

TASTE UNTOLD:
CRITICAL PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AND CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE

by Adriana Cobo

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into the field of architecture and urban design, focusing on the codes and practices of contemporary public space. Underscoring a dependent correlation between research and existing urban sites, the investigation is situated on Granary Square, arguably the most successful privately owned public space made in London in recent years, located at the heart of the King's Cross Estate. Within architecture and urban design fields, high regard for specific urban regeneration projects with POPS at their heart normally overlooks their inherently divisive social impact, and strengthens the often legitimised belief that analysing, questioning and re-aligning such impact falls outside the realm of these professions. The investigation addresses some of the reasons behind such overlooking, and articulates research-practice that critically approaches some of the effects contemporary public spaces have on the unfolding of urban life, including on dominant aesthetic narratives often communicated through pseudo-public environments.

The thesis sets out to test the agency of spatial practices in contemporary public space post-occupancy, by critically inspecting active maintenance practices specific to the King's Cross Estate, in connection to those characteristic of architecture and spatial practices more broadly. Research has been driven by routinely asking: how can performance practice be used as an agent to question and realign the codes and practices of contemporary public space? Motivated by this question, research-practice evolves through reading and writing, as well as through designing, negotiating and delivering performance interventions involving medium to long-term engagement with specific local groups. A feedback loop between these research methods critically informs the investigation, and shapes critical connections between architectural and urban design and performance practice tailored to contemporary public space. The contribution to knowledge derives from exploring how use and everyday practices are conditioned by specific maintenance strategies, including regulatory codes, ideologies and aesthetic regimes of public space.

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CHAPTER 01 / Introduction

Thesis Overview

This practice-based research is an investigation into the field of architecture and urban design, focusing on the codes and practices characteristic of contemporary public space.¹ Although often contested, privately owned public spaces (POPS) are presented today as desirable additions to urban redevelopment projects across the United Kingdom and beyond.² Particularly in London during the last two decades, privately owned public spaces at scales larger than the neighbourhood park have been promoted as enjoying considerable commercial and design success. This perception often overshadows, and sometimes dismisses, some of the more damaging impacts that the establishment of POPS has on the social tissue of specific localities and social groups, and more generally on the socio-political dynamics of cities. Within architecture and urban design practices, high regard for specific urban regeneration projects with privately owned public spaces at their heart too often overlooks their inherently divisive social impact. This thesis addresses some of the reasons behind such overlooking, and explores the possibility to articulate practice-based research that critically approaches some of the effects contemporary public spaces have on the unfolding of urban life.

¹ Further considerations on Practice-based Research are presented later in this chapter, under *Methodology*.

² See: Jerold S. Kayden, *Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), pp. 5–73. This is a study of how the privatisation of the public realm at large scale has evolved in New York City, recounting the city's near sixty-year program "of using incentive zoning to produce privately owned public spaces", p. 43. In the context of London, see the report: London Assembly, GLA, 'Public Life in Private Hands: Managing London's Public Space' (London: Planning and Housing Committee, May 2011). The introduction highlights that "London Planning has become adept at the delivery of high quality public realm as part of large scale private developments." (Gavron, p. 9). See also *The Guardian* Cities series on the privatisation of public spaces in London and the UK, specially: Oliver Wainwright, 'Revealed: How Developers Exploit Flawed Planning System to Minimise Affordable Housing', *The Guardian*, 25 June 2015. Bradley L. Garreth, 'The Privatisation of Cities' Public Spaces Is Escalating. It Is Time to Take a Stand', *The Guardian*, 4 August 2015. And Jack Shenker, 'Revealed: The Insidious Creep of Pseudo-Public Space in London', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2017. This latest article includes a link to a map devised by the investigation by *The Guardian* Cities on Privatised Public Spaces across London. Here, it is explained that "Private control over large open spaces in the city is not without historical precedent. In the 19th century many areas of central London, including stretches of Belgravia, Marylebone and Pimlico, were effectively gated communities, sealed off from the general public and policed by private entities. Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries public struggles were waged to force open land and ensure streets, squares and parks were adopted by local authorities over whom Londoners of all backgrounds – not just the influential or wealthy – could exert a measure of democratic control."

In order to do this, the thesis contextualises its practical component within the framework of spatial practices, understood within architecture and urban design as “forms of positive spatial action that can envisage and present alternatives of everyday life”.³ Aiming at testing the agency of spatial practices in contemporary public space post-occupancy, the design of research-practice was directed towards engaging critically with the life of specific public realm designs. The investigation has been sited on Granary Square in London, arguably the most successful POPS made in the city in recent years, located at the heart of the King’s Cross Estate.⁴ Amongst other roles, the square performs as an open urban lobby for the Granary Building, the architectural face of Central Saint Martins and location of its library, a place where a considerable amount of material for this research has been discovered, documented, studied, analysed, crafted and recrafted.

The thesis takes the view that, in spite of contemporary public spaces such as Granary Square appearing as unmodifiable built environments, temporary actions can be taken to counterbalance some of the controlling tendencies that their codes and practices exert on urban social life.⁵ It argues that such temporary actions can be designed and delivered from

³ Melanie Dodd, *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City* (Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York, NY, Routledge, 2019), p. 1. Dodd further reflects on Spatial Practices as “not necessarily the built and architectural alternatives of twentieth-century modernism, but rather operational alternatives and systems by which we can reboot, shedding our habits and norms as a daily resistance to the status quo”. (Ibid). The term Spatial Practice has been used for some years now within architecture and urban design, particularly by Jane Rendell, who defines Critical Spatial Practice as “a helpful way to describe projects located between art and architecture, that both critiqued the sites into which they intervened as well as the disciplinary procedures through which they operated.” (In Jane Rendell’s Critical spatial Practice Website: <https://criticalspatialpractice.co.uk> (accessed 15/10/2020).) See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_spatial_practice (accessed 15/10/2020). Further considerations, and articulations between Spatial Practice and this research are given later in this chapter, under *Methodology*.

⁴ The term Post-Occupancy has been widely used since the 1960’s, in reference to Post Occupancy Evaluation, or POE, defined as “...the process of evaluating buildings in a systematic and rigorous manner after they have been built and occupied for some time” as explained in the book *Post-Occupancy Evaluation*, where the measurement of “... the building’s effects on productivity and wellbeing”, is the main concern. See: Wolfgang FE Preiser, Edward White, and Harvey Rabinowitz, *Post-Occupancy Evaluation (Routledge Revivals)* (Routledge, 2015). Generally, post-occupancy evaluations are used to measure the quality of construction of a building, and its performance during the first year of occupancy, as well as to inform potential refurbishments or alterations. These are mainly technical studies. In this thesis, the term post-occupancy is used rather, to underscore the potential conceptual and critical implications it suggests. See also Hilary Sample, *Maintenance Architecture* (MIT Press, 2016), p. 157, where she describes Post-Occupancy and Alternate Architectural Futures. Though her opening paragraph in this chapter is promising, in my view, the subsequent elaboration of her argument and the examples she uses, fall short of exploring possibilities for extending the life of architectural practice post-occupancy. See also Chapters 02 and 03.

⁵ It is important to emphasise the assertion about public spaces such as Granary Square, only *appearing* unmodifiable. This thesis explores the possibility to modify such spaces, via temporary disruptions of existing protocols of use. This approach is largely qualified by Henry Lefebvre’s concept of social space, whereby space is produced socially as well as physically, and therefore social conventions, rituals and events modify space. In Chapter 01 of his book *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre explains his concern about “the division which keeps the various types of space away from each other, so that physical space, mental space and social space do not overlap.” He then proceeds to focus on “the distance that separates ‘ideal’ space, which has to do with mental (logico-mathematical) categories, from ‘real’ space, which is the space of social practice.” He affirms that “In actuality each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other.” (Blackwell 1991,

the field of architecture and urban design, with projects defined in terms alternative to traditional form-based practice which, in turn, perpetuates equally traditional architecture dialectics between form and function, architect and user, etc. The thesis argues that these dialectic traditions play out in the design and management of contemporary public spaces, and that they could be critically counter-balanced and/or resisted when operating within spatial practice frameworks.⁶ Research subsequently moves towards time-based practices, specifically performance practice, undertaken here as a means to analyse critically the politics and aesthetics of function in architecture, and some associated programs of use – particularly for public space – which are often prescriptive of users’ actions, routines and behaviours.⁷ The research has therefore been driven by routinely asking: How to use performance practice as an agent for questioning and realigning the codes and practices of contemporary public space?

The thesis also argues that, in the context of contemporary public space, the aesthetics of performance have been largely and perhaps intentionally under-elaborated, compared to some other aspects of spatial practices. A subsequent question arises from this consideration, which has also motivated the development of the research: How would the potential agency of performance practice impact on institutionalised notions of taste in architecture and urban design?

Via the design, negotiation and delivery of performance interventions tailored to Granary Square, the project has critically addressed dominant power structures within the locality, and analysed how they manifest in particular through maintenance strategies, including the tight monitoring of activities on site and the delivery of strict cleaning protocols.⁸ Throughout the thesis, maintenance is addressed beyond cleaning and repair practices, as a system of strategies dedicated to the construction and sustainment of specific notions of

14). The thesis explores some of the ways in which ideal and real spaces could overlap, through a situated inquiry into Granary Square.

⁶ The subsection on *Methodology* in this chapter further defines the framework of research practice for this study.

⁷ In the following chapter, definitions of form-based vs. program-based design will be further explored and explained. Definitions of spatial and performance practices, and their intersections in the research are explained in more detail under *Methodology*.

⁸ For a detailed elaboration on the politics of maintenance in connection to practices of contemporary public space, see subsection *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02.

contemporary public space.⁹ The thesis argues that these strategies draw their agency particularly in connection to the codification of power, the monitoring of strict labour protocols, and the curation of civic life, all designed to support the corporate ideologies characteristic of existing POPS both aesthetically and functionally, and with a carefully managed long-term view.¹⁰

Throughout the process of research, controlling mechanisms shaping the delivery of maintenance labour and programs of use have been identified.¹¹ Seeking to temporarily subvert such mechanisms, specific performances were designed to provide temporary visibility to suppressed activities, and then performed by individuals displaced from and/or under-represented in the chosen location. These interventions sit at the centre of the investigation's methodology.¹²

Going beyond the controversial debate stirred by the concept of privately owned public space, performance projects have focused on the codes and practices characteristic of the chosen case study, considering them as the background against which to propose temporary interventions that question the establishment of such models of contemporary public space more generally. Set against the King's Cross Estate's curated program of cultural events, the research's approach to performance focused on re-enacting common actions such as cleaning (performed daily as a professional routine on site) or chatting (performed as an ongoing leisurely one). Additionally, the everyday practices of washing, drawing and knitting, were recoded within a critical framework of spatial practice, represented as public performances, and given temporary visibility and meaning when set

⁹ Some of the maintenance practices considered here, which when grouped produce a system of maintenance strategies, include cleaning and repairing the public realm, curating, managing and surveying programs of use and designing the public built environment.

¹⁰ Ibid. The management of public spaces with a long-term view is particularly present in the chosen location, where developer Argent LLP is also partial owner and on-site manager of the King's Cross Estate. For Argent's overarching view on urban redevelopment, see the report London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3 (London: Argent St George, July 2001).

¹¹ These are extensively considered throughout Chapter 02.

¹² See subsection on Methodology, later in this chapter.

against the dominant physical, cultural, socio-political and aesthetic narratives structural to the square.¹³

Of particular relevance here are the aesthetic narratives attached to contemporary public space. This thesis argues that systems of taste characteristic of contemporary public space are manifested, on the one hand, through strictly regulated cleaning protocols that legitimise and sustain both the belief that cleanliness equals safety in public spaces, and that subsequent maintenance management regimes are necessary.¹⁴ On the other hand, systems of taste are also manifested through curated programs of use (and users) which, performed iteratively, sustain the ongoing commodification of public space. The thesis therefore aims to specify the connection between dominant sanitised aesthetics of contemporary public space, and the possibility to expand the notion of maintenance in architecture and urban design practices beyond technocratic definitions, and/or prescribed understandings of urban leisure associated almost exclusively with the consumption of goods.

Although largely unspoken of today, architectural taste has been considered here as an essential regulatory system for designing, making, experiencing and maintaining contemporary public spaces, through both aesthetic (physical) and functional (social) codes which, the thesis argues, are perpetuated specifically through the action of cleaning - an action which, in turn, has established itself as aesthetically, practically, socially, and conceptually distinctive of architectural practice.¹⁵ Defined as a *modus operandi* internalised by architects and based on professionally legitimised aesthetic narratives, taste is understood and scrutinised here as it manifests through maintenance strategies,

¹³ Detailed descriptions, analyses of and work about such narratives will be developed through the following two chapters. A definition of spatial practice within this investigation is given under the subheading *Spatial Practice* below

¹⁴ See subsection *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02.

¹⁵ This thesis considers the book *Towards a New Architecture* (1927), by Le Corbusier, as a treaty on cleaning strategies for the practicing of architecture in modern times at all levels. See Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Martino Fine Books, 2014), pp. 9–20. It is important to note here that, although Melanie Dodd argues that the ways of 're-imagining ourselves' opened through Spatial Practices "are not alternatives to twentieth century modernism" (Dodd, *Spatial Practices*, p. 1 – see footnote no. 3 above), it is my contention here that the poignant aesthetic premises of the modern project, in turn sustained by the institutional project of architecture as a profession, are in particular need of revision and re-imagining through the Spatial Practices lens. This, for *other ways of doing architecture* to continue to level up with their mainstream counterparts, including on the contested subject of designerly skill, aesthetics, or ultimately, taste.

structural to the production and communication of architecture generally and, specifically for this investigation, of public space.¹⁶

The core constituting categories of public space have been studied in the following ways: representations of power – pertaining mostly to spatial design; labour protocols – especially the cleaning of the public realm; and the unfolding of civic life – in the form of both regular use and curated events and programs.¹⁷ Through research-practice, these categories have been examined by recording and questioning their specific implementation as maintenance strategies, instrumental to the establishment and reception of contemporary models of urban public space.¹⁸ The observation and analysis of how these categories translate into codes and practices of public space constitutes part of the research methodology and informs the general framework for both, the building of theory and the design of research-practice throughout the investigation.¹⁹

Through the analysis of these codes and practices on the chosen site, the research aimed to understand and contest some of the processes by which new political, social and aesthetic narratives of public space become embedded into the contemporary public realm, and legitimised in the long term through projects such as the King’s Cross Estate. Beyond this specific location, wider implications of the research pertain to writing stories of practice that emerge from studying – and designing practice around – the link between maintenance and taste.²⁰ As a practice-based PhD, the thesis aimed to devise strategies to allow architects and spatial practitioners – professional or not – to critically imagine, construct, experience and speak out for more open, negotiated and heterogeneous narratives than those sustained via such sites as Granary Square.

A diagrammatic structure of this thesis summarising its components and development, is presented and explained later in the chapter.

¹⁶ See Interim Chapter, *Habitus and Recodification: The Practice of Taste in Contemporary Public Space*

¹⁷ For a summary of public events held on Granary Square between 2015 and 2018 see **FIG. 05**.

¹⁸ For private managerial protocols found on cleaning protocols see **FIG. B09**, for private use protocols found on site see **FIGS. A27–A29**, and **FIG. A31**.

¹⁹ See Methodology Diagram on p. 41, for a more detailed breakdown of methods and actions associated with research-practice, specifically performance practice and theory building.

²⁰ See Interim Chapter *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*.

Contribution to knowledge

Modern and postmodern conceptions in architecture have consistently left space for further exploration of programs of use, defined here as time-based spatial practices, performed by users and dwellers in the everyday.²¹ Although it has been extensively argued that everyday practices significantly contribute to spatial production processes,²² only recently has function started to be addressed by architecture as spatial practice, and more specifically as performance practice, through what Alex Schweder has defined as *Performance Architecture*.²³ However, performance practice has not yet been fully explored as a method for critically addressing the codes and practices specific to the production of contemporary public space. This research aims at contributing to knowledge by exploring performance as a method for uncovering some of the ways in which dominant structures of public space play out, as the everyday unfolds within urban public spaces. Subsequently, the research sets out to test the agency of performance practice for questioning, and temporarily realigning the codes and practices of contemporary public space, distinctive of such dominant structures. Working towards its contribution to knowledge, the thesis argues that some of the most characteristic codes and practices of contemporary public space can be grouped, understood and explored as maintenance practices, not only linked with

²¹ The modern tradition in architecture addressed function in conjunction to form (Le Corbusier 1927), whereby use was aestheticised and often translated into machine-based visual codes and styles (modernism, functionalism). The main reference on the ethics of modernism for this investigation is: Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*. In turn, modernist codes and styles have been re-evaluated through alternative, but still form-based, postmodern narratives. The main reference on postmodern narratives in this research is: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (MIT Press Cambridge, Mass, 1972). The main references on the connections between the everyday, users' practices, and the production of space here, are the seminal works: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991). Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011).

²² Seminal studies on everyday life, and its impact on the production of space are Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*, comprising three volumes (1947, 1961, 1981), Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), and Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Within the context of feminist critiques of space, the impact of everyday life in the design of the household and beyond is thoroughly studied by Dolores Hayden in her book *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981), where Hayden offers a relevant historical perspective spanning from Communitarian Socialism, to the design of the domestic kitchen as a professional setting as early as 1869 by Catherine and Harriet Bleacher. Leslie Kanés Weisman's book *Discrimination by Design* (1991), points a finger not only at how our environments are man-made, but also at how to imagine them in a more equitable manner where the everyday life is incorporated in design from a feminist perspective. In the third chapter, *The Private Use of Public Space* (pp. 67–85), Weisman describes how everyday life transforms space, in a simple and incisive way: "Armed with a piece of chalk, children can turn public sidewalks into private gameboards that block pedestrian traffic. Armed with a can of spray paint, teenagers can turn the walls of public buildings and highway overpasses into private billboards." (p. 67). Amongst others, see also *Everyday Urbanism* (1999), by John Chase and Margaret Crawford, and the book *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday life and How it Changes* (2012), by Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson, particularly the subsection *Space and Practice*, in Chapter 7, pp. 130–134.

²³ For further specification on performance in connection to programs of use and spatial practices, see the subsection *Research-practice: Performance, performativity and spatial practice*, under *Methodology*, in this chapter below. For Alex Schweder's full text *Performance Architecture*, see: Rochus Urban Hinkel, ed., *Urban Interior: Informal Explorations, Interventions and Occupations* (Spurbuchverlag, 2011), pp. 13–144.

maintenance labour through cleaning and repair, but also with power and civic life, through dominant practices of control and everyday practices respectively.

Within a wider frame of research, and expanding on the notion of maintenance as explained above, the investigation examines architectural taste, defining it as a maintenance strategy in its own right, and one which has been consistently used to sustain the hegemony of form-based practice in architecture. Taste, and its conventional and naturalised translation into a series of period-based styles,²⁴ has steadily contributed to legitimising the coupling between beauty and form, which in turn defines the exclusive character of mainstream architecture practitioners as *men of taste*.²⁵ This situated inquiry into the codes and practices of contemporary public space, also led to the identification of the connection between notions of taste and maintenance practices in architecture as an underdeveloped cluster of knowledge within the field.²⁶ The research finds a specific space for action within this cluster, along with the possibility to specify its contribution to knowledge on two distinct fronts, as follows:

First, by testing performance practice as a methodological tool and strategy for drawing critical knowledge about the field of architecture and urban design. This leads to the proposal of performance-based methods for the exploration and cognition of places, and specifically public spaces, through the design and delivery of tailored performance

²⁴ Traditionally, style has been the natural way into architecture's taste, with the profession making taste institutional through its translation into style. The bibliography supporting this statement is extensive, with books on history and theory of art and architecture for insiders and outsiders alike. Two widely known examples are given here, which demonstrate how the vocabulary of style merges into ideas of beauty and culture in architecture both in highly academic and non-academic publications:

"Architecture - the art of building - has a language of its own, and reading buildings is just like reading any language: you need to understand the basic components before you start, but once you are confident with the structure of the language, you can read anything. Three key aspects make up the grammar of architectural language: period-based styles..." In: Carol Davidson Cragoe, *How to Read Buildings: A Crash Course in Architectural Styles* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008). On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Distinction*: "The [conscious or unconscious] implementation of [explicit or implicit] schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture, is the hidden condition for recognising the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 2.

²⁵ This designation will be explained and reflected on extensively in the next two chapters, and specifically in the section *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*, at the start of Chapter 03.

²⁶ It is important to specify here that, when referring to taste and maintenance practices together, what is suggested is that architectural taste has been devised to maintain and/or sustain well established aesthetic paradigms for the profession. This, rather than suggesting that taste manifests through notions of tidiness and cleanliness only. In the Interim Chapter, *Taste Untold: Habitus and Recodification*, the issue of taste, its connections with maintenance practices, as well as with the overall argument of the thesis, are further discussed.

projects.²⁷ Second, by constructing critical, open and also accessible narratives of architecture and urban design from the material and experiences produced through the design and delivery of participatory and collaborative performance projects on the chosen location.²⁸ These narratives aim to address issues of ideology and taste which, however significant, remain usually suppressed and/or sidelined by mainstream professional practices of architecture. They are addressed to architects, spatial practitioners and the general public.

The contribution to knowledge therefore derives from:

- Exploring how use and everyday practices are conditioned by specific maintenance strategies including regulatory codes, ideologies and aesthetic regimes of public space.
- Questioning the effects of this conditioning.
- Bringing alternative modes of spatial practice to visibility, through the design and negotiation of performance practice, and the associated writing of architectural theory.
- Testing alternative architectural and spatial methods for producing critical knowledge of place, and furthering imaginations of public space.
- Advancing new readings and understandings of taste in architecture and spatial practice, particularly in relation to contemporary public space.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives for the investigation arise from the following research questions:

- How can performance practice be used as an agent to question and realign the codes and practices of contemporary public space?
- How would the potential agency of performance practice for questioning and realigning codes and practices of public space impact on institutionalised notions of taste in architecture?

²⁷ As explained below, under *Methodology*.

²⁸ Ibid

The research aims are therefore

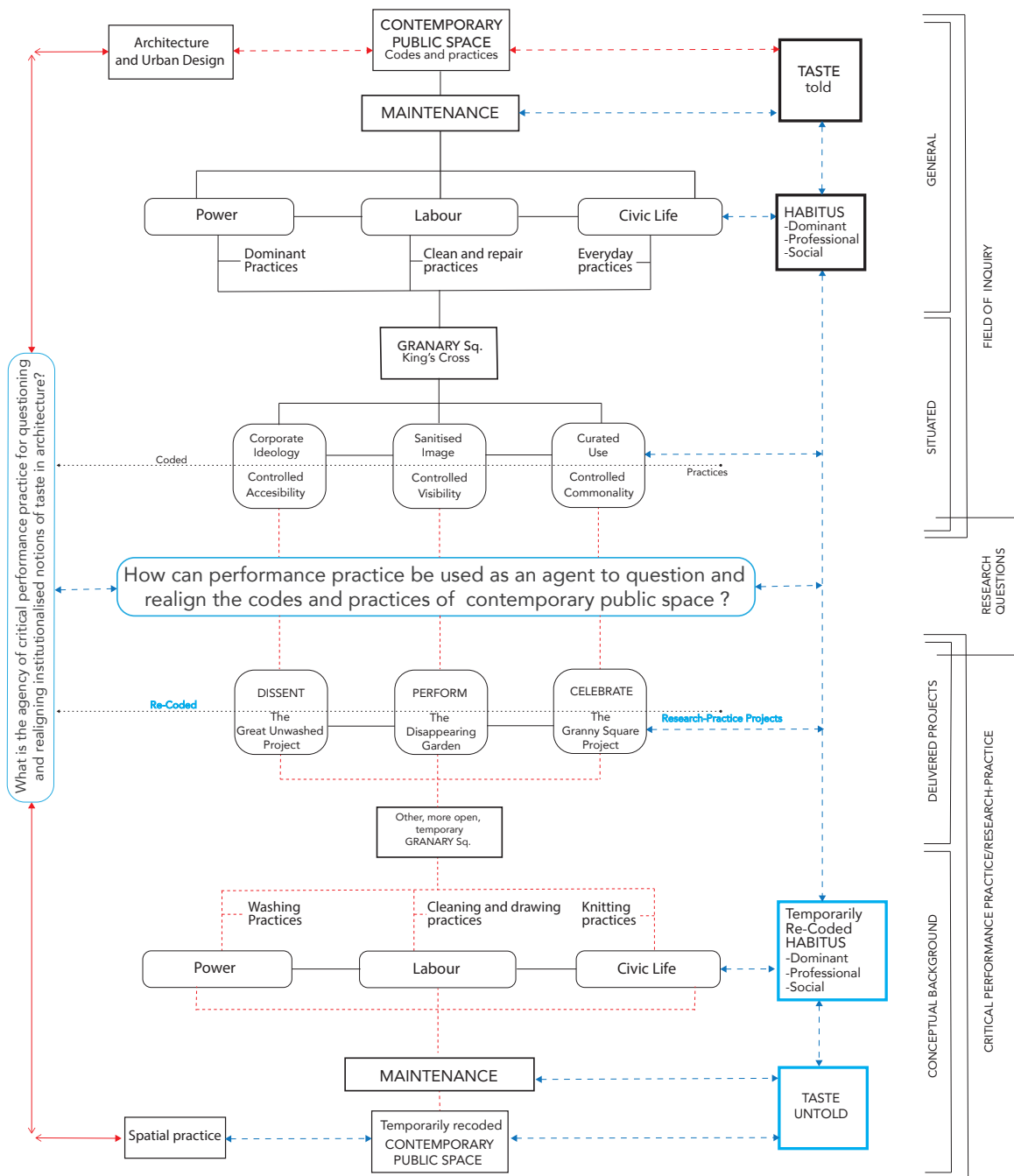
- To explore ways in which performance can inform and motivate spatial practices that are critical of the existing codes and practices of contemporary public space
- To provide temporary visibility to under-represented groups through participatory and collaborative site-specific interventions for public space
- To construct untold stories of taste in, of and for architecture, derived from the process of designing, developing, negotiating and delivering tailored performance interventions in set locations.
- To translate untold stories of taste into expanded notions of maintenance in architecture, contextualised within spatial practices at the margins of technocratic approaches.

The research objectives are

- To identify critical issues in the defining of codes and practices of public space in the chosen location, through observations, analyses, theory writing and performance practice.
- To investigate how power and ideology influence and are influenced by the design and use of public space, and the communication of dominant aesthetic narratives in architecture both generally and in the chosen site.
- To identify key maintenance strategies used for the implementation and preservation of contemporary public spaces, and to understand how these strategies translate into protocols of labour, programs of use and the communication of 'desired' aesthetics of public space, both specific to the chosen location and within the context of urban public space more generally.
- To detect key everyday activities which, although meaningful for the locality, could be absent and/or under-represented on the chosen site, and to reflect on how such activities are generally absent from and/or under-represented within our built environment more widely.
- To initiate performance practice projects that link site findings with relevant local groups.
- To engage in the medium to long term with relevant local groups, including under-represented groups and stakeholders, by volunteering, advancing dialogues and collaborating on developing, negotiating and delivering performance projects.

- To advance writing as an analytical strategy for building theory, as well as an ongoing method for linking academic work and design practice via the construction and communication of untold stories of taste for the profession.

Thesis Structure Diagram



The Thesis Structure Diagram summarises the inquiry, showing the different components of the thesis in connection to each other. It also shows how these connections evolve and iterate as research progresses. Crucially, as indicated by the long brackets at the right side of the diagram, the two main stages of the research – specifying the field of inquiry (top half of the diagram), and delivering research-practice (bottom half of the diagram) – are brought together, and mirrored, by the main research question, which is circled in blue at the diagram's centre.

As shown in the top half of the diagram, the field of inquiry is first defined by a general examination of the association between architecture and urban design and the codes and practices of public space, and then by a situated inquiry into Granary Square, King's Cross, which brings the research into focus through research-practice. Three main categories of public space articulate the field of inquiry: power, labour and civic life. Specifically for the chosen site, these categories translate into codes associated with corporate ideology, sanitised aesthetics and curated programs of use respectively, each in turn characterised by specific practices of control on visibility, accessibility and commonality. Analysed through the lens provided by the main research question, these codes and practices correspondingly evolved into critical performance interventions tailored to the chosen site, each associated with one of the three categories, and aimed at recoding its existing codes and practices through dissent, performance and celebratory strategies respectively. Connecting lines in the thesis structure diagram show how links between categories, codes and practices and projects developed through the course of the research, with black lines indicating existing/permanent connections (top half), and red dashed lines indicating temporary links constructed through research-practice (bottom half).

Research-practice developed along two interdependent fronts: performance projects and their conceptual background. The conceptual background of performance projects is anchored in the main research question, and motivated by a subsequent question on the aesthetics of public space and its links with architectural taste more generally. Throughout the research, the subject of taste is also studied in association with the three main categories of public space, each in turn specified by a *habitus*, or set of entrenched codes

and practices. These are identified in the diagram as dominant, professional and social respectively, as indicated inside the lower black box to the top right corner of the diagram.

Crucially, these sets of codes and practices of public space, both in their more permanent as well as temporary manifestations (through performance projects), are grouped and redefined here as *maintenance*: a system of strategies dedicated to the construction and sustainment of specific notions of contemporary public space with a long-term view. The concept of the habitus defined by Pierre Bourdieu,²⁹ informs and structures the analysis of the codes and practices of contemporary public space shown at the top of the Diagram. Dashed blue lines indicate connections between existing codes and practices and their recoded variations, as well as between existing and expanded notions of maintenance and taste in the context of Spatial Practice.

Methodology

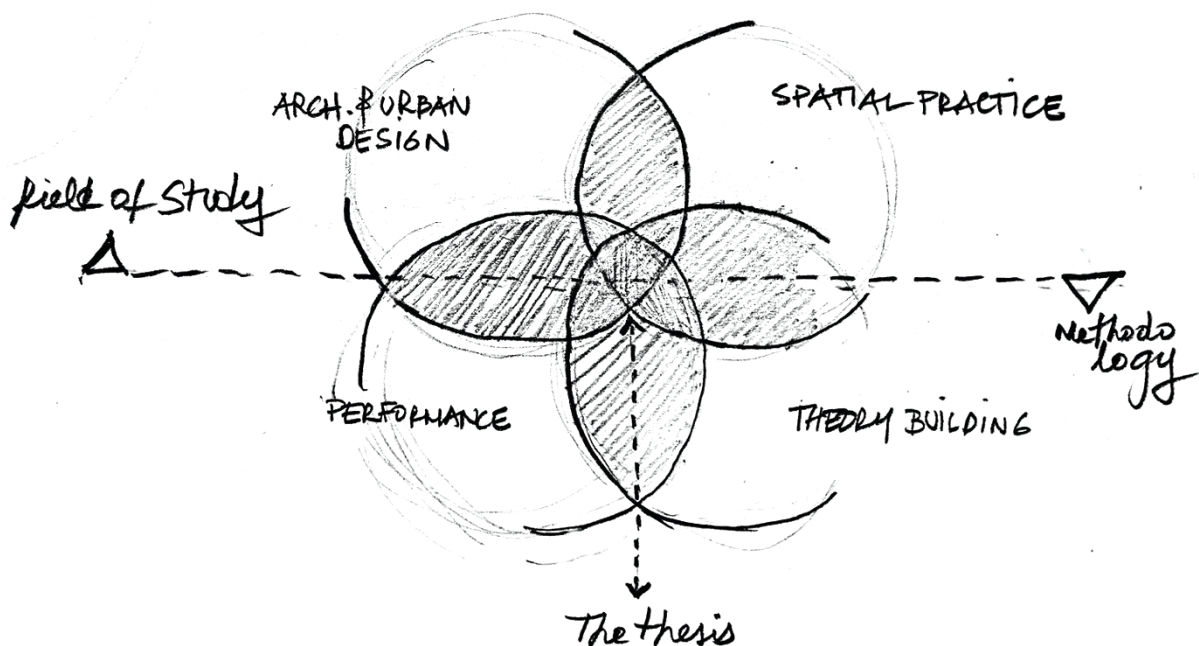
This investigation has been developed as practice-based research, with performance practice at the core of its methodology.³⁰ This section observes some of the more relevant definitions of practice-based research for the study, defines performance in connection with the research's aims and objectives, and outlines its intersections with the field of architecture and urban design more generally. As shown in the Methodology Diagram at the end of this section, two main methodological phases constitute the research: Performance Practice and Theory Building. A feedback loop between them informs and structures the methodology throughout, and supports the research's approach to Spatial Practice, also defined below. Additionally, key methods attached to each of the two methodological phases are discussed to clarify the research's stance on complex

²⁹ Bourdieu defined habitus as the iterative re-enactment of actions and behaviours that both define and are defined by specific practices. In his book *The Logic of Practice*, he writes: "The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten a history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present." Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990), p. 56. Habitus will be extensively discussed in the Interim Chapter *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*.

³⁰ The building of theory, one of the two core methodological phases in this research along with performance practice, is not specifically mentioned here because it is considered intrinsic to any PhD and therefore implicit the term *research*. As will be discussed below, a practical component defines a particular approach to the construction of theory for Practice-based Research. Critical writing and the construction of situated knowledge – both key methods for building theory in this investigation – are, however, discussed later in this section.

methodological themes (i.e. the methods used to produce knowledge). These include reflexions on the role of chance and intuition in research, understandings of participation and collaboration strategies and considerations on the notions of situated knowledge and critical writing.

A Venn diagram is provided below, to explain the intersections between the different components of the thesis visually. The thesis sits in the intersection between Architecture and Spatial Practice – which in turn define the field of study – and performance and theory building, which define the investigation’s methodology. As the various methods used to produce knowledge on the field of study are implemented, intersections between the methodology and some of the new definitions of practice within the field are produced. So, although thesis is located in the very centre of the diagram, it touches upon other shaded areas, which indicate specific intersections between the four main components to the study.



In *Theses on Feuerbach*, Karl Marx defines practice as the primary source of knowledge, emphatically differentiating it from scholastic understanding. According to Marx, “the dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is purely an scholastic question.”³¹ Arguing that change is motivated by practice rather than by theoretical interpretation, Marx famously affirmed that “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.”³² His call for change offers a relevant political framework to argue in favour of the contested role of practice in scholarly research today, especially because “Practice Based Research is a research approach that has yet to reach a settled status in terms of its definition and discourse, despite its presence in academic contexts for over 35 years”,³³ as academic authors Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds explain.

The practical components of this investigation have been directed toward producing knowledge about the field of architecture and urban design through situated practice.³⁴ The purposeful focus on practice coheres with a primary definition of practice-based research, as “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice.”³⁵ However, advancing the case for practice requires further consideration of the ways in which practice can lead to the production of new knowledge and, going back to Marx, about how that knowledge ultimately leads to change. The research question motivating this study recurs here, as it is formulated for the research to address these concerns more specifically with a focus on urban everyday

³¹ Karl Marx, ‘Theses On Feuerbach’, 1845, Marx/Engels Internet Archive (marxists.org), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>. Thesis No. 3.

³² Ibid. Thesis No. 11. Marx also famously wrote ‘political action is the only truth of philosophy’. See the Wikipedia entry for *Theses on Feuerbach*: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theses_on_Feuerbach [accessed 20/11/20]. Here, a basic though clear and useful description of this document is offered, at a level relevant for the point argued above.

³³ Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, ‘Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts: Foundations and Issues from the Front Line’, *Leonardo* Vol. 51, no. No. 1 (2018): 63–69, p. 63. Important to note here that the authors differentiate between practice and research, and clearly state confusion originates when these terms are used “in ways that suggest they are interchangeable, for example in phrases such as “research as practice” or “practice as research”. Furthermore they affirm: “We believe that conflating research and practice leads to insufficient emphasis on scrutinizing and sharing any claims of originality and diminishes any claims to new knowledge” (p. 64).

³⁴ As discussed below under the subheading *Situated Knowledge*

³⁵ Candy and Edmonds, p. 63.

practices: how does performance practice provide the agency for questioning (to find new knowledge about) and realigning (to change) codes and practices of public space?

Urban everyday practices, this thesis argues, modify space in subdued manners which are not always acknowledged, even when they constitute valuable sources of knowledge for the field of architecture and urban design. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau affirms that “urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the elements that the urbanistic project excluded”.³⁶ Following this thought, the thesis analyses the exclusion and marginality of some urban everyday practices, drawing a correspondence with methods and epistemologies for the production of knowledge which are marginal themselves, not only to the structural dynamics governing the production of urban space (de Certeau’s ‘urbanistic project’),³⁷ but more generally to dominant academic frameworks. As authors Cole and Knowles observe, knowledge “as society has learned to define it, dwells beyond the realm of the everyday.”³⁸ Making a case for what they denominate Arts-Informed Research, they explain that

the dominant paradigm of positivism historically has governed the way research is defined, conducted, and communicated and consciously and unconsciously defined what society accepts as Knowledge; however, it is not a paradigm that reflects how individuals in society actually experience and process the world. Life is lived and knowledge made through kitchen table conversations and yarning at the wharf or transit station or coffee shop or tavern.³⁹

The study of everyday practices in this research informs the methods characteristic of performance practice and/or the construction of theory, and entails careful attention to surprising events and/or simple occasions of the sort of ‘kitchen table conversations’ or ‘yarning at the community centre’. Often placed at the heart of research-practice, these unplanned moments underscored the relevance of subdued or commonplace practices and

³⁶ De Certeau, loc. 1477.

³⁷ See the subsection *Labour: The Practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space* in Chapter 02, where some aspects of Henri Lefebvre’s theories about the production of space are further explained, in connection to research-practice.

³⁸ Arda L. Cole and Gary Knowles, ‘Arts-Informed Research’, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2008), pp. 59–60. Cole and Knowles coined the term Arts-Informed Research to create a research platform critical of institutionalised academic epistemologies within the social sciences, a field where arts and design practices do not constitute primary sources of knowledge. However, their critical approach to traditional epistemologies is relevant here.

³⁹ Ibid. “Positivism asserts that all authentic knowledge allows verification, and that all authentic knowledge assumes that the only valid knowledge is scientific.” See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positivism> (accessed 17/11/20).

influenced the overall methodological strategy, opening the door for intuition to play an active role throughout the research.

Chance and Intuition in research

In his essay *Making a Mess with Method*, John Law observes that even though “our methods are always more or less unruly assemblages... [they also] other the possibility of mess.”⁴⁰ He further explains that methods could often be thought of “as a form of hygiene”,⁴¹ which allows you to “wash your hands after mixing with the real world... [and make] your findings warrantable.”⁴² At the heart of this inquiry, maintenance practices – particularly cleaning and washing – and their connection with sanitised narratives for architecture and notions of class within the King’s Cross Estate, are questioned.⁴³ At a general level, the inquiry’s critical approach to sanitised aesthetics and maintenance practices coheres with methods critical of sanitised approaches to methodology, as outlined by Law. Additionally, his approach proves reassuring to the study’s openness to chance.

