative team of Liverpool-based curators. Working together, the team explored the cultural context of the city. Significantly, in contrast to 1999 where the majority of exhibition art works were shipped into the city, for *International 02* (2002) around 80% of the artworks were commissioned or completed especially for the exhibition. This shift reflected the use local curatorial expertise as opposed to an invited auteur, and a desire for a more dynamic response to "site." This curatorial turn continued in subsequent years as Liverpool Biennial practices evolved regularly. For the *International 04* (2004) local venue curators developed the exhibition in conversation with invited international researchers Sabine Breitweiser (Vienna), Yu Yeon Kim (New York), Cuauhtémoc Medina (Mexico City) and Apinan Poshyananda (Bangkok). Artists from around the world were invited to Liverpool to explore the city itself as a context for the show. They then developed new works through dialogue with the curatorial team, the arts venues and local communities. Through this process 100% of the works shown were commissioned. Similarly in 2006, the *International 06* Liverpool Biennial was organised collaboratively by local curators at key participating venues, advised by invited international consultant curators, Manray Hsu (Taiwan) and Gerardo Mosquera (Cuba). Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, archive, accessed June 2, 2021, [www.biennial.com/archive](http://www.biennial.com/archive).

<sup>27</sup> Along with other arts organizations the Liverpool Biennial played a key role in strengthening the cultural sector of the city and supporting the professional development of local curators through experimentation with different models of production and presentation. It also was a key member of the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC) founded in 2007 as a new city-wide collaborative concerned with the role of arts programming within regeneration.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 1, Figs. 1-8. I was responsible for commissioning, producing and writing about Tracey Moffatt and The Royal Art Lodge, while Bryan Biggs managed commissions by David Blandy and Khalil Rabah.

theme “Made Up,” established by Lewis Biggs, the Biennial’s Artistic Director.<sup>29</sup> The team of curators from various Liverpool arts organizations discussed how their thematic interpretations were taking shape and which artists they were interested in pursuing, as well as concerns about accessibility, resources and institutional capacity.<sup>30</sup> Used to working more independently, I initially found these meetings challenging; the collaborative work-in-progress demanded envisioning multiple spaces and potential experiences. I was grateful for the support and advice of my curatorial teammates. Learning through collaboration was a transformative experience, and marked a serious shift in my thinking as a curator, particularly in the process of commissioning new art. I came to understand that research, critical discussion and project management could only prepare you so far. Commissioning is a risky business, and it demands “curatorial faith.”<sup>31</sup> Sometimes the risk is that the work by an artist falls short of the intended result; at other times things can go awry along the way, which is what happened to me. An artist I invited to participate presented a proposal that could not be realised because of the timeframe and resources needed. I worried that my inexperience in my first Biennial would ‘out’ me as a self-taught, novice alongside colleagues who I perceived exuded a professional confidence and social behaviour that came from years of institutional training.<sup>32</sup> I felt like an imposter.

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<sup>29</sup> Through this summary I refer to “the Bluecoat” which was the given name of the organization at the time I worked there. Previous to my tenure it was called the “Bluecoat Arts Centre.” Today it is simply known as “Bluecoat.”

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix 1, Fig.3. Bryan Biggs and I responded from an affective position of working in collaboration with artists. Biggs, Bryan and Sara-Jayne Parsons, “Introduction to the 2008 Liverpool Biennial at the Bluecoat,” in *Liverpool Biennial, the Guide*, Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, UK, 2008, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Biggs, Lewis, “MADE UP International 08” in *Liverpool Biennial, the Guide*, Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, UK, 2008, 22.

<sup>32</sup> After over a decade of living abroad and rarely feeling characterised by my class, on my return to the UK in 2006 I quickly recognized signifiers and barriers of class. The uncomfortable feelings I sometimes experienced in the

*Years later I have come to better understand those uncomfortable feelings. My discomfort was evidence of the affective tensions of care and how, as suggested by Elizabeth Probyn, even in creative endeavours the act of care involves consequences.<sup>33</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa identifies this as the disruptive potential of care.<sup>34</sup> The unsettling nature of this incident is such that I still sometimes feel anxious when beginning a new commission with an artist; a simultaneous sense of excitement about the unknown and apprehension that comes from the piercing memory of a failed project.<sup>35</sup> Over time I've learned to accept and lean on curatorial faith. I now recognize the value of the accumulation of experience with each commission I did for the Liverpool Biennial over several years; a process which ultimately propelled me towards greater confidence and self-assurance in developing new projects with artists.*

The Bluecoat commissioned four artists for the 2010 Liverpool Biennial which responded to the theme "touched": Daniel Bozhkov, Nicholas Hlobo, Carol

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process of collaborative curating were akin to the anxiety and isolation I had experienced as a first-generation working-class undergraduate student in the late 1980s. I should swiftly add that this uneasiness was not the fault of any of my Biennial colleagues who were welcoming and supportive. Rather as Bourdieu suggests, I experienced discomfort through shame associated with being exposed as working class through certain classified forms of taste and behaviour. Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984; Warnock, Deborah, and Allison Hurst, "The Poor Kids' Table": Organizing Around an Invisible and Stigmatized Identity in Flux." *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, vol 9, issue 3 (2016): 261-276. Maria Fusco's honest exploration of social mobility and the embodiment of her own working-class identity in her art writings is also worth considering in this conversation: "A Belly of Irreversibles," in Marie-Anne McQuay, ed., *un un un un un un*. Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Probyn's idea about writing shame could be used as a sticky analogy to curatorial work: "There is no shame in being a sham if you don't care what others think or if you don't care what you think. But if you do, shame threatens. To care intensely about what you are writing places the body within the ambit of the shameful: sheer disappointment in the self amplifies to a painful level." Elizabeth Probyn, "Writing Shame," in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect theory Reader*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010, 72-3.

<sup>34</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. *Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017, 9-12.

<sup>35</sup> Lisa Le Feuvre's interest in failure and its critical potential in contemporary art is a valuable point of reference here. She positions failure as 'possibility' in the gap between the intention and realization of an artwork. Le Feuvre, Lisa, ed. *Failure*. London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2010.

Rama and Ranjani Shettar.<sup>36</sup> While I managed all the commissions, each involving its own set of unique working relationships, the project with Bozhkov dramatically shifted my curatorial practice. Bozhkov subscribes to a practice based in relational aesthetics, and the process of collaboration to produce his Biennial project was an incredibly rich experience.<sup>37</sup> I now recognize that working with Bozhkov informed affective curatorial interests and site-specific commissions I made years later, particularly with artists Alicia Eggert, Jordan Baseman and Raphaël Barontini.

*Bozhkov made an initial site visit in early 2010. His process of making site-specific “situation retrievals” involved a great deal of research and engagement not only with the Bluecoat but with the city more broadly, to untangle ideas and encounters that emerged as affective moments. The starting point for his endeavour began with the fact that Bozhkov had first visited Liverpool in 1986 as a merchant seaman. Before arriving, he knew the city as a historic port, the home of the Beatles and the place that had stood up to the conservative policies of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. But his brief 7-hour shore leave had resonated with him in years since. His return to Liverpool was an opportunity to investigate discrepancies between the past and the present. In what ways had he been “touched” by the city? What trace of affect could he try to map and understand?*

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 1, Figs. 9-25.

<sup>37</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon, France: Les Presses Du Reel Edition, 1998. Bourriaud's idea of relational aesthetics recognizes artistic practices that consider human relations and their social context.



*Working with Bozhkov rested on a close, collaborative approach, although I was mindful he had to make his own work in his own way while my job was to manage timeframes, budget and organizational capacity. I listened carefully and shared information to connect him quickly to city networks and contacts. My affective labour in these early stages was based around hospitality and wayfinding; we visited the docks to complete Bozhkov's 25-year roundtrip, the museums, local bars to listen to live music, and key popular tourist sites like the Cavern Club and Anfield, the home of Liverpool Football club. My goal was to expose Bozhkov to as many different aspects of the city as possible and offer potential tracks of investigation as he navigated new information alongside past lived experience. Over time my role as curator moved from being a guide and provocateur to a more practical sounding board as he sifted and filtered exhibition ideas before settling on a final iteration of his installation.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately this intimate and evolving process mirrored the Biennial theme itself; the collaborative dialogue between artist and curator relied on an affective form of intellectual and empathetic touch.<sup>39</sup>*

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<sup>38</sup> See Appendix 1, Figs.21-25. As initial ideas fell by the wayside, Bozhkov began to realise a clearer picture of the commission. The idea that stuck came partly as the result of taking Bozhkov to a Liverpool LFC game at Anfield. After watching the game from the Kop (the home fans terraces), Bozhkov returned days later to complete a stadium tour. Touring the team dressing room, he was struck by its humble simplicity, after watching million-pound players on the pitch. He described the dressing room as a place of affect and transformation, and he wanted to replicate this space in the gallery as a structure to house a 'music video' filmed with local musicians and performers. In *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, the final iteration of Bozhkov's idea, the exterior of the dressing room structure was made of metal screen, the type used to protect the many vacant properties around the Anfield stadium awaiting demolition as part of Liverpool's redevelopment. As well as a music video at the centre of the structure Bozhkov also included monitors featuring a YouTube video of a sneezing panda cub; a viral phenomenon that 'touched' many and had been viewed by 60 million people world-wide. Through this simple intervention, the global and local collided in a memorable manner that reflected the artist's own, original encounter with Liverpool.

<sup>39</sup> As Lynne Cooke suggests, in such a project the curator appropriates and participates in relational aesthetics like the artist. Cooke, Lynne, "In Lieu of Higher Ground," in Paula Marincola's *What Makes A Great Exhibition?* Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2006, 33.



Fig.1, Daniel Bozhkov, *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, 2010, exterior view, Liverpool

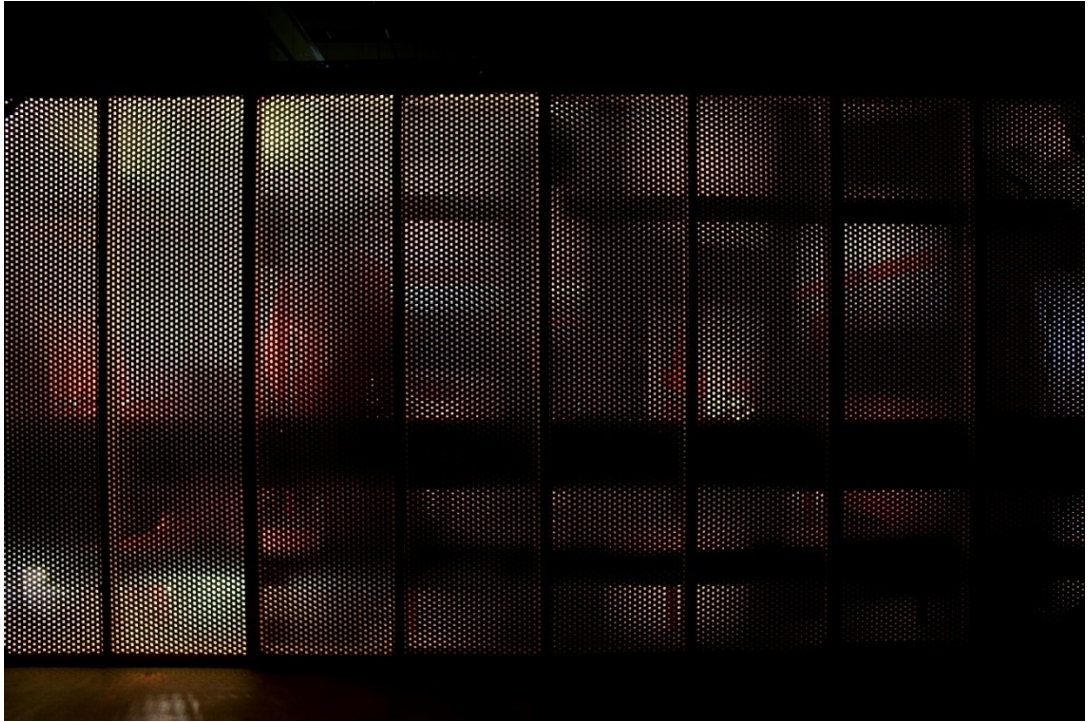


Fig.2, Daniel Bozhkov, *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, 2010, exterior view, Liverpool Biennial



Fig.3, Daniel Bozhkov, *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, 2010, interior view, Liverpool Biennial



Fig.4, Daniel Bozhkov, *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, 2010, detail of interior view, Liverpool Biennial

Artist-Curator Collaboration: *Soft Estate*

Exploration of new curatorial modes at the Bluecoat also included collaborations with artists outside of the Biennial context. Sometimes the alliance was a 'light touch' of support or critique, while other times, a deeper collaboration involved working closely with an artist to materialize their ideas in a public presentation. Working with an artist in this way allowed the Bluecoat to acknowledge artists' practice by providing compensation, profile and intellectual support, while

expanding its curatorial voice in a transparent and inclusive manner.<sup>40</sup> A distinctive example of this type of approach was the exhibition *Soft Estate* (6 December, 2013 – 23 February, 2014) that developed from an idea proposed by London-based artist Edward Chell which interrogated ‘edgelands’ or familiar, yet ignored, spaces of the contemporary landscape.<sup>41</sup> Significantly this collaboration highlights aspects of affective experience in my curatorial approach.

*The idea of ‘edgelands’ was something Bryan Biggs and I talked about often and we enthused about making an exhibition that explored the theme as posited by Michael Symmons Roberts and Paul Farley.<sup>42</sup> For me the attraction of this subject reached back to my presentation of the exhibition *Liminal Britain at the University of North Texas in 2005.<sup>43</sup> Since then, I had further come to understand the study of psychogeography and was enamored with authors like Iain Sinclair and Rebecca Solnit. More significantly though, in the intervening years my relationship to landscape and my immediate daily environment had changed; I had swapped a flat suburban Texan sprawl for a historic European port cityscape that was in the midst of transformation. I had also returned to being a pedestrian.**

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<sup>40</sup> The success of this type of approach is reflected in observations by Paul O’Neill who indicates that a common argument for collaborative curatorial practice rests with the provision of greater access to artistic and cultural practices. O’Neill, Paul, “Beyond Group Practice,” *Manifesta Journal*, 8 (2010): 43.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix 2, Figs.1-10. Chell’s title for the exhibition was derived from a Highways Agency term used to describe the natural but overlooked waysides of motorways and main roads, and his proposal alluded to an investigation of history, ecology and travel that acknowledged and re-imagined picturesque traditions.

<sup>42</sup> Roberts, Michael Symmons & Paul Farley, *Edgelands: Journey Into England’s True Wilderness*, London: Vintage Books, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix 3, Figs.1-11. *Liminal Britain*, University of North Texas Art Gallery, Denton, Texas, August 31 – October 8, 2005; University of Texas at San Antonio, March 9 – 26, 2006. *Liminal Britain* featured the work of six British photographers: Richard Billingham, John Darwell, Dinu Li, Jason Oddy, Ingrid Pollard and Trish Simonite. Their practices examined spaces where memory, identity and place intersected.

*After arriving in Liverpool in 2006 I witnessed a great deal of physical change in the city due to regeneration efforts. The vista of the docks and ferry terminal, punctuated by the grand Liver Building, changed on a daily basis; this was a Mersey River view I remembered with nostalgia from regularly travelling to and from my home on the Isle of Man as a child. At the height of the Liverpool One regeneration project in the run up to 2008 European Capital of Culture celebrations, I remember counting over twenty cranes breaking the skyline at one time, and much like the refurbishment work at the Bluecoat, other city buildings were wrought open to reveal traces of the past before being renovated and made fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century purpose. Construction interrupted every aspect of moving around the city; diversions, cones, barriers, hard hats and high-vis gear disrupted every view. The future was being made before our very eyes.*

*More prosaically, during those years I also noticed small changes on my daily 2-mile commute to the Bluecoat. This experience, which revolved around the stickiness of memory and association that comes from walking, wayfinding and noticing with regularity, had an acute impact on how I began to think about the relationship between the past and present in urban spaces. Previously, in my conception of Liminal Britain, my curatorial impetus meant I processed memories of space and place from afar as an ex-pat. But now I was responding to a dynamic built environment that was tangibly in flux as I walked through it every day. I 'felt' something about a landscape in front of me, not a place I was imagining from far away. From this position I conceived of making an exhibition in Liverpool that responded to these types of feelings, as opposed to my earlier curatorial efforts to 'package' my nostalgia for these 'types' of places.*

*When Edward Chell approached the Bluecoat with his idea for a show focused on 'soft estate' spaces with edgeland qualities I was delighted to find kinship in our thinking. We both sensed that the zeitgeist of the city would mean local audiences, who had also experienced the recent physical changes to their city, might be receptive to an exhibition that explored space, place, memory and identity.*

Although ongoing research and site-specific interest in the theme of 'edgelands' at the Bluecoat suggested a good curatorial fit for collaboration to make Chell's proposed exhibition, in practical terms he did not have enough work to fill all the gallery spaces as a solo exhibition. Instead, we realized there was an opportunity to make an exhibition that encompassed Chell's solo project while also including the work of a selection of artists working in similar territory. His work would function as the anchor or critical focus for a wider discussion about space, place, memory and identity in contemporary landscape. This curatorial strategy enabled the Bluecoat to collaborate with Chell and expand upon his ideas with respectful stewardship, while simultaneously connecting the threads of a shared creative dialogue with the work of several other artists.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Soft Estate* would not have been possible without collaboration that made space for others. Ten additional artists were invited to exhibit, and their work expanded the vocabulary of the show through media and thematic focus, resulting in rich dialogue around Chell's proposed theme. The partnership of Tim Bowditch and Nick Rochowski brought together sound and photography captured in the empty unseen pedestrian walkways under London's M25, while Day Bowman's large abstract paintings evoked a similar melancholic grandeur of contemporary urban wastelands. Paintings by George Shaw and photographs by The Caravan Gallery presented spectacularly ordinary details of everyday life which wryly suggested a sense of place in sites that were completely forgettable. John Darwell's photographs ennobled the in-between space of allotment gardens and unofficial dog-walking trails, while paintings by Robert Soden captured the changing landscape around his Sunderland home in the face of redevelopment. Drawings by Laura Oldfield Ford and Simon Woolham considered the role of memory in neglected places. Collectively, the works by these artists, in juxtaposition with Chell's, provoked a timely conversation around beauty, wilderness, and human agency.



Fig.5, Installation view of works by Edward Chell including *M2 Motorway Junction 3, 2013*, oil on shellac on linen; road dust prints, and laser-etched stainless steel sculptures, *Soft Estate*, the Bluecoat, December 2013



Fig.6, Installation view of works by Edward Chell, including a selection of silhouette panel paintings, acrylic and lacquer on gesso panel, *Soft Estate*, the Bluecoat, December 2013





Fig.7, Installation view of *Hind Land*, an audio/video collaboration by Tom Bowditch and Nick Rochowski, *Soft Estate*, the Bluecoat, December 2013



Fig.8, Installation view, left to right, featuring lithographs by George Shaw and oil on canvas paintings by Day Bowman, *Soft Estate*, the Bluecoat, December 2013



Fig.9, Installation view, left to right, photographs by John Darwell, collage works by Day Bowman, and drawing by Laura Oldfield Ford, *Soft Estate, the Bluecoat*, 2013

## **Curator as Critical Friend**

While traditionally the curator prioritized the care of objects, today, the primary affective labour of a contemporary curator is funneled toward the care of artists, ideas and audiences by “managing social networks, collective energies and professional relationships.”<sup>45</sup> Regular tasks of exhibition-making such as studio visits, selection of works, writing interpretive and promotional texts, are supplemented by additional responsibilities, some of which are brought about by institutional change or external forces.<sup>46</sup> This extended duty of care can sometimes bring artists and curators closer together, marking a change in their relationship that goes beyond the completion of an exhibition or project. After the intensity of the deadline-driven working relationship subsides, the artist and curator can remain in contact and support each other in a variety of practical ways over time. The artist-curator relationship then develops around a model of creative maintenance based on mutual respect and reciprocity that helps each professional develop their practice.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Reckitt, Helena. ‘Support Acts: Curating, Caring and Social Reproduction’ in *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, vol.5, issue 1 (2016): 6–30.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 4, Figs.1-11. The addition of curatorial responsibilities derived from institutional changes and external forces impacted my practice in the development of an exhibition by sound artist Janek Schaefer at the Bluecoat. After initially proposing an exhibition of his work in 2006, it was not presented until 2009, and in the intervening years, the financial life of the arts in Liverpool changed significantly and the Bluecoat faced a series of institutional challenges. The financial fallout from a fire just two months after the Bluecoat’s reopening in March 2008 was particularly difficult. It closed the entire building for a week and the revenue-raising bistro was closed for months. This setback, along with global recession and the subsequent financial anxiety associated with public funding cuts, meant that planning for the 2009 exhibition schedule involved much uncertainty and caution. In the context of this unsteady financial landscape, impact on the development of Schaefer’s exhibition was very much behind the scenes as confirmation of the 2009 exhibition program remained in flux for months. Staffing and organizational changes at the Bluecoat meant that arts events and exhibitions were now assessed through monthly meetings of cross-organizational project teams which included front-of-house, technical, engagement-outreach, marketing, and finance staff. This shift in management practices at a time of uncertainty and change left a lasting imprint on my curatorial approach. The process symbolized an accumulation of care, where strategic questions and collective concerns throughout the organization became part of my considerations in exhibition planning. Working with a project team for Schaefer’s exhibition was an experience that transformed how I later developed relationships with artists. My duty of care to Schaefer and his work expanded beyond specific curatorial concerns to encompass in-house advocacy such that preparations for the exhibition across the organization were nuanced and thoughtful.

<sup>47</sup> This includes writing letters of recommendation or assisting with funding applications, and facilitating useful connections to network and raise the profile of the artist or curator. Fowle, Kate. *Who Cares? Understanding the role of the curator today* in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, London: Apexart, 2007, 33.

There is also capacity for the artist-curator relationship to evolve to a different position, that of friendship; a connection defined by mutual, reciprocal affection and trust. This allows for a type of leakiness to occur across more traditionally recognized professional boundaries; friendship informs honest and provocative advocacy in the acknowledgement of both professional and personal aspirations.<sup>48</sup> This suggests friendship can be an affective process: we gain knowledge of ourselves through friendship with others, and that experience informs other relationships. However, this relational, porous quality in the connection between artist and curator has received little critical attention.<sup>49</sup>

Current ethical guides for curators tend to focus on the role of museum curators working with collections and only in recent years have scholars begun to wrestle with the ethics of the artist-curator relationship in a non-museum space or where curators are working in an independent capacity.<sup>50</sup> In addition, in view of intersectional concerns and the current review of curatorial practices through the critical lens of diversity, equity and inclusion, the need for training

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<sup>48</sup> Used by several scholars to describe the way in which boundaries of subject and body are unsteady and porous, the idea of "leakiness" suggests the possibility of a type of embodied writing that acknowledges the functions of the female body. It seems particularly appropriate here to consider in the context of an artist-curator friendship between women. Manning, Erin. "What if it Didn't All Being and End with Containment? Toward a Leaky Sense of Self." *Body & Society*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2009): 33-45; Manning, Erin. *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013; Rantala, Teija, Leppänen, and Mirka Koro. "Mucous Bodies, Messy Affects, and Leaky-Writing in Academia." *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, vol. 9, issue 5, (2020): 120-132; Shildrick, Margit. *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics*. London: Routledge, 1997.

<sup>49</sup> Discussion of the lack of discourse around practices of support in the context of exhibition-making has been noted by Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade: *Support Structures*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009. Additionally, evaluations of artist-curator relationships can be found in *The Exhibitionist: Journal on Exhibition-Making – The First Six Years* (2017), edited by Jens Hoffman, including contributions from well-known curators Okwui Enwezor, Mary Jane Jacob, Nato Thompson and Massimiliano Gioni. Hans Ulrich Obrist also reveals aspects of the intimacy and influence of artist-curator relationships in *Ways of Curating* (2014), however, his descriptions are nearly all about his friendships with men. Relationships between women artists and women curators remains largely overlooked in scholarship regarding curatorial practice.

<sup>50</sup> The most often quoted guides includes the American Alliance of Museums' *Code of Ethics for Museums*, 2000, and the Museum Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums*, both accessed January 6, 2022, [www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums/](http://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums/), [www.museumassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics](http://www.museumassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics). Some recent attempts to point out this discrepancy and focus instead on the role of the contemporary curator include: Knauss, Olivia, *Professional Practices for Art Curators in Nonprofits*, 2019, New York: Association of Art Museum Curators Foundation, accessed January 6, 2022 [www.collegeart.org/pdf/RAAMP/aamc\\_professional\\_practices\\_.pdf](http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/RAAMP/aamc_professional_practices_.pdf); Martinon, J.-P. *Curating as Ethics. (Thinking theory.)* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020; and, Schuppert, Mirjami. "Learning to Say No, the Ethics of Artist-Curator Relationships," *Philosophies*, vol.6, issue 16 (February 2021): [www.doi.org/10.3390/philosophies6010016](https://www.doi.org/10.3390/philosophies6010016)

and the development of skills in self-aware, ethical relationship building is much needed in a contemporary art context.<sup>51</sup>

The following case studies consider the agency of affect in my friendships with artists Jyll Bradley and the artist-duo Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale, aka The Caravan Gallery. I attempt to highlight transformative aspects of these personal connections that influence and situate my approach to centring artist development. Ultimately, I reveal an affective curatorial position characterized through care and derived from an ethical approach to exhibition-making that values people over production.

### Reciprocity and Care: Jyll Bradley

I first met artist Jyll Bradley in November 2006 as she began research for a commission from the Liverpool Culture Company about the city's horticultural heritage as part of planned celebrations for 2008, the city's year as designated European Capital of Culture.<sup>52</sup> The Bluecoat provided curatorial support as a city partner as her project developed in the months that followed. Through lengthy research and site visits across the city, Bradley began to uncover the fascinating but largely hidden story of the Liverpool Botanic Garden, founded by

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<sup>51</sup> Even just a slim selection of popular art news sources here highlight this need: "Indianapolis museum apologizes for 'white art' job listing," *AP News*, February 14, 2021, accessed June 4, 2021 [www.apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-museums-indiana-indianapolis-a107046d457f0ea212f172bba9274caf](https://www.apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-museums-indiana-indianapolis-a107046d457f0ea212f172bba9274caf); Brown, Taylor Whitten. "Why Is Work by Female Artists Still Valued Less Than Work by Male Artists?" *Artsy*, March 8, 2019, accessed June 4, 2021 [www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-work-female-artists-valued-work-male-artists](https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-work-female-artists-valued-work-male-artists); Small, Zachary, "After a year of reckoning, US Museums Promised to Implement Diversity Policies. Workers Are Still Waiting to See What That Means," *artnet*, February 9, 2021, accessed June 4, 2021, [www.news.artnet.com/art-world/dei-initiatives-museums-1941407](https://www.news.artnet.com/art-world/dei-initiatives-museums-1941407).

<sup>52</sup> Jyll Bradley's practice involves aspects of photography, sculpture, text, installation and public interventions, and her work often explores gestures and relationships between people, objects and their histories, and spaces. Artist's website, accessed November 15, 2021. [www.jyllbradley.com/](https://www.jyllbradley.com/).

William Roscoe in 1803, which included a herbarium and live specimen collection.<sup>53</sup>

*I participated in a bus tour devised by Jyll for project stakeholders in late February 2007. Travelling around Liverpool, we encountered ghost sites of the original Botanic Garden and places associated with the legacy of William Roscoe. We also saw some of the last remaining living specimens of the collection. It was there, in the still air of the council-owned greenhouses, that the history we had been learning about was brought to life. In that moment, in front of rows of fragile potted plants, the web of care that Jyll was coaxing into view intensified as I experienced a tangled rush of memories about people I cared about and their love of tending plants: my grandparents and older relatives working in their rose gardens, greenhouses and bountiful allotments; my parents' transformation of our back garden into a vegetable patch in the hot summers of the mid-1970s. I remembered clouds of hollyhocks, the feel of fat, waxy broad bean pods, and the smell of warm tomatoes and peaches.*

*As I looked around to see others marveling at the greenhouse contents, I more fully understood Jyll's impetus of bringing people into contact with plants. I could also see how the affective nature of this type of encounter conjured by an*

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<sup>53</sup> Commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company, Bradley's project *Mr Roscoe's Garden* evolved as a multifaceted artist residency that resulted in the design of a display garden for the Royal Horticultural Society's annual Chelsea Flower Show, London (May 2008), and the exhibition of a series of photographic lightboxes at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, accompanied by a publication including photographs and an essay by the artist. An edited version of the Royal Horticultural Society display was also presented in the Bluecoat's garden in Liverpool in June 2008. Rather than a history of the Liverpool Botanical Collection, Bradley instead created a series of works and public events based on moments and reflections that highlighted a rich story of care and collaboration in the city; she revealed the identity and changing fortunes of the garden over time, from heroic efforts to safeguard plants during World War II to the dissolution of the garden by Liverpool City Council in 1984. Through her research of various aspects of the Liverpool Botanic Garden, Bradley connected and collaborated with a wide range of individuals and institutions across the city including Liverpool University Press, National Museums Liverpool, Liverpool Parks and Environments Services, Liverpool City Archives and Library, Sefton Park Palmhouse, Friends of Harthill and Calderstones Park, Ullet Road Unitarian Church, Croxteth Hall and Country Park, Liverpool Biennial, and the Knowsley Flower Show Committee.

*artist could inspire and bring together audiences through imagination and care. Jyll was 'showing' rather than 'telling', nurturing her audiences' growing understanding of the project, and taking them on a path of discovery akin to her own explorations. A posthumanist position suggests she considered how her audiences would feel and be moved to learn, act or share in the process of perceiving the possibilities in her research. In that regard, this moment in the greenhouse with Jyll holds an indelible quality for me in how I began to think about my curatorial role as conduit between artists and audiences.*

*As Jyll's project, now named Mr Roscoe's Garden, continued to develop it became clear that its strength was powered by her conviviality and empathy in listening to and retelling people's stories about the Botanic Garden: from retired gardeners to librarians, urban planning activists to city employees. Again, there was something in her manner that reminded me of the gentleness and curiosity of my own gardening family. And while popular appeal of the project relied on an attention to detail in recontextualizing the lived experiences of others, Jyll was also very clear about her own desire to find the right balance in her work in engaging with contemporary art-specific audiences. The result was an endeavour that skillfully wove together aspects of her studio practice and exceptional storytelling skills, with gentle and generous social engagement.*

*Participating in this process through regular creative maintenance and witnessing Jyll's practice succeed through a careful weaving of concern was transformative; I recognized her approach as an ethical model that employed affective caring. This is reminiscent of Carol Gilligan's suggestion of an "ethics of care" that "directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing*

connection with oneself or with others.”<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Gilligan’s widely understood characterization of this as a feminine ethical position in acknowledgement of the gendering of care, supports the idea of the potential for affective agency in critical friendships between women artists and women curators.<sup>55</sup> Certainly the reciprocity of care in my professional relationship with Jyll developed in a meaningful way; my curatorial approach shifted from a place of project-based institutional support to a critical friendship. This move directly influenced how I worked with her on the presentation of her exhibition *Airports for the Lights, Shadows and Particles at the Bluecoat in 2011* and how I wrote about her work and advised on future projects.<sup>56</sup> It also influenced the ways I worked with other artists on solo research projects and commissions, most notably *Emily Speed*.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Carol Gilligan, June 21, 2011, accessed February 2, 2022, [www.ethicsofcare.org/carol-gilligan](http://www.ethicsofcare.org/carol-gilligan).

<sup>55</sup> Gilligan, Carol. *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. Gilligan suggests female perspective includes an ethic of responsibility which centers relationships.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix 5, Figs.1-11. *Airports for the Lights, Shadows and Particles* was originally presented in March 2010 as *Naming Spaces* at The Exchange in Penzance curated by Blair Todd. A solo exhibition of Bradley’s work over a 20-year period, the show included photography, sound, sculpture, and drawings, and significantly, some earlier, lost works were remade. Through a collaboration between Bradley and interior designer Andrew Kirk, the layout of the show was reconceptualized for presentation at the Bluecoat in 2011. An exhibition publication to accompany the exhibition was published by The Exchange and included texts and photographic documentation from both iterations of the exhibition.

Through our ongoing friendship Bradley and I have continued to support each other’s practice in different ways. For example, Bradley sought my advice on curatorial aspects of her solo project *City of Trees*, a commission by The National Library of Australia, Canberra in 2013. This later led to an opportunity for me to write about the exhibition for *Australian Art Monthly*. See Appendix 5, Figs. 12-15.

