

MOVEMENT, ANOMALIES and DISTRACTIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals, institutions and organisations that have been supporting this exhibition:



Codrington Library, All Souls College Oxford

Green-Templeton College Oxford

Harris-Manchester College

Oxford Crematorium

RSPB: Otmoor

*James E. Hogan
Hope Entomological Collections
Oxford University Museum of Natural History*

NatWest Bank, Cornmarket Street branch, Oxford

Windrush Tower, Blackbird Leys

Wolfson College Oxford

CONTRIBUTORS

Participating Artists

Sonia Boue & Allison Berrett
Magdalen Chua
Kate Hammersley
Katalin Hausel
Katie Herzog
Diane Jones-Parry
Mirja Koponen
Stephen Lee
Annabel Ralphs
Luke Ralphs

Contributing Writers

Katalin Hausel
Hannah Newell
Annissa Schlichting

and all participating artists

Curator

Katalin Hausel

The disappearing exhibition

Katalin Hausel

“Another dream: in the inside which is the outside, a window and myself. Through this window I want to pass to the outside which is the inside for me. When I wake up, the window of my room is the one from my dream; the inside I was looking for is the space outside.”¹

¹ Lygia Clark, *About the Act*; as quoted in Monica Amor: *From Work to Frame*, In *Between and Beyond*, Grey Room 38, pp20-35

Space that surrounds us unavoidably determines who we are. The spatial system of the city is a flexible web of forces that allow or forbid access, whether we are conscious of it or not. At the same time, as our bodies move through this structure, we are capable of transforming it, even by a slight change in attitude or alteration of rhythm in our stride. As it is, whether the city overpowers and subdues us, or offers itself as site for transformation and play, is up to each one of us.

Oxford is a city of multiple overlapping, entangled, historically reinforced systems of exclusive spaces. Most of these are institutional rather than private - however, the sense of enclosed privacy permeates the city. The exclusivity is justified by the historically developed profile of academic excellence that defines not only the colleges and the university but became equal with the name of the town itself.

Inaccessibility triggers fantasy, and Oxford is a rewarding tourist experience as such, more due to our imagination than actual experience. Maintained inaccessibility however can be perceived as discriminative paranoia if the boundaries happen to be permanently staked at one's very own backyard. A flight of imagination turns into weary boredom, curiosity is dulled by scepticism, and assumed glory fades into suspected mediocrity, because open systems are the call of the day, and something so stubbornly closed eventually raises suspicions of trickery.

There is a resignation to such fossilized spatial practice, a mutual inertia that prohibits trespass and investigation. Once you live in Oxford, you tend to stop asking questions and take your place on either side of the boundaries. Representations of Oxford reinforce the maintained mystification of exclusion, to joint benefit, as the tourist industry supports the town, as well as the university. The separation becomes the underpinning of daily life, defining the



Stephen Lee: IDEAL CITY
photograph by Katalin Hausel

movements and experiences of the inhabitants of the city.

This rigid setting, on the other hand, lends itself to transgressions characteristic of contemporary art. Neither celebratory romanticism nor stout post-modern criticism can say much new or interesting about this status quo; but contemporary art has a tendency towards instability, uncertainty, spatial temporality and immateriality, and as such, it is well positioned to transgress and undermine the familiar structure of the city in subtle ways.

In the footsteps of the Situationists, the exhibition *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* set out to loosen and reflect upon the established image of the city, to slightly shift centres, pathways, and destinations, to reinvestigate hidden histories and buried agendas that lie behind the official story of the city, told again and again by tourist guides and locals in unison, to playfully relocate sights and re-define viewpoints, and gently nudge the image of the city into the realm of the absurd.



Mirja Koponen with THE FIRMAMENT
photograph by Katalin Hausel

Luke Ralphs: SUBTERRANEAN -
Entrance to Trill Mill stream underground
tunnel
photograph by Katalin Hausel



The attempts to access selected excluded places and collaborate with institutions yielded widely different results. The university library, the Bodleian, one of the oldest and largest libraries in the country, issued an umbrella rejection to all three proposals submitted to them,

in a manner that indicated their awareness of how beneficial it could be for it to be flexible enough to accommodate such requests, but still, institutional inertia overruled, and no risks were taken. The artists involved reacted differently – Katie Herzog made the rejection the point of her project, while Kate Hammersley went the official way, applied and eventually became a member of the library, and created her work within the parameters of limited access that an external reader's library card allowed. One artist sadly dropped out of the exhibition, feeling that since recently public funding almost entirely dried up for artists, the least that can be expected is to have the support that costs no money – a point of view that cannot be shaken off as unreasonable.

Some of the artists' requests were met with enthusiasm and support that lasted all the way through: Katalin Hausel enjoyed the assistance of Harris-Manchester College at every stage of her project, just as Magdalen Chua, who was allowed access to research and exhibit at the Crematorium, or Stephen Lee, enjoying fruitful collaboration at both Blackbird Leys and the Natural History Museum. Sonia Boue and Allison Berrett also gained easy access to the Codrington Library without problems. In certain cases the enthusiasm were curbed by infrastructural deficiencies, and so while Mirja Koponen could place her site-specific paintings inside the Radcliffe Observatory, the building stayed closed to the public during the day. In some cases there was no response and nobody took upon the responsibility to reach any, positive or negative, decision regarding the project, and therefore left in limbo, Diane Jones-Parry altered her plans, and staged her work as a private act which was documented and made viewable on the web.



LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY
photograph by Katie Herzog

Well aware that any attempt to gain access would result in a rejection, Luke Ralphs simply went ahead and toeing but not violating legal boundaries made his project about an underground waterway, subject of many Oxford legends. In a mirroring contrast, Annabel Ralphs has been in correspondence with numerous different institutions for years, following her interest in the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary.

STAGE 2. Displace

The original call for proposals used the term “display” to describe the second stage of the exhibition. However, invariably, the artworks became visible not only by removing them from their original location and putting them on view, but rather by putting them on an unexpected and temporary display that interrupted their original meaning as well as their new context's. The pieces wove themselves into the fabric of the city, and doing so not only they themselves went through change but also altered the seemingly infinitely secured and immovably robust image of the city itself. The work appeared and disappeared simultaneously.

Each project did this in a different way. Katie Herzog, proposing a toilet door swap between the Bodleian and Oxford Public Library, accidentally unearthed the most curious fact about Oxford, despite of the rejection from the Bodleian. “*Oxford Toilet Exchange*” originally proposed that graffiti found in the toilets of a private institution and in a public library to be

Stephen Lee: IDEAL CITY,
two views
photographs by Katalin Hausel



swapped. After the rejection, the project took a different route, and became a reflection on guarding and hiding the bodily in a library that allows no access to the public. However, in the course of trying to find a way to do this project, it turned out that there are no public toilets in the Oxford Public Library at all. Even if the Bodleian had given permission, there would have been nothing to swap. As a matter of fact, there are not many public toilets in Oxford in general - the City Council controls all public lavatories in the city, and they are very few. As it happens, they are also overly maintained, and completely free of graffiti.



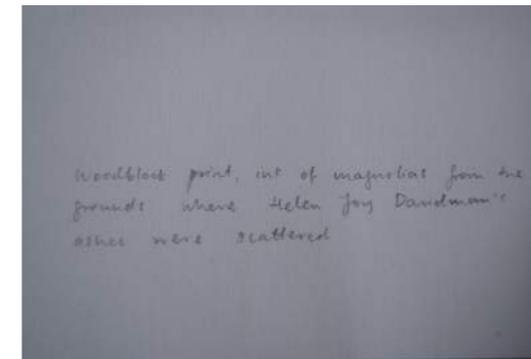
Graffiti is always a disruption of the power structures of a place. Whether appearing in public or private spaces, it is by definition an intrusion made by an interloper. What does it say about a city if it offers no surface for graffiti? It is befitting the over-controlled image of Oxford that it tolerates no form of graffiti, not even in the privacy of a public toilet. Also befitting, that through accommodating or refusing bodily comfort, the city implicitly defines itself by selecting its preferred citizens. Herzog's project drew out a characteristic of Oxford where the realm of tourists and the realm of "outsider" residents overlap. Only true insiders, insiders of the university system, can feel physically comfortable in the historic part of the city, because only they have comfortable access to toilet facilities.

Stephen Lee's performance created rather than traced a line between disparate spheres in the city. The artist was allowed access to the storage facilities of the Natural History Museum where he found a large collection of insects' nests, available for study by biologists, architects or social scientists. Lee teaches in the community college of the city, an educational institution that is emphatically not part of the circle of elite that is the University of Oxford system. His work consisted of a performance that led from the city centre to Blackbird Leys, one of the few high-rise housing projects that were allowed to appear in Oxford, well out of sight from the view of the "dreaming spires". A natural educator, he plotted the route to Blackbird Leys via public transportation, throughout which he individually approached travellers and viewers to look at the city through the images of insect nests transferred onto transparencies, engaging them in a conversation about city planning, about access to knowledge, and even access to education, while offering them a piece of



Magdalen Chua: GRIEVE OVER NOTHING
IN MAGDALEN, detail
photograph by Katalin Hausel

beeswax to make a bee for him in exchange. The performance ended with a visit to the very top of one of the tallest high-rises, where a shockingly different Oxford was laid out in front of the viewer. The colleges a distant sliver of white, what dominated the view was the Phillip Morris car factory and the football stadium. The result was a dramatic shift in the perception of the city, losing its established centre, and gauged by sheer volume. The distance between the academic part of the city and the perimeters became tangible.



Magdalen Chua also connected the periphery of the city to the academic centre, via the most human common denominator possible: death. Chua approached Magdalen College by

seeking access to two Oxford writers, C.S. Lewis and Julian Barnes who were alumni of the College and had written about mortality and death. Venturing into their writings and lives, she discovered that both writers' wives had passed away and they had chosen different ways of acknowledging the grief they experienced. Titled "Grieve Over Nothing In Magdalen", her private correspondence with Julian Barnes and the small public installation at the epitaph of C.S. Lewis' wife at the Crematorium in Barton created two opposite poles, but the different narratives intertwined in many ways, negotiating the distance not only between public and private, but also between collective and private experience, and between physicality and immateriality. At the same time, the rich history and decorum of the city, its vast number of famous scientists, artists and well-known public figures, the perceived eternity of academia, were all quietly put into the context of the heavy simplicity of mortality.

The presence and absence of things, especially things written, was the subject of Annabel Ralphs' work, "Hidden in Transit". Ralphs has been researching the history of the Oxford English Dictionary for years, an ongoing project that has required her to be engaged with the slow undercurrents of history, the peculiar connections of Oxford and its people, that can only unfold with long-term commitment. Hers was not a temporary project made specifically for the exhibition - rather, in an interesting twist she put the weight of her time-consuming engagement with this particular product of Oxford into contrast with the impossibility issues of making the work visible. Rather similarly to scientific research in Oxford, it remained obscure, as it has proved impossible to find an exhibition space in Oxford to place it in its entirety on public view. Aspects of the work were once on display at Oxford University Press for a longer period of time this year, but since the build-

Magdalen Chua: GRIEVE OVER NOTHING
IN MAGDALEN, detail
photograph by Katalin Hausel

Annabel Ralphs: HIDDEN IN TRANSIT
2 views
photograph by Katalin Hausel



ing is not open to the public, only a select few could see it – the people who work there. The objects slowly have been made or collected, then stored in Oxford, without having a chance to come to light. It is almost as if Oxford's secretive nature engulfs efforts even that are not meant to be exclusive, simply by the lack of public space. On 30 June 2012, the artist canoed down the river Cherwell to ship some of the objects to Wolfson College, the location for the final stage of the exhibition, placing them for a brief period into clear view on the river. She also used Royal Mail to release some of her images in the form of postcards into the public, making them visible by posting if only to the people handling local deliveries.