The thesis subscribes to the idea that methods “are more or less unruly assemblages”⁴⁴, articulated by researchers often guided by intuition. Bent Flyvbjerg affirms that “intuition may be the real, or most important, reason why the researcher wants to execute the project”.⁴⁵ He further explains that, “like other good craftspeople, all that researchers can do is use their experience and intuition to assess whether they believe a given case is interesting in a paradigmatic context and whether they can provide collectively acceptable reasons for the choice of case”.⁴⁶ As mentioned before, chance is leveraged throughout the thesis – as will become evident through the stories of practice told in Chapter 03 – where ‘intuition’, or the embodied know-how of the practitioner, was used not only to decide the

⁴⁰ John Law, *Making a Mess with Method* (Lancaster University Centre for Science Studies, 2003). Quote from version of 19th January 2006, p. 3. (Available at: www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2006MakingaMesswithMethod.pdf).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ All subjects addressed extensively in Chapter 02 under the following subsections: *Power: The practice of control in contemporary public space*, *Labor: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*, and *Civic Life: The practice of commonality in contemporary public space*. And the stories attached to these themes, told in Chapter 03.

⁴⁴ Law, *Making a Mess with Method*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Bent Flyvbjerg, ‘Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2006): 219–245, p. 233.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

case-study or site to situate the inquiry, but also to act on a series of unexpected moments, embraced with an open disposition to incorporate chance into research.⁴⁷

Spatial Practice

The term Spatial Practice “has emerged to describe new forms of interdisciplinary practices responding to the contemporary city and the politics of territorial relations”,⁴⁸ as Melanie Dodd explains in the book *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City*. The defining connection between spatial practice and the study of urban environments was cemented by Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Focusing on the daily practices of anonymous citizens in urban environments, de Certeau describes spatial practices as “multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside of the field in which it is exercised, and which should lead us to a theory of everyday practices, of lived space, of the disquieting familiarity of the city.”⁴⁹ De Certeau substantiates his description of everyday practices as spatial practices, explaining that although they are ‘impossible to administer’ by the ‘panoptical administration of the city’, they form their own disciplinary systems of practices which ultimately determine ‘the conditions of social life’.⁵⁰

Inclusive as it is of the practices of urban life in the everyday, the framework of Spatial Practice, opens architectural tradition to a broad spectrum of alternative practices which, this thesis argues, can include performance. The notion of Spatial Practice in architecture “takes emphasis away from the fixed outcome – the building – and focuses instead on how the construction, occupation, and consumption of spaces are interconnected in their

⁴⁷ On a more personal note here, I believe that intuition, as a researcher’s guiding tool, could be considered in connection with the concept of the habitus which, as explained in the subsection *Thesis Structure Diagram*, is defined as an ingrained series of socially and professionally formed dispositions that define *who we are*. In *The Favored Circle*, Garry Stevens describes the habitus as “a social analogue of genetic inheritance”. Furthering this explanation, Stevens offers a description that could be applied to understanding how ‘intuition’ might operate in the context of research methodology, as described by Flyvbjerg. The habitus, he explains, “ provides us with a practical mastery of social situations, telling us ‘instinctively’ what to do.” (Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, 2002, pp. 57–58). My own habitus, or to use Steven’s description, my “ active, unconscious set of unformulated dispositions to act and to perceive” (Stevens, p. 57), dictates the patterns by which an acquired propensity to act upon, and take decisions within the uncertainty provided by chance events, impacts the research methodology.

⁴⁸ Dodd, *Spatial Practices*, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Loc 1489. See Part III: *Spatial Practices*, locs. 1449–1489.

⁵⁰ Loc 1485. This in reference to Foucault’s analysis on the structures of power.

production”,⁵¹ as Dodd explains. It also invites users to participate in spatial production processes, rebalancing the usually hierarchical relation between the architect and his or her client and/or end user, regarded here as a spatial practitioner her or himself.⁵² In connection to performance more specifically, Alex Schweder affirms that “the notion of performance already exists in architecture, but is not named as such...architects use the term ‘program’”.⁵³ His redefinition of program as performance opens the field of architecture and urban design to a wider range of spatial practices, including more than just those that are dictated by entrenched form-based traditions. Conversely, by incorporating architectural practice within, Schweder’s approach also contributes towards expanding definitions of performance.

Performance practice

The term performance in this investigation designates the design, negotiation and delivery of timed based interventions, tailored to the chosen research site and choreographed for an individual or specific group of people – trained or not – who perform agreed and rehearsed sets of actions.⁵⁴ The practice of performance defines the study as practice-based research and structures its methodological approach. As mentioned above, only recently has performance started to be incorporated within and translated into architectural practice. Amongst other approaches, what Alex Schweder has coined as *Performance Architecture* is of particular relevance to the inquiry, although a critical shift is presented here with projects moving from the sites and themes of interior and private spaces – the home, art gallery

⁵¹ Dodd, *Spatial Practices*, p. 17.

⁵² In his or her capacity that is, as a maintenance agent or labourer. This approach will become more explicit through the stories that constitute Chapter 03.

⁵³ Alex Schweder *Performance Architecture*, in Rochus Urban Hinkel, *Urban Interior*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ For theoretical and critical elaborations on performance practice, in connection with spatial practice, and within the context of art institutions, theatres and the urban realm, see: Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005). Also Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Routledge, 2011). Catherine Wood, *Performance in Contemporary Art* (London, England: Tate Publishing, 2018). For precedents on how the term performance practice has been used in art and spatial practice, as well as to define specific artist’s work, see: Francis Aljys, *Francis Aljys: Seven Walks: London, 2004-5* (Artangel, 2005). Kari Conte, *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Seven Work Ballets* (Sternberg Press, 2015). Andrea Fraser and Alexander Alberro, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (MIT Press, 2007). For establishing a link between performance practice and architecture more specifically, the work of Gordon Matta-Clark can be relevant, particularly his interventions on existing buildings and structures, which pre-empted the incidence of performance in the architectural field from the late 1960s, with a cutting-edge critical approach to the profession for the times. See: Pamela M. Lee and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (MIT Press, 2001).

and/or museum – characteristic of Schweder’s work, towards performance strategies critically tailored to contemporary public spaces.

Contextualised within the framework of Spatial Practice, the research tests performance in an expanded field: one placed at the intersection between architecture and urban design, and performance practice. Based on Rosalind Krauss’ seminal essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, performance is understood here as a practice that absorbs two fundamental exclusions characteristic of its primary definitions: it is not architecture, nor urban design.⁵⁵ Through site specific practice, the logic of the expanded field opens the possibility to incorporate the materiality of everyday performances into space. This materiality is embodied by those who perform, their actions temporarily given the agency for changing space through disruptive and/or unusual acts. It also manifests through an array of documents, including briefs and critical scripts necessary to develop participatory and collaborative design, and to advance negotiation processes attached to situating projects on contested sites, as well as performance records including written descriptions of practice and visual documents.⁵⁶

One of the most poignant examples of site-specific work is Robert Smithson’s iconic piece *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70). FIG. C. Sited at the shore of Great Salt Lake (Utah) and made with mud and rocks, it shows how ‘sculpture in the expanded field’ articulates an impactful interdependence between landscape, architecture and sculpture. Again exchanging the words sculpture and performance, this study investigates such interdependence through site-specific performance practice. In her essay, Krauss illustrates how the field “provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organization of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.”⁵⁷ In connection to architecture and urban design – though still strongly attached to the dynamics of specific sites – the expanded field allows to define performance as a

⁵⁵ Rosalind Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, *October* Vol. 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.

⁵⁶ The notion of the expanded field emerges from a critique of history, by which Krauss describes how, based on the logic of the monument, an un-flexible historical frame has primarily defined sculpture as *commemorative representation*. According to Krauss, any definition outside this frame was flattened out by historicism, with ‘the rage to historize’ sweeping away difference. She therefore demands that new notions be incorporated within institutionalised definitions of sculptural practice, and proceeds to explain how sculpture has been historically defined by a combination of exclusions: it is not landscape, it is not architecture. And to show how incorporating these exclusions within the field, expands the possibilities of practice.

⁵⁷ Rosalind Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, *October* Vol. 8 (Spring 1979), pp. 42–43.

spatial practice, in as much as it is not constrained by the mediums by which architecture and urban design are traditionally materialised, namely brick and mortar.⁵⁸ FIGS. A and B.

In 2018, RoseLee Goldberg’s most recent publication in the widely known series of performance anthologies she edits, included a chapter dedicated to the connection between performance and architecture for the first time.⁵⁹ In her books, Goldberg usually presents well-recognised practitioners within the field of performance art. This latest publication however, included a description of performance as “a critical tool for examining the controversies of architecture; to articulate fierce disagreements with relentlessly commercial developments that blatantly ignore the mixed communities around them”.⁶⁰

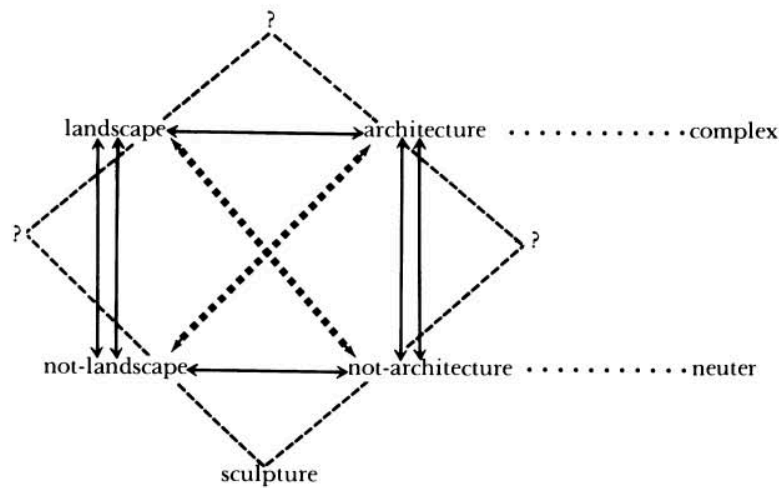


FIG. A Shows how by “a logical expansion a set of binaries is transformed into a quaternary field which both mirrors the original opposition and at the same time opens it. It becomes a logically expanded field.” (Krauss, p. 37)

⁵⁸ I will retake this argument in connection to notions of taste in the Interim Chapter, *Taste Untold*.

⁵⁹ Goldberg, R. L., *Performance Now: Live Art for the 21st Century* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018). See Chapter 6: *Performing Architecture*, pp. 236–265.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 240.

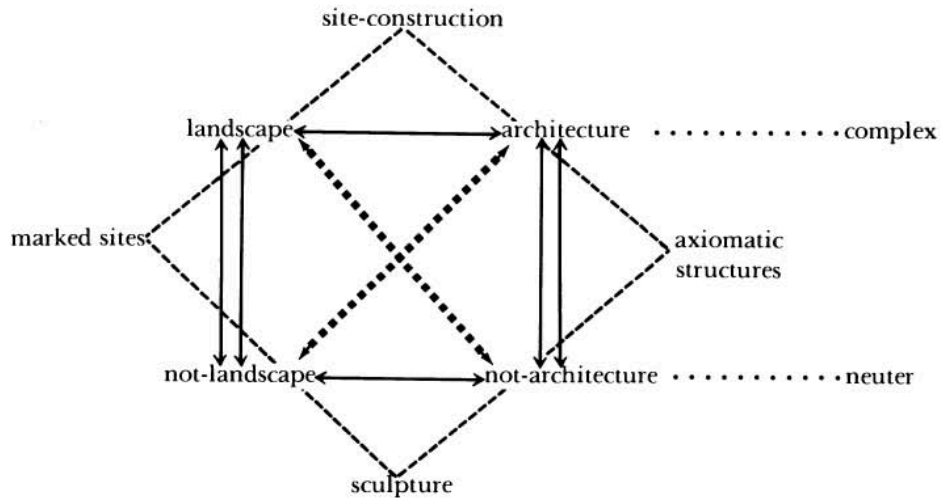


FIG. B Shows how the field expands, so "sculpture is no longer the privileged middle term between two things that it isn't. Sculpture is rather only one term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities." (Krauss, p. 38)



FIG. C. *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70), Robert Smithson

Coming from the context of a publication described as 'a landmark survey on performance as an art form',⁶¹ this statement indicates not only that performance is becoming recognised as a practice that expands the field of architecture, but that from the perspective of live art practice, the methods of performance architecture are slowly but surely entering the mainstream.

From the field of architecture however, as Aubin and Minguez Carrasco affirm in their introduction to the book *Body Building: Architecture and Performance*, "[v]ery little has

⁶¹ Ibid. Back Cover .

been written about architects who actually employ performance as a way to practise architecture or explore critical questions about the built environment, be it is relationships to labor, security, race, migration, the environment, gentrification, or modes of public assembly".⁶² This inquiry aims to contribute towards furthering the recognition of performance as critical spatial practice within the field of architecture,⁶³ while defining research-practice using some of its critical methods.⁶⁴

Alongside performance, the term performativity has been increasingly applied to describe practices generally interested in socially and culturally acquired behavioural patterns.⁶⁵ Particularly in architecture and urban design, the term is often used to describe practices interested in the incidence of sustained human activity in the production of space.⁶⁶ When the term performativity is used in the text, it is in reference to some actions which are themselves performative, and which inform specific performance projects. That is, actions embedded within the everyday routines of those involved in the making and delivery of performance projects, and which could potentially have critical agency for questioning and temporarily realigning some of the codes and practices characteristic of Granary Square.^{67 68}

⁶² Aubin, C., Minguéz Carrasco, C., Eds., *Body Building: Architecture and Performance* (Minneapolis: Performa, 2019), p. 9.

⁶³ Discussions and work on the interface between architecture and performance are not new. Amongst the more widely diffused works are Oskar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet for the Bauhaus School of Design, in connection with constructivism and the notion of the total work of art or *Gesamtkunstwerk* within the school. See Melanie Dodd, *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City* (Abingdon, Oxon England; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019). More recently, architect Bernard Tschumi can be identified as one of its most devoted advocates. In *Architecture and Disjunction*, Tschumi affirms: "There is no architecture without action, no architecture without events, no architecture without program". Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press, 1996), p. 121.

⁶⁴ As shown in the Methodology Diagram, through Chapter 03, and in Annex 1: Methodology Booklet

⁶⁵ A relevant insight into the connection between performance and the performative is given in the introduction of Jill Dolan's book *Utopia in Performance* (2005), pp. 1–8.

⁶⁶ Drawing from Judith Butler's work on performativity, for example, Neil Leach articulates a connection between architecture, the notion of habitus and performativity. In reference to Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, Leach writes: "Architecture, in Bourdieu's terms, can be understood as a type of 'objectivated cultural capital'. Its value lies dormant and in permanent potential, but it has to be reactivated by social practices which will, as it were, 'revive' it. In this respect, architecture belongs to the same category as other cultural objects: 'Although objects — such as books or pictures — can be said to be the repositories of objectivated cultural capital, they have no value unless they are activated strategically in the present by those seeking to modify their incorporated cultural capital. All those objects on which cultural value has ever been bestowed lie perpetually dormant waiting to be revived..." (P. 298). See *Belonging*, by Neil Leach in: Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Ashgate, 2005), p. 297–314.

⁶⁷ The term performativity will occasionally be used mainly in reference to embodied knowledge. That is knowledge acquired through sustained and/or iterative performances of coded actions or acts, usually as a result of regulatory and naturalised social and cultural conventions such as gender, or other practices such as language, all deeply entrenched within specific social groups, but generally used here to understand professional groups and social behaviours, particularly in architecture. In relation to gender, for example, Judith Butler explains that "gender reality is created through sustained social performances [which] means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed", i.e. the performative aspect of gender 'feels natural', or has been naturalised. See Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531, p. 528.

In her book *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative*, Gill Jagger explains that, “[t]hroughout Butler’s work, she has maintained that the practices which constituted us as gendered subjects also provide the possibility of agency and resistance. In other words, she has tried to show that these practices are simultaneously constricting and enabling”.⁶⁹ Within the context of this research, subjected as it is to the rigorously controlled Granary Square, the possibility to attain agency from a position of subjection, opens up particularly relevant possibilities for testing the methods of performance practice as agents that can temporarily resist, question and realign practices of control in the wider context of contemporary public space.⁷⁰

Participation and Collaboration

In *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop offers an incisive critique of participatory and collaborative practices: “there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond.”⁷¹ Generally describing these practices as complicit with the social turn associated with a political move to the right, and away from the welfare state, Bishop takes the view that participatory and collaborative works increasingly distance themselves from the institutional framework that legitimises them as art. However, she also acknowledges these practices offer valuable and critical strategies to achieve wanted change in art practice. Relevant for this study is the possibility to understand collaboration and participation as complementary strategies for example. Bishop affirms that participatory art projects “work against dominant

⁶⁸ As Neil Leach explains, “Performativity achieves its aims not through a singular performance – for performativity can never be reduced to performance – but to the accumulative iteration of certain practices. For performativity is grounded in a form of citationality – of invocation and replication” In Hillier and Rooksby, *Habitus*, p. 301. Furthermore, in his short text *Belonging*, Neil Leach elaborates on the “interaction between social behaviour and a given objectified condition” (a building), and suggests that a closer look at the contribution of social behaviour to the production of space, “opens up a crucial problematic within an architectural discourse that has traditionally been premised almost solely on questions of form”.
Ibid, p. 298.

⁶⁹ Gill Jagger, *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative* (Taylor & Francis, 2008), p. 89. See Chapter 03: *Performativity, Subjection, and the Possibility of Agency*, pp. 89–114. See also: Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’. Here, Butler explains how gender is “a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style”, pp. 519–520.

⁷⁰ Performance practice methods are developed through the research, not only through re-enacting specific actions such as cleaning, washing or knitting (see Chapter 03), but more generally through the over-arching critical approach to the methods, and the focus on architectural practice itself, but recoded and reenacted outside the dominant paradigms of the profession. (See Conclusions).

⁷¹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Verso Books, 2012), p. 13.

market imperatives by diffusing single authorship into collaborative activities that transcend 'the snares of negation and self-interest'. Instead of supplying the market with commodities, participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change."⁷² Practicing participation and collaboration as complementary methods for translating single authorship into co-production, is one of the most relevant aspects of critical performance practice in this investigation, as well as within the context of spatial practices that engage with contemporary public spaces more generally.

In this research, specific groups of displaced and/or under-represented users participate as collaborators in the design and implementation of performance interventions. Their involvement in the projects is significant for testing both, the research's critical concerns regarding the perceived controlling and exclusionist effects of existing public space projects, and the design of performance interventions aimed at counterbalancing such effects. The interventions were sited at the heart of an urban regeneration project which was granted planning permission through a lengthy and participatory consultation process itself,⁷³ but participant communities have often expressed their frustration at what they see as failure to act upon their insights, needs and concerns, as voiced during the consultation stage.⁷⁴

Taking this perspective into account, the participation of specific user groups in the research seeks to open space for sharing skills in the temporary co-production, co-repairing, and/or co-recodification of existing and contested sites. More specifically, and supported by critical framework informing the thesis, it indicates a practice operating with methods other than those characteristic of form-centred practice which can often be professionally exclusive. In this sense, the approach to research-practice here differs from participatory practices in art, where one of the main motivations for doing participatory art

⁷² Bishop, pp. 12–13.

⁷³ For a detailed account on the process of making the King's Cross Estate Bishop, including from the planning stages, see: Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making: A Case Study of King's Cross* (RIBA Publications, 2016). See also: *Framework Findings, An interim report on the consultation response to "A Framework for Regeneration at Kings Cross"*, June 2003, Argent St George with Fluid.

⁷⁴ See Michael Edwards, *King's Cross, Renaissance for Whom?* In: John Punter, *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 189–205. See also: Wainwright, O., 'Revealed: How Developers Exploit Flawed Planning System to Minimise Affordable Housing', *The Guardian Cities*, 25 June 2015, Garreth, B.L., 'The Privatisation of Cities' Public Spaces is Escalating. It is Time to Take a Stand', *The Guardian Cities*, 4 August 2015.

works is to actively engage otherwise 'passive' audiences in the process of making art. It also differs from participatory practices in architecture, generally directed at seeking citizens support for urban regeneration projects. Participants in this research are not part of 'an audience', nor are they part of a community involved in planning consultation processes.

In architecture and urban design, where participation is largely used in urban policy making, as well as for consultation processes leading towards planning permission, the research's interventions are devised as post-delivery strategies to counterbalance some of the negative outcomes affecting particular communities in existing urban regeneration projects.⁷⁵ This however, does not exclude a pressing need for addressing the exemption from aesthetic criticism and/or accountability apparently granted to socially aware participatory practices, as Claire Bishop argues. In the field of art she affirms "it is also crucial to discuss, analyse and compare [participatory] work critically as art, since this is the institutional field in which it is endorsed and disseminated, even while the category of art remains a persistent exclusion in debates about such projects".⁷⁶ Her concerns are echoed by spatial practitioners who resist "the reductivist reading of spatial practices in which 'process' can be political, but 'form' cannot", as Melanie Dodd writes in *Spatial Practices*. Her quote goes on: "This simplification not only allows spatial practice to be easily discredited and marginalised by its critics as 'bad architecture', but far more importantly it paralyses a more sophisticated 'designerly' discussion about spatiality; its actions, operations – and not least the physical qualities and capacities of the 'things' produced".⁷⁷ This research addresses the worry about the aesthetic output of spatial practices – a particularly overlooked issue in discussions on participation as Dodd points out – by inspecting the contentious issue of taste as a collective construction. This approach is

⁷⁵ "Participation is the space in which hope is negotiated", writes Jeremy Till in his text *The Negotiation of Hope*. Coming from a very different field (Till's texts here evolves from a planning consultation session), his definition suggests a connection between participation, and Jill Dolan's utopian perspective on performance practice. In her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*, Dolan affirms that "publicly practicing performance makes it a tool of both expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and hope"(p. 91) and that "Utopia can be a placeholder for social change"(p. 63). As she pairs utopia with hope in theatre practice, Dolan presents performance as a participatory platform that allows to practise imagining – and eventually achieving – new and "better forms of social relationships" (p. 90). Specifically within architecture practice – and not necessarily restricted to urban planning consultation – the practice of hope might, hopefully, attain double agency if also 'aesthetically accountable and compelling, even when defined by temporary events and/or prop-objects, as when through performance. See Jeremy Till, 'The Negotiation of Hope', *Architecture and Participation*, 2005, 23–42.

⁷⁶ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, pp. 12–13.

⁷⁷ Dodd, *Spatial Practices*, p. 19.

tested here through performance practice, and articulated through the construction of theory, with reading and writing at its core.

Theory Building

Through the research, theory has been constructed by ongoing reading and writing, as well as through subscribing to the notion of situated knowledge, briefly described below in connection to this study. Considerations on critical writing are also outlined, explaining how it has allowed for both personal and collective accounts of research that in turn, contribute to the making of original contributions to knowledge.

Situated Knowledge

In her essay *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*,⁷⁸ Donna Haraway outlines a theory of feminist knowledge critical of 'the objectivity of science'. She advocates instead for *feminist* objectivity, that is one based on situated knowledge. As Haraway explains, "Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor or agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as a slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of 'objective' knowledge."⁷⁹ Based on Haraway's perspective, it is inferred here that knowledge derives from specific positionings, and involves exposure to a specific location, including sustained interaction with its communities of practice.⁸⁰ Within this research, critical approaches are motivated by a desire to engage with alternative ways of gathering knowledge, particularly in and through spatial practice. This implies critical distancing from dominant epistemologies where problem solving via technical rationality is prioritised, to favour what Haraway defines as 'the partial perspective', or what has been referred to here as a 'residency approach' to practice: "Accounts of a 'real' world [which] do

⁷⁸ Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.

⁷⁹ P. 592

⁸⁰ Furthermore, it seems possible to draw a connection between situated knowledges and Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, where know-how derives from specific social contexts to which individuals are exposed from early in life, and where they derive their 'embodied knowledge' or habitus from. See note no. 29, under *Thesis Structure Diagram*.

not depend on a logic of 'discovery' but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'.⁸¹

Without sustained exposure to Granary Square and its surroundings, including the long processes required to build up trustful relationships with some communities in the locality, this research would have not been possible. If the investigation would have been developed in an institution other than CSM, 'the partial perspective' would have shaped a study altogether different.

Critical Writing

The various methods that constitute this investigation's methodology are woven together through text. Written accounts of the thesis comprise theoretical, practical and anecdotal frameworks, with writing essentially involved in both, the articulation of performance interventions and the construction of theory. While working on the research, writing gradually re-emerged as a personal practice, which has been important from childhood, when frequent reading and writing shaped my inner voice in Spanish.⁸² After years of practice, this inner voice has been layered over, adapted to and merged with a foreign language and, as the PhD advanced, its dominant code has partially receded to make space for reflecting and building theory on architecture and urban design by writing in English.⁸³

At a more specific level, the writing of project briefs became an important method for negotiating and advancing research-practice as indicated with blue and green lines in the Methodology Diagram.⁸⁴ Project briefs necessarily dealt with a paradox: proposed interventions aimed to critique specific codes and practices of contemporary public space,

⁸¹ Haraway, *Situated Knowledges*, p. 593.

⁸² It could be argued here that this personal writing practice is part of my *habitus*. Studies on the connections between Habitus and Language are extensive. I am only referencing Bourdieu's main book on the subject here: Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁸³ See Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (Sage, 2012). In this book, the authors offer a thorough study of the way in which practices define the social, and how they take form, persist, transform and/or disappear. In doing so, the authors argue, real possibilities for social and individual change are opened at various structural levels, from the individual to the societal.

⁸⁴ See Methodology Diagram, *negotiating project briefs*, and the connections between green and blue lines. See also See Chapter 03, Stories 02, and 03, and Annex 1: Methodology Booklet

but to gain authorisation from the owner/manager of the King's Cross Estate they also needed to comply with the estate's power structures, including control over the curatorial practices responsible for selecting and scheduling the estate's cultural events all year round. To address this paradox, briefs were developed through a comparative process with other cultural practices active on site, such as those devised by Argent's Public Realm Strategy, specifically the *Play and Art Programme*.⁸⁵ Briefs were also regularly amended according to ongoing conversations with the projects' different stakeholders. Through the writing of briefs, the early proposals for performance interventions in Granary Square became 'disciplined', that is regulated, in part by corporate interests, in part by the critical theoretical frameworks informing their design.⁸⁶

Either through performance records written on the basis of practice, theory and/or autobiography, or through more instrumental texts such as project briefs (along with other kinds of documents like meeting notes, interview transcripts and literature annotations), the practice of writing produces a vast amounts of material. The construction of these different texts entails its own materiality as discussed before in the subsection on Performance. In her text *Site-Writing*, Jane Rendell explains:

I wish to draw attention to the architectural aspects of the practice of writing, a practice which, like architecture, is both spatial and material, and with which historians, theorists, critics and designers all engage, and yet is usually rendered invisible – often considered antithetical to designing, sometimes irrelevant to building. But most architects communicate their conceptual design ideas in words as well as images, and the legal documents of the building profession – contracts, specifications etc – occur as written texts as well as drawings. And most importantly it is through writing, as well as speaking, that thinking takes places. I would like to suggest today that writing, particularly the writing of art criticism, is an architectural practice, in the sense that

⁸⁵ See the report: Argent St George, London and Continental Railways and Exel. (April 2004) *King's Cross Central Public Realm Strategy*, London: EDAW, Townsend Landscape Architects, General Public Agency, Access Design. See also the subsection *Civic Life: The practice of the everyday in contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02.

⁸⁶ I use the term 'disciplined' here in reference to *The Publicity Principle*, in which David Luban studies Kant's transcendental formula of public law. Kant connected the process of making political propositions and thoughts public, with moral law and notions of fairness. He explained how 'publicity' acts as a discipline or moral agent of political thought. Luban's dissection of Kant's transcendental formula of public law, which he refers to as The Publicity Principle, proves its controversial and complex nature (especially when brought into the context of contemporary public space, and the laws which shall govern it). Kant's law states that "All actions relating to the right of other human beings are wrong if their maxim is incompatible with publicity" (as quoted in Luban's text, p. 155). See David Luban, *The Publicity Principle*, in Gooding, R.E., Ed., *The Theory of Institutional Design*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 154–198.

it involves the processes of thinking, designing and building – in short it can be understood as a spatial construction.⁸⁷

The materiality of writing is relevant to this inquiry, not only because it builds a bridge between performance projects and theoretical frameworks, but also because it allows to further the visibility of thinking processes within the profession.⁸⁸ With this in mind, the research aims to unlock the accessibility of academic writing, i.e. to make knowledge more public, as opposed to contributing towards maintaining knowledge locked as a privatised possession of those 'educated enough' to access its codes. Through writing – from the formulation of project briefs to the communication of stories about taste – the research aims to critically expand its field of inquiry.

Methodology Diagram

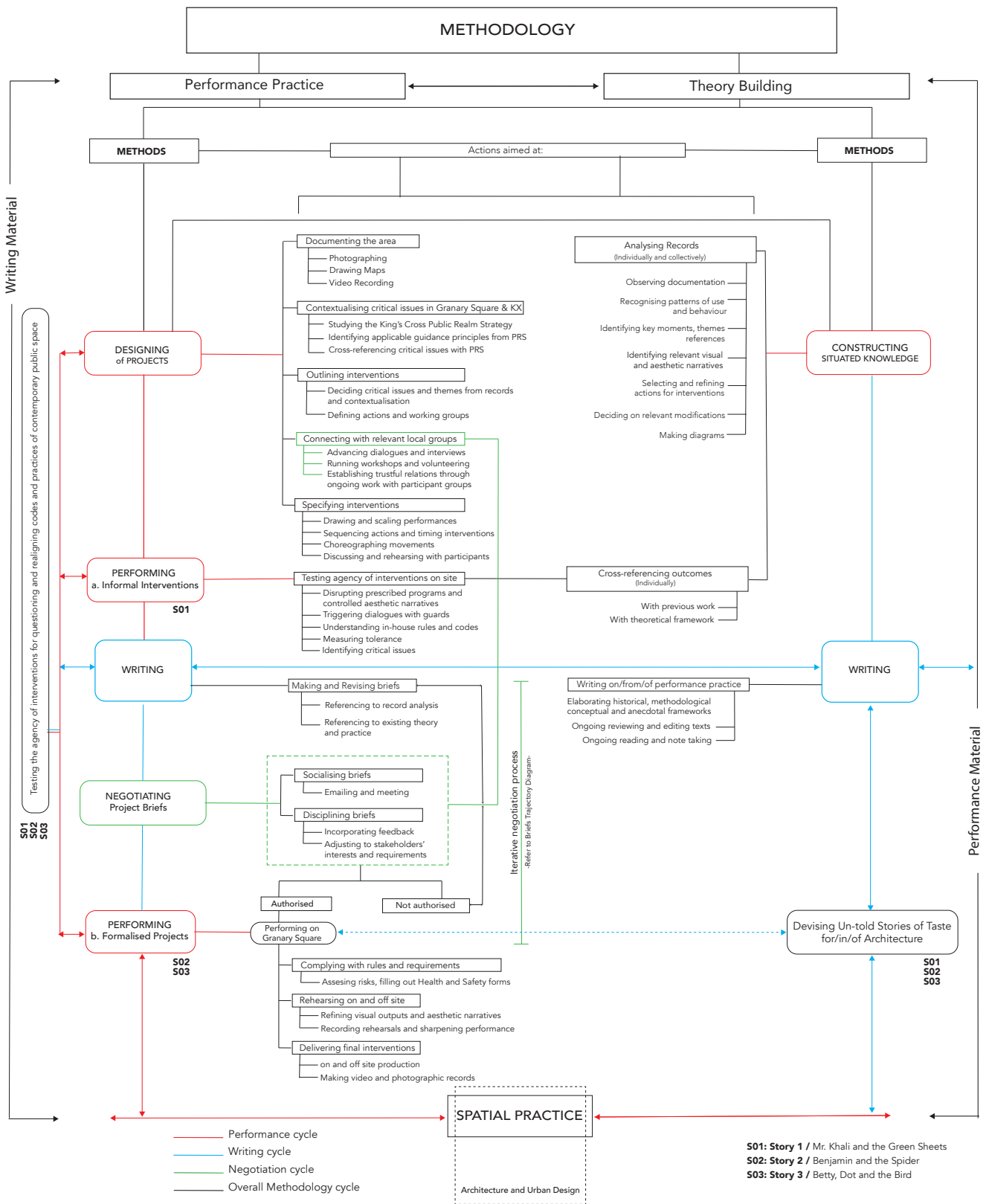
The Methodology Diagram presents a visual summary of the research methodology. Black lines on the outside of the diagram indicate how the methodology cycle evolves through a feedback loop between Performance Practice and Theory Building, the two main research phases. As indicated at the bottom of the diagram, this feedback loop in turn supports the general Spatial Practice framework that informs the practical components of the research, and which define the study as practice-based research. The group of methods ascribed to *Performance Practice* is shown along the left side of the diagram. Performance projects entailed cyclical engagement with local stakeholders at various levels, through lengthy socialisation, negotiation and authorisation processes specific to each project brief. The brief's negotiation cycle is marked by green lines in the diagram. The group of methods ascribed to *Theory Building* is shown along the right side of the diagram. Blue and red lines indicate two-way correspondences and connections between writing and the design of performance interventions.

⁸⁷ Jane Rendell, 'Site-Writing', publication of invited contribution to *Building, Designing, Thinking*, 3rd International Alvar Aalto Meeting on Modern Architecture, Alvar Aalto Akatemia Academy, Tiilimäki, Helsinki, Finland, (August 2008) as part of the conference proceedings: Kari Jormakka and Esa Laaksonen (eds), *Building, Designing, Thinking* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy /Alvar Aalto Foundation, 2008), p. 1. Available as PDF: <http://www.janerendell.co.uk/chapters/site-writing> (accessed 17/06/2020).

⁸⁸ See subsection *Visibility as a practice of public space*, in Chapter 02.

Although intrinsically related, the various methods that constitute the research methodology emerge at different stages throughout the thesis. This is reflected in the chapter structure with Chapter 02 focusing on theoretical and analytical frameworks and pointing out those which are derived from practice when relevant, and Chapter 03 focusing on on-the-ground practice, conversely incorporating its impact on theory.

The three stories that constitute Chapter 03 emerge at different moments across the methodology cycle. These are indicated as S01, S01 and S03 in the diagram. A visual Methodology Booklet is attached at the end of Chapter 03. It displays a breakdown of design methods used across the three main performance projects and constitutes a visual extension of this section.



CHAPTER 02 / Codes and Practices of Public Space

This chapter foregrounds three key themes – power, labour and civic life – that characterize the conflicted pairing of public and private interests in and through the public realm. Within the specific context of Granary Square and its locality, these themes define some of the existing regulatory practices against which this research has been developed, becoming relevant as situated interventions were developed within the contextual framework constructed around them.

The three themes are studied as follows: First, structures of power are connected to the practice of controlled accessibility. That is accessibility subjected to private codes and surveillance strategies, by which certain publics and activities are welcome in a public space, or not. Second, labour protocols are connected to the practice of strategic visibility, by which welcomed publics and activities are continuously showcased as desirable models of urban public life, through diverse media and business platforms. Third, the unfolding of civic life is connected with the practice of what I refer to as selective commonality. This denotes curatorial practices of public space, including programs of use, to appeal to specific groups, old and new, arguing they are mostly regarded as *consumers* of public space.

Following the three key themes identified above, the investigation has been developed through questioning some of the existing notions of accessibility, visibility and commonality specific to the chosen site, as well as through testing the extent of their impact on the unfolding of everyday life on Granary Square. This was achieved through the performance projects presented at length in Chapter 03. The themes are unpacked below, in connection with specific codes and practices of public space.

Power: The practice of control in contemporary public space

The idea that democracy and the principles of civic life are intertwined and come into being in public space has been commonly held since the time of ancient Greece. Athenians cherished the hope that, through democratic participation, the “gathering together [of] all people in a city” could be possible, which materialised as “urban democracies sought for a unifying political space to which all citizens could relate.”⁸⁹ Along with the theatre, this was provided by the agora, an “empty space in the middle of the city in which all things are common, known and shared.”⁹⁰ From the ancient Greek agora to today’s public squares, the ongoing relevance of public space as the locus of political life has been continuously re-enacted in various forms. On the one hand, political rallies, oratory and military parades, as well as commemorative rituals, are often staged in monumental public space settings where architectural scale and grandeur, paired with emblematic sculptural design, become essential for the practice of state sponsored urban politics. On the other hand, various forms of protest and mass manifestations often share these same settings to stage civic practices of dissent within the urban realm.⁹¹

However, and despite the symbiotic tradition linking politics, civic life and public space, an increase in privatisation is unsettling the correlation between political life and public space

⁸⁹ Richard Sennett, ‘The Spaces of Democracy’ (Raoul Wallenberg Lecture, The University of Michigan College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ann Arbor, MI: Goetzcraft Printers, 1998), p. 40.

⁹⁰ Marcel Hénaff and Tracy B. Strong, *Public Space and Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 27. It is important to note here that the Greek agora was not ‘an ideal’ public space. Although its physical configuration was indeed one of an open, centrally located and easily accessible space in the city, and “although the agora was not defined against the ubiquity of private, capitalized space, but vis-à-vis far more collective uses of space”, it was not truly public, as “rights to the polis were highly restricted to a very narrow and privileged social class recognised as free citizens” (Low and Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*, 2006, p. 4). I revisit this issue in subsection *Visibility: as a practice of public space*, later in this chapter.

⁹¹ Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, Red Square in Moscow, Zócalo in Mexico City and Trafalgar Square in London are some examples of public spaces conceived and practised as universal archetypes of political and civic life. In present times, democratic practices of persuasion, debate and, particularly, dissent are multiple and are taking place throughout the world: Cairo’s Tahrir Square as the centre of the Egyptian revolution (2011); Occupy Wall Street in New York City (2011); daily silent protests against the negative peace referendum results in Colombia, staged in Bogotá’s Plaza de Bolívar (2016); women’s marches around the world against the result of the 2016 US presidential election, with the Women’s March on London concluding at Trafalgar Square (2017); and the march against Brexit in London’s Paternoster Square (2017), with the sequence of protest rallies following (2017–present). Most recently, Climate Emergency strikes (2019–ongoing) have brought the relevance of public space to the forefront of today’s politics, with Extinction Rebellion (XR) protests being stopped by the London Metropolitan Police (the Met), considerably forcefully, in Trafalgar Square and at other sites across the city. These protests led to the Met declaring a blanket ban on XR protests across London, which was later declared unlawful by the High Court. One of the most striking mass protests, staged in plazas and large public spaces across the world, has been the gatherings for chanting the feminist anthem “El Violador eres Tu” (“The Rapist is You”), devised by Chilean collective *Las Tesis* in 2019 and initiated in Santiago de Chile’s Plaza Italia, subsequently spreading rapidly around the globe.

– particularly the public square – adding layers of complexity to an already contested connection.⁹² Within the context of privatisation in London, and particularly for Granary Square, complexity is added by what appears as a well-crafted imbalance between high-end architectural design and suppressed expressions of civic power at scales large and small.

In the King's Cross Estate, high-end architectural designs are mostly dedicated to profitable office and retail space.⁹³ As planned, these buildings have brought specific user groups – mainly executives and consumers – who, although relatively new to the area, do bring about dominant cultures and their systems of representation, including both a wealth of new high-end architecture and the activities and programs of use attached to its occupants. More often than not, new user groups fail to represent the wider ranging spectrum of class, wealth and culture characteristic of the area in question, which includes long-standing local dwellers from some of the most deprived wards in London, such as Somers Town. They now share their locale with people representing some of the most powerful businesses in the country and indeed the world, now sited within the redevelopment. Some examples are developer/owner Argent LLP, Google and the global communications group Havas, amongst others.⁹⁴

The strength of these businesses and corporations can marginalise other, less powerful groups, whose cultures are not necessarily interested in architectural symbols of power, nor could they indeed afford them. The imbalance mentioned above therefore plays out as one between symbols of power and an absence of power, as traditionally recognised in the

⁹² See Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (Routledge, 2006). Particularly Chapter 1, *Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space*, pp. 1–16. Here, the authors explain diverse definitions of what has been understood for public space through the ages, and how the complexity of configurations and views on the subject exacerbates today, with the inclusion of advanced media technologies.

