

ae

Arts & Education

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Amalgum

Ben Lewis

Joseph Cartwright

Jon Purday

Meena Choda & Tim Jones

Phil Scott

Layla Fay

Benjamin Thistle

Howard Hollands

Richard Wentworth



Editorial

Henry Ward

Art is, by its very nature, educational. This publication acknowledges and celebrates this idea. Much contemporary art practice is

The art of the future may be more focused on its role as a social and educational tool.

focused on the participatory, the collaborative, the educative and the socially engaged. The historical obsession with the artifact; the object, is beginning to shift. The art of the future may be more focused on its role as a social and educational tool.

In the 1980s, during the recession under the Thatcher government, artists spotted the potential of the vacant buildings, left empty by businesses that went to the wall. Studio complexes and collectives sprung up. Exciting new gallery spaces appeared and interesting projects formed. Out of the destruction wrecked by the government in trying economic times, it was art and artists who found possibilities and opportunities. In moving into run down and neglected, and therefore extremely cheap, areas, artists spearheaded their regeneration. Once places had been

'gentrified' by artists, the businesses began to move back in, the costs went up and the artists were forced to move on elsewhere. Until now. It seems highly possible that the current economic situation will result once more in empty warehouses and shops; prime locations for innovative artistic projects.

It seems incredible that given such, relatively recent, examples of the positive impact that artists and art can have, we nonetheless have a government determined to undermine and devalue the arts. In a recent poll of MPs, asking them which subjects should be included in a new National Curriculum, alongside English, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education, only one MP stated that Music should remain and precious few more included Art on their list. The new Minister for Education; Michael Gove; has rushed through his 'English Baccalaureate': Ostensibly a drive to broaden the education of young people and surely a worthy intention. However in neglecting to include the Arts subjects in his plan

broaden the education of young people

he has downgraded them. Already many schools are questioning the need for designated Art departments and even discreet Art lessons. If the schools are to be judged on how many students achieve good passes in GCSEs in Science, English, Mathematics, a Language and History or Geography, why bother investing in subjects, such as the Arts, that will have little bearing on their future league table position.

Art in schools has the potential to bring so much. It is, by its very nature, cross-curricular. As such it lends itself to the questioning

the heart of our education system.

and exploration of so many other aspects of education and culture. The government's, apparently, narrow view of the role it can play ignores this fantastic opportunity. Instead of pushing Art to the fringes of education, instead of making it a minor subject, we should be placing it at the heart of our education system. We should be embracing it's potential for developing enquiring students, interested in the world around them; in it's history; it's culture; it's nature; and it's possibilities.

Within this publication are arguments that add flesh to the bones of these ideas. The collaboration of diverse individuals from a broad variety of perspectives allows us to investigate the potential of Art and of education. Richard Wentworth highlights the human impulse to point and the way in which this leads to drawing. He questions what drawing is, and links this to both seeing and explaining. Phil Scott writes, from his position as a teacher of Art, about the nature of the brainstorm and how we generate ideas. Howard Hollands explores the environment and aesthetics of the art classroom, discussing it's potential as a creative space often far more potent than the artist's studio. Unusual community projects are highlighted in the articles by Meena Choda & Tim Jones about their Window 135 Project and Ben Thistle's account of an amazing pop-up museum in Nunhead. Alongside these Ben Lewis writes about the outstanding exhibition; The alTURNERTive Prize; consisting of work by students at Welling School; a school that, despite the trend instigated by the government, are placing the Arts at the centre of their curriculum.

By being offered as a free publication, æ hopes to expand interest and involvement in the overlap between Art and Education and to reach as broader an audience as possible. Visiting a gallery or museum is an educational experience. Picking up a copy of æ and reading through it on the journey home will, we hope, extend and enrich this experience.

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Ben Illife

The Art of Brainstorm

Phil Scott

Teaching creativity has always been a perplexing issue. The concept of learning through traditional teaching methods does not especially lend itself to the arts, as the process needs to be more independent based of the individual learner. The idea that you can meet the needs of students on a creative level through predetermined methods is one that I have tried to address throughout my career as a teacher. The process of making work is one that the various exam boards and national curriculum standards attempt to embrace, but on the basic level of teaching in classrooms, levels of consistency fail to encourage variety and true creative thought processes as the ultimate goal is to produce a finished resolution, or to use the student friendly variation "a final piece."

Most projects in schools that involve the creative subjects begin with a brainstorm. This may continue as a process most students will use in a variety of different professions within their lives, ultimately because it is quick and easy route to jot down ideas and thought processes leading towards an intended goal. But the intended goal creates unnecessary limits on creativity within this system. Why can't the process become part of the work?

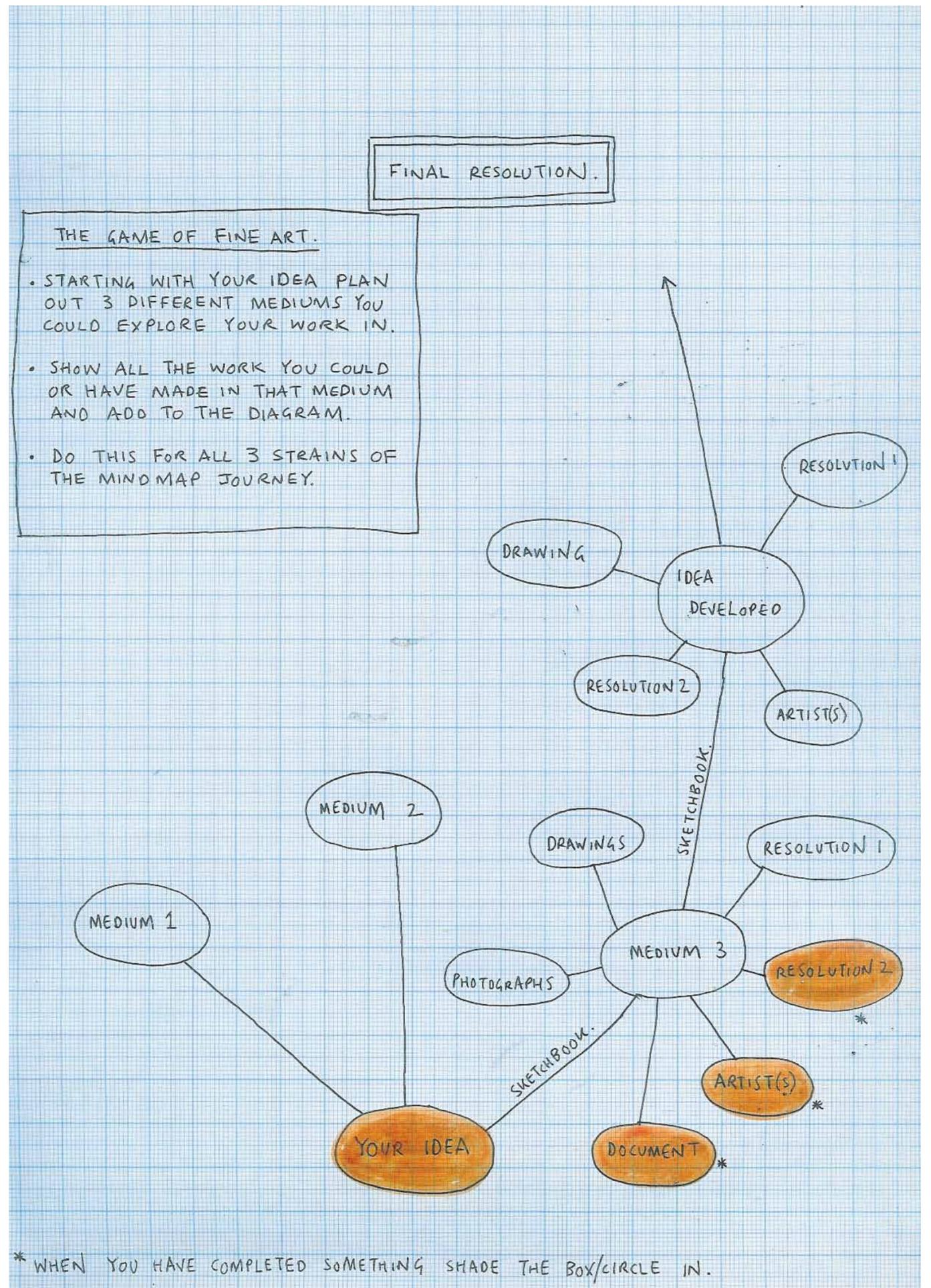
Brainstorming is an art in itself. Similar to a journey the brainstorm documents the thought processes of a creative individual/group through association, ultimately leading to the development of an idea. As with all creative processes there is a need to be inspired and influenced by external sources, leading to the development of concepts that challenge initial perceptions and take students out of their so called comfort zones. This is where teaching is most significant in opening up the idea of possibility and enthusiasm for the subject area, whether this be from experience or independent research (visiting galleries, subject knowledge, etc...).