Mirja Koponen: THE FIRMAMENT
detail
photograph by Mirja Koponen

light-handed work, Mirja Koponen created a heavy-weight piece in order to capture the most transient thing in Oxford: sunlight. Large panels of immensely beautiful acrylic painting were specifically created for the space inside the Radcliffe Observatory. The observatory is not functional anymore, and it is closed to the public apart from brief and rare events. The light, however, moves through the beautifully renovated circular building each day, unseen, and when the sky is not overcast, the light throws the most spectacular shadows onto the hardwood floor. The painted panels were laid on the floor without becoming overpowered by their exquisite surrounding, instead, expertly crafted to create a balance of dominating without diminishing the architecture. Koponen's original intention for the exhibition was to find something that refuses to be excluded, to seek out something that trespasses and violates boundaries without breaking any rules or regulations, and to simply mark its presence. The labour that obviously went into creating the panels, and the seductive beauty of them, however, entered the piece into a different conversation about publicity and privacy. The work was not possible to visit in person, and instead it was broadcast live on the internet from

Ralphs' simple actions hide an almost overwhelmingly dense familiarity with Oxford. Using waterways and the mail, even a specific mailbox where most of Oxford English Dictionary correspondence were mailed, years long correspondence with different institutions related to the OED project including a prison – all this hidden behind a few seconds of appearance in a canoe as it gracefully cut its way in the water under the Magdalen Bridge. Cleverly weaving her own activities and their significance into the fabric of activities (and their significance) of Oxford, "Hidden In Transit" takes the tongue-in-cheek position of likening it to water under the bridge.

In contrast to the gravity of historical detail in Annabel Ralphs'



such unified architectural development of the city and such overpoweringly forbidding buildings – the story of obsession with power.

After several months of research in the archives of Harris-Manchester College, and after becoming familiar with the laws that governed public education in Britain since the 17th century, the difficulty that presented itself for the artist was to make an artwork about a realised utopian ideal, which by now so seamlessly became integrated into the self-image of the city that is now forgotten. Manchester College is a descendant of one of the once outcast dissenting academies that were shunned away from the capital and centers of learning, i.e. Oxford and Cambridge, because of its liberal views on separating religious faith from the opportunity for higher education. After 150 years, with the integration of principles of religious freedom into higher education, the college's ideals, and the reason for its existence in the north of the country, ceased - around the beginning of the 20th century.

The college by now is completely integrated into the university system, and the idea that prompted it into being is invisibly melted into contemporary life. In the end, the project became centered around finding a way to redraw the invisible because omnipresent ideal into the public sphere without overemphasizing it. The work, "The Story Of An Utopia", consisted of abstract sculptures (*Improv*) appearing on a balcony of a building waiting to be demolished, which were cut in the shape of the sky visible from inside Harris-Manchester College. Placed inside a Cornmarket street bank by its information desk, on the side of a foot high stack of blank printing paper (*Scraps*), appeared again one of the blue shapes of sky. People were free to use the sheets as scrap paper, taking a tiny sliver of the image with them, on a dimension of the paper that is never thought about. The sculptures appeared in the city for the day in a non-invasive and slightly absurd way, as twinkling blue abstractions, bringing to surface one of the forgotten stories of the city before disappearing again.

the observatory, because the college (Green-Templeton College) could not afford to designate a spare staff member to the tower in order to guard the historic site. Painting is a very private medium, both for the creator and for the viewer. Allowing the work to be reduced to a pixelated web video in order to make it available to anyone who wishes to see it, in contrast to its visceral beauty and magnificent size, was a pointedly democratic move, a witty demonstration of the absurdity of reinforced exclusivity.

Koponen's large abstract painting in fact was based on actual images of light moving through the particular space the panels were placed on display. The 2-part work "The Story Of An Utopia" by Katalin Hausel utilized a similar blurring of boundaries between abstraction and representation. As the curator as well as a participating artist of this exhibition, Hausel was interested in the original reasons for elite isolation, curious about the source of financial support that resulted in



Katalin Hausel: THE STORY OF A UTOPIA
- Scraps
photograph by Katalin Hausel

Katalin Hausel: THE STORY OF A UTOPIA
- Improv
photograph by Katalin Hausel

Kate Hammersley: DISPATCHES FROM THE MOUNTAINEERING LIBRARY
detail
 photographs by Kate Hammersley and Katalin Hausel

Kate Hammersley combined playful experimentation with impeccable craftsmanship and in a presentation that hovered between a performance and a mobile sculpture display, on 30 June 2012 she cycled the streets of Oxford. The bicycle was fitted with various miniature mountains that she had made. Oxford is a very flat town, where there are no hills and definitely no mountains. However, the Bodleian, as one of the central collecting libraries in the country, has every publication ever printed on mountains and mountaineering on its shelves. After going through the elaborate process of applying for and being granted a library membership, Kate



Hammersley discovered that the Mountaineering Library in Oxford is underground. In a strange twist, not only there are no actual mountains in town and the literature on them is inaccessible to the general public, but also one even has to go underground in order to look up information regarding mountains. "Dispatches From The Mountaineering Library" set a few of the hidden mountains of Oxford free to roam the streets, in an elegant and hilariously funny move. As a surprising side-effect, the work also unexpectedly inserted itself into the framework of Oxford mythologies. The moment one got a glimpse of the artist and her sculptures on the slick green bicycle being photographed by groups of tourists under the Bridge of Sighs, it became clear that the performance, which appeared in the historic parts of town on a sunny Saturday, became

an eccentricity that sparked the imagination of visitors, and as such immediately became a tourist attraction. It was interesting to see how the city integrated the artwork without missing a beat, despite running into such resistance when asking for permissions for research and display.

Another performance that successfully weaved itself into the official stories of Oxford, told by tourist guides to thousands of visitors annually, was "Behind The Times", the work of Alison Berrett and Sonia Boue. The two artists, who simply started out visiting the Codrington Library uncovered the story behind the sundial in All Souls College. The sundial was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and in its original location was famously precise displaying the time. However, due to renovation works, it was temporarily removed and



Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES
 photograph by Katalin Hausel

never since has been relocated to its original place. As it is now, it is nothing else than an abstract public sculpture, without any purpose and function. Fascinated by the history of this object, the artists set themselves up as tourist guides, and approached people on this busy Saturday, telling them the story, and engaging them in a conversation about time, displacement and the meaning of objects. Not only they drew an interested crowd, but tourists guides who listened to their performance added the tale of the displaced timepiece to their regular collection of insider stories about the city.

These performances happened upon an approach that is characteristic of contemporary art, which, being interactive and temporal, reinvents meanings through negotiations between history and the present, between individual



and collective experiences, between reality and projection. While the city resists contemporary art because it poses a risk towards its sustained self-image, a few of the fleeting peculiar artworks that flickered on the surface for a day found a meaningful way to integrate itself into the fabric of the city's everyday life.

Resisting such an integration was part of the point of "Subterranean". Luke Ralphs' performance traced an underground stream onto the city streets, making the viewer walk across deserted parking lots and bland 80's architecture. Taking on the role of a tour guide, but obscuring the starting point for the tour and choosing a sight that is invisible, Ralphs made it difficult for himself to capture his audience. The well-paced and well-edited series of stories and facts however made a captivating connection between the underground tunnels carved by flowing water and the life of the city, the life of its celeb-

rity residents and the life of the artist himself. The necessity for a suspension of disbelief, threading through the entire exhibition was again called upon here as well – that the waters visible both at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College where the tour started, and at the gates of Christ Church College where it finished were in fact parts of the same stream turned out to be improvable, the blue dye poured into it never appearing on the other end. Appearing as the unconscious of the city, the tunnel remained invisible, only to be imagined. However, cleverly mixing myth and fact, and physically moving people across a part of town nobody ever visits, a city of hidden desires appeared, legend and personal experience intertwined. A new Oxford appeared with eradicated histories, misshapen architectural development, and failed educational integration.



Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES
 photograph by Katalin Hausel

Luke Ralphs: SUBTERRANEAN
 photograph by Katalin Hausel

Diane-Jones-Parry: INHABITED SPACE
 photograph by Diane Jones-Parry





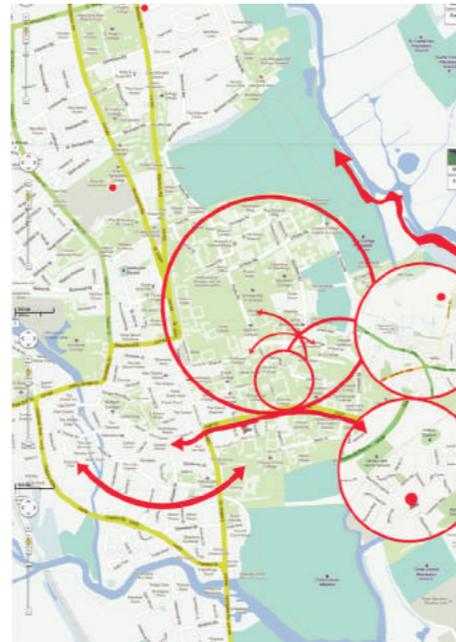
The journey between reality and projection, the visible and the hidden, “*Inhabited Space*” by Diane Jones-Parry cleverly mirrored the strange remoteness of scientific research that happens behind closed doors. With the permission of Ortmoo, a wildlife reserve dedicated to collect data on the ground and to manage, conserve and protect birds and wildlife, more exactly to observe behaviors of birds, Jones-Parry worked with a dancer who set herself up with a routine only known to herself, while the artist was observing her. The visual artist documented the movements of the dancer, recording her findings in the form of video and drawings. The resulting artwork was a compiled and edited video documentation, viewable by clicking on a link on the exhibition website, taking the viewer another step further away from the actual source. YouTube is where everything can be found, and the video was placed among the millions of clips that are broadcast by people from all over the world.

There was a peculiarity in this presentation of such elaborate work, somewhat similar to some of the other projects, but melancholic rather than funny. The beauty of the movements of the dancer, and the seduction of the video made of her, seemed so deeply hidden in the layers of internet presence, that they were on the verge of losing significance. An elegy to the obscure abstraction of scientific observation, but also, pointedly lacking real birds in the video, Jones-Parry’s work precariously balanced between the absurd and the wondrous, before disappearing in the sea of clips offered to the viewer by YouTube.