⁹³ Although the headquarters of the Council for the London Borough of Camden are situated at No. 5 Pancras Square, the occupation of buildings in King's Cross Estate is predominantly corporate. For more detailed information about each building in the estate, its architect and current tenants, see <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/workspace> (accessed 30/11/2020).

⁹⁴ At present, the headquarters of these companies are located in buildings designed by architects Stanton Williams (who refurbished the Granary Building, originally designed by Lewis Cubitt), Wilmotte and Associes (who designed 6 Pancras Square where Google is currently located, one of three buildings for the company within the redevelopment, with the other two under construction designed by the Bjarke Ingels Group with Thomas Heatherwick Studio) and Porphyrios and Associates respectively.

urban plaza, where “spatial representations of the dominant culture may in fact obscure representations of the less powerful culture”.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the imbalance between high-end architecture and suppressed expressions of power ultimately plays out in and through spaces such as Granary Square, since their physical and spatial configuration utilises symbols of financial power that resonate with and appeal to potential users/consumers who have it (exclusive architecture and urban design, eating and shopping venues, etc.), while those who don’t are therefore excluded from such representations, and subsequently from fully participating in the unfolding of a civic life described beyond the consumption of goods. The emphasis here concerns “a vision of society in which you work and you shop. At times when you are not working or shopping, you may go to restaurants”,⁹⁶ a suitable description by Occupy activist Naomi Colvin of the kind of disempowering civic life some contemporary public spaces are crafted for.

It becomes relevant to ask here “if the images of cities reshaped for external perception by cultural and public spaces mask rather than address a democratic deficit”,⁹⁷ and to evaluate if and how privately owned public spaces become expressions of this deficit when, in their control of public life, they also restrict its political content. Furthermore, it becomes important to inspect what role architects play in the political life of the city, in their capacity as professional designers who contribute to the formal coding of the built environment.⁹⁸

The story of the King’s Cross redevelopment project has been presented to the general public through site-specific narratives that understate the conflicting coexistence of public

⁹⁵ Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2010). Kindle Edition, loc. 2161. From protesting to sleeping belly-up, for example (FIGS. A27–A29), some common uses and civic practices are codified and regulated in Granary Square, including protesting, which is allowed until 6:00 pm and only if advance notice has been given.

⁹⁶ In Jeevan Vasagar, ‘Public Spaces in Britain’s Cities Fall into Private Hands’, *The Guardian*, 11 June 2012.

⁹⁷ Malcolm Miles, 2014, *Critical Spaces: Public Spaces, the Culture Industry, Critical Theory, and Urbanism*. In D. Boros and J.M. Glass, ed., *Re-Imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 107.

⁹⁸ In his book *The Favored Circle* (1998), Garry Stevens notes “architects design so little of the built environment”. Referencing this remark in footnote 64, he quotes: “Best estimates are that architects are involved in the construction of between 30 and 50 percent of the contract value of buildings produced in the developed world. See R. Verges-Escuin, *Present and Future Missions for the Architect, Fifteenth World Congress of the International Union of Architects* (Cairo, 1985)”. See Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, 1st Edition (MIT Press, 1998), p. 33. Outside this academic framing there is very little research measuring the impact of the KX redevelopment in particular, and these kind of project more generally. However, the first-hand experience gathered by this particular study, though not aiming at measuring this impact, hints at the fact that some groups, such as those involved as participants in the performance projects developed for the investigation, are underrepresented and self-regarded as second priority.

and private interests and justify its manifestations through public space, specifically Granary Square. Reading through King's Cross's very own website, these narratives present the site's story along the following lines: From post-war times, up to the end of the last century, the area suffered a steep decline and became a vast post-industrial site of disused railway infrastructure, largely characterised by crime.⁹⁹ Today, the area is conceived of as an urban hub, created through shops and restaurants, theatre, fashion, museums and art galleries, festivals, sport, a celebrated public realm and state-of-the-art housing. All these at the centre of a transport infrastructure connecting the local area with the rest of London and the country, via underground and railway services from London King's Cross, and London with Europe via Eurostar services from St Pancras.¹⁰⁰

This research has inspected some of the ways in which the above narrative is sustained, focusing on maintenance strategies that include programs of use and cleaning protocols, with specific interest in both their political and aesthetic implications.¹⁰¹ Today, Granary Square lies at the centre of King's Cross and is the largest public square constructed in London since Trafalgar Square was built in 1845, according to Joe Mellor in *The London Economic*.¹⁰² Was the decision to choose the public square archetype to represent the King's Cross redevelopment project based on an old, idealised model of public space anachronistic for the times of decentralised democracy? Or was it, rather, an intentional

⁹⁹ This mainly refers to prostitution and drug addiction. See below.

¹⁰⁰ "When road replaced rail freight after the Second World War, the area went into decline. It went from being a busy industrial and distribution centre to an under-used site and many buildings became derelict. In the latter part of the 1900s the area became known for its night life, and was something of a hub for artists and creative organisations. But problems of crime, unemployment and a poor quality environment undermined the area. The arrival of the 21st century has seen some significant changes that kick-started the next chapter in the history of King's Cross. In 2001, construction work started on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and since then the area around King's Cross has seen an investment over £2.5 billion on the transport infrastructure. The area has also seen an incredible flow of investment into world-class buildings such as the British Library, the Francis Crick Institute and Kings Place. After years of uncertainty, the railway lands at King's Cross were ready for regeneration." Landscape Brochure By King's Cross, 2014. Available for download at <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/media/Kings-Cross-Landscape-Brochure-vlr.pdf> (accessed 01/12/2020). For a counter narrative see Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (IB Tauris, 2013), pp. 4–12. Here, Campkin refers to these kind of narratives as restrictive of other, more local views and experiences, which they don't represent and with which they do not resonate. See subsection *Dirt in King's Cross*, in Story 01, Chapter 03, where I use references to both Ben Campkin and Michael Edwards to stress the point that these curated corporate before-and-after narratives are often at odds with the views of local residents who cherish the area where they live and its history.

¹⁰¹ Refer to Chapter 03, Story 03, where I extensively elaborate on the disparity between colloquial and legal ward names within the Borough of Camden, and how naming, in my view, becomes a subtle but powerful and divisive strategy of privatisation, i.e. indicative of new and different ownership. See subsection *Commonality and Distinction*. Throughout the text, I will elaborate on the aesthetic value of behaviour and use, following Alex Schweder's observations in his text *Performance Architecture* (2011). I refer specifically to this text in the section *Labour: The practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space*, below.

¹⁰² Joe Mellor, 'The Evolution of King's Cross', *The London Economic*, 10 July 2014.

aesthetic statement symbolising the process of displacement of power and control from public to private hands?

In connection to this questioning, it is relevant to consider a couple of comparisons. The public realm of the King's Cross redevelopment has often been compared to its most significant antecedent in London, Canary Wharf (1988–1991), a business district on the Isle of Dogs.¹⁰³ This is the largest private redevelopment in Europe and one of the most important financial centres in the world.¹⁰⁴ By now, however, its built environment represents a series of important don'ts for urban design. Although it uses the urban square archetype to accommodate its most symbolic structures, with Canada Square and Cabot Square flanking its iconic skyscrapers, the area is perceived as 'impenetrable', dependant on intransigent security and characterised by lack of activity, especially after 5:00pm, when employees return home. In comparison, King's Cross looks quite the opposite: it has become 'integrated' as a northern extension of central London relatively quickly; its public realm is widely perceived as 'open' and 'thriving' due to the absence of physical barriers, the readiness to help of security wards on the ground, and its characteristic variety of activities, mostly shopping and dining plus ongoing cultural offer, on site.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, King's Cross and especially Granary Square – the 'public' heart of the redevelopment – represent the capacity of private enterprise to merge financial power and successful urban design and management, the latter being Canary Wharf's main failure.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Though the comparison between King's Cross and Canary Wharf is frequent in discussions about urban redevelopment, here I refer to a direct exchange with Peter Bishop, planning director at Tower Hamlets at the time when Canary Wharf was negotiated, and at Camden Council from 2001, where he was instrumental in the negotiation of the King's Cross redevelopment through participative planning. Bishop was a keynote speaker at the symposium *Inclusion, Citizenship & Participation: Measuring the social impact of urban regeneration*, an online event organized by DCN Madrid (Distrito Castellana Norte Madrid) in conjunction with Menéndez Pelayo International University, 31 November and 1 December 2020. When asked about the balance of power between public and private interests, and how it plays out in public space, he used the comparison between these two redevelopments, pointing at the positive improvement King's Cross makes evident. My observations above come from my personal records of the symposium.

¹⁰⁴ For an account of Canary Wharf on the occasion of the 30 years since construction started, see Jane Martinson, 'Canary Wharf: Life in the Shadow of the Towers', *The Guardian*, 8 April 2018. Here, the author, a local resident of the area who was a child when the development was initiated, describes how "Local deprivation levels are among the worst in the country and a sense of powerlessness, which may have started as a reaction to the unaccountable regeneration scheme, now seems more widespread. The transport, shopping and leisure opportunities might have been revolutionised, but for a surprising number living there, Canary Wharf appears just as impenetrable as the docks were when I was a child." The similarities in terms of the social fabric in areas where affluent redevelopments are located, and how their impacts highlight inequalities, are stark.

¹⁰⁵ See note No. 30 below, and my explanation about this in subsection *Accessibility: As a practice of public space*.

¹⁰⁶ Currently, there is a plan to 'humanise' Canary Wharf, to be completed by 2023. It has been developed by Allies and Morrison, the same developers involved in the master plan for King's Cross Central, with Porphyrios Associates. See <https://www.alliesandmorrison.com/projects/wood-wharf> (accessed 14/12/2020).

However, what Canary Wharf and King's Cross have in common is a domestication or taming of civic life in the political sense. In the context of this investigation, the political life of a public square is described in connection to practices of accessibility, visibility and commonality, as discussed in this chapter and which, it is argued here, would benefit ordinary citizens. In retrospective comparison with Canary Wharf, the King's Cross redevelopment firmly stands as a better example of urban regeneration, more open and indeed more 'popular' in the sense that it attracts publics more varied than financiers and service economy employees, as is the case in Canary Wharf.

Taking the comparisons further back in history, however, the politics of representation of Granary Square are necessarily bound to the fact that this urban square is comparable, at least in size, with the most representative urban square of London, Trafalgar Square, "the heart of the nation"¹⁰⁷ or "emblem of empire"¹⁰⁸ as Paul Vallely and Rodney Mace respectively describe it. The modelling of Granary Square upon traditional town square archetypes – classic sites of democratic representation – emphasises the controversial politics that surround its making and management as a pseudo-public space. As Peter Bishop describes, "the new square was always seen as the centre piece for the scheme. Early ideas to restore the canal basin in front of the Granary were rejected in favour of a more traditional and lively public square."¹⁰⁹

In line with Bishop's remarks, Argent's commissioned framework for the redevelopment *King's Cross Central: Urban Design Guidelines – North*, explains the general intentions for the overall design, and explains that

In front of the Granary there was a deep Canal basin with an archway to the Canal. The atmosphere of the place was busy, ordered and tough; its purpose was the interchange of goods, using the natural levels to

¹⁰⁷ Paul Vallely, 'Trafalgar Square, Heart of the Nation', *The Independent*, 15 September 2005.

¹⁰⁸ Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, 2nd Edition (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making: A Case Study of King's Cross* (Routledge, 2019), p. 93. I revisit this point at the start of section *Civic Life: The practice of everyday in contemporary public space*, later in this chapter.

connect rail, road and canal. This space is named 'Granary Square' within the Framework: what was once a hub for goods will become a hub for people.¹¹⁰

Although the terms *traditional* and *lively* in Bishop's quote above, can be subjected to various interpretations, a brief look at the definition of a plaza or square, as a space that "provides physical, social and metaphorical space for public debate about governance, cultural identity and citizenship",¹¹¹ provides insight into what a traditional and lively public space might be expected to be, i.e. a significant, representational and well attended square. Such an understanding about what a traditional and lively public space is might further validate the choice of a traditional square as the preferred archetype placed at the heart of the King's Cross redevelopment, and qualify comparisons between Granary Square and Trafalgar Square, the public space par excellence in London and Britain more widely.

Focusing on its symbolic power, Rodney Mace explains the history, referring, amongst many other events, to the anti-poll tax riot of March 1990, which "did much to unseat Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Tory Party a little later", and to the change of institutional responsibility for the square, which, in the late 1990s saw it changed "from central government to the newly created Greater London Authority."¹¹² This change, Mace affirms, made a difference in "the way the Square has been reclaimed by the people of London, ably assisted by the GLA, for it is no longer the sole preserve of the state and its dead, with the population let in on sufferance, but truly a place that is both popular and yet still political."¹¹³ He summarises the historic process by which Trafalgar Square has become emblematic of diverse forms of public life through history, in one paragraph:

Trafalgar Square, of course, speaks the language of the ruling class. To the mass of ordinary people, whose exploitation and death through nearly three centuries had enabled the ideal of Empire to be realised, the Square offers no bronze or granite memorial; yet it is they and their descendants who in the course of time by the use of the site as a public forum have given it its real significance.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Allies and Morrison Architects, Porphyrios Architects and Townshend Landscape Architects, 'King's Cross Central, Urban Design Guidelines, NORTH' (London: Argent St George, London & Continental Railways and Exel, 2004), p. 27.

¹¹¹ Low, *On the Plaza*, loc. 655–661.

¹¹² Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, p. 16.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, 2nd Edition (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2005), p. 17.

Although Granary Square uses the emblematic archetype of the public square as the political and commemorative centre of a town or city, looking ahead it is hard to imagine it appropriated by a truly political life. Located centrally and impressive in scale, the archetype is, however, deployed of historical content and used to represent corporate power instead.¹¹⁵ The prioritisation of corporate interests over creating ‘a place that is both popular and yet still political’, suggests this is an aesthetic statement symbolising the process of displacement of power and control from public to private hands.

The production of today’s King’s Cross can be visualised in a basic timeline, FIG. 01, showing the various failed attempts to redevelop the area and the political and financial decisions that took place from the 1960s until 2000, when developers Argent St George were appointed.¹¹⁶

Observing this timeline, it becomes apparent that two key and correlated events determine the course of the project. First, in 1996, the King’s Cross Partnership (KCP) is set, following a business-oriented government policy allocating funds to private-public partnerships and providing SRBs (Single Regeneration Budgets). London Continental Railways (LCR) are appointed as developers and operators for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and, crucially, the land holdings pass from government to private ownership. Second, and following this ownership transfer, the developers for London Continental Railways take the view that the redevelopment problems in the past had been political and economic matters, not architectural ones.¹¹⁷ This view leads to the appointment of Argent St George as site developers in 2000, following a competition in which they were the only team to

¹¹⁵ And knowing that money making is not in itself problematic – Trafalgar Square is also used as a business site. See <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/venue-hire/book-traffic-square> (accessed 14/12/2020).

¹¹⁶ The physical configuration of the public realm in the King’s Cross redevelopment, as it stands today, is the outcome of planning consultation and design phases, described by Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams in *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King’s Cross* (2016). The book includes a historical account of the redevelopment of the site, leading to the redevelopment project approved in 2000, as well as explanatory sections on the planning system in the UK.

¹¹⁷ Two renowned architectural firms, Foster and Partners and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), were hired in 1989 to propose and potentially develop an alternative master plan for King’s Cross, in the first serious attempt to pull regeneration forwards. The project involved the London Regeneration Consortium and the Camden community in leading planning briefs. In 1993, the deal collapsed due to opposition from the community to both proposals. This is described also in Bishop and Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making*, pp. 26–31.

propose an open, schematic plan to be developed by negotiation with all stakeholders and, crucially here, without liaising with architects for envisioning a mast from the outset.

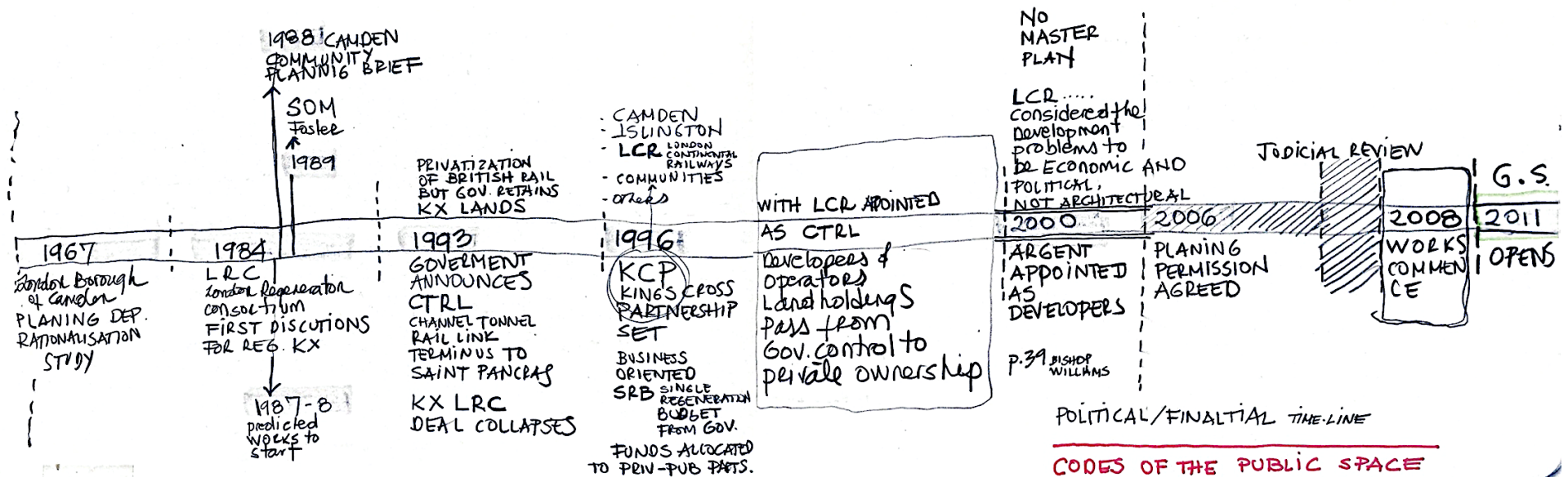


FIG. 01. JOURNEY TO PLANNING PERMISSION.

Showing the main efforts made to put together a project for the railway lands prior to 1993, when the process of privatisation started, and the key events leading towards the construction of the King's Cross Estate as we know it today: 1996, when the King's Cross Partnership (KCP) is established, and 2000, when Argent are appointed as developers, without an architectural master plan.

This process corresponds to the Dominated Space, as indicated in Figures 03 and 04.

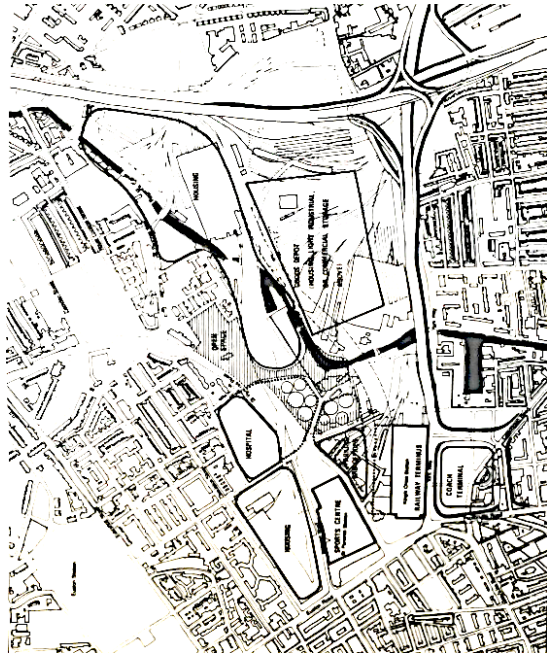
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "STRONG ECONOMY" "INTERNATIONAL - GLOBAL BUSINESS CENTRE" "LONDON AS WORLD CITY" "HIGH QUALITY VISUAL ENVIRONMENT" "HIGH STANDARD OF ARCH." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "ENCOURAGEMENT OF INESSENTIAL CAR USE" "MIX USE" "ENCOURAGE COMPETITIVENESS OF BUSINESS, CULTURE & THE ARTS" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "SUPPORT & PROTECTION OF EXISTING & FUTURE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES" "PROMOTION OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY & ACCESS FOR ALL" (Planning Goal 2) p.29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "TO BUILD ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACES" "TO SUITABLE JOBS, EDUCATION, TRAINING" 	2000 2003 2006	CAMDEN UDPs UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLANS GUIDELINES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RUBUST URBAN FRAMEWORK (BUSINESS-TRADE) (TRANSPORT) MIX USE VALUE OF HERITAGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHYSICAL INTEGRATION OPTIMISE ECONOMIC VALUE "SAFE" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SENSE OF PLACE PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY "INCLUSIVE" (my notes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOCIAL (LOCAL SCALE) INTEGRATION (NOTE ON COMPARISON ON TO CANARY WHARF.) 	2001 2002	ARGENT ST. GEORGE + LCR + EXEL PRINCIPLES FOR A HUMAN CITY FRAMEWORK FOR REGENERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MINIMISED TRAFFIC IMPACT LEGIBILITY & SIGN POSTING ON-GOING MAINTENANCE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIGHEST QUALITY STREET FURNITURE visual cooperation clean/safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SECURING A SENSE OF PLACE, SECURITY & BELONGING HIGH STANDARDS OF COMFORT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIGHEST QUALITY STREET FURNITURE PUBLIC TOILETS DRINKING FOUNTAINS 	2004 9 11	MAYOR OF LONDON LONDON PLAN - chapter 7: LONDON LIVING SPACES POLICY 7.5: PUBLIC REALM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROTECTED VIEWS/LONG PERSPECTIVES/OPEN HORIZONS HIGH CONNECTIVITY ACROSS THE AREA WELL DEFINED OPEN SPACE BOUNDARIES/BUILDINGS UNIFORMITY OF DESIGN-HEIGHTS HIGH CALIBRE ARCHS. APPOINTED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENCLOSURE SUNLIGHT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WIND PROTECTION REPRESENTS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR THINKING ABOUT A "HUMAN CITY" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TACTILE & ANIMATED PLACE G.S. REINVENTED FOR PEOPLE RATHER THAN GOODS 	2004	ARGENT ST. GEORGE (By ARUP) KX CENTRAL REGENERATION STRATEGY KX CENTRAL URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES (By ALLIES & MORRISON) NORTH
FORM/DESIGN <u>ASSETS</u>		SOCIAL "INTEGRATION" Local Scale / use EXISTING connectivity <u>SHORT COMINGS</u>		"ACCESSIBILITY" <u>PLANNING POLICY - AGREEMENTS - GUIDELINES</u> <u>CODES OF PUBLIC SPACE</u>	

FIG. 02. CODES FOR THE PUBLIC REALM IN KING'S CROSS.

These codes are comprised in a series of documents including plans, policies, agreements and guideline reports, some existing, some produced during the planning stages. Although guidelines provided by these documents were taken into account and privately commissioned reports and local government guidelines were considered as well, assets and shortcomings regarding Form/Design, Social Integration and Accessibility can be measured by direct experience on the ground today.

Specifically on the subject of Social Integration, perceptions on the ground differ from the stated guidelines and intentions stipulated on the guiding documents. This mismatch will be further addressed through the projects detailed in Chapter 03. When compared with experience on the ground, the implementation of strategies to deliver comfort also fall short of the desired high quality standards, especially with street furniture and wind protection, which remains a problem as wind comfort proves difficult to achieve on site, as will be noted later in

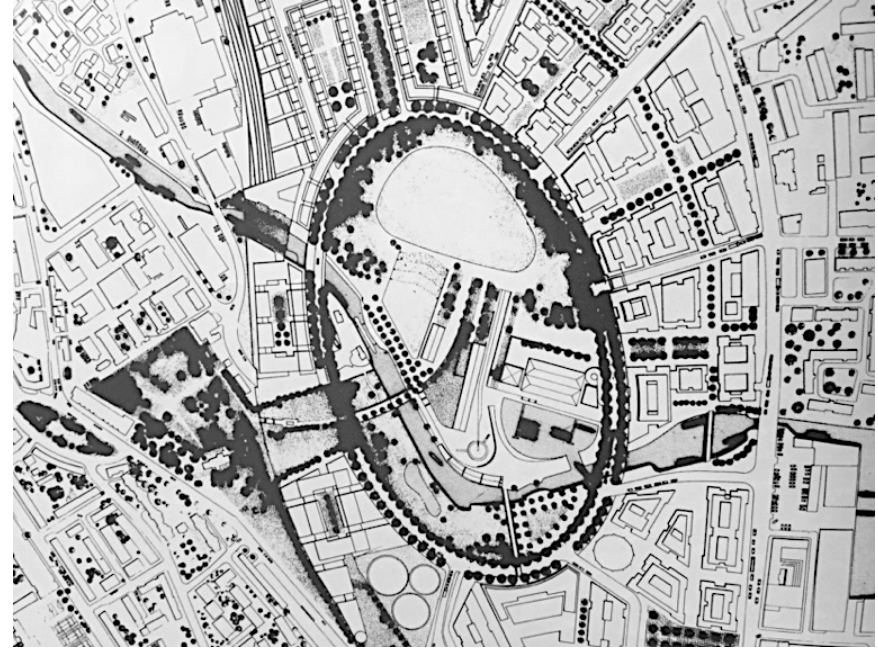
Story 03, Chapter 03.



1.



2.



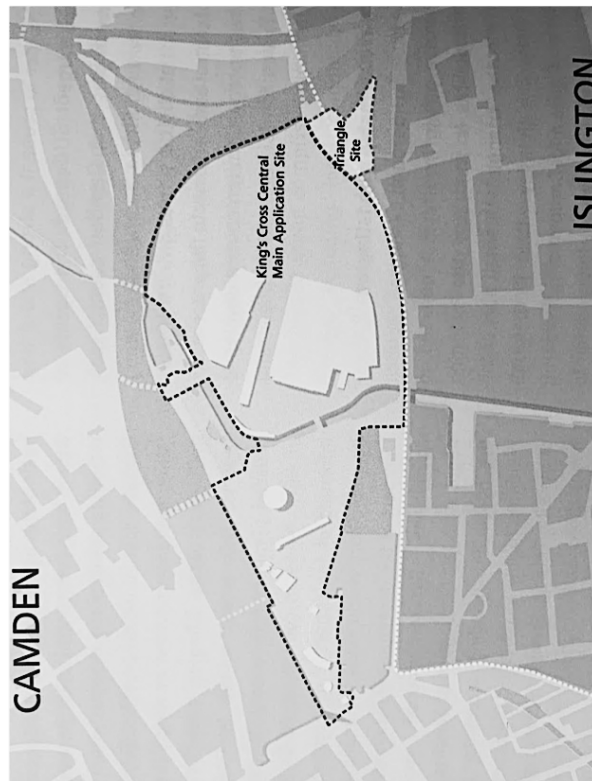
3.

1 King's Cross Rationalisation Scheme. 1967.
From the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.

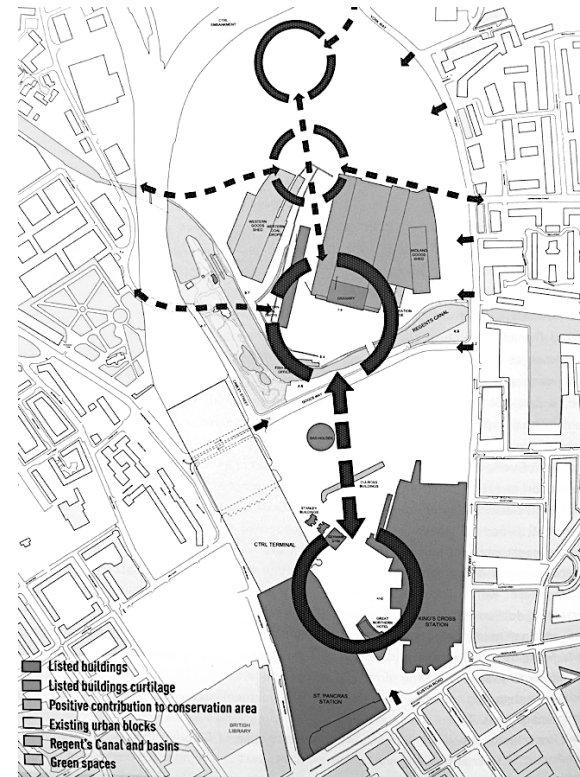
2 King's Cross, master plan proposal for the London Regeneration Consortium by Skidmore, Owens and Merrill. 1989.
From *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, p. 27.

3 King's Cross, master plan proposal for the London Regeneration Consortium by Foster and Partners. 1989.
From *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, p. 28.

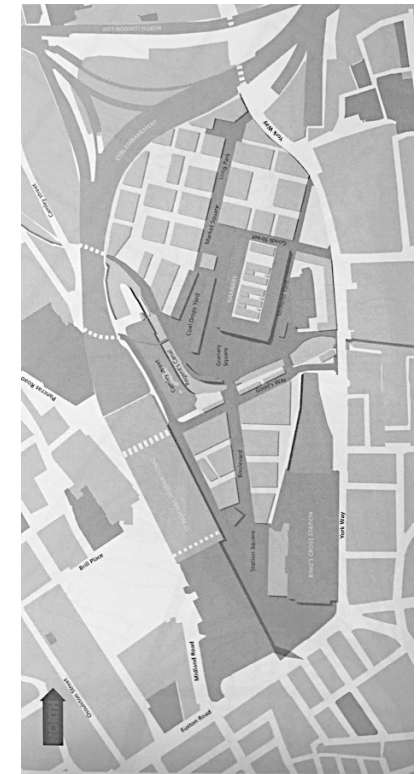
FIG. 02a. VISUAL TIMELINE SHOWING ARCHITECTURAL SCHEMES BEFORE 2000.



1.



2.



3.

1 King's Cross main application site. 2000.

From *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, p. 60.

2 King's Cross early drawing showing 'central spine route'. Note the emphasis and centrality of the location where Granary Square would be located. Before 2002.

From *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, p. 78.

3 King's Cross masterplan 2002.

From *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, p. 81.

FIG. 02b. VISUAL TIMELINE SHOWING ARCHITECTURAL SCHEMES AFTER 2000.

In combination, the two approaches that seem to have made the King's Cross Estate such a model for future regeneration – privatisation and the delayed architectural master planning – imply that power hierarchies characteristic of significant privatised sites, such as King's Cross, manifest through a specific kind of aesthetic that is not entirely dependent on architectural and urban form.¹¹⁸ This suggests that the aesthetic value of use is somehow acknowledged and managed with a long-term view, mainly through two discernible strategies: firstly, the use of maintenance labour in order to aid the delivery of controlled, sanitised spaces; secondly, the regulation of programs of use of the space in order to aid the curation of desirable publics, which match with sanitised aesthetics.¹¹⁹ Both strategies ultimately derive from an equation that seems to characterise contemporary public spaces: cleanliness plus safety equals accessibility.¹²⁰ Well-managed and curated sets of activities, every time they occur, reiterate a message that highlights the developer's success, slowly replacing the classic idea of the public urban forum – the plaza being the ultimate democratic site – with a pull of entertainment-led uses that complete the aspirational image crafted by private interests: children playing with water, adults watching tennis matches or visiting various design and food festivals. An image, that is, that builds up daily, where the aesthetics of controlled form cohere with, but are subdued to, legitimised corporate power.¹²¹ Furthermore, the aesthetics of use sustain architectural and urban design in the

¹¹⁸ Master Planning for the redevelopment was designed and adjusted alongside the extensive consultation process for the project, rather than pre-conceived. It was done by Allies and Morrison with Porphyrios Associates.

¹¹⁹ Alex Schweder advocates for working with behaviour as an aesthetic end in itself, for example. See *Performance Architecture*, in: Rochus Urban Hinkel, ed., *Urban Interior: Informal Explorations, Interventions and Occupations* (Spurbuchverlag, 2011), p. 131. I elaborate further on this point below, under *Dissenting: Alternative practices to controlled accessibility*.

¹²⁰ I elaborate further on this point below, under the section *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*. See also Story 02 in Chapter 03, where maintenance and cleanliness are the core subjects. The relevance of cleanliness and safety is stated by Argent St George as a key concern of the local community. See Argent St George with Fluid, 'Framework Findings: An Interim Report on the Consultation Response to "A Framework for Regeneration at Kings Cross"' (London, June 2003). Foreword, p. 1.

¹²¹ In the fields of architectural and urban design, the Granary Complex, including Granary Square and the Granary Building, has been highly recognised. It won the Mayor's Award for Planning Excellence in 2012. Architects Stanton Williams, designers for the renovation project of the Granary Building, won a 2012 RIBA award and many other design distinctions. The King's Cross website describes the Granary building as "an amazing building...gloriously restored by Stanton Williams Architects". Additionally, the complex has won other prizes, such as World's Best Higher Education and Research Building, WAF Awards; BCI – Major Building Project of the Year (over £50m); *World Architecture News* – Education Award; AIA UK Excellence in Design; RICS London – Regeneration Category and Building Conservation Category; Public Building of the Year; LABC London Building Excellence – Best Education Project; and AJ100 – Building of the Year. With regards to urban planning, including negotiating processes through which the King's Cross redevelopment came to fruition, the project has been praised as "an exemplary teamwork" and "impressive feat of city making". These remarks by Peter Wynne Rees CBE (Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment) and Sunand Prassard (former RIBA President) respectively, are featured in reviews of Bishop and Williams, *Planning, Politics and City Making* (back cover). A rhetoric of the extraordinary seems to be a common denominator when design professionals refer to the redevelopment, which emphasises the desirable and marketable qualities achieved by

long term, through curated cultural practices supported by the estate's events management.

Beyond considering activities described as disruptive by the estate's management – generally in line with those grouped under 'anti-social behaviour' by the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014¹²² – curated and controlled practices of public space exclude uses that are more characteristic of a public urban forum, such as public debate, which do not cohere with the dominant fashionable spirit that characterises King's Cross. Activities described as 'too political' are not welcome in the estate's public spaces.¹²³ In Granary Square, not only events management but also physical design features obstruct large crowds gathering for political purposes. The layout of the water fountains prevents the usage of the square as an open floor or urban void – a simple and crucial characteristic of the public square archetype – as it divides the square into four smaller areas with almost a third of its surface area covered with water most of the time.

Six years after Argent's appointment planning permission was granted and the redevelopment opened in 2011 with an event in Granary Square. The negotiation period for King's Cross Central after 2000 has been summarised in different reports, indicating some of the planning documents, guidelines, policies, manifestos and sets of principles by which the place, as it stands today, was framed, negotiated and finally given the go ahead.¹²⁴ **FIG. 01.** Although a complex process it was a very fast one, if compared to the previous four decades of stalemate, characterised by various failed attempts by the council

the project through high design. See www.kingscross.co.uk/central-saint-martins and www.stantonwilliams.com/projects/ual-campus-for-central-saint-martins-at-kings-cross/#awards.

¹²² Public Space Protection Orders are explained in Chapter 02 of the Act. See note no. 165, on the Anti-Social Behaviour Act in connection to this study.

¹²³ Although protests are allowed if granted authorisation and if they end by 6:00 pm on a single day. However, public debate and other dissenting activities not only take the form of public protest. For the second performance project in this investigation, generally described as a critique of maintenance regimes on site, one of the persons involved in the process of negotiating authorisation advised relocating the project outside the estate, because it was 'too political for Argent to regard it as suitable for Granary Square'.

¹²⁴ This information has been mainly gathered from the book *Planning, Politics and City Making: A Case Study of King's Cross*, as well as from Wikipedia through different searches including https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_Cross_Central, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_and_Continental_Railways, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privatisation_of_British_Rail (all accessed 15/12/2020).

to push a project through.¹²⁵ When measured against the bureaucracies of public management, the comparison suggests that efficiency, in this case embedded in activities from planning stages all the way through current daily maintenance and surveillance on site, legitimises the transfer of landownership from public to private hands. It also suggests that efficient management communicates private ownership as ‘a better choice’, through equally efficient aesthetic and programming practices of public space. A comparison between pre-established guidelines for public space design and some of the assets and shortcomings that can be observed through direct experience on the ground today reveals some gaps between initial intentions, regulation and lived experience after completion. **FIG. 02b.**

Going back to the plaza, the nearly five-decade period of discussions about redeveloping King’s Cross can be displayed as a series of visual images showing architectural schemes before and after 2000. **FIGS. 02a/b.** This includes the architectural stages leading to today’s King’s Cross.¹²⁶ It is worth noting that prior to 2000 no project considered the model of a grand public square as the centre of a project’s public realm. But early on in the negotiations of the current project, and without an architectural design plan, the public realm strategy commissioned by Argent St George and the landowners Excel and LCR stated that “the public realm lies at the heart of the aspiration to create a place for people at King’s Cross Central”,¹²⁷ an aspiration materialised by making Granary Square a “magnificent public square [at] the heart of King’s Cross.”¹²⁸

The negotiation of public space provision in redevelopment projects is regulated by Section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act, through which the obligations agreed between local authorities and developers are specified on a case-by-case basis, to mitigate the impact new projects could have on local environments. In the case of King’s Cross, Section 106 included not only an agreement for delivering the public realm but also for adopting and maintaining it, as well as for the funding of a dedicated public art program

¹²⁵ For a detailed overview of the redevelopment’s history, see Bishop and Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making*, pp. 134–35.

¹²⁶ Bishop and Williams, pp. 26–31.

¹²⁷ EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, GPA, ADC, ‘Public Realm Strategy Report’ (Argent St George and the landowners Excel and LCR, 2004), p. 76.

¹²⁸ See www.kingscross.co.uk/Granary_Square.

amongst other provisions, specified by subject including employment and training, community facilities, education, leisure, health and transport.¹²⁹

The fact that 'public space' that 'looks' open – unfenced and seamlessly accessible from pedestrian routes – is privately owned might still surprise many people, but “the type of legislation that encourages this practice – zoning provision that allows developers to trade the creation of a public plaza on their land for the ability to build a larger building – is responsible for creating most of our contemporary urban public spaces.”¹³⁰ However, rather than focusing on how these spaces come into being, it is more relevant for this research to examine the mechanisms by which their accompanying structures of power are sustained after they are delivered. The hypothesis here is that maintenance structures and protocols, including programs of use, not only play a prominent role in the daily making and communicating of dominant power structures on site, but also offer the possibility to articulate critical spatial practices that temporarily counterbalance some of their controlling effects.¹³¹

In what follows, some of the controlling practices of public space that have been identified through the making of performance projects will be discussed, along with strategies towards counterbalancing them based on processes and reflections emerging from the situated interventions that constitute the research-practice.

Accessibility: as a practice of contemporary public space

The question of accessibility defines most of the conflictual issues at stake in privately owned public space (POPS) and plays out at various levels, starting from the planning stages and ending with the regulation of daily use on the ground, our focus here. In September 2017, a motion seeking transparency and public accessibility to the regulation

¹²⁹ See Bishop and Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making*. Appendix 1: Summary of Section 106 Agreement, pp. 204–5.

¹³⁰ D. Boros and J.M. Glass, *Re-Imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century*, p. 6. It is worth reiterating here that, during the course of this research, the Mayor's office has taken some action towards introducing more transparency in the processes of regulation for POPS, from the planning stages.