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix 6, Figs.1-6. My experience working with Bradley subsequently influenced my decisions to commission Emily Speed to develop new works for exhibition at the Bluecoat (2012) and the Art Galleries at TCU (2016). Speed’s projects involved aspects of performance and I had little experience managing this type of presentation. Over time I learned from her thoughtful approach that considered the care not just of her collaborators but also of gallery staff who would ultimately offer interpretive assistance to audiences.





Fig.10, Installation detail, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, at the Bluecoat, 2011. Detail features “Mr Roscoe’s Garden” including photographic lightboxes with live plants on special loan for the exhibition from the Liverpool Botanical Collection.



Fig.11, Installation detail, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, at the Bluecoat, 2011. Detail features “The Bridge,” 2010-11, two lightboxes and two metal panels (foreground); and “She sleeps on top of a mast with her eyes fast closed,” 2011, lightbox and metal panel (background)



Fig.12, Installation detail, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, at the Bluecoat, 2011. Detail features “Airports for the Lights, Shadows and Particles,” 2010-11, four lightboxes aluminium panels, William Morris wallpaper (bird and vine design).

### Photography, Community and Friendship: The Caravan Gallery

The transformative nature of working with artists can also be located in my practice through my relationship with The Caravan Gallery, a collaboration between artists Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale who employ photographic strategies as a socially engaged practice.<sup>58</sup> In their dynamic, versatile

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<sup>58</sup> Based in Portsmouth, The Caravan Gallery has presented projects all over the UK, and internationally, including in Japan, Belgium, Germany, China and Lithuania. Their activities revolve around a canary-yellow 1969 holiday caravan which functions as a mobile exhibition venue, a centre for research and creative participation. The artists have become well-known for presenting a candid cultural critique of contemporary life in Britain. Using the caravan as a mobile base, the artists access and embed themselves in a wide range of settings while simultaneously enabling a diverse set of public audiences to engage with their work. The Caravan Gallery website, accessed November 12, 2021, [www.thecaravangallery.photography/](http://www.thecaravangallery.photography/).

collaborative approach they explore the possibilities of photography as a documentary tool that can encourage social interaction and engagement with high quality thought-provoking art. They also inspire and connect communities through sharing stories and images, empowering and giving agency to people in how they are portrayed.<sup>59</sup>

*Our initial opportunity to work together occurred in 2008 when the Bluecoat invited The Caravan Gallery to participate in opening weekend celebrations for the Liverpool Biennial. Installed in the Bluecoat's courtyard, The Caravan Gallery was a welcoming and intriguing sight for visitors, attracting local and visiting audiences who were exploring the city.*



Fig 13. The Caravan Gallery in the Bluecoat Courtyard, Liverpool Biennial, 2008

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<sup>59</sup> In expanding from the caravan into empty high-street shops for a temporary exhibition period, Williams and Teasdale now regularly work with local councils and businesses to support communities as they explore their identity and make their own exhibitions as part of a Caravan Gallery initiative, the 'Pride of Place Project.'



Fig 14. The Caravan Gallery in the Bluecoat Courtyard, Liverpool Biennial, 2012

*During our early interactions I quickly came to realise that Jan and Chris were not only incredibly resourceful in how they funded and organized their practice, but more especially that they were thoughtful and ethical in their approach to audiences. Our friendship developed enthusiastically outside of my institutional curatorial concerns, aligning with my personal focus on photographic scholarship and a wish to connect with the UK's photography community.<sup>60</sup> As the Bluecoat's curator I wrote letters of support for The Caravan Gallery and provided email introductions to other artists or curators. But 'off the clock' we became critical friends with a relationship based on reciprocity and support; I*

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<sup>60</sup> Parallel to the development of our critical friendship I became involved in LOOK, Liverpool's international photography festival. At first, I participated as a curatorial voice organizing *Confined: The Captive and keeper in Contemporary Life*, a group exhibition at the Bluecoat as part of LOOK 11. Later I became a LOOK Board Member (2012) and then Chair of the Board (2013), while also curating the Bluecoat's contribution to the festival, the group exhibition *I Exist (in some way)* (2013). My encounter with Williams and Teasdale's work and their commitment to the use of photography in social engagement as an artist practice influenced how I considered my contribution to photographic discourse.

*contributed a text for The Caravan Gallery's 2011 book Is Britain Great? 3, and more recently wrote an essay for Exposure Magazine (Society of Photographic Education).<sup>61</sup> These texts were an effort to reveal the value of Jan and Chris' collaborative approach and amplify the relevance of their work in a bid to offset what I sense is an occasional curatorial "sniffiness" about the practice of some socially engaged artists; where work is perceived as lacking in aesthetic value and at best described as the work of "do-gooders."*

*The opportunity to write about the work of The Caravan Gallery afforded me moments of autobiographical reckoning. My working-class background growing up in a small seaside town, of the type often documented by Jan and Chris, is part of my sticky association with their work. Similarly, my daily walking commute to the Bluecoat through low-income working-class areas of the city being transformed through regeneration meant I saw and connected to their culture-specific images.<sup>62</sup> Multiple encounters with Jan and Chris' practice, in exhibition-making and through writing, disturbed some of my memories entangled across time and space. Margaret Wetherell usefully suggests that recollection is an affective practice where a "sedimented social and personal history" informs understanding within a particular cultural context.<sup>63</sup> The signifiers of class I identified in Jan and Chris's photographs were familiar and*

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<sup>61</sup> See Appendix 7, Figs.1-27.

<sup>62</sup> Manstead, Antony, S.R. "The psychology of social class: How socioeconomic status impacts thought, feelings, and behaviour," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol 57 (2018): 267–291. Manstead posits that the material conditions in which people grow up have a lasting impact on their personal and social identities, influencing later thoughts, feelings and social behaviour.

<sup>63</sup> Wetherell, Margaret. *Affect and Emotion. A New Social Science Understanding*. London: Sage Publications, 2012, 96. Wetherell considers how affects are solidified through structures of feeling, habitus and emotional capital. She leans on Bourdieu's understanding of 'habitus' as "the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them." *Bourdieu and 'Habitus'*, accessed February 10, 2022, [www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/bourdieu-and-habitus/](http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/bourdieu-and-habitus/).

*reassuring in their remembering.<sup>64</sup> In this way, my writing indicated solidarity with their practice in social engagement; a type of care and advocacy informed by activism and political belief. My continuing friendship with Jan and Chris is informed by the affective nature of the unremarkable, resolutely situated in the everyday; a sustaining and empathetic state of allyship, evolving and in progress.*

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<sup>64</sup> This is in stark contrast to my experience of discomfort perceiving the agency of class while working collaboratively for the Liverpool Biennial as discussed earlier.

## **Contextualizing Intersectionality: Curatorial Practice and Social Justice**

Sometimes a disruptive event overtakes slow, small incremental changes in a curator's practice. Instead, change materializes in response to a rupture, requiring a different type of affective labour which has evolved from a growing awareness of social and political upheaval. Affect leads to activism. The effects of such a shift illustrate a 'becoming' or reckoning with the role of care in curatorial practice; a characterization that signals the emergence of posthumanist concerns which elevate the role of lived experience, question hierarchies, and embrace a theoretical framework that foregrounds relationality and is intersectional in nature.<sup>65</sup>

For some curators an understanding of posthumanism in this way has provided a greater comprehension of the identities and social inequities faced by some artists and audiences; it has also elicited renewed efforts by many curators to further demolish exclusionary patriarchal institutional practices that privilege white, male, heteronormative traditions.<sup>66</sup> The navigation of the multilayered web of intersectional research has also underlined the need for curators to develop greater contextual sensitivity or a more nuanced awareness of 'situational specificity' as described by Donna Haraway.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Derived from feminism and critical race studies, an intersectional approach considers ways in which gender, ethnicity, sex, class and other social categorizations overlap and intersect in complex and dynamic ways rather than exist as separate or isolated aspects of lived experience. This methodology reveals systems of privilege and discrimination that affect marginalized individuals or groups.

<sup>66</sup> Robert, Nicole. "Getting Intersectional," *Museums, Museums & Social Issues*, vol. 9, issue 1 (2014): 24-33.

<sup>67</sup> Haraway suggests that focusing on localized and situated knowledge requires an acknowledgement of the researcher's intertwinement with the knowledge produced and the dimensions of the situation that are outside the researcher's control: "We do not create the world we investigate according to Haraway, but establish a 'conversation' with it, which implies that we are, of course, part of - - affecting and affected by - - the research process, and that the situation can answer back and contribute to this interaction." Knudsen, Britta Timm and Carsten Stage. *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 5-6.



Curatorial practice as a place of entanglement requires curators to consider a variety of subjectivities and presents an opportunity for intervention that in some contexts can challenge and educate audiences on a range of contemporary social and political concerns. As such, within a posthuman approach there is space for curatorial activism or activities that are counter-hegemonic which implicate the need for ethics and accountability in the role of the contemporary curator.<sup>68</sup>

*In August 2014, after eight years at the Bluecoat in Liverpool, I began a new role as Director and Curator of the Art Galleries at Texas Christian University (TCU), a private, liberal arts college located in Fort Worth, Texas. I spent the first couple of years in the role getting to grips with how the galleries could deliver the university's mission "to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community."<sup>69</sup> I evaluated existing practices and piloted new initiatives to grow and diversify audiences while simultaneously writing a nascent business plan for the galleries. On a more personal level I had to reacquaint myself with the complicated social and political landscape of Texas and consider the direction of my curatorial practice: I began to conceive of the galleries as potential sites of resistance.*

*In spring 2016 a college-wide communications audit revealed on paper what I had been learning on my feet: that contemporary art was perceived as difficult for many students who expressed a lack of interest in exhibitions and*

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<sup>68</sup> Reilly, Maura, *Curatorial Activism. Towards an ethics of curating*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2018, 16-33.

<sup>69</sup> The mission statement of Texas Christian University, Texas Christian University website, accessed January 3, 2022, [www.tcu.edu/about/mission-history.php](http://www.tcu.edu/about/mission-history.php)

gallery projects.<sup>70</sup> The student audience I was trying to grow wanted programming they described as being more relevant to their lives; I had to understand what that was for young people from largely privileged backgrounds.<sup>71</sup> I also had to learn about student life in a campus culture that was sometimes hostile and alienating for people of colour and students who were not from affluent or religious backgrounds.<sup>72</sup>

Before I could engage students through gallery programming under TCU's mission, I felt I needed to challenge them to consider different perspectives and elucidate conversations about privilege and cultural difference. This aligns with Braidotti's "affirmation of the positivity of difference" in the process of "producing socially relevant knowledge that is attuned to basic principles of social justice, the respect for human decency and diversity, the rejections of false universalisms."<sup>73</sup> In effect, I realised I would have to develop a form of curatorial activism at TCU which would negotiate and avoid what Jocey Quinn calls the humanist/posthumanist paradox found in universities;

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<sup>70</sup> In 2014 the student population of Texas Christian University was 10,033; 59.2% female, 40.8% male. On arrival I thought attendance figures for the galleries were low, averaging around 1800 visitors annually between two gallery spaces and typically with 22 exhibitions throughout the academic year. As well as making strategic decisions about the types of exhibitions we presented, I also collaborated with other departments on campus to grow and diversify audiences.

<sup>71</sup> Tuition costs at TCU for one-year undergraduate study in 2014 was close to \$50,00 including room and board. Admissions website, Texas Christian University, accessed January 3, 2022, [www.admissions.tcu.edu/afford/cost-estimate.php](http://www.admissions.tcu.edu/afford/cost-estimate.php).

<sup>72</sup> In October 2016 black students and allies submitted a letter to TCU's Chancellor highlighting their disadvantaged experience on campus. Texas Christian University Race and Reconciliation Initiative website, accessed January 3, 2022, [www.tcu.edu/race-reconciliation-initiative/conversations/posts/black-students-allies-tcu-2016.php](http://www.tcu.edu/race-reconciliation-initiative/conversations/posts/black-students-allies-tcu-2016.php). Shortly after this the TCU DEI Committee was established to build a campus community committed to growth in diversity and inclusion, central to the university's mission to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion website, Texas Christian University, accessed January 3, 2022, [www.inclusion.tcu.edu/about/dei-committee/](http://www.inclusion.tcu.edu/about/dei-committee/). Alongside racial alienation, the religious traditions of TCU's Christian founding (Disciples of Christ), while now a much less a rigorous part of the curriculum, are also sometimes perceived as a cultural barrier for some students and public audiences

<sup>73</sup> Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, 11, 50-54, 88-9. Braidotti also suggests that neutralizing difference is unhelpful. Understanding the complexities of posthuman humanity offers new avenues for creative critique; "differences exist and continue to matter. So, what are we to make of them?"

*where academic critique reveals inequality and injustice but also continues to reproduce them.<sup>74</sup>*

*At the Bluecoat I had come to rely on an institutional history of curatorial practice that recognized and supported conversations around lived experience and social justice. However, at TCU I did not have the same support system, and there was not a tradition of using the galleries as social spaces for political discourse. And even though I had previously lived in Texas for fifteen years, I was now experiencing a type of culture shock as I wrestled with my own subjectivity and accumulated set of sticky suppositions from things learned and felt. These were the near invisible affects of everyday encounters of my new life which involved, among other things, the casual sexism of some colleagues, immigration concerns affecting my husband's ability to seek employment, and my stepson's adjustment into a high school where his new Latino and black friends confusingly characterized him as "not white" because he was British-Anglo not American-Anglo. I frequently contemplated how could I develop my practice to be more accountable to concerns of race, gender and class within the privileged and complicated context of TCU.*

*Then suddenly that interior conversation changed. On 9 November, 2016, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. My disbelief was matched by a disillusionment with the media, and the role of fake news in the election made me question my role as a curator in an educational context. The politics of care came into focus like never before as I considered what the next four years would bring for women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and immigrant*

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<sup>74</sup> Quinn, Jocey. "A humanist university in a posthuman world: relations, responsibilities, and right." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 42 (May 2021): 4.

*communities. And for us as a family; had we made a terrible mistake by emigrating to the USA?*

*A few weeks after Trump's election an artist abruptly cancelled his show at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts for the following March. I had three months to make or secure a new exhibition. I saw this cancellation as an opportunity to shift my curatorial practice from a form of stealth activism to a more overt praxis. I emailed Jordanian-American photographer Tanya Habjouqa and asked if she wanted to make an exhibition together, featuring the work of RAWIYA, a photography collective. The result of that correspondence informed the way I shaped the next eighteen months of exhibition programming at TCU.<sup>75</sup>*

## RAWIYA

*We Do Not Choose Our Dictators* opened at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts on 4 March, 2017, just over a month after President Trump issued an executive order restricting travel from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.<sup>76</sup>

Co-curated with Tanya Habjouqa, the exhibition featured a selection of photographic works by RAWIYA, an artist collective focused on human rights

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<sup>75</sup> See Appendix 8, Figs. 1-8. I previously worked with Habjouqa in 2013 when I included her work in the Bluecoat exhibition *I Exist (in some way)* as part of Look 13, Liverpool's International Photography Festival. I respected her 'slow journalism' form of photography and was keen to hear her response to Trump's executive order. I also knew she had attended high school in Fort Worth and would understand the significance and timing of a Texas presentation of work by RAWIYA.

<sup>76</sup> Numerous artists and curators responded in protest to President Trump's Executive Order 13769 issued on 27 January, 2017, just days after his inauguration. The Order nicknamed the 'Muslim Ban,' placed tough restriction travels to the United States for citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In one of the more notable examples, a group of curators at the Museum of Modern Art in New York replaced eight works on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the museum with works by artists from the seven nations. The works were accompanied by labels making it very clear the installation was made in response to Trump's action and in an effort to "affirm the ideas of welcome and freedom." Reilly, Maura, *Curatorial Activism. Towards an ethics of curating*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2018, 14.

and social justice.<sup>77</sup> The exhibition also included a side-by-side presentation of video footage of Arab Spring demonstrations in various Middle Eastern countries (2010-12) and footage from global locations where International Women's Day marches occurred (2017). We hoped this juxtaposition would propose a solidarity of protest against dictatorship and oppression. Similarly, protest posters made by TCU students and faculty were also displayed, as a material effort to connect the protest experiences of students with the activities of global protestors.<sup>78</sup>



Fig.15, Installation view, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017

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<sup>77</sup> See Appendix 8, Figs.9. Translated from Arabic as “she/he who tells a story,” RAWIYA originally was formed in 2009 as an all-female photography collective. Using photography in response to and reflection of the daily lives of people affected by political upheaval in the Middle East, RAWIYA attempted to document and understand a swiftly changing social and political landscape. For *We Do Not Choose Our Dictators* (2017) the photographers Myriam Abdelaziz, Tamara Abdul Hadi, Tasneem Alsultan, Laura Boushnak, Tanya Habjouqa and Zied Ben Romdhane presented works from individual investigations of cultural stories they felt were invisible, including environmental concerns and LGBTQIA+ rights.) Significantly, it was RAWIYA's first exhibition in Texas.. As experienced witnesses and well-informed narrators of resistance and social change, the photographers understood the potential affective nature of exhibiting in the United States as part of a response to President Trump's executive order that impacted the lives of foreign nationals in the process of immigrating to or visiting the United States.

<sup>78</sup> The inclusion of student and faculty protest posters was significant and site-specific. A protest march on campus on 2 February, 2017 in response to President Trump's executive order, just a few weeks before the exhibition opened, signaled a growing change in political engagement by students. TCU 360 website, accessed February 2, 2022, [www.tcu360.com/2017/01/chancellor-and-students-react-to-trumps-executive-order-campus-protest-planned-for-thursday/](http://www.tcu360.com/2017/01/chancellor-and-students-react-to-trumps-executive-order-campus-protest-planned-for-thursday/). Interestingly, there is very little history of public protest by students at TCU before this march.



Fig.16, Installation view, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017



Fig.17, Installation view, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017



Fig.18, Installation detail, video documentation of Arab Spring and *International Women's Day* street demonstrations and protest banners, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017



Fig.19, Installation detail, protest banners made by students and faculty at Texas Christian University, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017



Fig.20, Installation detail, floor vinyl and chairs, *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017.

After RAWIYA's exhibition, programming in the Art Galleries at TCU over the following year included presentations by diverse artists in an effort to amplify the work of artists of colour as well as engage in conversations about gender identity in response to racist and sexist sentiments expressed by the Trump Presidency.<sup>79</sup> The galleries were proposed as spaces for conversations about race and identity, and in each case, live programming accompanied exhibitions in the form of artist talks and performances. On-campus collaborations brought new audiences to the galleries including students from the Black Student

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<sup>79</sup> See Appendix 9, Figs.1-14. Exhibitions included: *Finding Fanon*, (2017), a film installation by UK-based artists Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, inspired by the lost plays of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961); *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan* (2017), featured a selection of prints, sculptures, textiles, archival material and other performative objects used by the artist to reflect on her Indian-Iranian-Afghani heritage as well as her experience growing up in Texas; *Black Borders: Artists of Color, Reframing Culture*, (2018) featured new video works and installations that both embraced and challenged notions of what it is to be a contemporary artist and a person of colour. Featured artists included Amir George, Erika DeFreitas, and Anansi kNOwBody, and the exhibition was guest curated by Texas artist, curator and writer Christopher Blay; and, *gendersick*, (2018), a film by Jordan Baseman commissioned by the Art Galleries at TCU made in collaboration with a TCU student who identifies as asexual.



Association, and class groups from the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Comparative Race and Ethic Studies Program.

*This sudden shift in my curatorial practices allowed me to enact a move toward activism rather than continuing to pursue what I perceived as low-key or niche mechanisms for change such as writing curatorial essays. Instead, I wanted to encourage empathy and understanding through an exhibition-making practice that could be affective and provocative. In this way, I would characterize the affective agency of RAWIYA on my curatorial practice as ‘diffractive.’ Karen Barad suggests knowledge is gained by “reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter.”<sup>80</sup> From a diffractive position, use of nuance and complexity can open up possibilities of understanding that were previously inaccessible.*

*In the space of curatorial practice, a diffractive approach when co-curating with Habjouqa, allowed us to how to make an exhibition that amplified cultural and geographic concerns about human rights and social justice. This was best illustrated in the exhibition by video imagery of crowds of the International Women’s March juxtaposed with imagery of the Arab Spring protests. This display method challenged TCU students to consider difference as a strategy for understanding and developing allyship. Or, as Barad might say, the affective nature of working with RAWIYA made it “possible for*

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<sup>80</sup> Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007, 72.

*entangled relationalities to make connections between entities that do not appear to be proximate in space and time.*<sup>81</sup>

## Disruptive Bodies and Public Space

An additional shift in my curatorial practice brought about by working with RAWIYA and in the context of Trump's Presidential tenure was an exploration of the role of performance as activism. Under the prevailing cultural spotlight on sexism and racism, I made a concerted effort to engage with performance to explore the complexities of public spaces on campus and as a means to coax affective encounters for students. For example, *Flâneuse*, a group exhibition, featuring the work of eight international women artists at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts in Fall 2018, attempted to draw attention to the role of gender in contemporary urban experience.<sup>82</sup> It was conceived to engage college students in a national conversation about women's bodies and introduce viewers to multiple perspectives on women's experiences.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix 10, Figs.1-12. *Flâneuse* featured works by Martha Cooper, Alicia Eggert, Retha Ferguson, Laura Grace Ford, Roxane Huilmand, Cristina de Middel, Alicia Paz & Tuesday Smillie at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, The Art Galleries at TCU, Fort Worth, Texas, USA, August 24 – September 29, 2018. Taking the traditional 19th century idea of the "flâneur" as a point of departure, the exhibition highlighted key themes from ongoing scholarly debate about the appropriateness or indeed the existence of the female equivalent, the "flâneuse." The artists explored diverse concerns about street life and overlapping themes including history, memory, social justice, personal safety, public protest, physical movement, and commodity culture; from photography by Martha Cooper, an artist in her 70s, to explorations in international cities such as Retha Ferguson's documentary images of Capetown, South Africa, and Laura Grace Ford's psychogeographical "emotion maps" of London. *Flâneuse* also included print and textile work by Brooklyn-based artist Tuesday Smillie, the first transwoman artist to be presented by the Art Galleries at TCU.

<sup>83</sup> The majority of students on TCU's campus are women. Student demographics and other statistical data can be found on TCU's Institutional Research website, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://ir.tcu.edu/facts-data/students/student-demographics/>.



Fig.21, Installation view, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.22, Installation view, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.23, Installation view, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.24, Installation view, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.25 Installation detail, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018

*As a curatorial proposition, Flâneuse allowed me to refresh and expand my research on psychogeographical concerns as explored in previous exhibitions and projects.<sup>84</sup> However, in light of the national political landscape and coupled with a sense of responsibility to educate potential global citizens, the project was intentionally developed to present work that was relevant to the lives of young college women. I commissioned new work by artist Alicia Eggert to directly engage with the question of sexual assault on college campuses. Eggert's site-specific work, You Are Her, was presented in the form of a series of sculptural interventions and pop-up performances by student performers in*

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 2 and 3. The ideas and questions that formed the basis of *Flâneuse* descend directly from exhibitions *Liminal Britain* (2005) and *Soft Estate* (2013), and conversations with The Caravan Gallery ongoing since 2008.

*public spaces across campus.<sup>85</sup> The work responded to statistics that 1 in 4 young women would experience sexual assault during their first year in college in the United States.<sup>86</sup>*

*Students encountering the silent pop-up performances were intrigued and asked questions of the performers who gave out small slips of paper with details about the exhibition and statistics about sexual assault on campuses nationwide. Anecdotally, many of the students remarked that they were not aware of the issue and thought the performances were a “cool” or “unusual” way to draw attention to the concern. Additional interest surrounding Eggert’s work provided evidence of the affective implication of *Flâneuse*; the impact of the performances as a way to draw attention to issues of social justice was revealed in different ways, beyond the data of visitor figures and audience feedback.<sup>87</sup>*

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<sup>85</sup> See Appendix 10, Figs.9-12. Alicia Eggert works primarily in sculpture and interactive media, many times using signage as a means of political and poetic comment. Artist’s website, accessed December 17, 2021, [www.aliciaeggert.com/pages/youareher.html](http://www.aliciaeggert.com/pages/youareher.html).

<sup>86</sup> Pérez-Peña, Richard. 1 in 4 Women Experience Sex Assault on Campus. *New York Times*, September 21, 2015, accessed December 17, 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2015/09/22/us/a-third-of-college-women-experience-unwanted-sexual-contact-study-finds.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/22/us/a-third-of-college-women-experience-unwanted-sexual-contact-study-finds.html).

<sup>87</sup> Within a few weeks of the exhibition opening, I was contacted by Tracy Matheson, whose 22-year-old daughter, Molly Jane Matheson, had been raped and murdered in her home within blocks of the TCU campus in 2017. Matheson had seen Eggert’s sculptures when driving past campus and wanted to know more about the exhibition project. She also wanted to offer her support and share details of *Project Beloved*, a non-profit organization set up in honor of Molly Jane with a mission to “educate, advocate and collaborate to change the conversation about sexual assault and empower survivors to find their voices.” Matheson visited the gallery to meet Eggert and talk to students about the initiatives of Project Beloved. Project Beloved website, accessed December 21, 2021, [www.projectbeloved.org/](http://www.projectbeloved.org/). This consciousness-raising event was in stark contrast to a publicity stunt which occurred shortly after the exhibition closed in October 2018. Stephen Crowder, the Dallas-based controversial conservative comedian, political commentator and YouTuber, visited TCU campus and presented a man-on-the-street question booth with the banner “Rape culture is a myth, change my mind” which drew ire and frustration from many women students. It was not clear if Crowder was specifically influenced to action because of the sharing of Eggert’s public interventions on social media, but his provocative stance around the discussion of sexual assault on college campuses, underlined the timely concerns of understanding attitudes towards women’s safety as raised in *Flâneuse*. Fort Worth Weekly website, accessed December 17, 2021, [www.fwweekly.com/2018/10/03/rape-culture-apologist-trolls-tcu/](http://www.fwweekly.com/2018/10/03/rape-culture-apologist-trolls-tcu/); Fort Worth Star Telegram website, accessed December 17, 2021, [www.star-telegram.com/opinion/cynthia-m-allen/article219855240.html](http://www.star-telegram.com/opinion/cynthia-m-allen/article219855240.html).



Fig.26, Installation view outside the gallery, *You Are Her* by Alicia Eggert, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.27, Installation view outside the TCU School of Art, *You Are Her* by Alicia Eggert as part of *Flâneuse*, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.28, Performance of *You Are Her* by Alicia Eggert, featuring TCU students, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018





Fig.29, Views of campus performances of *You Are Her* by Alicia Eggert, featuring TCU students, *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018



Fig.30, Campus performance of *You Are Her* by Alicia Eggert, featuring TCU students as part of *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2018

Performance as a form of activism also occurred as part of the live program for *Caribbean Fantasia: Raphaël Barontini*, presented at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts in Spring 2020.<sup>88</sup> The idea for the performance was derived from Barontini's ongoing postcolonial research on the symbolic nature of equestrian portraiture. In the context of Fort Worth, a significant cattle trade site, he considered the history of the American cowboy, or more specifically, cowboys of colour. In collaboration with the National Multicultural Western Heritage

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<sup>88</sup> See Appendix 11, Figs 1-11. Paris-based artist Raphaël Barontini creates large-scale vibrant installations featuring banners, flags and items of customized clothing. He silkscreens and collages pre-existing photographic imagery onto digitally designed and printed textiles as part of his ongoing investigation of African Diaspora. His work engages with and challenges dominant iconographies of colonial interests, often drawing attention to black hero figures in French history to explore issues of representation and race. Artist's website accessed December 29, 2021. [www.rafaelbarontini.art/work](http://www.rafaelbarontini.art/work).

Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth, Barontini invited cowboys of colour to ride through the centre of campus, from the TCU School of Art to Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, about half a mile.<sup>89</sup> The parade by contemporary working cowboys of colour was presented by the artist as a living tribute to such figures who had been erased from history, but who the artist asked audiences to reconsider.

*As we worked together to make his exhibition, I found the interweaving of theoretical and formal aspects of Raphaël's work rich and complex: his concern for processes of creolization and hybridity, derived from his engagement with the works of writers Édouard Glissant and Stuart Hall, and also his studio practice which utilized analog and digital aspects of painting, print and photography to create three-dimensional installations.<sup>90</sup> Little did I realise that the opening of his exhibition in February 2020 was just the beginning of my further untangling of representations of race and power in contemporary America.<sup>91</sup> Almost three months after the parade, George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis. In the summer of 2020 against*

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<sup>89</sup> See Appendix 11, Figs.2-10. The cowboys wore items of custom-clothing created by the artist, which after the ride were installed in the gallery to become part of the on-going exhibition.

<sup>90</sup> Barontini generously shared aspects of his personal impetus for his practice. He considered his own family history which is infused with experiences of participating in community parades and carnival, and diverse familial connections which wind back and forth from Réunion Island (French Territory in the Indian Ocean) to the Caribbean, and from Italy to Paris. His interest in exploring history, race, identity and social justice in a public space stretched from experiences in his youth as a drummer in his high school band, to later participating in street protests against the imprisonment of journalist and activist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

<sup>91</sup> Within a matter of days after the opening of the exhibition and the parade on 28 February, 2020, the emergence and spread of Coronavirus COVID-19 led to a global pandemic and the closing of the TCU campus. The galleries remained closed to visitors until August 2020 when the exhibition re-opened briefly. Only small groups of on-campus audiences were permitted to visit, and the gallery remained closed to off-campus audiences as per university COVID-19 protocols. The uncertainty of the pandemic and the set of emergency restrictions for campus activities meant that live programming associated with the exhibition, designed to untangle and highlight key aspects of Barontini's work, could not be presented as planned. Instead, virtual materials were made available to online audiences on the Art Galleries at TCU YouTube page, including an exhibition tour, a recorded Zoom-discussion with Kenneth 'Wolf' Samson, one of the parade cowboys, and Jim and Gloria Austin, the founders of the National Multicultural Western Heritage Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth.

*the backdrop of a pandemic which highlighted racial inequality, alongside street tributes to Floyd, Black Lives Matter protests, and heated conversations around the removal of public art that served to memorialize the confederacy, my feelings about Raphaël's parade shifted. I had initially perceived it as a celebratory event that acknowledged diversity and reconsidered erased histories, thus drawing attention to racial and social inequities. Now, as Black voices were amplified, I perceived a more serious and sober reading of the cowboys of colour parade. It was a public presentation of Black bodies in an historically white, conservative space. Raphaël and the cowboys understood this, but I hadn't fully comprehended the extent of their courage in this performance, which was an act of disruption, as well as celebration.*



Fig.31, Panorama installation view, *Caribbean Fantasia: Raphaël Barontini*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2020



Fig.32, Barontini dresses cowboys with chaps, capes, bandanas and flags before the 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.33, Documentation of the cowboys before the 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.34, Documentation of the cowboys before the 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.35, 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade begins at the School of Art, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.36, 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade continues through the centre of campus, followed by crowds, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020





Fig.37, 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade arrives at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.38, Barontini installs chaps, capes, bandanas and flags from the 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade in the exhibition *Caribbean Fantasia* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, February 28, 2020



Fig.39, Documentation of chaps, capes, bandanas and flags from the 'Cowboys of Colour' Parade in the exhibition *Caribbean Fantasia* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2020

## Untangled Threads and Other Conclusions

*By exposing threads of care that accumulated and entwined in moments of my curatorial practice, I have attempted to challenge traditional understandings about artist-curator relationships. Posthuman methodologies have enabled me to scaffold a conversation about accessibility and vulnerability while disclosing my lived experience. For me, this new way of writing has been simultaneously liberating and terrifying; it has changed the way I think about curatorial practice and provoked me to find new ways to contribute to the discourse of exhibition-making.*

*In practical terms writing this summary revealed how I have evolved as a curator, and the process of looking back to look forward feels timely and invigorating. I am keen to prospect my future and am encouraged to build on what I have learned here, especially around the potential for new definitions of care. I now recognise that the most dynamic changes to my practice were catalyzed by interactions brought about by significant relationships with artists in the process of making exhibitions. But what do I do now? How do I negotiate and nourish this affective space I have plotted? How can my practice encourage more meaningful outcomes or encounters for artists and audiences? Such questions motivate my desire to investigate the capacity for radical care in curatorial practice, and to consider what this would look like, where it would be situated and what it would mean for the artists I will work with in the future.*

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## Appendix 1

Documentation from the 2008 and 2010 Liverpool Biennials includes:

- Scanned pages from the *Biennial Guides* articulating themes and details of artist commissions
- Installation images of artist commissions for the Bluecoat for the 2010 Liverpool Biennial

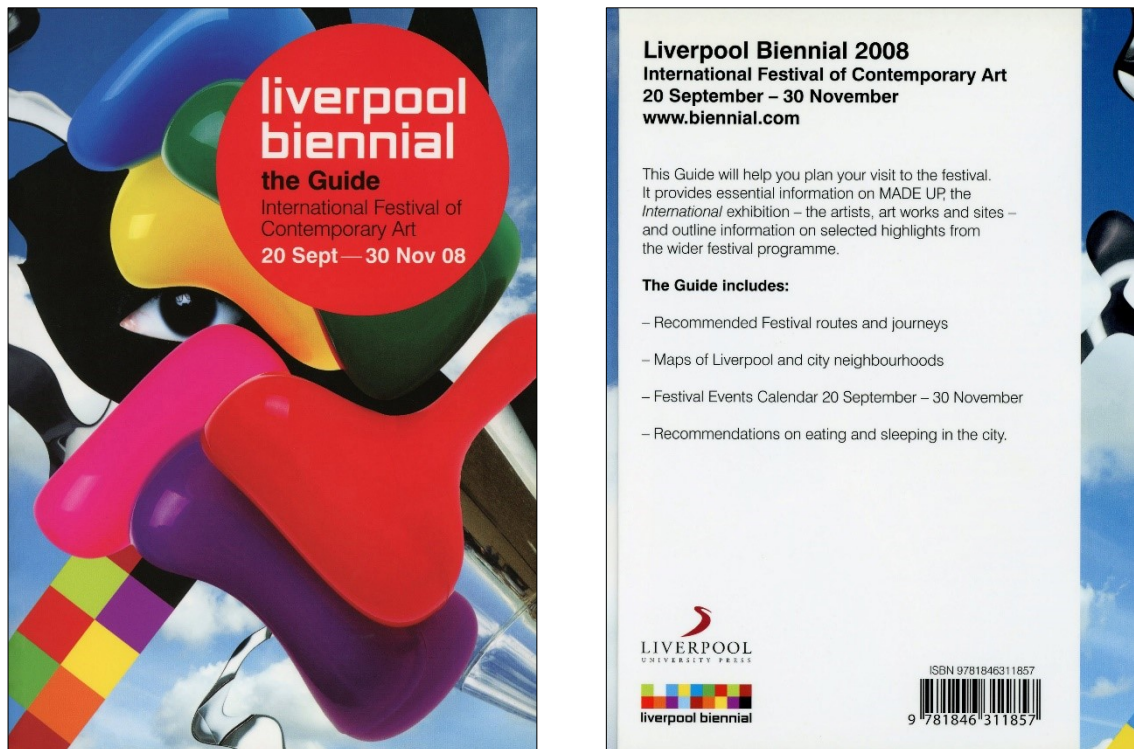


Fig.1, Front and back covers of 2008 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*

## MADE UP *International 08*

MADE UP is a celebration of the ways in which artists use imagination. It might have been called 'beyond documentary' or 'beyond the readymade'. I asked the curatorial team to invite their favourite artists who do more than retail information (there's a lot of information around these days). I wanted an exhibition of work by artists whose passion was evident, who have something to say for themselves, whose position is deeply felt, who give us something unexpected - in short, artists who have created something new.

