

**A PLAYFUL DISILLUSION:**

**AN UNFINISHED MASTERPIECE: WALKING THE LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL**

An ongoing account following the experience of returning to a City which no longer knows you: with an emphasis on the Liverpool Biennial as a narrative for exploring overlaps of memory, play, art, society, philosophy, dialogue and the estrangement of living among people. Undertaken around frameworks of art criticism in an attempt to see if the semi-peripatetic is truly an exhausted activity

L8



**This is culture: 'Stop Me If You Think You've Heard This One Before'**



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Then down Princes Avenue at night; soggy tree lined axon, fortified by myelin sheath-like Victorian terraced houses, relinquished buds of merchant profiteering. Their antics were the very creations of this direct (and contradictory) flow; from colonised sea to city centre (extracted labour) to its domesticated park (bestowed morals). Scarred pavements jump up and trip. Now only weed-like communities inevitably emerge among relics of capital. A universally sight; such severed genealogical memories surely offer borrowed stages for adaptive reuse and un-self-conscious constructions. But rather than attempting, or being allowed to produce newer semi-independent forms of dendrites many houses get gutted out, boarded up, split down and re-placed by orderly dwellings of humdrum ambitions. All in the currently impossible hope of regenerating this old hierarchical flow of creative destructive dependence, ironically through the cultural tourism trade.

*'If the slave trade had gone, there's an end to our lives,*

*Beggars all we must be, children and wives,*

*No ships from our ports, their proud sails e'er would spread,*

*And our streets grown with grass, where the cows might be fed'*

Ok, maybe that's a bit too harsh an observation, and an altogether common one for a common reality, it's definitely trying too hard to sound lyrical; so let's bring it down a level.... It's been two years and this is the reason why I'm back-not to see friends, I had none-but the Biennial, as planned in my previous journal, a self fulfilling future now present and ready for rescripting in an unchanged stage. I imagine giving a speech about the city, in a recorded interview about my past, where I've won some kind of prize or writing submission. I don't know what for (this is something I'm allowed to overlook) but it takes place in this city, which explains why I'm giving the speech. It goes;

"I wasn't born here but I know of fewer places in the world more welcoming, even for a soft southerner like myself (this is met with laughter followed by applause)... And although I couldn't possibly speak for all of Liverpool it seems to be a city that has always been proud of itself, not through ignorance but through...human necessity. Perhaps this is why I relate to it and why it is eternally a second home to me."

A pack of young 'laas' linger between flickering ambers at the junction I must cross. I feel a waft of danger whizz past my head.

"Ear, come'n-en swaggah"

They are hurling mud rocks at me.

Next day, my guide - known around the grassroots art circuit, temp running on the Biennial (as is the way of Biennials) and conveniently the sister of my girlfriend - go through Chavasse Park. In summer children place fountain-wet hand prints onto red hot walls that wrap its periphery; guarding the treasure trove of chain stores like gums around false teeth plonked on a kitchen table. The little sprogs run back and forth screaming as their own neotribalist art dries out before the eyes, undisturbed by the impermanence of their carnal enjoyment. It's a softened sight to see.

Then past an entertainment complex.

“Entertainment complex – can you think of anything worse?!” She said.

“No... I’d go to a complex entertainment though.”

Walking around other times of day, like when i wanted to take a lavender/flower sprig and a security guard was patrolling the landscape-a artificial controlled sight which has nothing to do with nature or parks. L1 walking through makes me satisfactorily disillusioned with humanity. Time spine quality, archival is easily derided, i think here they’ve readily accepted this. Onto the popular Fact Cinema and exhibition space. Although this did not really take place straight away but then I will get to that at a later time:

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## Fact and around Slater Street

I’ve never been to Lodz, but these scenes of children playing in its neglected outskirts resemble restagings of those critical post-war ‘Black Series’ documentaries; except they were never stages and neither is this. So I’m unsure whether this cements my preconceptions of stably poor Poland or counters today’s global tourist friendly cover ups; a kind of ‘same-old-shit but this time we hate Capitalist Realism propaganda’ exercise. Either way, considering the area’s significant filmic history this invitation is inevitable. But Sharon Lockhart is not a resident nor did she claim to be a director, so how does one, in this case predominantly brought up on the stillness of photography, take up that heavy baton of authenticating social study, where if film documentation has taught us anything – is that it’s never purely authentic. We get a moving photograph. Technically it’s a lock down shot initiating observational documentary, impassively parked up in a corner with a fixed view. But not hidden from sight, as the inclusion of a child noticing our gaze whilst knocking a semi-deflated ball against a wall acknowledges. *did Kolakowski’s ‘Can The Devil Be Saved’ get taken too literally; taking sanctuary in a paradise lost? I hope so, to an extent, there is much hope and victory to be made from living freely among ruins.*

**...But This Never Was A Pipe** and we are always reminded of the camera's limitations, so I think we should just steer clear of making any behavioural conclusions about the children based on interpreted observation - even though this is implied by some of the press releases - (*being a child is being*

