

About Andrea Luka Zimmerman

Andrea Luka Zimmerman grew up on a large council estate and left school at 16. After moving to London in 1991, she studied for a PhD at Central St. Martins. She won the Artangel Open Award for her collaborative feature drama *Cycle* (2014) with Adrian Jackson (Cardboard Citizens). Her work explores the impact of globalisation, power structures, militarism and denied histories.

With David Roberts she co-curated the project *Real Estates* at PEER, London (2015) in association with LUX, as a social, discursive and imaginative space around issues of housing and spatial justice in East London.

Zimmerman has made several commissioned short films, including *Merzschmerz* for Film and Video Umbrella (2014), *More Utopias Now* for Channel 4's *Random Acts* (2016) and *Lower Street, A Night's Journey* for Tintype Gallery (2016).

Her work has been nominated for the Grierson Award, the Aesthetica Art Prize, the Golden Orange and the Jarman Award. *Estate, a Reverie* is part of the Arts Council Collection.

Taşkafa, Stories of the Street and Estate, a Reverie will be released in 2017 by Second Run DVD, featuring new writing on the films by award winning author Ali Smith and essays by writer and scholar Colin Dayan and Rosemary Bechler (Open Democracy).

Zimmerman is a co-founder of the artists' collective Fugitive Images (*I Am Here* and *Estate: Art, Politics and Social Housing in Britain*).

Her forthcoming artist's documentary *Erase and Forget* (90mins, 2017) is an enquiry into the nature of human conscience and the limits of deniability. *Erase and Forget* had its world premiere at the 2017 Berlin Film Festival and was nominated for the Glashütte Most Original Documentary Award.

Spike Island

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Visitor Information

Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm
(during exhibitions only).

Admission to the gallery is free.

Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm
Saturday and Sunday, 10–5pm.

Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible building.