STAGE 3. Process

The last stage of *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* is a gallery exhibition. Although not integral to the collaboration between artists and institutions, a gallery exhibition seemed to be the only venue where a processing of the complex patterns that were created within the exhibition by the interaction of the 10 projects can be facilitated. If a new, momentary, fleeting map of Oxford was drawn for a day on 30 June 2012, the more traditional exhibition format can function not only as documentation, but also as a processing of that day.

Several threads occurred already that



connect the different projects: the creation of new histories, tracing the past within the present, the blurring of abstraction and representation. The installation of all of the projects in one place will allow more connections to surface.

What was achieved across all of the artworks in *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* is a reconfiguration of the notion of public sphere in Oxford, into a multitude of different, overlapping spheres and formations that hovered between control and desire, between history and the present, between factuality and projection, and between reality and imagination. Through creating movement, anomalies and distractions in a city of permanence, perfection and attractions, this exhibition loosened the image of Oxford, and the city allowed the transformation in a leisurely push and pull, with flexibility to accommodate the playful interventions but demonstrating enough resistance to crystallise the presence of each project as unique. We hope that the gallery presentation of the work will allow a wider audience to access to our findings, before they finally disappear without a trace in the bottomless history of the city.

A space in need of a strong voice. The streets of Oxford.

Annissa Schlichting

Over the centuries Oxford's city fabric within the medieval city walls has changed periodically resulting in decreased permeability and a reduction of public space. The streets in particular appear to have become less valued. As a consequence of this they have been bought, shortened, narrowed, or simply incorporated by the academic world as well as the non-academic.



NEW COLLEGE LANE
Photograph by Annissa Schlichting

Most of this process is invisible – a hidden history. Only a few of these historical shifts can be physical experienced - for example by walking along Kybald Street leading towards University College, or by walking along Shoe Lane leading towards the Clarendon Shopping Centre. Another example is Beef Lane, incorporated by Pembroke College in 1960.

The status of public streets and the amount of pedestrian traffic thereon have also been affected by foot bridges spanning over the streets below; most of these footbridges were built at the beginning of last century in order to connect old and new college sites. Bridges such as those at University College, New College and Hertford College enable staff and students to move around the city without using the surrounding public space. The same principle applies to tunnels connecting medieval college sites to neighbouring city blocks acquired later. An example of such a tunnel can be found at Oriol College. Here the old quad is connected via a tunnel to a block of smaller old city houses which are now used to accommodate students and teaching facilities. As only one new main entrance for this housing block was cre-

ated along with the tunnel, the old entrance doors remain vividly present to the passer-by in bright colours but they are actually redundant and impenetrable.

Bridges and tunnels seem to counteract the most important function of a street, to serve as a linking way. But above all they reduce a street's potential to serve as a social space, a public space where academic and non-academic, residents and non-residents can meet. This process is not at a halt. Even though expansion within the former city wall seemed almost impossible Pembroke College was able to buy houses and ground on a block next to its premises piecemeal and cemented the new extension in 2012 by building a foot bridge over-sailing Brewer Street.

Other features also influence the permeability and pedestrian traffic on streets and lanes. The most obvious example are gates stationed at either end of lanes leading towards the southern

part of the inner city. Closed by college staff at sunset and reopened at sunrise, their existence creates a different night and day pattern in the use of surrounding streets and these lanes. During the university's examination periods the gates at Logic Lane are also locked throughout the day resulting in an ever changing permeability of the city depending on the academic calendar. Currently there are proposals to close off Bulwarks Lane, a Public Right of Way between Nuffield College and St. Peters College, and Pembroke Alley next to Pembroke College.

Oxford has a large number of bigger units in its inner city fabric. These units are in the most part colleges occupying whole city blocks. The further east one goes, the more impermeable the inner city becomes. Oxford's original Roman street pattern appears to have been dramatically altered with fewer streets now accessible for the public to roam.

Almost all college complexes with their inherently more inward-oriented components are less embracing of public interaction and have fewer outwardly facing exits and entrances in comparison to the number of people living and working there. Solid facades and high walls not only change the frequency of use of neighbouring streets but more importantly determine their character. Thus streets and lanes squeezed in between huge college complexes, sporadically over-sailed by bridges, or undermined by tunnels seem to be dispossessed of their social power.

If a city is a social model which should enable people to interact the resulting questions ensue: How can a city serve this function, if there are less public spaces for doing so? What happens, if these spaces are not experienced as neutral ground anymore? How can people meet, if they are surrounded by spaces emphasizing barriers? What kind of social behaviour is encouraged with such public spaces? And what unwritten social message do they bear?

A space creates and dictates our behaviour the same way as our behaviour can create space. As a consequence of this Oxford's streets and lanes represent potential public spaces for positive social interactions. They should be defined as blank spaces, as spaces without pre-justification and no specific owner. Only whilst belonging to nobody or better still everybody, can they carry the potential to serve positive functions on neutral ground. Therefore it is important to rediscover Oxford's streets and lanes especially within the former city wall as valuable public spaces and treat them as well as maintain them as such.



GATE AT LOGIC LANE
Photograph by Annissa Schlichting

The whole is the sum of its parts

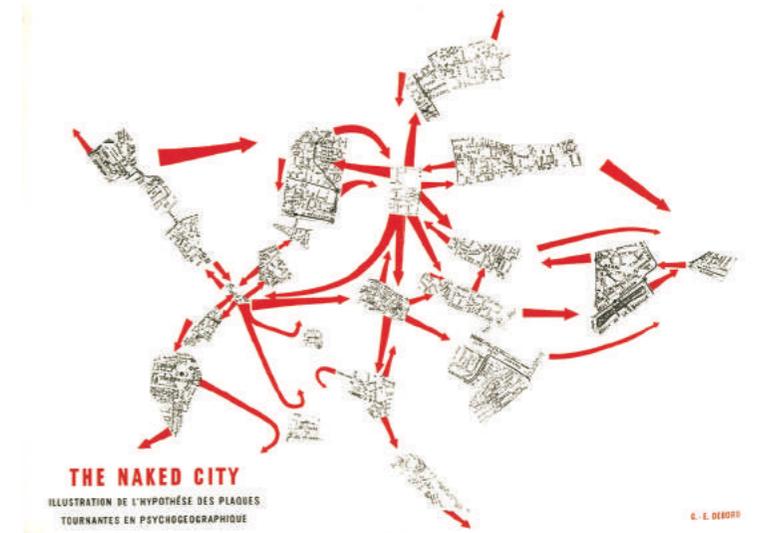
Hannah Newell

A city is a map of streets, roads and alleyways coursing between buildings. One place runs into another and another. As such, cities are always on the move: networks of communications running into, out of and through them. They are places we experience through a process of navigation. Cities are where we meet and where people and places intersect. They are harbours and markets and centres of knowledge. The city is in constant flow.

It is this flow - the spatial practice of cities by people - that gives them much of their character. It is how we experience cities as both inhabitants, following habitual pathways as we go about our everyday lives, and as curious visitors exploring each street for the first time. These movements write and re-write the narrative of the city on a daily basis to "compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator."¹

From above, the fragmented city may look the same as any other: divided into its districts by function and delineated by the boundaries of historic quarters, each with its own strange personality. On the ground, a footfall score sounds out the borders of less distinct and overlapping territories.

In 1946 French Marxist Henri Lefebvre published *'Critique de la vie quotidienne' (Critique of everyday life)*, which reflected a growing awareness of the city's subtle social structuring within contemporary thought. These theories challenged 20th century urban planning as devastatingly simplistic, criticising the tendency to disregard the complex social ecology developed by the inhabitants of urban areas over time, in favour of more immediate and white-washed ideas of 'progress'. The somewhat strict rationalist consideration of the whole - the common good - was felt by some to move too far away from the interests and potential of the individual. The God-like aerial perspective of city plans and maps was countered with experience based descriptions and visual representations that aimed to reflect the compound and interlocking nature of urban living at personal and community levels. These challenges to the traditional understanding of the urban inspired 'The Naked City', a psychogeographic map of Paris created by Guy Debord with Asger Jorn and one of the better known images to be produced by the Situationist International, an artistic and political movement working between 1957 and 1972.



GUY DEBORD: The Naked City

Reprinted in Simon Sadler: *The Situationist City* (The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1998), p. 60.

¹ Michael de Certeau (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life: Walking in the City*, London: University of California Press pg 93

The map was created through a process of ‘drift’ to discover those parts of the city that still retained the ideal qualities of the urban. The Situationists may have struggled to define exactly what constituted these specific qualities of urban ambience they sought and how it was to guide the ‘drifter’, but it is clear that the areas not included – in fact actively cut out of - ‘The Naked City’ were those places felt to have been fragmented through the effects of urban planning, capitalism and bureaucracy. The sections of Paris that are retained, directional arrows darting hurriedly over the voids in between, are those parts deemed to be the liveable sections; those places that are less controlled, that are adaptive, perhaps even chaotic as opposed to abruptly functional. The sections removed were those that subsumed any sense of agency in the inhabitant. Communication is muted and the city unresponsive.

Guy Debord defined the aim of walking the city to produce the situationist psychogeographic maps as a kind of fieldwork for refashioning the city: a critical investigation into urban space in order to theorise on possible future cities. ‘*Movements, Anomalies and Distractions*’ contained a similar challenge to the accepted practices and subtle controls within the life of the city of Oxford, opening up a variety of different spaces for discussion. This developed into a many layered investigation into the complex and many-fold realities of the city, existing side by side.

“This is a city full of blind spots, for any of its residents, but in particular for people not associated with the university”² **“They have a lake in there, you know” - on passing Worcester College, Oxford**

It is entirely unsurprising that C. S. Lewis, the famed children’s fiction author and lecturer at the University of Oxford, should have written about entire worlds existing inside wardrobes. Grand complexes are scattered throughout Oxford, often internally much larger than expected and mostly hidden behind university gates. They represent a world that is in-accessible to many, both in terms of access to higher education and knowledge, but also simply as spaces within the city for those not involved with the university institution. The university permeates throughout the urban landscape of Oxford architecturally and culturally, inspiring a world class knowledge economy and tourist industry. But for some it is this hidden city within the city that creates the sense of fragmentation which ‘*Movements, Anomalies and Distractions*’ explores. This romantic, secretive side of the city was shown in the first event to take place on the 30th June in a piece entitled ‘*Hidden in Transit*’ by Annabel Ralphs. As if playing a game of pooh sticks, we ran from one side of Magdalen Bridge to the other to watch Ralphs float past underneath, a 150 lb and 4 ft long book of endangered words safely stowed in her boat. She toured the precious and completely unseen cargo up the river and through the city as a reflection of the hidden movement of information and knowledge habitually coursing through the city unbeknownst to the majority of its inhabitants.

Rattling around town, I made my way between many of the different works on the 30th June by bicycle. Having lived in Oxford for ten years or more, I span through the streets with conspiratorial confidence, weaving smugly through bewildered and frustratingly slow moving tourists. However, like the Letterist International’s alternative travel agency, events over the course of the day would make me a tourist in my own town, taking me from the top of a sixties tower block to the inside of the Radcliffe Observatory (an otherwise in-accessible part of Green Templeton College) to a tour through the memory of one of Oxford’s oldest districts.