*told what, how and who to be, before being aware otherwise. The difference between now and then is that I hadn't learnt to care. Even so, we are presented with real living breathing looking children - such is the power of the camera! - and we witness them doing things which seem familiar to their behaviour ('these objects as appearances conform to our mode of representation' - Kant) and we watch them very, very intently. So, as an art-work this cannot become anything else without first acknowledging the content: a bunch of kids playing outside. It is what it is, as my friend often remarks, much to my annoyance because he's already played the trump card ahead of my 'infinite regress game'; like a kind of, 'I know you are but what am I?' retort against psychoanalysis. But maybe he has a point, on a level of giving up the never-ending pursuit of understanding*

In the unrefined courtyards of Lodz there resides a group of children who - encouraged to explore their environments - perform in them as if they were sanctuaries for creativity. A few video recordings exist which I've seen; one shows a girl and boy crouched over a self-made muddy sandpit, immersed in their work which involves making a mound of some sort. With her back to me, the girl's pink top carries a vividness against the earthy urban surroundings, scratched and burnt walls swelling under pages of cement. War-torn. As though a real living version of an Alberto Burri 'Succo' was being choreographed, except that little bloody-red bit is replaced for a more rosy-pop sentimentality. The street is only identifiable by its six digit number stamped on the wall.



They sit with a happy-blue water bucket between them. A red table tennis racket lies just to the boy's right looking absurd within this setting. It is never used. A child's happy screaming becomes louder as a lime coloured plastic ball meanders towards them. A toddler - not much bigger than the ball - suddenly appears in pursuit. The girl nonchalantly pushes it forward, rerouting his direction as he magnetically trails after it in a harmonic motion, as if drawn in the dark. They continue working on this mound patting and watering and standing over it for the next three minutes or so, they never allow these interruptions to halt their mission, a mission yet to become apparent. Our view of the mound's development is too obstructed by their circulating activity to really see what they are up to. A soon-to-be battleground for soldiers and dolls? Captive track course? An unearthing of a soul from the concrete ground? A kind of Earth Art perhaps. Humbled, because it is without monumental scale, permanence, presentation or the usual smoothness of form; like a reversion of contemporary manure and I suppose in a way it is just this... Emerging from the alleyway, a man briskly walks past, lugging a green bucket in each hand his time does not consist of stop and play, it is an activity which struggles to keep up with his time frame of objectives and events his body lacks the

*or the sake of freely  
experiencing.*

**From one piece of evidence we  
can construct a monster image.**

**Instead what is this  
essentially *doing* then? If we  
strip away all jargon and  
information that exhibition  
texts give depth to (usually  
because such depth is not  
actually evident in the work)? It  
is an entering of idle escape,  
through witnessing it in action,  
right before the eyes. Innate  
self-made sanctuaries of  
singular expressions,  
unproblematised by outside  
forces, which in doing so  
naturally affects its  
environment, like the birds  
giving voice to a  
street.**

*In 'an anticipated reality of what  
it evokes' (to borrow and alter  
from Jack Ranciere in a 2006  
lecture, slightly related if you  
read it and get to the end of  
this). It purposefully severs itself  
from your run-of-the-mill  
authorship or the necessity for  
wet humour you might see in a  
home vid. In this regard the  
work of art under mass video  
sharing site or tv programme by  
its stillness and technical quality  
for one, but mainly through a  
subject is apparently a typical  
desire in professionalised art; as  
in the art; as in the drive towards  
painterly abstraction (in its  
generally accepted form of being  
pure art.*



art-as-art and nothing else, in art-as-art and nothing else, in the drive towards painterly abstraction (in its generally accepted form of being pure art, art-as-art and nothing else, in the Ad Reinhart terms). **Purity. For the critic too this has been expressed. I am writing nothing new or interesting here: As demanded by Sontag (mainly stolen from Barthes). "And, conversely, it is the habit of approaching works of art in order to interpret them that sustains the fancy that there really is such a thing as the content of a work of art"...** "In good films, there is always a directness that entirely frees us from the itch to interpret" Pre-empted flatness by Greenberg (and you don't get more flat than a flat screen tv) **It's all here, and I am aware that these references are American-centric and that it would be crass to make this connection with the artist coming from America herself, so I won't even mention it.** This aint abstract art though as already established it begins with a subject. **The subject Children playing is simply what you get when you have no prior function, they are pretty redundant, but full of awaiting potential, no wonder artists film makers and pictorial people obsessively use them as mediums to express contrasts and causal relations of everyday drudgery. She's seeking something through these children, through her art, and I'm gonna work it out.**

power to keep up with his imposed speed of time and he is walking fast to keep up. No one knows where he is going and no one need care. The children, it turns out are building an afforded time that resists work/play dichotomies, with each slop of mud, slowing it down and striating the pavements from hindered mulling, under the fugacity of life.

It isn't a music video or a phoney promise about life being beautiful. Theirs is a genuine pause from life without a sale at the end. Before they become mothers, prostitutes, labourers and victims of whatever else awaits. The urge to create may as well be an urge towards any urge, I have realised this in my own failings of gradient shifts: draftsman, painter, conceptualiser, writer, critic, bitter.