I became interested in the idea of the brainstorm as a piece of work in its own right, as well as a tool for generating numerous resolutions as an idea develops. This is extremely important within art education, as assessment objectives require a thorough documentation of ideas visually. The idea that the brainstorm in its own right could be used as a piece of work came about through the influence of Peter Davies paintings in the late 1990's. Presenting work that was formed through the association of ideas brings up a number of possible resolution as well as the student being able to appreciate the brainstorm as a work of its own.

Rachel Whiteread's Drawings show at the Tate Britain in 2010 conveyed a constructive practice that engaged the viewer through the process of her work. Whiteread has made drawing an important part of the process of her work. The drawings stand alone as beautiful pieces, and the necessity to see Whiteread's finished works almost fades into insignificance when looking at her preparatory drawings. The experimentation in her plans communicates the concept, visually standing alone as documentation of her thoughts and ideas. I wanted to inspire my students to have the same level of engagement, and desire to experiment through "drawings" as plans and works on their own.

Similar to Rudolph Steiner's Blackboard drawings, the process of documenting ideas would become individual to the student based on a simple starting framework.

The basic schematic proposed by this article can be used to inspire students to have the same level of engagement, and



desire to experiment through "drawings" as plans and works on their own. (see diagram)

This schematic is already being implemented by students in upper school classes at Welling School and has enabled them to consider how the process of documenting their ideas would appear in a number of different media. It has offered an opportunity for students to think about how they would produce brainstorm "drawings" en route to their eventual conclusions. Art education seems to be obsessed with the resolution of the works, but this model encourages the idea of multiple resolutions, offering a visually clear documentation of the student's progress.

By removing the onus on the finished resolution of a work, students become more engaged with the process of producing found material art as well as embracing the need to plan through drawings, but holding these drawings as works in their own right. This offers students a range of ways of experimenting with materials and concepts,

and because there was no focus on a resolved piece of work they were entitled to explore and become more creative in their methodology.

As a group, students and teachers can analyse the results after the process had been undertaken and because the emphasis of the tasks was shifted onto the process, ideas became more developed from more throw away starting points as everything had the weight of a finished resolution. These sessions are extremely important in the communication of ideas, and the realisation of how an audience will respond to visual ideas.

Ultimately this led to students creating a range of works, which took them out of comfort zones and enabled them to experiment with their concepts in numerous mediums. The process of editing became more important, and the development of works following the various streams of thoughts lead them to produce work that they would have normally not explored. Ideas rarely dried up, as they

changed the medium they were working in if they had hit a mental block with the idea/medium they were currently working on. And this in turn led them to another way of developing their work and the exploration of other practitioners.

The discussion of ideas and the realisation that the process is as important if not more so than "the final piece" has opened the door to the developing practice of these students as young artists and has allowed them a route to engage with a variety of resolutions and concepts, which is how art education should structure itself. Offering stabilisers for artistic engagement should be the framework of a strong art school, allowing students the opportunity to develop their intentions and creativity with the guidance of the art teacher(s).

Joseph Cartwright



Drawing Beuys

Joseph Cartwright

Drawing, actions, material, transmitters, receivers, expansion, contraction, sculpture, vitrines, rituals, lectures, protests, multiples, myth, politics, environments, dialogue, pedagogy, provocation, appropriation, sexuality, readymade, democracy, romanticism, spiritualism, redemption, social sculpture, Gesamtkunstwerk.

Beuys's oeuvre is so rich, so wide ranging and encompassing, engrossed in ideas of rebirth, growth and change. Dialogues of catastrophe, reminders of darkness, messianic actions, worrying detritus and collections of sometimes indescribable matter all collide to remind us of what has been and highlight the need to examine our understanding of history and our place within it.

I love the ideas encapsulated in Beuys practice, I love the optimism, I love the idea that art isn't compartmentalised, isn't limited to the plastic arts but is all encompassing and is the positive force for

change. For Beuys the importance of art was paramount as was the importance of change, things couldn't stay as they were, everything had to change. The deeply spiritual vein running through his work, through his expanded concept of art put the onus onto art becoming the vehicle for change in society and artists as the catalysts of that change. It wasn't technology or science that was going to save us, it was art and everyone could be an artist, if they lived to their creative potential.