² **Movements, Anomalies and Distractions**
website <http://maad.moonfruit.com/>

Following the underground path of the Trill Mill Stream with Luke Ralphs as part of his work ‘*Subterranean*’, we journeyed through nondescript car-parks, housing developments, traffic junctions and the ghosts of monasteries, cattle markets and cobbled alley ways. The faces of Oxford multiplied, like the gargoyle visages that decorate various college buildings around the city.

Over the course of one day, my personal map of the city was unfolded, stretched and reshaped to show the hidden gaps and breaks. The small city of Oxford grew to include places hitherto disregarded or forgotten, either collectively or individually. As pieces of knowledge taken from the book filled bowels of the city were given an airing, toured on bicycles and boats through the city, we trod forgotten histories and discovered how the personal narratives of the artists mingled with those of well known figures, such as Lawrence of Arabia, C.S. Lewis and Julian Barnes. These personal stories of lives lived and written were contrasted with the view of the expanse of Oxford from the top of Windrush Tower in Blackbird Leys, spreading outwards from the historic city centre across a socio-economic divide to cul-de-sacs and avenues, industrial buildings and the football stadium. From this overarching view point we considered the ‘*Ideal City*’ with Stephen Lee, framing the growing, moving city from inside the intricate natural structure of insect nests in order to consider the agency or non-agency present in the development of cities for its inhabitants.

Urban planning, or any other control over urban space that overly represents a particular bias – a particular group or specific interest – can result in places that feel inflexible and closed. The criticism made of rationalist design was that it created “*machines for living in*”³: spaces and buildings in which people lived but could never really ‘inhabit’ because they had no relationship to them. An important personal relationship to space had been removed, which eventually undermined the communality that the designs originally sought to inspire and suggested the necessity of a co-dependent relationship between the planned and non-planned. Both have their own blind spots, but in complimenting each other the collective making of the city becomes apparent. It is this collectivity contained within urban density that makes cities attractively dynamic, but also makes them social, political and economic melting pots. Differences are often made greater in comparison and the question of whom the city represents is consistently raised, a question aimed at Oxford by the artists involved in ‘*Movement, Anomalies and Distractions*’.

“Realism and the utopian know each other very well indeed”⁴

The Situationists aimed to critique the city and in doing so, looked to find the utopian within everyday life, as opposed to the grand sweeping solutions of the bulldozers that destroyed parts of the city they revered in order to replace them with idealised and homogeneous designs. However, many of their ideas for a Situationist city also led to utopian plans for great new cities built upon blank canvases, inspiring urban dreams such as Constant Nieuwenhuys’ ‘*New Babylon*’, a plan for a massive world wide city populated by a completely nomadic and unrestricted population. In resistance to this kind of conclusion to their ideas, the Situationist group confined themselves to the position of theorists and researchers, making forays into the city to experiment with new ways of living.

Homogenisation and the broad brushed efforts of the more brutish incarnations of urban

³ Michel Colle, a member of COBRA, (1948 – 1951), a group of artists and writers, as quoted by Simon Sadler, (1999) *The Situationist City* Massachusetts: The MIT Press

^{4, 5} ⁸⁶ Simon Sadler, New Gorbals, New Babylon: Ross Birrell in conversation with Simon Sadler, in *ARCADE: Artists and Public Spaces* London: Black Dog Publishing, pg 57-69

planning can have a devastating effect on some of the qualities we enjoy in urban living, one of them being the constant possibility of confrontation, difference and collaboration. A growing, successful city attracts a variety of people from across cultural and socio-economic divides creating an inspirational sense of flux, change and progress. However, this characteristic of the urban could be argued to create a natural kind of fragmentation; a fragmentation that could even be seen as a positive factor inherent in the very nature of cities. To describe a city we divide it up into areas, perhaps by function, urban density or into historic quarters. Geographer Louis Wirth described this urban landscape as a ‘mosaic’ made up of independent areas that, whilst self-possessed and not always in agreement, can never-the-less remain open to each other, thereby creating the “*possibility of critique, cleaving open the prospect of difference and change starting precisely with everyday life*”.⁵

Accessibility, in terms of how open different groups perceive city spaces to be to them specifically, and in turn how represented within those spaces they feel, has an important effect as to how we see difference within the city as indicative of disparity or variety. In this way we could say that the ideal would be a jigsaw or mosaic-like city as opposed to a fragmented city: a combination of divisions and joins as part of a complex balancing act in which communication between the many different pieces of the jigsaw is key. Not only this, but the city needs to remain self-aware of the many parts that make up its whole; that it is representative of a variety of inhabitants that perceive of the city differently.

“Architecture is a projection of the social imaginary”⁶

Oxford contains the divisions inherent to any city, but it is also specifically dominated by the institution of its university, which is strongly represented architecturally and culturally within the city centre. The spaces of a city can, if overly representative of institutional, commercial or bureaucratic control and interests, become a “*publicity system*” that “*advertises the city’s biases*”⁷ to its inhabitants and visitors alike, stifling other view points. ‘*Movement, Anomalies and Distractions*’ engaged in activities that not only sought to uncover the different faces of the city by referencing its spatial history and its present workings, but also the connections between them. It is through such activity that we re-awaken our hidden knowledge of the city’s complexity, a view point that is not as comfortable as more simplistic mirages of familiar territory, but it is perhaps this same sense of discomfort that often urges us forwards.

As the “*contested site of difference*”⁸ cities resist the dream of complete cohesion, but do contain the real promise of encounter, experimentation and progress. It is important to work in the spaces in-between towards these possibilities. These are the pieces of utopia that are easier to swallow.

Shards of blue sky lean calmly against the rusted railings of a dilapidated balcony, the derelict house slanting unevenly towards the street. These are fragments of hope spied from inside Harris-Manchester college, looking outwards and upwards

“Take a sheet, with a sliver of sky painted on its edge, almost invisible, just like the utopias that become a reality”⁹

^{4,5,6} Simon Sadler, *New Gorbals, New Babylon*: Ross Birrell in conversation with Simon Sadler, in *ARCADE: Artists and Public Spaces* London: Black Dog Publishing, pp57-69

⁷ Vito Acconci (1993) *Making Public: The Writing and Reading of Public Space*, Stroom: The Hague Centre for Visual Art, p12

⁸ Mosheen Mostafavi (1999) *Cities of Distraction in Cities on the Move* London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, p7

With Reference to:

Simon Sadler (1999) *The Situationist City* Massachusetts: The MIT Press

⁹ Katalin Hausel: *The Story of a Utopia*, text from website: maad.moonfruit.com

THE EXHIBITION

BEHIND THE TIMES

Sonia Boue & Alison Berrett

(a MAAD Project and meditation on art, research and faith in the process)

Sonia:

“Art research is deciding where you want to go, meandering, getting lost along the way and following your nose until you get somewhere entirely different. Only then can you know how and why you got there and why it all makes perfect sense. The challenge is then to explain yourself.”

I found something interesting, listen...

“Science holds an infinity of doubt, and implies a faith. Faith in what? Perhaps in nothing; just a capacity to have faith...” W.D. Winnicott

Alison:

“Yes, you unearthed a fascinating story and because we work quite closely together and know one another well, we already had threads to pick up from previous and current/existing conversations which form much of our collaborative process.”

Conversation is at the heart of our work together as collaborating artists. Choosing to work with a longstanding but little known conversation about a reputedly tardy sundial for Katalin Hausel's *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* project, we meandered fittingly into a conversation with the public for our final piece on June 30th 2012. Throughout the project words formed a thread of whispered notions creating a series of looping lines that ran in and out of the All Soul's Codrington library, spilling out onto the pavements of Oxford City, into studios and cafes and each other's houses.

An ariel view of these whispers' trajectories, if such a thing were possible, might read like lines drawn in to mark out the boundaries not only of thought but of place. What if these lines could be likened those on a map? We could then be talking about new pathways, through familiar features and monuments, arriving perhaps at a new location for the sundial.

Alison:

“We talked about emancipating the sundial, so that it would be free to

Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES
photographs by the artists



perform the task it was originally designed to do. (now that I write this and have had time to reflect upon the events of 30th June and the conversations we had with the public I am seeing things differently) Perhaps it has already been emancipated from the rigid constraints of accurate time telling and is now free to set its own time."

The sundial is a timepiece quite literally behind the times and behind the lines held within college walls just visible from the pavement at an angle through railings and archways. A slow running sundial trapped in a south facing wall of an ancient library could, we conjectured with our intervention, slip through the railings, tip toe onto the pavement and pace around Catte Street pouncing on passersby, drawing them in momentarily with it's tale. We could for an hour between 11.07 & 12.07 (the dial runs 7 minutes late it is said) free the sundial, it's 'normal service' suspended to inhabit a temporal and temporary escapade to a place where seriously playful encounters become possible.

After months of work this took a shadowy form, becoming a street intervention with a chalk-based sounding board for messages about time, which formed the locus of the piece, referencing the sundial with it's motto (the hours pass and are set to your account). It's curious shape borrowed from a drawing by Wren, allowing the conversational lines to extend beyond the artistic process and into the public space, by way of 'conversation piece.' The story of the sundial provoked a series of extraordinary meetings with people from across the globe. It seems not too fanciful to conjecture that this delicate narrative thread now runs through Japan, South Africa and Southern France, not to mention various locations in the UK.

Trusting our conversational process, we arrived at the perfect form for our contribution to the MAAD event, we must now consider the many forms our emancipation of the timepiece took along the way.

Our first challenge was to enter, what tour guides invariably cite 'the most exclusive college in Oxford' All Soul's. What they don't tell their audiences, because they surely don't know it, is that the library, in contrast has an open policy. You simply need a good reason to enter the building. Ours was the large collection of drawings held there by Sir Christopher Wren. Once in, we emerged with a gorgeous drawing by Wren, the designer of the sundial, metaphorically tucked under our arms. The drawing in time became the linchpin, the site non-site emblem of our street intervention.

More needs to be said about the ease of access and the method of entry here, for it was the key assumption of MAAD that access would be difficult, as proved in several of the projects to the point of impossibility. Yet, All Soul's while holding a reputation for extreme exclusivity, has none of the bureaucracy or membership stipulations attached to all other of the University libraries. Entry was facilitated fittingly through conversation, in person and by telephone. Retrospectively a nominal form was filled and explanatory e-mails dispatched but entry fundamentally hinged on what might be termed a spoken 'gentleman's agreement.' This knowl-

edge eventually became in large part the driver for our final piece in which the spoken word was our chosen medium.

Alison:

"Our first thoughts took us in the direction of a kite. The kite represents the freedom of flight alongside the security of being held tightly in order to perform its purpose well, as it is designed to do. A kite can be the embodiment of what it is to dream. To have big ideas. To 'fly a kite' is also an expression....."

fly a kite

1. to suggest a possible explanation for something 'I'm just flying a kite, but I suspect he was in love with her'.
2. to make a suggestion in order to see what other people think about your idea 'I'm just flying a kite, really, but do you think there would be any demand for a course on European art?'

Sonia:

"Interesting, tell me more..."