#### *Scene B Ext. Car Park*

Some of the other children have bikes (although, from looking at the places they take them to I wonder what's the point). But they have their bikes all the same, and they take them to what looks like rundown car parks and more barren courtyards, circulating around these concrete carpets like pigeons congregating during business lunch hours. Except they seem to purposefully make an absurd gesture of the place. Take one example of a boy sedately rolling his wheels into a puddle, wheels going back and forth, back and forth. Akin to an animal in a cage, or Travis Bickle rocking a television set with his foot. Controlled chaos leaking out the seems. He makes wet track marks on the ground which could be described in some hoity-toity press release thus;

*"Titled 'anthropométrie in muddy brown' the artist makes an ironic gesture towards Klein's 'post-minimal events', in which the extension of the artist's bicycle kinetically reworks the canvas of the everyday. His own Duchampian wheel escapes the confines of the gallery whilst simultaneously reworking its function as art object in retaining the bicycle's prior function. The first bicycle, a particular iconic moment in a child's stage of independence negates any ideological promise of liberation by a mental state that already reflects this exhaustion with life."*

Actually, that sounds like it could have been written by me.

The guardian of this existentially fraught boy is physically absent. Unlike this other boy who actually rides his bike whose guardian seems merely absent-minded. With the typical body language of a duty bound mother she looks on, like something I witnessed in a games arcade once in which a child was quietly immersed in some relentless zombie shooting game; she politely watched on staring into vacuous space, reminiscent of waiting in a queue. Anyway, this boy only rides in circles; I think he is merely reappropriating the previous one, but with greater artistic subtlety you might argue.

**Working like an 'en plein air' artist privileged. Working like an 'en plein air' artist privileged, patient and seeking immersion, seeking it through the parallel of producing it, only a key difference being that of course we are there with her seeing what she sees at the same time (or at least in the future).....Or, we could just say that this adopts the same function as the Lumiere's first cinematography scene, in which the camera just sat watching people leave a factory (I later discover she actually make a kind of homage to this in another work). I'm pretty sure as genius-like and artsy as the Lumiere brothers were- what they were doing hadn't been officially declared under the umbrella of Art just then, perhaps a kind of art form maybe yes, but closer to innovation. With the proliferation of everyday images and expanded opportunities to record, a return to exploring the very fundamentals of the camera through its subjects will inevitably remain a prior concern among those that use it as their their own labour and work. A return to this is a return to youthful wonder as an expert. An expert who uses these techniques to deliver an explicit counter response to superfluous adult entertainment. It is somewhat fitting then that the first credited film portrays people exiting mass production, as if hurtling into a new kind of mass/art production, that of the audience collector.**

A proposed medication to the onslaught of reality-based documentations that are far from any attempt towards realism, even less an attempt at questioning it. They of course aim to instruct and commodify aspirations: the categorisation demonisation and celebration of class types, a becoming-celebrity social type already quasi-fictionalised, scripted talent shows, sponsored online personalities and entertainment journalism in accelerated editing. The viewer faces a shortened attention span but a widening of distracters. Good luck to her then, it has already been played out though, a dual battle set up since the inception of film studies and concretised by one of Europe's founding fathers of cultural theory, Walter Benjamin; 'Clearly this is at bottom the old charge that the masses are looking for distraction whereas art looks for immersion.... The person who stands in contemplation before a work of art immerses himself in it... the distracted mass, on the other hand, absorbs the work of art into itself. .... the kind of reception in a state of distraction that to an increasing extent is becoming apparent in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception has its true practice instrument in film... mass reproduction particularly suits reproduction of the masses 'work of art...etc' Nevertheless, we get a window into her world looking into the children's world. In this regard, the work

makes us aware of our own changing assumptions about the technical medium of film as an artistic pursuit, affected as it is by new technologies and artistic expression. Cheers for that Sharon. "The beauty of Lockhart's work is that she challenges and reinvents the boundaries between still and moving image, playing with notions of time and the spaces we inhabit..." This description of her work can be found online in nearly every commentary about her. Beauty that is, if your idea of such a thing takes premise from this artistic function of immersion, and so it is this beauty for something unattainable or at least using the technical in a way that is like a traditional compassionate artist, this is its beauty. The engagement is the refuge of not so easily reproduceable labor that much of art is Here artists have often been recorded in their moment of making and rarely does the person behind the camera end up determining a stronger artistic impression (I think maybe that Hans Namuth one of Pollack painting on glass being an obvious exception). Besides, if the... *Their actions become creations about necessary idleness rather than idle expressions under analysis. I think reinventing boundaries translates into context. This is a popular beauty in art, contextual shifting. But then is this not the very same thing which the child experiences and attempts in their own playfully immersive activity, substituting objects for other uses, playing with words, histories, convention and time?*