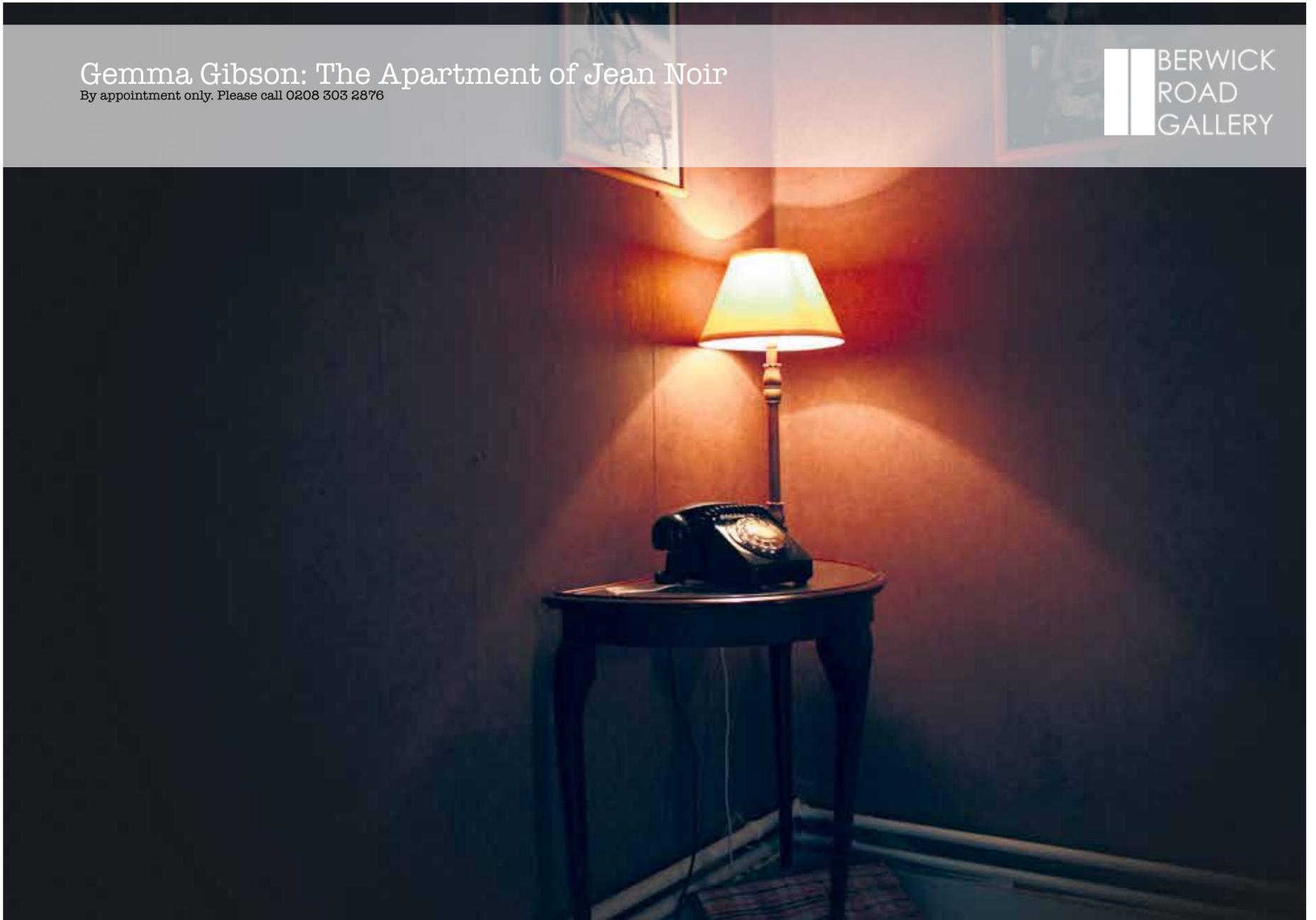
Stark black and white photographic reproductions of Beuys's work (I can't remember any being in colour until after he died) seemed to be stuck up in every student space whilst I was studying on my degree, talisman like, protecting our practice or at least purporting to our self-conscious seriousness as artists. Years later in the early 90's I was quietly confronted by three pieces of his sculpture and a vitrine in the 'Gravity and Grace' exhibition held at the South Bank Centre. One piece stood out for me that day and it still holds a fascination for me, 'Erdtelefon' (Earth Telephone) 1968 is a roughly fashioned sod of earth, skull like, sitting next to a Bakelite telephone its unconnected cord wound around itself, both objects arranged on a wooden board in a statement of dumb communication. Relics. The temporal register of the work suggesting death. No heat therefore no life, echoes of redundancy. Dirt to dirt. Sonorous yet ridiculous, it has a vulnerability, a damaged human quality, it doesn't work, it confounds us with our inability to even touch it. How can we fix it?

This manipulated, damaged, careworn, worried, appropriated aesthetic where sometimes seemingly tenuous links become the strongest bonds has fascinated me for years now. It's informed my practice. It's strengthened my belief in the power of art. Art as engagement, as education, as a tool, as ideas, as a conduit, as hope, as vision. Art that matters.

Gemma Gibson: The Apartment of Jean Noir

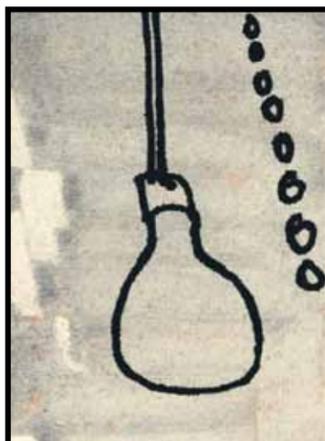
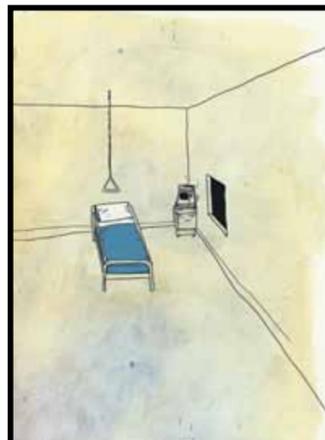
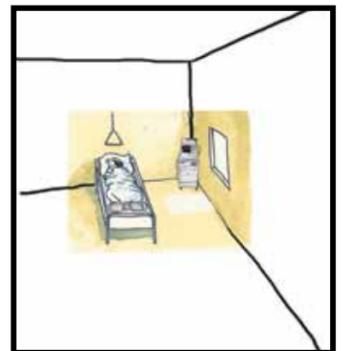
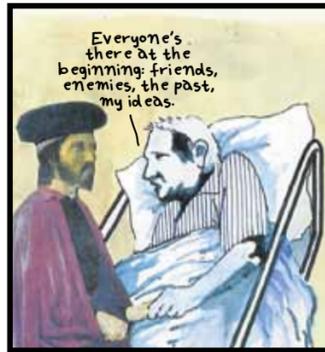
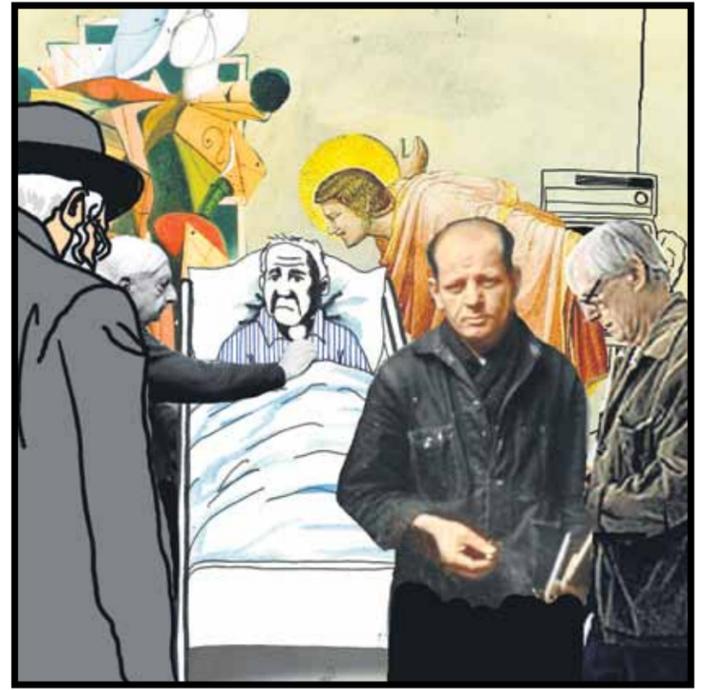
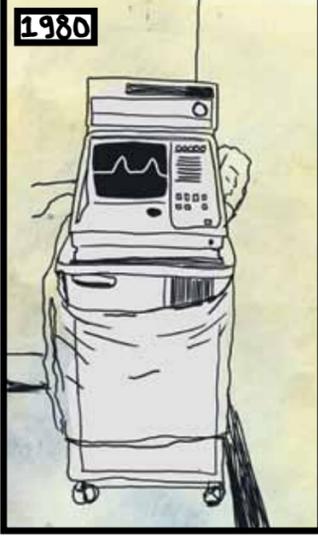
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Love Letter