¹³¹ This will be articulated further in Chapter 03.

of POPS “through the lifetime of developments, not just at the application stage”¹³² was approved by the London Assembly. One of the motion’s proponents asserted that “increasingly, London’s public space is in private hands and there is very little transparency around which individuals and groups can have access. These are Londoners’ outdoor living rooms and it is appalling that access can be restricted.”¹³³ Although the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has made a commitment to include detailed recommendations in his forthcoming London Plan,¹³⁴ in response to the motion passed by the Assembly, it remains the case, at the time of writing, that public policy has been ineffective in ensuring transparency around regulations relating to privately owned public space.¹³⁵

On the ground, regulation for access to POPS is implemented diligently under the supervision of King’s Cross Estate Services’ security wards on the ground, who are linked via walkie-talkies to security and to health and safety management, in turn linked to ‘other’ enforcement authorities (including the Metropolitan Police) in case an incident needs to be escalated.¹³⁶ Spaces like Granary Square have no physical or visual barriers blocking passage, but management and security structures ensure that any presence and/or activity considered disruptive to its privately prescribed order does not stay on the King’s Cross Estate for too long.¹³⁷ The conflict of power in POPS, i.e. the simultaneity of private and public interests, is mirrored and underscored by the issue of accessibility, whereby open access is advertised as desirable and accomplished whilst restricted accessibility is practiced hourly.¹³⁸ According to an extensive investigation by the *Guardian* newspaper, “POPS appear unrestricted to the average person as long as they are behaving in ways that

¹³² The motion was proposed by Sian Berry and Nicky Gavron. See: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/privately-owned-public-spaces-need-new-london-plan> (accessed 07/10/2019).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ See <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/publication-london-plan> (accessed 02/01/2021).

¹³⁵ The Mayor of London commissioned the Centre for London as consultants for the Public London Charter. See <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/what-new-london-plan> (accessed 22/01/2020).

¹³⁶ See **FIG. A17**, in Story 01, Chapter 03, where there is a brief note on the security protocols to follow in case in-house rules are breached.

¹³⁷ See Annex 1. *Methodology Booklet*.

¹³⁸ In 2014, for example, a commissioned piece of art was installed on the top, north-east corner of the Camden Council’s building. It was a colourful, lighted stained glass piece made by artist Mark Titchner, displayed as a corner sign embedded within the building’s facade. It read *Not for Self But For All*, as an allusion to the desired ethics of openness and accessibility behind the King’s Cross redevelopment. I refer to this subject under subsection *Commonality: as a practice of public space*. **FIG. 07**.

corporate landowners approve of, such as passing through on the way to work or using the area for spending and consumption".¹³⁹ For the majority of people, the fact that these spaces are privately owned comes as a surprise, not only because they generally follow the script (either passing through and/or spending and consuming) but also because spaces look 'open to all'.

Control systems in the King's Cross redevelopment project follow managerial guidelines closely.¹⁴⁰ They are effectively delivered on site daily, by well-disciplined guards and maintenance workers, through a set of strategies tailored to grant accessibility and visibility to publics easily identifiable as those fitting in with the estate's corporate ethos.¹⁴¹ These strategies support a smoothly released, long-term view of the redevelopment, for which a thriving public realm is the ultimate measure of success and is also its most powerful legitimising tool, as suggested by the document *Principles for a Human City*, prepared by Argent St George in 2001.¹⁴² This report lays out ten core principles necessary to achieve a 'human city'. One of these principles is to *Promote Accessibility*, because it "will add economic and social value and help make a real place, well integrated with surrounding neighbourhoods and communities".¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Jack Shenker, 'Revealed: The Insidious Creep of Pseudo-Public Space in London', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2017. See Story 01, Chapter 03, which presents the first performance project set out to test and disrupt on-site regulations on accessibility and use.

¹⁴⁰ These managerial guidelines are difficult to unearth as they are not public. However, via the performance projects made throughout the investigation, some of these were exposed and/or communicated at different point of research. Exposure to specific security, health and safety, cleaning and maintenance protocols, as well as to schedules for managing activities and events was had, while developing *The Disappearing Garden* project (Story 02, Chapter 03). On a more general basis, the scheduling of performances throughout the research depended on the established priorities, curatorial guidance and tight timetabling of Events Management, which exposed some of the mechanisms by which they deliver the year-round program of events on site, for example, including targeting publics or sidelining representations of undesired activities and/or users (Story 01, Chapter 03).

¹⁴¹ A quick look at the King's Cross website (www.kingscross.co.uk) offers a clear enough view of those who constitute a desirable public for the estate, featured across its pages.

¹⁴² London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3 (London: Argent St George, July 2001). Alongside critical analysis of the King's Cross redevelopment project and its becoming a model for the future of London, closer inspection and processes of negotiation for research-practice projects show that Argent – developer, partial owner and site manager – is one of the best of its kind, if not the best developer in London. This is mainly owing to its long-term view, and the accompanying engagement on site, i.e. its maintenance management/control at various levels. For a critical elaboration on the long-term view and its specific connection with programs of use and maintenance protocols on site, see the next two sub-sections, *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space* and *Civic Life: The practice of the everyday in contemporary public space*. See also the reports: EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, GPA, ADC, 'Public Realm Strategy Report'. And: London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3. It is worth noticing here that Argent LLP are based on site, and share a section of the Granary Building with their tenants: Central Saint Martins, Caravan, Yum Cha and The Granary Patisserie (as of March 2020).

¹⁴³ London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3, p. P. 17.

Leaving aside the fact that the document does not define what constitutes 'a real place', the relevant question here is who this notion of accessibility is promoted for in POPS, beyond technical considerations about ramps providing access for disabled people or the fact that spaces "should be easy to navigate".¹⁴⁴ Henri Lefebvre refers to "the clash between a consumption of space which produces surplus value and one which produces only enjoyment – and is therefore 'unproductive'". He explains that this "is a clash, in other words, between capitalist 'utilizers' and community 'users'".¹⁴⁵ This clash, with the contradictions it implies for managerial and maintenance structures, is at play within the chosen site: Can maintenance workers, for example, be regarded as a community of 'users'? To what extent is a significant portion of the public realm in London, when ruled by corporate interests, interested in long-term engagement with non-consuming or 'user' communities?

Practices of programming and managing the use of public space appear to be relevant for overcoming contested relations between private and public ownership, especially in connection with accessibility. Describing the differences between 'public(ly accessible) space' and public space – that is between privately owned public spaces that display no fences or physical barriers obstructing access, and public space – Carl Fraser explains that "it is their accessibility that they have in common as opposed to their spatial typology or ownership status",¹⁴⁶ meaning both types of space offer the possibility to walk through or linger in them, without users being questioned about their reasons for visiting before entry. As accessibility and ownership stand in tension, differing views emerge between those who affirm that "successful public space is not defined by legal ownership so much as use",¹⁴⁷ or that "it is too heroic a leap to assume that making a city's public space more vibrant and inclusive will improve urban democracy",¹⁴⁸ and those who believe "it is a significant development in our public sphere that the spaces in which we contemplate life daily – the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. See also Story 01 in Chapter 03, and *Conclusions*.

¹⁴⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991), pp. 359–60.

¹⁴⁶ Carl Fraser, *Protest as Spatial Practice*. In Melanie Dodd, *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City* (Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Ken Worpole and Liz Greenhalgh, *The Freedom of the City*, 23 (Demos, 1996), p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Ash Amin, 'Collective Culture and Urban Public Space' (Public Space and The Urban Library, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2006), <https://www.publicspace.org/multimedia/-/post/collective-culture-and-urban-public-space>, p. 2 (accessed 07/07/20).

spaces which we should, according to the values of democratic theory, 'own and control' (Garvin, *New York Times*) – have become only superficially or partially ours".¹⁴⁹

As these views play out every day in contemporary public spaces a paradox emerges: flagship projects such as Granary Square are defined through the principle of promoting accessibility, and are committed to delivering a varied, well-designed and well-managed cultural program of events for 'enlivening the public realm'.¹⁵⁰ But that very program of events is expected to perform as an exclusion agent, amongst other things, because corporate power is communicated via spatial aesthetics that include carefully constructed programs of use. These are, in turn, delivered to define and regulate 'desired' publics of public space. Leaving aside extraordinary events, such as the Lumiere Festival of Lights – held in many different locations across London, including King's Cross and Granary Square in 2016 and 2018, which attracts a wide variety of publics and has a relatively diverse food and drink offer with prices ranging from affordable to expensive – eating takeaways outdoors during the weekly held KERB Festival of food for example (usually held on Tuesdays and Fridays), though always well attended is exclusively expensive. This is one of many events characteristic of life in the square. Others include the annual London Design Festival, which uses King's Cross and Granary Square as one of its venues to showcase costly high-end designs, and the annual Christmas markets and Wimbledon screenings, suitably named *Strawberries and Screen*, which offer highly priced strawberries and cream that, again, only affluent publics can afford.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ D. Boros and J.M. Glass, *Re-Imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ See London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3, p. 17: "Principle No. 3: Promote Accessibility, making the space welcoming, safe and inclusive...and meeting the needs of all groups in society".

¹⁵¹ A takeaway lunch from a KERB stall ranges between £7.00 for a simple and small burger to £11.00 for bigger or more garnished choices. Additionally, the everyday life on the square, connected as it is to the possibilities of consumption it offers – from coffee drinking and ice-cream eating to lunching or dining in its surrounding restaurants – becomes necessarily exclusive, as prices for coffee, ice-creams and takeaway food are very high. As of the beginning of 2020, a coffee with milk (Latte) is priced in average between £2.90 and £3.10, and a one-scoop ice-cream at £4.00 (This, compared with less exclusive cafes and ice-cream offers off site, including supermarkets and canteens, where the price of a latte ranges between £1.90 and £2.10, and that of a one scoop ice-cream between £1.50 and £2.50). See **FIG. 05** for an account of some of the events curated by events management 2014–2017. Full listings are available on the King's Cross website <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/whats-on>. Generally, this pool of events and activities contributes to the perception of the estate as *posh*, i.e. smart, fashionable and expensive, or upper-class or genteel, according to the Collins Dictionary entry for *Posh*.

This research is concerned with testing practices that could temporarily counteract some of the post-occupancy effects of privatisation, while avoiding a definition of such practices exclusively as activism, resistance or protest against privatisation. The thesis considers the view of anthropologist Setha Low and geographer Neil Smith, who state that “the dilemma of public space is surely trivialized by collapsing our contemporary diagnosis into a lament about private versus public...the contest to render spaces truly public is not only simply a contest against private interests”.¹⁵² Although the control exerted over existing privately owned public spaces may appear so overpowering as to prevent being contested by post-occupancy practices at those sites, contemporary approaches to architectural design have opened avenues for action, where “the key political responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the building as static visual commodity, but as a contributor to the creation of empowering spatial, and hence social, relationships in the name of others.”¹⁵³

The research has also been concerned with the accessibility granted – or not – to publics other than the curated middle-class in POPS, particularly Granary Square. This is further elaborated in Chapter 03, where the outcomes of long negotiating processes of authorisation for performance projects are described. These negotiating processes provide some insight into how actions critical of privatisation could be delivered within the very privately owned public spaces they are critical of. If project briefs keep sight of delivering gains to all stakeholders involved, room for manoeuvre can be found at the margins of the ‘private versus public lament’. That is, within the localised small scale of performance projects, such as the ones tailored to this research.¹⁵⁴

In the book *Re-imagining Public Space*, Boros and Glass affirm that, with regard to public spaces, “ultimately, more than needing to own them, we need to feel we can use them”.¹⁵⁵ Throughout this investigation, practice projects have sought out that feeling and questioned who we really are in the context of privately owned public spaces. Through

¹⁵² Low and Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), p. 38. See the Interim Chapter *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*.

¹⁵⁴ This, in reference to Chapter 03: *The Spider, the Bird and Other Stories of Contemporary Public Space*.

¹⁵⁵ D. Boros and J.M. Glass, *Re-Imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century*, p. 6.

both formal and functional spatial codes, the conditions that define Granary Square – private ownership and management – appeal to some by creating a feeling of exclusion. As Sarah Elie, Executive Director at the Somers Town Community Association, explained during a panel discussion where she shared the stage with key stakeholders, including Central Saint Martins (CSM) and Argent: “you have created your own little worlds within these institutions, but they need to look beyond that”.¹⁵⁶

The perception that big institutions have created ‘their own little worlds’ in St Pancras and Somers Town is strongly defined by class distinction, i.e. the entrenched view that cultural and academic institutions are usually exclusive and that a white middle-class background allows one “not to feel uncomfortable visiting places such as the British Library or Central Saint Martins.”¹⁵⁷ Places, that is, which, via the aesthetic and the functional codes distinctive of their architectural and urban designs, communicate a message of class distinction. The spatial configurations derived from both sets of codes remain largely unchallenged by the architectural profession, which appears generally comfortable delivering the aspirational aesthetics characteristic of powerful institutions and organisations: aesthetically orderly and aseptic environments, marked by iconic buildings made by exclusive, prize-winning firms.

Based on the general perception that institutional power dominates the cultural and social arenas in the locality around the King’s Cross Estate, this research questions the ways in which institutional agents, i.e. the artists, lecturers, researchers, curators, managers, etc., sustain power via their daily actions within and beyond the institutions they belong to and represent. Research-practice aims to decode these actions while challenging established routines, to test ways in which they could resonate beyond the ‘little worlds’ created by the area’s most powerful stakeholders. The work of Andrea Fraser on institutional critique is considered here, in connection with both the general framing of theory and the practical research projects, concerned as they are with enacting the conflicted inclusive–exclusive

¹⁵⁶ Elie, S. (2016) *King’s Cross: 5 Years In, 5 Years On*. Panel Discussion Notes. [Notes from stakeholders views and evaluations on the first five years of the King’s Cross redevelopment project, Friday 14th October]. Sarah Elie MBE is Executive Director of the Somers Town Community Centre.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

nature of accessibility, as well as with decoding the structure of power, as practised in POPS today.

Dissenting: Alternative practices to controlled accessibility

Andrea Fraser's work offers a poignant perspective: "The institution of art is not only institutionalised in organizations like museums and objective in art objects. It is also internalized, embodied and performed by people."¹⁵⁸ Through her work, "the strategic re-performance of an institution revealed its autonomous thingness to be dependent upon a heteronomous series of repeated actions",¹⁵⁹ exposing how, via individual daily performances, people play an active role in the construction and maintenance of institutional power. Fraser's work develops from "an internal conflict between identification and resistance",¹⁶⁰ which, I argue, is akin to that embedded and active within practices characteristic of POPS: in their description as public spaces, POPS are 'open to all citizens' (i.e. to a group of frequent users we seem to be 'all' invited to identify ourselves with). Additionally, as materialisations of corporate cultures, POPS become part of metropolitan representations of a civic life heavily fashioned through such cultures. But, in spite of our likely will to resist, citizens internalize these cultures, and inevitably become their agents.¹⁶¹

It follows that POPS are not only institutionalised and legitimised via spaces like Granary Square but also by daily practices on site, performed cyclically by owners, designers, managers, workers and users alike. The cheerful and now iconic image of children playing with water in the fountains of Granary Square has come to evidence how specific programs of use become successful tools for legitimising POPS, and how citizens – in this case children and families – perform simultaneously as their agents and as satisfied users.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Andrea Fraser and Alexander Alberro, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (MIT Press, 2007), p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Routledge, 2011), p. 125.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁶¹ Jackson highlights Fraser's poignant remark: "the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves". *Ibid.*

¹⁶² It is wonderful the children play here, but it is necessary to be aware of how their images come to represent successful privatised spaces and therefore legitimise privatisation and a model for future development. Some other curated activities with users performing as corporate culture agents are: local white-collar workers having lunch when the KERB food stalls are present; middle-class audiences watching Wimbledon screenings and eating strawberries and cream, or attending the Lumiere Festival of Lights and the KERB Food Festival every July and the Christmas market every December, or drinking cappuccinos; and art students picnicking and smoking outside. See **FIG. 05**.

Considering that this research has been carried out within an academic institution structural to its focus site, practices of dissent have been tested while operating within the framework of institutional critique, at two levels. On one hand, projects aimed to resist accessibility restrictions forced upon those who are not part of the institution. This was done through critical practice seeking to represent the other, non-institutional bodies that have been subdued and/or displaced from site, as well as seeking to address critically the controlling mechanisms behind such displacement. On the other hand, projects aimed to address the conflict between identification and resistance, which demanded actions to temporarily represent and possibly overcome borderlines between institutionalised selves – myself included as a representative of an institution on site – and others, i.e. those whom I/we want to represent.¹⁶³

It becomes apparent that, in POPS, strategies to resist the co-option of use and users would necessarily result in actions through which dissent and legitimisation overlap. Following the idea that “[t]he Practice of protest is a tool of the outside or under-represented voice”,¹⁶⁴ the performance project *The Great Unwashed* (2015) – at the core of the first story told in the next chapter – identified some routines and activities displaced and/or altogether absent from Granary Square, but which nevertheless constituted part of the site’s past, literally and/or symbolically.¹⁶⁵

Mirroring Fraser’s work, *The Great Unwashed* project was also designed to question my own role as a spatial practitioner, working simultaneously at the service of an institutional machine structural to the site – Central Saint Martins – and at the service of those whom I

¹⁶³ Andrea Fraser credits Bourdieu’s social theory of the concept of taste as the base for her work on institutional critic, as outlined in his books *Distinction* (1979), and *The Logic of Practice* (1980). See Jackson, *Social Works*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁴ Carl Fraser. *Protest as Spatial Practice*. Dodd, *Spatial Practices*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁵ These activities and routines are considered here as those that could define public square life more generally/universally, but which fall outside of the defining scopes of accepted use in Granary Square. Some of the access restrictions, which are usually attached to specific activities, such as sleeping, playing loud music or disturbing people more generally, are surprisingly very similar in POPS and in public spaces owned by the City of London. For the legal framework on the regulation of use in public spaces, see the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014, Chapter 2: Public Spaces Protection Orders, p. 33, where powers are given to local authorities to issue orders if “activities carried out in a public space...have detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality”, and the Public Order Act 1986, Chapter 64, p. 1: “an act to abolish the common law offences of riot, rout, unlawful assembly and affray and certain statutory offences relating to public order”. See also Story 01 in Chapter 03, where connections between dirt and members of ‘unwelcomed’ lower classes are explored.

identify as being under-represented.¹⁶⁶ In my own life, I continue to experience a twofold conflict between identification and resistance, which played out through this project as I identified with, and resisted against, both the institutional framework in which I operate professionally and my personal middle-class status.¹⁶⁷ This performance project acquired special relevance for me – it linked the site to my personal, and now seemingly distant, history growing up within a particularly unequal society (Colombia), in which, from a position of privilege, I learned to recognise the mechanisms through which unequal accessibility to places and spaces, and attached to specific groups of society, normalises gender and class inequities.¹⁶⁸

In the performance *May I Help You?*,¹⁶⁹ Andrea Fraser enacts six different characters who represent the art world. While walking around an art gallery looking at works of art, she says, impersonating an outraged visitor, “How are you supposed to enjoy looking for personal meaning in the souvenirs of that class of people who manipulate history to your exclusion? I think it takes a pretty blind state of euphoric identification to enjoy another’s power to exclude you.”¹⁷⁰ While she critically ‘performs the institution’, she situates her work outside the field of material culture (paintings, sculptures, etc.), and within the ‘lived space’ of art, performed by all those who, in different capacities, identify against and resist

¹⁶⁶ There are strong connections between institutional critique, as articulated by Andrea Fraser, and psychoanalytic theory, where stable truths are questioned. As Shannon Jackson explains, “the process of internalization is itself fraught, and never fully legible to the subject who internalizes”. See Jackson, *Social Works*, p. 124. For *The Great Unwashed* series, I analysed and questioned myself, both as institutional agent and as an under-represented practitioner in my position as a female architect dedicated to critical performance practice, i.e. practicing outside of the profession’s traditional canon. Although the connection between psychoanalysis and practice is not my focus, Bourdieu’s theory of the habitus, which I have discussed in my introduction to Chapter 03, hints towards the seemingly unconscious process by which our dispositions are formed via exposure to specific contexts and cultures. A theory that, again, has heavily influenced Fraser’s work. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990), pp. 52–66.

¹⁶⁷ The professional institutional framework and personal middle-class status are obviously related, as architecture has been widely acknowledged as an elitist profession. In my view, the book *The Favored Circle*, by Garry Stevens – one of the key references for this investigation – is the most relevant critical work studying the link between class distinction and the architectural profession. See Stevens, *The Favored Circle*. See also the introductory sub-section for Chapter Three, *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*. Furthermore, and although not a focus in the investigation, the relevant link between institutional critique and psychoanalysis has been extensively explored, not least in Andrea Fraser’s work. See Jackson, *Social Works*, pp. 128–29.

¹⁶⁸ See Story 01, Chapter 03.

¹⁶⁹ Fraser enacted this performance between 1991 and 2013. It consists of a woman who enters a gallery while museum visitors are looking at the artworks. She approaches the visitors and starts talking to them, while acting out six different character variations: a museum tour guide, an art critic, another visitor, etc. The variations are performed in a loop. The performance took place at Museum Ludwig in Cologne in 2013, inside a Gallery installation with Allan McCollum’s work *Plaster Surrogates*. See Andrea Fraser, *Texts, Scripts, Transcripts* (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig, 2013), pp. 20–29.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

the institution. Henri Lefebvre calls this space 'representational space',¹⁷¹ a lived space dominated by its other: the dominant space of art – the gallery, the museum – and embodied in art objects made by artists/authors. The dominated space, nevertheless, constitutes the realm from which the possibility to dissent against the institution arises, and could take shape through performative actions.¹⁷²

Within the wide spectrum of performance practice, this research focuses on work where "thinking of performance as a social practice allows us to start...with those in mind who do not expect representation".¹⁷³ That is, performance defined as "a way to practice imagining new forms of social relationships".¹⁷⁴ The investigation substantiates research-practice through both performance practice and spatial practice framework, first to prioritise program and use – and therefore time and users – over form,¹⁷⁵ and secondly to practise architecture as service, that is to understand it as a 'social practice'.¹⁷⁶

Having looked at the first aspect of the subject of maintenance in connection to contemporary public space, namely systems of power and control, we now turn to the second, which is maintenance labour.¹⁷⁷ In the next section, practices specific to Granary Square are inspected and strategies to temporarily counterbalance their underlying politics of control are outlined.

¹⁷¹ See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 39–40.

¹⁷² The different uses and definitions of the terms performance, and performative within this investigation, are explained in the sub-section *Research-practice: Performance, performativity and spatial practice*, under Methodology, in Chapter 01.

¹⁷³ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 91. (Theatre theorist Alan Read is referenced by Dolan in the quote. Alan Read, *Theatre in Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.)

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 90.

¹⁷⁵ It is very important to note here that prioritising use over form in spatial practice does not translate into a move away from design aesthetics. Paraphrasing Alex Schweder, I am interested on 'working with use (Schweder refers to use as *behaviour*) as an aesthetic end in and of itself'. See his text *Performance Architecture*, in: Rochus Urban Hinkel, *Urban Interior*, p. 131.

¹⁷⁶ This approach is connected with the aim, explained in the previous sub-section, *Accessibility: as a practice of public space*, to contribute towards what Lefebvre designates as 'social space', that within which time is reincorporated into specialized/professional processes for producing space, i.e. spatial practices (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 68–169). See also Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*, pp. 37–52. Additionally, the notion of 'art as service' informs many participatory and socially engaged practices within the performance field. Of particular interest here is the work done by Jill Dolan mapping and theorizing the field. Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*.

¹⁷⁷ Refer to the *Thesis Structure Diagram* in Chapter 01, p. 20.

Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space

Ongoing clean-and-repair labour not only ensures the good health and functionality of the physical structures of public space, they also aid the communication of aesthetic messages attached to the urban public realm. In this investigation, maintenance labour is understood and examined as a key aesthetic agent for architecture generally and, more specifically, for public space, where controlling maintenance protocols translate into sanitized spaces that fit well with some of the characteristic architectural and urban design aesthetics of today's public realm.¹⁷⁸ These are communicated through the presentation of orderly and pristine public spaces, where cleanliness equals safety and safety equals accessibility, however questionable the notion of accessibility in this equation might be in POPS, as discussed previously.¹⁷⁹

This approach to maintenance as being a critical aesthetic agent in the architecture of public space is different from the more usual technocratic approach currently followed by the architectural profession, which considers maintenance a technical factor to be addressed alongside such other responsibilities, such as health and safety. Maintenance protocols for architectural practice are specified in the Building Operation and Maintenance Manual (O&M Manual), a document required for the delivery of a building in the UK, usually prepared by the general contractor in consultation with the principal designer and which, amongst other things, specifies cleaning and maintenance instructions, including health and safety information.¹⁸⁰

Some recent reflections on this, such as Hilary Sample's book *Maintenance Architecture*, although apparently concerned with the visibility of maintenance labour outside traditional practice, at times resort to what might seem like simplified statements about cleaning,

¹⁷⁸ Specifically for Granary Square and the King's Cross Estate design, see Rowan Moore, 'All Hail the New King's Cross - But Can Other Developers Repeat the Trick?', *The Observer*, 12 October 2014. For architectural design for public squares more generally, and within a historical perspective see Low, *On the Plaza*. Kindle Edition. Chapter Four: *The European History of The Plaza: Power Relations and Architectural Interpretation*, locs 1508–1565.

¹⁷⁹ Taking into consideration the contradicting messages of accessibility and exclusion delivered via 'clean and safe spaces' placed within grand architectural design settings with buildings hosting middle-class and/or corporate institutions.

¹⁸⁰ The manual needs to be handed over to the user upon delivery, before allowing occupation of the building. See <https://www.marpal.co.uk/building-operation-maintenance-manual/> (accessed 20/02/2020).

concluding that the issue of maintenance is becoming more embedded within culture “through contemporary art projects and an increasing number of larger architectural works that require continual cleaning.”¹⁸¹ Sample presents her book as “ a permeable archive that recasts one story about architecture”,¹⁸² where maintenance is central. By doing so she resorts to iconic buildings – foregrounding and reflecting on the way they are maintained – and also to art projects that address the subject. She affirms that maintenance “represents an investment in the persistence of architecture – both as image and as ideal.”¹⁸³ Although her approach to the subject focuses on buildings and takes into account the public nature of maintenance labour in cities whilst highlighting its spectacularity – window cleaners hanging from only a rope at extraordinary height while labouring on glassy skyscrapers – her observation is relevant in the context of Granary Square and its surroundings, where maintenance indeed represents an investment in the preservation of the image of privatised developments, as well as on the communication of this model as ideal. Sample states that “architecture has had a disciplinary amnesia about maintenance”, and urges architects to address the subject because “it has not yet been theorised”,¹⁸⁴ a call this investigation responds to, particularly with regards to the connection between maintenance, architecture and ideals about architectural form.

Other perspectives on the subject of maintenance present a wider, cross-referenced frame. In the essay ‘Maintenance and Care’, Shannon Mattern affirms:

In many academic disciplines and professional practices — architecture, urban studies, labor history, development economics, and the information sciences, just to name a few — maintenance has taken on new resonance as a theoretical framework, an ethos, a methodology, and a political cause. This is an exciting area of inquiry precisely because the lines between scholarship and practice are blurred. To study maintenance is itself an act of maintenance. To fill in the gaps in this literature, to draw connections among different disciplines, is an act of repair or, simply, of taking care — connecting threads, mending holes, amplifying quiet voices.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Hilary Sample, *Maintenance Architecture* (MIT Press, 2016), p. 161.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 20.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁸⁵ Shannon Mattern, ‘Maintenance and Care: A Working Guide to the Repair of Rust, Dust, Cracks, and Corrupted Code in Our Cities, Our Homes, and Our Social Relations.’, *Places Journal*, November 2018, p. 1. (*Places Journal* is an online and free magazine www.placesjournal.org.)

Mattern's remarks resonate with this investigation's methodology. As practice-based research, the study aims to identify key maintenance strategies used for the implementation and preservation of contemporary public spaces, and to understand how these strategies translate into protocols of labour, programs of use and the communication of 'desired' aesthetics of public space.¹⁸⁶ Mattern also explains that "if we want to better understand and apply maintenance...we need to acknowledge traditions of women's work, domestic and reproductive labor, and all acts of preservation and conservation, formal and informal."¹⁸⁷ She outlines maintenance as 'a corrective framework', in reference to 'a broken world'. In this sense, maintenance labour in the context of Granary Square appears ambiguous: care and repair in this space are not performed to reconstruct over urban sites in 'decline', but to legitimise and preserve the new, i.e. as a natural effect of 'innovation' and regeneration strategies put in place to deal with 'urban decay' via cleansing.¹⁸⁸ Alongside reflections on innovation and cleansing, this study focuses on the intersection between maintenance and architectural aesthetics, whereby investment in maintenance secures the communication of architecture and urban environments 'as image and as ideal'.

The connection between cleaning and repair maintenance and aesthetic ideals, although often overlooked, is not foreign to architecture. Recalling Le Corbusier's *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925), Mark Wigley quotes Le Corbusier asserting that "the mark of purity and integrity is the unmarked wall." He explains that "the whole moral, ethical, functional and even technical superiority of architecture is seen to hang on the whiteness of its surfaces",¹⁸⁹ and observes that it is in texts aimed at non-specialists – rather than in architectural literature – that a deeper understanding of the issues at stake behind the modernist white wall can be found. He recollects architect Stephen Gardiner explanations about how white walls connect the buildings in a Mediterranean village and the buildings of modern architecture, in a publication for lay publics:

¹⁸⁶ As stated in the introduction, under *Aims and Objectives*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ It is important to stress here that I am using the term *innovation* in the context of urban regeneration, to signal urban change giving priority to the construction of new city quarters, and with little, if no consideration over caring, repairing and/or maintaining existing, 'old' structures (unless, that is, when these have real estate value). Next sub-section expands on this issue.

¹⁸⁹ Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designers Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (MIT Press, 2001), p. xvi.

Whitewash was also a visual bond between the buildings of the island villages; like bare essentials that hold people together, whitewash was a bond that held aesthetics together... Thus white became the bond between Le Corbusier's early buildings. In consequence, it became the bond between all European architectural modern movements of the 1920's and 1930's, white was the theme that held the total picture together.¹⁹⁰

Wigley concludes that the reason why whitewash is not analysed more incisively in architecture is because "the visible ageing of the white wall calls into question architecture's ability to transcend the turnover of fashionable styles. Superficial flaws become deep threats."¹⁹¹ In the context of this research, the proposed understanding of maintenance labour as spatial practice – rather than as subdued set of cleaning-and-repairing duties aimed at preserving white walls ageless – is aimed at finding strategies for overcoming the dominance of fashionable styles when reflecting on architecture and urban design aesthetics, and ultimately on taste.

It appears necessary here to consider that the desire for clean and sanitized aesthetics that marked twentieth-century architecture practice and ideology – a mark particularly visible on the design of both public and private housing¹⁹² – appears to have moved into contemporary public space design. And that this move implies an accompanying transfer of responsibility for aesthetic guidance from the architect's hands to those in charge of developing and managing the public realm, interested as they are in achieving a perception of safety and accessibility via cleanliness which, in turn, establishes an important aesthetic bond between curated groups of users, via sanitised and orderly public spaces (as discussed in the previous section).

Aiming to challenge and recode controlled protocols of public cleaning – or the cleaning of public spaces – an expanded and critical approach to maintenance labour is tested in this

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. xvii. Quote taken from: Stephen Gardener, *Le Corbusier* (Viking Press, 1974), p. 40.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. xix.

¹⁹² Examples on housing as a prime modern architecture endeavour are prolific and well known. Just to mention some iconic projects here: for public housing, the multiple iterations of Le Corbusier's Unite the Habitation schemes, along with exemplary exhibitions such as the Weissenhof Siedlung – which translates into *The White-Courts Residential Complex, or White Courts Estate* – in Stuttgart 1927, which demonstrate the sanitized ethos mentioned in this paragraph, by designing collective, public and private housing under the same International Style aesthetic. See Jurgen Joedicke, *Weissenhofsiedlung Stuttgart* (Stuttgart: Karl Kramer Verlag, 2000).

research. The thesis positions itself at the margin of the dilemma between private and public ownership, problematising instead the aesthetic code of privatisation: one by which the rendering of sanitised spaces as accurate representations of civic life is persistently communicated through controlled maintenance labour. In other words, the thesis aims to shift attention from the politics of ownership to the political and aesthetic implications of privatisation. In line with what Awan, Schneider and Till have defined as 'Spatial Agency', this shift informs the design of critical performance, where projects

might be pragmatic, but never are formalistic for the sake of form; they start out with a clear transformative intent and *do* try to produce work that has both a political and ethical content, challenging the perceived and real limitations of each new project. In this, the pragmatics of spatial agency are different from the pragmatism of architecture. Where the latter resigns itself to the wider forces – “why resist what cannot be resisted?” – and so effectively withdraws from the political, the former engages but in a manner that avoids modernism’s alliance with epic social reform, be it of the left or of the right – and not only because most projects are much more modest in scale.¹⁹³

In addition to architects, urban planners and users, maintenance workers are crucial agents in the construction of public space in general, and of Granary Square in particular. Cleaners, in their particular capacity as agents and custodians of the cleanliness-equals-safety formula, come to represent the King’s Cross Estate as they clean its public realm during their daily shifts. With their uniforms on, the cleaners ‘embody the estate’, i.e. they act as its representatives. Via cleanliness and sanitation, they support the iterative, daily construction and communication of the estate. But, although the result of their labour visibly reflects and sustains the corporate project, the cleaners themselves remain largely invisible as the active makers of the public realm, or as the spatial agents that they are. This issue is at the core of Story 02, *Benjamin and The Spider*, told in Chapter 03.

In art, practices that focus on labour have helped to critically highlight and address issues relating to how public space is coded and perceived, specifically with regard to the slim recognition given to maintenance labour, which Mierle Laederman Ukeles translated into Maintenance Art. Starting with her *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969!*, Ukeles – a

¹⁹³ Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*, p. 39.

promising artist who also acquired the roles of household carer and cleaner after she gave birth to her first child – declared: “Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art.”¹⁹⁴ She initially sited her work within the public realm of New York City and has worked voluntarily as artist in residence at the city’s Department of Sanitation for many years. Within the context of artistic practice, Ukeles equates maintenance labour with performance art, considering both to be visual cultural practices. Talking about her art, she explains:

All this work has a long history in the roots of modern Western Art – from futurist Machine dances, to early Russian art, to German dada, to Stravinsky and Fernand Leger – only I did it off the canvas in real life, not “realistic” but real - that’s the advance... It is art [that] involves real work systems being extended right into a cultural manifestation, self-consciously so. This is not clearly understood at this point in time.¹⁹⁵

This research also considers maintenance art, which Ukeles describes as her work “off the canvas in real life”, in terms of spatial practice, with particular reference to Henri Lefebvre’s description of social space in his work *The Production of Space*. Here, Lefebvre explains how space has been reduced to an abstraction of form, with such specialists as architects or urban planners traditionally operating, to borrow Ukeles’ expression, ‘on the canvas’, i.e. through a well-established professional routine that “fetishizes abstraction and imposes it as the norm”,¹⁹⁶ resulting in the “abstraction of the ‘user’” and rendering “our time...this most essential part of lived experience...no longer visible to us, no longer intelligible”.¹⁹⁷ In describing social space as being subdued by the dominance of abstraction, Lefebvre helpfully suggests a connection between performance practice and spatial practice, which this research investigates.

¹⁹⁴ After giving birth, Ukeles asked her husband to take pictures of herself while doing chores: brushing her teeth, changing diapers, cooking, washing. These photographs became her first set of maintenance art works, expanding the field of art to include ordinary actions of maintenance and caring. Her series *Seven Work Ballets* (1983–2012), compiles works made with sanitation workers in seven different cities over the three decades that followed. See Annex 5: Mierle Laederman Ukeles, *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969!* Proposal for an exhibition: “CARE”, Philadelphia, October 1969.

¹⁹⁵ Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Seven Work Ballets* (Kunstverein Publishing and Steinberg Press, 2015), p. 74.

¹⁹⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 74.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Lefebvre's lament that "with the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space",¹⁹⁸ pinpoints time as the very element that a critique of space aims to re-incorporate into processes for designing the production of space, and resonates with performance art, which as a time-based practice, or *live art*, works with time as its base material. Although largely overlooked in form-based, mainstream architectural design, time is manifested through use and user's actions, as well as through decay, a process fundamentally linked with urban regeneration. This effects urban change through such large-scale projects as the King's Cross Estate, where urban 'improvement' is delivered through 'innovation', as opposed to maintenance and repair, understood here as a regenerative strategy at the urban scale.¹⁹⁹

The 'fetishisation' of abstraction in professions dedicated to produce space results in a spatial split – between dominant and dominated spaces – which implies a further split for practicing communities: While the professional activities of the architects, planners, engineers, city officials, etc. produce the dominant space of representations, the various practices of the everyday, which enable the continuous production of space through time, are performed by people who are not specialists in this field. Many users remain under-represented and/or displaced as a result of strategies devised by estate management to exercise a greater level of control over the use of space than architectural design may allow. Management, operating on the premise that "what makes public space is use",²⁰⁰ brings the user back to the space, but requires him or her to adhere strictly to a controlled expectation of how to perform within it. This approach is similar, to some extent, to that used to manage maintenance workers – hierarchies on site are well maintained, with users, as well as site workers, fulfilling a service of representing the estate, not the other way around. **FIGS. 03/04.**

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁹⁹ See Campkin, *Remaking London*. Introduction, pp. 1–17.

²⁰⁰ Worpole and Greenhalgh, *The Freedom of the City*, p. 12. See www.demos.co.uk.

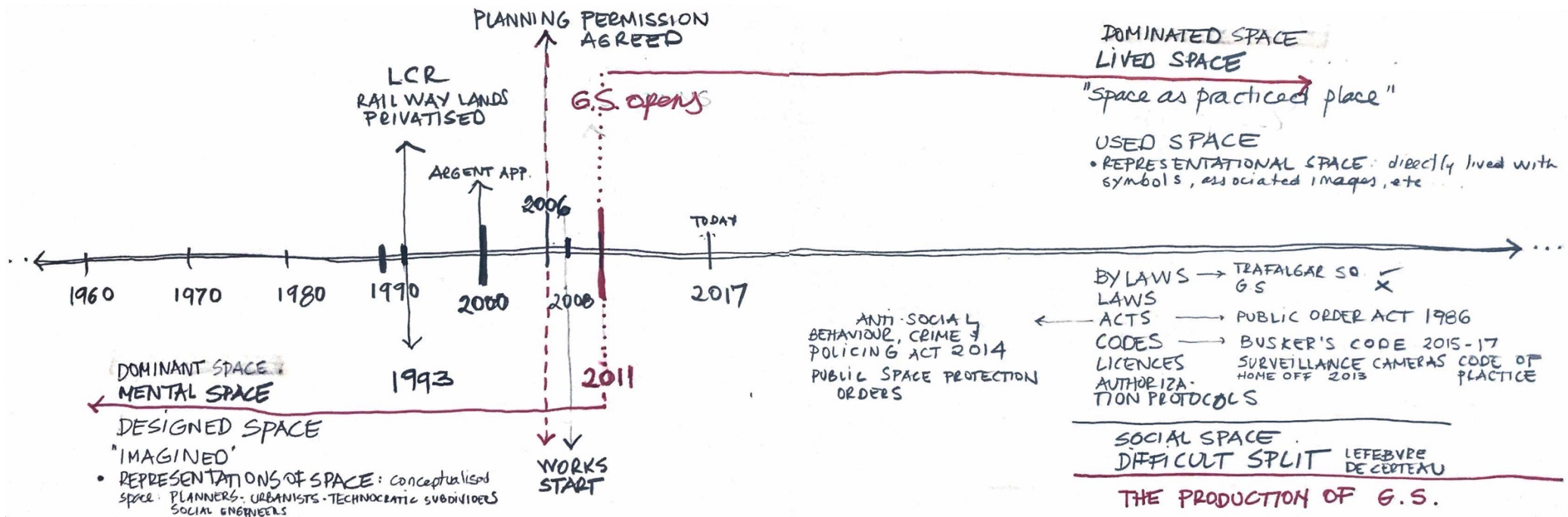


FIG. 03. SPATIAL SPLIT IN GRANARY SQUARE, KING'S CROSS.