Scene D Ext. Building

Here comes trouble as two boys around 11 years old climb atop a shell-of-a building. It reminds me of a scene in 'Killer Of Sheep' when these kids are jumping and throwing stones from a low roof; they do the same only more sedate and it isn't targeted at anyone. Up here they are free to construct hidden shelters from discarded bricks and sticks, or seek birds' nests and boil eggs over hot chimney pots using collected rainwater, though this is a rare opportunity. It is said that there is much wildlife to be found within the cracked slates and gutters. But if you own an aerial be careful, as it is rumoured they get a kick out of messing with your signal. I think they may be collecting and reassembling them in order to catch lightning strikes. Days spent away from life below they occupy gridded islands with no rules or boundaries except when a gap is too wide to jump and they must return. In their ambling descent a kind of lazy parkour is performed as if the building is to be taken as an apparatus that cannot be mastered but absorbed as one would a new mattress. Akin to the Bandar-log in The Jungle Book;

'Street corners where the public wells once stood, and the shattered domes of temples with wild figs sprouting on their sides. The monkeys called the place their city, and pretended to despise the Jungle-People because they lived in the forest. And yet they never knew what the buildings were made for nor how to use them.'

So if sliding contexts is the dish of the day, then let's pretend we know nothing of Lockhart that this isn't an art display and that she didn't spend years embedded with the children and their surroundings. That this is found without reference in some moment in the future when it looks as old as a Lumiere film, and let's pretend then that the *children* are the artists and this is merely a recording of their performative activities. Why not. It takes nothing away from the physical being of the work itself, only our own preconceptions about who's making the art, which isn't a bad thing. I mean, if we are going to focus on the beauty of shifting context then we need to look at the ugly truth of artistic conventions.

# Telephone

The idea that workers should meet the conditions of "flexibility" is just another standard technique of control and domination. Why not say that administrators should be thrown out if there's nothing for them to do that semester, or trustees-what do they have to be there for? The situation is the same with top management in industry: if workers have to be flexible, how about management? Most of them are pretty useless or even harmful anyway, so let's get rid of them.

And you can go on like this. Just to take the news from the last couple of days, take, say, Jamie Dimon, the CEO of JP Morgan Chase bank: he just got a pretty substantial raise, almost double his salary, out of gratitude because he had saved the bank from criminal charges that would have sent the management to jail; he got away with only \$20 billion in fines for criminal activities. Well, I can imagine that getting rid of somebody like that might be helpful to the economy. But that's not what people are talking about when they talk about "labour reform." It's the working people who have to suffer, and they have to suffer by insecurity, by not knowing where tomorrow's piece of bread is going to come from, and obedient and not raise questions or ask for their rights

Noam Chomsky

'Calling Chomsky' telephone box at the bottom of the road leading to the Toxteth job centre  
(The politicised weapon of language acquisition is also innate among Chomsky's children)

Vygotsky, who perceived play and language as not independent from one another and community as important influence focused on 'object substitution'; objects that serve as pivots whose function in symbolic terms is to sever its initial meaning. This sounds a lot like the entire history of modern art.

A girl toddler abruptly enters the foreground which gives a jarring effect to the boy's reality (this clustering together of such age gaps the kind you see in infant birthday parties arranged by parents -who have arranged it more for their own parental friendship circle than anything else - have always made me feel as though different species were being lumped together; a zoo of little humans).

They produce without profit or time frame and this is the ultimate privilege, both instinctive and unnatural. A chorus to get lost in and a scene gone missing or a park bench as a scrawling on the wall left by a child that watches passers-by. **Saint Marc Giardina: "man is amusable only a small part of the time, whereas the idler who must distinguish himself lasts longer.... time is his obsession."**

This is why the subsidised unemployed are vilified when they choose a life of non-work, only to use their time unambitiously.

Play emphasises the boredoms of living and yet it can take on an altogether different characteristic according to how you live. One could go even further (so I will) and claim that this gives an emblematic study of ideology; in which fantasy struggles to maintain its reality under pragmatic maturity. Legendary cognitive psychologist Piaget is translated in claiming that 'play makes for the satisfaction of the ego rather than for its subordination to reality'. Philosophy is peppered with this constant flow of dualities, between resistance and submission, like two oceans interlocking. But didn't he realise that reality is its own plays in accordance with contextual rules. A construct of the ego. To break them even momentarily allows a break from prepared identifiability. In doing so we realise our own precarious identity. All the world is a stage. Surely he read Shakespeare;

"History adds that before or after his death he found himself facing God and said: I who have been so many men in vain, want to be one man, myself alone. From out of a whirlwind the voice of God replied: I am not either. I dreamed the world the way you dreamed your work, my Shakespeare, one of the forms of my dreams was you, who, like me, are many and one."

Jorge Luis Borges did.