Alison:

"I believe we are all created with an 'original design', a unique set of qualities, character and abilities. The sundial had been designed with a purpose. Flying a kite represents the launching of a dream, the dream of being free to be the person you were created to be and doing the things you dream of doing. But a dream cannot just be let go of and left to the powerful elements of wind and rain, carrying it away from its owner. We must hold on to our dream as we hold on to the string attached to a kite and allow it to dance in the rhythms of the wind."

Yes, early word was that we would make a kite, a Constructivist kite-like structure referencing Dr Simmon's All Soul's Slavonia scholar and ex-librarian and our sundial's devoted champion. We would fly it on free and common land in Port Meadow thereby 'releasing time.' A beautifully poetic gesture that long entranced us until we considered that while a public space, port meadow might, at our appointed time, boast a few cows and some dog-walkers. Too remote, a little underpopulated. Not enough noise. The whole point of this project for us, was to tell people about it and to know that they had heard.

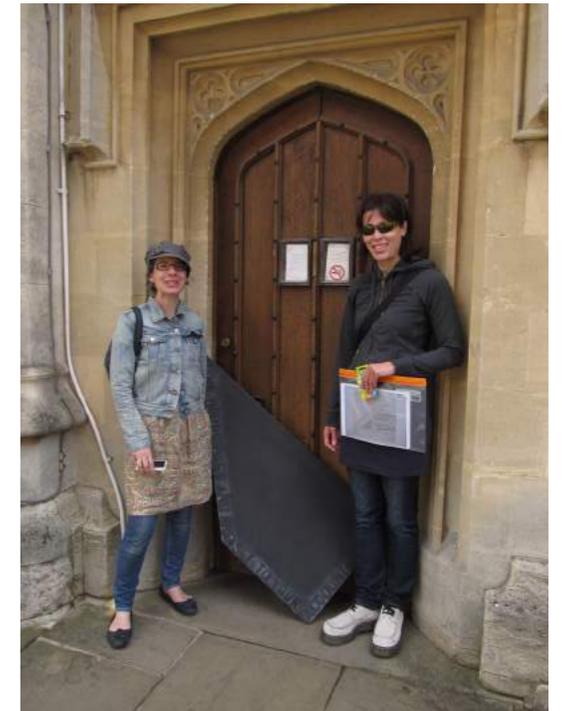
Alison:

"The dream of our librarian had been to set the sundial free from what he considered to be the wrong location. To allow it to perform its task as it had been originally designed to do and accurately show us the position of the sun."

Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES
photographs by the artists



Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES
photographs by the artists



Sonia:

'I know, I so thought we would make a kite to set it free right close to the end and yet...'

Loosing our kite was to let go of a carefully nurtured dream, but location was the blade that cut through it's pretty ribbon, and the imagined and planned for was severed by the reality of cobble and stone and the visceral presence of the public in our thoughts. Those concerns late in on the act served to squeeze the project most literally into shape. Suddenly, formal concerns took over and sketchbooks brimmed with prototyped sculptures on wheels, borrowing from sundial design, Constructivist posters and our Wren drawing.

In parallel, we decided our piece should take place on the pavement at Catte Street, thus working from the sketchbooks, in 3D model form we arrived at a minimalist sculpture, a paired down timepiece with three elements based on Wren's drawing, suggesting hours, minutes and seconds. At first designed flat to the pavement, the piece was doomed to lie down and possibly die unnoticed, trodden on or tripped over. Fitting perhaps but not right. Upright it lost it's pleasing forms and begged for revisions. The conversations continued.

Close to deadline the sculpture began to disintegrate. We split off forms regrouped them and took on various new elements as we pondered the many layers of narrative and form our researches had unearthed. These became a series of props and the idea of an action took shape. We considered taking our studio processes onto the street and sharing them with the public, inviting them to help us resolve the formal problems of the piece, which would of course involve a conversation about the sundial.

Two days to go and the final stages of our conversation took a radical turn. Sifting through

the props, talk turned to improvisation and the need to create a form free enough to respond to the exact environment of Catte Street, 30/6/12 11.07-12-07. Assemblage is for the studio and the gallery we reckoned, and we hadn't really dealt in actions, our currency was words. Our piece was a narrative. The simple chalkboard was born, transmitter and receiver of messages both, the anchor for our improvised encounters on the theme of time held captive in the this very particular city.

Catte Street provided the perfect theatrical backdrop to a one act play, in which our story wove it's way into the space, echoing from flagstone, to sundial, to chalkboard. Surprisingly receptive and almost universally interested people presented themselves along this walkway, for whom the story seemed to resonate generating waves of meaning that washed back and forth between us. An un-

expectedly rich loop of feedback which added to our understanding of the piece.

Working responsively, through a combination of intensive study, and free flowing intuitive means, our staging of the story allowed us to hold up a mediated space for the sundial to emerge joyfully and in good time.

Sonia:

"Ali, you know what, I'm glad we didn't make a kite. We have to trust the process, it never lies..."

Ali:

"In some ways I think we did make a kite....the shape of the blackboard was very kite like and on the day of 30th June, as we performed our 'one-act play' the wind very nearly took it!"

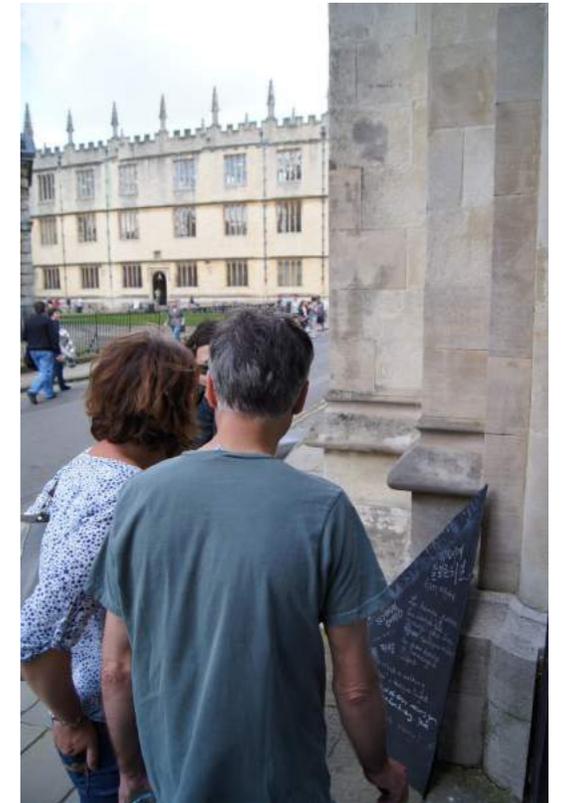
Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES

photograph by Katalin Hausel



Alison Berrett & Sonia Boue: BEHIND THE TIMES

photograph by Katalin Hausel



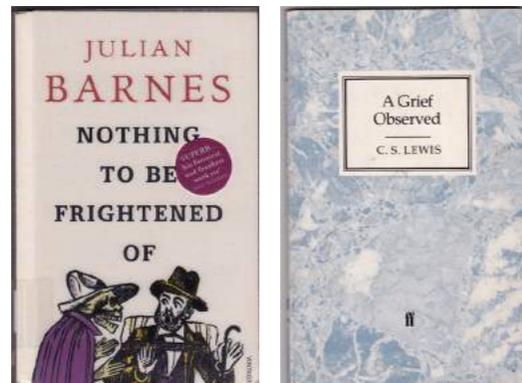
Grieve Over Nothing in Magdalen

Magdalen Chua

As an outsider of Oxford, I cannot claim any institutional or geographical connection to Oxford. My ability to respond to the issue of access to institutional spaces appeared limited to me as I could not profess any kind of commitment to Oxford.

Despite my outsider status that was apparent to me, I became aware of my sense of affinity to Magdalen College after learning that the authors Julian Barnes and C. S. Lewis studied there. (The fact that I share its name is a coincidence - or at least I would like to think of it that way.) Barnes' and Lewis' writings on mortality, faith/absence of faith, memory and death have resonated with me at different points of my life, and I am drawn to Magdalen College because of these "famous alumni" - as phrased by Magdalen College's website and travel guidebooks. While I am unable to draw any institutional lineage or bloodline to Barnes or Lewis, one way in which I can truthfully claim any form of being with them, is through death.

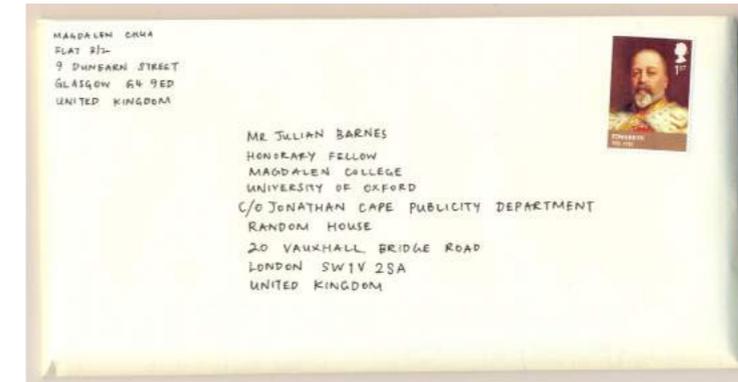
Death and a consciousness of death seems to be a way of envisioning how a community can exist without fragmentation across institutional, geographical, blood or national lines. While barriers to Magdalen College exist that inhibit access, those who come from Magdalen College share with everyone else an apprehension that death is the one certainty in life.



As a way of accessing Magdalen College, I decided to read two books about death by Barnes and Lewis. Lewis wrote *A Grief Observed* on the grief he experienced after the death of his wife, Helen Joy Davidman. Barnes' *Nothing To Be Frightened Of* contain his reflections on God, the fear of death or ceasing to be nothing. It was published just before the passing of his wife, Pat Kavanagh.

Julian Barnes, *Nothing To Be Frightened Of*. London: Vintage, 2009 and C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. London: Faber & Faber, 1966.]

Reading both books led me to wonder if Barnes' thoughts about death changed after the passing of his wife. My original proposal for the public event was to invite Barnes to pen down his thoughts about death following the passing of his wife, in a series of letters that I would compile and install in a corner of Magdalen College. I felt that it could be a way that I, and the public, could access Magdalen College, through death as a universal and shared experience.



Postal exchange with Julian Barnes

The eventual work for the public event on 30 June 2012 was inspired by a postal exchange with Barnes that led me to realise the private nature of someone else's grief as a personal loss that I cannot access, yet can still feel deeply for.



GRIEVE OVER NOTHING IN MAGDALEN - public, 30 June 2012, Oxford Crematorium. photographs by Magdalen Chua



On 30 June 2012, the presented work took the form of two cards, as public and private expressions of grief encountered. One was on public display at the epitaph of Helen Joy Davidman at the Oxford Crematorium, the other remained in private, in transit by post to Barnes.