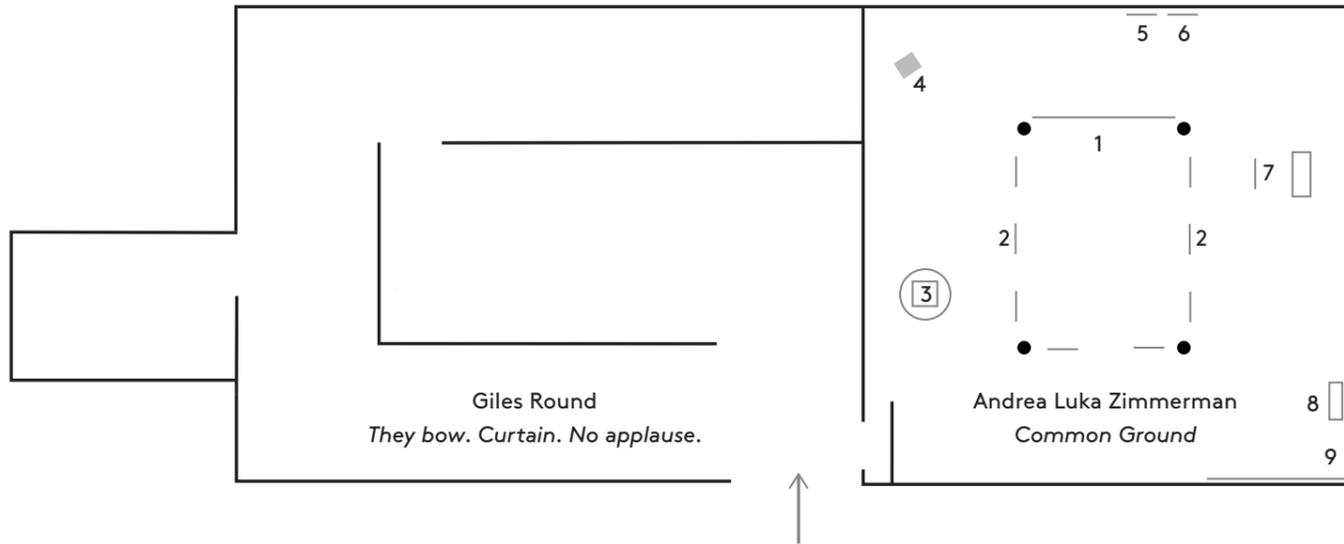


Exhibition Guide

Common Ground Andrea Luka Zimmerman

8 April to 18 June 2017

Spike Island



- 1 **Estate, a Reverie (2015, 83mins, HD)**
The essay film *Estate, a Reverie* tracks the long drawn out closure of the Haggerston Estate in East London. Andrea Luka Zimmerman lived on the estate for 18 years and filmed *Estate, a Reverie* over the final seven of these. The subject of the film is the community of people who lived on the estate and the complex negotiations, freedoms and improvisations that characterised their lives together amid decades of neglect and uncertainty. Their stories are told with warmth and reflect the humour by which people survive.
- 2 **I Am Here (2009-2014) Photographs**
I Am Here was a public art project initiated by Andrea Luka Zimmerman, Lasse Johansson and Tristan Fennell, artists who were long-term residents of Samuel House on Haggerston Estate. Without consultation or prior warning, the local council placed bright orange hoardings over the windows of all the vacated flats on the estate, marking them out as empty or abandoned. Replacing the orange boards with large scale photographs of people who remained on the estate was a challenge to this image of dereliction and to the passers-by who were often overheard speculating on the reasons for the neglect of the buildings. The photographs were displayed outside for four years and these are some of the last remaining portraits.
- 3 **Merzschmerz (2014, 6mins, HD)**
In this series of short videos children retell from memory fairy tales written by the German artist Kurt Schwitters to an adult neighbour or friend. These short scenes draw attention to the process of remembering

and forgetting – as well as adding and taking away – that is essential to the handing on of stories from one person to another. They are tender portraits that show the role of a listener to be as important as that of a narrator in telling a tale. The story tellers and listeners were all living on the Haggerston Estate during the making of *Estate, a Reverie*.

- 4 **Ghana Must Go bags by Smart Urhiofe Props from Estate, a Reverie**
Smart Urhiofe's *Ghana Must Go* bags were made in response to the events of 1983 where up to 1 million Ghanaians were ordered to leave Nigeria. Their exodus was characterised by the plastic woven laundry bags that most people used to pack up their belongings. The bag is an object from the film *Estate, a Reverie* in which Smart Urhiofe features. He also features in the *Behind the Scenes – workshops*.
- 5 **Behind the scenes – outtakes (31mins)**
Scenes that were deleted from *Estate, a Reverie*.
- 6 **Behind the Scenes – workshops (45mins, HD)**
Footage of workshops devised by architectural researcher and writer David Roberts in collaboration with residents and Andrea Luka Zimmerman. Although only very short clips of the workshops are included in the final cut of *Estate, a Reverie*, they give a sense of the multiple approaches taken over the years of filming.

- 7 **Taşkafa, Stories of the Street (2013, 66mins, HD)**
Taşkafa, Stories of the Street recalls histories and memories of the street dogs of Istanbul, told by the city's human citizens who live alongside them. This essay film is about the coexistence of people and animals; the friendships and aid they offer each other every day. These alliances have formed and endured for centuries, despite countless attempts to eradicate the dogs by those with political or economic interests. It is voiced by the late writer and storyteller John Berger from his own novel *King: A Street Story* (1988, Bloomsbury Publishing).

- 8 **Library**
The library is set against a photograph by Dilek Özcan of Andrea Luka Zimmerman's old bedroom in Samuel House on the Haggerston Estate. Before she moved out, the artist turned the flat into a film set, and the bedroom became the *Garden of Eden*, featuring in the film with children re-enacting a constellation of the stars. The library contains books that either inspired

Zimmerman or her collaborators, or contain essays by either the artist or others about the work they did on the Haggerston Estate. Some of the books contain notes, you are welcome to add or underline as you wish.

Please keep these books here for everyone. There is a DVD player and monitor for you to use with a selection of films made on the estate between 1975 and 1994.

- 9 **Blackboard**
The blackboard is another reference to *Estate, a Reverie*. It was initiated by long-term resident Ruth-Marie Tunkara who used a blackboard on the side of Samuel House as a space for sharing thoughts and notices.
Please feel free to use the blackboard and we will keep a record of it as it changes.

Related events

Common Ground provides an environment for open discussion, research and debate about the issues at the heart of these films and the other work in the exhibition. A series of talks, discussions, readings and screenings are organised over three weekends during the exhibition.

Book for events online at www.spikeisland.org.uk, call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

Exhibition tour

Led by Melissa Mean, Head of Arts at Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC)

Saturday 13 May, 2–3pm

Free, no need to book

Melissa Mean, Head of Arts at Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC), Bristol, talks about the work in *Common Ground* in relation to KWMC's citizen-led housing project *We can make ... homes*.