*For me the illness is  
the prescription; the  
idle child offers us  
an escape only to  
reflect our ultimate  
lack of present  
escape just as the  
cinema offered mass  
ecstasy as it did  
reflect the  
organisation of mass  
culture, just as social  
networks online  
reflect the isolating  
effects of our  
fickle relations  
cuddled by a  
computerised  
society*

urban vestiges and decay is always fetishised, but never more so than in the last decade; (television, tours, cafes, home decors) the reasons are obvious but while ruins rarely speak for themselves it seems as though urban ones present the stage for grassroots capitalism today. Unlike the centre this is not deemed worthy of preserve, and so too the memories will be plastered over, even in grand regeneration plans in city centres there are always remaining tracings over tracings. But the respite in these decays lives in a longer time frame that reaches a natural end; those bricks took decades to discolour, the roofs took generations to grow wildlife, time reaches natural ends. *But the main city looks quite good and on travel forums there are positive reviews on a place called Find Out; 'real life escape game'. There has been a growing business of these in the teens of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century; where team work and all that kind of thing is necessary and popular with those imperative Corporate days out.*

The next room is sparse except for a jaded but attractive girl standing in the corner invigilating;

"Hi, I noticed you were making notes, so are you writing about this?"

'Possibly. Yeah, I'm writing a review of sorts, or short fiction, but it has no clear direction yet. I have a deadline though'. This is a lie.

She seems surprisingly impressed, considering as-it-were she must assume this is unpaid. Just as she is explaining to me why one of the little girls recurs in the videos a work friend appears for the shift swap. She disappears without saying goodbye.

I head downstairs where some items stewn across the floor washed ashore

*'we wanted to do it outside but it was raining' 'oh ok i wasn't sure if i could touch it or not' chimes 'make sound' 'play' spade and bucket, sand pipe remnants of an act washed a gallery-shore, 'soft play' Mihaly Spariosu's distinction between the interpretations of play as „rational“ or „prerational“ to inscribe play into the argument between representation and non-representation in the theory and practice of art this instinct to make it function outside of rational logic is a capitalist one, which is a very dirty word and a simplified one at that, but where art does enter into the rationale it becomes heavily political. Whilst the pre rational is easily subsumed in the politicked it can be argued that the best art reveals the theoretical fact that there are only degrees of logic within a completely illogical universe.*

Being child-minded after school always took place under the omnipresent sanctuary of a Mum; with me usually playing fantasy with her own child, who I didn't really have much in common with; and which always included-at a later point-the interruption of their Dad; dragging his own sorry state of work-life into the room. On one occasion another daughter wanted to act out some scene in the garden, but when I hesitantly declined she threatened to tell on me, yet I still remember him sitting there, shirt undone beer in hand and saying "don't worry about it mate". So I didn't anymore. `



Image above: The square between Fleet Street and Wood Street. A man receives a loud cheer as he takes his top off. I am at risk of sounding elitist here but it must be stated; it is a watering hole for philistines. Surrounded by a caged rock wall and unimaginative bars facing the square, this is to my mind, far more oppressive than any Foucault-ian social prison. Or perhaps it is fairer to say it is another type of prison. Devoid of anything but a ghetto of drinking it contains within a leisure culture of control in which bouncers police the perimeters and the police intervene an imminent danger. Drink up. And yet there is obviously something innate within the human condition that requires a hedonistic fun, just as the drunkard removes his clothes in the town so too the adolescent removes their swimwear to go naked in the sea. It is not so much the desire for hedonism which depresses me, far from it, but the realisation that this is both capitalised upon and controlled regimentally to such an extent that the removal of a t shirt garners such a strong response.

wandering into an abyss of thoughts an empty vast black humming to no tune.

*Play emphasises the boredoms of living and yet it can take on an altogether different characteristic according to how you live. One could go even further (so I will) and claim that this gives an emblematic study of ideology; in which fantasy struggles to maintain its reality under pragmatic maturity. Legendary cognitive psychologist Piaget is translated in claiming that 'play makes for the satisfaction of the ego rather than for its subordination to reality', this is the biological urge, but the cultural abstains from. The choice not o.*

*accommodation and assimilation in a continual balancing act, which is to say broadly, thought incarnate. Philosophy is peppered with this constant flow of dualities, between resistance and submission, like two oceans interlocking. But he obviously never hung around streets like these, where the reality of everyday drudgery suffocates any ego. Yet, it really is down to the individual to seek their own escape, to lose yourself in concentration*

*Under Freud's childbearing affecting adult behaviour we could relate this to our organic environment*

*To be restrained is a growing unique approach towards reality making, and yet I feel as though evidence of the artist entering into their world, to lose oneself may have offered more potentialities. .*

*Extreme climbing, base jumping, parkour there is little strategy or finesse in their approach, like no football. The activities are not primitive, they may be described as such in their output but this does a disservice to the child.*