By Amalgum





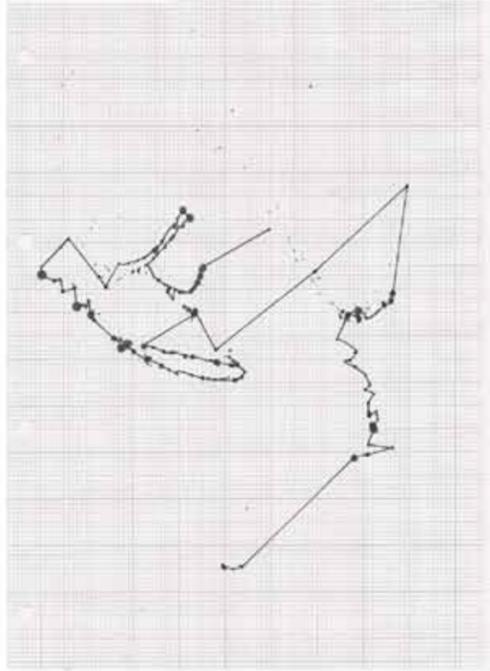
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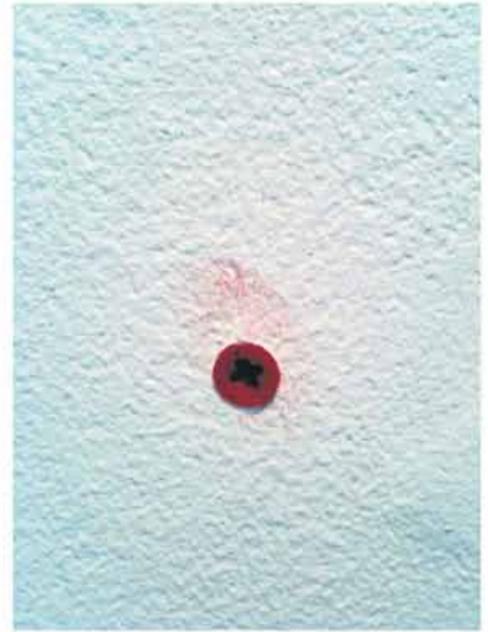
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Window 135

Tim Jones & Meena Chodha



"Window 135" began in 2004. It started tentatively as a method of putting 'distance' between the New Cross Rd and the family living room. Formerly a shop our house was one of the two greengrocers made redundant when Sainsbury's opened a vast supermarket nearby in the 1990's.

In 1996 the shop had no shopfront, the grocers had served market style with a mahogany table pulled out onto the pavement. The new 'shopfront' was designed to meet local conservation area rules, to look like a shop although its derelict interior meant it could no longer function as one; it reverted to "residential purposes only".

The New Cross Road is the arterial route from London to Kent. The volume of passing traffic is disruptive to live with but presents a continuous and diverse audience. The council agreed to "de minimus"; a shallow space to a maximum depth of 1 metre and 'by appointment only'.

A structure was quickly established; a vitrine changing weekly showing work-in-progress, paintings by Tim Jones, Deptford Market ephemera, chitting potatoes and so on. Seen in context among the hair and nail salons and the fast food outlets, the response to the window with no painted sign or description of purpose was usually "what is this place?"

In 2007 Soledad Garcia contacted us and consequently curated two shows

"Re-Intervention Project 135". Interrupting the common physical environment of New Cross Road, Window 135 (owned by Tim Jones and Meena Chodha) has been the house's façade for almost three years; a space of particular attention that distracts the pedestrian in the normal commercial area. From a public to a private axis, the vitrine is the extension of a residential house and viewed from the opposite side of the road is a parenthesis among shops, markets and restaurants. Enclosed by colourful and excessive decoration, the window is distinguished by an austere construction of wood and concrete - demarcating not only its contrasting site, but also the frame in which different objects are displayed on a weekly basis. With this continuous transformation inside the space, the owners set diverse elements, exploring the possibilities of the space, objects and its reception. Starting points

for "The Re-Intervention Project 135" were the in-between condition of the window's location and the constant intervention of the owners in this extension of the urban realm. The project highlighted the circumstances of the outside and everyday life with the aim to give rise to some questions involved with the ambiguity of the space.

*Who lives behind this window? What is its purpose? Why did somebody display/put objects in the vitrine? These became some of the questions asked by the pedestrians of New Cross Road during the three weeks of interventions."*¹

The Goldsmiths artists exposed the distinction between the window of a home and the window as 'gallery'. The pattern of weekly change, although questioned by some artists, continues to feel appropriate.

Open Window 135 2010 was 1 month in gestation, three in deed. The artists were either familiar with the window practice or lived locally. There was no strategy other than the usual one week exhibition. Artists were enabled to show work as they wished. Installation took place every Sunday, with Tim working as an assistant to the hang when necessary. The work was diverse in nature: Mich Maloney whitewashed the window and chased a drawing of the streetscape over the week; Heini Philipp reflected on an uncle's brief life as a Luftwaffe pilot. Welling School Year 9 students made Airfix models of fighter planes to dogfight over an illustrated Thames; Rachael Causers "Lost & Found" was a classification of the absurd, rejected objects found on the local streets. A map located the 'found' posters, the site of both loss and find.

Window 135 is ongoing. We are applying for funding to extend the practice and hope to make Open Window 135 an annual event.

Open Window 135 2010
Jean Marc de Broglie, Simon Haddock, Clara Philipp, Charlie Fox, Brian McKenzie, Chris & Kit Bowsher, Heini Philipp + Welling School, Mich Maloney, Rachael Causer, Heidi Lawson.