This diagram shows the timeline split between Dominant/Mental Space, i.e. that characterised by conceptualisations of space during planning and design stages, and Dominated/Lived Space, i.e. that characterised by everyday use. The diagram is informed by Lefebvre's differentiation between these two kinds of spaces, and includes some of the events that characterise their systems of production in the making of King's Cross, including Granary Square (indicated as G.S. in the diagram).

The year 2011 – when the redevelopment opens with an event in Granary Square – marks the split between Dominant/Mental Space and Dominated/Lived Space on site. During the years after 2011, a series of codes and regulations are used to extend the dominance of mental space over lived space through time, in an effort to preserve the place operating in a way as close as possible to how it was conceived before delivery. To date, management has been consistent and successful in this sense, in spite of changes of personnel and ownership.

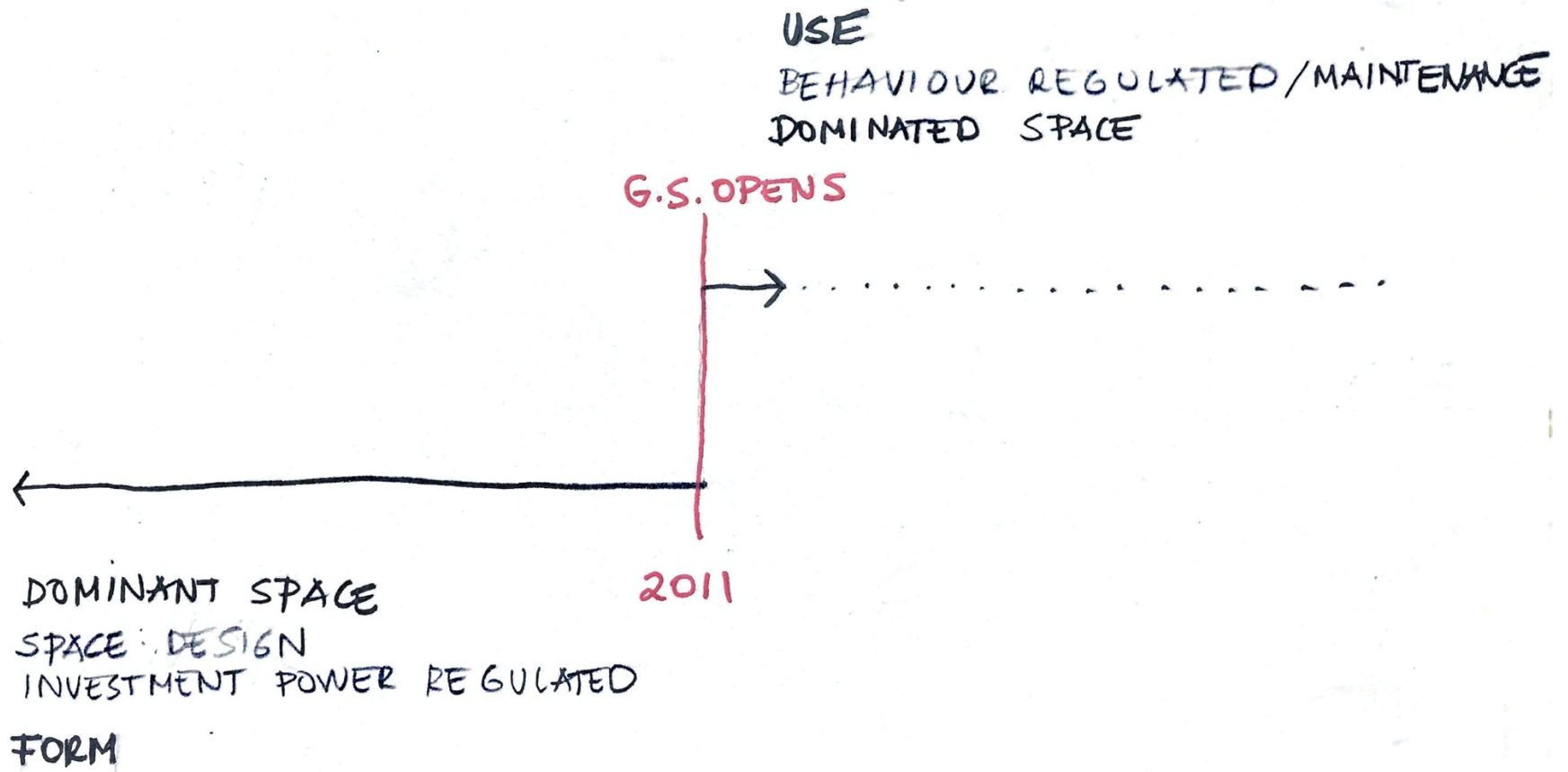


FIG. 04. SPATIAL SPLIT SUMMARISED.
Showing how the dominant space is characterised by the regulation of form,
and the dominated space by the regulation of use.

In Granary Square, a consistent, long-term representation of the King's Cross Estate is delivered daily by the estate's management team, not only by way of controlled programs of use, as discussed above, but also through highly efficient maintenance protocols. This, it is argued here, implies a design transfer analogous to the common architect-to-user transfer that occurs after buildings are delivered: via maintenance practices, long-term care for public space is transferred from architecture to management, now publicly responsible and impactful at the metropolitan scale.

Within the framework of spatial practice, function has started to be addressed in some ways that are different from those associated with the modern project, i.e. a series of set programs of use, strongly linked to architectural form. More specifically, performance has begun to be translated into architecture, through what Alex Schweder has coined *Performance Architecture*,²⁰¹ a practice that redefines entrenched ideas of function and program, offering a simple but transformative thought: "the notion of performance already exists in architecture, but is not named as such... Architects use the term 'program'."²⁰² Performance practice, however, remains underexplored as a method for critically addressing the codes and practices guiding the production of contemporary public space, in spite of widespread consensus on the view that "what makes public space is use".²⁰³ Such consensus suggests that architectural practice could counterbalance the stasis of form by observing the ways in which users' actions, their performances, are curated and time-managed in contemporary public spaces. In the context of this investigation, this includes the careful inspection of the design and scheduling of maintenance labour as impactful

²⁰¹ Throughout this thesis, I use the terms performance and performativity. When I refer to performance I mean specific interventions designed to occur in a specific timeframe, date and place, with a group of people – trained performers or not – performing agreed and rehearsed sets of actions. The term is used as defined by performance practices in art and spatial practice. Performance is the term selected to define research-practice in this investigation, i.e. the design, negotiation and delivery of performance projects on site. When I refer to performativity I mean embodied knowledge acquired through repetitive performances of coded actions or acts, usually as a result of regulatory social and cultural conventions, such as gender, or practices such as language, all deeply entrenched within social groups. The term is used as defined by philosophy, and used in the social sciences. For a more detailed explanation of these two terms, within this investigation, see the subsection *Performance Practice*, under Methodology in Chapter 01.

²⁰² Alex Schweder *Performance Architecture*, Rochus Urban Hinkel, *Urban Interior*, p. 131.

²⁰³ In Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1996, *The Freedom of The City*. Published by DEMOS as an open-source document, p. 12. See www.demos.co.uk.

spatial practice, to able to translate maintenance strategies and protocols into critical projects.²⁰⁴

In what follows, I trace the history of the politics of visibility in public space in connection with maintenance labour, and examine some of the ways in which these traditionally translate into architectural design. I also present spatial strategies that have the potential to help counterbalance controlled visibility and labour in contemporary public space.

Visibility: as a practice of public space

The exclusion of specific groups from public sight was practised as a means of achieving gender and class domination in ancient Greece. In Athens, women were publicly invisible, regarded as unsuitable to participate in public life in the agora, and expected to remain home, where their 'cold bodies' belonged and would be better 'protected'. Females "were thought to be colder versions of men", as "the Greeks used the science of body heat...to enact rules of domination and subordination", whereby their "understanding of the human body suggested different rights, and differences in urban spaces, for bodies containing different degrees of heat".²⁰⁵ These differences cut most notably across the dividing line of gender, but also class, as male members of the lower classes were not considered citizens. Only free Greek-born men were citizens, and they "comprised never more than 15 to 20 percent of the total population, or half the adult male population". Furthermore, "only a minority of those citizens possessed enough wealth to live leisurely, spending hour after hour, day after day among their fellow citizens, talking and debating: the leisure class composed from 5 to 10 percent of the citizenry".²⁰⁶ Although the agora – classic locus of democracy – was open to 'all citizens', only the dominant class controlled and used public space according to its own values and constitution.

²⁰⁴ Performance practice is increasingly overlapping with spatial practice, not only as an occasional strategy for participatory projects sited within iconic architectural locations, but also as critical spatial-practice in its own right. See Aubin, C., Minguez Carrasco, C., Eds., *Body Building: Architecture and Performance* (Minneapolis: Performa, 2019). Performative approaches using common actions, such as walking to redefine perceptions of space, are also well known and explored. See Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology*, First ed. 1981 (Bureau of Public Secrets, U.S., 2007). For a more contemporary practice, see Air Studio <https://airstudio.org/places/kings-cross/> (accessed 08/06/2020). For a relevant example exploring performance as critical method for addressing housing policy, and its effects on communities in London, see David Roberts, 'Make Public: Performing Public Housing in Erno Goldfinger's Balfron Tower', *The Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 1 (2017): 123–50.

²⁰⁵ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (W. W. Norton, 1994), p. 34.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

In terms of gender, spatial segregation continues to shape our environments, including public spaces. As Leslie Kanes Weisman explains, “the acts of building and controlling space have been a male prerogative”, and architecture “is a record of deeds done by those who have had the power to build. It is shaped by social, political and economic values embodied in the forms themselves and in the processes through which they are built and the manners in which they are used.”²⁰⁷ In terms of class, her view, from the perspective of architecture, corresponds in many ways with that of Pierre Bourdieu, who articulated the structures of class distinction in detail from the perspective of the social sciences. Writing on ‘the aristocracy of culture’, Bourdieu explains that “differences between works are predisposed to express differences between authors, partly because in both style and content, they bear the mark of their authors’ socially constituted dispositions (that is, their social origins, retranslated as a function of the positions in the field of production which these dispositions played a large part in determining)”.²⁰⁸ As is the case in architecture, the authors of such works have been mainly men – Kanes Weisman argues that the built environment resembles the environments suitable to these men’s own class and gender, or what could be called, in reference to Bourdieu, their ‘socially constituted dispositions’.

For Bourdieu, mechanisms of power and domination “are largely reflected through symbolic means, that is, through culture”.²⁰⁹ Architectural sociologist Garry Stevens explores the contributions that the production of architecture has made to culture, by way of codified or symbolic form. He explains that Bourdieu “strives to uncover the specific contribution that symbolic forms make to the construction of inequality by masking its political and economic roots”.²¹⁰ Using Bourdieu’s concept of *the field*, Stevens explains that “the field of architecture is responsible for producing those parts of the built environment that the dominant classes use to justify their domination of the social order”.²¹¹ He elaborates on the relation between architecture and power by appealing to the professionally constituted ideas of practising architects who, according to him, “must

²⁰⁷ Leslie K. Weisman, *Discrimination by Design: A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 2.

²⁰⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 11–12.

²⁰⁹ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 48.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 74.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 86.

believe that their projects proceed in an aesthetic world, that they are indifferent to the games played in the field of power, that only artistic issues are at stake. But precisely by so doing, they most effectively produce the symbols that the dominants use to maintain their place at the top of the social order."²¹² It follows that the visibility of groups who are not at the top of the social order is not considered a priority in privatised public spaces, where symbols of power and control strategies are devised and managed by and for those who own the space. That is, by powerful and affluent stakeholders, clients of powerful and affluent architects, landscape architects and urban designers. And for those who resemble them.

In this sense, the King's Cross redevelopment project bears some similarities to the architectural design approach to the modern urban project, where highly recognised architects and planners "were fundamentally anti-urban in conceiving of the city as having a 'natural' predisposition to disorder that architecture and planning needed to address".²¹³ This was addressed by way of a 'new' formal code that appealed to the values and visions of their own professional/social group. However, the problem at the heart of the architecture practised by the most prominent architects of the modern movement, as Garry Stevens explains, is that "while they talked a lot about developing a functional architecture, a social architecture, an architecture for people to live in, they ended up with what the logic of the field demanded of them – a style, an aesthetic".²¹⁴ The modern aesthetic, which attempted "to remove grime and disorder from the urban environment",²¹⁵ resembles that delivered today by developers and managers via controlled maintenance labour.

In the King's Cross of today, as Ben Campkin explains, "[t]he distant industrial past has real estate value as heritage. Yet the more recent and ephemeral history of King's Cross – a contested place, where creativity, charity, clubbing and queer culture appeared in the cracks of the ex-industrial cityscape – has disappeared under pristine developer-owner

²¹² Ibid, pp. 87–88.

²¹³ Campkin, *Remaking London*, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 95. For an extensive explanation about the notion of the field, as applied to architecture from Bourdieu's social theory, see Chapter 03: Architecture as Field, pp. 68–121.

²¹⁵ Campkin, *Remaking London*, p. 1.

streets.”²¹⁶ Describing the ‘clean-up’ campaign undertaken in King’s Cross in the early 1990s, Ben Campkin explains how police forces arrested many people, including sex workers, and reportedly caused the amount of drug dealing in the area to reduce significantly. “That does not mean, however, that entrenched social problems were dealt with effectively rather than their aim was, as one police officer put it, to make problems ‘disappear’.”²¹⁷ That is to say ‘reorganise’ the area, through adopting strategies that are similar to those that require what appears dirty to be cleaned. Here, it seems important to recall Mary Douglas’s description of dirt as “essentially disorder”.²¹⁸ In her seminal book *Purity and Danger*, Douglas explains that “there is no such thing such as dirt; no single item is dirty apart from a particular system of classification in which it does not fit”.²¹⁹

In the case of King’s Cross, and particularly for this investigation, the practice of cleaning is examined at both a metaphoric level – understood as urban cleansing as a system of social classification – and a literal one, the actual act of removing dirt, as well as the mechanisms and protocols used for doing so at the scale of the urban plaza. A further examination of cleaning at both of these levels takes place through performance, with Story 02 in Chapter 03 recounting the development of *The Disappearing Garden* project.

Performing: Alternative strategies to controlled visibility

As the research developed, the maintenance workers of King’s Cross, who are managed by King’s Cross Estate Services to clean the public areas, actively engaged with the research and contributed their own knowledge and skills to it.²²⁰ Their maintenance work allowed for the exploring of cleaning protocols through a series of controlled performances. *The Disappearing Garden* project paired architecture students and maintenance workers in a collaboration where maintenance and spatial practices merged, operating within the

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 125.

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 119.

²¹⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 1st Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002). Kindle edition, loc. 293.

²¹⁹ Ibid, loc 210.

²²⁰ The following chapter is dedicated to exposing and unpicking the work constructed and performed in collaboration with two specific groups of people in the locality: the cleaners for the King’s Cross Estate’s public realm, and senior women from St Pancras and Somers Town.

framework of Ukeles's Maintenance Art. This collaboration aimed at attaining temporary visual, spatial and aesthetic agency for the labourers themselves, by recoding their cleaning routines through visually, aesthetically and culturally recognisable practices, such as drawing and choreography.

In Ukeles's choreographed performances, groups of workers expertly operate the machines they work with daily, following synchronised group patterns created with colleagues in the form of a parade, a dance or a march. Ukeles worked on the premise that she "would make the skills of these workers visible as cultural actions – to pop them out of a near universal feeling amongst sanitation workers where they did their work in public but, strangely, the public did not seem to see them, certainly not as persons with highly developed skills".²²¹



FIG. 05a. LAEDERMAN UKELES, *RESPECT FOR GIVORS*, 1993.

²²¹ Mierle Laederman Ukeles, *Seven Work Ballets*, p. 19.



FIG. 05b. LAEDERMAN UKELES, *DANCE OF THE DOZERS: THE TRAGIC LOVE STORY OF ROMEO AND JULIET*, SNOW WORKERS BALLET, ECHIGO-TSUMARI, 2003.

Maintenance workers, specifically cleaners and carers of domestic spaces in patriarchal structures of power, are mainly women, and are made less visible than men, in accordance to their lesser or plainly powerless circumstances. In contemporary practices, the visibility of maintenance labour has become an important theme, especially for feminist performance practices, with examples ranging from Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) to Ukeles's *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969!* (1969) and her subsequent work on the subject. This research questions the visibility of maintenance workers in the context of public space, particularly Granary Square, where these workers and their labour become key means for controlling the space and communicating the kind of aesthetics and publics it is made for. The study follows the argument that maintenance can be regarded as spatial practice and, therefore, maintenance workers can be, and within this research are, considered co-authors of the space post-occupancy, even if their visibility continues to be largely suppressed.

In her essay 'Maintenance and Care', Shannon Mattern appeals to "all maintainers to apply their diverse disciplinary methods and practical skills to the collective project of repair", so that "maintenance can challenge innovation as the dominant paradigm".²²² Recalling the writings of Steven Jackson, she refers to maintainers as "fixers" i.e. those who "know and see different things – indeed, different worlds – than the better-known figures of 'designer' or 'user'".²²³ In this investigation, specifically through the making of *The Disappearing Garden* project, maintenance workers and/or 'fixers' were regarded as collaborators in their capacity both as designers – or spatial practitioners – and as users. These issues are further discussed in the following chapter.

Having looked at the second aspect of the subject of maintenance in connection to contemporary public space, namely maintenance labour, we now turn to the third and final

²²² Shannon Mattern, 'Maintenance and Care: A Working Guide to the Repair of Rust, Dust, Cracks, and Corrupted Code in Our Cities, Our Homes, and Our Social Relations', p. 2. In contrast to Mattern's "collective project of repair", I would refer to a collective project 'on resistance', as research-practice here is intentionally sited within existing 'new' redevelopments, and framed by a post-occupancy setting.

²²³ Ibid. Here Mattern is quoting Steven Jackson's essay *Rethinking Repair*, in Gillespie, T., Boczkowski, P. J., Foot, K. A., 2014, *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, MIT Press, p. 221. This essay addresses maintenance and repair within the context of information technology and new media. However, much of its insight is valuable within the context of urban renewal, and planning and generation policies, and specifically for public space design, and practice.

one, the practice of civic life.²²⁴ The next section reflects on notions of commonality in public space, and questions practices aiming at controlling public everyday life while outlining strategies to counterbalance its effects.

Civic Life: The practice of the everyday in contemporary public space

One of the guiding principles for the *Play and Art Strategy* for the public realm in the King's Cross Estate, established under Section 106, is that "the focus of art commissions would emphasize function rather than decoration".²²⁵ The primary aim of the strategy is to enliven and animate the public realm, through the ongoing delivery of activities or programs of use.

FIG. 06. This strategy supports a long-term view of the estate being controlled by and through management, with architectural impact sometimes overwritten by these other productions of space. The strategy could be considered analogous to traditional architecture practice where, as Jonathan Hill describes, "the architect is assumed to be the superior term and the user the inferior one", and where "to maintain this hierarchy" architects need to "attribute to the user forms of behaviour acceptable to the architect".²²⁶ Only, in this case, the title of architect is replaced by manager and/or developer-owner.

Consistent with the above, as the managerial structure of King's Cross controls use and constructs specific local stories through the programs attached to the public realm strategy, so the images and symbols constructed by architects via a formal coding of the public realm might not necessarily communicate messages that would be familiar to longstanding local residents. Instead, a 'new', curated sense of commonality – what could be termed selective commonality – is established, with both formal and functional codes and practices subscribing to the dominant paradigm of innovation, as opposed to that of maintenance (of local histories and stories) and (environmental) repair. According to Anna Minton, privately

²²⁴ Refer to the *Thesis Structure Diagram* in Chapter 01, p. 20.

²²⁵ EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, GPA, ADC, 'Public Realm Strategy Report', p. 53.

²²⁶ Jonathan Hill, *The Illegal Architect* (Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 1998), p. 18.

owned public space can be viewed as “a carefully designed consumer product in itself, manufactured in the hope of attracting as many customers as possible”.²²⁷

Minton’s view underscores the production of contemporary public space as a practice of corporate ideology, which, hand in hand with design practices, causes urban democracies to drift away from the ancient notion of public space as ‘a unifying political space to which all citizens could relate’, and towards a counter-contemporary notion in which curated aesthetics and programs of use transform public spaces into aspirational sites, where mainly affluent publics are entertained. This does not necessarily make the space less political or less contested, but it becomes perhaps less apt as the locus of political life, if this is understood as a place where civic power and equal representation can be practised and experienced. How then does this diminishing of political life play out daily on site, and how is it possible to counterbalance its effects on contemporary public space?

²²⁷ Anna Minton, ‘What Kind of Space Are We Building: The Privatization of Public Space’ (RICS-Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, 2006), p. 23.

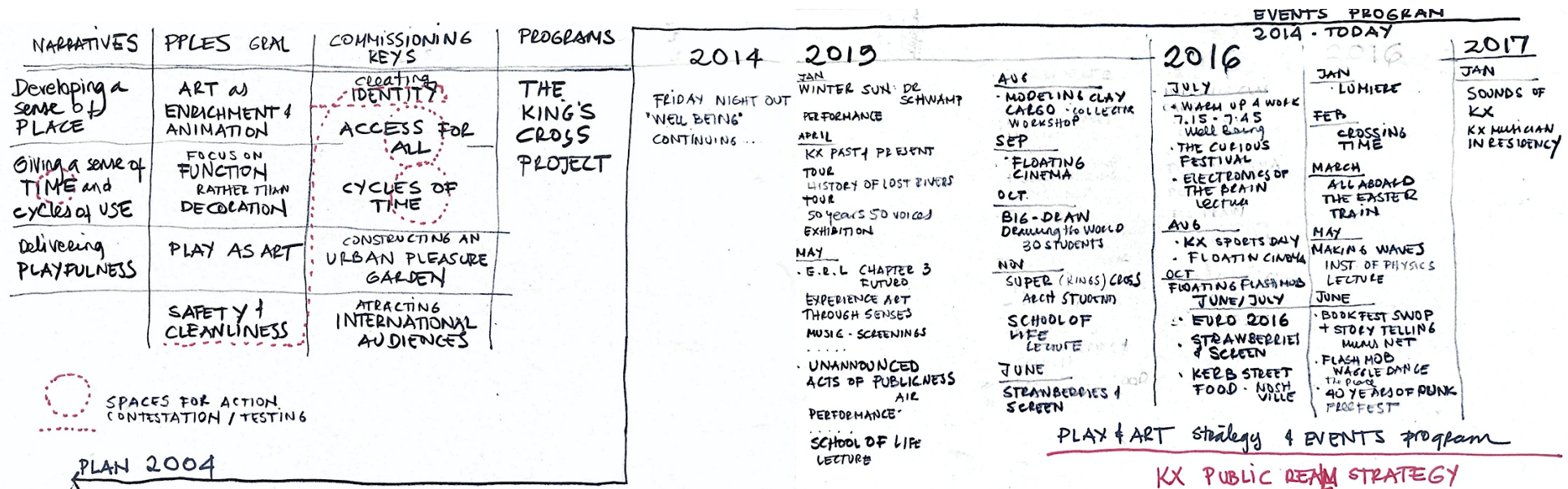


FIG. 06 PLAY AND ART STRATEGY.

This chart shows the main public events on the cultural agenda for the King's Cross Estate – The Play and Art Strategy – between 2014 and 2017. It highlights key principles and narratives behind the curatorial practices established for the King's Cross Project (according to the King's Cross Central-Public Real Strategy Report (2004)).

Under the first three columns – from left to right – these principles, narratives and key aims are bullet-pointed, indicating with dashed red lines those more akin to the research-practice. Performance projects were then conceived, designed and negotiated following these narratives, principles and aims, trying, at the same time, to operate at the margin of the curated program of events devised by estate management, as shown at the right side of the chart, per year/month. (Source: King's Cross website.)

In spite of the current increasing tendency to render public spaces less apt as sites where political life unfolds, some traditional models of public space retain strong political markers. The town square or urban square, particularly the Latin American plaza, “has been identified as a preeminent public space, a source of civic power, with a long tradition as the cultural centre of the city”.²²⁸ It could be said that these spatial models offer some counterbalancing evidence against views such as that expressed by Richard Sennett, who argues that in the modern era of decentralised democracy “traditional models of public space...by which major spaces come to symbolise central power are called into question”.²²⁹ Sennett might be right, however, if one observes how the plaza – its archetype retaining relevance as a model for spatial design – is not exempt from the effects of privatisation. With the increasing commodification of public spaces occurring in the United States, for example, “theme park versions of an idealized original have started to appear, proposed as strategies for delivering ‘a sense of place’”, and designed within private residential developments as “ersatz versions of small-town America, including a town hall and a central square.”²³⁰

The King’s Cross redevelopment project selected the model of the urban square as the flagship civic space for the project from the early stages of the master plan, when it was decided that “in the centre of the site, in front of The Granary, a major new square will be the centrepiece of the scheme”.²³¹ Its strategic location makes Granary Square the centre of the redevelopment at a local scale and a new centre for the city at large, earning the project its name of *King’s Cross Central*, which was introduced along with a brand-new postcode: N1C.²³²

Commonality: as a practice of public space

At the start of this chapter I discussed how the ancient Greek agora has historically and culturally been regarded as an “empty space in the middle of the city in which all things are

²²⁸ Low, *On the Plaza*. Kindle Edition, loc. 726.

²²⁹ Richard Sennett, ‘The Spaces of Democracy’, p. 40.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, loc. 710.

²³¹ Bishop and Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making*, p. 92.

²³² Chapter 03 expands considerations on the name King’s Cross, and how it relates to this larger locality.

common, known, and shared”.²³³ Within a contemporary context that includes the pseudo-public plaza and its publics, it seems relevant to ask if a sense of commonality is still possible, and to whom would *all things common* be?

According to Michel de Certeau, attentive consideration can be given to an “approach to culture [that] begins when the ordinary man becomes the narrator, when it is he who defines the (common) place of discourse and the (anonymous) space of its development”.²³⁴ De Certeau’s stance suggests society could find what is *common to all* if and when ordinary people become its core narrators; that is when ordinary people, even if only temporarily, produce culture. His remarks carry a critique of societal structures where “culture is used to conceal the true nature of the power relations between groups and classes, [and] predominance is maintained by the use of symbolic power, by cultural means”.²³⁵ Furthering Bourdieu’s theory of distinction within the field of architectural practice, Garry Stevens explains:

Integration of the dominant classes is achieved by creating a commonality of culture. By agreeing on what symbols are important, and what are not, communication between members is facilitated. By purveying this culture as the universal property of the whole society, when it is in fact only the property of the dominant, it fictitiously unites the whole in a covenant to support the dominant. By pretending there is no division, it most effectively maintains that division – we are all middle class, are we not?²³⁶

Stevens’s explanation fits well in the context of the King’s Cross Estate, where claims of open accessibility are made regularly, not least by works of art, such as that by artist Mark Titchner, commissioned in 2004, which consists of an elaborate, large-scale sign reading NOT FOR SELF BUT FOR ALL, and is located on the top north-east corner of the Camden

²³³ Richard Sennett, ‘The Spaces of Democracy’, p. 27.

²³⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011). Kindle Edition, loc. 274. See also Part I: *A Very Ordinary Culture, A Common Place: Ordinary Language*, locs. 221–88. Here, de Certeau is reflecting on Freud’s arguments from *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930).

²³⁵ Stevens, *The Favoured Circle*. Chapter 1: *Targeting the Favoured Circle*, p. 79. See also Story 03 in Chapter 03, p. xx.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 69. Within the dominant class, disparities between economic and cultural capital are determined by professional choice and tradition: professionals in the fields of culture or technical careers constitute the ‘subordinate fraction of the dominant class’, whereas professionals in high-level sales, scientific or managerial jobs constitute the dominant fraction of the dominant class. See the diagram *Social space in the United States mapped as occupations*, p. 66.

Council building within the estate.²³⁷ **FIG. 08** This investigation aims, however, to highlight that such claims are only possible through the practices of dominant factions of society, which exercise an idea of commonality that is in fact, as Stevens explains, divisive and founded on a system of class division that these groups are interested in maintaining, specifically for and on localities and spaces such as the King's Cross Estate, more particularly Granary Square.

This thesis has brought forward the subject of taste in a quest to realign what it considers the overdone coupling of form and taste in architecture, with taste restrictively coded as a series of architectural styles.²³⁸ A practice of taste that is more in line with the exclusive strategies that define cultural codes and practices throughout the King's Cross Estate than with what de Certeau defines as "the murmuring voice of societies", i.e. the ordinary man, to whom he dedicates his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.²³⁹ Throughout the investigation, taste has been viewed as an ongoing collective construction, articulated through design strategies including the participation of laymen and laywomen. These strategies have been proposed as alternatives to those that provide more fixed sets of form-informed norms that are exclusive to professionals, and against which judgements on good and/or bad taste have been traditionally institutionalised.²⁴⁰ Such collective

²³⁷ See London and Continental Railways and Exel, 'Principles for a Human City'. Edition 3. Principle No.3: "Promote Accessibility, making the space welcoming, safe and inclusive...and meeting the needs of all groups in society", p. 17.

²³⁸ Mainstream architectural history usually translates the passing of time into architectural style, with consideration given to technological developments, social, economic and regional contexts, and displaying iterative interplays between historical periods and iconic architects, almost all male, who appear to have been able to capture the spirit of their time in their oeuvre. Examples of iconic readings are Siegfried Gideon's *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941), John Summerson's *The Classical Language of Architecture-From Alberti to Le Corbusier* (1963), Peter Collin's *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750—1950* (1965), Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980) and William Curtis's *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (1982). When I refer to styles here, I mean period-based formal cannon, such as classicism, neo-classicism, medieval, baroque, or renaissance architecture, eclecticism, modernism, futurism, brutalism, postmodernism, deconstructivism, etc. See **FIG. 08** – Timeline of Styles, in Interim Chapter. Literature on the formation and vocabulary of architectural styles is wide. For publications addressing the general public, see Carol Davidson Cragoe's books *How to Read Buildings: A Crash Course in Architecture* (2008), and *How to Read Buildings: A Crash Course in Architectural Styles* (2012). For more specialised and critical bibliography publications see Bruno Zevi's series called *Controistoria dell'architettura in Italia: Personalita e Opere Generatrici del Linguaggio Architettonico*; with its short editions: *Romanico-Gotico; Barocco-Illuminismo, Rinascimento-Manierismo, Preistoria-Alto Medioevo*. Edited by Tascabili Economici Newton. First edition 1995. The next chapter, *Interim*, is dedicated to the practice of taste in contemporary public space.

²³⁹ De Certeau opens his book with: "To the ordinary man. To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets". He then says: "He is the murmuring voice of societies. In all ages, he comes before texts. He does not expect representations." Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Kindle Edition, loc. 6. In the context of this thesis, and with no intention to claim the impact of the research going much further beyond the groups constituted by those directly involved, de Certeau's ordinary man highlights a timeless disparity between ordinary people, and those who are not, i.e. those who belong to dominant factions of societies and who, as we have mentioned, produce and sponsor culture.

²⁴⁰ In *The Favored Circle*, Gary Stevens inspects the formations of professional associations of architects through the lens of writings by M. S. Larson. He explains how he sees a problem for architects defining their profession, "since the products of

construction of taste is contingent here on engagement with specific groups of users, dwellers, workers, etc., whose actions – the diverse ways in which they use, maintain and therefore make spaces – are considered just as valuable, not only in functional or philosophical terms, but also sociologically, culturally and therefore aesthetically.²⁴¹

In other words, this thesis addresses taste as a set of maintenance practices past and present, through which the core professional habitus of architecture, i.e. its tradition as an exclusive and form-centred profession, can be either sustained or temporarily challenged and realigned through the construction of narratives that are common to architects and users, new and old residents, ordinary people and the men of taste.²⁴² In choosing the latter option, the thesis presents taste as a more open maintenance practice of public space, coded to celebrate some common, everyday practices that are embedded within specific localities and therefore made temporarily available to wider audiences. Such practice is contingent on collaborations with lay participants and is subordinate to temporary, ‘low’-impact changes, including the swift disappearance and/or small-scale and potentially unnoticeable recodings of current practices of public space.²⁴³

architects and non-architects are functionally indistinguishable, the profession has never been able to construct an ideological justification sufficiently convincing to persuade the state to allow it to monopolize the design of buildings. Appeals to aesthetic and theoretical grounds have never succeeded in a society in which cultural plurality is acceptable in a way that, for example, medical heterodoxy is not.” Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 79. See also Story 03 in Chapter 03

²⁴¹ Throughout the research, starting from its title, the main references that support the investigation are books written by French scholars who all worked in both, the fields of sociology and philosophy: Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984. First Ed. 1979) and *The Logic Practice* (1990. First Ed.1980), Henri Lefebvre *The Production of Space* (1991. First Ed. 1974), and Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1974). This choice of references might support and inform the reasons why I have conceived of architecture here as a diverse field of practices, including the social construction of the everyday by ‘ordinary men’. It might also explain why this understanding of architecture leads to addressing the subject of taste outside exclusively form-based practices, with a focus instead on user’s actions and social space.

²⁴² See the Interim Chapter *Taste: Habitus and Recodification*.

²⁴³ Which does not render them irrelevant, nor unworthy of the undertaking. See *Conclusions*

Residents in the London Borough of Camden are divided into eighteen wards, one of which is St Pancras and Somers Town, where the King's Cross redevelopment is located. Each ward maintains a specific identity and administrative boundary, and there are stark differences between these wards, with the King's Cross redevelopment posing further divisions within the locality, between old and new, affluent and deprived. Many residents of St Pancras and Somers Town do not feel represented by the new redevelopment. For some senior residents for example, the local Waitrose supermarket, not the public square, is a main reference point.²⁴⁴ If a local urban public space of metropolitan scale as Granary Square, fails to represent older residents from the vicinities of the King's Cross Estate, this may be indicative of how narratives of public space showcased by the estate's management contribute more often than not to widening the schism between old and new.

The third story that will be presented in Chapter 03, which explores the subject of commonality and was developed through the third research-practice project, works with senior local residents in order to explore narratives of place relevant to the larger locality and community, which is often and significantly absent from these new pseudo-public sites.²⁴⁵ The project addressed the lack of representation specifically of senior women, in terms of the ways in which they are regarded by public opinion generally – how the life experience of the elderly is mostly underutilised in contemporary society – and, more particularly, the absence of this group from what could constitute one of the most representative spaces in the area, Granary Square. The project referenced various performance pieces, including *The Crystal Quilt* (1985–87) by Suzanne Lacy, in which she staged a celebration of life stories of women, mothers and grandmothers, in contrast to the usual commercial and 'profitable' representations of women.²⁴⁶ Lacy's performance took place on Mother's Day. It involved 430 women over sixty years old, sitting at tables of four, in turn placed on a quilt-like carpet in the Centre Crystal Court of the IDS building, the

²⁴⁴ This observation comes from conversations with members of senior community groups, who became the participants for The *Granny Square* project. I make it in addition to the issues discussed in the subsection on accessibility above. See note no. 138.

²⁴⁵ See Story 03: *Betty, Dot and The Bird* in Chapter 03, where I relate how The *Granny Square* project was made.

²⁴⁶ See www.suzannelacy.com/early-works/#/the-crystal-quilt/.

tallest skyscraper in Minnesota, designed by Philip Johnson. In front of an audience of about 3,000 people, the women performed a series of actions at ten-minute intervals, delivered as a protest against the commercialisation of 'Mother's Day', one of the primary celebratory occasions on which women are most 'represented' in media and society.

FIG. 07



FIG. 07 SUSANNE LACY, *THE CRYSTAL QUILT*, 1985-1987.

The lack of visibility and/or representation of senior citizens in public space, and particularly women, shows that "still all too often, in the public imagination at least, [they are] marginal to urban life – conceptually and often quite literally less visible".²⁴⁷ In a significant number

²⁴⁷ Sophie Handler, 'Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook' (The University of Manchester Library, 2014), p. 12. See also Age UK - London, 'A London Plan for Older People 2018: Response to Consultation on the Draft New London Plan' (London: Age UK, 2018). Citing Evidence to support changing policy on building strong and cohesive communities, the document states "older people have told us that they will not venture out if they feel unsafe, thus being deprived of opportunistic encounters for

of cases, the senior residents of St Pancras and Somers Town who collaborated in the third research-practice project for this investigation have spent more than six decades living in the ward. However, perhaps due to the fact they are living memory of some of the ward's most cherished histories, their presence is at odds with the dominant paradigm of innovation, through which new urban spaces are mainly devised for young tribes – media savvies, wealthy art students, young families and executives. Often, during my weekly conversations with groups of elderly women in the locality, I have seen how they refer to the King's Cross project as 'the other side', with an elegant though slightly dismissive wave of a hand. They perceive the redevelopment, if at all, as distant and foreign. A place, that is, not really made for them and, therefore, one where new memories in their lives are highly unlikely to be formed as they are not interested in frequenting it.²⁴⁸

Throughout the third research-practice project, anecdotes and local histories slowly became a driving force for our collective work. Through chatting – or storytelling – cherished common memories were remembered and translated into a piece of work made by all those involved in weekly knitting sessions. To celebrate these memories, the knitted piece we have been making has been brought to 'the other side' several times and made temporarily public as a storytelling prop in and around Granary Square.²⁴⁹

In the work of Francis Aljys, citizens in their capacity as storytellers are regarded as 'agents of propagation'. Aljys explains that "it is in stories passed informally from person to person that a great reservoir of resistance to power persists," and, he affirms, "that's a fundamental aspect of a political strategy in making art...because the institutions and the power structure always try to play down the anecdotal. Yet anecdotes weave the fabric of our social existence."²⁵⁰ Aljys performs actions so simple as to be almost absurd, so they can be

social interaction that help to alleviate loneliness. It will also undermine the value of spaces created for people if those spaces are not well maintained, as they will be perceived as undesirable places to visit." Pp. 18–19. Although Granary Square is safe and well maintained and perceived as such (both issues depended on each other), it is also unfriendly, specifically to older people (and, in fact, to people in general) in terms of lack of sufficient shade, poor wind management and uncomfortable seating provision.

²⁴⁸ Elie, S. (2016) *King's Cross: 5 Years In, 5 Years On*. Panel Discussion Notes. (Notes from stakeholders views and evaluations on the first five years of the King's Cross redevelopment project, Friday 14th October.)

²⁴⁹ See Story 03 in Chapter 03.