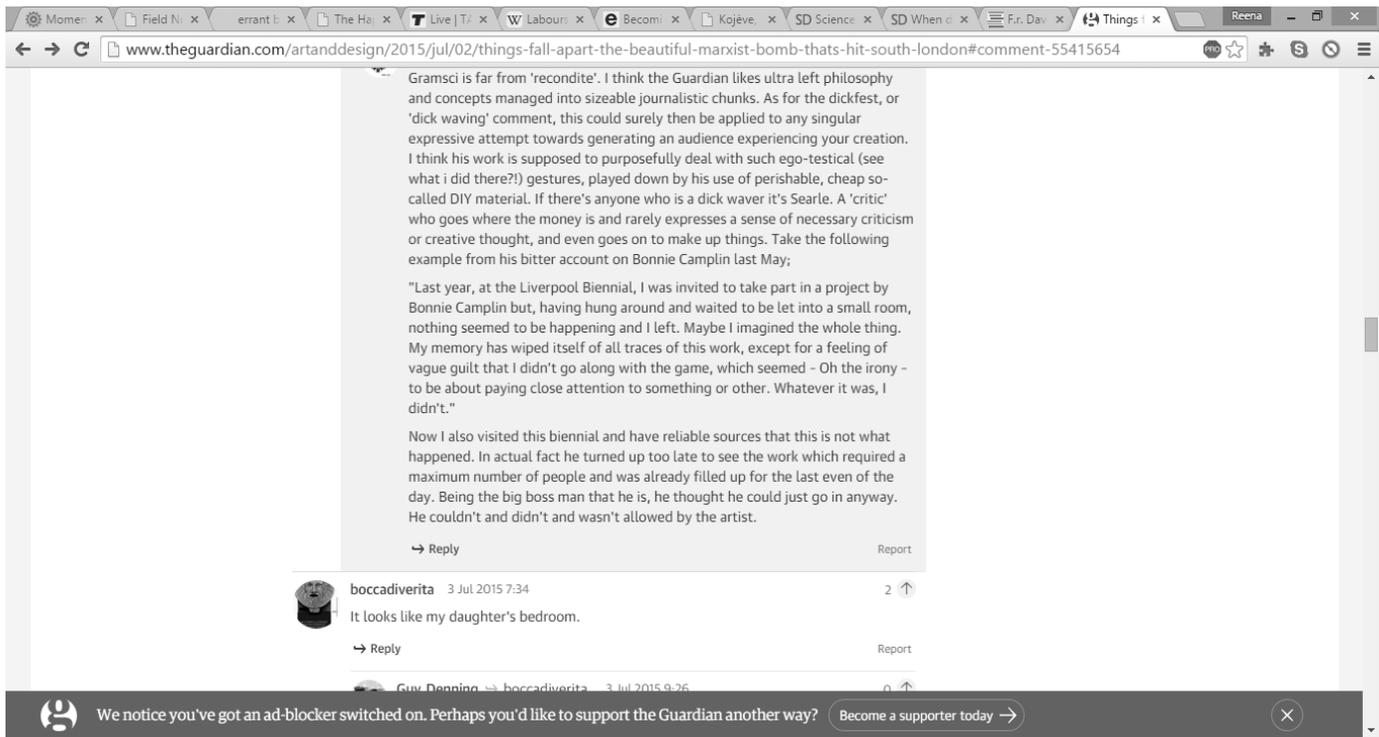
## The Old Blind School

Also to be included...The Bluecoat, working there temporarily and why, even though it should have been a great arts hub I despised the place, whilst looking through the parable of the Whistler masturbatory exhibition.

Record Shop where I embarrassed myself regarding the Beatles white album within an art collection activity taking place and yet managed to get away with it in such a way that it could just as well have been my own interventionist act...

Model, upstart gallery that epitomises the Liverpool art less institutional culture spirit and yet still leaves me feeling awkward and bitter about everything and how the symbolic nature of play within art has taken a turn towards the humble, dispirited and how this biennial is a lot less celebratory in general. Also a video piece with a water slide and voice over which was brilliant, and made my week.





Control is a self induced apparatus providing the necessary meaning. The attempt to implement laws into the social internet is an acknowledgement that social life online is taking up similar attitudes to the social life outside it. Social networks have the danger of becoming places of unimaginative conformity where it is not the individual's freedom at stake but the necessity to smooth out the human ethical error functions of a profitable site. I notice a number is on the wall. Is this part of the installation or unintentional? I don't know, So phie Calle it up.

"Hi" I say

"hello?"

"Is this part of the exhibit?"

"Hi yes it is, it's me from the future, but writing this in the present. Why are you making up that you called this number when you didn't just so you can now invent some kind of meta narrative within this monologue?"

"I'll have to get back to you when I've made up something interesting and profound. May take a while, in the mean time please hold" ..... A Tycho's cover of another composer in synth .....

..... "Hello Walter De Maria Here.... What do you want, who gave you this number if you're another one of those prankers then I'm not interested?"

And so onto capitalism. Well I think of it like when playing a competitive game online and you reach that point where you cannot possibly lose but still need to finish it off. In that moment it is a bored frustration and a realisation that the best part was the struggle process. I can only imagine that's what it's like to be an oligarch or Trump card, where everyday is a limitless pointlessness.



## Waiting for Tiny

I would hide on the garden periphery, between the shrubbery and our lawn, my back against the wire fence behind a bush. This lasted every day for three humid weeks; topless and burning patterns on my itchy skin. I had constructed a pitfall cage consisting of a washing basket held up either end by a stick, the nearest end attached to my pulled string. This rested on a vertical stick-fork - around 60cm in height - placed in the middle and pierced into a pavement crack. Like something out of a Noel Chomel diagram. Situated directly four meters opposite ready for release, it was easily disguised by the hedges running parallel; a striation on the only direct pathway to the house, otherwise surrounded by fauna and garden obstacles.