I wanted MADE UP to express a belief in art as a pleasurable enterprise in which more can be achieved and enjoyed through a vision of what might be than through a critical analysis of what already is. Beauty can move us when critique falls on deaf ears. There have always been artist-visionaries, and sometimes their effect on society has been profound. Shelley's 'unacknowledged legislators of the world' deserve a bit of recognition.

The curatorial team each took a personal approach to the MADE UP theme, and they have described this later on in this Guide. Surprisingly, there were fertile parts of the theme that are not represented in the choice of artists' practices - for instance, there might have been a group of artists focused on the way we MAKE UP our identities, or even on cosmetics.

But the artists participating do all use their imagination, all use desire to move us from the everyday into a new space where there are new possibilities including the potential for subjective creativity.

MADE UP is an exhibition of all new work, commissioned or straight from the studio. To that extent it's a risky business for the artists as much as for the curators: it's a show that's more about curatorial faith in the artists' ability to come up with the goods, than about the curator's ability to illustrate a theory. None of us was able to predict the detail of the show that we now have, we could only believe in its ambition.

We hope you enjoy MADE UP as much as we have enjoyed the journey while making it up.

Lewis Biggs,  
Artistic Director

Fig.2, Thematic articulation by Lewis Biggs, *2008 Liverpool Biennial Guide*

## the Bluecoat

School Lane L1 3BX  
+44 (0)151 702 5324  
www.thebluecoat.org.uk

10.00-18.00 (Monday-Sunday)

Free Entry  
Fully accessible  
Contact gallery for further information

MADE UP at the Bluecoat is a dialogue with artists on the subject of imagined futures and the creation of personal and collective utopias. Our early discussions were infused with day-dreams of our own future, for the Bluecoat - closed for major redevelopment - was changing daily. We envisioned our new galleries, performance space, artist studios, shops, restaurant and public areas: our entire building was being re-imagined. Floor plans and maps took on extra meaning as we plotted a new arts experience, and our preliminary meetings with artists involved hard hats, boots and high-vis jackets. As we toured them around a construction site, we challenged them to conjure their Biennial proposals alongside our own expectations of the renewed building.

In this context, MADE UP gave us scope to work with artists who imagine what might be, and who through fantasy or reinvention of reality, suggest conditions required to fulfil private or perceived communal needs. It was important to elicit a range of responses from this position, and to present artists playfully interrogating their own motivations or institutional practices, alongside those taking a mischievous leap into the unknown. We are delighted that the artists have given us an engaging and compelling diversity of experiences.

MADE UP at the Bluecoat begins with a collision of fictional universes in David Blandy's video project, revolving around a private quest for music and artistic identity. The playful tone continues as The Royal Art Lodge's collaborative mixed media installation proposes a journey through a surreal and epic landscape. Populated with dream-like and eccentric imagery, the vision provides visitors with an escape-hatch from reality to uncertainty. By contrast, Khalil Rabah's investigation of a factual event through the systems of a fictionalised museum mixes a very real past and present. His installation ultimately poses a series of genuine political, social and economic questions about the future. And finally, the juxtaposition of Tracey Moffatt's photographic and video work, characterised by humour and melodrama, presents an imagined utopia that speaks to individual and collective concerns.

Bryan Biggs  
Sara-Jayne Parsons

**Fig.3, Thematic articulation for the Bluecoat by Bryan Biggs and Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2008 Liverpool Biennial Guide**

## The Royal Art Lodge

Garbage Day 2007-2008 (Detail)  
Mixed media on hardboard  
15.5x4572 cm (length variable)

Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial  
International 08

Initiated in 1996 by six undergraduates at the University of Manitoba, Canada, The Royal Art Lodge turned heads early in its career for producing playfully eccentric collaborative drawings and paintings, where one artist begins and then passes the work along to another, and so on. Their quirky and surreal imagery often alludes to day-dreams or snippets of fantasy, sometimes with text which appears to provide narrative clues or ironic truths. Members share a great diversity of interests, including Fluxus, children's art, comic strips and science fiction, and they appear committed to a shared vision, albeit one that accounts for individual tastes. For within all their work there is a democratic anonymity. No one artist of the group holds the floor; the message is collective whether in collaboration on drawing, painting, videos, music, puppets, props or costumes.

In their new installation, *Garbage Day*, The Royal Art Lodge continues this approach presenting a series of 300 modest panels that form an epic frieze of painting, drawing and collage. Panels are characterised by bright colours, simple compositions and the use of a candid child-like line. Within the overall collection, smaller separate stories emerge and populate the walls like key chapters or themes. *100 Years of Dying* features tombstone markers for selected famous historical and cultural figures, suggesting a wealth of biographical stories to be told, remembered and archived. Similarly, *Alphabet Code* suggests new ways to organise or communicate information, as different facial types are assigned to letters.

In between these smaller narrative groupings one finds eccentric single panels that baffle and intrigue, like a collection of unconnected one-liners: *Raised by rats* portrays a cat being held aloft by two tiny strong rodents; *Wood nymph* features a woman in white bra and panties frolicking in an empty landscape; *Head* depicts a young female cradling the blue and bloodied face of a cadaver. Reflecting the sheer volume and diversity of The Royal Art Lodge's imagined characters and realms, *Garbage Day* highlights the continuing prolific output of this engaging group of artists. SJP

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**PIPPY  
HOULDSWORTH**

Fig.4, Artist page for the Royal Art Lodge by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2008 Liverpool Biennial Guide

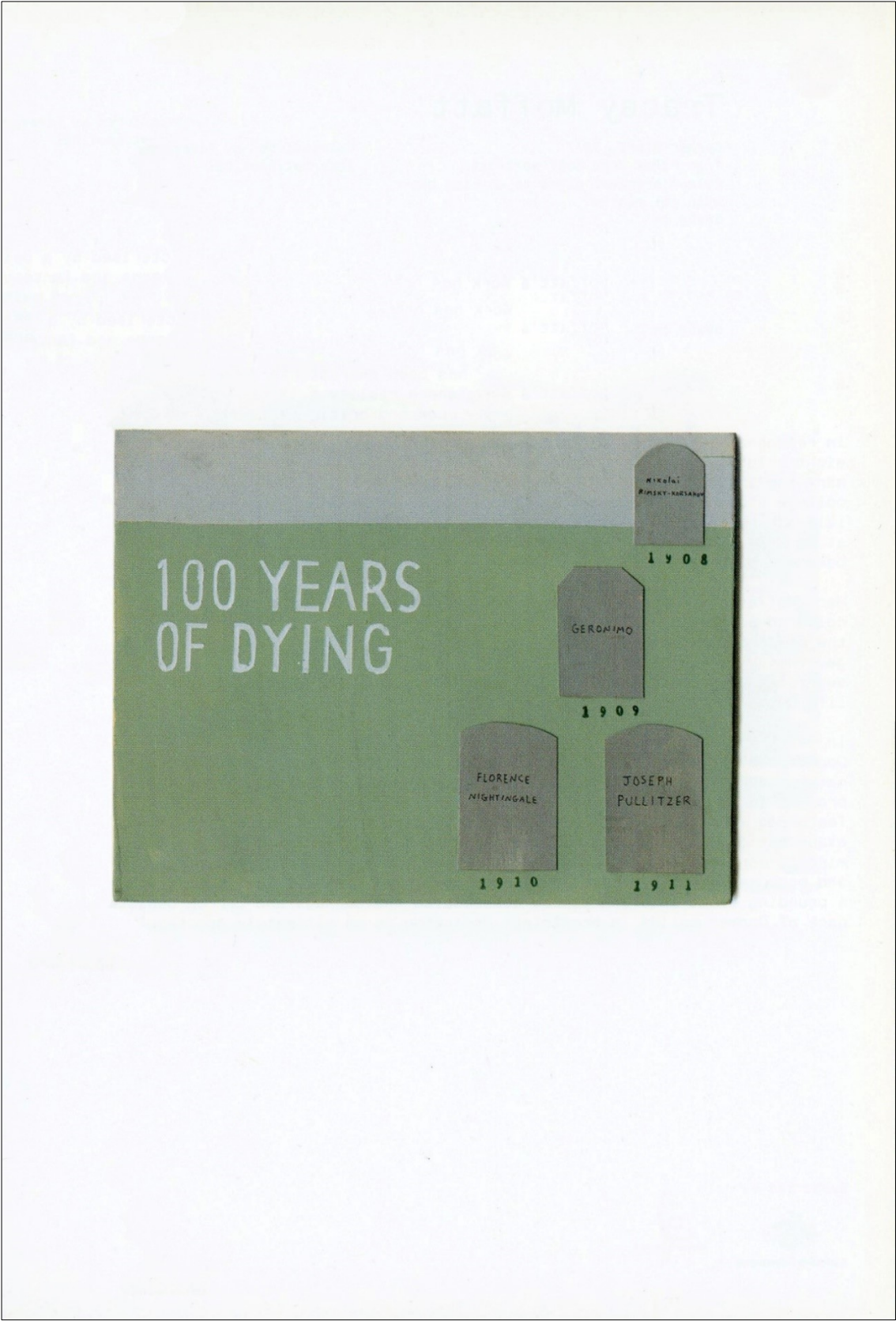


Fig.5, Artist page for the Royal Art Lodge, 2008 Liverpool Biennial Guide, 59

## Tracey Moffatt

*Corner Store, 1977*  
 from *First Jobs Self-portraits*  
 Colour archival pigments on rice paper  
 with gel medium  
 66x88 cm

Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial  
 International 08

Since the 1980s, Tracey Moffatt's work has been characterised by a delicious ambiguity that leaves viewers wondering where reality ends and fantasy begins. Her photographs and films regularly draw upon and critique popular culture and the history of cinema, art and photography, and employ devices such as painted backdrops, costumes and models. In earlier constructed realities, Moffatt's characters navigate narratives that are mysterious and suggestive, with veiled references to the politics of identity and representation occurring often.

In response to MADE UP, Moffatt presents *First Jobs - Self Portrait Series* comprising eight brightly coloured photographs. Unlike her earlier works featuring actors, here the images depict the artist role-playing odd jobs she had as a teenager and college student in Australia in the 1970s and 80s. Using found imagery and photoshop illusion, Moffatt creates re-imagined scenes from her past, where she appears happily at work in various settings ordinarily associated with abject drudgery or low paid boredom, such as a canning factory or an office.

Here Moffatt's past is candy-coloured referencing not only the nostalgia of hand-coloured postcards of the 'Wish you were here' variety but also, and more personally, the delight she finds in looking back at the dreary, character-building jobs that gave her a work ethic. Read in this way, fact and fiction merge in the photographs to suggest that no matter how mundane the job, your mind can always travel or imagine a life beyond the factory floor.

In stark contrast to the rosy, self-reflective nature of *First Jobs*, Moffatt's video *Doomed* depicts every kind of catastrophe imaginable, from the reconstruction of natural events such as fire, flood and earthquake to fictional other-worldly calamities brought about by alien invasion. Made in collaboration with artist Gary Hillberg and featuring a collage of clips from numerous disaster films, *Doomed* is an over-the-top, exuberant celebration of a cinematic genre. Moffatt's use of black humour throughout mirrors contemporary global anxieties about the environment, war and violent conflict, and provokes a range of emotional responses. The speed of the editing accompanied by a pounding electronic soundtrack accentuates the carnage and terror depicted as the pace of *Doomed* builds in breathless crescendo to an ultimately spectacular finale.  
 SJP

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Fig.6, Artist page for Tracey Moffatt by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2008 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



First Jobs, Corner Store 1977

Fig.7, Artist page for Tracey Moffatt, 2008 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*, 61

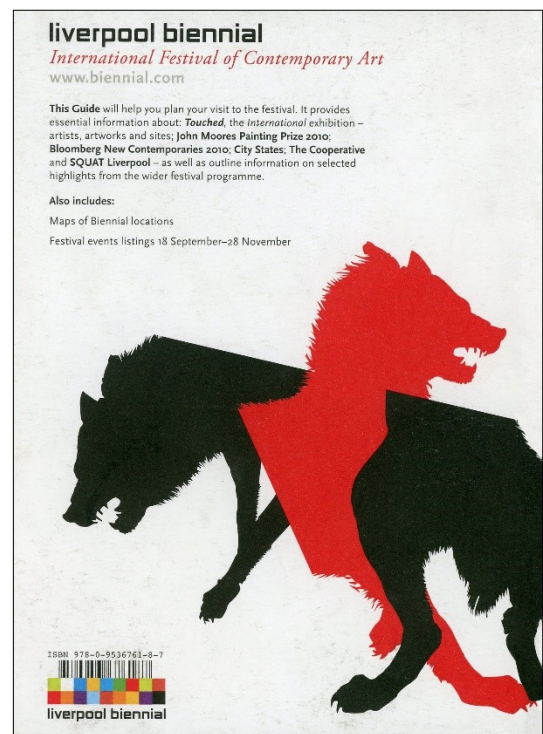
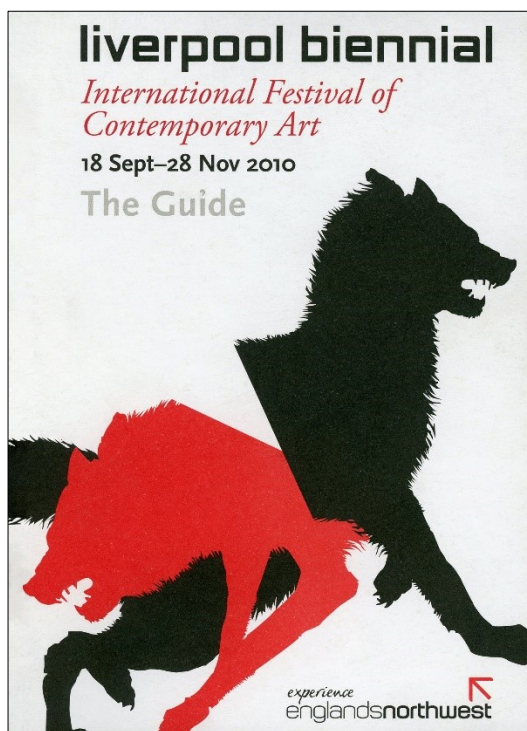


Fig.8, Front and back covers of 2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide



## Touched

The English language is playful: touched in the head, touched in the heart, touched by hand are common expressions, common experiences.

To say that someone is touched in the head is to suggest their closeness to an edge, maybe of madness or of genius, territories lying just beyond the borders of our common humanity. Some artists adopt this state knowingly and with the intention of returning to humanity. In this show Tehching Hsieh and Sachiko Abe have adopted an 'extreme' position in relation to durational time, while Antti Laitinen's devotion to failure might seem extreme also.

To be touched in the heart or the gut is to feel the pull of tragedy in another person's situation; maybe as a result to be moved by horror turning to anger and the desire to do something about it, as in Alfredo Jaar's documentation of the massacres of Rwanda; but also to be moved by beauty and wonder, as in Danica Dakić's film *Grand Organ*. As Alfredo Jaar has noted: 'if images lose their power to affect us, we have lost our humanity' (page xx).

The relation of our senses and their 'sensations' to our minds and their 'feelings' has been a continuous field of enquiry in the history of philosophy and of art. The 'authenticity', 'signature', 'expression' that leave traces in a sensible medium (whether paint, film, built space, computer animation, poetry, music etc.) are instruments in the hands of artists that will not disappear. Craft – skill with materials – is sometimes marginalised, although it has found a powerful advocate

recently in the writings of sociologist Richard Sennett.

As long as we inhabit material bodies (that is, until we lose our senses) the sensual qualities of art will continue to matter. A relation between the artist's sensibilities, the sensual quality of the artwork, and their combined impact on the viewer is here evident in work by Nicholas Hlobo, Carol Rama, Otto Muehl, Magdalena Abakanowicz, and painters in *The Human Stain*.

The best art touches us in all three: the head, heart and hand – mind, body and spirit. A whole art appealing to the whole person.

A criticism levelled both at skill with materials and at 'expression' in art has been that these qualities can disguise a lack of intellectual rigour. Narcissism and emotional self-indulgence are never attractive (or successful) in art or life. As Raymond Pettibon remarks: 'It's a mistake to assume about any of my work that it's my own voice. Because that would be the most simple-minded ineffective art that you can make'. *Touched* is an invitation to consider the role of affect in art, but more urgently it's a proposal that the viewer be affected by the art. It affirms that art is a social activity, not a solipsistic one.

The 1970s slogan 'politics of the personal' was a challenge to the contemporary understanding of both those terms – that politics was insufficiently reflective of society, and that individuals could be activists. Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* 1975 (Tate Collection) is

Fig.9, Thematic articulation by Lewis Biggs, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*

a beautiful reminder of the battle of feminists and other groups to change the 'dominant culture'. Schneemann lists the attributes of the art she loves, banned by 'mainstream' structuralist art critics and artists of that time: 'Emotion' is first on the list, followed by 'Intuition, Inspiration, Spontaneity, Personal Clutter, The Persistence of Feelings, The Hand–Touch Sensibility...' More than thirty years on, you can hear the anger in Schneemann's litany, and anger is a good place to start any political action. 'I think anger is ... the first political emotion. It is often anger that moves the subject to action. Anger is the emotion that produces motion, the mood that moves the subject.'<sup>1</sup>

One of the most powerful tools of the 'minority activists' who helped to shift modernism into postmodernism was the revival of the human body as a site of social and political significance; the notion of 'embodiment' became critical and has remained so. But since the 1990s, globalisation has created the additional need for an urgent reconsideration of the local. The concept of emplacement results from adding to embodiment its context of locality, history, specificity. Embodiment implies integration of mind and body; emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body–mind–environment.

The ambition of *Touched*, then, is not simply to affect the social but to extend the concept of the social towards emplacement. We've chosen artists whose work reaches out to mind, body and soul – to the critical intellect, the

senses and the emotions – art that addresses not only the whole person but the whole context of experience in which it is apprehended. This includes, but is more than, a phenomenological approach, grounded in the senses. It also invokes memory, history, geography, time passing: emplacement.

The last word goes to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: 'All the theoretical elements we have accumulated thus far in our discussion ... despite all their power, risk lying inert beside one another without one more element that pulls them together and animates them in a coherent project. What is missing is love. Yes, we know that term makes many readers uncomfortable ... We think instead that love is an essential concept for philosophy and politics, and the failure to interpret and develop it is one central cause of the weakness of contemporary thought.'<sup>2</sup>

Lewis Biggs

<sup>1</sup> Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 79.

Fig.10, Thematic articulation by Lewis Biggs, 2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide



## the Bluecoat

School Lane, L1 3BX  
Open: daily 10.00–18.00  
Tel: +44 (0) 151 702 5324 [www.thebluecoat.org.uk](http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk)  
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*Touched* provoked us to ask questions such as how are humans touched by seeing or making art? How or why does a moving experience stay with you? How can an artist's work be inspired through an understanding of what touches people?

The work of the four invited artists suggests possible responses. They employ strategies that revolve around the trace of memory and matter, identity and humour, and they often use familiar objects in unusual or unexpected ways. The kinship in their work suggests a glimpse of everyday situations from very different worlds. The global and the local collide, collapse and fuse through explorations of YouTube viral wit, urban regeneration and architecture, identity and personal politics.

Several of the commissioned works show the hand of the maker in a very direct way, presenting tactile qualities that highlight an intense (some might say obsessive) engagement with materials and the body. In this respect the works embody aspects of a debate about different ways of creating meaning in art: how does value

and meaning become attached to the material and formal presence of objects more readily associated with traditions in craft? Do these differ from values and meaning ascribed to work conventionally defined as fine art? Is there an argument that the former is necessarily more 'touched' than the latter?

Sara-Jayne Parsons

Fig.11, Thematic articulation for the Bluecoat by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010  
*Liverpool Biennial Guide*

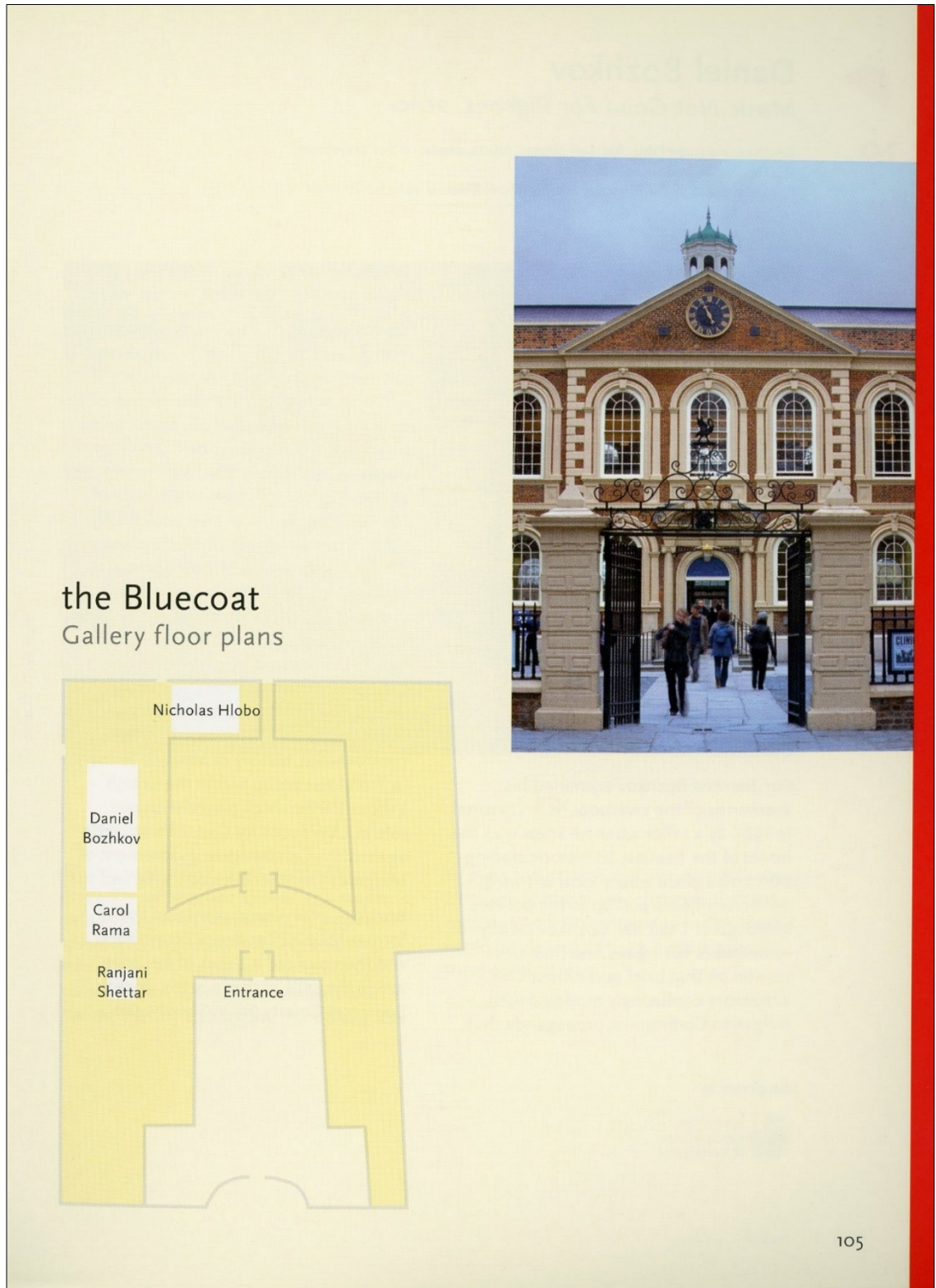


Fig.12, Floorplan for Bluecoat exhibitions, *2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide*



## Daniel Bozhkov

### *Music Not Good For Pigeons, 2010*

10

Benches, massage table, football players' shirts, music - video projection, YouTube video, monitors, soft toys  
Commissioned by the Bluecoat and Liverpool Biennial 2010 for *Touched*

Daniel Bozhkov often characterises his site-specific works as 'situation retrievals'. Created after months of research and engagement with a particular location, his projects draw attention to unusual coincidences and reveal hidden strains of meaning. To unearth instances of surprising proximity he spends a great deal of time with a variety of people, learning first-hand about their personal history, experiences and practice, and sharing his own stories and expertise in exchange for new skills. Bozhkov's work acquires its form in a process of social anthropology. Appropriate means are decided along the way – painting, photography, film or interventions on the city street. He has even developed a new *eau de cologne* and a type of bread as ways to engage with specific situations and sites.

For *Touched* Bozhkov examined his memories of the Liverpool he first visited in 1986 as a sailor when he knew it as the home of the Beatles, an historic trading port and a place where local left-wing politicians had stood up to the policies of Margaret Thatcher. Bozhkov clearly remembers seeing his first homeless person on that brief seven-hour visit, a memory confusingly muddled with Bulgarian Communist propaganda that

taught him that homelessness was a social plague of the West.

On his second visit nearly 25 years later, Bozhkov investigates the discrepancies between what caught his attention then and now. Merging the phenomenon of online culture with football, music and politics, his reflection is darkly humorous, poignant and timely. The main structure of Bozhkov's installation is a replica of the dressing rooms of Liverpool Football Club. When he visited the Anfield stadium, the artist was struck by how humble and austere these spaces were. At the centre of the structure at the centre of the structure a YouTube video of a sneezing panda cub, viewed by over 60 million people world-wide, plays repeatedly on several monitors. A music video that presents the half-forgotten, but still controversial, history of Militant Tendency – a Trotskyist group within the British Labour Party, which played a crucial role in Liverpool City Council's struggle against the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher between 1983 and 1987.

Bozhkov interviewed several of these former Militant Tendency councillors, and then painted a series of frescoes inside the cells of the recently closed Somerset County Jail in Skowhegan,

Courtesy of the artist

Supported by



Fig.13, Artist page for Daniel Bozhkov by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



Maine, recounting chapters of Militant's story. These frescoes appear in a music video along with Bozhkov taking voice lessons in Liverpool, learning how to sing John Lennon's 'Imagine'. Performed in collaboration with local musicians and bands, in a style changing from bluegrass

to punk to Socialist and anti-Fascist songs, Bozhkov provocatively suggests that the message Lennon embedded in the song could be viewed through a more specific local political lens.

Sara-Jayne Parsons

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Fig.14, Artist page for Daniel Bozhkov by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



## Nicholas Hlobo

*Ndize*, 2010

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Recycled rubber, fabric, ribbon, white clay  
Commissioned by the Bluecoat and Liverpool Biennial 2010 for *Touched*

Nicholas Hlobo creates sculptural installations that explore and reflect his Xhosa heritage. Personal and collective memory slides in and out of focus as he reframes and re-presents traditions and rites of passage. With intelligence and sensitivity, Hlobo considers how such customs are evolving in changing times. Entwined with this cultural scrutiny, the artist engages in an investigation of sexual identity and personal politics, contemplating his position as a gay man within Xhosa culture in post-apartheid South Africa.

In his investigation of past and present Hlobo reinvents and recycles objects. His materials often include leather, rubber, ribbon, furniture and other domestic found objects. The obsessive stitching, braiding and knotting he frequently employs reveals an intensity of making that revolves around craft and touch. The tactile nature of his materials and his hand-worked methods imply tradition and skill, but result in something that is more contemporary than historical in meaning. Unsurprisingly, Hlobo sometimes performs with his sculptures, partly dressed as – or in – one of his forms, further highlighting the significant relationship of materials and body.

For *Touched* Hlobo connects two galleries with a trail of rubber, fabric and white clay

balls, enticing visitors into a game of hide-and-seek with his sculptural installation *Ndize*. In Xhosa the game of hide-and-seek is called 'undize', and 'ndize' is the player who seeks. Hlobo introduces us to 'ndize' in the ground-floor gallery; a lone figure leaning against the window, peering out, suggestively presenting his rear and silently counting before the search begins. From 'ndize' the playful trail winds its way around and out of the gallery, meandering up the stairs, in search of the other players.

Once upstairs, visitors are met with a sensuous maze of brightly coloured, densely woven ribbons that hang from a great height to the floor. For seekers in the game there are several paths to choose from; the labyrinth is delicious in its intimacy and mystery. Brief, tantalising glimpses through the ribbons reveal the hiding players, and after the challenge of wrong turns and dead ends, seekers may eventually find them; an enigmatic couple engaged in a whispered conversation. It is not clear what sex they are. Their black rubber bodies are clothed with fabric and yet more rubber; their hands and faces are doll-like. Upon finding the hiding players the innocence of the game of hide-and-seek matures into the caress of adult fantasy.

Sara-Jayne Parsons

Courtesy of the artist

Fig.15, Artist page for Nicholas Hlobo by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



Fig.16, Artist page for Nicholas Hlobo by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide*, 109





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## Carol Rama

### *The Cabinet of Carol Rama*

Carol Rama is a self-taught artist who has been making art for nearly seventy years. Producing work consistently characterised as unconventional and darkly erotic, Rama's style has moved from figurative to abstract and back again through the decades, accompanied by an exploration of diverse materials. Throughout, her work has had a constant subject: an engagement with self and the effect of trauma in modern life.

Rama began making art to express her fears and anguish; emotions of passion, anger, violence, joy and melancholy are all strongly conveyed in the work. Yet the artist has also indicated that she has used art to heal herself from despair and loneliness, drawing strongly on personal experiences of devastating loss from her mother's mental illness to the trauma of her father's suicide. This makes for uneasy reading, her work avoiding narrative in favour of symbolism, provocation and enchantment. Its power lies in dichotomy: there is something fierce and tender about her female figures; they are seductive but repulsive, tragic yet playful.

Featuring twelve works (ten of which have never been seen in the UK before),

*The Cabinet of Carol Rama* includes dresses made and worn by the artist, along with watercolours, collages, sculpture and photographs. The selection, spanning a sixty-year period, effectively creates a very intimate space; a place referencing not only clothing, the female body and the hint of sexual encounters, but, more significantly, Rama's biography and the private realm of her own home and studio.