(Un)Common

Saturday 29 April, 2–5pm

Free, drop in anytime

Andrea Luka Zimmerman hosts a drop in event with collaborators on her film *Estate, a Reverie*; David Roberts, Elam Forrester and Lorna Forrester.

Common Wealth

Saturday 20 May, 12–5pm

Free, drop in anytime

This afternoon long open discussion about housing and redevelopment addresses how these issues affect people in and around Bristol today. Andrea Luka Zimmerman invites guest campaigners, activists and others who are involved in related projects or research to take part.

In Common

Saturday 17 June, 2–8pm

Free, booking advised

Join us to celebrate the work of John Berger, a prolific writer of powerful art criticism, poetry and fiction. This event combines talks, screenings and an audio recording of Berger reading Andrey Platonov's short story *A Sparrow's Journey*, heard by candlelight.

Notes on *Common Ground* by Andrea Luka Zimmerman

Common Ground is an important show for me personally, as it is the first time that I have been able to show a body of work centered around the idea and practice of co-existence.

The main piece in the gallery, *Estate, a Reverie*, tracks the passing of the Haggerston Estate in East London (where I lived for 18 years) and the utopian promise of social housing it once offered. It was filmed over seven years and celebrates the extraordinary, everyday humanity and resilience of residents who continue to be profoundly overlooked and stereotyped by media representations and wider social responses. Alongside the film works *Taşkafa, Stories of the Street* and *Merzschmerz*, it asks how we might resist being framed exclusively through class, gender, ability, disability and geography.

Estate, a Reverie has not been made about a community, but has been made from it. Through a variety of filmic registers and strategies, I sought to capture the genuinely utopian quality of the last few years of the buildings' existence, a period when, because demolition was inevitable, a sense of the possible, of the emergence of new, but of course time specific, social and organisational relationships developed, offering a fresh understanding of how we, the residents, might occupy the spaces of the estate and express the fullest possibility of our being, creatively and collectively.

The suspended photographic portraits captured in the film are the last remaining images of *I Am Here* (2009-14), a public art installation and our first major intervention on the Estate. We replaced sixty seven orange boards which overnight (in a Council action) had covered the windows of emptied flats on the façade of Samuel House (creating a widespread sense of dereliction and the abject) with portraits of estate residents. We then tried to think through what 'progress' actually means—and what it erases—in the artists' book *Estate: Art, Politics and Social Housing in Britain* (Myrdle Court Press, 2010), which is included in the small library in the gallery.

London, like so many cities now, is a zone whose buildings, functions, and populations are being challenged by 'incursionist' forces—of speculative

capital, architecture, and commerce—that threaten the current spectrum of ways of being. *Estate, a Reverie* tries to make sense of a process that is regarded in public discourse as inevitable, one that declares UK public housing in its original sense to be dead, made obsolete by the market 'choices' of a neoliberal world, one shaped by both finance and consumer capitalism.

These ideas are directly linked to *Taşkafa, Stories of the Street*, a film about memory and the most necessary forms of belonging, both to a place and to history. Through this exploration, the film opens a window on the contested relationship between power and the public, community and categorisation (in location and identity), and the ongoing struggle/resistance against a single way of seeing and being.

Taşkafa, Stories of the Street is structured around readings by the late storyteller and essayist John Berger, drawn from his novel *King: A Street Story*, a tale of hope, dreams, love and resistance, told from the perspective of a dog belonging to a community facing disappearance, even erasure. In *Taşkafa, Stories of the Street* this voice is gifted to a wider community and range of perspectives: to dogs, a city and finally, to history.

As with *Estate, a Reverie*, I wanted to explore how public space becomes a battleground for the relationship between corporate making and the unfolding of everyday lives within this idea of what is commonly called 'progress'.

What if, instead, we could hold onto a curious gaze, one that resists what comes—with its own pre-ordained rules and intentions—to a place. This warmer attention might appreciate a street dog not as abject but as an emblem of love and endurance. To us in Europe, the fate of such animals is perhaps a reminder of the violence of modernity, where all that did not belong to its idea was banished from sight.

In the end, *Taşkafa, Stories of the Street* is not about dogs as such. It is about the way people seek — still and especially now — to belong to a larger context than themselves, one which respects other creatures and wishes them to play a significant role in their lives. The key issue is not whether we live securely, especially in the 'official' sense, but rather that we don't lose touch with the shared reality that surrounds us.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people without whom my projects would not have been possible.

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