GRIEVE OVER NOTHING IN MAGDALEN
- private, 30 June 2012,
Mailbox on Woodstock Road,
Oxford



Dispatches From The Mountaineering Library

Kate Hammersley

I am sitting in an office at the Bodleian Library being quizzed by the Admissions Officer about exactly which books and areas of research I want to follow. Why do I need access to the library and can I be specific? I live in Oxford and have always wondered what lay behind the doors of the Bodleian. I have been on the guided Bodleian tour for tourists, walked through the underground tunnel which once transported books on a railway between the Bodleian and the Radcliffe Camera. I have seen the subterranean room where shelves are stacked with newly published books - the library is currently expanding by 5000 books a week. Now I want to explore the Bodleian without the tour guide. I have done the research; written my research statement, got the form signed by two different people but back in the Admissions Office the questioning is tough. Finally, I'm allowed access if I read aloud an oath which is placed in front of me. More than a little self-consciously I read:

"I hereby undertake not to remove from the Library, or to mark, deface, or injure in any way, any volume, document, or other object belonging to it or in its custody; nor to bring into the Library or kindle therein any fire or flame, and not to smoke in the Library; and I promise to obey all rules of the Library."

I have my photo taken for the library swipe card and the Admissions Officer gives me a map. I now have access to 29 libraries.



The Bodleian Library is one of the oldest libraries in the world dating from 1602 with a collection that includes items as diverse as the Magna Carta and OK Magazine. After visiting different reading rooms and libraries I chance upon the Mountaineering Library. Two floors below the streets of Oxford are housed one of the coun-

Kate Hammersley: MOUNTAIN

Kate Hammersley: DISPATCHES FROM
THE MOUNTAINEERING LIBRARY
photographs by Kate Hammersley

Kate Hammersley: MOUNTAIN
detail

Kate Hammersley: MOUNTAIN
photographs by Kate Hammersley

try's largest collections of Mountaineering literature. Many of the books date back from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the golden age of mountaineering which resulted in the mapping of the Alps and the first successful ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. I am drawn to a book entitled; *The high Alps without guides: being a narrative of adventures in Switzerland, together with chapters on the practicability of such mode of mountaineering, and suggestions for its accomplishment* by Rev. A.G. Girdlestone, 1870. Reading these books you experience being in a different time and place, it seems a world away from the hurly burly at street level. As a non-Oxford University library card holder I am not allowed to remove books from the Bodleian, so I decide to make some photocopies. I am only allowed to photocopy in black and white. I make my way to the photocopier which is at the end of another room obscured from



view amongst the shelves of books. After going through the brightly lit reading area I am surrounded by darkness, as I walk towards the photocopier sensors trigger the overhead lights which switch on and illuminate my path amongst the shelves.

Stepping outside onto street level and bright sunshine, I consider the way these explorers have written about the physical properties of mountains through personal experience and emotive language. What drives people to conquer these inhospitable places? As Robert Macfarlane (2008, p.19) writes: "*What we call a Mountain is thus in fact a collaboration of the physical forms of the world with the imagination of humans – a mountain of the mind.*"

Back in the studio I decide to explore the idea of creating sculptures of fictional mountain ranges, a series of small scale summits that have yet to be climbed. I am interested in recreating the 'idea' of mountains. Using paper and starch some sculptures are left blank to reflect the silence in the library whilst others are drawn on with



'kindling' or charcoal with attrition like marks picking out the ridges of the paper with surface noise.

For the public event I wanted to playfully reinterpret the proverb and bring the mountains to the people. I wanted to bring different elevations together; the mountains and the subterranean library out onto the relative flatness of street level in Oxford. I decide to cycle the mountain sculptures around Oxford by bicycle using the Radcliffe Science Library, which houses the Mountaineering Library, as the despatch point. As a non-cyclist I learnt how to ride a bicycle overcoming a personal mountain to cycle the artwork around Oxford. Unlike the mountains of the Alps which are clearly visible, these small scale mountain sculptures can only be viewed when in transit by people who happen to be passing the route the bicycle takes. A man in a suit spots me "Mont Blanc!" he shouts.



Kate Hammersley: DISPATCHES FROM
THE MOUNTAINEERING LIBRARY
photograph by Katalin Hausel

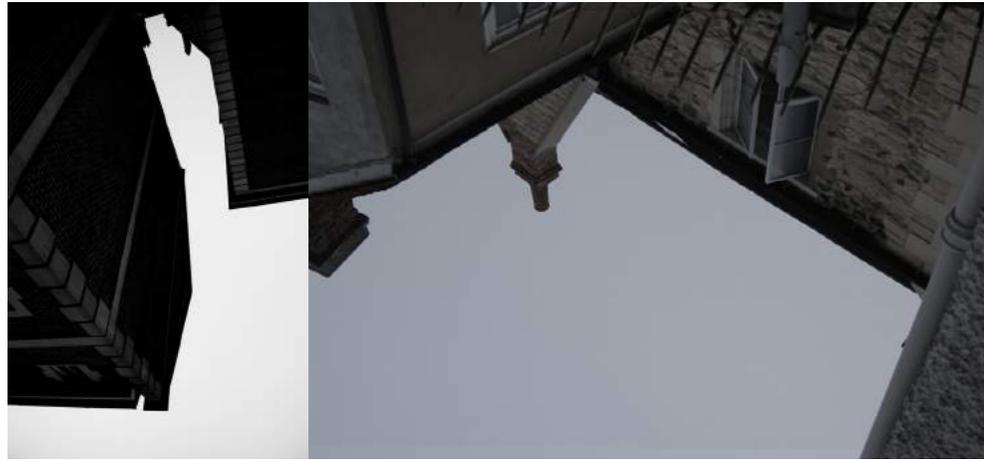
References
MACFARLANE, R. (2008) *Mountains of the mind: a history of fascination*. London: Granta Books.

The Story of a Utopia

Katalin Hausel

¹ Gordon Matta-Clark, "Art and Industry in SoHo" *The Village Voice*, January 28, 1971

"Everybody to some extent accepts architecture as something to look at, to experience as a static object. Few individuals think about or bother visualising how to work away from it, to make architecture into something other than a static object."¹



It is hard not to see Oxford as a place not driven by the highest and purest of ideals, not as a place for the most pioneering intellectual enquiries limited by nothing and no one.

It is also hard to see Oxford not in terms of its exclusive architecture, the walled circles of colleges, members-only accessible university departments, institutes and faculties.

In this project, I tried to bracket the familiar images of the city, and instead,

retrace some ideas that continue to shape the way we can experience it, to investigate their relevance, and (re)place them into the public domain for a better view. I wanted to rethink its famous architecture, the tangible, visceral presence of inaccessible space inside the city centre. The difficulty was to find a way to see the familiar without looking at it. I wanted to find something that would flip our view of the city's familiar architecture, but throwing them into sharp light instead of diminishing it.

The abstract blue shapes that appeared in Oxford as my work for the exhibition were based on different views of the sky seen from inside Harris-Manchester College. They are shapes circumscribed by the tumultuous cluster of college buildings, the negative space that we tend to not notice, in-between the skyline.

I chose to work with this particular institution for *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions*, because I found the history of the college fascinating. They moved 5 times before finally settling down in Oxford. Each time, the in-



Harris-Manchester College
photographs by Katalin Hausel

H. Wells: Warrington's past; <http://www.hwells.co.uk/>



stitution, one of the dissenting academies formed in the 18th century in the north of England, liquidated its assets, sold all properties and moved only the library and scientific teaching equipment to their new location. In Oxford, where property is the most apparent sign of wealth and power, it was curious to work with the history of a college that resisted to hold on to anything but its ideals for over



a hundred years. The college was founded on the liberal principle "to furnish tuition to all young men who will conform to its regulations and principle, without distinction of political party or religious persuasion". Today it sounds obvious, however, in 18th century England higher education was only provided for people who belonged to the Anglican Church, and any educational institution that refused such distinction between its pupils was facing serious difficulties of operation, and even closing down. They were eventually tolerated where no other form of education was at all available, but still were forced into remote areas by such legislation as the Five Mile Act. This placed the dissenting academies into the North, thus avoiding the training of minds in the political, economical and cultural centre of the country that were uninclined to discard orthodox religious, social and political views.



¹ Manchester Academy, *Minute Books*, 18 June 1798, as part of a debate whether a clergyman educated in the Church of England can be appointed to the position of Classical professorship.

Katalin Hausel: A THE STORY OF A UTOPIA - IMPROV
Katalin Hausel: A THE STORY OF A UTOPIA - SCRAPs
photographs by the artist

The era of religious laws is long gone, and education is open to anyone without regard to their views in such matters. What now is an obvious way of life, however, at the time of dissenting academies was a utopia, to which numerous people dedicated their lives and their wealth. Having spent months of reading the minute books and other documents in the archives of Harris-Manchester College, my interest shifted from the story of a mobile, weightless, anti-establishment institution to that of the utopia which it was based upon. Surprisingly, having set out to find aspects of Oxford that is dissimilar to our generic ideas about it,



what I happened upon was exactly the kind of embodiment of enlightened and idealism that we can expect in any historically excellent academic institution. Oxford is Oxford, after all. But this is only true because what was Manchester Academy is now one of the colleges that are part of the Oxford University system.

By shifting focus, the little sliver of the history of the college threw into light the negative space around it, the suppressed story of the university as the conservative bastion of the political and economical establishment in this country. Change has been taking place slowly - women were only admitted to most of the colleges in the 1970's. The university's ongoing efforts to make the elite education they are specialist of available to a wider demographic are still just that, efforts. And in government and other high power positions Oxford and Cambridge graduates are still overwhelmingly in majority, although there are 115 universities and 165 institutions for higher education in the UK.²

The scale of the project was becoming problematic. Not the scale of the findings - the only piece of truly new discovery that emerged from my research was the fact that one of the Trustees of Manchester Academy brought the institution to court in order to settle the dispute whether it was within the principles of their foundation to move the school to London after the lifting of the ban from the capital³ (the removal happened in the end, in 1853). The size of the project was from the beginning to be modest, as it is difficult enough to place anything at all in the public domain in Oxford. But that is a matter of largeness. Following the thread of

² Source: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/UKHESector/Pages/OverviewSector.aspx>

³ New Manchester College Minute books, 1852, Reports by Special Committee

Katalin Hausel: A THE STORY OF A UTOPIA - SCRAPS
photographs by the artist

the movements of an educational institution, the religious, political and educational history of the country started to weigh heavily on the work that I never really wanted to be grand. Conceived in the fashion of Situationist interventions in the city, I wanted to make something with a light touch, rather than a heavy bang. In a way characteristic of a gestalt, I wanted a small shift that radically changed to way we experience the city. I needed to abstract and quiet down the piece. Abstraction, I find is the language of utopias - it allows space for another story, an unknown one, to unfold, not only the logical consequences of what we can already grasp; but it is also rendered mute and redundant by the particularity of the present.

I decided to use multiple locations, and separated two different aspects of the work: one was to make a hidden idea visible again, and the other to release it back into the practice of everyday life. I had the exact shape of the sky as it is circumscribed by the various roofs and buildings of Harris Manchester College cut into blue plexi glass. I was miraculously granted permission to place these on the balcony of a building that belongs to the college but is caught in a limbo - like a grotesque of Oxford, the temporary structure that lacks even a foundation has been kept around too long and is now considered a historic building, and as such, it is impossible to pull it down. The little house is public hazard - it is leaning towards the street and is unsafe for entry. I had to install my sky-shaped sculptures (*Improv*) in an improvisational manner, from the outside, balancing on top of a ladder, without ever setting foot inside the building or even on the balcony.