Watercolours from the late 1930s featuring impassioned sexualised young women converse with images of more opaque indicators of desire such as stylish shoes with phallic details, fox stoles and a crowd of luscious shaving brushes. Collectively the motifs present themes of sexual identity with a specific investigation of female sensuality. Later works, collages on canvas from the 1960s and 1970s, explore the soft, skin-like surface of rubber inner tubes. These anticipate her more direct focus on the body in the following decade – Rama's series of black wedding dresses featuring hand-stitched details echoing the forms of male and female genitalia.

Sara-Jayne Parsons

With thanks to Alexandra Wetzel and Franco Masoero

Fig.17, Artist page for Carol Rama by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



Fig.18, Artist page for Carol Rama by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide, 111



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## Ranjani Shettar

*Aureole*, 2010

Cast bronze

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Talwar Gallery, New York and Delhi

The relationship that humans have to particular spaces in the built environment is a consistent concern for Ranjani Shettar. She is interested in the scrape or collision between the industrial and the organic, the mundane and the unusual, the traditional and the contemporary. She searches for possibilities of meaning in humble objects and usually works with everyday materials such as wax, ink, paper, cotton, plastic sheeting or mud.

For *Touched*, Shettar has experimented with bronze and presents an elegant installation in the Vide at the Bluecoat that provokes a conversation about the touch between materials and architecture. Cast using the ancient lost wax process, Shettar's work draws attention to the process of casting bronze. Traditionally, small 'sprue', or channels, are used to facilitate the flow of molten bronze and allow ventilation from the main form being cast. These channels typically appear as vein-like structures but are cut off the main form and discarded in the finishing process; their existence is purely functional.

*Aureole* embraces the idea of these 'lost' forms and recreates them as a large, closed organic form that slopes away from the viewer, circling, ascending and clinging to the walls and floor of the Vide. Made of several pieces varying in length from just a few inches to several feet, the bronze resembles the remnants of a collapsed spider web.

A poetic tension and mystery permeates the installation; a sense that something cast has been removed, leaving only the trace of what it once was; a voluminous ghost that hovers unseen. Similarly, the vine-like natural growth of the roughened bronze with green patina sits in stark contrast to the grey-white, smooth, geometric minimalism of the surrounding architecture.

In creating *Aureole* Shettar made the wax models for the work and then supervised the production of the bronze by a team of craftsmen at a foundry in south-eastern India, an area renowned since the ninth century for producing Chola bronzes.<sup>1</sup> She not only challenged her practice by deciding to work with bronze, but also questioned the role of the maker's hand; although using a traditional craft method, she employed a different form not usually associated with the method or material. Significantly the young men helping her see themselves as fabricators; they are not self-aware as artists or craftsmen. In this respect, it's clear that Shettar's work continues to occupy a liminal creative space; a place where the thresholds between art and craft, tradition and modernity overlap and inform each other.

Sara-Jayne Parsons

<sup>1</sup> Chola-style bronze is epitomised by statues of Hindu gods and other ceremonial deities usually made to be housed in an inner sanctum of a temple, and being brought out only for certain rituals or festivals. By and large they are very expressive and technically exquisite.

Fig.19, Artist page for Ranjani Shettar by Sara-Jayne Parsons, 2010 *Liverpool Biennial Guide*



Fig.20, Artist page for Ranjani Shettar by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *2010 Liverpool Biennial Guide*, 113



Fig.21 Daniel Bozhkov, *Music Not Good For Pigeons*, 2010, interior view of installation, Liverpool Biennial (Photography credit: Jon Barraclough)



Fig.22, Nicholas Hlobo, *Ndize*, 2010, details of ground floor installation, Liverpool Biennial (Photography credit: Jon Barraclough)



Fig.23, Nicholas Hlobo, *Ndize*, 2010, details of first floor installation, Liverpool Biennial (Photography credit: Jon Barraclough)



Fig.24, Carol Rama, *The Cabinet of Carol Rama*, 2010, installation view, Liverpool Biennial (Photography credit: Jon Barraclough)



Fig.25, Ranjani Shettar, *Aureole*, 2010, installation view, Liverpool Biennial (Photography credit: Jon Barraclough)

## Appendix 2

Documentation from the exhibition *Soft Estate* includes:

- Scanned pages of “In the Rear View Mirror,” by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 13-23

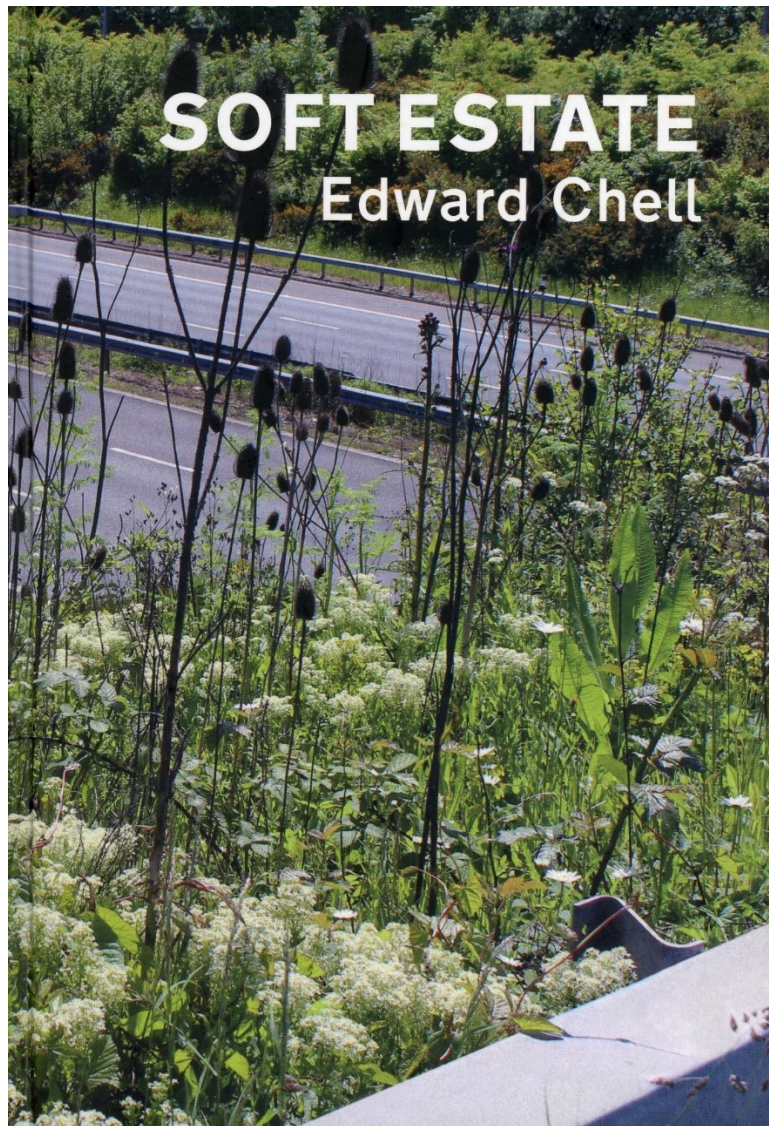


Fig.1, Front cover of *Soft Estate*, the Bluecoat, 2013





Fig.2, Pages featuring new works by Edward Chell in *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 6 & 11

## In the Rear View Mirror SARA-JAYNE PARSONS

For years now scholars have recognised the significant role of photography in the historical investigation and visual representation of the British landscape.<sup>1</sup> More recently its use in the examination of edgelands – the familiar yet often forgotten or overlooked territory that forms margins between landscapes – has been the basis for the work of several contemporary artists and writers.<sup>2</sup>

From the stark emptiness of Richard Billingham's photographs of his Midlands hometown of Cradley Heath, featuring nondescript public spaces around factories, car parks and areas of waste ground, to the captivating still-life studies of allotments by John Darwell, imaginative engagement with liminal spaces employs the camera to direct effect. For other artists, like George Shaw or Laura Oldfield Ford, photography is part of their creative process in painting and drawing, rather than an end result. For these artists, photographs are visual documents of narrative, place and form; they are integral to the means of making, but mostly function as groundwork in the service of realism.

In *Soft Estate*, his body of work that investigates areas of roadside wilderness, Edward Chell chooses not to employ photography by direct means but instead posits deliberate allusions to the photograph. His works consistently acknowledge an indexical relationship between painting and photography that goes beyond preparatory support. Instead for Chell, significantly, though somewhat ironically, connections exist in a liminal space, betwixt and between, as painting and photography blend and cross into each other through philosophical and historical considerations. Further exploration of this terrain

left: Motorway Intersection, M2 Westbound 2010  
Oil on shellac on linen  
180 x 140 cm

1. Key texts in this regard include: Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, Stanford University Press, 1989; Graham Clarke, *The Photograph*, Oxford University Press, 1997; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion Books, London, 1998; John Taylor, *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's Imagination*, Manchester University Press, 1994; James Ryan and Joan Schwartz, *Picturing Place. Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2003; Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape, Photography, Culture and Identity*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2011; Patrick Wright, *Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, Verso, London, 1985.

2. While authors Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts highlight the work of artists using photography in their book *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* (Jonathan Cape, London, 2011), Farley also acknowledges using the camera as a documentary aide memoire in his own process of exploring, mapping and remembering edgelands. (Conversation with the author, September 2013.)

Fig.3, "In the Rear View Mirror," by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 13

reveals a metaphorical construct that usefully suggests an alternative reading of Chell's work.

As the artist himself advises, the context of his work relies on an understanding of the development and study of the Picturesque in the eighteenth century, a very particular structure through which to comprehend cultural attitudes towards the use and representation of landscape. Within this framework, Chell's critique of the verges of motorways and trunk roads negotiates complex and shifting relationships between travel, environment and landscape imagery.

The Picturesque gave artists a step-by-step guide to the composition of a painting; it provided a business plan for souvenir producers, and inspiration for tourist postcard designers. However, the chief directive of the Picturesque from proponents such as Humphry Repton, William Gilpin and Uvedale Price was to challenge the process of 'looking'. And it's here, in the legacy of looking, that the development of Picturesque photography coincides

It is widely accepted that as the practice of photography developed in the mid nineteenth century it was located in relation to traditions in fine art. With regard to landscape, Picturesque traditions in painting were passed on and accepted without much question. But few have asked if the relationship was in any way reciprocal. Were Picturesque practices shaped by early ideas or experiments in how to capture and fix an image?

Photography historian Geoffrey Batchen contends that even though the basic knowledge of the effects of light-sensitive chemicals was available from the 1720s, it was not until the early 1800s that the concept and desire for photography began to emerge.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that if one traces the development of Picturesque practices it becomes apparent that popular use of proto-prophetic instruments such as the Claude glass, and later the portable camera obscura and camera lucida at designated scenic spots, points to an active discourse around the process of looking.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, Boston, 1997, pp. 52–54.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–74. It is also useful to consider that devices used to study and capture form in portraiture must have contributed to a culture of looking. For example, the physionotrace traced the shadow profile of a portrait sitter, resulting in a silhouette that informed physiognomy and influenced character portrayal. The notion of capturing or recording a shadow in this way is sympathetic to the aspiration for permanence, i.e. in fixing an image, or creating a photograph.

Fig.4, "In the Rear View Mirror," by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 14

So rather than separate two strands of looking – the Picturesque and the photographic – why not bring them together? With a practice filtered through an energetic critique of the Picturesque, Chell's assembly of works for *Soft Estate* reconciles with an eighteenth-century proto-photographic practice of looking. His approach reveals the potential for a metonymic encounter, where paintings (and prints) can be seen to stand in for a photographic experience.

Chell's series of sixty small silhouette panels supports this proposal. A collection of painted botanical specimens that records the typical flora found in areas of edgelands and soft estate, the panels depict life-size black plant-portraits against a plain, yellowish background. Installed together in an exclusive gallery space, they are a wall-to-wall library of weeds awaiting taxonomic rescue. It's also likely no accident that the sketchbook dimensions of the panels are reminiscent of the size and layout of the species fact sheets found in the Highways Agency's *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (Vol. 10).

Photographic precursors of Chell's painted herbarium can be found in the experimental photogenic drawings of William Henry Fox Talbot and elegant cyanotypes of Anna Atkins. Like these early protagonists, Chell mixes the sciences of 'looking', chemistry and botany to present the ecology of soft estate. But beyond such immediate references, Chell's panels are also home to other photographic signifiers. The flatness of the paintings rests on a figure-ground relationship suggestive of the photographic vocabulary of positive/negative. Also, the acrylic painting on each panel is fixed using a spray lacquer that sandwiches the silhouette like a pressed flower held in stasis, existing in an in-between state subverting painterly surface and texture.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the overall smooth shiny patina of the paintings is more reminiscent of a mirrored daguerreotype or the surface of a glossy gelatin silver print.

Chell also uses the silhouette form of plant specimens on iconic road signs and small metal sculptures, as well as in a series of screen prints. In their easily recognisable reflective blue and white form, the signs operate on a symbolic rather than directional level, helping to categorise and locate the plant species as they are dotted about the gallery space, connecting different groupings of Chell's work. However, the sculptures, made from reconfigured exhaust pipes,

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5. Interestingly, Nicéphore Niépce's early experiments in heliography resulted in a photographic image formed on a layer of bitumen varnish, which later led to the world's first photograph c.1826.

Fig.5, "In the Rear View Mirror," by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 15



Fig.6, Edward Chell, *M2 Medway Services Eastbound*, 2013, oil on shellac on linen, 180 x 140 cm, in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 17



Fig.7, Edward Chell, *Poker Smoker Mantel Piece (one of a pair)*, 2013, laser-etched stainless steel middle box silencer on stand, 58.5 x 23 x 12.75 cm, in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 19



Fig.8, Edward Chell, *M2 Motorway Island, Junction 3*, 2013, oil on shellac on linen, 180 x 140 cm, in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 21

are pimped-up shiny trophies, emblazoned with delicate specimen portraits. Here the silhouettes act like logos reminiscent of car insignias, adding to the decorative and seductive nature of the objects; the sculptures take on the appearance of a luxury collectible.<sup>6</sup>

In screen prints made using ink containing roadside dust, Chell considers the material legacy of modern travel and tourism. Collected from various locations, including beside the M20 and the M4 motorways, the dust produces slight variations in colour in the prints, reflecting geographical differences and allowing viewers to map the artist's explorations. Akin to the painted silhouettes, which expound the yellowed pallor of pollution, these delicate prints also juxtapose beauty and toxicity. This is where Chell's reference to photogenic drawing is perhaps at its most overt; the shimmering quality of the printed ink hints towards the corrosive silver nitrates used by Fox Talbot to conjure his shadowy images. Similarly, his use of a reprographic method like screen printing further underlines his quiet commitment to the photographic image.

In larger works on canvas, Chell retreats from the close-up perspective of plant portraits to provide the wider context of his study. Large swathes of small wildflowers inhabit the foreground of service station architecture; new plantings protected by plastic covers soften the view of the side of the road. In these beeswax-coloured paintings their very monochromatic nature suggests a life photographic, or at least black and white analogue. Of all the *Soft Estate* works, these have the most readily recognisable relationship to photographic images. Chell has worked in the studio from snapshots, as the subject would have been too difficult to paint on site. Tellingly, many of the paintings feature a point of view that would only be seen by those stranded by a breakdown and awaiting rescue by the AA, or on a screen captured by the tilt of a CCTV camera. The paintings are devoid of people or traffic. Instead, Chell surmises that human agency is inscribed in the landscape; whether through architecture or land management practices, the past exists in the present.

Indeed, this in itself is a very photographic understanding of landscape. As Roland Barthes said of the photograph in his celebrated book *Camera Lucida*

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6. For Chell the sculptures are evocative of eighteenth-century silverware, particularly the work of Matthew Boulton, whose work was formative in developing a modern taste for acquisition and collecting. Interestingly, his design innovations and marketing prowess would be matched a century later by the vigorous activities of many early photographers who expounded the precious, unique qualities of another silvery fetish collectible, the daguerreotype.

Fig.9, "In the Rear View Mirror," by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 22



(1981), although it points to something 'that has been', the subject still exists within the image 'that is'. Essentially, the photograph makes it possible for you to carry the past with you always, but the subject of the photograph persists with a life of its own and simultaneously continues beyond the specific time and place in which it was captured. Therefore, like the view of a landscape in a rear view mirror of a moving car, the meanings of photographs do not stand still but are always contingent, ambiguous and marked by transition.

Collectively, the works that make up *Soft Estate* blur the space between painting and photography. The diversity of Chell's studio practice, which also includes filmmaking, lends itself to generous engagement and immersion within his subject.<sup>7</sup> Symbolically, this not only reflects the liminal nature of the roadside territory that he investigates, but also highlights the development of eighteenth-century modes of 'looking'. He successfully engages with the subject, language and sometimes the very materials and craft of photography without actually making photographs. In this way, Chell may be likened to a proto-photographer, challenging the process of observing and representing landscape.

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7. Chell's films include *Leaf and Wind* (2011–13), which records the passing of time in nature over a six-month period, and *Via Florigium* (2013), made on location at sites on the A2 and M2, using combinations of wild flowers and natural floral displays alongside floral tributes of roadside memorials, dedicated to loved ones who have died on the road.

Fig.10, "In the Rear View Mirror," by Sara-Jayne Parsons in Edward Chell, ed. *Soft Estate*, Liverpool: the Bluecoat, 2013, 22

### Appendix 3

Documentation of *Liminal Britain* includes the following scanned pages of the exhibition catalogue, written by Sara-Jayne Parsons and published by the University of North Texas Art Gallery, 2006.

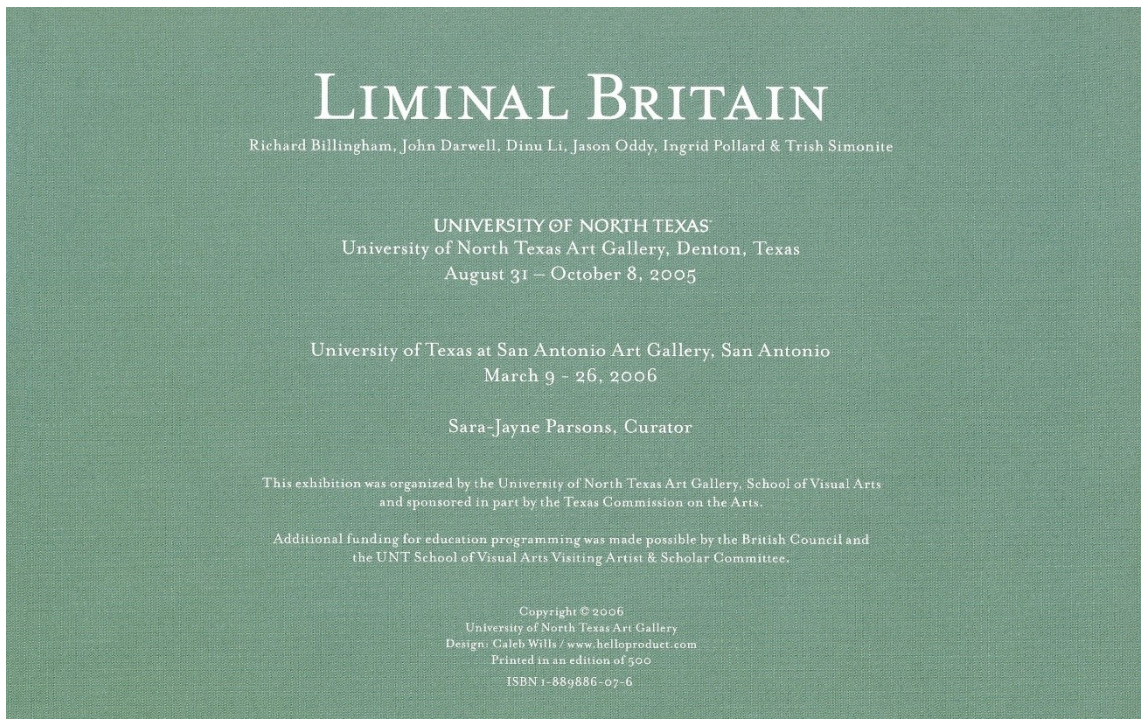
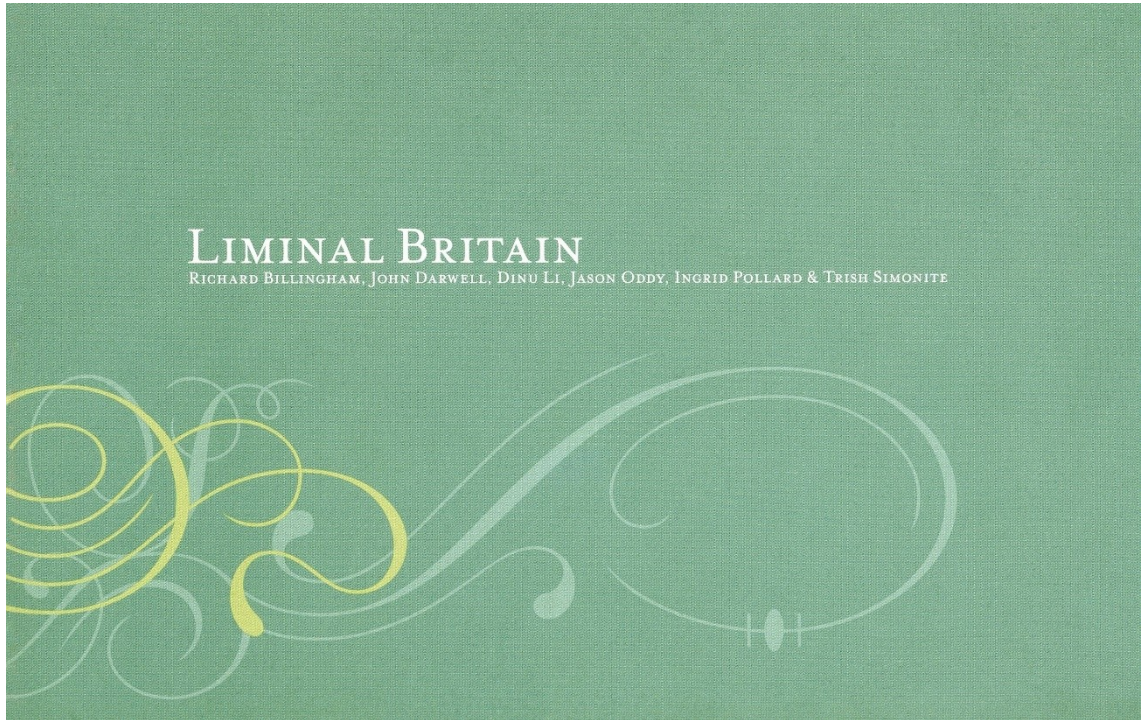


Fig.1, Front and inside cover of *Liminal Britain*, published by the University of North Texas Art Gallery, 2006.

### **Liminal Britain:**

Richard Billingham, John Darwell, Dinu Li, Jason Oddy,  
Ingrid Pollard & Trish Simonite

#### **lim-i-nal** adjective

1. situated at a sensory threshold; the point at which one enters a space that stimulates a physiological or psychological response

2. at a point where one perception or condition blends or crosses over into another; a place of transition and transformation, of ambiguity and marginality, betwixt and between, barely perceptible

In discussing the emotional effects of certain photographs in his celebrated book *Camera Lucida* (1981), Roland Barthes remarked upon an irrationality or madness that is specific to the photographic medium; that although the photograph points to something "that has been," the subject still exists within the image "that is." Essentially a photograph makes it possible for you to carry the past with you, always, but the subject of the photograph persists with a life of its own and simultaneously continues beyond the specific time and space in which it was captured.

Inspired by this premise, the concerns of the works featured in *Liminal Britain* echo Barthes' conclusion that the photograph enables the past to exist in the present. *Liminal Britain* brings together the work of six contemporary British photographers whose works examine spaces where memory, identity, and place intersect in subtle and undefinable ways. Whether depicting the rural countryside, domestic interiors

or unremarkable urban views, these evocative photographs expose thresholds of psychological experience that involve an engagement with the past. These are spaces marked by time, where the present is pierced by the past tangibly or metaphorically, or where the photographer's own memories and experiences drive a need to capture a visual record of a particular space.

The photographs included in *Liminal Britain* often challenge the viewer to go beyond consideration of their formal appearance and appeal to reflect upon the relationship between place and memory. Recognition of the context of the photograph then becomes a narrative key in the unveiling of its liminal qualities. Ultimately, what connects the work of these photographers is a desire to understand their surroundings as psychological as well as physical spaces. Their photographs can be regarded as cultural landscapes; imaginative responses to individual memories or the private spaces of other's lives.

In some cases we find photographers responding to very personal, apparently mundane, memories. For example, the work of Richard Billingham and Trish Simonite stems from an engagement with private worlds and remembered landscapes. Billingham goes back to his home town and investigates everyday spaces of his adolescence, whilst Simonite, a British expatriate living in Texas, returns to the east coast of England to explore a landscape that was once a favored family holiday haunt.

Other photographers examine their daily surroundings to uncover historic spaces of transformation and change. Photographing in the Lake District in northwest England, John Darwell documents the last known home of artist Kurt Schwitters. Now a derelict site reclaimed by wildlife and mostly forgotten, Darwell's images reveal the space as a final testament to the psychology of Schwitters' merz aesthetic.

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By contrast, Jason Oddy's still-life photographs taken inside the homes of recently deceased elderly people, cluttered with the chaos of life, reveal silent spaces infused with the pathos of time, memory and death.

Equally hushed in their composition are Dinu Li's images of empty interiors that document the private lives of illegal Chinese immigrants in Britain. An immigrant himself, Li finds familiar and telling juxtapositions of symbolic old world objects in new world spaces. The photographs bear eloquent witness and show quiet reverence to personal identities in transition.

Similar themes about diaspora, cultural identity and autobiography also inhabit the work of Ingrid Pollard. Her coastal photographs surround the eighteenth-century story of a young black boy who dies and is buried in this shifting landscape: a place once associated with West Indies trade that the photographer encourages the viewer to imagine and reflect upon.

The arrested spaces featured in the photographs that comprise *Liminal Britain* allude to moments between life and death, of lives lived between cultures, of things remembered and forgotten, places left behind, arrived at, or revisited. Frequently the gap between absence and presence collapses into indistinct reverie in these images, and traces of human existence provoke poetry, politics and irony in literal and metaphoric ways. As the photographers traverse and explore various aspects of life in contemporary Britain, public landscapes become private worlds, and conversely, personal environments are exposed.

Sara-Jayne Parsons  
University of North Texas Art Gallery

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Fig.2, Curatorial statement for *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 3-4

**Richard Billingham**

Born in Birmingham, 1970. Currently lives and works in Hove, East Sussex.

Richard Billingham first gained recognition for his disturbing and yet poignant color photographs of his family in the mid 1990s. Published in the acclaimed book *Ray's a Laugh* (1995), the images depict the untidy chaos of everyday housebound life centered on Ray, Billingham's alcoholic father. The photographs tread a delicate path between sensational voyeurism and subjective social documentary. In *Black Country* (1997-2003) Billingham steps outside the familial domestic scene and instead focuses on the wider suburban working class landscape of his home town, Cradley Heath. Located in the Midlands, a historically industrial area of England known as the "Black Country," the town might seem like a somewhat featureless or forgettable place. Billingham's color images depict public spaces around factories, car parks, waste ground and red-bricked terraced housing. This is not picturesque England by any means. As the artist states:

*"I felt a great longing for these little places, street corners, bits of waste ground and brick walls, places that I would play in as a kid or pass through on the way to school or to run an errand for my mom. I also realised my relationship with my home town had begun to change at this time. Although living very close by, I was no longer as innocent and no longer with no money and low expectations, like many of the locals. I was more conscious of my surroundings but at the same time I did not want to let go of the emotional reassurance and security that my home town afforded me. I moved away some time after making those pictures and they are the last "snapshot" photographs that I have taken."*  
(Richard Billingham, *Black Country*, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, May 2005)

For the viewer, Billingham's photographs appear empty and quiet. Yet for the artist, while the landscapes are unpopulated, they are not silent. They are filled with the noise of memories. Even as he makes exquisitely simple images from the most mundane material, Billingham coaxes a poetic coincidence of absence and presence.

Richard Billingham began working with photography while studying painting at the University of Sunderland in the early 1990s. He went on to win the prestigious Citybank Photography Prize in 1997 and in the same year was included in the now notorious *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy, London. In 2001 Billingham was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. His work has been published and widely exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States.



Fig.3, Richard Billingham, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 6-7

**John Darwell**

Born in Bolton, 1957. Currently lives and works in Carlisle, Cumbria.

In 1936, during a period of great political unrest, artist Kurt Schwitters fled from his native home of Germany to Norway. Four years later, when Nazi forces invaded Norway, Schwitters was forced to flee again, this time to England, where he was interned as an "enemy alien" on the Isle of Man. After his release he lived in exile in London for some time before moving to Ambleside in the Lake District of England where he would spend his final years as a sick and virtually unknown refugee.

In the months leading up to his death in 1948, Schwitters had been working on his last major Merzbau project: essentially a house that embodied his merz philosophy which involved constructing assemblages from found objects and materials, aimed at uniting all forms of art and everyday things from daily life. However, due to ill health, Schwitters was only able to complete one wall of this Merzbau installation at Ambleside before his death, after which it was removed and installed in the Hatton Gallery at the University of Newcastle where it remains to this day.

The abandoned Merzbau site, comprising a number of small stone buildings situated within dense woodland, has been left largely untouched, visited only by the occasional Schwitters scholar or curator. The landscaped environment around the Merzbau has returned to nature and become a haven for wildlife. The buildings are full of natural weather-beaten detritus and the evidential remains of human habitation.

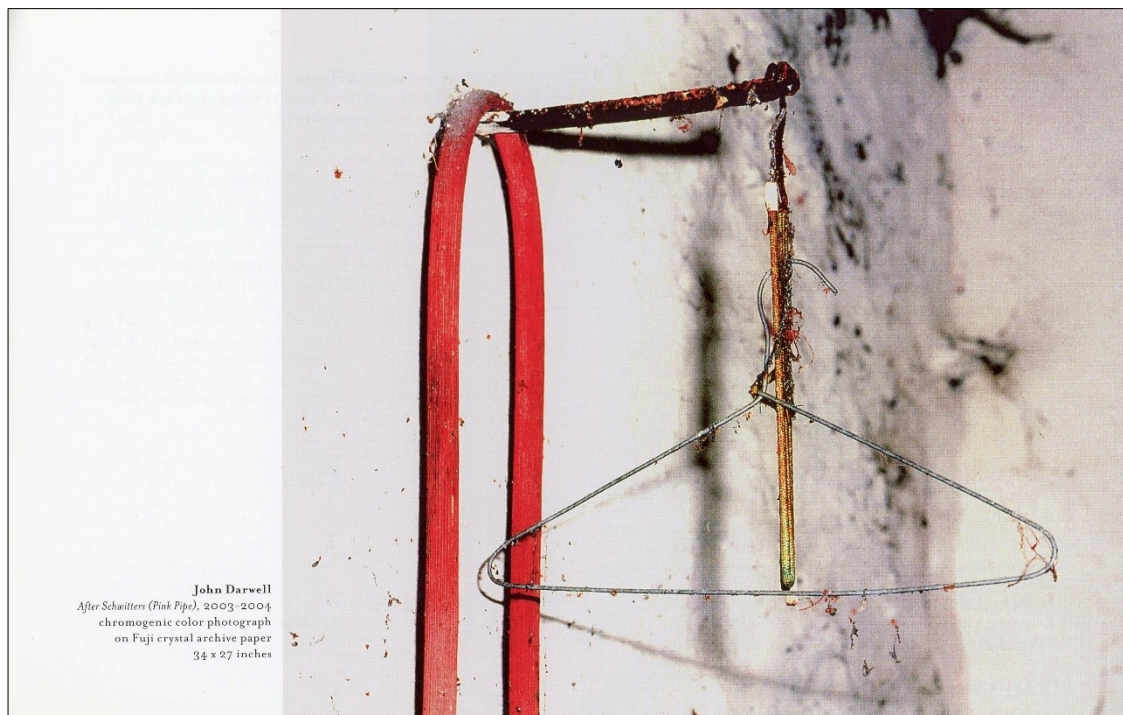
In *After Schwitters* (2003-2004), a series of evocative still-life photographs, John Darwell responds to the exiled artist's final Merzbau. The images do not document the location in a historical

sense, but rather capture something of the atmosphere of this liminal space and traces of its intent as originally conceptualized by Kurt Schwitters. As the past is excavated through Darwell's lens, rusted nails and broken glass become plaintive metaphors for the passage of time and human agency.