It was as if to contain her feral ways whilst safely- and maybe enviously-entering into my own, in which I had constructed an environment of de-domesticated sport. Perhaps she didn't see a distinction between play and prey anyway, but she would usually arrive twice a day around the same time. She would 'slink and sidle over' the chain back garden fence before ticking the floor with her paws onto the pathway; heading towards this hopeful enclosure. It was always ineffective. Just as I was about to release the thing she'd turn into a black dart, ears back, tail up, petrified and pissed off, flowing through my clasp. I also tried luring her by tapping her food bowl "Tyyyneey, dinner tyym!" But it wasn't long before she shrewd up to this too. ("mrkgnaoooo"). Another time I tried making an elaborate net with the washing line but this also proved impotent. I could have improved it of course, but the anticipation of waiting and sweating was the real game and one that became ritual and in turn this became *her* game, not mine. Although she grew to hate me and even though I look back and realise I am an evil bastard; whether she liked it or not, we were our only friends in that dry and lonely July.



affordable dreams and relaxing rooms of emptiness; a biennial of many couches

## St. Andrews Gardens

Next day another brilliant video footage this time an archive of work by Jef Cornelis and how one interview in particular says a lot about a lot. Also how I was told by a volunteer, that I had been there for the longest time which I am proud of.



Also to be included... Open eye Gallery and the futility of representing insurrection in art, dazzle ship and the futility of not taking crazy camouflage to the complete extreme, Tate Liverpool and the futility of trying to appease everyone.





space: the concretising frontier

## Mann Island

I remember assisting with Hector Zamora's concrete hanging bird-like manta rays from the window ceiling in this Mann island area photographed above. You had to carry them carefully because even though concrete casts, they were fragile. At the time the surrounding area was still unfinished so we had borrowed a couple of their construction workers to help out in hanging them by using cherry pickers; (what is it about construction equipment names sounding like sexual innuendos? Driller, vibrator, bulldozer, backhoe loader). Anyway, he was seemingly frustrated with their jovial approach. His was a work of sincere hard graft and he couldn't fathom why the other men wanted breaks every couple of hours. ("In Mexico you do 12 hour days", I remember him telling me. I'm still uncertain whether this was a good form of criticism to throw at our tea drinking labourers). I could appreciate both perspectives, after all even though I was his

main art assistant, supervising the volunteers, it was drudgery. Heavy steel toe boots, hairline destroying helmets and a damp Irish wind clapping between open doors; and I was only there for a week. He didn't seem to rejoice at being in the Biennial either, so I'm not really sure any of us were actually enjoying the process. At least the construction workers made it an enjoyable event. Even if they didn't appreciate its poetic nature of giving lightness to what was and still is essentially a soulless corporate amphitheatre. It was sometimes difficult telling which way the wires went especially since there were seven variations and once or twice I'd even got them upside down. Only Hector could tell. These manta rays taking flight now rest somewhere else, where I don't know, but I'd like to think they are resting in another coastal city somewhere, delicately expressing the evil entrapments of greed while slowly cracking apart. When an architect for the building swung by he congratulated Zamora on making something which 'fitted in so nicely with the space'.



**'An amateur is what today the intellectual ought to be... instead of doing what one is supposed to do one can ask why one does it, who benefits from it, how can it reconnect with a personal project and original thought' Edward Said 1993. In the 'A Needle Walks Into A Haystack' accompanying Biennial book. But purposefully being an amateur just means you can get away with being rubbish. No I know what he meant, but the amateur is now all pervasive, not in a Punk way though, but as a submissive. Hence the obsession with television shows in which we witness an individual develop through competition among others-food, business, singing, art, profession, life. I am an amateur critic, does that make me an amateur thinker? Is to question then to be amateur? I thought that was being inquisitive. To be an outsider is not to be equated with amateur. Perhaps the amateur needs to then be an outsider. But of themselves, to be self-critical. But what do I know?**

## Notes yet to be assigned to any narrative



Sign language: when semantic density (concentration of meaning) is retranslated through words on a road sign it can be compared to the urban topography, in which the closer you get the greater the levels of abstraction. But the same can be said for the greater the distance. In short can it be argued that everything begins and ends as an abstract?

It's a good city for walking in the rain at night half cut. it must have museums/bars and cafes/parks/markets and shopping area/historic quarters/business complex and preferably a litter of distinctive spectacle pieces among these features which characterises its present brand i.e. the light show in Hong Kong, Liverpool's football stadiums or Amsterdam's red light district. Standardised uniqueness. Damp drizzle and cobbled pavements cars shooshing by hands in pockets very romantic, but gritty except at night a clamp is pressed around both temples

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Glass building... i like what WB said about plants being used to house them, kind of implying that our best dream is to capture nature in trying to live within it as a perfect entity of Victorian-bled values. From the walled windows I would look out on I would just see other populated offices and other black clad hospitality workers doing the same as me. Serving as a reminder this environment offered me little else to look beyond but the sanitising practical ever-present.