¹ "Re-Intervention 135"... Soledad Garcia <http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/streetsigns-aug08.pdf> page 32 Soledad Garcia Christl Mudral, Jorge Cabieses, Conrad Ventur, Deniz Sosen, "warboutique"



The alTURNERtive Prize 2010 ***Berwick Road Gallery***

Ben Lewis

It was a difficult decision to make. I had two invitations in my hand. In my right was a thick piece of gold-embossed white card, asking me to attend a champagne reception at a millionaire collector's Chelsea home for a photography prize organised by a private Swiss Bank. In my left hand, was a printed out email from Henry Ward, asking me to present an art prize at a school in Welling. Well, I'd been to enough swanky art world 'do's for one lifetime, so I took the train through the snow to Welling.

I was expecting to see a room full of watercolours, some clay coil pots and still life paintings - I didn't know anything about Henry Ward's approach to teaching art to GCSE and A-level students. A smile and occasional grin broke across the grizzled features of my art critic's face, which over time has become frozen in a wily cynical look of perplexion, as I was confronted with some of the most precisely-formulated and witty contemporary art I had seen in London in months, much of which would have sat or hung comfortably in any East End

gallery. Abbi Granger's cuddly toy stuffed with mince-meat had the kind of punch you got from a work of art by a YBA. It was creepy and surreal and, with its use of just two textures (white fur and ground meat) it displayed a pared-down attitude to materials that one expects only from the most mature artists. The influences I thought I could spot in this exhibition amazed me - Reece Kidman's photos betrayed the scientific objectivity of early twentieth century German photographers like Karl Blossfeld. The latest directions in contemporary art were evident in the show, but were not being slavishly copied. Camilla Price took up the baton of documentary-based art-making, a la Susan Hiller or Tacita Dean, and she ran with it. Her archive of memories of female students from her school was both sound piece and sculpture - that use of an atmospheric old wooden pew from a school store room gave her work a strong sense of place, and created an interplay between different nostalgias of sound, material and form. I hadn't expected the unusual historical

references of Jamie Reed's animation, which instead of taking inspiration from South Park or the Simpsons, engaged with American propaganda cartoons from the early fifties. And then there were the tiny interventions of Nicole Wenden, who made a few marks on the exhibition room's grid of light switches - a nice 'activation' of the typical contemporary art form of the grid. How could someone so young, be so cunningly ephemeral, I wondered. Much of the work here was conceptual, but it wasn't a religion. Amy Barnes paintings were so bold in their brushwork and evoked other great female painters like Maria Lassnig and Alice Neal, while Gemma Gibson's installation seemed like a miniature set from the Film Noir. In the end I was glad I didn't have to choose the winner - that would have been too difficult - but I'm glad I skipped the swanky central London do. Anyway I've never been one for champagne. It's what bankers drink.



Try pointing at something, then try pointing at something else nearby. Try to follow what your index finger traces in space. This ability to point and follow spatial flux mixes up our speedy memory with our calligraphic appetites.

We call it 'reading'.

I am astonished at what the eye alights upon and how the mind sieves and sorts, capable of separating the scratchiness of wear and tear from the patina of phone numbers furred onto a door post. All in a trice.

Its not true to say that we understand everything (my Chinese is rusty), but we acknowledge what we recognise a hundred times an hour. We do not always acknowledge what we recognise.

I am drawn to purposeful acts which have lost their sense of purpose, the particular which has become generic, the calligraphic which becomes pictorial.

Its good to point.

Richard Wentworth

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Susan Hiller

Tate Britain

1st February- 15th May 2011

Layla Fay

The work of Susan Hiller employs the themes of language, memory and the unexplained as motifs that resonate throughout her oeuvre. Previously unfamiliar with her work, I noticed the recycling of ideas, a consistency. Her work invites the viewer to involve themselves in the pieces whether consciously or unconsciously, allowing them to create layers of further meaning. Hiller's work endeavors to give a new existence to things that would otherwise be considered irrelevant, unimportant or outdated by society.

Witness (2000) articulates the conceptual language of Science Fiction. Each hanging speaker transmitting testimonies of extra terrestrial and UFO encounters in languages from across the planet. Whether the testimonies are hallucinatory, actual or fictional they are united by the belief of something more than life on earth. Although many of the languages are foreign to me I felt a great similarity between them as they were united by a tone of conviction and belief. The effect of the merged buzzing sounds created a supernatural sensation of floating through a contained universe. The experience, almost religious, each "UFO" whispering prayer-like coaxing the viewer to listen to its significance, its voice otherwise lost to an illegible white noise.

This exploration of life beyond reality alluded to themes already seen in Dream Mapping (1974), which documented dreams and the subconscious mind. The participants merged dream diagrams and maps to create pieces of artwork. This explored the boundaries of making art subconsciously by taking something imaginary and giving it a literal existence. The process of

documenting these dreams took inspiration from myth and legend, the participants sleeping outdoors in "fairy rings". It brings questions of how influenced we are by our surroundings, how conscious our subconscious mind is and how the subconscious creates a world outside of reality. The modern day mysteries of the existence of life on other planets are something that as a race we are all united by and share interest. Hiller's works allow us to open our minds to imagine and encourage us to realize just how tiny our planet is juxtaposed by the infinite possibilities of existence within the universe. Hiller juxtaposes fact and science with imagination to conceptually create the art of articulating our language and ourselves. It allows us to simply imagine and question in the same way a child would do.

The Last Silent Movie (2007) is an opportunity to experience Hiller's ideas and learn more about ourselves by reflecting upon our personal abilities to articulate language. The "silence" of the movie refers to Hiller's liberation of extinct and endangered languages from archives in an attempt to resurrect their voices. The movie is shown in a dark room, a black screen with only the white written subtitles and the spoken sound. This simplistic execution creates space to listen and reflect. The juxtaposition of these lost languages

with the simplistic setting is a blank slate that the viewer gives meaning to by experiencing these lost languages. Accompanied by etchings based on oscilloscope voice traces from each language's soundtrack. I found the experience surprisingly moving and educational, the tone of the voices somewhat accusing.

The languages have essentially become modern day myths that are further portrayed by Hiller through the nature of using subtitles and subcategories of "endangered" and "extinct". The injustice of the last native speakers losing their language is seen in the English translations, as many of the speakers talk of how Westernized cultures wiped out their traditions and eventually their languages. The last chance of life given to the languages by Hiller is somewhat unsuccessful as some of the last native speakers are now deceased. Only one-way conversations in "The Last Silent Movie" remains. One of the languages left the screen completely blank, the viewer left only with an illegible sequence of sound as even the speaker did not know the true translation. This raises the question: "Is a language truly a language if it can no longer be communicated?"

The point in the film that has resonated with me most is the "Blackfoot" language, the speaker asking, "I am fluent in my language... Do you speak your language?" I thought of how as humans we are limited to a lifetime and within that relatively short span of time there are an impossible number of words, within in our own language, that we may never utter, never write and never learn their meaning. There is the distinct possibility of them becoming extinct.

I feel like I should dedicate my time to reading a dictionary to fully learn and understand my own language.

What Hiller has achieved is truly extraordinary.



Blocked Sinks: what happens to all the 'Not Art'?