Significantly for Darwell, this series marked a change in his photographic practice. The majority of his previous work explored and documented facets of social and industrial change, or environmental concerns. As Darwell explains:

*"In many ways this work (After Schwitters) stands, with the benefit of hindsight, at a point of great change in my work and accordingly in terms of my outlook. It marks a move away from what could be described as images that are my response to subjects/scenarios that I feel angry about enough to want to bring them to wider attention whether to do with de-industrialisation, the horrors of the nuclear industry, or to be more precise, people caught up in these situations and unable to do anything about their circumstances. This new work marks a more meditative approach to my image making, moving away from my previous wide view images to a closer look at the minutiae of life."* (John Darwell, email to the curator, May 2005)

John Darwell received a B.A. Honors degree in Photography from Manchester Polytechnic in 1980, and is currently completing a Ph.D. at Sunderland University, researching photographic depictions of depression and mental health. He has had several solo exhibitions in the United Kingdom and has participated in group shows in The Netherlands, Mexico and the United States, including FotoFest, Houston (1996). Darwell teaches photography at the Cumbria Institute of the Arts in Northern England.



John Darwell  
*After Schwitters (Pink Pipe)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph  
on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches

Fig.4, John Darwell, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 8-9

**Dinu Li**

Born in Hong Kong, 1965. Currently lives and works in Manchester.

In his recent series of color photographs *Secret Shadows*, Dinu Li documents the private living spaces occupied by illegal Chinese immigrants working in Britain. Born in Hong Kong and now a resident of Manchester, England, Li, conversely, approaches this work from the position of a legal immigrant. His photographic project juxtaposes stories from his own journey with those made by other Chinese immigrants. Sometimes he observes similarities, such as frantic attempts to learn English on the outbound flight to a new life. But more often than not it is differences in their new-country experiences that attract his attention:

*"I was intrigued to discover what personal possessions these people bring from China. I learnt that some perform a type of ritual, whereby the mother will collect a little earth from outside the front door, put it inside a silk wallet and place it inside the pocket of a departing son. This, the workers will carry wherever they end up or sometimes in a symbolic gesture will nail to the wall of their bedroom. Without revealing the faces of these workers, I have tried to understand their personal stories through the objects I see lying around." (Dinu Li, email to the curator, April 2005)*

Indeed Li's austere, elegiac interiors record the intimate places where immigrants transition into a new Western life. The scenes bear witness to a dichotomous existence, where a secret, invisible community passes through everyday life with dreams of material wealth and other tangible possibilities. In addition, the installation of the photographs with simple brass drawing pins references the fragile quality of the subjects and the transitory nature of the immigrant's domestic experience. Maps and other personal portable mementoes can be removed and

packed quickly if necessary, for the situation of the illegal immigrant remains one of constant vigilance with the prospect of flight from temporary lodgings at any given moment.

Dinu Li received a B.A. Honors degree in Documentary and Fine Art Photography from Stockport College, Cheshire, in 2000. Since then, his work has been featured in various solo and group shows in England and China. Li has also begun to undertake curatorial projects and recently organized *Home*, a group show at the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester (2004). *Liminal Britain* marks the artist's first exhibition in the United States.



Fig.5, Dinu Li, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 10-11

**Jason Oddy**

Born in London, 1967. Currently lives and works in London.

When photographer Jason Oddy followed a local Social Services official on her rounds in West London he discovered a haunting world of the elderly and forgotten. As he entered the homes of recently deceased people, Oddy encountered clothes-strewn living rooms full of half-packed suitcases and dead plants covered with layers of dust; kitchens with saucepans of food going moldy on the stove, and beds which appeared to have been abandoned long ago in favor of armchair sleep. It was obvious that the previous inhabitants, often times widowed and with little or no family contact, had lived alone for quite some time, pottering on in their own world of memories, in slowed time, waiting to die.

The *Waiting Room* series, Oddy's resulting photographic still-lives and interiors, features the material remains of people's final months between life and death; a liminal world of objects and spaces that still bear the trace of their inhabitants. It is fitting that perhaps the most poignant of Oddy's images is his most abstract. In portraying indentations in the cushions of a sofa, his camera traces the weight and once life-force of a human body, and in that instance, the sofa becomes a red, soft, velvety memento mori. Yet in the shadow of poetry, politics also pierce Oddy's work. The empty scenes bespeak self-neglect and virtual abandonment, suggesting a lack of familial responsibility or social service policy gone awry.

Jason Oddy received an M.A. in French and Post-War Literary Theory from University College London, where he is currently researching a Ph.D. dissertation in Critical Theory. He began exhibiting his

photographs in the late 1990s and his work is regularly published in *The Independent* newspaper. At present Oddy is working on a photographic project documenting the town of Playas, New Mexico.



Fig.6, Jason Oddy, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 12-13

**Ingrid Pollard**

Born in Georgetown, Guyana, 1953. Currently lives and works in London.

*"Using the sea as a way of exploring the themes of separation and the diaspora experience of migration, I look at journeys that have crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean both east and west. These voyages echo the sea's own relentless movement of waves and tides: journeys out toward the sea's horizon and journeys of arrival from the same horizon. What traces are left of the past accumulate in contemporary coastal locations."* (Ingrid Pollard, FotoFest 2004 catalogue, Houston)

*The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By* is a series of photographs by Ingrid Pollard commissioned by the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester for the exhibition *Travelogue* (2002). The curator of the exhibition had asked the artists involved to produce artwork in response to a location of his or her choice, with the hope that the results would reflect a diverse historic and cultural vision of Britain. Pollard chose to examine the coastal landscape around the village of Sunderland Point in Lancashire, northwest England. Only possible to access at low tide, the quiet estuarine village, now favored by amateur ornithologists, was once a busy port, with trade centered on cotton, rum, sugar and, to some degree, slaves.

In her research of the area, Pollard read numerous logbook accounts of transatlantic journeys by traders and came across the popular story of "Sambo," a young slave who belonged to either a merchant or sea captain. Little is known about his life or the details of his death, but he is buried in a field close to the sea shore, and as the mythical story spread, the gravesite was marked with a brass plaque identifying the boy as "Poor Sambo, A Faithful Negro." As Pollard discovered, the lonely, isolated coastal site continues to receive visitors: people who are curious

about the young boy, and who are also drawn to the melancholy beauty of the landscape. In a metaphoric sense the seashore exists as a liminal geography. It is an unstable landscape, where water and land meet, resist and change course. As evidenced by Pollard's project, it is a place where waves and tides count the hours of an evolving history.

Ingrid Pollard's first solo exhibition debuted at the Watershed Gallery in Bristol in 1988 and since then her work has been featured in numerous national and international exhibitions, including Project Row Houses, Houston (FotoFest 2004). She has received several commissions, including the BBC Billboard Art Project (London) and a monograph about her work, *Postcards Home - Ingrid Pollard*, was published last year by Chns Boot Ltd.. At present Ingrid Pollard is a Research Fellow at London South Bank University.

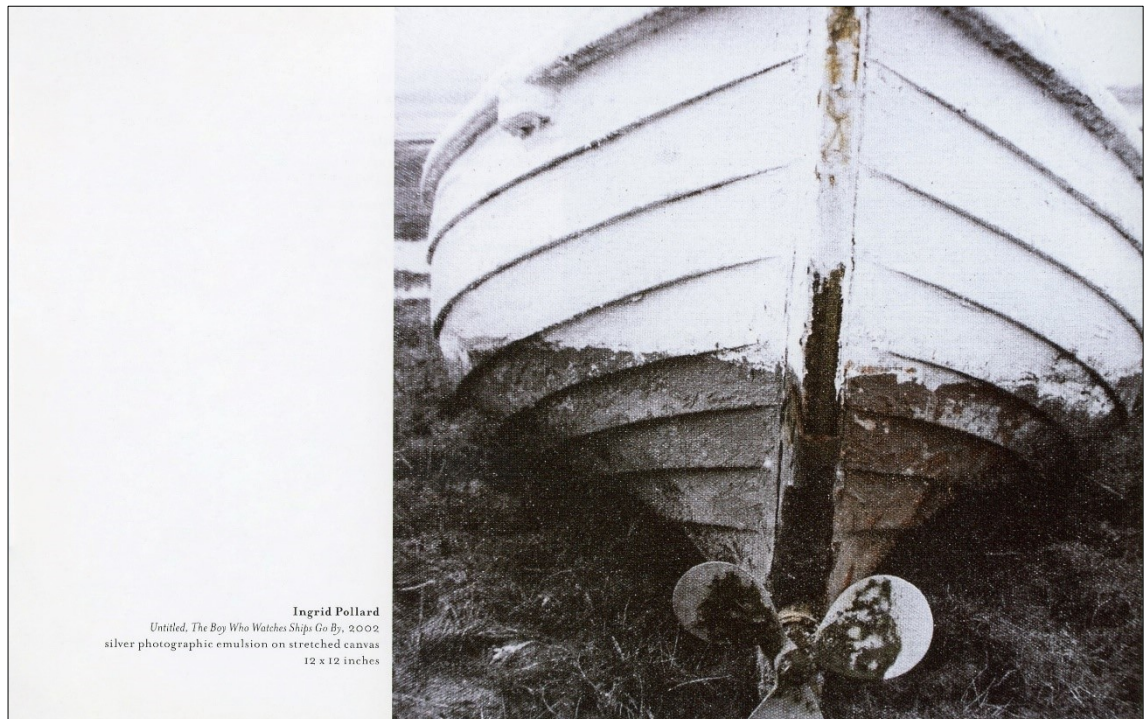


Fig.7, Ingrid Pollard, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 14-15



**Trish Simonite**

Born in Norwich, 1949. Currently lives and works in San Antonio, Texas.

Since 2001 Trish Simonite has returned to the coast of East Anglia in England to photograph places where she spent time as a child. As a British expatriate living in Texas for over two decades, Simonite looks upon this recent series of works as an effort to negotiate issues of memory, both collective and personal, by revisiting remembered places to investigate notions of "home." The site-specific images say as much about the past as they do about the present, and hence reflect the photographer's prolonged absence from the landscape of her youth.

Simonite's seaside views are centered on perennial holiday vistas of places such as Great Yarmouth; quaint little towns that were once popular tourist resorts, but which now compete with cheap, Euro-continental package-tour destinations. Going beyond the public terrain of her past, Simonite also depicts scenes that pierce her memory in more personal ways as she photographs private spaces through, or reflected in, windows. She explains:

*"I realized in 2001 after I came back to Texas and was looking over my photographs, that I had begun to photograph a number of window images, either of reflected landscapes or images taken from interiors looking out into the landscape. I think of them as a metaphor for memory. The window is both a barrier and a frame. The viewer and the photographer are one layer (and sometimes more when there are curtains behind the glass) away from the actual landscape." (Trish Simonite, email to curator, April 2005)*

Other seemingly banal views such as an empty field are populated with blurred memories of an old summer home and family life now gone. For Simonite these photographs function as documents of liminal sites: places where she has photographed in the present, but for reasons

that have emerged from the past, and have consequently propelled an emotional yearning for a specific landscape.

Trish Simonite currently teaches photography in the Department of Art and Art History at Trinity University in San Antonio, and is Vice-President of the Texas Photographic Society. Her work has been featured in various solo and group exhibitions in England, France, Greece, Sweden, Thailand and the United States, and was recently published in *Memory and Emotion* (Oxford University Press, 2003).



Fig.8, Trish Simonite, artist pages, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 16-17

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

**Richard Billingham**

1. *Black Country*, n.3, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches
2. *Black Country*, n.8, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches
3. *Black Country*, n.15, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches
4. *Black Country*, n.16, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches
5. *Black Country*, n.17, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches
6. *Black Country*, n.25, 1997  
Fuji longlife color print  
30 x 36 inches

All works are courtesy of the artist & Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

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**John Darwell**

1. *After Schwitters (Blue Bag & Moss)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
2. *After Schwitters (Fireplace)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
3. *After Schwitters (Hanging Nail)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
4. *After Schwitters (Pink Pipe)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
5. *After Schwitters (Pipe & Wire)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
6. *After Schwitters (Letterbox)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
7. *After Schwitters (Blue Wire)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches

8. *After Schwitters (Standing Stone)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
9. *After Schwitters (Twisted Wire)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches
10. *After Schwitters (Windowsill)*, 2003-2004  
chromogenic color photograph on Fuji crystal archive paper  
34 x 27 inches

All works are courtesy of the artist  
*After Schwitters (2003-2004)* was commissioned and sponsored by Littoral  
and The Kurt Schwitters in England Working Group.

**Dinu Li**

1. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
2. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
3. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches

4. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
5. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
6. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
7. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches
8. *Untitled, Secret Shadows*, 2001  
chromogenic color print  
24 x 20 inches

All works are courtesy of the artist & Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool

**Jason Oddy**

1. *Untitled, Waiting Room*, 1997  
chromogenic color print  
30 x 30 inches

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Fig.9, Exhibition checklist, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 20-21

<p>2. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 30 x 30 inches</p> <p>3. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p>4. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p>5. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p>6. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p>7. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p>8. <i>Untitled, Waiting Room</i>, 1997 chromogenic color print 19 x 19 inches</p> <p><i>All works are courtesy of the artist &amp; Frederieke Taylor Gallery, New York</i></p>	<p><b>Ingrid Pollard</b></p> <p>1. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>2. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>3. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>4. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>5. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>6. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p> <p>7. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 12 inches</p>
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<p>8. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 24 inches</p> <p>9. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 24 inches</p> <p>10. <i>Untitled, The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By</i>, 2002 silver photographic emulsion on stretched canvas 12 x 24 inches</p> <p><i>All works are courtesy of the artist &amp; Autograph ABP, London.</i></p> <p><b>Trish Simonite</b></p> <p>1. <i>Couple Holding Hands, Promenade, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 10 x 16 inches</p> <p>2. <i>Turquoise Fence, Bowls, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 20 x 16 inches</p> <p>3. <i>Reflected Landscape, Cart Gap, Happisburgh, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 30 x 24 inches</p>	<p>4. <i>Couple Sunbathing, Cromer, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 20 x 16 inches</p> <p>5. <i>Kitchen Window View, Cart Gap, Happisburgh, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 30 x 24½ inches</p> <p>6. <i>Number 114, Cromer, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2001 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 30 x 24 inches</p> <p>7. <i>Fence, Poppies, Field, Cart Gap, Happisburgh, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2003 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 20 x 16 inches</p> <p>8. <i>Rose Curtains and Roses, "Windhill," Cart Gap, Happisburgh, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2003 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 30 x 24 inches</p> <p>9. <i>Fence, Trampolines, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2003 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 20 x 16 inches</p> <p>10. <i>Shadows, Britannia Pier, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England</i>, Summer 2003 limited edition archival pigment print on watercolor paper 20 x 16 inches</p> <p><i>All works are courtesy of the artist.</i></p>
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Fig.10, Exhibition checklist, *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 22-23

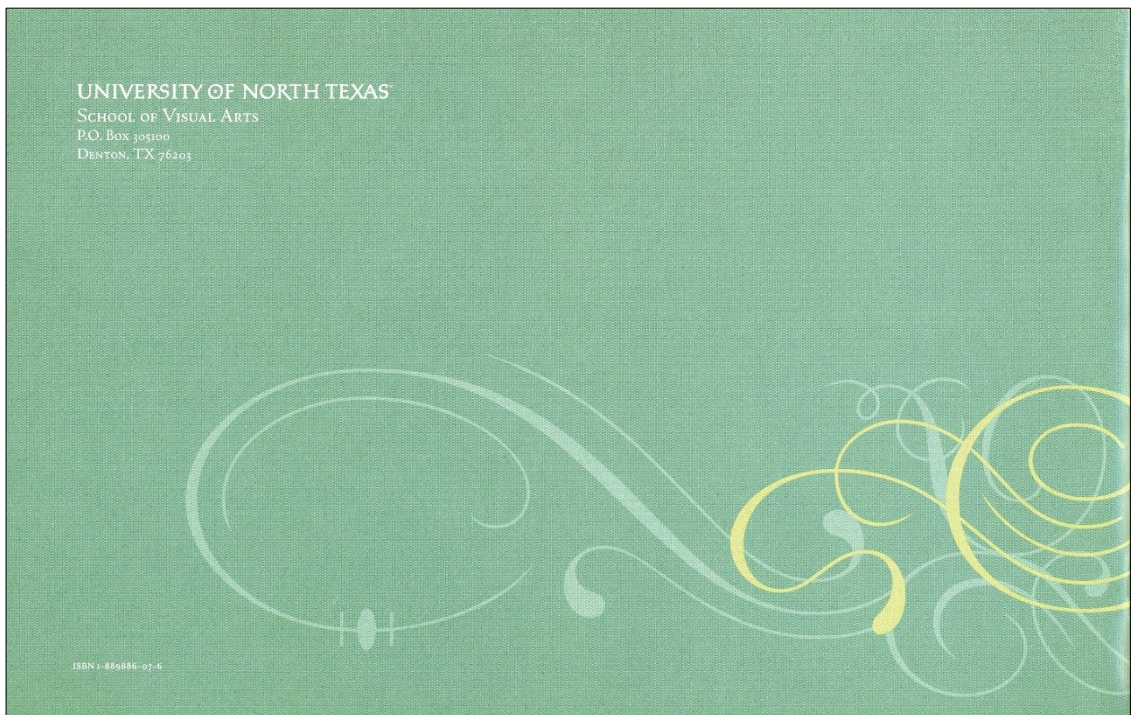


Fig.11, Back cover *Liminal Britain*, 2006, 20-21

## Appendix 4

Documentation of *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art* includes the following key scanned pages of the exhibition catalogue, published by the Bluecoat, 2009. Installation images of the exhibition and a curatorial essay are included.



Fig.1, Front cover, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art*, the Bluecoat, 2009

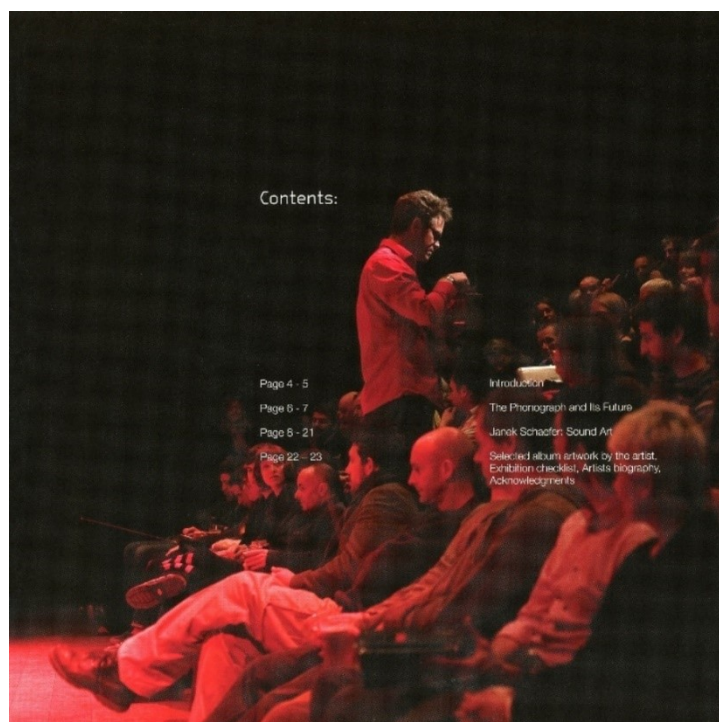


Fig.2, inside cover and contents page, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art*, the Bluecoat, 2009

## JANEK SCHAEFER: SOUND ART

By Sara-Jayne Parsons, Exhibitions Curator at the Bluecoat

Planning meeting  
Schaefer's home studio [opposite]  
Walton-on-Thames, September 2009

Janek Schaefer and I had been talking about this exhibition for a couple of years. Ideas had come and gone, but finally we found ourselves in the home stretch. Two months to go until opening, and the really hard work was about to begin. We spent the day together at Schaefer's home; talking, planning, playing with various bits of vinyl and kit, and most importantly listening. Domestic moments seamlessly wove their way into our day; we were a captive audience for daughter Scarlett's impromptu fashion show; Schaefer fed baby Phoenix and settled him for a nap; we listened to crackly vinyl while eating lunch; I chatted with Catherine (Schaefer's wife) about kids' parties; we tested out an old TV as a prototype for the new commission It's 'National Portrait [the last transmission]'

Sitting in the studio that day, or shed as Schaefer likes to call it, it dawned on me that this is why his work is so appealing. His family are very much at the centre of his life, and this inner circle informs his process of making; he can translate the passion he has for how a record player works to his young daughter, and she gets it. The intimacy of experience that Schaefer wishes to share with his viewers and listeners comes from his enthusiasm about sound and space. And difficult things are made simple by embracing curiosity.



Fig.3, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 8

Janek Schaefer: Sound Art brings together several key installations by the artist at one time to showcase his range. This is an opportunity sound artists rarely get, and it appears at a critical point in Schaefer's career as he seeks to further establish his gallery-based practice alongside, but in contrast to, the usual modes he works with, such as a one-off concert or festival presentation. In planning the exhibition we agreed that it was important to create different moods and environments with the installations, not just in sound, which is obvious, but also in colour, light and texture. Five major installations are presented, accompanied by a retrospective-type selection of mixed media works, prints, posters, photographs and films spanning the last two decades. The plan is to tell the sound art story of Janek Schaefer so far.

Approaching the galleries, the visitor's initial sonic encounter with Schaefer's work is Inner Space Memorial [for JG Ballard] (2009), a seductive drone of multiple organ type chords; rich harmonies that entwine, shimmer and ascend the Vide, the Bluecoat's striking three-storey atrium. Characterised by starkness in its rough, white brick and smooth, grey cast concrete, the Vide (as named by its architects) is a three-sided, minimal void; a place of emptiness, and yet, as Schaefer reveals, possibility.

Upon entering the Vide visitors find a small sculpture mounted on a hi-rise structure reminiscent of classic memorial architecture like Luyten's famous Cenotaph. Its focus is a pair of white speakers whose cones are re-positioned to play back into the void of their own cabinets. The emanating drone is an evocative swirl that suggests a timeless reverence. The sound hovers inside the inner space of the speakers and echoes around the surrounding minimal architecture. The speakers sit atop an old, slightly battered gramophone case that used to belong to his mother.

Schaefer's Inner Space Memorial [for JG Ballard] gently exposes the poetry of the Vide. The installation, the centre piece of a music and sculpture series, was created by the artist in memory of the novelist J.G. Ballard (1930 – 2009), widely regarded as one of the leading writers of the 20th century. His progressive work



and ideas influenced many creative thinkers during the last 50 years.

Aspects of several of Ballard's literary works consider what effect the modern world has on the human psyche. ('Modern' might crudely translate here as an urban landscape of concrete shopping precincts and motorway bridges.) Ballard's critical response to his own question was an investigation of 'inner space'; an internal realm where outer world reality and inner world mind converge.

Schaefer's installation references Ballard's idea of 'inner space' through the presentation of self-referential sounds and the suggestion of entombed memory. The face-to-face speakers play privately to themselves and the resulting escaping, ethereal, sound becomes interned within the modernist space of the Vide. The experience of listening to the work, from the ground or from higher floors, is elegiac and uplifting. Ultimately Schaefer's installation is a sonic meditation on space and an elegant memorial for a significant writer.



"Ballard lived a mile from my studio in the far west fringes of Greater London. His life was astonishing. His central treatise was "inner space" [as opposed to outer space] and his novel Concrete Island inspired my 1996 project The Memory Museum. Ballard died in April 2009 while I was reading his autobiography. I was preparing to pop over the river and go say hello. Like myself, he was a full time father and reading his daughter's eulogy is an inspiration for all. I felt moved to produce this series of works in memory of his legacy."

Janek Schaefer, October 2009.

Fig.4, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 11





After leaving the Vide, the first gallery installation visitors encounter is *Recorded Delivery* (1995).

*Recorded Delivery* is a sound activated tape recording of a parcel travelling through the Post Office system from Exhibition Road in central London, to the Acorn Self Storage centre in Wembley. The sound activated dictaphone automatically edited the 15 hour journey to a 72 minute recording, capturing only the most sonically interesting elements of the journey, from the 28th to 29th March 1995.

You hear all kinds of sounds and spaces, from the parcel being posted at the post office counter, the journey through the sorting offices, various vans, different sized rooms and lifts, the singing postmen and their radios. You even hear a cluster of workers talking dirty during the early shift as they scan and process the recorded delivery parcels! The recording finishes with the parcel being signed for at the storage centre.

*Recorded Delivery* originally featured in the group exhibition *Self Storage* which was organised by Artangel (London) and curated by musician and ambient music innovator Brian Eno, with musician and experimental performance artist Laurie Anderson. Schaefer installed the dictaphone on view in its original packaging in a clear Perspex box that floated in space at head height. Visitors were invited to sit underneath to listen.

At the Bluecoat, the work was installed quite differently, to reflect the surreptitious and intimate nature of the original recording. Schaefer imagined a presentation that was less transparent but no less evocative of the soundtrack of the journey of the package. The dark blue walls of the gallery matched the colour of the original recorded delivery label used to send the package. The dictaphone and speakers were hidden inside a postman's red delivery bag, placed atop a plinth at the centre of the darkened room. The recording emanates from the bag at quite a low volume, requiring that listeners stand close by to hear the recording.

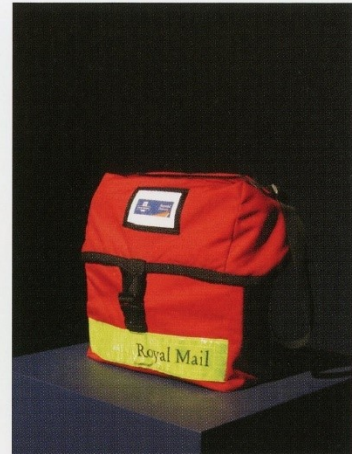
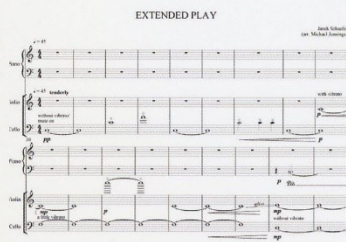


Fig.5, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 13



When Schaefer became a father in 2005 he was struck by the context of his daughter's birth in contrast to that of his mother, who had been born in Warsaw, Poland in 1942. The poignancy of this realisation and recognition of the courage required of survivors of war, particularly children, led to his development of *Extended Play* 2007; an original commission for the 2007 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, which also won Schaefer the 2008 British Composer of the Year Award in Sonic Art, and the Paul Hamlyn award for composers prize. At the Bluecoat the work was installed in the largest exhibition space

*Extended Play* is an evocative installation featuring a composition for cello, violin, and piano. Schaefer based the score on a piece of music that was used to communicate to the Polish Underground during World War II; he had learned that the BBC World Service used to broadcast a short piece of music called a 'Jodoform' after the mid-day news. The music carried a very specific meaning.

On a trip to The Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London, Schaefer discovered the Jodoform log book which revealed the piece of music broadcast on the day his mother was born. It was a Polish folk song 'Tango Lyczakowskie' which referred to a Ukraine/Polish conflict in 1918 where children had to go to war to defend their town in South Eastern Poland. This chirpy, energetic song became the basis for the score of *Extended Play*.

In Schaefer's hands the tango becomes elegiac and haunting. At times the notes soar and then fall, like the echo of air raid sirens. The random sounds of the cello, violin and piano transfix the audience; a shadow of reverence hangs in the air. The visceral power of the music is partnered by a visual conceit as the installation is lit only with red light. Symbolically it washes over the space unifying the architecture, installation and audience, conjuring a powerful blood-red mood that mixes danger, fear, passion and love.

As part of the installation Schaefer reveals the process by which he created *Extended Play*. Schematic drawings indicate that each instrument (cello, violin and piano) was recorded playing their individual part of a ten minute composition. Each part was then edited and extended to fifteen minutes, and then cut at 45rpm onto a 12" vinyl EP. Three copies of each instrumental EP are then played on nine specially modified record players that are arranged in three trios and set to repeat play at a combination of different speeds and pitches.

Motion detectors are installed in each record player. It turns off the power when you pass in front of the player, symbolising the power we all have to make a difference. This action enables *Extended Play* to become a randomly evolving composition that continuously extends the playback of the piece. The audience has to stand still if they want to hear and then absorb the experience. There is choice in the process of listening or, more specifically, in the will to act.

Within the structure of the entire exhibition, the juxtaposition of the installations *Recorded Delivery* and *Extended Play* was based on the idea that visitors could experience one of Schaefer's oldest works alongside one of his newest. And in the space between them, the story of Schaefer's career so far was highlighted through a virtual time line animated by photographs, objects, models, and interactive sound works. It was our ambition that visitors had a chance to understand why and how Schaefer made his sound art.

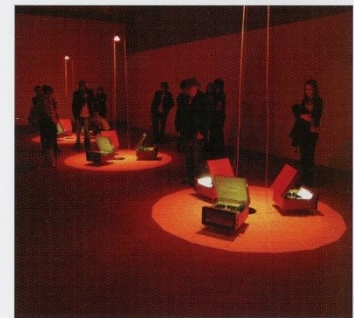
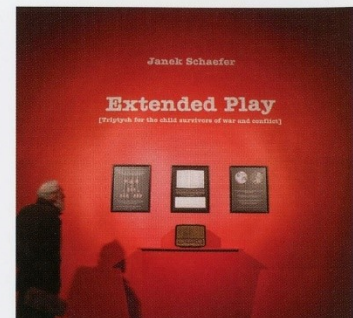
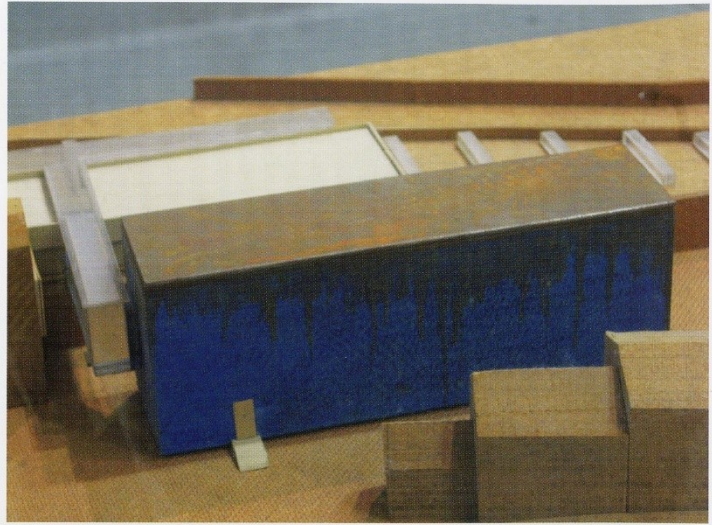


Fig.6, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 14

The Bluecoat's cloister space featured early works by Schaefer as a student of architecture at the Royal College of Art 1994-96. Models, drawings and photographs detailing the *Outside-In Building*: the Floatel and The Memory Museum indicate that even at an early stage of his career Schaefer was interested in the connections between architecture, space, sound and human experience. Similarly *Tri-Phonic turntable* (1997) and *Dual turntable* (2006) reveal the home-made tools of his trade; turntables that allow the artist to perform live vinyl manipulations that he has used all over the world at concerts and festivals.



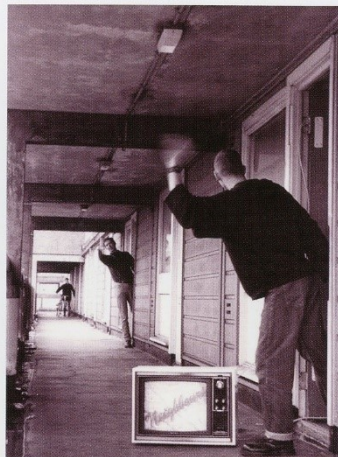
*Outside-in Building* [1996]

Design for a building for a float tank centre in the busy Camden Market, London. The blue block is covered in a lattice of hidden microphones picking up the exterior sound context. Each microphone is wired to a speaker on the inside. The effect is that as you enter the space it sounds just like the outside which you can no longer see.

*Covers* (2005)

is a film collage made of a selection of close-up images of LP covers from the artist's personal collection. The covers span the last 60 years of graphic design history and present a diversity of styles. The film is set to Schaefer's soundtrack of found soundscapes sourced from the LPs and other manipulated recordings.

Fig.7, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 16



Neighbours (1991)

A photographic competition held by the Royal Institute of British Architects on the theme of 'neighbourhood'. This was my flat in Bark Walk, Hulme, Manchester and my flatmate Paul waving to a neighbour. The photograph was shot live as the titles from 'Neighbours' rolled on the TV. I received 1st prize. I didn't know it back then as I wasn't involved in music, but the guys in the next flat were the band Bark! and Matt Wand from Stock, Hausen & Walkman lived down the walkway. Via a twist of fate Matt's record label Hot Air was to release my Recorded Delivery project eight years later. Neighbours Unite!!! Janek Schaefer



Pickup Putdown [2009]

Interactive sculpture where the tone-arm is tied to a hovering bunch of helium balloons. To hear the LP you pull down on the ribbon to engage the stylus.