²⁵⁰ Russell Ferguson, Francis Aljys, *Francis Aljys: The Politics of Rehearsal* (Los Angeles : Göttingen: Hammer Museum; Steidl, 2007), p. 103.

easily remembered and passed on as anecdotes, or plain gossip. His practice has been relevant in this research for understanding when and how critical performance can celebrate the anecdotal, emerging from the old fabric of a locality's social existence.²⁵¹ Through the process of making the third and final story told in Chapter 03, the anecdotal slowly became essential material for shaping and developing the project, in a manner subconsciously analogous to the process of making the two preceding projects. This will be elaborated in the next chapter.

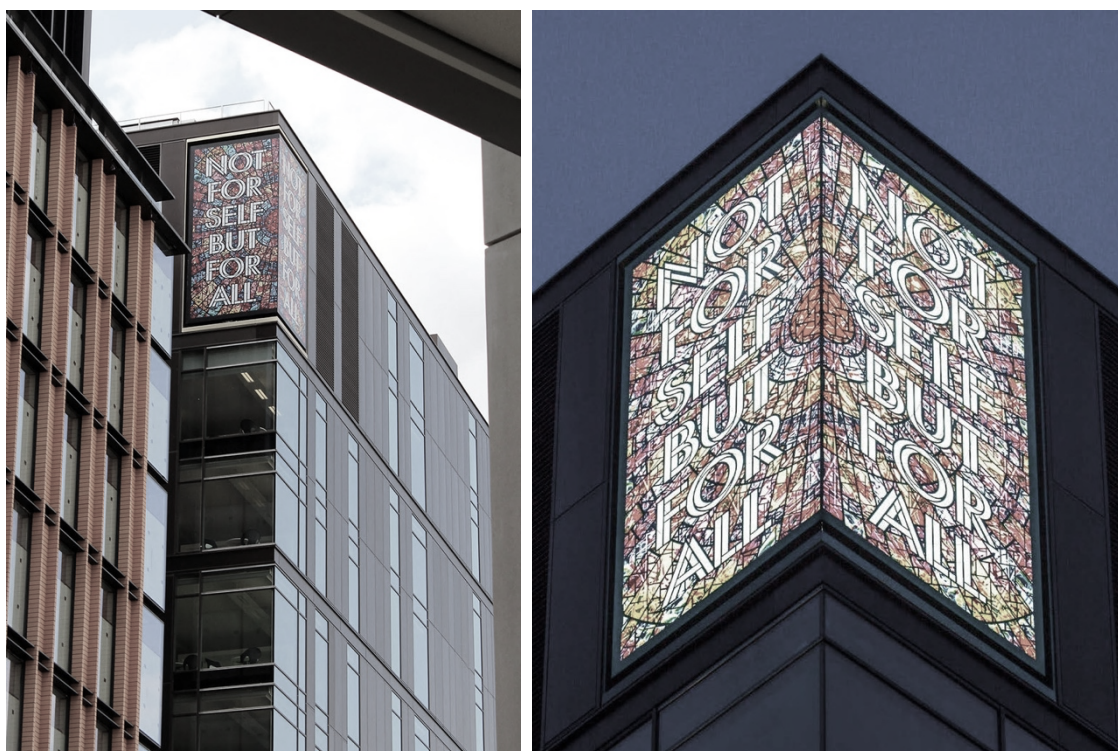


FIG. 08. ART INSTALLATION FOR THE KING'S CROSS ESTATE. MARK TITCHNER, 2014.

²⁵¹ That is, seizing anecdotes as core material for performance interventions where local stories could be tested in their capacity to “carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places”, as Michel de Certeau has explained in Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Kindle Edition, loc. 1769. De Certeau has defined the differences between places and spaces, whereby places are fixed and static and spaces are composed of mobile elements. In the context of this research, mobile or transitory elements include the specific memories and stories that constituted the material for collective work, and which eventually do travel across different timeframes and locations, in a series of moves aimed at temporarily celebrating civic-life acts from times past. For de Certeau: “A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place) ... A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.” In contrast, “a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programmes or contractual proximities accord with which elements are distributed in relations of coexistence.” Loc. 1769.

INTERIM / Habitus and Recodification: The practice of taste in architecture and urban design

*“The habitus is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body’s readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social, that the king, the banker, or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the church made flesh”*²⁵²

Following from last chapter, where some of the codes and practices of public space were scrutinised, this Interim Chapter is dedicated to a short series of reflections on the codes and practices characteristic of architecture and urban design professions themselves, ultimately focusing on the figure of the architect and urban designer in their capacity as aesthetic agents, or tastemakers. Pursuing Bourdieu’s definition of the habitus (above), this chapter observes the connection between the professional institution of architecture and its agents/practitioners, and how it structures each architect’s persona and the works that they produce. The *habitus* of an architect is a product of both the social structure incorporated through long exposure to the particular social context within which they developed from childhood, and their acquired professional structure, incorporated during long years of specialised training and practice within their chosen field.²⁵³

This structure is referred to here as *architectural habitus*: a dominant set of skills and practices characteristic of the profession and its professionals, and one which enables architects to self-identify and be identified as design practitioners. Whilst operating within the institutional framework provided by the profession, the architect ultimately becomes an institutionalised architectural agent, or in Bourdieu’s words, *architecture made flesh*, a process I will further elaborate under *Habitus* (below).

²⁵² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990), pp. 56–57.

²⁵³ In *Distinction*, Bourdieu explains that “differences between works are predisposed to express differences between authors, partly because in both style and content, they bare the mark of their authors socially constituted dispositions (that is, their social origins, retranslated as a function of the positions in the field of production which these dispositions played a large part in determining).” In Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 11.

Although this is an investigation into the field of architecture and urban design, it might appear here that I am focusing on the figure of the architect alone for inspecting architectural habitus. As explained in Chapter 02, under *Labour: The Practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space*, I argue that, increasingly, urban developers/managers take the lead in the production and curation of contemporary public space, including its aesthetic output and its effects on taste narratives more generally. Conversely, architects and urban designers see themselves constricted to the design of urban forms, as the managerial structures upon which the maintenance of public space depends – including the communication of lifestyles and their tastes – take over after a project's completion. However, I believe it is still necessary to explore habitus and its strong connection with notions of taste from within architecture *and* urban design. Taste has been usually explored, articulated and contested from within architecture rather than from the larger scale involved in urban design practice, because, amongst other reasons, the dominant connection between taste and style becomes more evident and focused through the analysis of buildings rather than that of urban environments.

Today, however, public space (including social media platforms, which, though not the focus of this study, have vastly challenged and transformed the notion of public space) has become an amplifier and ultimate communicator of notions of taste beyond form, often attached to lifestyles based on consumption and entertainment. This, I argue, is still a limited understanding of taste, often used to describe the aesthetics of public space, and one that demands further inspection of the links between dominant narratives of taste in architecture and their effects and contestations from the contemporary public realm.²⁵⁴

The examination of architectural habitus is advanced here at both personal and professional levels, and also considers their mutual dependency. At the personal level, studying the notion of the habitus has been key to understanding how my architect self conforms to the dominant architectural habitus acquired through traditional architectural education and

²⁵⁴ For Argent's perspective on the connection between designers, developers and managers, as well as between contemporary public space and notions of taste, lifestyle and entertainment, see the text *The New Entertainers*, by Robert Evans, Executive Director at Argent and CEO of the King's Cross Redevelopment. In: Daniel Elsea, ed., 'Citymakers: Exploring Models of Urban Development' (Allies and Morrison, Autumn 2019), pp. 70–71.

practice, including the narratives of established taste intrinsic to it. Against this, my spatial practitioner self – fostered through iterative variations as performer, maintenance worker, writer – has sought ways to address the strongly felt need to resist her dominant habitus.²⁵⁵ Professionally, this inspection allows further understandings of how self-image, professional structure and design work are linked via architectural habitus, and how this connection affects the aesthetic outputs of architecture and urban design practice, including some of the ways in which these play out in contemporary public space as practices of taste. The reflections presented in this chapter are therefore not only about the aesthetic power and/or agency of architects as individuals, but also about architectural *and* urban design practices themselves. FIG. I 06.

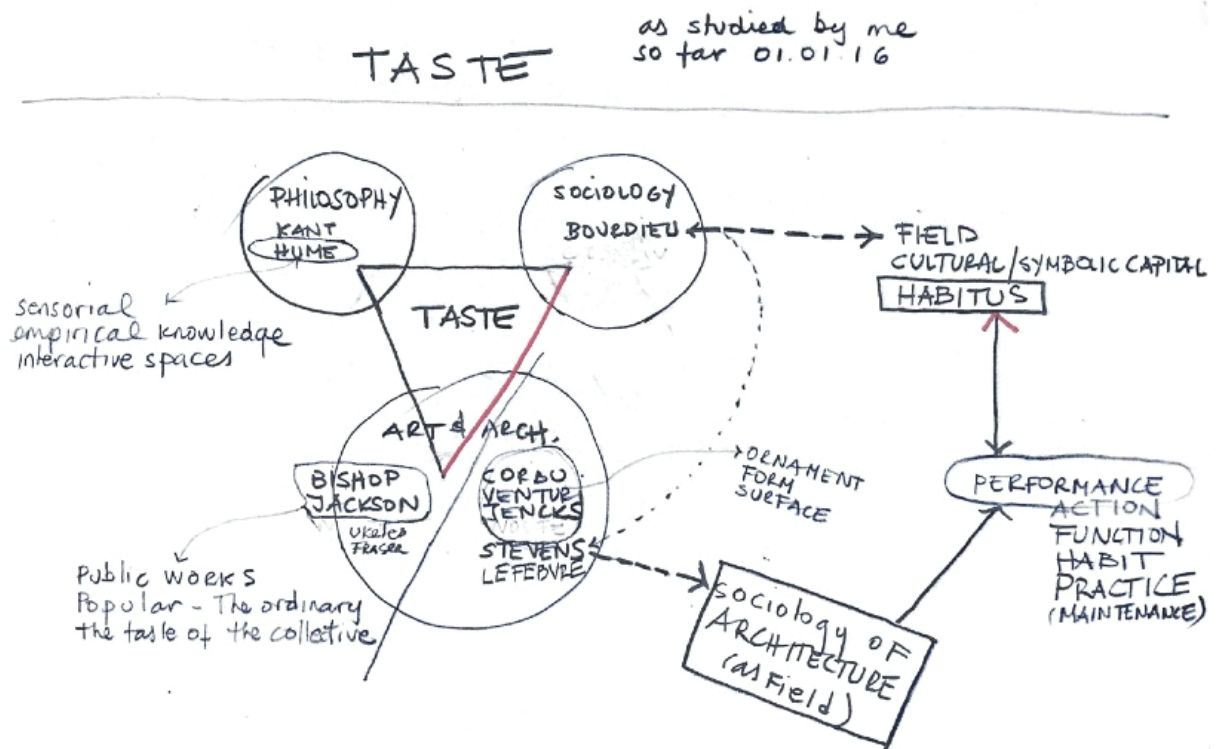


FIG. I 06. TASTE/HABITUS DIAGRAM.

The focus on this investigation is the connection between sociology and architecture (shown in red), with its main bibliographic references, which lead to exploring the concept of the habitus through performance.

²⁵⁵ This, in connection with the conflict between identification and resistance, as explained in the previous chapter under *Dissenting: Alternative practices to controlled accessibility*.

Habitus

Based on Bourdieu's quote at the start of this chapter, the inspection of architectural habitus is prompted here by asking: How do architects embody the institution of architecture? That is, how do they become *architecture made flesh*?

The concept of the habitus was coined by Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), and further developed in his subsequent books, *The Logic of Practice* (1980) and *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), where he connects the politics of taste with the sociology of practice. Garry Stevens has scrutinised this connection specifically for the field of architecture in his book *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (1998), where he explains and critiques the processes for the establishment of architecture as a profession, and the social roles architects assigned to themselves and were able to perform – or not – within it.²⁵⁶ In the context of this research, and taking both Bourdieu's theories and Stevens's elaborations for architecture into consideration, the concept of the habitus has been studied to advance my critical understanding of taste within the field and, subsequently, the notion of architectural habitus in connection with it.

The institutional foundations of the habitus of the architect as a tastemaker, or *man of taste*, were established from the very beginning of the process of institutionalisation of architecture as a profession in the UK. On Monday 15th June, 1835, the Opening General Meeting of the Members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) was held in London to first establish the institute. In the *Report of the Proceedings, the Address to the Members* by acting secretary, architect T. S. Donaldson, was published. He called for all architects – present and future members of the institute – to “up-hold in ourselves the character of Architects, as men of taste, men of science, men of honour”.²⁵⁷ FIG. I 07. Holding onto that call, this investigation argues that the professional projection of the architect's persona as a *man of taste*, is symbolic of a continuing architectural tradition that

²⁵⁶ See Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, 1st Edition (MIT Press, 1998). Chapter 1: *Targeting the Favored Circle*, pp. 17–31.

²⁵⁷ T.S. Donaldson, 'Institute of British Architects - Inaugural Meeting. Report of the Proceedings, 1835' (London: RIBA - Royal Institute of British Architects, n.d.), p. 31.

further distinctions between architects and non-architects, to those between good taste and bad taste, rational and emotional knowledge, high class and low class, men and women.²⁵⁸ It also argues that the subsequent extension of such tradition into the future has sustained an institutional project on taste, via the production of formal canon or style.

FIG. I 08.

A working description for this investigation defines taste as an internalised *modus operandi* by which architects practise their profession whilst adopting the persona of *men of taste*. This, I argue, is a dominant *modus operandi*, which likewise provides a sense of legitimisation and a sense of self-censorship, both strongly attached to the architect's practice.

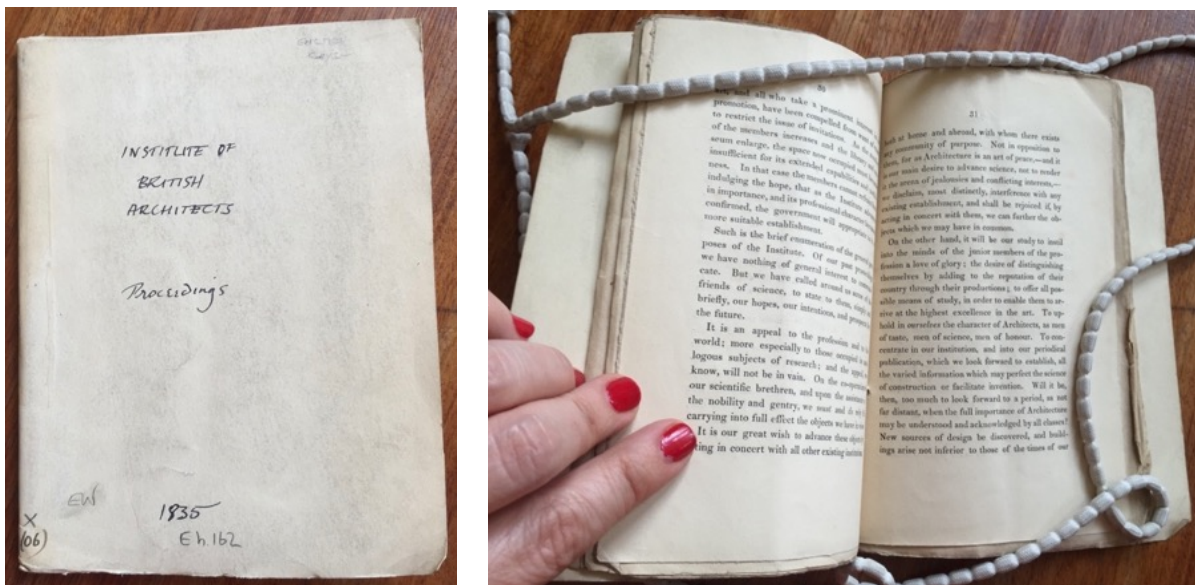
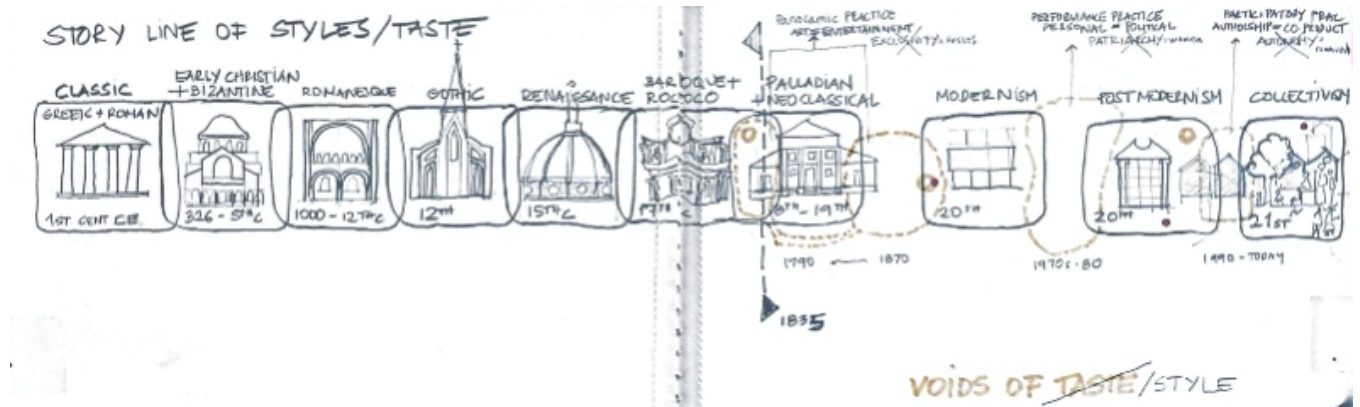


FIG. I 07. RIBA – INAUGURAL MEETING. REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS, 1895.

Photographs taken from the RIBA archive, where this booklet rests.

²⁵⁸ The denomination of architects as men of science is connected here to the notion of Situated Knowledge, as described in Chapter 01, under *Situated Knowledge*.



TIMELINE OF STYLES FIG. 1 08.

Recodification

The proposed inspection of codes and practices characteristic of architecture and urban design implies preliminary considerations about the dominant ways in which notions of taste have been traditionally translated into architecture, and then observes how these notions operate within the wider framework of spatial practice.²⁵⁹ Ultimately, it becomes relevant to test if the traditional coupling of taste and style in architecture could potentially be recodified and translated into alternative taste narratives. Rather than setting further entrenched positions, the narratives that I have developed through my practice aim to temporarily recontextualise a contentious and often unrecognised subject.

The institutionalisation and communication of a formal canon or style through traditional architecture practice constitutes the very bread and butter of the profession. In recent history, tussles over styles characterise binary oppositions between modernism and postmodernism in architecture, reduced at times to widely known maxims and their counterparts: 'less is more' (Van der Rohe) vs. 'less is a bore' (Venturi, 1966), or 'form follows function' (Sullivan, 1896), and the subsequent notions of 'Ducks' and 'Decorated

²⁵⁹ Connections between labour, maintenance, visibility and performance within the framework of Spatial Practice have been more extensively discussed under the section titled *Labour: The Practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space*, in Chapter 02, which includes subsections on the practice of controlled visibility, and performance as a strategy to counterbalance it. Chapter 01 explains the framework of Spatial Practice in connection to this study, under subsection *Spatial Practice*.

sheds' (Izenour, Scott-Brown and Venturi, 1972), all of which endure, regardless of the passing of time, and are characterized one way or another by a primary focus on form, both in design and theory.²⁶⁰ The primacy of form in architecture discourse tends to distract from the social consequences of architectural practice. Lefebvre's understanding of 'social space' – space as it is lived and experienced by people – and its analysis and questioning, is therefore too often overlooked by mainstream architecture in its preoccupation with form and its associations with style.²⁶¹

Within this inquiry, habitus becomes relevant because it challenges the idea of taste as a deliverable product – as form. Understood through the lens of the habitus, practices define institutions via the actions and works of their practitioners, so "the king, the banker, or the priest [become] hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the church made flesh".²⁶² In its connection to taste, habitus – a practice acquired through life-long exposure to specific social and professional structures and contexts – allows us to inspect and situate taste within social space, as a practice. That is, as a set of cultures, behaviours, knowledge and skills slowly absorbed by individuals through both subconscious imitation and professional training. In architecture, this implies a relocation of notions of taste, from object-based to time-based practice. That is, as a practice that incorporates the performative and situates itself at the margins of more established and sustained architectural traditions, which define taste via formal codification, or style. **FIG. 08.**

A shift of focus from form to use in architecture is seen here as a preliminary step towards possible recodifications of architectural habitus. With the belief that "just as words can be understood by the manner in which they are used, so buildings can be grasped...by the

²⁶⁰ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1966). Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (MIT Press Cambridge, Mass, 1972). Worth noticing the phrase 'form follows function' was not originally by Mies Van der Rohe, but coined by architect Louis H. Sullivan in his 1896 essay *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered*, available at <https://www.thoughtco.com/form-follows-function-177237> (accessed 17.10.2019). Apparently, Van der Rohe first heard the sentence while working on the AEG Factory project, at the office of Peter Behrens, according to Van der Rohe's biography by Detlef Mertins, *Mies* (Phaidon Press, 2014).

²⁶¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991). Chapter 2: *Social Space*, pp. 68–169. See subsection *Accessibility: as a practice of public space*, and *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02.

²⁶² Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 56–57.

narratives of use in which they are inscribed,²⁶³ a translation of fixed visual narratives into more open, temporary others is proposed here, without, however, losing sight of their interdependency. Narratives of taste derived from a further inspection of use are attached to the formal configuration of the spaces being used. Equally, existing spaces acquire different, temporary readings, dependent on the ways in which they are used. Taste is understood here as a practice attached to everyday life. Traditionally used as a strategy to sustain the dominant narratives of taste, which are, for the most part, attached to form. Conversely, continuous use is regarded here as essential to the maintenance of architecture, even though the taste narratives it produces are often overlooked.²⁶⁴ Following from the notion of performance in the expanded field, as described in Chapter 01, it could be said here that notions of taste in architecture have also been constrained by the mediums by which architecture and urban design are traditionally materialised, namely 'bricks and mortar', and that, conversely, the materiality of taste might need to be explored at the margins of such logic.²⁶⁵ That is, to see how taste in spatial practice might emerge from narratives that are not primarily associated with buildings.

In the book *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, the authors explain the interdependency between social practices and objects, and explain how materials and materiality can be understood in connection to them. Shove, Pantzar and Watson describe how materials encompass "objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware *and the body itself*" (my italics).²⁶⁶ Their insights are useful in connection with the practice of taste in architecture and urban design – when explored at the margins of the logic of form and style – because they open up possibilities for considering mediums other than bricks and mortar in the production of architecture, e.g. the body. This can be developed by focusing on the dynamics of use and users and spatial practitioners' actions, and on the way these contribute to the production of space, including its associated taste narratives.

²⁶³ Neil Leach, *Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space*, in: Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Ashgate, 2005), p. 298.

²⁶⁴ See Chapter 03, Story 03, subsection *Use, disuse and maintenance*.

²⁶⁵ This, following from the subsection titled *Performance practice*, in Chapter 01, in connection with the materiality of spatial practices.

²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (Sage, 2012), p. 23. They further explain here that materials constitute one of three main elements of practice. I will further explain their theory on elements of practice in connection to this study and this particular chapter, below.

As a continuation of the profession's foundational desire for "the full importance of Architecture [to] be understood and acknowledged by all classes,"²⁶⁷ the focus on form production and its translation into formal canon or style has limited and prescribed architectural design, often impeding rather than allowing the 'full importance of architecture' to permeate all brackets of society at more equal levels. Choosing performance practice as a means to explore ways to realign architecture and urban design towards more socially embedded practices, this research argues for a temporary suspension of the role of the architect as a *man of taste*, i.e. an agent of distinction. This, it is argued here, is a move to contribute towards counterbalancing what Garry Stevens describes as a tendency by which 'architectural discourse avoids the social'. Theories of architectural form, he says,

have never been social theories, even when they have purported to be...The history of architectural theory could be written as a cycle of formalistic theories, followed by a crisis of confidence, a search for external values to base a theory of form on, then slowly increasing introversion and formalism. Architectural theory has also aligned itself with philosophy rather than with any of the social sciences. Academic and critical debates take place of the high ground of aesthetic theory.²⁶⁸

Because of a historic focus on form, the coupling of architectural design and social betterment has been traditionally constrained, and with it the idea that "there is a causal link between designing a building and making the world a better place" often becoming sidelined.²⁶⁹ If, however, these concerns were more frequently incorporated into contemporary public space designs, they could more positively impact their neighbouring communities and the socio-political life of cities more generally. As argued in the book

²⁶⁷ T. S. Donaldson, 'Institute of British Architects - Inaugural Meeting. Report of the Proceedings, 1835', p. 31. As Garry Stevens explains in his book *The Favored Circle*, formal production is one of the main mechanisms by which the profession is legitimised and regarded as successful. For him, "the basic dynamics of the architectural field are driven by symbolic concerns and the quest to achieve reputation through the production of great architecture, which is, of course, that which the field defines as great". Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 95.

²⁶⁸ Stevens, pp. 14–15. He furthers his point with examples, such as the writings of Spiro Kostoff: "Modernist rhetoric waxed eloquent about the needs of users. It represented architecture as the vehicle of social welfare and set public housing issues as the highest priority of architecture. But there was no question of consulting with the user of the housing estate during the course of their design...Users did not know what they wanted or, more importantly, what they should have. Their collective needs, interpreted by the architects and sponsoring agency, would be codified in the 'program' – as has been the case with hospitals, schools and prisons in the past. The fit might not be comfortable at first. The setting might appear alien to our habitual ways. The fault was with our habits. We would learn to adjust to the new Wohnkultur because it was based on rationally derived standards...Architectural revolutions required the redesign of humanity." Ibid. Kostoff quoted from: Russell Ellis, Dana Cuff, ed., *Architect's People* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), p. xiii.

²⁶⁹ Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*, p. 37 This, I would add, not only because building design might be 'beautiful', but also critically engaged with the communities they are meant to serve and the knowledge they have about their needs and the dynamics of their area.

Spatial Agency: “the key political responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the building as static visual commodity, but as a contributor to the creation of empowering spatial, and hence social, relationships in the name of others”.²⁷⁰ Beyond style and form, a re-envisioned version of taste might further contribute to the betterment of spatial-social relations.

As spatial practices diversify and influence the field of architecture and urban design foregrounding social concerns in the design of urban environments and the public realm, the practices of taste attached to them inevitably and accordingly transform. After reviewing diverse theories of practice in connection with social theory, again authors Shove, Pantzar and Watson affirm that “theories of practice are distinct in contending that the social is situated in practice”.²⁷¹ To contextualise my previous reference to their description of the materials of practice within their broader argument, it is necessary to explain the three elements of which practices are made, according to them: “a. Materials – or the stuff of which objects are made; b. Competences – or skills and know-how, techniques; and c. Meanings – including symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations” They argue that “practices emerge, persist, shift and disappear when connections between elements of these three types are made, sustained or broken.” Crucially, they explain that “in showing how materials, meanings and competences endure and travel, we provide a means of understanding how practices are sustained between moments and sites of enactment”.²⁷² Or, put differently, between time and place. In this study, the temporary interventions designed for a specific place – Granary Square – become means for exploring how different practices of architecture and urban design, including site-specific performance interventions, in turn produce different manifestations of taste, along with the mechanisms necessary to sustain them.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, . 38.

²⁷¹ Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (Sage, 2012), p. 6.

²⁷² Shove, Pantzar, and Watson, pp. 14–15. Explaining how introducing new concepts generates new practices in specific places, Shove discusses Timothy Burke’s analysis on the making of soap markets in Zimbabwe: “Burke highlights the role of key companies and the importance of alliances built with church and state, all enlisted in the project of generating new concepts of dirt.” She then explains how, “in cultivating practices of personal hygiene in Zimbabwe, the organisations involved were instrumental in establishing the very idea of market transactions...[and were] of importance well beyond the realm of personal hygiene”, p. 136. Shove’s example here refers to the book by Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Leicester University Press, 1996).

In reference to the elements of practice described above, it seems important to ask what specific elements would constitute the practice of taste in architecture and urban design? Historically, as has been argued, these elements could be generally described as follows, based on the definitions provided by Shove, Pantzar and Watson: a. Materials – or bricks and mortar and all other construction materials used to build; b. Competences – or the know-how, skills and techniques used by designers, such as drawing and model-making; c. Meanings – or the symbols, ideas and aspirations conveyed by the narratives attached to architectural form, which buildings signify and represent. But, if the proposed focus now is on time-based spatial practices, such as performance, where the outcome is not necessarily a longer-lasting building or environment, the following elements could be considered to re-envision such practice: a. Materials – or bodies themselves, i.e. spatial practitioners and users; b. Competences – or the knowledge, skills and techniques attached to everyday practices characteristic of the ways in which spaces are used and maintained; c. Meanings – or the temporary representations and visibility that users' actions convey, as specific activities associated with use and maintenance are performed in a space.

Taking these considerations forward, I argue that, as maintenance regimes of contemporary urban practice are considered ever more relevant for the production of space, they in turn introduce specific types of taste that are different from those associated with form and style, and that these new types of taste need further attention and scrutiny. I argue that, as the notion of spatial practice is incorporated within, and the focus of architecture and urban design practices shifts more broadly towards social space – or the space of lived experience – the practice of taste shifts and transforms accordingly. Within this context, spatial practitioners – formally or not – practice taste as a collaborative endeavour, which usually involves non-specialists in its making.²⁷³ While doing so, they produce new links between the elements of practice, which, however temporarily and precariously, allow in turn, new associated notions and narratives of taste to emerge, which expand beyond form.

²⁷³ Which is different from articulating a 'new' architectural style – namely post-modernism – incorporating popular culture into the wealth of architectural vocabularies characteristic of the various formal canons of the past, through signature architecture, as discussed at the start of this subsection.

My contention is that these other manifestations of taste that this research addresses emerge through the codes and practices characteristic of today's urban realm. More specifically, they emerge through maintenance practices informed by dominant notions of power, labour and civic life, as these have been explained in the previous chapter. In consequence, urban professionals and spatial practitioners are equally bound to the habitus that is constructed around this version of taste, as architects are to the habitus bound to form-centred practice. And I argue that architectural taste might be expanding into these new versions of taste that emerge from maintenance practices – which I describe as hidden manifestations of taste in the profession – and which this research aims to help expose. As a spatial practitioner who focuses on performance and on the dynamics of use and program particular to public spaces, I do not deal with the formal manifestations of taste – although my arguments build against these – but with other, time-bound ones, which, although largely unattended, are characteristic of contemporary public space. My practice therefore attempts to question, recode and temporarily subvert their base.

All too often, however, these other narratives of taste are overshadowed by architectural tradition, which still connects our understanding of taste to accomplished form. The dominance of the image, associated with the historic architectural aim to produce enduring objects, marginalise them. Left behind and forgotten, these narratives remain a bulk of seemingly irrelevant material about a taste untold. The stories presented in the next chapter aim to reveal these untold manifestations of taste as they unfold through contemporary public space, and the mechanisms by which they are perpetuated through different maintenance practices. I describe these practices of taste as a situated practices: site-specific and dependent on the elements of a project, including the skills and competences of those involved in its making. As a project unfolds, narratives attached to its everyday construction emerge, with the participant's histories, stories and situated knowledge about the specificities of the place in question contributing to giving it shape.

Interested as I am on highlighting the relevance of the everyday for architecture and urban design practice, I have written three stories each corresponding to one of the main

performance projects developed through the research, which constitute the next chapter.²⁷⁴

I present these stories as untold stories of taste about architecture, written for architects and the wider public. Through these stories, the notion of taste as practice has been articulated, aiming to show how alternative practices of taste might emerge as new and often temporary connections between the materials, competences and meanings of how architecture and urban design practices are formed. The stories tell how, for example, a bird and a spider, although relatively taste-irrelevant motifs, become the precarious products of design production processes that nevertheless own and are owed particular aesthetic value, and that this study aims to make more relevant within architecture and design practice, and more public.

²⁷⁴ This evokes Michel de Certeau's assertion "Stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed with the world's debris." Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011), loc. 1636. See previous note No. 12 on Situated Knowledge.

CHAPTER 03 / Taste Untold: The spider, the bird and other stories of contemporary public space

This chapter presents three stories of practice, each derived from a corresponding performance project in Granary Square. In reference to the overall thesis structure,²⁷⁵ each story addresses one of the three key themes foregrounded in Chapter 02 as characteristic of contemporary public space. Although each presents a particular singularity, mainly derived from a chain of small stories embedded within a leading narrative, cross-referencing between them as well as with the thesis at large also takes place throughout the chapter.

Story 01: Mr. Kali and the Green Sheets

Between March and November 2015, I washed my clothes on the fountains of Granary Square, doing fifteen to thirty-minutes-long laundry sessions, on an impromptu basis, either weekly or fortnightly. **FIGS. A01–A05.** The initial sessions were devised as trial solo performances, leading up to an authorised public event for the Sensingsite Symposium *In This Neck of the Woods*.²⁷⁶ In preparation for this event, small groups were built up during three weeks of rehearsals, ending with a final alignment of four performers/washerwomen. **FIGS. A05–A11.** After the symposium, I continued doing public laundry solos until the end of the year. These were based mainly on Granary Square, with two variations: a solo outing to Trafalgar Square, and the choreographed duo performance *We Have Got to Wash!*, an enactment of Le Corbusier's statement in the form of a public laundry session tailored to Granary Square with which the project was drawn to a close.²⁷⁷ **FIGS. A12–A15.**

²⁷⁵ See Chapter 01, *Thesis Structure Diagram*, p. 20.

²⁷⁶ Sensingsite is a Central Saint Martin's-based platform for postgraduate students to test, present and discuss work in progress. It is run by Susan Trangmar and Steven Ball. *In This Neck of the Woods* was a research event where open format proposals were welcomed, as long as they'd be sited within the King's Cross area, designated a Sensingsite location in June 2015. See https://sensingsite.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_6.html (accessed 15/05/2020).

²⁷⁷ Sentence by Le Corbusier, in: Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Martino Fine Books, 2014), p. 15. See **Video AV02.** *We Have Got to Wash!*



LAUNDRY SESSIONS. FIG. A01. May 2015.



LAUNDRY SESSIONS. FIG. A02. Speaking with a security guard. September 2015.



LAUNDRY SESSIONS. FIG. A03. Speaking with a member of the public. September 2015.



LAUNDRY SESSIONS. FIG. A04. Speaking with a colleague. October 2015.



LAUNDRY SESSIONS. FIG. A05. Speaking with a security guard. November 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. FIG. A06. June 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. FIG. A07. June 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. FIG. A08. June 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. FIG. A09. June 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. FIG. A10. June 2015.



THE GREAT UNWASHED. FORMALLY AUTHORISED PERFORMANCE. **FIG. A11**. June 2015.



WE HAVE GOT TO WASH! INFORMALLY AUTHORISED DUO PERFORMANCE. FIG. A12. November 2015.



WE HAVE GOT TO WASH! INFORMALLY AUTHORISED DUO PERFORMANCE. FIG. A13. November 2015.



WE HAVE GOT TO WASH! INFORMALLY AUTHORISED DUO PERFORMANCE. **FIG. A14.** November 2015.



WE HAVE GOT TO WASH! INFORMALLY AUTHORISED DUO PERFORMANCE. FIG. A15. November 2015.

The expression The Great Unwashed,²⁷⁸ chosen as the project's title, sharply communicated the classist perception of washerwomen evoked in my mind by their absence from Granary Square. The intervention of doing the laundry in a twenty-first century POPS in London was not only intended as a homage to them, but also as a dissenting act against the various ways in which "spatial representations of the dominant culture may in fact obscure representations of the less powerful culture",²⁷⁹ as Setha Low explains in *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. According to the conventions dictated by my Latin American background, a public space like Granary Square, with such a generous source of water permanently on display, would eventually host washerwoman, provided it was a genuinely public space.²⁸⁰ While I observed Granary Square from the window of room A102 of the Granary Building during my hours working in the library at CSM,²⁸¹ women doing the laundry would recurrently appear in my mind as the one missing act.²⁸² Historically, however, the King's Cross area – characterized as it was by pre-industrial steam-based locomotive transit and the storage of coal and other goods on a large scale from the mid-1800s – was populated by members of working or lower classes, referred to as 'The Great Unwashed', an expression commonly signalling those who 'smelled and were dirty'²⁸³ and, within this investigation, those displaced from the area as structural social and political transformations unfolded through history.

²⁷⁸ Susan Trangmar introduced me to this English expression, a term coined by the Victorian novelist and playwright Edward Bulwer-Lytton, as used in his 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*.

²⁷⁹ Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2010). Kindle Edition, loc. 2161.

²⁸⁰ The word *genuinely* here, is used to signal the transfer of ownership and management of public space from public (genuine), to private hands. As a citizen of Bogotá during the mid-80s and 90s, I witnessed and experienced the impactful transformation of urban public spaces that *The Public Space Workshop*, a dedicated office attached to the Mayor's Office, carried through. The workshop was run on public funds and directed by an architect. See Gerard Martin, Alberto Escovar, Marijke Martin, Maarten Goossens, ed., *Bogota: El Renacer de Una Ciudad* (Bogota: Editorial Planeta, 2007), pp. 205–227. Events that have changed the course of the city and country's history have taken place at Plaza de Bolivar from the city's foundation up to today. For an extensive account of the connection between citizenship, democracy and public space in Latin America, see Clara Irazábal, *Ordinary Places/Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* (Routledge, 2008). Specifically for the Colombian Case, see the chapter *The Plaza de Bolivar in Bogota: Uniqueness of Place, Multiplicity of Events*, by Alberto Saldarriaga Roa. Kindle Edition, pp. 126–143.

²⁸¹ The Granary Building is part of the Goods Yard Complex, designed by architect Lewis Cubitt in 1852. This is a Grade II listed building and its listing, from 1978, describes the façade having "segmental arched, recessed casements to window bays". See <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379215> (accessed 08/07/2020).

²⁸² Granary Square features a plethora of cultural activities as per the King's Cross Public Realm Strategy, particularly its *Play and Art Program*. See **FIG. 05** in the introduction. See the *Play and Art Program* in EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, GPA, ADC, 'Public Realm Strategy Report' (Argent St George and the landowners Excel and LCR, 2004), pp. 53–66.

For the Event Hire brochure, where multiple options for renting POPS are on offer, see:

https://www.kingscross.co.uk/media/KX_Event_Space_brochure.pdf. (accessed 08/07/2020).

For the business model hire, see: <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/art-programme> (accessed 19/05/2020).

²⁸³ Some of the Victorian workers around the King's Cross area (railway personnel, coal workers, etc.) belonged to *The Great Unwashed*. More recent history saw other *unclean or dirty* dwellers of the site, such as prostitutes and drug addicts displaced from the area, which will be touched on later in this section.

Dirt in King's Cross

As Ben Campkin explains, King's Cross was "a landscape in the throes of transition, between the obsolete age of steam, and the newer technologies run on diesel and electricity".²⁸⁴ In reference to the London smogs of 1952 and 1962, Campkin notes that "Londoners were acutely aware of the danger of dirty working conditions".²⁸⁵ More relevant to this particular story, however, is a footnote to this remark that highlights how, "beyond the unpleasantness and danger to public health of dirt, workers of dirty industries complained about the perceived detrimental effects of a dirty appearance on social standing".²⁸⁶ Specifically for King's Cross, such transition materializes today, as further social divisions between The Great Unwashed and middle and upper classes continue to manifest through politics of exclusion, including practices of controlled accessibility characteristic of POPS, and specific to the King's Cross estate.²⁸⁷

As Ben Campkin further explains, "[t]he railways that cut through the city from King's Cross in the mid-nineteenth century also contributed to the east-west social divide in the city as a whole".²⁸⁸ In contemporary King's Cross workers have suffered new waves of displacement via privatisation, which stresses the connections between dirt and social standing that mirror the east-west social divide within the locality. This is, however, an unsurprising development for the area, provided that "[i]n general, the privatisation of public space in the west accompanied the traumatic transition from an industrial economy to one based on financial services, shopping, entertainment and "knowledge",²⁸⁹ as Anna Minton explains in connection with the commodification of public space in London.