Howard Hollands

***'It's a small world unless you have to clean it'
Barbara Kruger***



In 1815 the French architectural theoretician Quatremère de Quincy on visiting a museum wrote: 'I find myself already, on entering this gallery, in the midst of a world that no longer is.' And, in a paper titled *Lost worlds: how the museum remembers*¹ Michaela Giebelhausen says: 'The past survives as an accumulation of fragments, a palimpsest that enters the museum to be stored, catalogued, deciphered and displayed.'



So it is with the art classroom. A semiotic medley of curated objects and displayed images resonating with eccentric histories and embodying a host of critical practices and pedagogic models. Objects such as these are rarely read just as objects (except sometimes by the pupils) but as a means to an end, which is most often the development of a skill in one or more formal elements in objective drawing and painting or the development of what has been termed 'School Art' (Downing and Watson NFER 2004). These objects and images are often situated amongst a bewildering array of textual signs.

Art room objects are not related to the iconography of the museum, the academy, or the boot sale from whence they came. The skulls, bottles, cheese and spider plants, broken musical instruments, shoes and telephones all gather dust with more speed than the obsolete computers beside them, yet present wonderful opportunities for happy mis-readings, so much at odds with the educational world of measurement and accountability. These chance meetings of objects create a pastiche of the Comte de Lautreamont's provocative assertion from *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 'As beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on the dissecting table'.



Art Room Sink

What happens to the paint that does not make it on to the sheet of paper placed in front of the pupil? The paint that is left to dry on the palette or brush, diluted in the water pot, or absorbed into the sponge, and that will eventually find its way to the art room sink and surrounding surfaces. This 'waste' will set off on a journey to meet other forms of residue water be 'treated' only to return to the taps and begin the process again. Is this cycle (re-cycle) another manifestation of Jerome Bruner's spiral model of learning. The residue from 'the art' diluted in water forms its patina of layered colour in the sink, often more beautiful than the contrived 'National Curriculum levelled' images created under Ofsted approved conditions. Leonardo da Vinci recorded in his notebooks that the painter Botticelli used to throw sponges drenched in colour at the wall to create his landscapes and Leonardo himself studied the cracks in walls for images to trigger landscapes.



The sink becomes the 'found' gallery space in which to exhibit what is lost, rejected, forgotten or wasted. The sink, without even realizing it, achieves its status through its definition of what is not, and what might be, in the culture of the art room. It is part of the process.

Each teacher has their own little strategy for avoiding waste, the most draconian being the use of the dreadful tempera 'cakes' which requires a scrubbing brush to achieve even a sniff of colour – not much left for the sink there! But for those using the ubiquitous plastic bottles of liquid colour, the art room sink can become a technicolour playground, a palimpsest of lost or potential images. Then Ofsted comes to call and those gorgeous layers of colour, those rich layers of countless art lessons, are scrubbed squeaky clean along with the teachers and pupils. Too much risk involved in dirt.²



Every instance of imagination or making installs the conditions of the body into material separable from the body and detachable from self. Instead of thinking as we traditionally have of a narrow set of objects, mainly art, as the direct record of the making of human image, we need to locate the terms with which we can see every act of making as a making – human, and every act of making as a loss of self – material, a separation and a materialization that invite a second cultural act: the recovery of the self back from materials in which it has been both expressed and buried.³

But there is another side to this sinking feeling – Citizenship (the subject). Clearing up after the art making is part of the work of any artist, designer or craftsman, unless you are Francis Bacon of course. In the classroom this features on the lesson plan and is the shared responsibility of the group as part of the making process itself. In the same way that the material history of art practice is ignored in favour of 'the artist/creator', the significance of the labour relationship between art (making) and cleaning (un-making) is often missed.



¹ Giebelhausen, Dr Michaela 2006 *Lost worlds: how the museum remembers* Working Papers in Art and Design⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol4/mgfull.html> ISSN 1456-4917

² Monem, Nadine 2011 *The Filthy Reality of Everyday Life* DIRT London, Profile Books and The Wellcome Collection

³ Fisher, Philip. (1991) *Making and Effacing Art* Harvard University Press

⁴ Reconstruction of Francis Bacon's Studio at the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin

In Art as Technique (1917) the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky explored 'laying bare the device', where artists or writers reveal something of the creative process behind the 'beautiful lies' of the finished work. There is something about the art-room sink here as a repository for 'the device', in the way that the materiality of paint does not meet its target to 'fill those blank spaces on the white paper' as demanded by teacher, but instead embellishes the sides of the white enamel 'Butler' sink.

At the same time, the sink is a magnet for play and mischief with the magical attributes of water, taps, sponges and brushes. The designers of art rooms in new school buildings often seem blissfully unaware of the potential for creative mayhem in the location and design of cleaning areas. This is because they see the space as a classroom in which art takes place as opposed to an art room or workshop.

Art Room Dustbin

Then there is all that work, again evidence of process, such as images destroyed or unfinished, in torn or screwed-up form alongside sweet papers and half-eaten sandwiches in the black-bag/dustbin gallery and hauled away at the end of the day by the loyal band of school cleaners/curators to join some great land-fill museum perhaps home to Kurt Schwitters or Michael Landy.

The Art Room Plans Chest

There is also the work that 'disappears'.
 "Can't find my work Miss"
 "Did you put it in your folder?"
 "Dunno – think so"
 "Have you looked in the drawer?"
 "Er..."

Way down in the dark and dusty crevices at the back of the plans chest there is an ongoing display of hidden work, a palimpsest that multiplies mysteriously and anonymously over the years. The work might be in concertina form through the action of endless opening and closing of drawers. Sometimes the work is in shreds. It exists in a dark place and eventually will see the light of day again.

I know what you are thinking, yes, these ARE all metaphors for the pupils (and perhaps their teachers) - lost, forgotten, discarded, hidden, rejected, some without a place and some, like the artwork itself, without a name. But this is the material with which we, as teachers, and they, as pupils, have to work and why art is inherently inclusive and not exclusive.

Everything counts in our subject.

Art is what we make of what we make of what we make.

And what of the impact of codes, conventions and signifiers in the art room in the forum of instruction? How do these signs really relate to or impact upon the culture of art practice in the art room?



Rubbing Out

What happened to the fragments, the dust, from the Erased de Kooning drawing by Robert Rauschenberg from 1953. Rauschenberg claims to have used over 40 rubbers to rub out the drawing over a few months. If this 'rubbing out' constitutes Rauschenberg's assessment of de Kooning's drawing then we need the evidence. If we were archeologists then we might set about reconstructing the drawing from the discarded fragments of rubber, ink and pencil.

So it is when the pupil rubs out their drawing too. Where does it go? Do they keep the fragments as a record of process to present to the examiner?

Some teachers ban rubbers, why is this I wonder?

Some teachers tell pupils to draw with rubbers, why is this?