The outside was always its internal world growing within, needing no offering. These buildings shouldn't have had windows at all.

Assimilation process, by which you create signifiers, creates disequilibrium when something unexpected occurs according to signifiers this creates a necessary construction of meaning. In play new constructions of meaning are able, whilst explaining them ruins the opportunity to explore unknown territories of meaning, even if incorrect.

Kids hiding behind wall 'Do you like surprises?'

H.D, games I would play and discussion of sex. Glass building... i like what WB said about plants being used to house them, kind of implying that our best dream is to capture nature in trying to live within it as a perfect entity of Victorian-bled values. From the walled windows I would look out on I would just see other populated offices and other black clad hospitality workers doing the same as me. Serving as a reminder this environment offered me little else to look beyond but the sanitising practical ever-present. The outside was always its internal world growing within, needing no offering. These buildings shouldn't have had windows at all. Unlike London suburbs which have all these windows but no soul.

'The question we must ask is not whether we shall have computers but rather, since we are going to have them, how can we make the most humane intelligent use of them? George a miller psychology of communication... but what is humane and what is intelligent?

What happens when someone from the past

.... these Towie types returning in their droves from a more exciting event, Shaggy on stage and who can blame them! the crowd takes on a simplified personality symbol, we know this now, its disruption is

They one of the sponsors again. I remember working there too. One of the worst jobs I ever had. Hill Dickenson. Hill Dickenson more like. I worked at the top of the building but was at the bottom of their hierarchy. In a steamy steel cube kitchen, serving lawyers stimulants of caffeine and sugar. In typical 'Down and Out' narrative no matter how much chaos was going on in the kitchen, once I stepped outside into the minimal corporate aesthetic of air conditioned sanitisation, I would have to appear 'presentable' with my trolley and drenched sweat which seemed to emerge whenever it was able to relax. It was mind numbing labour but often hard. Very hard. And I never got help. My supervisor was a lazy git, complaining of a back problem for the entire nine months I was there, I understood how he felt though and I never complained about him because he was one of the few alliances I had, and you needed them in that place. My hand started hurting from strenuous movement, not from any potential real accidents. And even if it had happened can you imagine me successfully suing a law firm?! When I did eventually leave it was like a rebirth. By the time I left I'd only saved up a few hundred pounds and it would all go towards moving to London a year later. One of my biggest regrets was not quitting sooner. But it was a valuable lesson. The last couple of hours were always the worse. I think there were about eight glass walled minimalist conference rooms, plus a reception and few more on other floors and on busy days they'd all be full. There'd be around a hundred odd cups, saucers, spoons, plates, lunches and glasses to clear. Just in time and stinking by the time I got home when my sweat would finally be able to relax... and mild pain from repetitive strain.. The Partners receiving ... while the full time pot washer downstairs got an increase of 20p an hour for being there six years. But they weren't all cunts. Like all work environments like this, it bread back stabbing and arse licking. And then there was the humour. The sexual innuendoes and the light hearted sexism. The future me puts this down to bored frustration just as I did then, but... Of course the lawyers worked hard too, but they also got rewarded more than fairly. And the uniform. I was made to wear steel toe cap boots for health and safety purposes, I dunno incase a spoon fell on my foot or something. I'd have gladly signed an agreement not to sue or claim liability just to wear something that didn't feel like walking through water. which I'd put on only when I was asked to help out in the canteen downstairs. They didn't like me resting, if I'd known in the job description that 'and general assistance' meant doing the jobs others didn't want then I'd have stayed on the dole. I was always being called 'young man', which I liked but knew it wouldn't last long and knew I couldn't still be there when it did. Squares. I spat in their tea. The spit maintained by their produce and by their complete dominance of a city without nearby stalls. 'I just want to do the best I can' I overheard the woman say when I was pouring. Steve told me she had made a joke with him about.... As this was only perceived by me I regarded it as my own humble form of justice. I felt bad though when one of their representing lawyers took from my bitter chassel. But that shows a stronger moral fibre than them. Everything must follow a pre-made path in law, everything is negated, made better by taking money away from one to another, or a life from one place to another. I felt bad for the woman though, but not that bad. Has its own language... i did transcripts work from home for a while but it didn't work out... it is the final point of expression, it dictates the outcomes of change and that extreme creative act-unlawfulness... awyers have it great cos they can appear to make the world just or work within the language of just but not have to directly change the tide or effect rules and so they exist to allow themselves to exist and feed themselves. It is the perfect form of surviving. Glass building... i like what WB said about plants being used to house them, kind of implying that our best dream is to capture nature in trying to live within it as a perfect entity of Victorian-bled values. From the walled windows I would look out on I would just see other populated offices and other black clad hospitality workers doing the same as me. Serving as a reminder this environment offered me little else to look beyond but the sanitising practical ever-present. The outside was always its internal world growing within, needing no offering. These buildings shouldn't have had windows at all.

Referenced Images:

Alberto Burri 'Sacco' series, fondazione giov-anna piras

Sharon Lockhart '[Pódworka](#)', artist's site