The figures of the prostitute and the drug addict were cast as undesirable representatives of the workers active in King's Cross from the 1990s, reinforcing the image of the area as populated by those who are 'dirty', and do 'dirty jobs'.²⁹⁰ By the end of the decade, King's Cross was subject

²⁸⁴ Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (IB Tauris, 2013), pp. 106–107.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 198–199. Here is Note No. 9 (for Chapter 5: Crisis and Creativity), where Campkin summarises debates around how of the dirty working conditions impact on workers, as referenced from Campkin: Anon, 'The Environment of the building operative: psychological research in industry'. *The Builder*, 176/5540 (1949), pp. 499–500.

²⁸⁷ See the subsection *Accessibility: as a practice of contemporary public space*, in Chapter 01.

²⁸⁸ Campkin, *Remaking London*, p. 106.

²⁸⁹ Anna Minton, 'What Is the Most Private City in the World?', *The Guardian*, 26 March 2015.

²⁹⁰ Divisions between them (The Great Unwashed), and Us (the middle and upper classes) are evident in contemporary King's Cross, however many narratives on 'open accessibility' estate management tries to reinforce (see the subsection *Commonality: as a practice of public space* in Chapter 01). An investigation by *The Guardian Cities* has reported some of events that often

to a 'clean-up' campaign, where "[p]oliticians openly encouraged the displacement of these groups through gentrification, with one local MP noting that the redevelopment would mean that the 'prostitutes and drug dealers will go and that could only be a good thing'".²⁹¹ This view was at odds with that of local residents, for whom, "[t]he dark picture stressed edgy physical decay, prostitution and drugs [was] (infuriating and alienating many local residents for whom the area was a good enough or a valued home)".²⁹²

Security and maintenance

Today, and specifically with regards to maintenance labour for the public realm, the King's Cross wards constitute the most distinctive workforce in the area, and one akin to that of washerwomen: by class they represent The Great Unwashed, by craft they are agents for 'the cleaner classes'. The King's Cross wards are in charge of security, ensuring the 'right publics' use the square, and of cleaning, a crucial responsibility as the perception that a clean space is a safe space – or that a 'dirty' space is a dangerous place – becomes generalised and further incorporated through maintenance practices of public space.

My encounters with the King's Cross wards, locally known as *the red caps* because they always wear red hats – caps in the summer, woollen beanies in the winter – developed a repetitive pattern from the first solo laundry outing to Granary Square. It would never be more than five minutes into the washing before a red cap would slowly approach and politely ask the same questions, in the same order: 1. What are you doing there? 2. Do you live or work in the area? 3.

occur in King's Cross, which show how such divisions play out on the site: "Another homeless man at King's Cross, who did not wish to be identified, said that it was those on the margins of the society that came up hardest against the hidden rules and borders of the site. "To the ordinary person, there's no distinction between here, and there," he said, pointing first at a public pavement by the taxi rank, and then at a privately owned road that leads north towards Granary Square. "To me, the difference is everything, because I'm not the sort of person they want over there". In Jack Shenker, 'Revealed: The Insidious Creep of Pseudo-Public Space in London', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2017, p. 7. With a subtle site alteration, the Granary Square fountains were programmed to 'write' pairs of words recalling class distinction, as we washed for the symposium *In This Neck of The Woods*. This decision was motivated by the fact that my working hours in the CSM library were timed by the changing rhythms of the jumping fountains outside, so I slowly became able to identify the time of day through the sounds of the water on Granary Square. The sound is poignant as an ever-present reminder of time passing in a mixing cycle of renewal and repetition. The fountains are programmed using simple animated GIF files that define heights and timings for the water jets. The words THEM/US, YOU/ME, HERE/THERE, THEN/NOW appeared on the bays as we washed on 04 June 2015. (With thanks to Dr. Andrew McGettigan, who shared the instructions on how to programme the fountains, from his course The Art of Geometry at CSM). See **FIG. A16**.

²⁹¹ Campkin, *Remaking London*, p. 119. See the sub-section *The 'clean up' campaign*, pp. 118–121. The quote refers to redevelopment plans already on their way for King's Cross. Campkin explains how "In the Mid-1980's there was already a national public debate about the need for investment, and a call for an intensive social and physical 'clean-up' campaign", p. 108.

²⁹² Michael Edwards. *King's Cross: Renaissance for Whom?*, in John Punter, *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance* (Routledge, 2009), p. 196.

What do you do? Depending on the day's mood, and on the character of the ward on shift, the conversation would vary in length, invariably reaching the point when I would have to explain my status as a CSM student. Then, the ward would walk slightly away, while operating a walkie-talkie, and have an unintelligible, short conversation with a superior, to then come back and politely request I finished washing and stopped altogether please.

In order to pave forthcoming outings smoothly, I followed the wards' instructions every time, conscious as I was about the shielding effect my student ID card had in enabling me to continue to perform. My motivation 'to follow instructions' was in line with the initial definition of *The Great Unwashed* project as a reiterative enactment of a disrupting action (which had to be dealt with every time it occurred), rather than as a confrontational performance series or an activist set of acts.²⁹³ Washing clothes is specified as an act prohibited by law in some public squares with fountains or sources of water on display. The bylaws for Trafalgar Square, for example, stipulate that "No person shall within the Square - ...(e) wash or dry any piece of clothing or fabric".²⁹⁴ This indicates that "... spaces managed by public sector landlords are not entirely unregulated... the use of publicly owned spaces can be restricted by the use of bylaws",^{295, 296} as explained in the recent report *Public London: the regulation, management and use of public space*. The report also notes that "even amongst the best intentioned, there is a natural tendency for landlords to give higher weight to their interests, or simply to shape spaces according to their understanding of user expectations. These can privilege commercial concerns, visual amenity and risk management over freedom of use and enjoyment".²⁹⁷ This affirmation not only indicates how some of the policy strategies behind what Anna Minton describes as a "traumatic transition from an industrial economy to one based on financial services, shopping,

²⁹³ Along these lines, I never used soap, for example, because foam and bubbles would have triggered a much quicker ban on the outings. See the subsection *Interim*, at the end of this story.

²⁹⁴ Trafalgar Square bylaws 2012. Bylaw No. 3, *Acts prohibited within the Square*. Greater London Authority, 'Greater London Authority Act 1999', § 385(1), (2) and (4) (2012), p. 3.

²⁹⁵ Nicolas Bosetti, Richard Brown, Erica Belcher and Mario Washington-Ihieme, 'Public London: The Regulation, Management and Use of Public Spaces' (London: Centre for London, November 2019), p. 18.

²⁹⁶ During my laundry outing in Trafalgar Square, I witnessed first-hand how law was reinforced on the square. A homeless man was sleeping on a bench, holding a sleeping bag and some blankets. A policeman woke him up shouting repeatedly for about five minutes. Seeing he was not going to go, a policewoman approached and threatened him with more shouting and heavy insults until he left. The square's bylaws stipulate that permission is required to erect or carry any equipment for sleeping or staying on the square (No.5(1)(h)(i), (ii), (i), (j), (k), (l)). The alarming issue was that that event demonstrated how reinforcement could be more aggressively enacted in a publicly owned public space, than in a privately owned one, a twisted symptom perhaps, of how corporate regulation is reinforced by mirroring the practices of the metropolitan police, but adding extra politeness while obscuring the regulation itself.

²⁹⁷ Nicolas Bosetti, Richard Brown, Erica Belcher and Mario Washington-Ihieme, 'Public London: The Regulation, Management and Use of Public Spaces', p. 25.

entertainment and ‘knowledge’”,²⁹⁸ play out on the ground in POPS, but also how, specifically for Granary Square, which features as one of the ten public space case studies in the report, “[t]he rules governing site use are set out in several documents – including an internal Estate Management Charter – and are ‘not available for the public to see’. The rules are reassessed by the landowner as and when an issue becomes problematic”.²⁹⁹

On the ground

As I reviewed the project’s video documentation gathered from the first-floor window of the Granary Building,³⁰⁰ it became evident closer records were needed to analyse how outings unfolded on the ground. The video camera needed to be brought down with me, and set on a tripod by the edge of the fountain where the laundry usually took place. The presence of the camera on the square would cause laundry sessions to be seen more as an ‘art project’ than anything else;³⁰¹ an unavoidable price to pay, I thought, for more accurate documentation.³⁰² On the first outing with the video-camera on the ground, I was set to wash the usual amount of small towels and pillowcases, along with a super-king bed sheet, brought to try out the kind of garments we would use for the forthcoming Sensingsite event. I later found out that pieces of cloth bigger than one square metre would be considered a health and safety hazard, a piece of information obtained when the process for formally authorising the collective washing

²⁹⁸ Anna Minton, ‘What Is the Most Private City in the World?’

²⁹⁹ Nicolas Bosetti, Richard Brown, Erica Belcher and Mario Washington-Ihieme, ‘Public London: The Regulation, Management and Use of Public Spaces’, p. 50. As the report clarifies, “This study focuses specifically on the management of recently developed or renovated public spaces. More work is underway as part of the Mayor’s Good Growth by Design inquiry into London’s public realm, focusing on design quality, diversity and social integration. We also envisage that our findings and recommendations will inform discussions with London boroughs, landowners, developers and civic interest groups”, p. 37. The report follows from a motion seeking transparency and public accessibility to the regulation of POPS by Nicky Gavron and Sean Berry, and approved by the London Assembly, in September 2017. The motion was proposed by Sian Berry and Nicky Gavron. See <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/privately-owned-public-spaces-need-new-london-plan> (accessed 07/10/2019). See the subsection *Accessibility: as a practice of contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02.

³⁰⁰ I would always approach the square carrying a small bundle of clothes under my arm. Then, provided it was empty, I would stand by the top left corner of the eastern fountain bay to do the washing – the video camera always set in the same position on the window sill of room A102, from which that specific corner was the best spot to capture – take my shoes off, pick one small towel from the bundle and start soaking and rubbing it against the wet floor. The fountains do not have a border around them, but merge seamlessly with the floor, a small amount of water is contained in each of the four bays due to the undulating section of the square, which smoothly changes from convex to concave, differentiating between non-wet/pedestrian surfaces, and water-jet areas respectively. When the jets are on, water forms shallow ponds on each of the square’s concave sections.

³⁰¹ During my outings, people would approach, motivated by curiosity, or a desire to help. One person came to tell me there was a nice and cheap laundromat down the road, another one to say the clothes would not be clean enough, as it appeared I was not using enough soap, another one asked if the water was good enough as it smelled like chloride, which would ruin the clothes rather than make them clean.

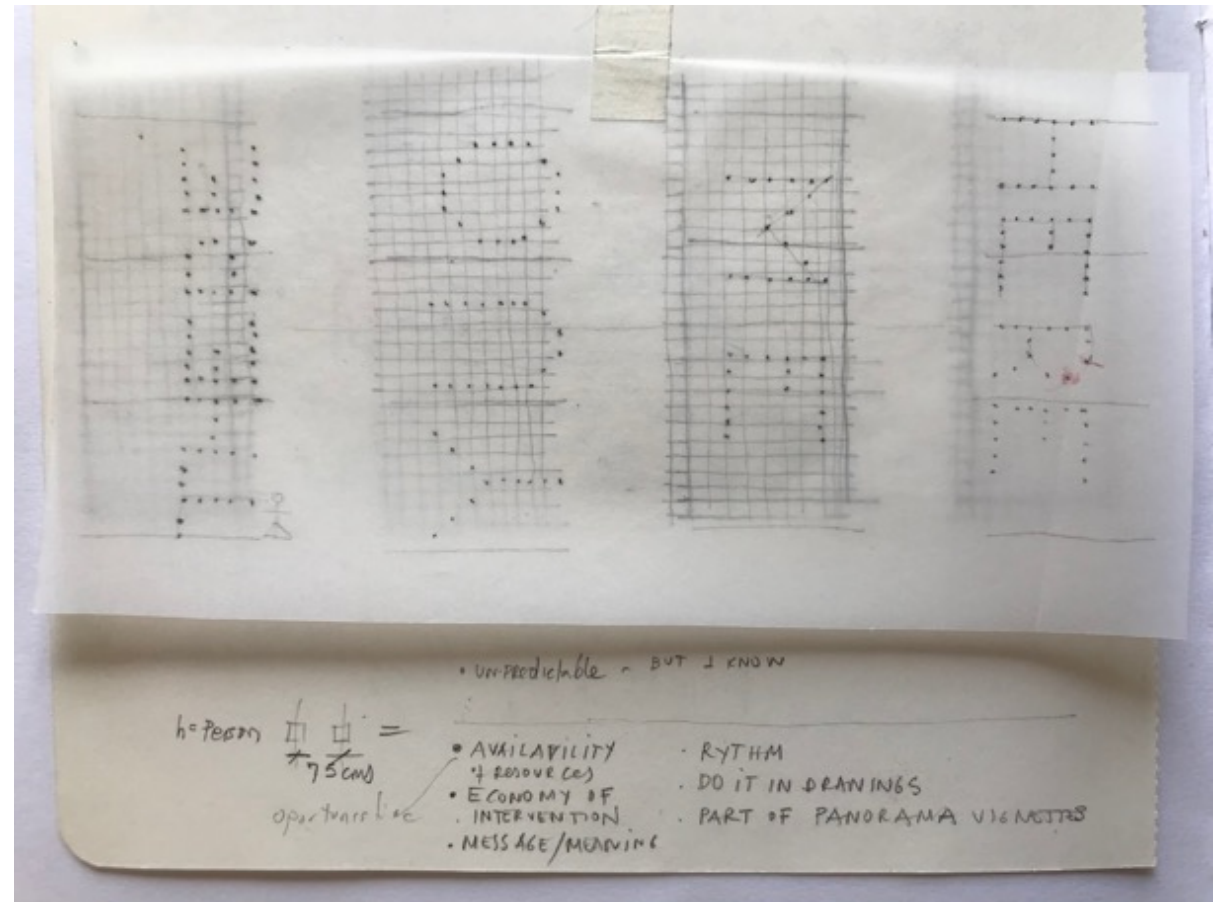
³⁰² Different possibilities were considered for the recordings on the ground: a hidden camera, a powerful zoom. They all required having a second person in charge of documentation, which was expensive and incompatible with non-planned, spontaneous outings, always preferable due mainly to changeable weather conditions.

performance for Sensingsite included filling out a Health and Safety form, for which it was necessary to specify measurements of all garments involved. **FIG. A17.** The repetitive action of washing clothes on the square proved effective for unearthing regulation which, to date, is 'not available for the public to see'. Through sustained dealings with the managerial structures of site at different scales – from the wards on the ground, through to site managers and health and safety officials – the project also proved effective for opening doors towards more formal interventions, based on extensive negotiation processes.³⁰³

In spite of its large size, jazzy green colour and constant flapping through the windy afternoon, I was able to wash my bed sheet for longer than usual on the day the video camera was placed on the ground.³⁰⁴ Four red caps observed the washing from a distance, while using their walkie-talkies, until one of them slowly approached, just before I finished. The protocol started and I answered questions while wringing out the green sheets, battling to extend them on a square bench. When finished with questions, the ward observed the scene, standing in silence for a moment, then decided to join in. He took two corners of the flapping sheets and carefully extended them towards his side of the bench, making sure they looked flat and nice, and then asked "How else can we help?" We collected the washed items scattered around by the wind, and put them on top of the extended green sheets. We then folded the sheets over to make a bundle I could carry back home. With the job done, he wished me good luck with the research. I thanked him very much, moved on to check if the precious recording was still on, and packed the camera and tripod away. The ward who helped with finishing the washing that afternoon is Mr. Yohand Kali, a red cap with a keen interest in art projects on the square, who had spontaneously helped with other interventions before, I later found out. **FIGS. A18–A21. VIDEO AV01.**

³⁰³ See the section Methodology, in Chapter 01.

³⁰⁴ Granary Square is almost unpleasantly windy. Wind tunnels are constantly formed through buildings, so wind comfort on the square is low. The Urban Design Guidelines for the redevelopment only briefly mention the matter: "Wind: The centre of Granary Square would be exposed to prevailing winds, from the southwest. The trees within the square and pavilion buildings could help to baffle the wind. The design of the Provender Store Pavilion should provide some wind protection for the western half". In Allies and Morrison Architects, Porphyrios Architects and Townshend Landscape Architects, 'King's Cross Central, Urban Design Guidelines, NORTH' (London: Argent St George, London and Continental Railways and Exel, 2004). Section 7: Microclimate, p. 42.



FOUNTAIN LAYOUT DESIGN FOR GRANARY SQUARE. FIG. A16. Animated .gif file (left), hand drawing (right).

Permit ID : 87617

King's Cross Estate Services

King's Cross Estate Services

All Permits to Work or Permissions To Access that are issued relate to the landlord controlled areas only. King's Cross Estate Services take no responsibility for any Access or Works within the occupier demised areas. Neither Permit shall constitute a consent or approval under the terms of the relevant Lease, nor shall either Permit be construed as granting a right to locate any equipment or grant any other right in addition to the rights granted in the Lease. The tenant should satisfy itself that it has all necessary approvals, consents and rights under the terms of the relevant Lease.

PERMISSION TO ACCESS

To be Completed PRIOR to Authorisation

Permit No :	87617	Property :	King's Cross Estate
Managed By :	King's Cross Estate Services	Telephone :	0207 664 5700

DETAILS OF REASON FOR ACCESS

Valid From :	04/06/2015 10:00	Valid To :	04/06/2015 18:00
Floor & Location :	Granary Square fountains		
Area of Access	performance with towels and bed sheet in Granary Square fountains between 9.30 & 10am.		

Key Reference :

DETAILS OF APPLICANT

Applicant Company :	Kings Cross Estate Services
Tenant Contact :	David Tod

DETAILS OF CONTRACTOR

For and on behalf of (Contractor) :	UAL
On Site Supervisor / Contact No :	Adriana Cobo Corey 0794 984 7079 / 0794 984 7079
Personnel to Attend Site :	Adriana Cobo Corey
Vehicle Details :	N/A

DETAILS OF DOCUMENTS

Type	Name
Risk Assessment	00.CSM Sensingsite A-Cobo RAMS.Student Exhibit.150223 (1).docx

KCES Estate Rules & Regulations
June 2013

King's Cross KING'S CROSS ESTATE SERVICES: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HOUSE RULES AND REGULATIONS

I have read the King's Cross Estate Services Document 'House Rules and Regulations' and agree to comply with their requirements. I also acknowledge the following:

- That any breach there under may result in me being removed from and subsequently barred from site;
- That any breach there under may result in my/my employers contract being terminated and the party being barred from being employed by KCES at any time in the future;
- That should I commit any breach there under, KCES reserve the right to report my activities and those of my employer to the Environmental Health Officer, the Health and Safety Executive or any other Enforcing Authority and legal proceedings may be taken against me and/or my employer.

Signature:	
Print Name:	
Contractor Company:	
Date:	
Relevant KCES Permit No:	

WELFARE INFORMATION

FIRST AID POST LOCATED AT:	
FIRE EVACUATION ASSEMBLY POINT:	

CONTRACTOR'S COPY

KCES IN-HOUSE RULES & REGULATIONS FOR AUTHORISED WORK / ACCESS. FIG. A17. Photographed on site before signing off on performance day 05 April 2015.



MR. KALI AND THE GREEN SHEETS. FIG. A18.



MR. KALI AND THE GREEN SHEETS. FIG. A19.



MR. KALI AND THE GREEN SHEETS. FIG. A20.



MR. KALI AND THE GREEN SHEETS. FIG. A21.

Identification and resistance

The presence of a woman doing her laundry in public is not only an act of necessity but, intentionally or not, one of protest. Her figure embodies a conflict between identification and resistance – as outlined in the introductory chapter – her public presence an uncomfortable reminder of class distinction and social inequity for those who witness her at work, including myself.³⁰⁵ Like maintenance workers dedicated to clean and care for the public realm, the work of a washerwoman holds the promise of a distinguished appearance granted to those at the tail end of her chores. While re-enacting a washerwoman on the square, I carried out a series of relatively simple and familiar actions. Having learned from my mother, I have washed my own clothes regularly at home since my teenage years, sometimes on a dedicated washing bay covered with small ceramic tiles that facilitate the scrubbing, sometimes in a basin or bathtub, and now with the aid of a washing machine.

Doing the laundry in public, however, proved substantially difficult, as both my social status as a white middle-class woman and my professional one as an architect, trained in elitist schools characterised by the ethos of the *men of taste*, clearly differentiate my social stance from that of washerwomen.³⁰⁶ Doing the laundry in public was difficult for me because I was ‘out of habitus’ – both socially and professionally – unless, that is, I made a conceptual leap and reminded myself I am a female architect. That is, an individual in charge of maintenance labour both at home and at work. A person whose domestic chores enable the clean and fresh appearance of those at the tail end of her labour who use the clothes she washes, airs, irons and/or folds, and

³⁰⁵ See the subsection *Dissenting: Alternative practices to controlled accessibility*, in Chapter 01.

³⁰⁶ However, there is an important similarity between myself and maintenance workers in London, and particularly in the King’s Cross estate: we are immigrants – **FIG. A22** – a condition that can prove a key to temporarily bypass bylaws, powerful enough to briefly unlock the power that cleaning agents and maintenance workers hold in situ. For my laundry outing in Trafalgar Square, I only brought one small red towel to wash. I knew I would have little time to do anything else before I would be stopped and questioned. The western fountain was emptier that morning, and a maintenance worker was cleaning it, standing inside the water with big rubber boots and a lot of cleaning equipment around. The second he saw me soaking the towel in the water, he started walking in my direction, visibly angry and shouting, what are you doing? You cannot do this here. You are making the water and the fountain dirty with your dirty towel! (Trafalgar Square bylaws state it is not permitted to: (3)(1)(a): do any act which pollutes or is likely to pollute water in any fountain or bathe in or otherwise enter any fountain or fountain bowl; p. 3). Sorry, I am just washing my towel. Not here! Why here? Well, not only here, I replied... I am doing this in other squares too, and then I send the pictures of all the washing to my mother in Colombia (I still don’t know how this answer shaped itself in my mind). Then, his whole demeanour almost magically transformed. Smiling, he asked softly: are you Colombian? Yes, from Cali. I was there this summer with my girlfriend who is Colombian too. We went to Cali, beautiful. And to Cartagena, and Medellin, and her mum was lovely and everyone was lovely... As he spoke and I listened – the wet red towel dripping on the border of the fountain – a security ward approached and asked him what was going on. What is she doing, everything all right? Yes, all fine he replied. Leave it with me. The ward walked away, the maintenance worker turned to me and said don’t worry take your time, ok? Ok, thank you very much. And he continued cleaning the fountain. **FIGS. A23–A26.**

whose carefully learned sanitised aesthetics conversely enable the clean and sound appearance of the spaces she cleans and/or designs professionally.

Female architects have been subject to ingrained institutional and social displacements, naturalised as they are by the history of the architectural profession and its intersections with that of patriarchal societies.³⁰⁷ In more recent history, a wide range of options has been opened up to female architects, including practices on Institutional Critique, such as that of Andrea Fraser in the arts. Although architectural practices have not widely operated under the specific label of Institutional Critique to date, the figure of the female architect, intentionally or not, also acts as a double agent: one who resists institutional displacement while being aware that she represents the institution, in a manner akin to the various characters Andrea Fraser enacted in her performance *May I Help You?* (1991–2013).³⁰⁸ For *The Great Unwashed*, the performer's actions constituted a series of symbolic acts, which simultaneously critiqued and legitimised patriarchal practices, practices of class distinction and of institutional power. Within this symbolic framework, it became clear that doing the laundry was not the subject of the performances but the tool for understanding the contested social fabric of POPS, where the action of doing the laundry in public was used to 'expose the underlying fabric of power structures in contemporary public space', to paraphrase Jean Claude Kaufman as he explains the method of his investigation for *Dirty Linen: Couples and their Laundry*.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ There is substantial confusion about the year when RIBA membership was granted to women. This confusion seems to revolve around the word 'full'. Women were not granted 'full membership' to the RIBA until 1938. Before this date, there was what was called the ARIBA, which stood for Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many women were seeking courses with ARIBA qualifications. See the paper: *Identification Through Disidentification: A Life Course Perspective on Professional Belonging*, by Mary Shepard Spaeth and Katarzyna Kosmala, in: Naomi Stead, *Women, Practice, Architecture: 'Resigned Accommodation' and 'Usurpatory Practice'* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 27–45. Footnote 38, p. 44. However, there appears to be further confusion with full-membership dates, with some texts referring to 1931 (not 1938) as the year when the first woman became a full RIBA member. See the paper: *Golden Age or False Dawn?: Women Architects in the Early 20th Century*, where the author Lynne Walker says: "By the 1920's, less than a handful of women were taken into the RIBA: Notables include Gillian Harrison, (née Cooke), Eleanor K.D. Hughes, and Winifred Ryle, later Maddock) and Gertrude W.M. Leverkus (1898–1989). It was not until 1931, that Gillian Harrison, formerly Gillian Cooke (1898–1974), became a Fellow of the RIBA, the first full member. Gillian Harrison's work was typical of architecture in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s, drawing on both traditional and modern styles", p. 5. In that same paper, Walker tells the story of Ethel Charles and her sister Bessie, regarded as the first women accepted as members of the institute, with Ethel obtaining membership in 1898. This looks like an exceptional situation, with an exceptional woman as protagonist. See pages 2 to 4 from Walker's text, here:

<https://historiceurope.org.uk/content/docs/research/women-architects-early-20th-century-pdf/> (accessed 08/07/20).

For a thorough overview on the issue of gender in architecture, see James Benedict Brown, Harriet Harriss, Ruth Morrow, James Soane, *A Gendered Profession: The Question of Representation in Space Making* (RIBA Publishing, 2016).

³⁰⁸ See the subsection *Dissenting: Alternative practices to controlled accessibility* in Chapter 01

³⁰⁹ This, as done by Jean-Claude Kaufmann seminal book *Dirty Linen: Couples and their Laundry*. Explaining his method, he writes: "laundry is not the real subject of this book, but the tool – something that enables us to expose the underlying fabric of conjugal life". In Jean-Claude Kaufmann, *Dirty Linen: Couples and Their Laundry* (Middlesex University Press, 1998), p. 9 (first published as *La trame conjugale: analyse du couple par son linge*, Editions Nathan, 1992).

With regards to cleaning practices in general, Mary Douglas explains that “In chasing dirt, in pampering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to scape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience”.³¹⁰ However, the ‘re-ordering of our environment’, as much as it remains a practice aimed at making the environment conform to an idea, becomes detrimental to the long-term association between democratic societies and the public realm, when such re-ordering conforms to the private interests of corporations aiming at the commodification of public space. Dissenting against the social displacement of members of lower and working classes from ‘public’ spaces via privatisation emerges, therefore, as a counter practice that necessarily places maintenance labour and labourers caring for contemporary public spaces, at its centre. Although cleaning defines the professional habitus of both domestic labourers and architects, this commonality has been largely overlooked, especially in connection to design and maintenance practices of contemporary public space. As with Institutional Critique, architectural practices have not operated under an expanded definition of maintenance architecture, where aesthetic aspiration could be decoupled from sanitised aesthetics, beyond widely practiced technocratic approaches.³¹¹

Although the initial phase of my research involved daily exposure to Granary Square, I did not formally identify the site as the location of the investigation until my unlikely encounter with Mr. Yohand Kali. That spontaneous moment made it clear that further collaboration with on-site maintenance workers was the way forward to further understand how power structures played out on site, and how their aesthetic impact was formed and managed. The investigation would have necessarily been another, had I been based elsewhere, as ongoing observation of and interactions with the place and its stakeholders slowly uncovered the research potential embedded in the site, particularly in connection with my initial inquiry,³¹² and bound research and location through a site-residency approach interlacing theory and practice.

³¹⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 1 edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002). Kindle edition, loc. 298. Here, Douglas was referring to cleaning private bathrooms, as carried by some of her close acquaintances.

³¹¹ Although the aesthetics of maintenance have been explored by artistic practices, especially through Laederman Ukeles’ work on Maintenance Art (which could be defined as a kind of spatial practice), the connection between architectural work and maintenance labour, and specifically the task of cleaning, has not been thoroughly explored yet in architecture. See the subsection *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space* in Chapter 02.

³¹² My very first proposal was a study on the visual cultures of architecture in connection to taste, with drawing and video installation as the practice components. One of my early questions was: Can an inquiry into aesthetic taste sustain the development of new forms of inclusion in architecture? (June 2015). This then evolved into the current question: How can performance practice be used as an agent to question and realign the codes and practices of contemporary public space? (March 2018). See the Thesis Structure Diagram, p. 20.



BIN AT CSM / UAL WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLEANING STAFF DISPLAYED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH. FIG. A22.



LAUNDRY OUTING / TRAFALGAR SQUARE. FIG. A23. Maintenance worker makes sure rules are communicated.



LAUNDRY OUTING / TRAFALGAR SQUARE. FIG. A24. Maintenance worker and I engage in dialogue.



LAUNDRY OUTING / TRAFALGAR SQUARE. FIG. A25. Security guards ask the maintenance worker what is going on, then leave after he says it's all OK.



LAUNDRY OUTING / TRAFALGAR SQUARE. FIG. A26. Maintenance worker allows washed towel to remain airing by fountain edge.

Meantime

More than ten months passed between finishing *The Great Unwashed* project and obtaining authorisation for the following one. In the meantime, apart from further negotiating practice, I carried on testing disruptive actions other than washing, including sleeping on Granary Square, which, unsurprisingly, proved the most controversial.³¹³ During sleeping outings, of which I was able to perform only a handful, uncanny rules were unearthed, again through conversations with security wards as they approached to check on the situation. These rules have to do with gestures, postures and props involved in the action of lying down on a square bench, where for example, a foetal position is not allowed, but a belly-up one is permitted, as a security ward instructed me the first time I took a nap on the square.³¹⁴ FIGS. A27–A29. Other private protocols regarding lying down in public have been reported by people in need of a rest, as a Guardian Cities investigation revealed in July 2017: “I’m allowed to lie down on the grass, but not to close my eyes”, one homeless man, who goes by the moniker Yankee Dan, said of the recently opened Pancras Square, part of the pseudo-public King’s Cross Estate, “I tried to take a nap the other morning, just for an hour or two, and every time my eyes began to shut I was woken up by security guards”.³¹⁵

The Great Unwashed project was initiated as a form of protest against the many ways in which “spatial representations of the dominant culture may in fact obscure representations of the less powerful culture”,³¹⁶ as explained by Setha Low. In Granary Square, however, the reiterative enactments of washerwomen on the square lost agency as a form of protest as time went on. Following the power structures characteristic of the site, the images produced through the project were fast incorporated and naturalised as ‘an art student project’. Also, and more straightforwardly, the project got banned by Argent LLP; its dynamic and potential long-term impact altogether stopped. The ban was not only based on reported sleeping outings, but

³¹³ Other actions included a short performance accompanying the 2016 Spotlight exhibition *Reframing: PhD Research at CSM*, where I exhibited a video of *The Great Unwashed* project on the Windows Gallery, at The Crossing, CSM. For the performance I wrote a text on the window pane, read it aloud, then proceeded to wipe it off the window. FIG. A30.

³¹⁴ However, after observing people taking naps on Granary Square, I realised this was a flexible rule: many people seem to sleep belly up undisturbed, but what they all had in common was the possession of expensive objects like a Brompton bike close to them, a laptop or phone and headphones, or to sleep belly up if they simply had a clean and well ironed suit and/or blue shirt on. FIG. A31. With regards to sleeping equipment, although it can trigger a quick security response in public spaces, this was not the case in Granary Square for one of the outings, when thick and brightly coloured felt covers and blankets were prepared for the benches, and a long nap evolved uneventfully. A sign, perhaps, of the wards’ training on how to differentiate local art students from more deprived local citizens.

³¹⁵ In Jack Shenker, ‘Revealed: The Insidious Creep of Pseudo-Public Space in London’, *The Guardian*, 24 July 2017, p. 7.

³¹⁶ Low, *On the Plaza*. Kindle Edition, loc 2161.

mainly on submitted proposals detailing two closing events for the first stage of the research: a collective washing performance, initially involving five washers per fountain, and a sleeping rally, with three sleepers per bench, which evolved from solo outings on public napping.³¹⁷ **FIGS. A32–A33.** Events Management for King’s Cross Estate Services-KCES, in tandem with the division for Public Realm Events and Enlivenment at Argent LLP, outlined their position on the proposals to External Relations – CSM: “... the developers, and the estate service organisation (KCES)... are somewhat nervous about depictions of rough sleeping in the area through an art project, and couldn’t allow performances that restrict access to the public’s enjoyment of the space (i.e. The proposal to do a ‘washing’ performance in the fountains)”.³¹⁸ The owners/managers’ stance paved the way to the long negotiated project at the heart of the next story.

Video record for The Great Unwashed

Please copy the following Vimeo Link in your browser to see the video:

Password:

³¹⁷ See Methodology Booklet / [Briefs](#), p. xx.

³¹⁸ Beddoe, S. (s.beddoe@csm.arts.ac.uk) 04 July 2016. *PhD Performance Proposal*. e-Mail to A. Cobo (acobocorey@gmail.com). Stephen Beddoe is CSM Director of External Relations, and was the link person between myself and Argent LLP during the first stage of research.



KCES IN-HOUSE SLEEPING RULES AND REGULATIONS. FIG. A27.



KCES IN-HOUSE SLEEPING RULES AND REGULATIONS. FIG. A28. As expressed verbally by security guard on site.



KCES IN-HOUSE SLEEPING RULES AND REGULATIONS. FIG. A29. As expressed verbally by security guard on site.

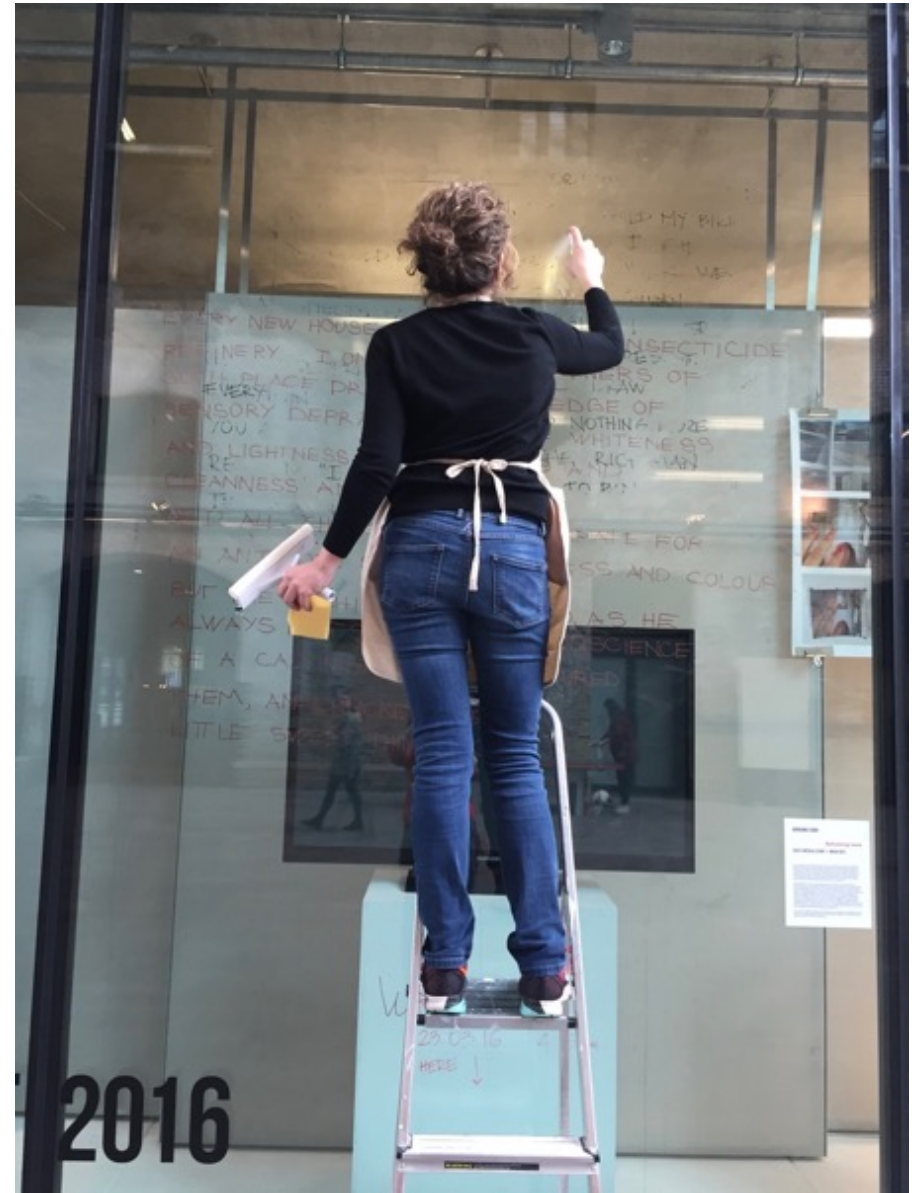


FIG. A30. WINDOW CLEANING. WINDOW GALLERY. THE CROSSING, CSM.



FIG. A31. SLEEPING GEAR FOR GRANARY SQUARE.



FIG. A32. SOLO OUTING ON PUBLIC NAPPING IN GRANARY SQUARE.



FIG. A33. SOLO OUTING ON PUBLIC NAPPING IN GRANARY SQUARE.

Story 02: Benjamin and The Spider

When people clean, water traces are left behind, which usually produce patterns similar to those traced with ink, graphite or paint when the hand draws. But water evaporates, so traces of cleaning labour fast disappear. **FIG. B01.** Following from my previous project on doing the laundry in the water fountains on Granary Square, *The Disappearing Garden* project conceived of cleaning as a form of drawing and, subsequently, following the work of Mierle Laederman Ukeles, of maintenance labour as a kind of art.³¹⁹ This approach allowed me to contextualise and articulate the idea that maintenance practices could, to paraphrase Chantal Mouffe, play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order.³²⁰ Throughout the making of *The Disappearing Garden* project, I aimed at testing how cleaners performing daily cleaning protocols play out as aesthetic agents for the symbolic construction and maintenance of the privately owned Granary Square. And how their agency could be momentarily tweaked into more visible and playful forms of practice.

Since I was a child I have seen women washing clothes in the Cali River, which flows through my home city, passing by the relatively affluent Barrio Santa Teresita where my grandma used to live and where my school was located. **FIG. B02.** For many years I walked, played or drove up and down the street parallel to the river, daily. Often, women from adjacent, though less affluent, barrios would be submerged up to the knees in the river, scrubbing clothes against the river stones, the water bubbling as they washed away with the popular blue bar soap *El Rey* – The King. Their presence was a constant reminder of social inequality and class struggle. The image of the river banks momentarily covered with their clothes airing on the grass is equivalent to an (anti-) aesthetic agent disruptive to the otherwise slick and well maintained Barrio Santa Teresita.