Ashes to Ashes

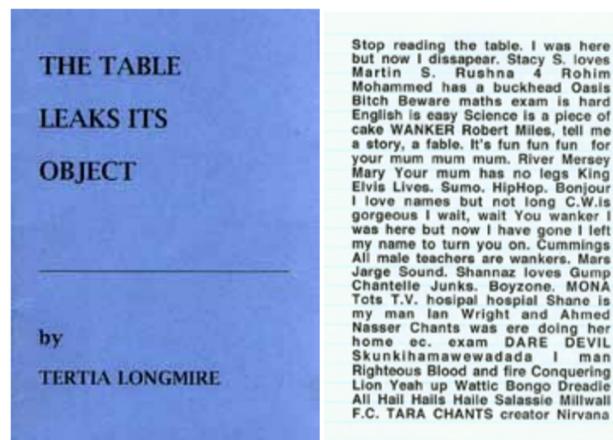
For Cinderella (Cinders), cleaning and drudgery is positively liberating, they become her passport to high society and the Prince -hmm.liberating!?! A phoenix out of the ashes. In the classroom too there are those pupils who relish the monitor/cleaner role. This can become a kind of passport to the mysteries of the art room, a responsibility for the pupil who might be lacking in confidence about making art itself. This is a different kind of access. Whose art room? Whose display? Whose work? Whose cleaning?

Dust to Dust

Artists have worked with human and natural waste since Dada in the early 20th century. Human waste from shit (Mario Merz), piss (Helen Chadwick), semen (Marcel Duchamp) to blood (Franko B). Dust, partly formed from tiny fragments of skin, is in abundance in

the corners of the art room. It may be subject to the laws of health and safety, but can also have a magical or supernatural quality as in Peter Pan or Philip Pullman's Northern Lights (1995) and, of course, Duchamp's Dust Breeding (1920) stunningly photographed by Man Ray. Duchamp's glass was left flat in his attic for a year to allow dust to settle and eventually be fixed in a specific area with varnish as part of the preparation for The Large Glass (1915-23). Gabriel Orozco's more recent, Lintel, washing lines of lint formed from the detritus collected from New York laundromat washing machines post 9/11 celebrates that which is discarded as we clean ourselves and our clothes. It comes back to haunt us with its beauty.

Some time earlier, much earlier, paleolithic mark-making on cave surfaces or stones provided evidence of the human need to symbolize existence in some way, and the reworked cave surface is an early manifestation of the palimpsest of the art room sink or black/whiteboard. These images were often created using soot, residue from the fire, and fat or blood, from animals. But it is the medieval manuscript that reveals the more recent and better known form of the palimpsest, where the original text was no longer valued or easily read thus making it possible for the scribe to 'again scrape'¹, or erase the surface, so that it might be re-inscribed or overwritten as with so much in the art room.



Meanwhile, back in the classroom it was the palimpsest of the defaced examination desk that was the trigger for the installation and book by artist Tertia Longmire titled, The Table Leaks Its Object²; an installation at the Pitshanger Gallery in Ealing in 1999, consisting of thirty examination desks which Longmire had found abandoned at a south London school in 1996. She carefully transcribed the layers of incised, scrawled graffiti from each desk into a thirty-page limited edition 'school exercise book' as an artwork. Each page of transcription represents one desk with its embedded desires, loss, frustrations and distractions from countless young people over many years writing or not writing away the hours literally sitting their examinations. What this extraordinary piece of work does is to validate as art the pupils' transgression which involved the defacing of such a potent symbol of an education system based on recognition through failure. Ironically much of the visual and verbal language employed by these youngsters can now be seen in the work of contemporary artists, writers and popular composers. The relocation of these desks from the institutional context of the school to that of the gallery with its accompanying exercise book as 'reader' as 'catalogue', allows those youngsters to triumph over a system that so often let them down, and it succeeds in underscoring the ambiguous notion of making one's mark in both education and art. But the mark-making here, a new type of bench-mark, and literally going against the grain and far deeper than the parallel examples of graffiti artists such as Jean Michel Basquiat who made the transition from forbidden walls and subway trains to the socially acceptable white space of the gallery. The mass-produced school exercise book now becomes a limited edition volume and the way that the conscious or unconscious statements of the 14 year olds have thus become recognized as possibly having some significance, and selected as art, for public consumption, and, in a form never imagined by these 'creators', is loaded with irony.

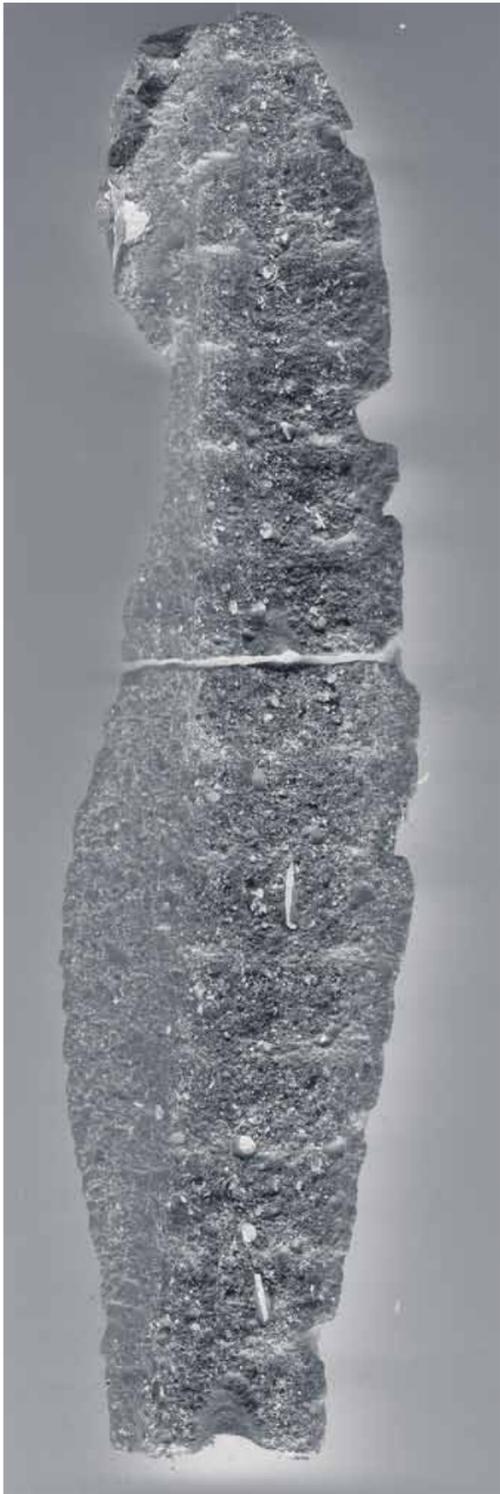
Finally, my own art room sink becomes the site for a sunken desert island with drowned blackboard and a decomposing educational classic, 'Draw They Must'.

Clean The Sink, They Must Not.



¹ 'again scrape' is from the Greek root for palimpsest
² Longmire, Tertia. 1999 The Table Leaks Its Object London: Magpie Press

Charlotte Norman



DANNY SAN



By appointment only. Please call 0208 303 2876

George Shaw: The Sly and Unseen Day

25 May – 1 July
South London Gallery



George Shaw, Scenes from The Passion: The Cop Shop, 1999-2000,
Humbrol enamel on board
Copyright the artist, courtesy Wilkinson Gallery, London.