I also stacked 2000 sheets of regular printing paper and painted one of the sky shapes on the side of the stack. I placed the sculpture into different public locations that provide information - it spent a Friday at the railway station, and on Saturday, 30 June 2012 it was placed in a NatWest Bank, by the information desk. The sheets were free to use as scrap paper, to jot down information that was given at that location. On the side of each sheet, the side we never think of, in its 3rd dimension, was a small bit of the blue sky to take away together with useful information.

Flickers of a utopia became visible albeit not necessarily recognisable for the day in *Improv*, or free to pick up in *Scraps* as a tiny stain on the wrong side of scrap paper, highlighting a dimension that is while hardly noticeable, it is still indispensable in our times.



Katalin Hausel: A THE STORY OF A UTOPIA - IMPROV
photographs by the artist

Library Toilet as Final Frontier: On Rejection, the Bodily, and the Bodleian

Katie Herzog



In December, 2011, I announced my proposal to swap library toilet stall doors between the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library and the City of Oxford's Public Library. The plan was to encourage writing in each location for a few months, swap doors, solicit responses (with a different color ink) for a few more months, and then exhibit the doors at the exhibition during Oxford's Open Days. The project was meant to give members of the public an opportunity to communicate with library patrons at a government funded (HEFCE) institution which the public are strictly exempt from (including on Oxford's open days), and to foster an exchange. Aside from local politics, I wanted to draw attention to the toilet stall as a final frontier: one of, if not the only non-surveilled space left (telecommunications included). The library as site is not arbitrary. As a pillar of democracy and an institution dedicated to the preservation of and open access to information, librarians worldwide are engaged daily with battles ranging from censorship to government "counter-terror" programs (such as the US PATRIOT Act) aimed to strip library patrons of their privacy. As the UK increasingly embraces public monitoring systems through the UAV, CCTV, oyster cards, phone and vehicle tracking, and the world's largest DNA database, the localized curatorial vision of *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* seemed like a fitting opportunity to address national and universal information politics on a local scale. With humor.

Interception Modernisation and the Early Modern State

- The intensity and complexity of life, attendant upon advancing civilization, have rendered necessary some retreat from the world, and man, under the refining influence of culture, has become more sensitive to publicity so that solitude and privacy have become more essential to the individual; but modern enterprise and invention have, through invasion upon his privacy, subjected him to mental pain and distress, far greater than could be inflicted by mere bodily injury¹. - Warren & Brandeis, *The Right to Privacy* (1890)

- The publication [of figures] by the human rights group Privacy International... suggest Britain is the worst Western democracy at protecting individual privacy. The two worst countries in the 36-nation survey are Malaysia and China, and Britain is one of the bottom five with "endemic surveillance."² - BBC News (2006)

- "There are now at least 51,600 CCTV cameras controlled by local authorities, with five councils now operating more than 1,000 cameras. In comparison, £515m would put an extra 4,121 police constables on the streets - the equivalent of Northumbria police's entire force."³ -Big Brother Watch (2012)

- Our modern demarcation of public and private zones occurred as a result of a twin movement in political and legal thought. The emergence of the nation-state and theories of sovereignty in the 16th and 17th centuries generated the concept of a distinctly public realm.

¹ S.D. Warren and L. D. Brandeis, *The Right to Privacy* (1890) 5 *Harvard Law Review* 196

² "Britain is 'surveillance society'," BBC NEWS UK. BBC News, 2006. Web. 25 Jul 2012. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6108496.stm>.

On the other hand, the identification of a private domain free from the encroachment of the state emerged as a response to the claims of monarchs, and, in due course, parliaments, to an untrammelled power to make the law. In other words, the appearance of the modern state, the regulation of social and economic activities, and the recognition of a private realm, are natural prerequisites to this separation.⁴ - Raymond Wacks, *Privacy: A Very Short Introduction* (2010)

The Bod

The initial conversation between the curator and the library seemed positive:

"[The Bodleian Communications Officer] was very open, apparently our timing is very good, as they just have a new policy of trying to become a bit more open to the general public, and reshape the perception of themselves as more integral part of the community of the city, not only of the university. So in many ways she was very positive, and she said she is certain that in some shape the collaboration can happen."

-email from Katalin Hausel, January 25, 2012

The Bodleian Communications Officer did express some concern that my project (there were three artists proposing works in the library) might "come out as embarrassing the institution." I secretly delighted in the language, as the nickname for the Bodleian is "The Bod," and my work was threatening to embarrass said body. (Because the work was drawing attention to the bodily? Cute! Because organized communication in toilet stalls has historically been followed by lewd sex acts? Hooray!)

Three months later my proposal was (along with those of the other two artists) rejected by the Bodleian. Bad timing was cited as the reason. The resulting work for *Movement, Anomalies and Distractions* consists of the initial proposal and correspondence surrounding the rejection. The visual component for the show at the Wolfson College Gallery includes photographs of public library toilet graffiti in Los Angeles and San Francisco.



Katie Herzog is an artist, librarian, and director of the Molesworth Institute. She lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

³ Pickles, Nick. "The Price of Privacy: Councils Spend Half A Billion Pounds On CCTV In Four Years." <http://www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk>. N.p., 21 Feb. 2012. Web. 25 July 2012.

⁴ Wacks, Raymond. *Privacy A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 33. Print.

Inhabited Space - Notes and Diversions

Starting point: envisioning pathways

Diane Jones-Parry

spectacle:
starling murmuration



aerial pathways made physical by the bodies of birds – an invisible network of flight and social cohesion in a sky space that holds no mark - all records reased beyond a transitory turbulence of air
migration, flocking - lines of movement without way marks or guide signs - bird highways of long usage, reading a 'landscape' beyond the conventionally visible.

scientific research:
flocking researched by physicists, aeronautical engineers, mathematicians, computer scientists and biologists. specific studies and new technologies bring understanding and insight - flocking algorithms - show individual complex behaviour emerges from simple rules involving visual fields, direction and alignment. This has social, bio-medical and computer scientific applications.

proposal:
1. to work with movement artist Kate Willis, and with dancers to reinterpret what governs the shifts and directions in flight through a different medium - the human body, observing and obeying three 'simple' rules to achieve separation, alignment and cohesion.
2. to work with an academic institution
a series of preliminary investigative requests met with no response - a passive resistance that denied access to the scientific knowledge and data it was hoped would increase awareness and extend the imaginative process.

reappraisal
regarding monitoring and measuring movement, lines of travel, journeys recorded:
high speed cameras reading topographical relationships, linking recovery sites of ringed birds, GPS tracking, connecting points that reveal linear pathways, lines that map direction speed and interactions.

new direction, revised proposal:
to monitor, record and work with movement artist Kate Willis as wayfarer, executing walks, the body moving in space, seeking ways of observing, recording and obtaining data – with the use of analogue and new technology.

site: a conservation flood field at RSPB Otmoor, where the yearly starling roost takes place over winter months - territory mapped by a body moving through it.

body:
as track maker, "Always, everywhere, people have walked, veining the earth with paths visible and invisible, symmetrical or meandering".¹

the human foot as a unit of progress, dance/ flight/ movement /gesture - an inscription of space over time, the entanglement of line in the body, in space and on the page.

places are transformed by bodies moving and 'the imagination cannot help pursue a line in the land'²

line:
as human positioning
"as soon as a person moves he becomes a line".³

an imprint of energy, the trace of a moving point that requires a variable or analogue experience of time and space
"line has in itself neither matter nor substance and may rather be called an imaginary idea than a real object"⁴

string:
a line in three dimensions
a means of generating form and material representation

"...people in modern metropolitan societies find themselves in environments built as assemblies of connected elements. Yet in practice they continue to thread their own ways through these environments, tracing paths as they go."⁵



¹ Clark, Thomas A, *In Praise of Walking, in Distance and Proximity*, (Edinburgh Pocketbooks, 2000)

² Macfarlane, Robert, *The Old Ways, A Journey on Foot*, (London Hamish Hamilton 2012)

³ Ingold, Tim *Lines, A Brief History*, (London and New York, Routledge, 2008)

⁴ da Vinci, Leonardo, quoted in *on Line*, (New York, Museum of Modern Art 2010)

⁵ Ingold, Tim *Lines, A Brief History*, (London and New York, (Routledge, 2008)

The Firmament

Mirja Koponen

The curatorial premise of the project was for an artist a generously open-ended one: an invitation to inquire into the friction zones, confrontations and potentialities arising from the double reality that is 'Oxford': a shorthand for academic site of excellence, and a very real mid-size English city. How is the habitual Oxford circumscribed by its myth, and in what way does it shrug it to aside and power forward as a place for life? Not being from Oxford and stopping for the first time to consider it a site for everyday practices rather than a socio-cultural reference, it suddenly presented itself as a much more



diverse, multi-layered, interstitial and fractured space, its imaginary 3-dimensional map full of grey areas, real but unknown to me. The idea of light that trespasses and ignores any social conventions about access, codes, zones of exclusion and sanctioned be-



haviours became my deviant ally but also a peculiar symbol for my efforts as an individual to place myself in the reality of the city: any of our social coding or spatial practices go just so far, and there is always a

Mirja Koponen: THE FIRMAMENT
photographs by Mirja Koponen

larger framework against which we can question the meaningfulness and justness of our practices and social organization.

I wanted to work in a space that would in itself be a part of the symbolic Oxford, and that would not be open to the public outside the university assembly, but that also was a very real place for working. Whilst the history, or perhaps even more the reputation of the university is that of an autonomous, closed enclave, the people who make up 'Oxford' are people of today, and the ways an institution responds to the changing environment must be brought forward by the continual individual and collective revision of its current relationship to the environment that supports it. I contacted several organizations, but received an answer from one: Green Templeton College. I was ready for the negotiations to be tenuous, but the support I received from the College was more than generous. For me to work with painting in response to both the site (Radcliffe Observatory) and the project was to subvert and suspend its critical framework momentarily in order to place it for myself within an intensely personal perspective, and from here reinvent it also as fully political, as a matter of presence, exposure and engagement.



In June I installed the work in the observatory, laying it out horizontally, raised upon the floor surface so that it would intermingle with the shadows as they swept over the expanse of the tower room. The fickle interplay of the sunlight and the tactile, shimmering paint surfaces went on unrestrained in the airy tower, as the sun slowly made its way over the sky. That no-one was privy to this display was here a sum of particular circumstances, but also part of a bigger picture, where the contemporary artists, increasingly finding themselves working both outside largely profit driven commercial art market and the underfunded, oversubscribed and politicized public sector, are turning towards alternative organizing and exhibiting strategies, a move which places art within the community often



in new and radically productive ways, but presents real challenges in terms of practical organization, as production, display and access need to be negotiated each time within an uncertain setting. As the Observatory stayed shut and the work was exhibited 'in private', the event was also broadcast over the internet via videolink to a streaming site accessible to all, with the channel embedded on the project website, so opening it up to potential public all around the world in real time.