Memory Museum (1996)

was an early sound work by Schaefer that investigated "dissociated sound" or sound that has become separated from its original point source in space or time. The sounds of people walking through a pedestrian underpass were recorded and replayed after a four second delay. In effect passersby heard their own recent past, and the live sounds were also transmitted to the BBC Radio 1 frequency to the cars passing on the motorway above.

Fig.8, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 17

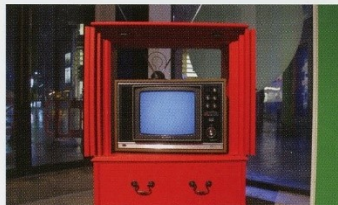
## National Portrait [the last transmission]

National Portrait [the last transmission] A Bluecoat commission, is the product of two years of research by Schaefer. The concept of the piece centres around the deadline for the switchover from analogue to digital television in Liverpool, as part of a UK-wide 'upgrade' programme to switch off the analogue transmitters that began broadcasting in 1936.

At midnight on the 1st December 2009 the analogue television signal was turned off in Liverpool. Schaefer recorded the last 24 hours of each of the five analogue television channels as they were broadcast across the city. From this 120 hours of raw material, he then created a shuffle mode sound portrait of a day in the life of Britain.

Featuring vertical stripes of red, green, blue, black and white, the vibrant walls of the gallery reference a television test card, an anachronistic graphic still beloved by many. The installation centres on vividly painted old domestic TV cabinets which frame a collection of classic television sets. Each displays a ghostly sound reactive flickering screen, and presents the sound of a whole day's broadcast from one of the terrestrial channels. Each of the five recordings is cut up into random length short clips that play back the sound bites randomly.

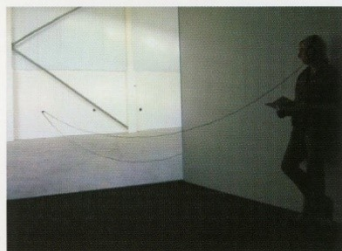
The sound bites create continuously new sonic relationships: jump-cut sound sentences that crackle and collide throughout the gallery. Adverts fade in and out of reality shows, and the solemnity of news reports merge with melodramatic soap opera storylines. *National Portrait* presents a serendipitous and infinite remix of space, place and time, or as Schaefer has characterised it, a portrait of the nation - ironically a nation often defining itself through an immediacy of choice, control and satisfaction. So while celebrating a significant moment in television history at the switching point between analogue and digital culture, *National Portrait* simultaneously reveals how we define ourselves through our channel-hopping mass media persona. At least that's what Schaefer believes, and his strategic decision to locate the



installation in the Bluecoat's most public gallery supports this. Featuring large windows facing College Lane, a busy pedestrian thoroughfare in the new Liverpool One shopping centre, Schaefer understood that passers-by would casually peer into the gallery, curiously window shopping the culture within as they meandered their way through the consumers' paradise. The gallery, like television, fits neatly into the wider landscape of popular consumption.



Fig.9, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009, 19



In the final gallery Schaefer's presentation of *Vacant Space* (2006) continues his interrogation of the direct relationship between sound and space, and examines the notion that sound is constantly present, whether we are there or not. This is a fitting way to conclude the exhibition, emphasising Schaefer's ongoing passionate interest in a basic investigation which has engaged him since he was an architecture student at the Royal College of Art in the mid 1990s.

Notably, *Vacant Space* responds to the white cube of the gallery space, and unlike Schaefer's other works on display, appears silent when first encountered. Here seduction is through interaction as pictures come first, but you are given a choice to listen. Panoramic projections of unoccupied but mostly recognisable spaces dissolve into each other and slide across the wall. A warehouse, a living room, a kitchen, a large office. There is something quite unnerving in looking at these empty places in silence. Where are all the people? Comfort comes with sound. By plugging headphones directly into the wall one hears amplified location recordings but they are randomly layered and influence the scrolling visuals in different ways. Three spaces

are heard at once and the visual compositions evolve. New places are created. There are still the occasional audible signs of people, activating and animating the spaces, but they remain unseen.

*Vacant Space* develops some of my early thoughts on the relationship between sound and image, and how that helps define architectural space. Every place has its own character which is hugely influenced by its individual soundscape. The audio aspect of the project was initially inspired by my experience of travelling abroad to perform concerts. I usually end up sitting in various types of spaces and locations very late at night when the world had gone to sleep - listening to the qualities of each specific space and the sounds beyond it, just out of view. I started to record these situations which then slowly resulted in this sound reactive installation. The images were inspired by some freelance work I did several years ago for a new company called Ehouse.co.uk. They were the first people in the UK to create online 'virtual tours' of property for sale. These are 360-degree panoramic scrolling images inside a huge variety of architectural spaces photographed without any people inside. They kindly granted me access to their enormous archive of fascinating spaces of every kind.

*"To these I added my own collection of interior photographs that I collected over the years on my own travels far and wide. Imperfections lend character to the world, so forget 'noise cancelling headphones' because this is a study for noise amplifying headphones, where you can hear the edges of time. A typical cycle of the installation lasts for over half an hour and is never, ever the same again."* Janek Schaefer

*Vacant Space* was commissioned by the Sonic Arts Network, London (now Sound and Music), and significantly Schaefer collaborated with David Tinapple, an American artist and software designer, and the BBC wildlife recordist Chris Watson. The latter provided recordings from his recent travels in South Africa, New Zealand, USA, Panama, Easter Island and elsewhere.

Fig.10, Curatorial essay by Sara-Jayne Parsons, *Janek Schaefer: Sound Art*, the Bluecoat, 2009, 20

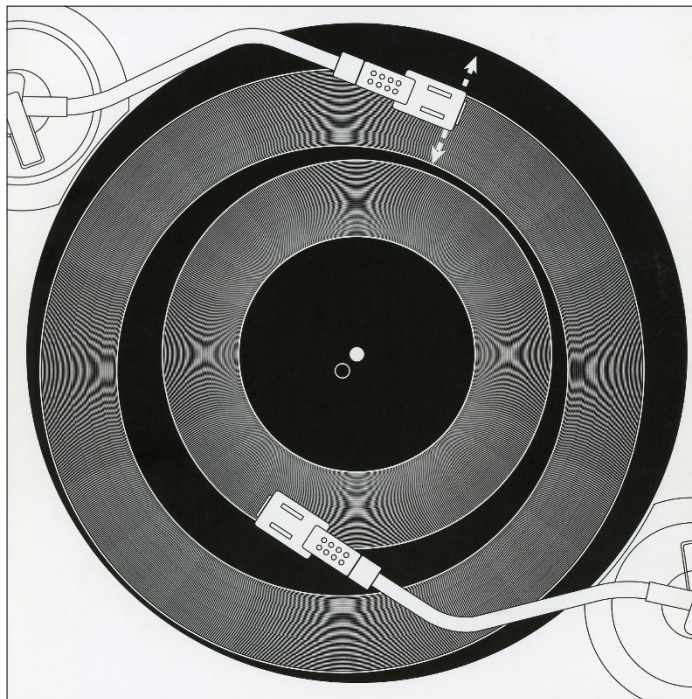


Fig.11, Inside and back cover, *JaneK Schaefer: Sound Art, the Bluecoat*, 2009

## APPENDIX 5

Demonstration of my critical friendship with artist Jyll Bradley is included in the following documents:

- Scanned pages including an essay in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011
- Scanned article: Sara-Jayne Parsons, "City of Trees: Jyll Bradley," *Australian Art Monthly*, 262, (August 2013): 30-33

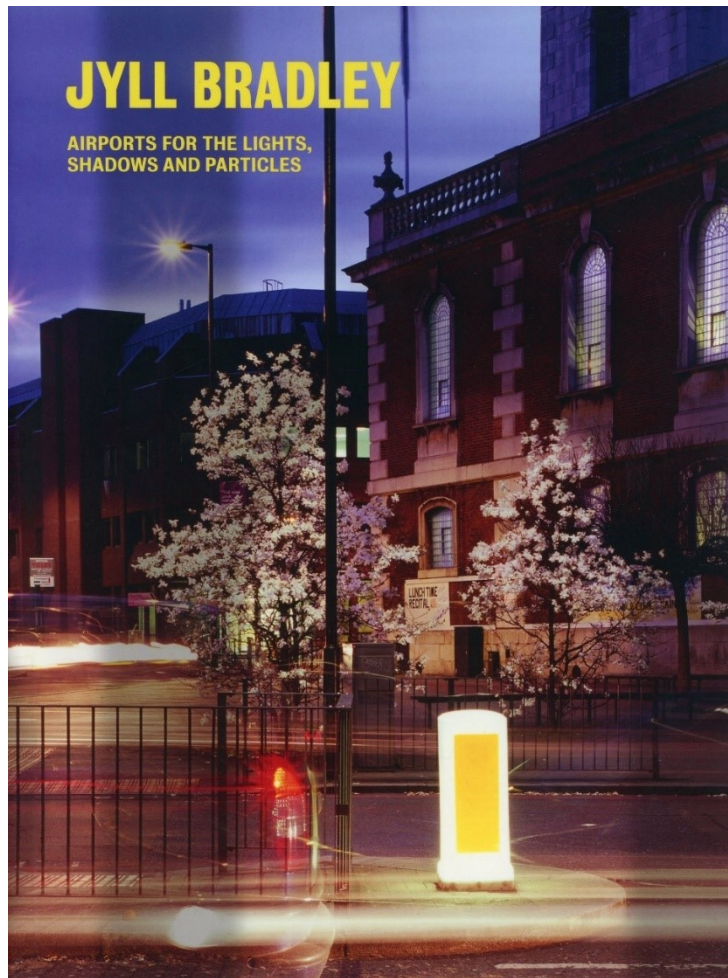


Fig.1, Front cover, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011



## FOREWORD BLAIR TODD

Light is a constant agent throughout the art and career of Jyll Bradley. Whether it's the urban allure of advertising light boxes, or photographically 'drawing with light', or the vital force of sunlight for plants, light is at the core. It creates a dynamic space for reflection upon Bradley's primary artistic concerns; identity and choice. As can be seen in this publication, she is now in a place where the fluid strands of her practice across photography, text and installation, run in parallel, drawing upon and feeding each other.

After studying at Goldsmiths' College in the late 80s and exhibiting in notable exhibitions such as *The British Art Show 1990*, Jyll Bradley shifted focus from visual art to writing for performance and BBC Radio. When she resumed a purely visual practice in 2002, it was far from solitary studio work, but immersed in collaboration and connection with people.

I first met Bradley in 2005 during her part in the Arnolfini, Bristol exhibition *This storm is what we call progress* which marked the gallery's re-opening after refurbishment. Alongside her light box portraits of international flower pickers, she orchestrated a vast back-lit diorama of cut flowers in collaboration with Bristol floral societies. She invited these communities to create, each week, for the duration of the exhibition, a new and personal landscape with flowers. Being in the gallery as the new edition of the display took place, I was drawn to Bradley's motivation; to create an arena for potential, of what might happen when one person meets another. The seductiveness of the installation, of the flowers, belied a complexity that was compelling.

Bradley's desire to create transformative spaces became evermore apparent during her residency with Newlyn Art Gallery in 2005/6. The Cornish flower farmers' struggle to maintain their livelihoods inspired several new works, including *Flower Train* a poster series which was presented on rail platforms between Penzance and Paddington; whose title evoked the now mythic train that once served as marketing conduit between city and country.

Fig.2, Foreword by Blair Todd, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 10

While Bradley was artist in residence at Liverpool Botanical Collection in 2008, during the city's year as European Capital of Culture, we remained in conversation about the realisation of a gallery exhibition at The Exchange. She had begun a period of reflection on her earlier work, revisiting the sculptural qualities of her light boxes and use of text with photography. This time inspired new works and it became evident that her exhibition with us would develop into a mid career survey.

When viewing these new and existing works, it is clear how themes, ideas and imagery weave in and out of each other, interrelated through the years. Without glancing at the dates it isn't immediately apparent which pieces were created in which stages of her career. The exhibition layouts, first at The Exchange and again at the Bluecoat, group works but with sightlines to other series, drawing references to works ahead of you and behind you.

As is the nature of Bradley as an artist, in that her work evolves, so has the exhibition. Journeying to Liverpool, this show has grown through her tireless energy and the insightful eye of Sara-Jayne Parsons at the Bluecoat who also commissioned new works. Aptly, the title of the show has changed; from *Naming Spaces* at The Exchange, to *Airports for the Lights, Shadows and Particles* at the Bluecoat.

I would like to thank the teams at Newlyn Art Gallery and The Exchange, including James Green, Cat Gibbard, Nick Brierley and Lynda Harris and, at the Bluecoat, Sara-Jayne Parsons, Bryan Briggs, Andrew Kirk, Denise Courcoux and Barry Charlton. Thanks also to Anne Odling-Smee at O-SB Design, for this beautifully designed book.

Thanks to Caroline Collier for her interview with Jyll Bradley exploring her art and career over the past 20 years and to Sara-Jayne Parsons for a focussed essay on new works that have arisen in the development of these exhibitions. We are indebted to Arts Council England whose support has made the exhibitions and catalogue possible.

And I would like to thank Jyll Bradley, for her art and for the inspiring ways in which she makes people part of it.

*Blair Todd, Exhibitions Curator / Deputy Director  
Newlyn Art Gallery and The Exchange*

Fig.3, Foreword by Blair Todd, *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 11

## **SHE DRINKS LIKE A PLANT THE ENERGY OF LIGHT<sup>1</sup>** **SARA-JAYNE PARSONS**

Through the process of photosynthesis, plants are sustained by light. In this microscopic everyday occurrence, something wonderfully creative happens; a natural life-giving force effects a chemical reaction and results in growth. Radiant energy is turned into food. Biology becomes poetry. Similarly in photography, light is used to create images. Traditionally, light affected chemicals on paper or film. Now, in an electronic age, light sensitive sensors in a camera capture an image and store it as a digital file. However you describe the activity, biological or photographic, the process and effects are still magical, and it is small wonder that the empirical and metaphoric nature of light has enchanted scientists and artists for centuries.

As a part of this critical system Jyll Bradley has thoughtfully investigated the formal and expressive properties of light for the last twenty years. Describing it as a 'protagonist', light sits at the intersection of her practice, informing and stimulating her endeavours in photography, sculpture and writing.<sup>2</sup> Post-Minimalism has been the consistent stylistic mainstay of her career; a hybrid approach informed by Conceptual art that challenges traditional Minimalist values.<sup>3</sup> Bradley's innovative use of the light box in the gallery – hitherto a commercial visual format used in advertising – combined with her directed use of text and blank sculptural panels clearly indicates her concern with formal aesthetics.

The panels though are Bradley's most hermetic response; shimmering, white, flat metal sheets varying in size and typically arranged leaning against or on the wall in Minimalist rapport with the light boxes. Ultimately through this partnership of forms Bradley explores a territory made familiar through the likes of Carl Andre and Roni Horn, while simultaneously attempting to address the politics of identity akin to Mary Kelly and Andrea Fisher.

Fig.4, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light," in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 56

While light boxes and sculptural panels have been the most obvious and constant part of her dialogue with light, lately Bradley's oeuvre has expanded to include drawings. Commissioned by the Bluecoat for inclusion in *Airports for the Lights, Shadows and Particles*, she produced three series of light drawings. Each comprised of ten A4-sized works, they are small in contrast to her light boxes and panels. Relaying a much more intimate engagement with light and luminosity, the drawings exhibit a quiet yet playful energy suggesting a re-acquaintance of the artist's love of working alone in the studio, in contrast to her collaborative way of working with photo labs and fabricators to produce larger works.

In the context of a survey exhibition Bradley's drawings are an astute addition. Sometimes their very title hints that she is hungrily taking critical stock of her practice and has actively embarked on an opportunity for studied review of two decades of work. One series entitled *Nobody gives you freedom you have to take it* is inspired by the words of artist Meret Oppenheim; another, *Look at me now and here I am* takes its title from a classic anthology of the collected writings of Gertrude Stein. The artist acknowledges and celebrates the distance travelled from her participation in the 1990 British Art Show to her 21st century present.

Collectively, the drawings can be seen as an appropriate and elegant meditation on Bradley's own studio practice. Closer examination reveals a concern for form and process which locates them in a pivotal relationship to photography and sculpture; indeed the artist describes the drawings as 'intimate allies of the light boxes'.<sup>4</sup>

For *Nobody gives you freedom you have to take it* (2011), Bradley created assemblages from simple, everyday materials; ephemera collected from the discarded remains of researching and making light box and sculptural works including various bits of paper and cut-outs, old train tickets, snippets of text, transparencies and ink blots. After photographing the assemblages, Bradley then printed the subsequent images on soft, dimpled watercolour paper, resulting in works that give the illusion of being elaborate tonal studies; still-life drawings made with pencil in painstaking fashion, a memento mori to industry. They range in abstraction and order; some are carefully arranged and suggest narratives reminiscent of a theatre stage or studio noticeboard, while others offer a more sporadic collection of materials.

Fig.5, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light," in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 57

From an informed glimpse one can't but be reminded of Picasso's experiments in collage or Schwitters' Merz pictures. Bradley challenges the picture plane by layering objects to create real and imaginary spaces. Shadows become complicit in her spatial sleight of hand. Yet the works push beyond mere acknowledgment of the legacy of modernist collage. These personal sketches expose delicious secrets from Bradley's studio and her selection of objects is a self-audit. Significantly, she owns up to the dichotomy of making: how can so much waste come from the effort of making something so minimal?

In contrast to *Nobody gives you freedom you have to take it*, Bradley's other drawings are made without a camera, although they still rely on a mechanical process of capturing the effects of light. In actual fact they are xerographs, or as they are more commonly known, photocopies. *Their flight is knowledge, space is their alienation* (2011) is a collection of images of assemblages Bradley made directly on the glass of a photocopier. The images are printed on acetate and mounted on card, which results in the surface of the drawing appearing slick and reflective. The compositions are pared back and sparse; motif is found in circles, concertina paper folds and the trompe l'oeil of sharp slits in the surface of the drawing. Only a recurring ink blot breaks the hegemony of geometry.

Drawings comprising the series *Look at me now and here I am* (2010–11) were similarly made on a photocopier, but are printed on watercolour paper. Again with the suggestion of soft, delicate shading, Bradley tricks the viewer into believing the drawings are pencil. As well as now familiar constituents of composition – geometric forms in cut paper and ink blots – new elements appear in the form of photographs taken by Bradley, depicting advertising light boxes in London Underground stations. In each case the light boxes are the backdrop of everyday metropolitan life as fleeting forms of commuters and tube travellers scurry past, disappearing down anonymous tunnels.

With both these series of light drawings, Bradley's experiment with luminosity rests with the automatic performance of the photocopier; an intense beam of light scans across the glass picture plane, covertly sweeping for solid form like a radar. If the object detected is not entirely flat the resulting image is distorted and the space between layers is exploited in shades. Bradley

Fig.6, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light," in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 58

had to physically manipulate the assemblage through holding the arrangement in place while the copier light completed its scan. Ultimately she relinquished degrees of control; she was not directing the light or regulating its intensity. Subsequently the process of making these light drawings could be characterised as performative and temporal; the artist's act of making relies on the long 'sweep' of the photocopier light rather than the definitive brevity and 'click' of the camera's shutter.

Another curious consideration of Bradley's cameraless light drawings is that they could be seen to locate Bradley's contemporary engagement with light more concretely within a canon of the history of photography; a categorisation which has not been overtly applied to her work before as previously Bradley's photographic pedigree was aligned with contemporary practitioners such as Jeff Wall. However, now, through these drawings, she joins the lineage of photogenic drawing that began with William Henry Fox Talbot and his proclamation of photography as the 'pencil of nature' in the 1840s. Indeed Bradley's light drawings must be recognised for their kinship to the work of notable historic photographers such as Anna Atkins who perfected the cyanotype, and Carlotta Corpron whose photograms explored simple abstraction of forms. Whether this consideration is useful remains to be seen, but it is worth drawing attention to here as previously Bradley's work might solely have been contextualised within a minimal and conceptual realm, exclusive of concerns about light itself and the very nature of photography.

Analysis of context can be narrowed further. Although the new drawings each carry a convincing individual presence, they gather further strength of meaning when exhibited alongside light box works and sculptural panels. In effect they materialise a more direct connection between various facets of Bradley's work, a strategy that she has not employed quite so explicitly before. Traditional Minimalist demands to negate private expression are challenged more energetically when the drawings are placed in relationship to the other works. Bradley's multiple use of an ink blot image throughout the drawings is particularly vital in this regard.

Inspired by Georges Braque's 'Ateliers' (1949–56), a series of eight studio paintings which depict a bird flying through each image thought to signify creative freedom, Bradley created her own

Fig.7, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light," in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 59

symbolic mark in the form of an ink blot. Also popularly recognised as a Rorschach – a device used in psychological testing – the blot offers multiple explanations. Whether as a bird, a leaf, a landscape, female genitalia or any other interpretation, its meaning depends solely on the viewer. So while meaning in the drawings is partially deferred it is not completely disavowed. Repetition of the blot acts as a visual pulse, creating a connection between all the drawings and acting as a memory trigger or perhaps, as Christopher Turner eloquently describes, ‘a cardiogram of the unconscious’.<sup>5</sup>

The appearance of the ink blot in the drawings, a form many are familiar with, could be construed as a generous device that encourages viewers to consider free association in other aspects of Bradley’s work. Alongside the drawings her white panels become open spaces for inquiry; as viewers are confronted with blurred, reflected self-portraits the notion of seeing oneself ‘in’ the sculpture becomes more apparent. Similarly, the reading of text in Bradley’s light box works potentially becomes less esoteric. Viewers may feel more inclined to take on authorship.

Where light emitted from light boxes illuminates the face of viewers, by contrast, the drawings absorb light and pull the viewer in. One is seduced into stepping forward into the tantalising space of the assemblages. Somewhere in between, the sculptural panels act as a dynamic, reflective hinterland open to possibilities. To encounter Bradley’s work in this tripartite configuration requires a phenomenological dance between the differing demands of two and three dimensional objects. Importantly, the defining relational factor that draws a thread between all Bradley’s works in this instance is light and its coterie of reflections and shadows.

The success resulting from the synthesis described above announces a potential new path for Bradley. Her experiments in light drawing present a fresh element in her studio practice that heralds optimism and excitement about what happens next. With luck, like a plant turned to the sun, light will no doubt continue to nourish Bradley for the next twenty years.

*Sara-Jayne Parsons, Exhibitions Curator, the Bluecoat*

Fig.8, Sara-Jayne Parsons, “She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light,” in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011,60

1. Perse, Saint-John. *Collected Poems*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983. Paraphrase taken from Saint-John Perse's 1962 poem 'Oiseaux' (Birds) where he refers to a symbolic bird motif depicted by Georges Braque in his 'Ateliers' series (1949–56).

2. Email to the author, February 17, 2011.

3. In this context, Bradley, like other artists of her generation, challenges the cool aesthetic of a Minimalist style understood as the use and repetition of simple geometric forms, a resistance to showing the hand of the maker, and concern with industrial construction and architectural space. The key intervention she employs is the use of text, often with literary and autobiographical connections. For a thoughtful consideration of a Post-Minimal approach see Lynn Zevelansky's *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994.

4. Email to author, February 17, 2011

5. Turner, Christopher. 'The Deliberate Accident in Art', *TATE ETC.*, issue 21, Spring 2011, pp58–65.

Fig.9, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "She Drinks Like A Plant The Energy Of Light," in *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 61





Fig.10, Jyll Bradley, "Their flight is knowledge, space is their alienation," 2011, detail of 'light drawings' on acetate, 30 x 22 each, *Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011, 64



Fig.11, Back cover of *Jyll Bradley: Airports for the Lights Shadows and Particles*, Penzance: The Exchange, 2011



Printer proof [detail], *City of Trees* publication, part of a display of "scatter-proof" prints in the exhibition; all images this article of work by Jyll Bradley; images courtesy the artist

## City of Trees: Jyll Bradley

SARA-JAYNE PARSONS

Standing on Mount Ainslie looking out over Canberra, it is impossible not to reflect on Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony's vision for Australia's capital. From up here, the urban panorama energetically proclaims its past and asserts its future through symmetry, order and sprawling elegance. The garden city was imagined, planned and built from a utopian vision. As the seat of government it's a place where dreams and policy are entwined, and collective memory enshrined. One hundred years after its birth, the Griffins' carefully choreographed relationship between architecture and nature has evolved into a performance of textures, shaped by light and colour, supported by a network of wide avenues and shimmering water. Picturesque meets Prairie style in the bush.

Somewhat prosaically, a consistent feature of the capital landscape observed from the lookout is trees, and lots of them. In fact, with over 1 million trees, Canberra is one of the world's largest urban forests and home to a diverse collection of native and exotic species; a remarkable achievement for a city that was built on a largely treeless plain. Over the decades both necessity and aesthetics meant that tree planting has been a significant part of Canberra's development. Beyond the built environment, the genius loci or spirit of the city is, quite literally, rooted.

Developed over a period of three years, *City of Trees* is a multidisciplinary project by British artist Jyll Bradley, whose practice embraces an investigation of identity and place through photography, sculpture and text. Commissioned as part of the Canberra Centenary celebrations, the project is a reflection on the role that trees have played and continue to play in the evolution of the city's identity. *City of Trees* comprises a suite of audio works that can be downloaded and experienced at

different locations across the city or remotely, and an immersive exhibition of sound, drawing and photography. Collectively the creative works offer a timely meditation on the history and future of Canberra.

Bradley's engagement with the capital city comes on the heels of highly successful projects in the UK such as *Mr Roscoe's Garden* (2008), reflecting the history and changing fortunes of Liverpool's Botanic Collection, and *Flower Train* (2010), concerning the dying traditions in Cornish flower farming. In both cases Bradley's sensitivity to context framed her approach. As well as completing exhaustive scholarly research, she took time to get to know a variety of people in different situations connected to her subject. For Bradley, the key to understanding and articulating poetics of place comes from firsthand experience and observations of subtlety found through means of language and memory. While her creative process is relational, it is phenomenology that ultimately informs her practice over time.

Such are the skills that Bradley eloquently employs in Canberra, where arboreal traditions and storytelling are comfortable bedfellows. For Bradley each tree has a human story to tell and the forest symbolises a crowd. From this notion the main impetus for her work was to listen and then reflect back what she heard; her work is not about making bold statements, but rather identifying nuance in words and emotions. This acknowledgement sits at the heart of the *City of Trees* project and provides the basis for Bradley's audio works.

During several residency periods in Canberra Bradley met with many people for whom trees are a passion, from historians to developers, musicians to golfers, foresters to poets. From these meetings she

Fig.12 Sara-Jayne Parsons, "City of Trees: Jyll Bradley," *Australian Art Monthly*, 262, (August 2013): 30



1 + 2/ Printer proofs [details], *City of Trees* publication, part of a display of 'scatter-proof' prints in the exhibition

selected a small cast for each audio work around a particular story that had surfaced through her research. In collaboration with Jonquil Panting, a BBC Radio producer, Bradley then recorded sessions with the casts in key locations. In the final edited work she also included songs by the Canberra duo The Cashews and newly commissioned music by composer Michael Sollis.

The collection of audio works presents a diverse range of stories behind Canberra's urban forest, and it's possible to download and listen to them in the very spot where they were recorded. Significantly Bradley determined that the works should function as intuitive, psycho-geographical devices as opposed to anthropological documents, preferring that they suggest and reveal traces of spirit rather than define place. This results in excerpts that are populated with exquisite birdsong, the sounds of enthusiastic volunteers at the National Arboretum or low-voiced Ngunnawal elders discussing ancient tree rites. In each case, the sensuous performance of participants walking through and being in the trees, experiencing their shade, smells and sounds, is a vital connecting feature of the audio works.

Bradley's rich and generous approach allows listeners to weave together their own versions of the proffered narratives and envision their own tree-scapes. For example, in the audio work *City of Trees* there is a magical moment where a listener can be transported back to their own childhood by the sound of a breathless young girl describing with delight how she climbs a tree. You can hear her stretching, grasping, hooking her feet up and holding on until she reaches a favourite spot where she sits and swings her legs. The lyricism of her voice mirrors the imagined swaying of the tree limb beneath her.

Bradley's considered and affective method is beautifully articulated in the audio work *Tree 20*, inspired by Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. In his text *I and Thou* (1923) he considers a tree and contemplates what trees can teach about relationships. Accordingly Bradley invited participants to say three things about a particular tree she had chosen which was located in a new suburb of Canberra. A coppice of voices respond, overlapping and leaning into each other to create a personalised collage of literal descriptions of bark, colour and shape as well as more abstract assertions: 'This tree is a solution ... an asset ... a survivor ... a habitat ... a column of light.'

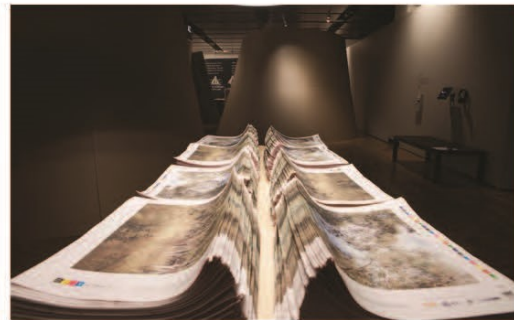
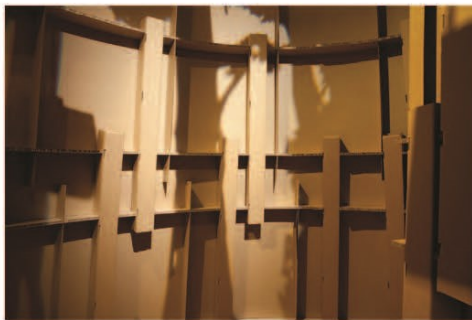
Of all the audio works though it is perhaps *Amongst the oaks* that best epitomises Bradley's desire to coax out the relationship between poetry and place. It features the voice of ninety-two-year-old Aldo Giurgola, the Italian-born architect who designed Australia's Parliament House. He shares his thoughts on architecture, landscape and poetry as he meanders through the historic woods of the York Park Oak Plantation; a shady retreat where he used to eat lunch during construction of Parliament House, but which was neglected over many years to become a largely unused, tangled wilderness.

With others, Giurgola made determined efforts to reclaim the park and designed new landscaping, with pathways and assembly points, where groups of people can gather to talk, share ideas, make music or read poetry. But it's not just the story of the rebirth of the park told by architect and other campaigners that captivates listeners. In sympathy with Giurgola's architectural practice of 'listening to the land', Bradley's audio work reveals collective sounds of aspiration and the synthesis of humans and the urban environment, through an

Fig.13, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "City of Trees: Jyll Bradley," *Australian Art Monthly*, 262, (August 2013): 31



1 + 2 + 3 / Installation views, *City of Trees*, National Library of Australia, 2013, showing the display of printer proofs (on the table) and Bradley's corrugated cardboard 'portals' for listening to the exhibition's sound-based works



engagement with trees. This could be construed as a metaphor for the daily industry of the capital city. If Canberra is a city where citizens go to talk and debate, where people are heard and policy is made, then it is also, surely, a place for listening.

When Bradley takes the sounds of the urban forest indoors the experience of listening shifts. In her exhibition she presents portals for listening; hollow, corrugated cardboard structures with a soft bark-like surface in which visitors can sit and listen together. Significantly, these intimate, darkened sound spaces provide the counterpoint to light, Bradley's consistent creative protagonist which arrives fully into view in the exhibition.

Bradley's continuing fascination with light is witnessed in a series of photographic works and drawings which capture the life of Canberra's trees, in harmony with her audio works. Here her rapport with modernist light and form results in serene minimalist renderings. In contemplating the role of light and shade in the evolution of a city, Bradley reflects on the effects of moving through trees and encounters between vertical forms and horizontal planes. A diptych photographic lightbox documents the changing light of a tree-landscape across a twelve-hour period. The artist places the viewer 'in' the trees, where subtle changes can be discerned as the sun passes overhead. From this perspective, Bradley suggests the possibility of enlightenment through the form and space of the designed city.

