The role of the artist in a world of imminent breakdown

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‘Industrial transformation turned out to be a bubble of promise followed by lost livelihoods and damaged landscapes.

...capitalism entangles us with ideas of progress and with the spread of techniques of alienation that turn both humans and other beings into resources.’

Anna Tsing Lowenhaupt, *Mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*
SUSTAINABILITY

How to (re)define or (re)appropriate sustainability?
What is the role of the artist in this context, in relation to sustainability?
What does it mean for me, and in the context of my work?

Exploring triggers of displacement.

Working with participatory methods:
Photographic portraiture
Social actions

The aim:
Destabilize power relationships
Organise
Highlight the capacity of community to self-organise
Change stereotypes (culture)
Build confidence
The Roles We Play
Recognising the Contribution of People in Poverty
Coming back to the questions:

How would you re-define or re-appropriate sustainability? What is the role of the artist in this context, in relation to sustainability? What does it mean for you, and in the context of your work?
SEPTEMBER 2019 DEMOLITION DATE

Just before last Christmas, Delacey put forward a planning application to Southwark Council for the demolition of the buildings and redevelopment of the shopping centre. Southwark Council will now decide whether or not to give Delacey permission for the demolition. It is probably too early to make a prediction as to what the outcome will be.

The application covers not just the shopping centre but the London Telegraph Communication (UTC) site as well. This also will be demolished if permission is given.

Shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, offices and nearly a thousand town centre homes are proposed for both sites.

A new cinema, music venue and leisure facilities are also proposed, along with a new advance to the Northern line tube.

Delacey proposes to begin the development on the shopping centre site in September 2018, and to finish in October 2018. Work would begin on the UTC site in June 2018, lasting until May 2019.

People have been talking about the redevelopment of the shopping centre for years and some are relieved that it will appear to be happening. But nothing is decided yet, and there are at least three big problems with Delacey’s proposals.

First, Delacey’s proposals for the demolition of the shopping centre include no new green space. A member of the UTC has been appointed, but the majority of the plots, except for a limited number of spaces, are also green. This is why the applicants for this whole scheme have only offered 7%.

Finally, Delacey has not included any social rental housing in the building it proposes to build. This is one good reason for Southwark Council to reject Delacey’s planning applications.

They break the rules for new developments.

In the meantime, local people and traders have made over two hundred objections to Delacey’s current plans. You can make an objection or comment yourself through the link below.

www.23arcnn.com/elephantproject

THE PLAN FOR THE DEMOLITION OF THE SHOPPING CENTRE HAS BEEN STOPPED IN ITS TRACKS BY A FURIOUS BACKLASH FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Delacey’s plans for the demolition of the shopping centre has been temporarily stopped in their tracks by a furious backlash from the local community.

Delacey’s planning application for the demolition of the shopping centre was due to be considered on 18 December by Southwark Council, but was postponed until 3 January after local traders complained that it was too close to Christmas. The traders were joined by local councillors, centre owners and staff and students from the London College of Communication.

Southwark Council was heavily criticised.

Everyone was outraged by the manner in which the highly controversial plan was put forward and the traders’ supporters could not attend.

A report about the proposal prepared for the meeting gave all the details of Delacey’s plans.

The report has been removed from the Council website, but still can be seen at the Council website. It recommends approving the application, but shows that Delacey’s proposals break many of Southwark’s planning rules.

On the demolition of the shopping centre the report said:

The Centre Shopping Centre, the dentist and Shoemakers, the newspaper, beside the Criterion Cinema, will all be knocked down.

Delacey wants to demolish the position of Ashur 4 & 7, but have no agreement for this from their own Network Rail.

The centre might not be demolished because Delacey has not yet got any funding for the development (and still has to remove all the obstructions).

The report also gives details of the new shopping centre that Delacey wants to build.

There will be very little increase in the amount of retail floorspace.

Only half the required affordable retail units would be provided.

Delacey has no agreement for the existing occupation of the centre.

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When is something not sustainable anymore?

What is the relationship between sustainability and making? Should we continue to make, should we stop making, is making of any use? Or should we be thinking about, and making in different ways?
‘Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves.’

Anna Tsing Lowenhaupt, *Mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*
‘Why do we make things? Why do we choose the spiritually, emotionally, and physically demanding work of bringing new objects into the world with creativity and skill? Through considering the work of my own hands, through the practical education of a life in craft, and through the shared experience of others – all seem to lead back to one fundamental truth: we practice contemporary craft as a process of self-transformation. Why this should be so and what its ramifications are, not only for craft and other creative fields, but also for understanding our own humanity.’

Peter Korn, Why we make things and why it matters?
‘We touch things to assure ourselves of reality.’
Anni Albers, *On Weaving*
Anni Albers in her studio
How We Might Live
The Vision of William Morris
September 2012–July 2013
Maryland Room Gallery
Hornbake Library
University of Maryland, College Park
‘By the mid twentieth century the concept of the shaman had been transformed into a metaphor for the artist; the artist is now identified as someone on the edge of madness who can ascend or descend into realms of unconsciousness unavailable to others and bring back gifts for the community in the form of works of art’
Esther Pasztory

By the mid 20th century the politics of work transmuted into the politics of self transformation..
How can we make in more sustainable and self-sufficient ways, using, for instance what we can grow ourselves? To transform ourselves and impact on others. Do we have a responsibility to do that in the context of climate breakdown?
What other questions emerge?

What does it mean to ‘live outside the system’, to be self-sufficient, or self-sustaining? What does it take? Is that what we should be doing or striving towards? Or should we instead be working with or within the system to change it? Is the kind of detachment from ‘the system’ of capitalist production and consumption productive or counter-productive?