Mirja Koponen: THE FIRMAMENT
photographs by Mirja Koponen

Ideal City

Stephen Lee



An aesthetic journey beginning in the backroom collections of bee's nests and butterflies of Oxford's Natural History Museum, travelling via city bus, across the fragmentary experience of socioeconomic divide in the city, constitutes my response to 'Movement, Anomalies and Distractions'. My investigation culminates at the summit of arguably Oxford's most ironic dreaming spire, the roof-top view from a Le Corbusier styled modernist tower block in the working-class community of Blackbird Leys.

My initial interest in etymology lay in the intense and flamboyant shapes of wasp's nests, the modular, yet fluid patterns

of bee's nests and how these forms have been used as metaphors for architecture. My drawings and photographs of these items were made in light of the current and fashionable theory of a 'physics of society', where methods of understanding emergent patterns in nature are used as a model for appreciating statistical patterns shaping society. In short, for



this project I compared patterns of insect nests with the movement of people through architectural spaces.

To do this I developed a layered, performative aesthetic method where photographic transparencies of the nests with fragments of text are adhered, using dish-washing liquid, to the windows of a moving bus. Within the text and images of the nests there are carefully composed perforations or gaps in text through which the cityscape



ELIPSES. Photograph of view through a transparency on a modernist tower block roof, Blackbird Leys, Oxford, 2012.

GARDEN CITY (detail). Photograph of transparency on bus window, 2012.

RUNNER. Photograph of transparency on bus window, 2012.

can be seen. I then photographed the layered views of the blurred city in motion intermingled with soap bubbles, framed by natural forms, while chatting with people as they read the texts. The texts are taken from literature based on the experience of observing mass culture and from the public's verbal responses to this work.

Conversation with **King Lloyd**, a resident of Blackbird Leys and a DJ specialising in Rhythm and Blues and Reggae, and the artist:

Lloyd: Hi how are you? What's your name?

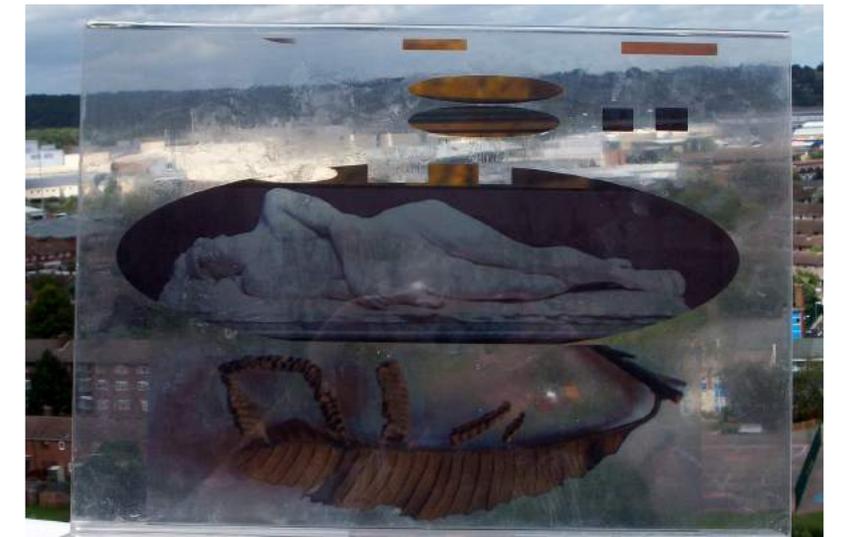
SL: I'm called Stephen, thanks for agreeing to comment about my art project as a resident in the BBL neighbourhood.

Lloyd: That's ok, that's a very English name Stephen; my DJ name is King Lloyd!

SL: The artwork compares patterns of our cities, architecture and crowds, with patterns in insect societies. I take transparent photographs of nests and stick them on the windows of the bus, so you see the city through the nest as you ride along. When the bus moves the images get interesting as the city flows by. As you are a DJ Lloyd I'll try to compare movement of crowds with musical pattern. Do you find that there are patterns of sounds on some records that build up then suddenly get to a point where they emerge into wilder sounds, and what effect does this have on the audience?

Lloyd: Let me see now, I know how to work a crowd; I know how to create a buzz. I call out like this, 'yeah', 'I say yeah' and what does the crowd do? They say 'yeah' back. This changes the excitement of the dancing. Sometimes at the beginning of the night people sit with their arms folded like they're not interested. I play a few songs, I know what they like and what 'gets' their interest, then at the right time I play Cher's, 'Life after Love', then they all dance. I think that's what you mean?

SL: Yes, in a beehive there's a hierarchy with drones, workers and a queen. The workers



can be seen. I then photographed the layered views of the blurred city in motion intermingled with soap bubbles, framed by natural forms, while chatting with people as they read the texts. The texts are taken from literature based on the experience of observing mass culture and from the public's verbal responses to this work.



SHELLEY. Photograph of view through a transparency on a modernist tower block roof, Blackbird Leys, Oxford, 2012.

PATTERN. Photograph of transparency on bus window, 2012.

communicate to the others by doing little dances like a code. Sometimes the bees swarm for various reasons, for example maybe the hive gets over-crowded, then the queen and some of the bees take-off.

Lloyd: I appreciate this: when I'm playing music and there's a buzz everybody's dancing, and then 20% break away and dance completely differently: they're with the queen! The other 80% continue. Or it's like families, mother and father are telling a youth what's good for them and the child break's away, does their own thing: off with the queen swarming!



SL: Well there are similarities with insect behaviour but we're not ants or bees are we?

King Lloyd: I think we are just like that, it makes a good comparison.

SL: Do you think that the hives make a reasonable model for the tower blocks and estates in Blackbird Leys?

Lloyd: Well I can relate it more to the Olympics, that's a lot of people to organise. (Lloyd places a spoon end up on the table as a post and describes a crowd flowing around). If you have a large crowd of people trying to crush through a small entranceway and you put a post in front, it divides the crowd, they flow

around and get through the entranceway more quickly.

SL: I think the tower blocks were originally designed based on the structure of man-made geometric beehives with compartments for honeycombs; they were called 'machines for living'. But the combs naturally have fluid shape like ear lobes. Maybe a building shaped as a lobe would be more suited to the patterns of people's lives. Ok King Lloyd, thanks for your words of wisdom.

Lloyd: Ok, (grinning)!

SL: Seeyou Lloyd!



MODULAR (detail). Photograph of transparency on bus window, 2012.

Sir Sambo aka King Lloyd

all photographs by the artist

Hidden in Transit:

Annabel Ralphs

This work is part of a long-standing and multi-faceted project stemming from an examination of the realm of dictionaries, using interventions and infiltrations of ephemeral work in places which relate directly to dictionary sites, in particular in Oxford. The places where dictionaries were made, and the people that made them, are a counterpoint to the less tangible world of the word-list as a mapping of language.

The Oxford English Dictionary records word usage and defines word meanings. It is an inclusive dictionary which is always growing. The Oxford Junior Dictionary is periodically revised to reflect the editor's notion of the canonical vocabulary for its readers. Words such as heron, otter, acorn, buttercup, clover have been omitted from the 2012 edition. New words include committee, block graph, celebrity, citizenship, compulsory, database. The compilers of this dictionary state that urban children have no need to see words associated with the semi-rural and rural in their dictionary as they have no everyday relevance to their lives, despite the resilience of wildlife and plants which persist even in deeply urban environments. The lack of status given to these 'old nature' words seems to go hand in hand with an attitude to 'wild' green spaces, particularly in cities. Urban planners snatch every opportunity to build, particularly in and around Oxford; embedded in the deal can be a requirement to hand back to the community open 'green spaces': wildness sanitised, controlled and therefore allowed. 'Citizenship', a new addition to the Junior Dictionary, illustrates the word's usage by 'at school we have lessons in citizenship'. Whose priorities and what propaganda are taught, particularly now nature is demoted and apparently long gone?

The OED was the life work of James Murray, who lived at 78 Banbury Road, Oxford. His correspondence with the army of readers who collected examples of word usage was so voluminous that a pillar box was especially erected outside his house to handle it. The OED in book form weighed around 150 lbs and took up 4 feet of shelf space. With this in mind I made a four-foot long folding book containing endangered words and transported it up-river to the future exhibition site. This, less obvious, parallel route was teeming with wild life, many of whose names are now inaccessible to 'juniors'. To coincide, images of common (but excised) wildlife annotated with newly included words were placed in the window of Sanders, a shop specialising in old maps and prints, and also posted in Murray's Banbury Road pillar box.

The wider project includes work relating to William Minor, the 'Surgeon of Crowthorne', who,



Annabel Ralphs: HIDDEN IN TRANSIT
photographs by Katalin Hausel

while held in Broadmoor, became a reader for Murray's dictionary. The slips on which he documented word usage were tied into bundles and are kept in archival boxes. The outward scruffiness of these OED slips belies a meticulous precision, very necessary in producing such an ordered work as a dictionary. Dr Minor's handwriting is minute and his contributions include occasional diagrams, for example 'catamaran', perhaps echoes of his previous life as an army surgeon.



These bundled and folded slips formed the basis for an altered book work in Newport Library where, like the OED itself, it was available to anybody who held a library card. Related work formed part of Bookmarks VII (www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk), infiltrating the library system and distributing sets of bookmarks through libraries worldwide. Elements of this work were exhibited this year in the Oxford University Press in two locked cabinets situated in the main foyer, not open to the public (these cabinets are used specifically for showing work related to the OED).



Annabel Ralphs: **HIDDEN IN TRANSIT**
photographs by Katalin Hausel

Subterranean

Luke Ralphs

Aiming to circumnavigate the map, a memory surfaced of being told of an underground tunnel running under the city. After initial research I discovered to my surprise that its entrance was located, hidden behind some trees, in a small triangle of public space, opposite the college I teach at. An ancient stream runs through it across the city from west to east, eventually emerging in the memorial gardens of Christ Church College. An unseen space, it seemed to act like an arterial link between these two sites, inviting a potentially revealing comparison. Virtual access unearthed a complex web of narratives. Lawrence of Arabia, in his youth, was reported to have gone down the stream with friends in 1908. A Victorian punt containing three skeletons was retrieved from it during building in the 1920's. There is more recent evidence of Urban Explorers holding nocturnal dinner parties within its recesses.

Looking into the flotsam of its polluted waters, the caged entrance reminded me of recent viewing devices that I'd made, a telescoped space, another perspectival funnel, filtering its own narratives, histories and fictions; a terrestrial black hole sucking you in and frustrating a view. Attracted by the notion of physically exploring it, and seduced by its mysteries, its mythic status, I was simultaneously repelled by its official designation as a sewer.

Testing the site, a dye was poured into the waters at its entrance, to provide a coloured trace, a proof. A guided tour, tracking the streams course through time, flowing through a medieval landscape of open fields, monasteries, and 1970's redevelopment, failed to detect the colour at the tunnels end, an Arcadian like grotto set amongst manicured formal gardens. The flow rate, an applied mathematician had warned me, was too slow for it to appear within the hour. Someone proposed the tunnel might act as an alternative backdoor route or conduit into the university, for students from the college of further education at its other end.

Luke Ralphs: **SUBTERRANEAN**
photograph by the artist