It is in Bradley's suite of drawings where the abstraction of trees through light is realised most

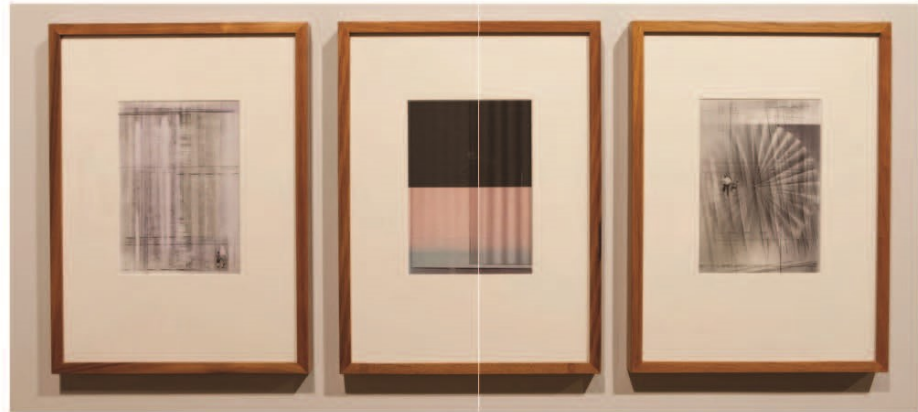
intensely. They are made by photographic but camera-less means; a powerful beam of light makes a drawing as it scans a collage of paper materials and photographs assembled by Bradley on the glass plane of a photocopier. The resulting image is a *trompe l'oeil* pencil drawing on a sheet of soft, antique blotting paper; a symbolic material that was a serendipitous find by the artist at the Yarralumla Nursery.

Bradley's delicately shaded tonal studies suggest the presence of trees through vertical forms which tower over tiny figures. The humans are seen to move through shafts of light, doing everyday things as they go, for example, talking on their mobile phones. They seem oblivious to their cathedral-like surroundings; no-one looks up. The trees are invisible. Instead, their materiality is signified in the faded, fibrous blotting paper which has been inscribed with light.

Compositionally there is a modernist provenance in the drawings. The strong vertical lines recall the dynamic zip of Barnett Newman and perhaps quietly nod towards Richard Diebenkorn's *Ocean Park* drawings. Bradley acknowledges that a painting she saw in Canberra by Fred Williams, *Lightning Storm, Waratah Bay* (1971-2), influenced her process of envisioning place through light. Similarly she also concedes the conception of the drawings is inspired by Emily Dickinson's poem *The Soul's Distinct Connection* which describes the effects of lightning as rendering a landscape into 'sheets of place'.

Bradley is transparent about what infuses her conceptual approach to the *City of Trees*. She describes her

Fig. 14, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "City of Trees: Jyll Bradley," *Australian Art Monthly*, 262, (August 2013): 32



City of Trees drawings (detail); photocopier-based photograph on antique blotting found by the artist at Yarralumla Nursery, Canberra

practice as akin to placing a sheet of blotting paper down on Canberra and soaking up its stories, rather than imposing her own voice or vision on the page. Her desire to 'conjure' as opposed to 'illustrate' leads to a graceful and imaginative exposition of tree-scapes. Like the Griffins and Giurgola, who mapped and drew the city before her, Bradley imagines and redraws Canberra with sound, light and line.

Importantly the artist recognises Canberra is a city in progress, ever-evolving. This observation is elegantly reflected in Bradley's series of scatter-proof prints which feature significant photographs referencing the ongoing narrative of Canberra's trees. The prints function as printer's proofs for a publication and reveal the process of bookmaking, but metaphorically, through consideration of paper, page and leaf, they echo the construction and development of a city. The reforestation of Canberra is also happening on its library shelves.

Jyll Bradley's *City of Trees* is the culmination of walking, listening and drawing bound together through an inescapable exploration of light. It asks us to reflect on our relationship to trees and provokes quiet activism through spiritual, ecological and political means. Bradley's path through Canberra's urban forest reveals a rich and complex landscape. Ultimately everyone can share the pleasure of her shaded walk and poetic documentary, and celebrate the life and generosity of the city's trees.

*City of Trees* is on exhibition at the National Library of Australia, 5 July to 7 October 2013. The audio works are available for download at [www.canberra100.com.au/programs/city-of-trees](http://www.canberra100.com.au/programs/city-of-trees).

Sara-Jayne Parsons is Exhibitions Curator at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, UK.



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O Z G A L L E R Y  
G A L L E R Y

Fig.15, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "City of Trees: Jyll Bradley," *Australian Art Monthly*, 262, (August 2013): 33

## APPENDIX 6

Commissioned projects with Emily Speed include:

- *Panoply*, a site-specific commission for the Bluecoat in 2012 as part of the touring group exhibition *TOPOPHOBIA: fear of place in contemporary art*, curated by artists Polly Gould and Anne Eggebert. *TOPOPHOBIA* included works by Anne Eggebert, Matthias Einhoff, David Ferrando Giraut, Polly Gould, Marja Helander, Uta Kogelsberger, Abigail Reynolds, Almut Rink, Emily Speed and Louise K. Wilson. In 2012 the exhibition travelled to Danielle Arnaud Gallery, London; the Bluecoat, Liverpool; and, Spacex, Exeter.
- *Body Builders*, an exhibition featuring new sculptural works, an artist book and a film made in collaboration with TCU dance students, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, October 2016. Using an American college campus as a starting point and referencing the symbolic use of Neoclassical architecture, Speed explored classical ideas of patriarchal power and authority through the movement and form of dance. (Artist's website, accessed February 27, 2022, [www.emilyspeed.co.uk](http://www.emilyspeed.co.uk))



Fig.1, Emily Speed, *Panoply*, wood and scaffolding, 2012, installation view at the Bluecoat (Photography credit: Mark Reeves)



"From time to time during the private view and on occasion throughout the exhibition disturbing little glimpses of naked twitching legs, or hanging hair, are visible poking through small window cuts in the elevated structure. This paradoxical construction appears to function both as a hide and a device to display the artist's body parts; or a space akin to the tree house most of us never had." (*TOPOPHOBIA* website, accessed February 27, 2022, [www.topophobia.arts.ac.uk](http://www.topophobia.arts.ac.uk))



Fig.2, Emily Speed performing inside *Panoply* at the Bluecoat, 2012 (Photography credit: Mark Reeves)





Fig.3, Emily Speed performing inside *Panoply* at the Bluecoat, 2012  
(Photography credit: Mark Reeves)



Fig.4, Emily Speed, *Body Builders*, installation views, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, October 2016 (Photography credit: Kevin Todora)



Fig.5, Emily Speed, *Body Builders*, detail, film still, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, October 2016 (Photography credit: Emily Speed)



Fig.6, Documentation during filming for *Body Builders*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, October 2016 (Photography credit: Emily Speed)

## APPENDIX 7

Demonstration of my critical friendship with The Caravan Gallery is included in the following documents:

- Scanned pages including an essay in *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011
- PDF version of online article: Sara-Jayne Parsons, “‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery.” *Medium*, December 15, 2019, accessed March 8, 2022, [www.medium.com/exposure-magazine/doing-things-with-people-rather-than-at-them-the-caravan-gallery-49b4f5ed0dce](http://www.medium.com/exposure-magazine/doing-things-with-people-rather-than-at-them-the-caravan-gallery-49b4f5ed0dce)



Fig.1, Front cover of *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011

## Sign of the Times Sara-Jayne Parsons

I've passed by the Wellington Pub on Picton Road in Liverpool regularly for several years now and it's become a significant coordinate on my internal daily map. The pub's bottle green and rust-red tile facade adorned with a ubiquitous SKY Sports banner is unremarkable, but the sign above the door - Locally Known Affectionally as "The Welly" - is unforgettable. I smile every time I catch a glimpse of it for a number of reasons. It locates my home; not just in its proximity to the actual bricks-and-mortar of the place where I live, but also the wider geography of the city I love.

The sign sounds better in Scouse, an accent where frequently words are shortened with "ly" creating an informal quality to what is being said. In this case, the colloquial familiarity used to describe "The Welly" suggests it's a comfortable, friendly place, beloved and valued by the surrounding neighbourhood. The sign bestows a recognised value on an unexceptional place and it reminds me of photographs by Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale that I've seen in The Caravan Gallery; images of contemporary Britain which highlight juxtapositions of language and location sometimes resulting in humorous or ironic new meanings.

Williams and Teasdale have photographed in Liverpool numerous times in recent years and I've been privileged to get to know them as they've explored the streets at a time of great change in the city. One of the most memorable images they captured during this time is of a grotty, rundown shop (not that far from "The Welly" as it happens) depicting a handwritten sign that reads "Sunbeds English Lessons." It's the incongruity of the two activities that strikes the viewer first. Do you get both services at the same time? Now that would be an efficient combination, although the exterior of the shop doesn't suggest anything very modern in the way of treatments or convenience. And what does this shop's very specific provision reveal about its targeted customer, located as it is in a working class area undergoing regeneration, comprised predominantly of immigrant families and students?

Such photographs expose the power of Williams and Teasdale's simple phenomenological observations and efforts to capture the spirit of place; their vernacular images are a semiotic frame through which to consider how people identify themselves and their environment, as they navigate their everyday lives. Sometimes their photographs highlight eccentricities of daily life; they isolate garish juxtapositions of colour, pattern and texture for formal study akin to the aesthetic coolness found in the work of other practitioners of the everyday such as Martin Parr. At other times their camera becomes a tool to raise awareness about difficult issues found in the contemporary landscape; the work of John Davies springs to mind in this regard.

Either way, Williams and Teasdale don't set out to proselytize. Their mission isn't moral but rather to record the ordinary and extraordinary, and to document contemporary life as they find it. The territory of their lens is typically places that are in transition; urban areas slated for regeneration or reinvention, or liminal neighbourhoods between the city centre and traditionally suburban areas. In another century their work might be aligned with efforts of the original Mass Observation photographers and their attempts to create a visual archive of ordinary life in Britain. Indeed Williams and Teasdale are not so interested in the wealthy elite or the newly squeezed middle of the Lib-Dem-Con Coalition, but rather their focus is on the already squashed and marginalised lower end of British society.

However, unlike Mass Observation efforts, humour plays a significant and reoccurring role in Williams and Teasdale's astute social and cultural comment. It's a strategy historically associated with political satire in visual art which remains effective, and the photographers recognise this. For example, it could be said that their approach proffers a respectful nod to William Hogarth's examination of 18th century urban living. Like his prints and drawings, their photographs are simultaneously seductive and

Fig.2, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "Sign of the Times," in *Is Britain Great?* 3, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011, 2

analytical, resulting in a type of visual stand-up routine that celebrates and critiques contemporary life. And similar to the very best of observational comedy which becomes political satire, the humour expressed through their images pulls the viewer in to contemplate reality in sharper critical focus.

The success and popularity of The Caravan Gallery rests on this capacity, which is supported by the very nature of how Williams and Teasdale work. They make several research visits to locations they are interested in or have read about in news reports. But more often than not their itineraries are made up of places recommended when talking to people on location or following local gossip; the vernacular nature of their photographs corresponds to their colloquial research. Their resulting photographs are not made from a high-horse or cool objective position.

Against the backdrop of photographic exhibitions, The Caravan Gallery becomes a discursive space that seems at home anywhere it's parked up, whether, in my experience, the rather grand vista of the Bluecoat's courtyard or the car park at the Asda on Smithdown Road, L15. The modest and inviting character of the Caravan is matched by the warm welcome offered by Williams and Teasdale as you enter. They are accessible, generous and non-judgemental which makes curious visitors feel comfortable when asking questions, sharing stories or suggesting places to photograph.

In this instance The Caravan Gallery becomes a sort of neighbourhood TripAdvisor; a place for research and reviews by and for people who like visual travels. And it follows that this rich, inclusive, participatory way of making photographs on location ensures that wherever they go, Williams and Teasdale are most definitely "locally known affectionally."

Sara-Jayne Parsons  
Exhibitions Curator, the Bluecoat  
Liverpool, October 2011

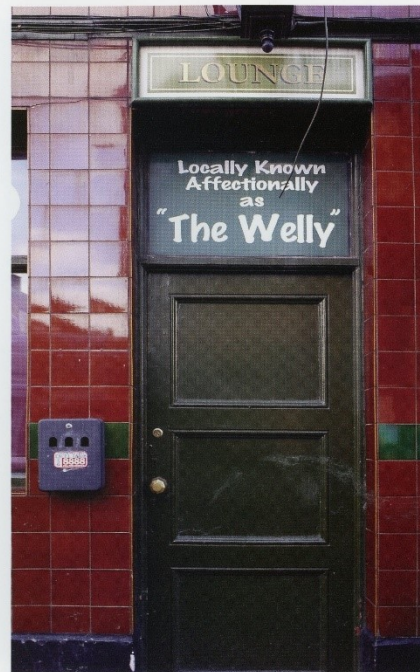


Fig.3, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "Sign of the Times," in *Is Britain Great?* 3, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011, 3



Chelmsford

Fig.4, *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011, 24



Mottisfont



Portsmouth

Fig.5, *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011, 25



Bognor Regis

Fig.6, *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011, 77

**THE CARAVAN GALLERY**

Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale spend their time sifting rubbish in the cultural dustbin of modern Britain.

This is noticing on an epic scale, poignant and melancholic.

Out of it they make art and laughter, a rare combination.

Long live The Caravan Gallery!

**Daniel Meadows**  
of the Free Photographic Omnibus

Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale  
[www.thecaravangallery.co.uk](http://www.thecaravangallery.co.uk)

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Fig.7, Back cover of *Is Britain Great? 3*, Manchester: Cornerhouse and The Caravan Gallery, 2011



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# "Doing things with people rather than at them." The Caravan Gallery

By [Sara-Jayne Parsons](#), Director & Curator of the [Art Galleries of TCU](#), Fort Worth TX.



Wenlock Estate, London during Shoreditch Festival, 2007. All images courtesy of The Caravan Gallery

Challenging recognized conventions of social documentary photography and employing a range of investigative strategies within a socially engaged practice, [The Caravan Gallery](#) is a collaboration between artists Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale. Basing their activities in and around a 1969 holiday caravan which functions as a mobile exhibition venue, a center for research and a site for activities that engage visitors and encourage creative participation, The Caravan Gallery has presented a



Fig.8, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 1





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cultural critique by arresting surreal or humorous moments; they provide, as one critic has concluded, "affectionate appraisal."<sup>1</sup> They highlight eccentricities found in daily life and draw attention to ironic juxtapositions that might otherwise go unnoticed or underappreciated. Their simple phenomenological observations also capture the spirit of place and their photographs function as a semiotic framework through which to consider how people identify themselves and their environments.



The Bluecoat courtyard during launch of the Liverpool Biennial 2008.

With its quirky, vintage shape and canary-yellow paintwork, The Caravan Gallery is both eye-catching and curious; traits useful as a base for artists whose work often involves direct engagement with an enquiring public. In this way, the actual caravan acts both as a form of public art and a roving, practical space for display, discourse and commerce, subverting traditions of the bricks-and-mortar gallery space. Williams and Teasdale also recognize that some people are not comfortable visiting galleries and



Fig.9, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 2



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street visibility, can often help break down these types of barriers and encourage audiences to visit traditional arts venues.

The peripatetic nature of The Caravan Gallery also enables Williams and Teasdale access to a wide range of situations and subjects in various geographic locations, and simultaneously allows a diverse set of public audiences to engage with their work. Accessibility is a key strategy of their practice. They can, for example, host exhibitions and participation activities just as easily at an arts festival as they can outside a local grocery store or at a community event, or go to places where people might not have easy access to cultural institutions.<sup>2</sup> This model also makes it possible for the artists to make a series of visits to a single location, or to embed themselves in one particular place over an extended period of time.

As artists, Williams and Teasdale approached the collaboration of The Caravan Gallery from a position of being self-taught photographers with an interest in social documentary work that could affect change, coupled with an entrepreneurial drive to find ways to fund their work without commercial gallery representation. They perceive their being self-taught in photography as something of an advantage. They do not obsess about technical elements or process, but they want to make good photographs and indicate that visual elements of composition drive their aesthetic interests; they allow ideas to lead to images and often “content, color and creativity rule.”<sup>3</sup>



Fig.10, Sara-Jayne Parsons, “‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery.” *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 3



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Caravan interior with 'Flâneur' exhibition images of Kaunas, Lithuania by The Caravan Gallery, Format Festival, Derby 2017.

Over the years, through an evolving, dynamic and versatile approach, The Caravan Gallery has pioneered a ground-breaking form of socially engaged practice. From early beginnings close to home in Portsmouth and then all over the UK, to projects in Japan, Belgium, Germany, China and Lithuania, The Caravan Gallery has explored the possibilities of photography as a tool to record everyday life, to encourage social interaction and engagement with art, and to inspire and connect communities through sharing stories and images.

#### **Refining a practice: research, presentation and assessment.**

In the late 1990s, in the years before The Caravan Gallery, Jan Williams' studio



Fig.11, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 4



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from tourist brochures that satirized and highlighted the often absurd claims of such promotional literature. Eventually Williams' process of manipulating existing photographic imagery to make new constructed realities shifted and she began to use photomontage and then Photoshop to create images featuring surreal or irreverent situations that appeared to occur in everyday life.<sup>5</sup> But from frequent people-watching and noticing odd coincidences happening around her, Williams arrived at the opinion that daily life offered moments that were bizarre and funny enough without artistic intervention. From this position she began taking straight photographs and using them to make prints and postcards, in reference to the tradition of British picture postcards. This work was a precursor for the first collaborative works that Williams and Teasdale made together as The Caravan Gallery.



Bank Holiday Britain postcard

Critiquing postcards with idealized tourist images captioned "Wish you were here,"  
The Caravan Gallery began to take photographs of what seaside Britain really looked



Fig.12, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 5

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On the success of this exhibition, in the same year The Caravan Gallery was invited to exhibit at Aspex Gallery in Portsmouth.<sup>7</sup> As well as a selection of their photographs taken around the city, The Caravan Gallery also introduced a participatory element to their exhibition whereby gallery visitors were invited to complete audience surveys. Visitors were asked simple questions about themselves, their close relationships, family, friends and neighborhoods, as well as what they liked to do in their leisure time. When completed questionnaires were displayed in the gallery alongside The Caravan Gallery photographs, the result was a fascinating and diverse arrangement of visual images and anecdotal details about the Portsmouth community. The positive responses to these early exhibition projects galvanized Williams and Teasdale, and in the following years The Caravan Gallery presented exhibition projects at various locations around the UK and began to experiment with different types of participatory activities. They began to refine their working methods through a series of steps involving *research*, *presentation* and *assessment*. This remains the core of their practice today.



<https://medium.com/exposure-magazine/doing-things-with-people-rather-than-at-them-the-caravan-gallery-49b4f5ed0dce>

6/21

Fig.13, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 6



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When working in a particular location, Williams and Teasdale complete a recce of the area over a period of days and weeks, and do so without a script. Their approach is part flâneur, part social geographer: “we totally immerse ourselves in locations, walking for hours and miles, driving through and around places, all the while attempting to capture a sense of place in the photographs we take.”<sup>8</sup> And while using guidebooks and tourist literature to determine “designated” landmarks or places of interest in the area, they also act on personal recommendations from people they meet casually through daily social interactions to guide their initial explorations.

Often The Caravan Gallery find themselves responding to communities and urban landscapes where regeneration and great social change is occurring. Here they are privy to poignant moments in time when layers of local history are laid bare; where built environments are about to be demolished or landscapes exist as liminal wastelands of in-between times. As psychogeographers they map their journeys with the camera and notebook. No location is without interest. Williams and Teasdale are connoisseurs of edgelands, or places that suggest the boundaries of urbanization; the soft estate between town and country.<sup>9</sup> Their dérives and wanderings capture the overlooked and almost out of sight; parking lots are just as interesting as civic monuments in the forgotten Britain that they reveal.



Fig.14, Sara-Jayne Parsons, “‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery.” *Medium*, December 15, 2019,7



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No Idea, Liverpool, 2013.

From this exploratory position, Williams and Teasdale are able to build up a preliminary series of images that form the basis of their introductory exhibition in The Caravan Gallery at the location site. They present images that reflect a range of perspectives on the area including recognizable landscape views or alternative perspectives on clichéd landmarks or architecture, as well as closer observations that detail local cuisine, language or a distinct activity. Upon opening the exhibition, Williams and Teasdale welcome visitors and act as hosts, giving tours and encouraging discussion, such that The Caravan Gallery becomes a hub for engagement. The artists are accessible and accountable for their work in the exhibition space; their photographs function as a catalyst for conversations about the area, and significantly, lead visitors to reflect on aspects of local identity. The images are thought-provoking and sometimes help people see their home anew. Visitors are also asked to complete surveys to help The Caravan Gallery research the area and think about locations that



Fig.15, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 8



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Extraordinary entrance, Birkenhead 2013.



Fig.16, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 9





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about other places to visit or things to photograph. Through listening and obtaining survey information, Williams and Teasdale create new photographs which are then added to their exhibition which expands over days into a richer presentation of the location. Throughout the process their interactions with the public are guided by the following broad goals: to expose people to new experiences and ways of looking; to empower people in finding or expressing their own creativity and being involved in, or contributing to, art-making; and, to find ways to break down barriers to engaging with contemporary art.<sup>10</sup>

An additional and significant aspect of The Caravan Gallery's output began in these early years with the production of their first publication, *Welcome to Britain: A Celebration of Real Life*, published by Headline Book Publishing in 2005. Featuring over 500 color images the book presents photographs by The Caravan Gallery from all over the UK grouped under everyday subject headings such as "Dogs," "Amusements" or "Shop Displays." This collective showcase acts simultaneously as a souvenir, an alternative tourist guide, and as a type of archive or album of British life in the new millennium.<sup>11</sup>

### Contextualizing The Caravan Gallery

The new approach to social documentary photography that matured in Britain in post-World War II decades rejected forthright anthropological concerns and the remnants of 19th century social documentary traditions driven by an agenda for social reform. Instead, influenced by street photography practices and moving away from photojournalist endeavors, some fine art photographers sought expression for a more personal, subjective interpretation of daily life. An understanding of this shift informs and situates work of The Caravan Gallery, which navigates a liminal space between objective and subjective concerns. While the ambition of their mission evokes the scale and attention to detail of the efforts of *Mass Observation*, their approach is much more intimate and inclusive.<sup>12</sup>

Practical social documentary precedents for the approach of The Caravan Gallery can be perceived in the work of, for example, Shirley Baker, Vanley Burke, Chris Killip or



Fig.17, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 10



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work is often positioned — albeit wrongly — within the genre of social documentary but who use photography declaratively for creative purposes. Both offer an ambiguous cultural critique of modern day Britain while simultaneously exploring formal and aesthetic concerns in photography. Their candid style of street photography displays a subjective resonance and is a long way from the quantitative and anthropological methodology of *Mass Observation*.

Echoes of Parr's practice, particularly his concern for color and texture, and his penchant for the quirky and humorous side of everyday life, can be witnessed in many of The Caravan Gallery's photographs. Wood's influence is a little more indirect. With a reputation for deep engagement over long periods of time his photographs often relay a sense of trust from his subjects that displays a quiet compassion. Ordinary things are important to him and the people in his photographs are very obviously his subject. He knows them and they have come to know him. Certainly the efforts of The Caravan Gallery in building relationships with their subjects and engaging audiences to tell their own stories is reminiscent of Wood's modest, humanist approach. But their practice extends beyond purely photographic or documentary concerns and reflects an overlap and dialogue with contemporary art strategies which seek to improve or draw attention to particular communities or social issues.

Socially engaged practice can best be described as having developed from a series of new strands of public art, performance and activism/consciousness-raising reaching back to the 1970s, to more recent ideas borne of artist participation and collaboration activities in the early 1990s.<sup>13</sup> It refers to a post-studio social context for thinking about art and audiences, and it can occur in a variety of real and virtual locations. Essentially the practice involves an artist engaging with people through social interaction and discourse. It is a collaborative experience that can be participatory, performative or discursive, involving groups of people and communities and sometimes the development of outreach and educational programs. Often artists will work for long periods of time in a particular environment, and their connection may revolve around a set of questions or challenges facing the community. In this way, sometimes the artist is both a partner and protagonist in finding solutions or affecting positive change; something the ethos of The Caravan Gallery strongly reflects.



Fig.18, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "'Doing things with people rather than at them.' The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 11



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she encouraged collaborators to use cameras to record themselves, their families and communities, and to articulate their aspirations and fears.<sup>14</sup> Ewald's vision led to a significant collaboration with Jo Spence and Terry Dennett in co-founding Half Moon Photography Workshop in 1975.<sup>15</sup> As well as a gallery and journal publication, the organization also facilitated educational workshops and provided professional advice on using photography in the context of community politics, with a view to encouraging local grassroots activism.<sup>16</sup>

Years later Spence collaborated with Rosy Martin to develop 'Photo-Therapy,' which used photography to create personal narratives using techniques adopted from counselling. Photo-Therapy allowed the "subject" to take control over their own representation. It also, importantly, pointed the way to other exploratory ways to use photography in a social context, for example, in the area of health education. Both Ewald and Spence's work has been credited with contributing to the development of Photovoice, a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. Essentially, the process allows for story telling through participatory and collaborative means.<sup>17</sup>

Outside of these London-based initiatives socially engaged practices in photography have been somewhat isolated and formal education opportunities for artists in the UK interested in this field have been few and far between until fairly recently. There are now several postgraduate courses in the UK that are specifically designated for the medium of photography, including the University of Salford (M.A. degree in Socially Engaged Photography Practice with Community Experience) and Coventry University (M.A. degree in Photography and Collaboration). The timeliness of such avenues of study could be understood as a critical response to the medium, to question the canon of photography and equip emerging photographers with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop a genuine and energetic expanded documentary practice which allows for multiple, collective voices.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly it appears that some challenges remain for photographers wishing to engage in a socially engaged practice, particularly around questions of authorship, visual aesthetics, ethics, and the question of how to evaluate success in this expanded context.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly such concerns are also magnified in the age of multiple digital



Fig.19, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 12



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arts in diverse and underrepresented communities have also informed their work. To Williams and Teasdale, a socially engaged practice means “doing things with people rather than at them” and they express skepticism at recent trends, echoing some of the concerns outlined above:

*“The term [socially engaged practice] has become so ubiquitous that it has become rather meaningless. We believe it’s about having good, honest conversations with people, being genuinely interested in what they say and do, not making presumptions about people and places, empathizing, being prepared to listen and learn, making real human connections and not treating people like commodities, exhibits or zoo animals.”<sup>21</sup>*

### Picturing Place



Fig.20, Sara-Jayne Parsons, “‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery.” *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 13



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and began using empty shops as a pop-up venue and extension of their activities. As such, the "[Pride of Place Project](#)" has now become one of the major models for how The Caravan Gallery connects with audiences for participatory activities in different locations. Initially the idea for the "Pride of Place Project" came from the solution to a practical problem when SPACE Gallery at the University of Portsmouth was unable to financially support the artists in the production of an exhibition. Williams and Teasdale suggested as an alternative to payment that they would show their photographs in half of the gallery, while the rest of the space would be occupied by work made local people in collaboration with and in response to the work of The Caravan Gallery.<sup>22</sup>



Preston Pride of Place Project participants in commemorative publication 2016.

The practical arrangement corresponded to the philosophical position of The Caravan Gallery, which had been moving to this position for some years. Williams and Teasdale had been witnessed great enthusiasm in their audiences who expressed a desire to join in with their creative explorations of place, but the scale of the caravan prevented this to a degree. The addition of a pop-up temporary space met the desire to accommodate the contributions of a larger audience and ambitions of Williams and Teasdale around the scope of engagement and inclusiveness. Indeed The Caravan Gallery has now successfully used the format of the "Pride of Place Project" on numerous occasions at various sites in the UK, as well as in Belgium and [Lithuania](#), and have welcomed thousands of visitors since 2011.<sup>23</sup> In any iteration of the project, a common defining factor is that photography plays significant and integral role as a documentary medium or an interpretive device.



Fig.21, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 14



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Sandwell Pride of Place Project visitors, exhibition contributions, and wall of images by The Caravan Gallery, Blast! Festival 2019.

For Williams and Teasdale the goals of the “Pride of Place Project” revolve around creating closer partnerships to establish a deeper collaboration with local people in the making of their exhibitions. Building on from their established practice, they recognize the importance of creating a unique social space where people can meet, share, make and display their art work or creative contributions to the project. A pop-up space also allows the artists to create situations to develop camaraderie through hospitality, by hosting celebratory events that bring together a wide range of people, for example, from regular participants and neighboring shopkeepers, to community activists and local government officials.

Alongside an evolving exhibition of their own photographs made ahead of time in the area as a catalyst for discussion, Williams and Teasdale add a series of activities to each “Pride of Place Project” which invite direct contributions from the public. These



Fig.22, Sara-Jayne Parsons, “‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery.” *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 15



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make their own display about their town; "The Creation Zone," for drop-in workshops hosted by local artists or writers that focus on writing and storytelling using photographs; a place for local souvenir making and display; "Photography Competitions" based on an open-call for place-specific photographs; and of course, a visitor survey. Williams and Teasdale also offer the pop-up space as a platform to local residents, artists, writers, historians or musicians who wish to respond to the area and host their own events.

Collectively, all the activities that take place under the umbrella of the "Pride of Place Project" coalesce around questions of identity, self-representation, community, memory and aspiration, which, when explored creatively, produce material that ultimately reveals the spirit of a place. To capture this (the process and the results), all avenues of engagement in a "Pride of Place Project" are documented and published in book form by The Caravan Gallery to provide an archive of the project.<sup>24</sup> The publication also acts as an alternative tourist information guide for future visitors to the location. But the artists don't see the end of the project as a door closing, but rather that creative engagement will continue without them; that their pop-up model will inspire others and provide a platform for local artists. Ultimately, they hope that community cohesion will bring new collaborations and artistic initiatives.<sup>25</sup>

Understanding the model of The Caravan Gallery's "Pride of Place Project" in its practical application is useful and highlights a particular development in social documentary practices in post-millennium Britain. At the same time, further reflection on the role of photography in remembering and (re)presenting place by participants demonstrates some of the mechanisms by which collective cultural memory is revealed. Their use of photography is manifold throughout their engagement in the project. Participants begin by viewing exhibition photographs made by The Caravan Gallery from initial research attempts. The act of viewing can elicit a response in the participants which, through discussion with the artists, may be revealed as a memory relating to the subjects depicted or the recall of things forgotten. From this moment, participants can continue sharing, within their range of comfort, to where they make or contribute their own photographs and materials to the exhibition. Significantly, at this point the authorship of the "Pride of Place Project" passes from The Caravan Gallery to the participants. Williams and Teasdale's use of photography in multiple



Fig.23, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 16







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<sup>9</sup> Farley Paul and Michael Symmons Roberts. *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale. "The Caravan Gallery," University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas, February 19, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> After this initial publication, Williams and Teasdale began to publish their own books, beginning with the follow-on series *Is Britain Great?* which was published by Apex Gallery, Portsmouth to accompany the exhibition of the same name in 2006. Volume 2 was published by The Caravan Gallery alone in 2009, and volume 3 was published by The Caravan Gallery in association with Cornerhouse, Manchester in 2011. An exhibition of works from volume 3 toured to Paul Smith Space, Tokyo, Japan. Significantly it is worth remembering that outside of London there are very few photography-specific commercial galleries or opportunities for photographers to sell their work unless they are working within a photojournalistic arena. In this context, it is not surprising that the creative engagement of The Caravan Gallery extends to its entrepreneurial activities. Certainly, in the early 2000s, as the development of digital technologies led to a revolution in self-publishing through online platforms, The Caravan Gallery's publications were part of the revolution that transformed the photo-book tradition in the UK. As well as selling their books through their website, The Caravan Gallery also essentially act as their own distributors as they move around the country.

<sup>12</sup> Launched in 1937 with the goal of creating a visual anthropological record of Britain, *Mass Observation* involved a team of objective observers and volunteer writers who studied and recorded the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain, through diaries, reports and photographs. Resulting materials were collected and presented through numerous books and reports, and were generally regarded as a scientific but popular resource for evaluating public opinion and social trends. There was no visual precedent for such a widespread and ambitious, domestic documentary survey of this nature in Britain. Although now regarded as a classic collection of photographs, the legacy of *Mass Observation* has received mixed attention by photo historians and much of the material it produced has since mostly been regarded as problematic or has been entirely neglected by postmodern anthropologists. The remit of creating "an



Fig.25, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 18



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minority subjects were viewed as a type of exotic species. Harrison, Madge and Jennings, "Anthropology at Home," *New Statesman*, January 30, 1937, 155; Frizzell, Deborah, *Humphrey Spender's Humanist Landscapes: Photo-Documents, 1932-42*. New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1997, 24-27; MacClancy, Jeremy, "Mass Observation, Surrealism, Social Anthropology: a present-day assessment," *New Formations*, Autumn 2001, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012, 1-9; Jacob, Mary Jane. *Culture in action: a public art program of Sculpture Chicago*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995, 10-13; Lacy, Suzanne, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1994, 19-46.

<sup>14</sup> In the U.S. Ewald also created "Literacy through Photography" in 1989, a program that teaches children how to take photographs and write about their lives. It is still in operation in several locations across the U.S., including Houston where it is homed with FotoFest, the international photography festival, and reaches over 1000 public school children.