This solo exhibition by British artist George Shaw brings together paintings made over the past 15 years which chart the urban landscape of his childhood home on the Tile Hill Estate in Coventry. Painted in Humbrol enamels, more usually associated with boyhood model-making, and based on photographs, Shaw's works revisit landmarks remembered from his youth. Meticulously painted houses, pubs, underpasses and parks become autobiographical notes, frozen in time. Conflating memory and present day reality, Shaw's works take on an uncanny quality, alluding to a murkier side of contemporary society and collective subconscious.

A BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art touring exhibition curated by Laurence Sillars.

SLG



Interior

Jon Purday

Last year I decided to take my family and leave our life in London to spend a year living in the wilderness of central Portugal. The experience was extraordinary. The landscape was breathtaking. The people were kind and open-hearted. Regrettably our time had to be cut short there. Nonetheless I made a series of 16 paintings as well as around 50 watercolours, numerous sketchbook pages and 100 Haiku poems. Since returning to London my work has continued to be influenced by my experiences in Portugal. The two paintings I have included here were painted in London and in some ways I think they are more successful than most of what I painted out there. Make no mistake, having the landscape for your studio with eagles and praying mantises for company is fantastic for inspiring creativity but so has working from the photographs we took. These are painted from photos taken by my wife, Caroline and capture light breaking through early morning mist at around 10am. It would be impossible to capture this effect from life in a painting as the conditions only last for minutes. The light out there is very white and balanced. Some have said they have a 1970's folk quality. I can go along with that. But I'm thinking Joni Mitchell rather than Neil Young. I will be returning to Portugal in April to hold an exhibition of my work in Sintra.





The Nunhead & District Municipal Museum and Art Gallery

Benjamin Thistle

England is famed for a tradition of eccentrics. David White is a fine example of a contemporary English eccentric. For the last three years, as part of the lively local Telegraph Hill Arts Festival and open studios, David has opened his house; transformed into the Nunhead & District Municipal Museum and Art Gallery.

The Nunhead & District Municipal Museum and Art Gallery (NDMMAG) originally took over the entire ground floor of David's Victorian house. David confesses to a life long obsessive interest in museums and spent months creating a bewildering plethora of artefacts and material to fill his 'museum'. Visitors were first confronted, in the hallway, by a series of portraits of the founder of the museum; an austere Victorian gentleman named George Gellatly (the house sits on Gellatly Road in New Cross), and the museum directors that followed him. Directed by museum staff, visitors next found themselves in a front room packed with vitrines and cabinets all containing a vast quantity of relics. Ranging from the Nunhead 'Bog Head', a severed head dated 2000 years old, to the bass drum and bootleg tapes from a local punk band; The Nunhead Cemeteries. In the next room was a small white cube gallery, exhibiting works by a 'local man' and down a short flight of steps was the kitchen, turned into a café and shop, where the 'Tub', an architectural proposal for the new museum could be viewed. At the bottom of the garden, in what normally served as David's studio, was another exhibition of paintings by an 'artist in residence', in fact the work of David himself, although, of course, so was everything else.

The NDMMAG was a huge success. David is a naturally modest man and did little to promote the event, but word of mouth meant that by the time the museum was due to close on the Sunday; 100s of people had visited. The story of the proposed demolition of the street and museum to make way for the 'Tub' incited a protest at the closing speeches

where local residents, led by David's neighbour Mrs Trellis, demanded to be heard.

All beautifully planned and choreographed.

The following year the concept had developed. David spoke of how, in demolishing the museum to make way for the 'Tub', the long lost catacombs were discovered. These were to be open for a limited period; the weekend of the festival, and visitors could explore what secrets had lain hidden beneath their feet. David turned the ground floor of his house into a labyrinth. Visitors were given hard hats and torches and led into, what had once been, his living room, where, in the dim light of their torches, they could marvel at the pet cemetery (soft toys imprisoned in jars), an old Indian cave, where the graffiti of decades betrayed the presence of teenage parties, and the lost tomb of the Nunhead Knight, a full size sculpted body of a crusader. Upon emerging into the light visitors could then head down to the bottom of the garden where his studio had been painstakingly converted into a lecture theatre, complete with banked seating for 50, constructed from found materials in local skips. The previous year he had posted a list of lectures that were purported to be taking place at the museum. So many guests had asked if these were real that David decided, for the second year, that they should take place. Over the course of the weekend a host of different talks took place including; The Music of Emerson, Lake & Palmer; Diseases of the Mucus Membrane and Oral Health; and A History of Mastication. For every talk the lecture theatre was packed, with the topics treading a fine line between fact and invention and all entering the spirit of the NDMMAG.

So to this year and the third incarnation of this wonderful spectacle. David explained that in the process of clearing some of the grounds to make way for a new sculpture garden; the remains of the Nunhead Hall were discovered. This was supposed to have burnt down at some point in

the 1950s. Beyond this the Alhambra Studio Theatre was discovered. He spoke of how Lewisham council had closed the studio theatre down in 1967, under direct instruction from the then government, due to the radical political discussions and educational philosophy that was being practiced there. The theatre was restored to its former glory, complete with a stage, announcer's booth and even a Royal box. David built two new 'buildings' in the garden to house the remains of the Nunhead Hall and invited music hall acts and lecturers to perform over the weekend in the Alhambra Studio Theatre.

This time there was a more cohesive thematic link between the talks. Alternating with hugely popular music hall style turns, including the Brockley Bonfire Choir, the lectures covered topics such as How to Save the World: Green Politics in the 1960s and The Origins of the Fluxus Movement, which, apparently had started in this very theatre at a John Cage performance in 1960.

The 'Tub' had been superseded by a new architectural proposition and the NDMMAG opened with the devastating news that David had been sacked and replaced by his neighbour, the doughty Mrs Trellis, who for the past two years had been the leader of the protests against the museum's development. In a bizarre twist the 'new' museum would be concentrating on its retail possibilities and, in light of this, visitors could visit the expanded retail outlet and purchase limited edition screen-printed posters, advertising one of the lectures; postcards of items from the museum collection; and busts of George Gellatly himself.

David is threatening to, as he puts it, "do a Glastonbury", and take next year off. If he does then the Telegraph Hill Arts Festival will feel the loss. The NDMMAG has been a cultural highlight for the last three years.



all my people love me they love me all they will die to protect my people

ACT ON & THINK ABOUT:

1. Make something everyday-
750 words? Half a dozen sketchbook pages? A piece of art? A free talk?

2. Use means that don't require a budget or specialised equipment. Use what's around you

3. Fit your practice into your day. It's ok to be a jack of all trades

4. Make what you can, when you can

5. Rebuild and remake, don't repeat

6. Tell someone about your work

7. Practice your practice

8. Journal what has worked/ not worked

9. Reward yourself for working

10. Inspire others to do the same