<sup>15</sup> Bertrand, Mathilde. *The Half Moon Photography Workshop and Camerawork: catalysts in the British photographic landscape (1972-1985)* in *Photography and Culture*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2018, 9.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth remembering that at this time Spence was also a founding member of the *Hackney Flashers*, a collective of artists who used photography to document the invisible work of women in and outside of the home to highlight social and economic issues facing contemporary women.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment," *Health Education & Behavior* 24, 3 (June 1997): 369.

<sup>18</sup> Turnbull, Gemma-Rose. "Surface Tension. Navigating Socially Engaged Documentary Photographic Practices." *Nordicom Review* 36 (2015) pp. 79-95. Turnbull suggests that because socially engaged practice in photography doesn't fit the canon of documentary photography, a contemporary socially engaged practice appears



Fig.26, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 19



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<sup>19</sup> Turnbull, Gemma-Rose. "Surface Tension. Navigating Socially Engaged Documentary Photographic Practices." *Nordicom Review* 36 (2015) pp. 79–95; Orpana, J. "Turning the world "inside out": Situating JR's wish within cultures of participation." *RACAR*, 39(1), 73–75.

<sup>20</sup> Turnbull, Gemma-Rose. "Surface Tension. Navigating Socially Engaged Documentary Photographic Practices." *Nordicom Review* 36 (2015) pp. 79–95; Luvera, A. Residency. *Photographies*, Vol. 3, Iss. 2, (Sep 2010): 225.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Williams, email communication with the author, March 29, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Teasdale, email communication, March 29, 2018. [Portsmouth Pride of Place Project](#)

<sup>23</sup> The [Pride of Place Project National Tour 2014–2016](#) evolved from The Caravan Gallery's approach designed to connect and encourage crossover between art and non-art audiences and in formal and informal venues. This multi-city UK tour presented six iterations and welcomed nearly 14,000 visitors. Partner arts organizations in this tour received an additional 49,000 visitors. Fowler, Mandy. *Arts Council England Strategic Touring Grant Evaluation: The Caravan Gallery, Pride of Place Project*, 2017, 5. In the [Sandwell Pride of Place Project](#) which was recently commissioned by Multistory for Blast! Festival 2019, The Caravan Gallery took over a former Poundland shop for 6 weeks attracting over 200 visitors a day. This short [BBC Midlands Today TV feature](#) celebrates The Caravan Gallery's biggest and most ambitious project to date.

<sup>24</sup> The Caravan Gallery also uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to document "Pride of Place Projects" and provide a virtual archive of their activities alongside the publication.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Williams, email communication, March 29, 2018. It is also important to note that all items donated by the public to a "Pride of Place Project" are archived and stored by the artists for retrospective use.

<sup>26</sup> Fowler, Mandy. *Arts Council England Strategic Touring Grant Evaluation: The Caravan Gallery, The Pride of Place Project*, 2017, 19–23.



Fig.27, Sara-Jayne Parsons, "‘Doing things with people rather than at them.’ The Caravan Gallery." *Medium*, December 15, 2019, 20

## APPENDIX 8

Documentation of my relationship with artist Tanya Habjouqa and the exhibition *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, March 4 – May 14, 2017, includes:

- Scanned pages including curatorial essay and artist pages for Tanya Habjouqa, from exhibition catalogue *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013
- *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators* curatorial text available as a handout for visitors in the galleries
- An interview with RAWIYA artists Tanya Habjouqa and Tasneem Alsultan can be viewed here on the Art Galleries at TCU YouTube page: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPhDEULLLs&t=51s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPhDEULLLs&t=51s)



Fig.1, Front cover, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013

## I exist (in some way)

The idea for an exhibition often begins with a question, and from that kernel of investigation, observation and curiosity drive a need to make a visual riposte or articulate a series of possible answers. *I exist (in some way)* is firmly rooted in this explorative landscape.

Responding to the theme of LOOK/13 – “Who do you think you are?” – the exhibition presents a platform of subjective reflection. It explores the process of self-determination through physical, psychological and sociological means. The participating artists might all have asked themselves this key question at one time or another; certainly, their works, in the most immediate sense, elicit a cacophony of responses: I am a mother. I am gay. I am one of many. I am utopian. I am a man. I am a bodybuilder. I am beautiful. I am Muslim. I am a feminist.

From this initial query, a web of secondary questions can also be spun. *When looking in the mirror, what does the reflection of my body say about me? What is the biology of my representation? What do I really look like? How and why is identity determined through history and memory? What is my autobiography and how did I construct it? Who do I believe I am? How do the roles of gender, myth or tradition affect who I am? What do my relationships say about me? How do personal choices and gestures through dress, behavior or social media define me? Who do you think I am?*

To place this ever-widening matrix of questions over the human geography of the Arab world is a fascinating and timely act, although admittedly, some critics might argue that an examination of identity politics in this way is outdated or irrelevant. However, one imagines that in the months and years following the Arab Spring an investigation of “self” by artists could be a prescient way of negotiating, documenting and understanding a changing social landscape where “self” is a community or city, and sometimes ‘me’ is actually ‘we’. In this vein, *I exist (in some way)* presents new ways of seeing, but also recontextualizes what might be regarded as older or established means of critique.

An investigation of gender is one such an example. **George Awde** and **Tanya Habjouqa** examine masculinity and the male body, presenting atypical images that defy stereotyping which comes from a limited narrative historically linking Arab men to the arena of war and violence. Awde’s *Shifting Grounds* series strives to capture homo-social spaces that act as an outlet for male bonding and love. His work encapsulates a particular moment of masculinity with an emphasis on youth, and more specifically coming-of-age, as a main trajectory of what it means to be(come) a man in the Levant.

Hadjouqa’s *Fragile Monsters* presents an alternate view of supersized contestants at the 17th annual Arab Body Building Championship held in Amman, Jordan. The images reveal surprisingly tender moments among the men during competition; some participants cry or faint with stress, others cover up their insecurities with spray tan. Ultimately, Habjouqa recognises that the men are simply performing to achieve their dreams.

Fig.2, Curatorial essay, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013, 4

**Boushra Almutawakel** explores gender through overlapping viewpoints – as a mother, a Muslim and a Yemeni woman. Her photographs draw attention to stereotypes that surround the representation of contemporary Muslim women, from considering the hijab or veil as a form of self-expression, to commenting on gender roles through use of clothing traditionally worn by men or Fulla dolls.<sup>1</sup>

But what if the context of your daily life as a Muslim woman is outside of the traditionally recognised Arab World? How, for instance, does your life change when you convert to Islam in Western Europe? Originally appearing in the magazine *Le Monde de Religions*, **Laura Boushnak's** photographs document the everyday lives of a group of French Muslim women. Ranging in age from 18 to 80, their personal situations are captured in a series of daily activities.

For other artists, questions about identity rest upon the topography of the face, rather than in the consideration of gender or religion. **Hicham Benhoud's** classic black and white self-portraits are like tortured mug-shots. Using simple objects, such as slips of paper, stickers, thread, pieces of plastic foam, stones or elastic bands, Benhoud explicitly transforms his own identity to create a sense of tension between convention and peculiarity, suggesting a range of emotions that he might experience.

In similar ways, **Lamyra Gargash** modifies the look of her portrait sitters, although unlike Benhoud using more sophisticated means. In her series *Through the Looking Glass*, Gargash considers the relationship between identity and perception, self-reflection and criticism. Do we view ourselves through distorted mirrors? How 'should' we look? Through the conduit of the diptych and the use of artificial prosthetics, Gargash accentuates what sitters perceive as slight imperfections. Her photographs ask: if by trying to attain ideal standards of beauty as suggested by the media and consumer society, are our goals of perfectionism affecting our self-esteem and mental well-being?

For some artists the answer to the question "Who do you think you are?" entails an examination of a personal history or landscape. For **Nathalie Kardjiane** this occurs upon the death of her uncle in the context of civil war in Syria in April 2012. Filming her experiences on her return to her family home in Homs for his funeral, Kardjiane muses on the fact the city is renowned for being the butt of jokes. In the same way that the Irish have been stereotyped in comedy, so too is el-Homs, the man from Homs. Now however, Kardjiane's hometown is no joke; Homs has become a scene of violence and tragedy, with a population of refugees. As viewers learn from Kardjiane's video, the experience leaves her emotionally homeless.

A desire to explore the essence of a personal, cultural identity also occupies **Laura El-Tantawy**. In her ongoing project, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids*, she documents contemporary Egypt from a perspective guided by her childhood memories. Beginning in 2005, the project spans a period including the last five years of Hosni Mubarak's rule as Prime Minister, to the revolution. Significantly El-Tantawy's portraits taken in Tahrir Square and surrounding streets during the pro-democracy demonstrations provide an alternative view of Egyptians to that largely disseminated by world media.

Fig.3, Curatorial essay, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013, 5

Isolating single faces in the large crowds, and in intense close-up, her subjects reveal a collective passion in the fight for democracy.

Photographing in the street is also key to the work of **Hichem Driss**, one of six photographers involved in the project *Inside Out: Artocracy in Tunisia*. During 2011 he travelled throughout Tunisia capturing portraits that illustrated the diverse society and landscape of his post-revolutionary home. The portraits were then archived and made available online, but more interestingly, the photographs were reproduced as black and white posters and displayed in the communities where they originated. Through this simple process, Driss and other Tunisian photographers regained control of their streets, where for decades only portraits of dictatorial rulers were displayed.

While Driss populates a new vision of Tunisia in a tangible way, **Larissa Sansour** presents a conceptual solution to Palestinian statehood in *Nation Estate*. Through a series of photographs she asks, what if Palestinians formed their state as a single, huge skyscraper; a building big enough to house the entire population? Each city would have its own floor and movement between cities would be facilitated by a checkpoint-free elevator. Sansour's construction includes significant reconstructions of historic meeting places and landmarks.

**Issa Touma** also explores the inextricable relationship of people, politics and place, and for decades has documented contemporary life in Syria. In his *Dancing for the Big Father*, (1995–2002) Touma portrays a landscape populated by images of the President, and as such draws attention to the inherent rhetorical power of photography. What are the effects of living with these images? How do they inform who you think you are? Do citizens feel they are watched over by an omnipresent benevolent leader, or constantly surveyed by a malicious dictator? The answers to such questions may depend on the democratic experience of your being.

The title for this exhibition was inspired by the words of Touma. In a catalogue for a recent show at the Victoria and Albert Museum (*Light from the Middle East*, 2012) he was asked by the curator Marta Weiss if he described his work as political? Touma replied, "everything in the Middle East can be political if you have censorship. They do not like the freedom I have, but they also do not have much choice. I exist in some way. They cannot cancel me, so they need to accept me."<sup>2</sup>

Touma's insistence on being is infused with ambiguity and uncertainty. It is a beguiling position that invites careful consideration of the corporeal and the conceptual. If ultimately we believe identity is not fixed in time and place, then what "ways" of being are possible? *I exist (in some way)* attempts to start answering that very question.

**Sara-Jayne Parsons — Exhibitions Curator at the Bluecoat**

<sup>1</sup> A popular Islamic version of the iconic Barbie doll, the Fulla doll comes with a headscarf, abaya, long underwear, and a myriad of accessories such as a prayer mat or CD player.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss, Marta & Venetia Porter. *Light from the Middle East: New Photography*. London: Steidl / V&A, 2012, p.151.

Fig.4, Curatorial essay, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013,7



**Tanya Habjouqa**

From the series *Fragile Monsters: Arab Body Building*, 2009, with kind permission of the artist and New Art Exchange, Nottingham

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Fig.5, Tanya Habjouqa, artist page, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013, 22





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Fig.6, Tanya Habjouqa, artist page, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013, 23

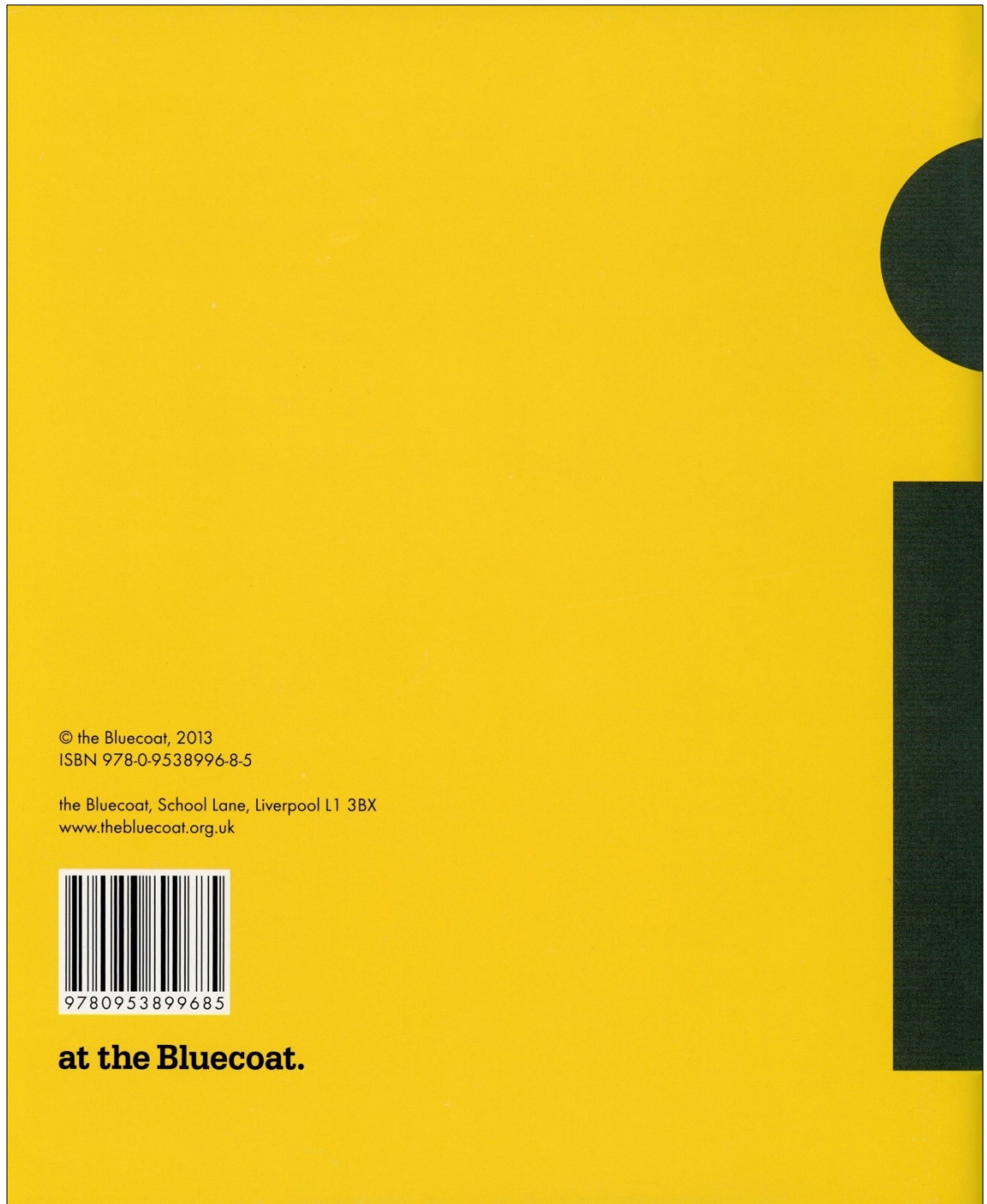


Fig.7, Back cover, *I exist (in some way)*, the Bluecoat, 2013



Fig.8, An image from Tanya Habjouqa's "Fragile Monsters" series installed as an exterior window vinyl at the Bluecoat for *I exist (in some way)*, 2013

## **RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators** Fort Worth Contemporary Arts

March 4 – May 13, 2017



Translated from Arabic as “she/he who tells a story,” RAWIYA originally formed in 2009 as an all-female photography collective. By sharing resources and networks, the members aim to strengthen and expand the reach of their work which energetically engages in an international dialogue around human rights and social justice. As a group of documentary photographers from across the Middle East, often with day jobs in journalism or a commercial context, the members use the platform of the collective to investigate social and political stories they feel are invisible, and as a means to explore more personal creative practices. RAWIYA’s presentation includes work by **Myriam Abdelaziz, Tamara Abdul Hadi, Tasneem Alsultan, Laura Boushnak, Tanya Habjouqa** and new collective member **Zied Ben Romdhane**.

**We Do Not Choose Our Dictators** features a selection of photographic works by RAWIYA that respond to and reflect the daily lives of people affected by political upheaval in the Middle East. In attempting to negotiate, document and understand a swiftly changing social landscape, the photographers present new ways of seeing and recontextualize what might be regarded as older or established means of critique. Often their investigations employ humor and irony, while at other times their work is emotive and controversial. From covering conflicts on the front line to documenting quieter instances of political resistance connected to gender, labor or land ownership, RAWIYA’s photographs collectively reveal subtleties of contemporary life in the Middle East that are surprising and life-affirming.

This is RAWIYA’s first exhibition in Texas and the timing is significant. Since 2010, from popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria, to protests and strikes throughout Turkey in 2013, the Middle East has experienced a major geopolitical shift which has further affected peace and stability in the region. The photographers are experienced witnesses and well-informed narrators of resistance and social change in this environment.

Many observers hoped this period of unrest would result in a period of political and social reform, where more democratic and open societies could develop. Indeed several authoritarian leaders were removed from power, such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, or at least challenged, including Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad. But in the months and years following what was popularly called the “Arab Spring” it has become apparent that human rights are still under attack across the region. The Syrian conflict has created the largest refugee crisis of the 21st century: the United Nations and Amnesty International report that over 250,000 people have been killed and 11 million have been forced from their homes since 2011.

In the USA these humanitarian concerns have been brought into tighter focus over the last few weeks with the introduction of a travel ban (Executive Order: protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States, January 27, 2017). This political directive has had a direct impact on the lives of many foreign nationals from the Middle East who are in the process of emigrating to or simply visiting the US; in many cases individuals who have been in a process of vetting by Homeland Security, the US State Department and other agencies for nearly two years. The emotional and financial burden for families effected through detention and separation is not insubstantial.

At TCU students, faculty and staff responded to the travel ban with a peaceful protest march on February 2, which, with nearly 400 people, was estimated to be one of the largest political protests in school history. With banners, chants and speeches, participants championed cultural diversity on campus and showed solidarity with international students and minority communities, calling for an end to discrimination and xenophobic rhetoric. The Art Galleries at TCU are excited to invite RAWIYA to Fort Worth at this extraordinary moment in history.

Sara-Jayne Parsons  
Director, The Art Galleries at TCU

Fig 9., Curatorial text for gallery visitors to *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, 2017



## APPENDIX 9

Documentation of exhibition programming in the Art Galleries at TCU after the presentation of *RAWIYA: We Do Not Choose Our Dictators* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts in Spring 2017 includes installation images of the following:

- *Finding Fanon* (2017), a film installation by UK-based artists Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, inspired by the lost plays of Frantz Fanon, whose writing investigated the psychological effects of colonization and the social and cultural consequences of decolonization. The artists examined Fanon's ideas, and considered how society, race and racism affect our relationships with each other in a posthuman age of new technology, pop culture and globalization.
- *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan* (2017), featured a selection of prints, sculptures, textiles, archival material and other performative objects used by the artist to reflect on her Indian-Iranian-Afghani heritage as well as her experience growing up in Texas. Inspired by writers such as Frantz Fanon and Jean Genet, Khan's work explored intersecting aspects of her lived experience: as a Muslim, an artist and a femme person of colour.
- *Black Borders: Artists of Color, Reframing Culture* (2018), featured new video works and installations that both embraced and challenged notions of what it is to be a contemporary artist and a person of colour. The exhibition considered a creative practice by people of colour that was independent and unapologetic, rejecting notions that an artist of colour should only engage in the context of "a role model" or being a voice for their race or gender. Featured artists included Amir George, Erika DeFreitas, and Anansi kNOwBody, and the exhibition was guest curated by Texas artist, curator and writer Christopher Blay.
- *Gendersick* (2018), a film by Jordan Baseman commissioned by the Art Galleries at TCU made in collaboration with a graduate student from Texas Christian University. Using interview audio and 16mm film shot around Fort Worth, Baseman's film *gendersick* is a personal account of the experiences of a TCU student. The film provides a brief glimpse into the life of an asexual and agender person. *gendersick* may be viewed through the artist's website: [www.jordanbaseman.co.uk/work/gendersick/](http://www.jordanbaseman.co.uk/work/gendersick/)



Fig.1, Installation view, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiamong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.2, Installation view, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiamong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.3, Installation detail, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.4, Installation detail, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)





Fig.5, Installation detail, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.6, Installation view, *Finding Fanon*, featuring Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.7, Installation view, *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan*, Moudy Gallery, August 2017  
(Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.8, Installation view, *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan*, Moudy Gallery, August 2017  
(Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.9, Installation detail, *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan*, Moudy Gallery, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.10, Installation details, *Iamuslima: Baseera Khan*, Moudy Gallery, August 2017 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.11, Installation view, *Black Borders: Artists of Color, Reframing Culture*, featuring Amir George, Erika DeFreitas, and Anansi kNOwBody, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, March 2018 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.12, Installation detail, *Black Borders: Artists of Color, Reframing Culture*, featuring Amir George, Erika DeFreitas, and Anansi kNOwBody, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, March 2018 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.13, Installation detail, *Black Borders: Artists of Color, Reframing Culture*, featuring Amir George, Erika DeFreitas, and Anansi kNOWBody, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, March 2018 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)



Fig.14, Installation view, *gendersick* by Jordan Baseman, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, October 2018 (Photography credit: Lynné Bowman Cravens)

## APPENDIX 10

Documentation of *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, August 24 – September 29, 2018, includes:

- *Flâneuse* curatorial text available as a handout for visitors in the galleries

## FLÂNEUSE

featuring Martha Cooper, Alicia Eggert, Retha Ferguson,  
Laura Grace Ford, Roxane Huilmand, Cristina de Middel,  
Alicia Paz & Tuesday Smillie

Fort Worth Contemporary Arts  
August 24 – September 29, 2018



*Flâneuse* is a group exhibition featuring eight international artists whose work draws attention to the role of gender in contemporary urban experience. Through a variety of media the artists explore a diverse array of concerns about street life. The overlapping themes they address include history, memory, social justice, personal safety, public protest, physical movement, and commodity culture. Taking the traditional idea of the “flâneur” as a point of departure, the exhibition highlights key themes from ongoing scholarly debate about the appropriateness or indeed the existence of the female equivalent, the “flâneuse.”

The nineteenth-century art critic Charles Baudelaire coined the term “flâneur” in his essay “The Painter of Modern Life.” A man with means and time enough to wander through city streets, without aim and without calling attention to himself, the flâneur was an urban explorer. Regarded as an aesthete and a literary figure, he was celebrated as a significant observer of contemporary life. Flânerie or idle strolling was made possible by male privilege and until recently scholars have mostly dismissed the idea of a flâneuse in the context of the nineteenth-century when it was indeed difficult for women to be in public spaces without a chaperone. If women were on the street alone they were likely considered poor or prostitutes.

But does the idea of the “flâneuse” make sense in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The artists in this exhibition document street life and use their experiences and research for creative purposes that reflect their observations. The modern flâneuse is found in the psychogeographer who considers walking or urban drifting as a way to explore built environments and suggest a sense of place. Day-dreaming or what Virginia Woolf called “street haunting” is part of their artistic practice, for unlike the traditional idle flâneur, all of them are professional, working women.

The act of flânerie has evolved and for these artists it is something more dynamic, active and liberating, reflective of the agency women now have in public spaces. Instead of the aimless flâneur, the flâneuse is someone to be reckoned with. That said, the wandering path of the “flâneuse” is still a problematic and sometimes dangerous endeavor. Urban strolling means accepting and sometimes transgressing accepted codes of city space. The freedom of the contemporary flâneuse to window-shop, loiter or soak up street life is complicated by concerns for personal safety, from uncomfortable incidents of anti-social behavior and sexual harassment, to violent acts of rape and assault. The collective voice found in *Flâneuse* openly acknowledges such issues and attempts to ask questions about how to make a safer, more equitable future for women.

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### ARTISTS

Since the early 1980s, starting out as a staff photographer at the New York Post, **Martha Cooper** has photographed the graffiti scene in the US and around the world. Her 1984 book, *Subway Art* (written with Henry Chalfant) has become recognized as the “bible for graffiti artists.” For decades Cooper has documented the work of female graffiti artists, such as Lady Pink (nicknamed the ‘first lady of graffiti’ renown for painting New York City subway trains in the 1980s), whose work was often overlooked in what was a predominantly male practice. Cooper remains an avid critic and advocate for graffiti work and art in the public realm, and even now, in her 70s, is still documenting ephemeral visual street culture around the world.

**Alicia Eggert** is Sculpture Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Sculpture at the University of North Texas, Denton. She works primarily in sculpture and interactive media, many times using signage as a means of political and

Fig.1, Curatorial text and artist information handout for gallery visitors to *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, August 24 – September 29, 2018, 1

poetic comment. In the context of *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Eggert was commissioned to make a temporary, site-specific installation, responding to the TCU Campus. As such, by installing "YOU ARE HER" signs, at the Gallery and the School of Art, Eggert seeks to provoke conversations about gender identity, empathy and consent. Her use of red, black and yellow exclamation signs, worn by groups of participants in pop-up, live performances across campus for the duration of the exhibition, draws attention to the nationwide occurrence of rape and sexual assault against women on college campuses. (*Dates, times and locations of performances tbc. Please see gallery website and social media for more details.*)

South African photographer **Retha Ferguson** explores contemporary life at the intersection of place, identity and history. Her series "Voortrekker Road" reflects the transitional experience of society along a key thoroughfare leading into Cape Town. Regarded as an important location of Afrikaner Nationalism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and, more prosaically, a shopping hub for white South Africans, today the road is the site of a diverse economy and a home for foreign nationals from all over Africa and the Middle East. Shot over a period of years, Ferguson's street photographs capture the complexity of the community and highlights her role as an observer of social change.

Utilizing drawing, collage, writing, zine-making, and audio recordings, British artist **Laura Grace Ford** investigates contemporary London as a psychogeographer. By walking through the urban landscape she notes social change and reveals layers of history while creating "emotional maps" that record memories. Ford's work is part architectural critique and political comment as she focuses on overlooked spaces or edgelands, sites of urban regeneration and contested public spaces.

For Belgian dancer and choreographer **Roxane Huilmand**, the street and the notion of flanerier are brought together in a dynamic interaction between body and building. In the video "Muurwerk" (1986, directed by Wolfgang Kolb) - - which translates as "Wall Work" - - Huilmand playfully explores a back alley in Brussels. At times we see her roll in the gutter, or throw herself against the pavement and walls; the vocabulary of her movements are defiant and captivating. Huilmand is not overwhelmed by the urban environment but rather she confidently uses her body to explore, engage with and be empowered by the city.

Nigeria's largest city, Lagos is believed to be one of the most dangerous cities in Africa, and it is a bustling, economic focal point of activity that attracts thousands of business people a year. Walking is generally regarded as ill-advised and unsafe. Bullet proof cars with tinted windows are a very common means of travelling through the city, for locals and visitors alike. For Spanish photographer **Cristina de Middel** this presented a problem when trying to capture the everyday experience of the street, as she explains:

*Walking the streets of Lagos might require some preparation and portraying the city's activity in an honest and non-manipulative way is a challenge starting from the base that the presence of a camera alters the scene inevitably.*

De Middel's solution was to photograph from inside a car, utilizing the tinted windows themselves as a device to focus and frame her wanderings and exploration of the streets.

**Alicia Paz's** art reveals a vibrant interest in an eclectic mixture of genres ranging from Rococo painting and Pop Art, to Mexican surrealism. Her style is reflective of her life experiences of different cultures and spaces; she was born in Mexico, is now based in London, and has lived for long periods of time in France. Primarily a painter, her recent work has focused on the female figure, often inhabiting exotic or fantastical landscapes. In "Flâneuses," a new series of semi-sculptural works (and the inspiration for this exhibition), Paz brings her painterly women to life as collage silhouettes in a three-dimensional world. Playful and coquettish, these colorful protagonists perform simultaneously as observers, guides and provocateurs.

Brooklyn-based **Tuesday Smillie** uses watercolor, collage, and textiles as material means to explore transgender-feminist politics, often juxtaposing historic and contemporary experiences. Street protest plays a significant role in her investigations of the imprint of the past in the present. In the series "FREE OUR SIBLINGS///FREE OURSELVES," Smillie weaves together two distinct moments in time that focus on the movement for trans-justice: the Christopher Street Liberation Day protests in New York in the early the 1970s, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century protests. Here a contemporary flâneuse is witness to the collective nature of trans-activism and resistance.

Fig.2 Curatorial text and artist information handout for gallery visitors to *Flâneuse* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, August 24 – September 29, 2018, 2



## APPENDIX 11

Documentation of *Caribbean Fantasia: Raphaël Barontini*, 2020, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, 2020

- A video exhibition tour with the artist can be viewed on the Art Galleries at TCU YouTube page: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7JytNNUgCM&t=90s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7JytNNUgCM&t=90s)
- A video of the “Cowboys of Color” Parade can be viewed on the Art Galleries at TCU YouTube page: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIC4z1R9kuE&t=8s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIC4z1R9kuE&t=8s)
- *Caribbean Fantasia: Raphaël Barontini* curatorial text available as a handout for visitors in the galleries

## ***Caribbean Fantasia: Raphaël Barontini***

Fort Worth Contemporary Arts  
February 28 – May 2, 2020

THE ART  
GALLERIES  
AT TCU

Paris-based artist Raphaël Barontini uses photographic imagery on textiles to create installations that conjure spectacle, celebration and ritual. From large-scale colorful banners and flags to items of customized clothing, his vibrant printed fabric work combines pattern and portraiture that is both eye-catching and alluring. His juxtaposition of seductive surfaces - - playful fringe and tassels against silky drapery and soft leather - - creates a dynamic gallery environment that suggests performance and improvisation.

In using pre-existing imagery Barontini references the collage work of artists like Hannah Höch or Romare Bearden, and his selection of particular photographic portraits points to his ongoing investigation of African Diaspora, of people and populations overlooked or misrepresented. His work engages with and challenges dominant iconographies of colonial interests. He often draws attention to black hero figures in French history, and as such, his contemporary re-presentation of such historic images explores issues of representation and race.

Barontini is particularly influenced by processes of creolization and hybridity and the philosophies of Caribbean thinkers, such as Édouard Glissant and Stuart Hall who believed there is not a homogenous cultural identity for diasporic people. He also considers his own family history which is infused with personal experiences of participating in community parades and carnival, and tracks a path from Réunion Island (French Territory in the Indian Ocean) to the Caribbean and from Italy to Paris.

For TCU, Barontini presents an immersive panorama at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts where visitors are surrounded by large-scale fabric works, accompanied by an audio piece commissioned by hip hop musician Mike Ladd. Inspired by Barontini's research on Haitian General Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803) and other leaders of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), the exhibition engages with a precise historical moment - - the Battle of Vertières - - and the fight independence from French colonial rule. Barontini considers equestrian portraiture as a symbol of identity and power, and in the context of Fort Worth, reflects on the history of the American cowboy, or more specifically, cowboys of color. Understood in this way *Caribbean Fantasia* represents an imaginary vision of a cavalcade for freedom.

To celebrate the opening of *Caribbean Fantasia*, Barontini collaborated with the National Multicultural Western Heritage Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth and invited cowboys of color ride to Fort Worth Contemporary Arts from the TCU School of Art, located in Moudy North Building. The cowboys wore items of custom clothing created by Barontini, which, after the ride, were installed in the gallery to become part of the on-going exhibition. The parade by cowboys of color was presented by the artist as a living tribute to such figures who have been erased from history, but who should be now be reconsidered and explored.

**About the artist:** Raphaël Barontini was born in France in 1984. He studied at the Hunter College of Art in New York and graduated from Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux arts in Paris in 2009. He has exhibited work in galleries and museums throughout the world, including Brazil, France, Haiti, Mali, Morocco, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. He has also participated in international biennales in Bamako, Casablanca, Lima and Thessaloniki. The artist recently presented a solo-exhibition at SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah, GA in October 2019. Barontini is represented by The Pill in Turkey; by Espai Tactel in Spain; and by Mariane Ibrahim Gallery in Chicago, USA. While usually based in Paris, Barontini is currently living in Singapore as part of a year-long artist residency organized by LVMH, the multinational company that is home to many famous luxury brands including Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior. *Caribbean Fantasia* at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts is the artist's first exhibition in Texas. [www.raphaelbarontini.com](http://www.raphaelbarontini.com)

Fig.1, Curatorial text and artist information handout for gallery visitors to *Caribbean Fantasia*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas Christian University, Spring and Fall 2020.