³¹⁹ In the tradition of performance art, Maintenance Art, defined by Mierle Laederman Ukeles when she first used the term in her iconic *Maintenance Art Manifesto* (1969) occupies an important though still overlooked place. I will elaborate on my reference to Ukeles' work later in this chapter.

³²⁰ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (Verso, 2013). Chantal Mouffe argues that "artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in its challenging, and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension". Kindle Edition, p. 91.

I left Cali soon after I finished secondary school. The day after I returned to stay, seventeen years later, artist Oscar Muñoz was inaugurating his piece *El Puente* (The Bridge, 2004), a series of projections from Puente Ortiz onto the surface of the Cali River, showing photographs of passers-by taken during the 1960s and 70s by the then popular street photographers, or *fotocineros* as they were known locally.³²¹

For four unusual evening hours, bridge and river hosted Muñoz's art, the bodies of anonymous people becoming much bigger than usual when projected on the river surface, then 'washed out' by the water flow at ten seconds intervals. The same year, Muñoz made his work *Re-Trato* (a play on words in Spanish meaning both trying again *and* portrait), where he films his hand drawing a self-portrait on a hot concrete tile using water as a medium, or 'paint', his face constantly disappearing through evaporation, thus forcing him to continuously re-trace the drawing. As the video focuses on the act of drawing it does not give any clue about location. When I see it, I imagine Muñoz in the Cali River, dipping his small brush in the water while trying to complete the drawing of his face on a river stone hard hit by the sun and by the wet clothes washed by washerwomen who had been labouring there years before him. In my mind, the river is the location for both of Muñoz's works; the place where the artist and washerwomen and anonymous citizens of Cali come together and work with the water, where they are projected, where they draw themselves or wash their clothes.

In 2015 I started PhD research at Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design in London. The school's library is located in the Granary Building, where room A102 has been assigned as the PhD office. The room has a window overlooking Granary Square, the flagship public space within the King's Cross Redevelopment Project. **FIG. B03.** The square has four water fountain bays, each with 270 automated water jets. These are on most of the time, taking different forms and rhythms and heights, and providing the square with its distinctive visual

³²¹ These were ambulant street photographers who made their living making individual or family portraits on the Ortiz Bridge and other public spaces, operating box or folding cameras. In *El Puente*, Muñoz projects "photographs of anonymous people taken by anonymous photographers", as Jose Roca explains in his text *Protografías* (Protographs), where he describes these photographs as "hopeful shots into the social void, the photographs of the *fotocineros* are the popular reverse of the affluent classes' photographic studio". In *Oscar Muñoz, Protografías: Exposición Retrospectiva, Museo de Arte del Banco de la República* (Banco de la República, 2011), p. 17.

identity and soundtrack. FIGS. B04–B05. Children, artists and cleaners collide in and around water on the square daily, without necessarily interacting with each other. FIG. B06.

Perhaps as a habit unconsciously carried through from my childhood visions of washerwomen working in the Cali River, I found myself spending a considerable amount of time observing cleaners at work on Granary Square from room A102. What I have come to see is a group of uniformed men inadvertently re-enacting the choices of the architect, the developer, the operations manager; a sight informed by my study of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus. With the aim of reviewing architectural professional codes through Bourdieu's insight, I began to craft a picture in which a desire for cleanliness reveals itself as being the supportive framework for last century's architectural project. Day in and day out I see how the modernist architect's defining gesture, his cleaning habitus – passed onto the twenty-first-century urban developer/manager via privatisation – falls heavily on and relies on the maintenance worker's hands. And I see how the constant presence of cleaners on the square, however subdued, acts as a reminder of class struggles and unequal power and the labour structures of public space. FIG. B07. With *The Disappearing Garden* project, I set off to explore what Chantal Mouffe explains as being the political dimension of artistic practices,³²² i.e. the bond between the aesthetic and the political, and what Jill Dolan defines as *Utopia in Performance*.³²³

The concept of habitus was developed by Pierre Bourdieu in his book *The Logic of Practice*, first published in 1980 and translated into English in 1990. In general terms, he describes the habitus as a practice acquired through life-long exposure to specific social and professional structures and contexts. According to Bourdieu, the habitus is produced by, and produces, practices. He explains that the habitus "is the system of structured, [and] structuring dispositions which is constituted in practice, and is always oriented towards practical functions".³²⁴ These practices, embodied in our gestures, our use of language, our skills or what Bourdieu calls a *feel for the game*, become most obvious when professional sports people play at a football match or perform an Olympic gymnastics routine, for

³²² Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, p. 91.

³²³ See subsection *Participation and Collaboration* in Chapter 01, footnote no.75

example. The habitus – our life-long set of practices – structures our dispositions, including aesthetic ones, and makes us who we are: a football player, an architect, a cleaner. In the context of this research, the habitus is explored and characterised as the invisible *modus operandi* embodied within any professional individual and/or group, though mostly focused on architects, a habitus group that has traditionally performed the profession by embodying the persona of a *man of taste*.³²⁵ Through practice, or habitus, spaces are produced, which, in turn, mirror the habitus of their producers, and tend to target specific taste and culture groups similar to that of their architect, sometimes extending to that of their developer.³²⁶

In his manifesto *Towards a New Architecture* of 1927, Le Corbusier, the man born to be modern architecture made flesh, defined the modern architect's grand gesture, his habitus, by uttering a cry: *We have got to wash!*³²⁷ Right there he signalled cleansing, clearing and sanitation as the prime motifs of the modern project on architecture, and of the modern architect's persona, establishing cleaning as modernism's leading aesthetic strategy. FIG. B08. Le Corbusier instigated "us all" to "purge our houses".³²⁸ He declared the homes of businessmen "a conglomeration of useless and disparate objects".³²⁹ He wrote *The Manual of The Dwelling*, claiming it "should be printed and distributed to mothers of families",³³⁰ advocating for a new and clean machine-based aesthetic, and directing people to undergo a radical shift in their own tastes; one that will 'allow' them to finally fully embrace modernity through architecture. He was most belligerent when transferring his thoughts to the urban scale: "We claim", he wrote, "in the name of the steamship, of the

³²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990), p. 52.

³²⁵ On Monday 15th June 1835, the Opening General Meeting of the Members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) was held in London to first establish the institute. In the *Report of the Proceedings, the Address to the Members* by acting secretary, architect T. S. Donaldson, was published. He called for all architects – present and future members of the institute – to "up-hold in ourselves the character of Architects, as men of taste, men of science, men of honour" (1835: 31).

³²⁶ In *Distinction*, Bourdieu explains that "differences between works are predisposed to express differences between authors, partly because in both style and content, they bare the mark of their authors socially constituted dispositions (that is, their social origins, retranslated as a function of the positions in the field of production which these dispositions played a large part in determining)." In Bourdieu, P. (2010) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, p. 11.

Listening to one of the masterminds behind the King's Cross Regeneration Project presenting it to a small group of master students at a lecture in a prestigious university in London. The room was filled with nothing but highly educated, middle-class people. There, I heard Bourdieu's theory sharply confirmed by the presenter, though it is highly unlikely he knows much about Bourdieu: "Knowing what we wanted for King's Cross was simple. To make spaces where we (all present that is), would like to go to."

³²⁷ See FIGS. A12–A15.

³²⁸ Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 20.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 122.

airplane, and of the motor-car, the right to health, logic, daring, harmony, perfection... It is no foolishness to hasten forward a clearing-up of things. We have got to wash!"³³¹ Who would we be? I wonder. We architects?

³³¹ Ibid, p. 19.



WATER TRACES LEFT BY RIDE-ON SWEEPERS. KING'S CROSS ESTATE. FIG. B01.



LAVANDERA EN EL RIO CALI (WASHERWOMAN IN THE CALI RIVER). FIG. B02.



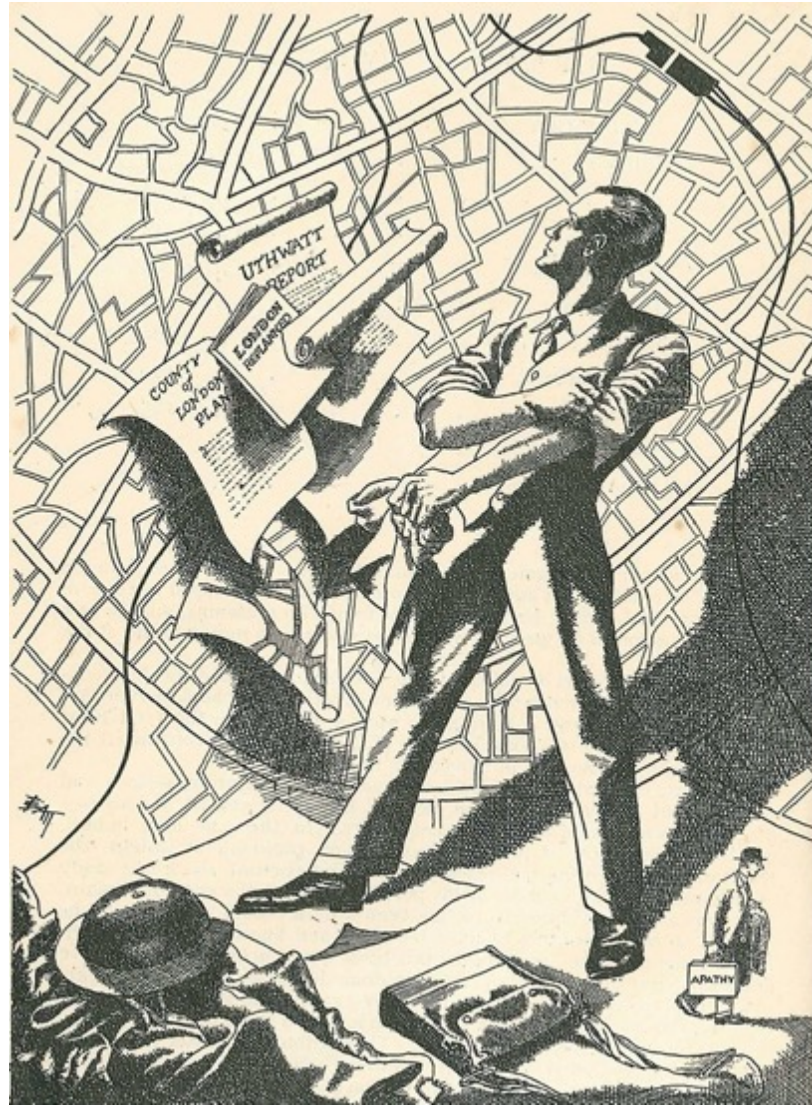
LOOKING OUT OF THE WINDOW FROM ROOM A102. FIG. B03.



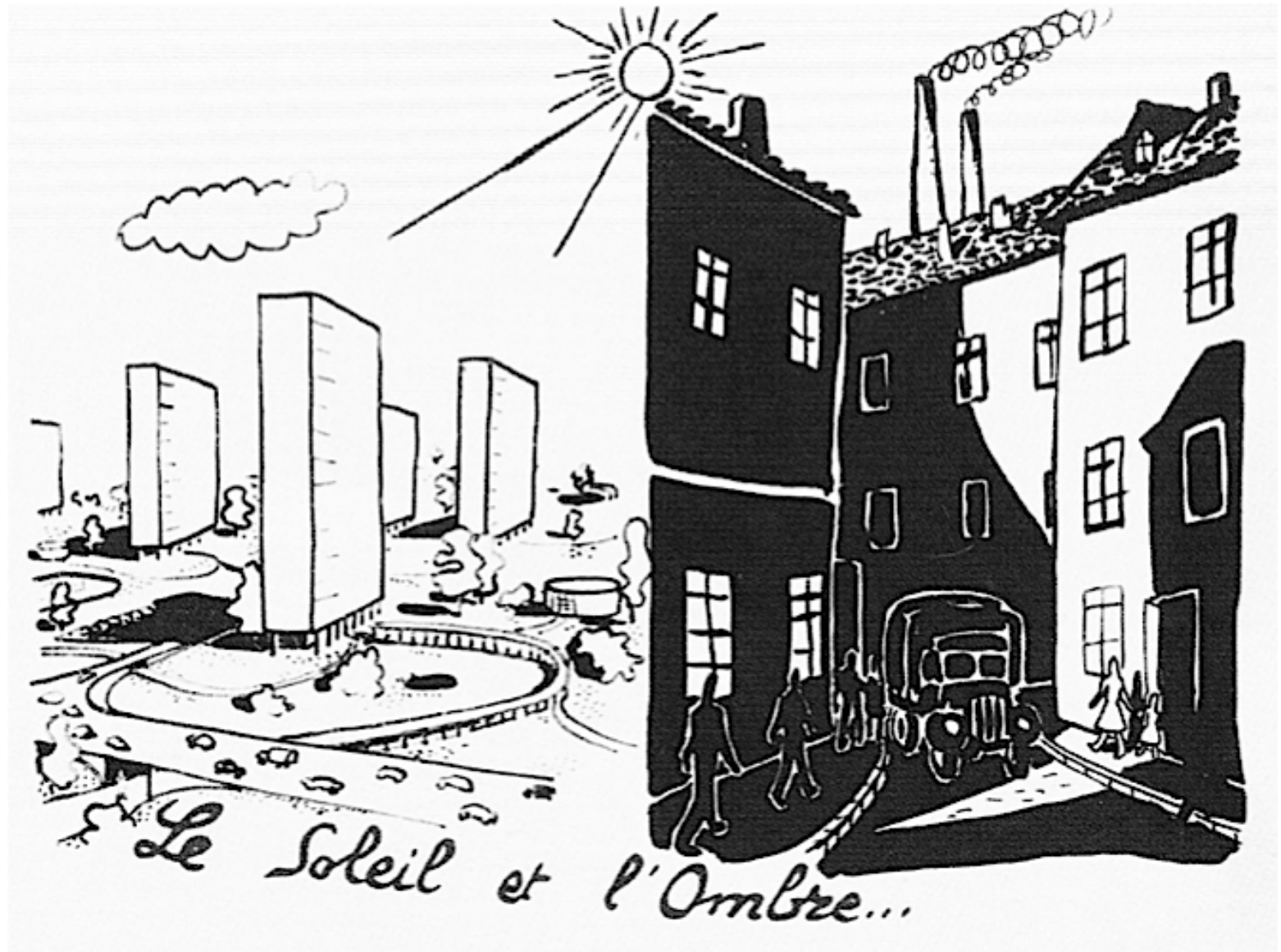
FOUNTAINS ON GRANARY SQUARE. FIGS. B04–B05.



CHILDREN, ARTISTS, CLEANERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN GRANARY SQUARE. FIG. B06.



THE [CLEANING] PLANNER. FIG. B07.



LE SOLEIL ET L'OMBRE, LE CORBUSIER. FIG. B08.

On Granary Square, cleaning, as a leading aesthetic strategy, is performed daily.³³² A group of maintenance workers is trained to deliver tightly controlled maintenance protocols, conveying the idea that “a clean environment is perceived as an environment safe from crime”. This agenda has been documented on the Public Realm Strategy Report, prepared in 2004 for the King’s Cross Central regeneration project.³³³ The report recognises that, “whilst design and durability are key elements of a good public realm, long term success is also highly dependent on its maintenance and management”, and commits to the idea that “world-class new city quarters demand an equally world-class standard of management and regime of maintenance”.³³⁴

One morning after the first rehearsal on site for *The Disappearing Garden*, I sat for a coffee with Robin Bland, the then, and I should also say irreplaceable, operations manager for King’s Cross Estate Environmental Services. What was intended as a meeting to resolve scheduling issues turned out to be a revealing class on the basics of privately run maintenance management. Robin explained that “every day is an event”. He put it in the words of one of his bosses: “Today’s Wow! is tomorrow’s expected. Like Disneyland. You walk in, and it needs to be perfect. Every day.”³³⁵ Robin explained how each cleaner’s performance, especially when operating heavy machinery, needed to achieve maximum efficiency. That is: best results, while consuming less water and less fuel in less time. He described how no piece of litter shall remain on the square for longer than ten minutes, how bins are polished, and how movable furniture needs to be rearranged as many times as necessary to keep it aligned with the design patterns of the square’s stone pavements.

FIG. B09.

Maintenance workers – a habitus group other than that of architects and developers – inhabit the King’s Cross Estate Public Realm for hours longer than any other dwellers, caring with dedication to maintain its clean looks, its carefully crafted clean aesthetic. In the words of Le Corbusier, they have got to wash! A lot. Their practice however, is not visualised as a

³³² This idea can be transferred to buildings, homes and even public spaces generally, however, it is not performed in the same terms as it is in this specific location, as will be explained later.

³³³ EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, GPA, ADC, ‘Public Realm Strategy Report’, p. 72.

³³⁴ Ibid, p. 76.

³³⁵ Bland, R. In conversation with Adriana Cobo, 10 January 2018.

daily contribution to the cultural capital of the estate, but is devised, controlled and managed as a service. In a series of conversations I had with maintenance workers from King's Cross Environmental Services, Benjamin Gonzales, one of the project's collaborators, explained how they are trained. Benjamin's first language is Spanish, so he spoke a mixture of Spanish and English. When he speaks English, propositions such as *that*, *this*, or *it*, can stand for central issues such as *work* or *life*. I believe I have all the clues necessary to interpret Benjamin's English correctly: we are both Colombian, both from Cali, from the Bellavista neighbourhood. In our interview, he explained that usually "the person who trains you says: Ok. Now you got to do things like this, not like that. Only, like this" (his voice sadly dropping as he uttered this last sentence). He went on with his thoughts: "Yes, I know there is health and safety, and it is important. But, when you have to go on your everyday routines 'like that', only 'like that'... It... It is... Boring. Very boring."³³⁶ It was early days in the project when I interviewed Benjamin. My aim, then, was relatively clear: to work out a series of water drawings crafted for Granary Square in collaboration with the King's Cross Estate cleaning staff.³³⁷ I could not envision that Benjamin was going to appropriate the project as a form of self-practice. The idea of drawing-while-cleaning played out in his mind as an alternative way of working, which could be, well, fun?

One morning at 6:00 am, at the start of his daily shift, Benjamin was cleaning The Crossing with a Combi 400 Ride-on Sweeper. The space is a 'public' passage connecting Stable Street with the West Handyside Canopy. It is roughly as long as Granary Square. He set off to create an image of a spider, using the Combi 400 as his drawing tool, covering the whole of the floor's surface with the water traces it leaves behind. **FIG. B10.** When he finished, he took a picture of his drawing with his mobile phone. A week later, I held a drawing workshop with the project's collaborators. Our task was to draw together, as architects do, on tables, with pens, pencils and markers, scales and precise measurements,

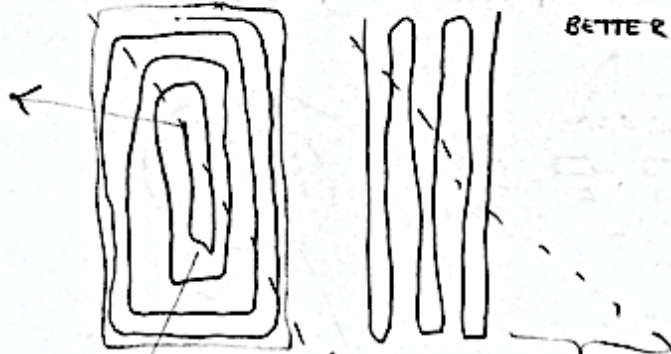
³³⁶ Gonzales, B. Interview by Adriana Cobo, 03 November 2017. According to varied sources, the number of Latin American migrants living in London has risen fourfold since 2008, and many of them work as commercial or domestic cleaners. As Miriam, an Ecuadorian migrant said to Marl Lobel reporting for BBC News, "London without Latin Americans will be filthy". Their contribution, however, not only lacking recognition, but in many instances delving into exploitation. Mark Lobel, 'London's Latin American Population Rises Fourfold', *BBC News*, 19 May 2011. Also see, amongst others: Amandas Ong, 'The Women and Men Who Clean London at Night', *Al Jazeera*, 7 May 2017. And Anoosh Chakelian, 'Inside London's Twilight World of Foreign Cleaners', *New Stateman*, 19 March 2015.

to decide what to draw for our first water-drawing performance, and to become familiar with drawings of Granary Square and its size in relation to what we would water draw. **FIGS. B11–B13 / FIGS. B14–B17.** Halfway through the workshop, Benjamin interrupted us and said quietly but proudly, “Adriana, I made this for you, and for everyone”. He then handed his mobile phone to me, the picture of the giant spider on the screen. He had cleaned The Crossing his way, clearly drifting away from the efficient protocols. He had, that is, for some minutes, gone off his controlled cleaning habitus, and he was happy. Staring at that phone, I tried to digest the moment. Benjamin, thank you. I understood that carrying on with the drawing workshop was now irrelevant. I decided to move on to stage Benjamin’s spider collectively on Granary Square. After some days rehearsing with the whole group, he requested that from then on we called him Pablo. As in Pablo Picasso. **FIG. B18.**

³³⁷ Water drawings are drawings made using water as the medium, or paint. Colombian artist Oscar Munoz has made water his main medium. For a comprehensive retrospective of his work see *Oscar Munoz, Protografias*.

cleaning:
most efficient

- 1 go is enough
STRAIGHT LINES
- NO GOING OVER (takes
1 pass over more time
to clear)



last time difficult +
OK. on G.S. because

"everyday on event" it no access from
other sides

pedestrians
can use
the
dry area.

mucky
shoes
you only would need to
re-do 1/2 or 1/4
of it.

MAINTENANCE PROTOCOL EXPLAINED BY ROBIN BLAND, OPERATIONS MANAGER KCES. FIG. B09.



BENJAMIN'S SPIDER WATER DRAWING IN THE CROSSING. FIG. B10.



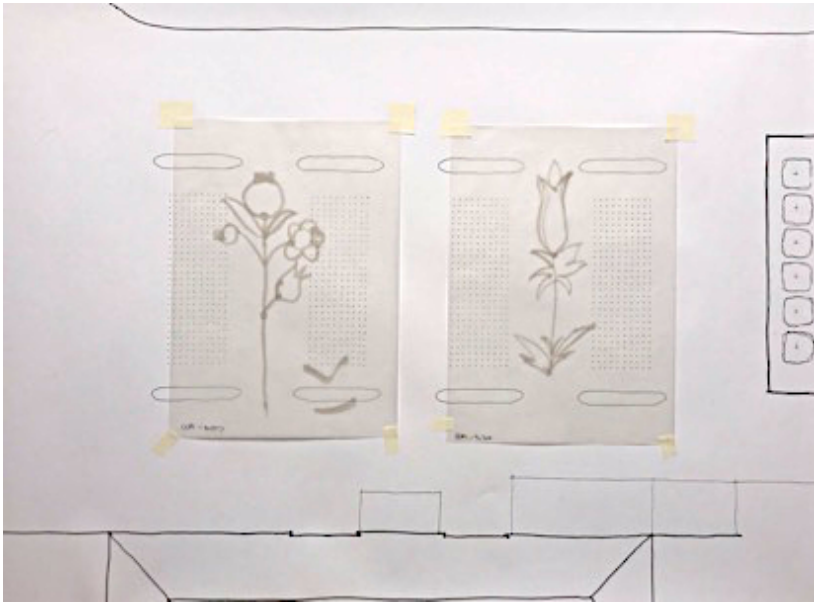
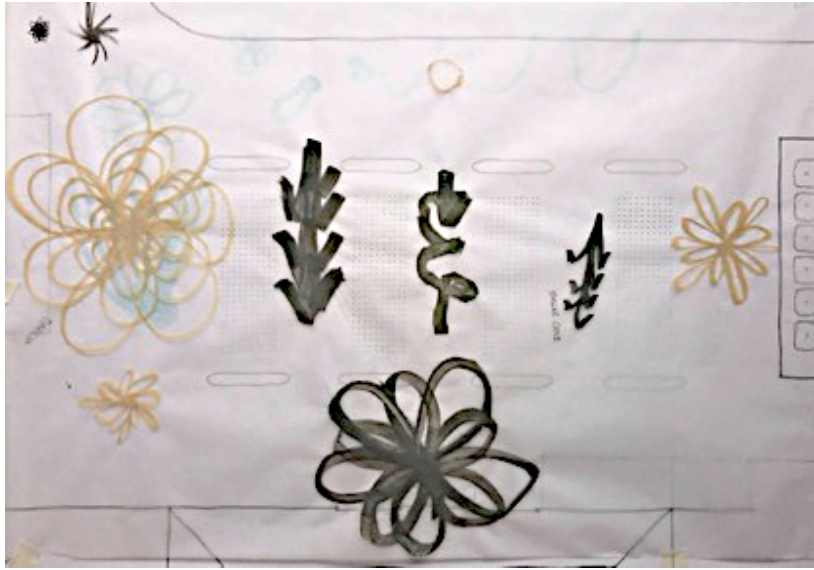
DRAWING WORKSHOP WITH COLLABORATORS. FIGS. B11–B13. CSM 29 January 2018.



DRAWING WORKSHOP WITH COLLABORATORS. FIG. B12.



DRAWING WORKSHOP WITH COLLABORATORS. FIG. B13.



DRAWINGS BY COLLABORATORS. FIGS. B14-B17.



BENJAMIN GONZALES HANDS OVER HIS MOBILE PHONE, SHOWING A PHOTO OF HIS ORIGINAL SPIDER DRAWING. FIG. B18.

Maintenance practices, especially cleaning, need to deliver daily. In other words, they are performed on site every day. They constitute a set of practices different from that required to deliver architecture, which traditionally operates on a 'by project' cycle, drawing to a close every time a design and/or finished building is handed over.³³⁸ However, alternative practices to traditional architecture have reviewed classic dichotomies between form and function, or user and designer, opening up options to continue practising after a project, building or public space has been delivered. In an interplay between performance and performativity, for example, Alex Schweder suggests that "architecture is not fixed but performed". He affirms that "through the overlap of performance and architecture, subjects are constructed that create, occupy, are impacted by, and modify their environments in a continuing process".³³⁹ Schweder's practice, which he calls Performance Architecture, explores the materiality of proposed or existing structures, making explicit the many ways in which behaviour and spatial changes affect each other, and how transformations occur according to his designs. His interventions have been usually sited within museums and galleries, as well as within other, more private interior spaces such as homes.

Schweder's approach to architecture shifts the focus of practice towards another field, that of performance. In doing so, it challenges traditional architectural habitus. Nevertheless, the practice maintains a strong link with architectural tradition, as it builds up from the fact that "performance already exists in architecture, but it is not named as such...architects use the term 'program' to describe the act of organising the relationships of actions within space".³⁴⁰ Schweder's performance architecture suggests siting research-practice here within public space, to test how performance could further the agency of architecture as public practice.³⁴¹ Through critical performance practice for contemporary public space, spatial renovations would be aimed at translating existing programs into renewed protocols. The practice could, in turn, momentarily alter symbolic relationships of actions from within sites of public representation. In the case of this research, the practice of critical

³³⁸ See Annex 5: Mierle Laederman Ukeles *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969). See also Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975).

³³⁹ Alex Schweder, *Performance Architecture*. In Rochus Urban Hinkel, ed., *Urban Interior: Informal Explorations, Interventions and Occupations* (Spurbuchverlag, 2011), pp. 132–133.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁴¹ See subsection *Performance Practice* in Chapter 01.

performance for public space is political in as much as it is constituted against an architectural tradition focused on the making of form, although it can only unfold by maintaining this antagonism.³⁴² The aim of this practice would be to foster critical engagement with current dominant agendas of public space, where issues such as the invisibility of maintenance workers, hand in hand with the targeting of specific and often exclusive publics through architectural design and curated cultural programs, sustain the aesthetic and programmatic coding of public spaces in London and beyond.

Ultimately, critical performance practice could challenge form-based narratives of taste in architecture by constructing temporal aesthetic accounts of public spaces based on program and action. The practice will address the traditional interdependence between form and function in architecture, by exploring, in the public realm, what Schweder refers to as “the potential of working with behaviour as an aesthetic end in and of itself”.³⁴³ In other words, by contributing towards a renovated, expanded, or what could be called utopian, architectural habitus.³⁴⁴

In *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan explains:

[P]ublicly practicing performance makes it a tool of both expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and hope. Performance is “an activity in which we engage,” rather than “a thing or a collection of things.” Removing performance from contemplative Kantian aesthetics into the material realm of activity makes it accessible to a larger public, to people who can use it for leisure, for entertainment, or for intervening in the conduct of their lives.³⁴⁵

Staging repetitive performances where members of the maintenance staff were the actors provided a temporary platform on which to work with the individual experiences and

³⁴² Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic approach to politics informs the design of research-practice. She argues that the formation of political identities is impossible in “a society from which antagonism can be eliminated”, and that “every identity is relational”, so the political is “always dealing with the formation of ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’”. Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, pp. 4–5. See **FIG. A16** in Story 01.

³⁴³ Schweder, in Rochus Urban Hinkel, *Urban Interior*, p. 131.

³⁴⁴ The aesthetics of behaviour have been explored in film, with iconic examples, such as Tati’s *Mon Oncle* (1958). Although eloquently portraying the difficult architectural conundrum between form and function, this kind of work remains, however, at the margins of the architectural field, and ultimately has little impact on narratives of taste for the profession, or on switching focus from form to program within the profession.

insights of those involved daily with maintaining public space protocols on the ground. Our work slowly constituted a body of material with the potential to be translated into as yet unheard stories of taste; stories that could critically render the controlled cleaning/aesthetic habitus of the architect anew. That is, the cleaning habitus of the architect made visible from a practice other than formal design. Perhaps when Benjamin Gonzales appropriated the strategy of drawing while cleaning for 'his leisure, for entertainment and for intervening in the conduct of his life', he experienced some joy at the possibility of disrupting his given cleaning instructions, and maybe some hope about being acknowledged for doing just that. I fancy the idea that perhaps the sum of these kinds of individual experiences allows for a non-fixed kind of representation, which is nevertheless already embodied by Benjamin and other collaborators, and has been made temporarily public through performance. These moments of hope, constructed through performing in public space, constitute a 'utopian' practice, what Dolan describes as moments "of both expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and hope". For all of us involved in delivering the project, performances opened possibilities not only for re-coding regulated cleaning in the King's Cross Estate but also, crucially, for experiencing some joy and hope about working together, and publicly putting our skills at work in ways we had not thought of or practiced before. In more academic terms, it is about the possibility of publicly practising another, perhaps utopian, architectural habitus. **FIG. B19.**

In *Theatre and the City*, Jen Harvie refers to the agency of performance for public space for disrupting established habitus. She explains that impromptu events "demonstrated that by performing in extraordinary ways it is possible to disrupt the naturalised meanings and behaviors of public space and 'ordinary' social life".³⁴⁶ What she calls 'naturalised behaviors' can be connected almost directly with what we have been referring to here as habitus, what Bourdieu eloquently describes as "the social made flesh".³⁴⁷

I finally met the cleaners who might be willing to collaborate for *The Disappearing Garden* in a small container cabin – fit for purpose with a dark grey carpet and a rectangular table –

³⁴⁵ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 91.

³⁴⁶ Jen Harvie, *Theatre and the City* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 55.

on the ground floor of the Environmental Services offices. All KCES staff sat on one side of the table, from left to right: Cem Izkender, Robin Bland, Benjamin Gonzales and Halil Ibrahim. I sat by myself on the side opposite. **FIG. B20.** Along with photographs of the traces that cleaning machines leave behind across the estate, which I had been taking for a while, I spread over the table images of the work of Oscar Muñoz drawing with water, Michael Heizer drawing perfect circles over sand with his motorcycle, and Mierle Laederman Ukeles choreographing performances with machines operated for maintenance or construction labour.³⁴⁸ We talked about these works, which everyone seemed to enjoy, and I explained that whenever I saw them cleaning from room A102 I thought they were actually drawing, forming compelling patterns with water traces left behind in their cleaning paths. “I have never thought about my work like that”, said Halil, “I am in”. This was an early glimpse at the possibility to disrupt some naturalised behaviors, regulated by maintenance regimes in King’s Cross and performed by the cleaners, while working this project out. I expressed my concerns about achieving a readable image at the scale of Granary Square with an acceptable degree of precision with the machines available. But Halil seemed confident. “Let’s put it to the test and see if it works... We are here to serve”, he said. Hopefully, Halil, I am too.

We started rehearsals the following week, with all staff present in the meeting. CSM students from the MA Architecture program, Matt Brown, Daniel Wilkins, Jonathan Shmulevitch and Amy O’Shaughnessy, joined the project as architects, collaborating on site drawings and measurements, and, as we performed trial drawings, guiding the paths of movement the cleaning machines had to follow. Weather allowing, we rehearsed in assigned slots either Monday or Tuesday mornings, after nine o’clock. **FIGS. B21–B36.** Rain was the equivalent of an eraser, it made our work invisible, so it was pointless to draw with water over wet floors, or with the threat of imminent rain, which would make drawings disappear before we could observe, record, measure and analyse them. From November 2017 to April 2018 we met six times, and put together a total of fifty-eight hours of work, with an average of twelve hours worked per participant. I negotiated rehearsal time to be

³⁴⁷ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 57.

part of the participants' working day, with corresponding wages acknowledged as normal cleaning hours because, from the point of view of the project, and in spite of the fact that we did not follow established protocols, we were still cleaning while we were rehearsing. When we agreed on the terms of the project, KCES and Environmental Services seemed to share my view: work would not be done unpaid nor outside the established number of hours per week in each worker's contract. Therefore, in contractual terms, cleaning and drawing – the everyday and art that is – became equivalent within the framework of the project.

In line with Jen Harvie's account of performances staged in public as "intended to validate everyday actions, giving them meanings by blurring art and life",³⁴⁹ the core strategy for *The Disappearing Garden* aimed at merging everyday maintenance practices and art into one single choreography. **FIGS. B37–B38.** Daily practices and their material outcomes, however, along with everyday practitioners and their set of skills – their habitus – impact built form and space usually without representation. My research-practice so far suggests the following: if after reflecting on Bourdieu's theory of the habitus we embrace the idea that the bodies of architects and developers – with their constituting professional habitus – represent the institution of architecture as much as buildings and building societies do, then the 'aesthetics of behaviour' – with the constituting habitus of everyday practitioners – could be considered an alternative base for constructing and communicating architectural taste. Furthermore, such aesthetics of behaviour would inevitably need to acquire institutionalised form in the long term.³⁵⁰ This is not only because critical performance practice for public space could further its agency through narratives of taste, but also because stories about the habitus of others than architects – their taste untold – could then share platforms within the institutions of architecture, with already well-known, persistently told ones.

³⁴⁸ See the art works: *Re-Trato* (2003) and *Proyecto para un memorial* (2005) by Oscar Muñoz; *Circular Planar Displacement* (1970) by Michael Heizer, and *Garbage Truck Dance* (1985) by Mierle Laederman Ukeles.

³⁴⁹ Jen Harvie, *Theatre and the City*, p. 55.

³⁵⁰ As Bourdieu explains in *The Logic of Practice* "the habitus is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body's readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the

However, early in the process of doing research-practice, it became clear that it would be pointless to aim to overturn the order of power on the chosen site specifically, and more generally in architecture. Instead, it has become increasingly relevant to acknowledge that, in the words of Chantal Mouffe, “society is permeated by contingency and any order is of an hegemonic nature, i.e. it is always the expression of power relations. In the field of politics, this means that the search for a consensus without exclusion and the hope for a perfectly reconciled and harmonic society have to be abandoned”.³⁵¹ In her view, “cultural and artistic practices can play a critical role by fostering agonistic public spaces where counter hegemonic struggles could be launched against neo-liberal hegemony”.³⁵² Specifically for this project, the idea of agonistic public spaces implies questioning whether performance practice furthers symbolisms of difference or of consensus, between groups at opposite ends of power structures, not only on site, but more so within architecture itself. And how practising joy, which I am certain all collaborators did whenever we worked together, can be articulated as a form of resistance against hegemonic narratives in its own right.³⁵³

Negotiating *The Disappearing Garden* project took one year and four months and involved various amendments to the original brief, each presented and discussed, to acquire full authorisation, through a cycle of meetings and emails between myself and five key instances of power, each representing one or more stakeholders within the site’s administrative and managerial structure: External Relations-Central Saint Martins; Innovation and Businesses-Central Saint Martins; King’s Cross Estate Services Events Management-KCES; Events and Enlivenment Management-Argent LLP; and Environmental Services-KCES. **FIG. B39.** Authorisation however, ultimately depended on Argent’s approval, which was finally granted after sixteen long months of steady insistence. Argent’s thumbs up was based on the acknowledgment of two key facts. First, the project looked a compelling idea

social, that the king, the banker, or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the church made flesh”. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 56–57.

³⁵¹ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Kindle Ed, loc. 44.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, loc. 117.

³⁵³ This research’s focus is not a critique of neo-liberal approaches for urban redevelopment. Rather, research-practice explores the negotiation of sited performance interventions, at the margins of corporate, heavily curated cultural events for POPS. This, as a strategy – at small scale, and of temporary nature – for questioning dominant structures and representational imbalances sustained by such an approach to the design and maintenance of contemporary public space.

on paper. Second, it was clear that its delivery would enhance public acknowledgment of Argent as a progressive and inclusive developer and manager. On Argent's website there is only one video featuring the work of the red caps (as maintenance and security wards are known locally), so a collaboration between 'their' cleaners and artists from CSM would take Argent's recognition of their work up a level.³⁵⁴ At the base of the negotiation process was the fact that the project needed to deliver tangible gains for all involved, including myself as the project's proponent. In my view, Argent's interests did not affect the project's critical content, nor its potential agency. Looking at it from diverse and even opposing sides, we went ahead with a project that would inevitably underline unequal representation and hegemonic power structures on site.

A meeting with Maxine Shannon, Project Manager for Argent's Events and Enlivenment, along with David Tod, Events Manager for KCES, was crucial for getting to the final stages of full authorisation. It was, at last, a face-to-face meeting to explain the project myself and answer questions directly.³⁵⁵ In fifteen minutes I described the main idea about making water drawings with the cleaning staff, talked Maxine through the work of Muñoz and Ukeles, and expressed my two non-negotiable conditions: all hours worked by the cleaners on the project should be part of their workday and paid accordingly, and participants should join voluntarily, not by direct order from the head of staff or other. When I finished my presentation, and once Maxine had established that Argent would have access to photographic and video records of the project, she said "this is an easy yes from us". **FIGS. B40–B41.**

³⁵⁴ Security and cleaning services, including recycling, are managed by King's Cross Estate Services (KCES), which, in turn, subcontracts specialized companies like the Incentive FM group to deliver security and maintenance in public areas and buildings.

³⁵⁵ I was determined to get a face-to-face meeting, especially after my experience on the previous project, where decisions about proposed performances were taken by what seemed (at the time) 'an abstract entity called Argent'. Additionally, decisions were communicated by email, through External Relations, CSM, so there was no possibility for direct contact with Events Management.



THE DISAPPEARING GARDEN. DRAWING AND EVAPORATION SEQUENCE. FIG. B19.



FIRST MEETING WITH MAINTENANCE STAFF. FIG. B20.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B21. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B22. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B23. November 2018.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B24. Cem and Benjamin. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B25. Jon, Adriana, Benjamin, Matthew, Daniel and Halil. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B26. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B27. Matthew. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B28. Halil. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B29. Benjamin. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B30. Halil, Cem, Daniel, Jon, Benjamin and Matthew. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B31. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B32. November 2017.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B33. February 2018.



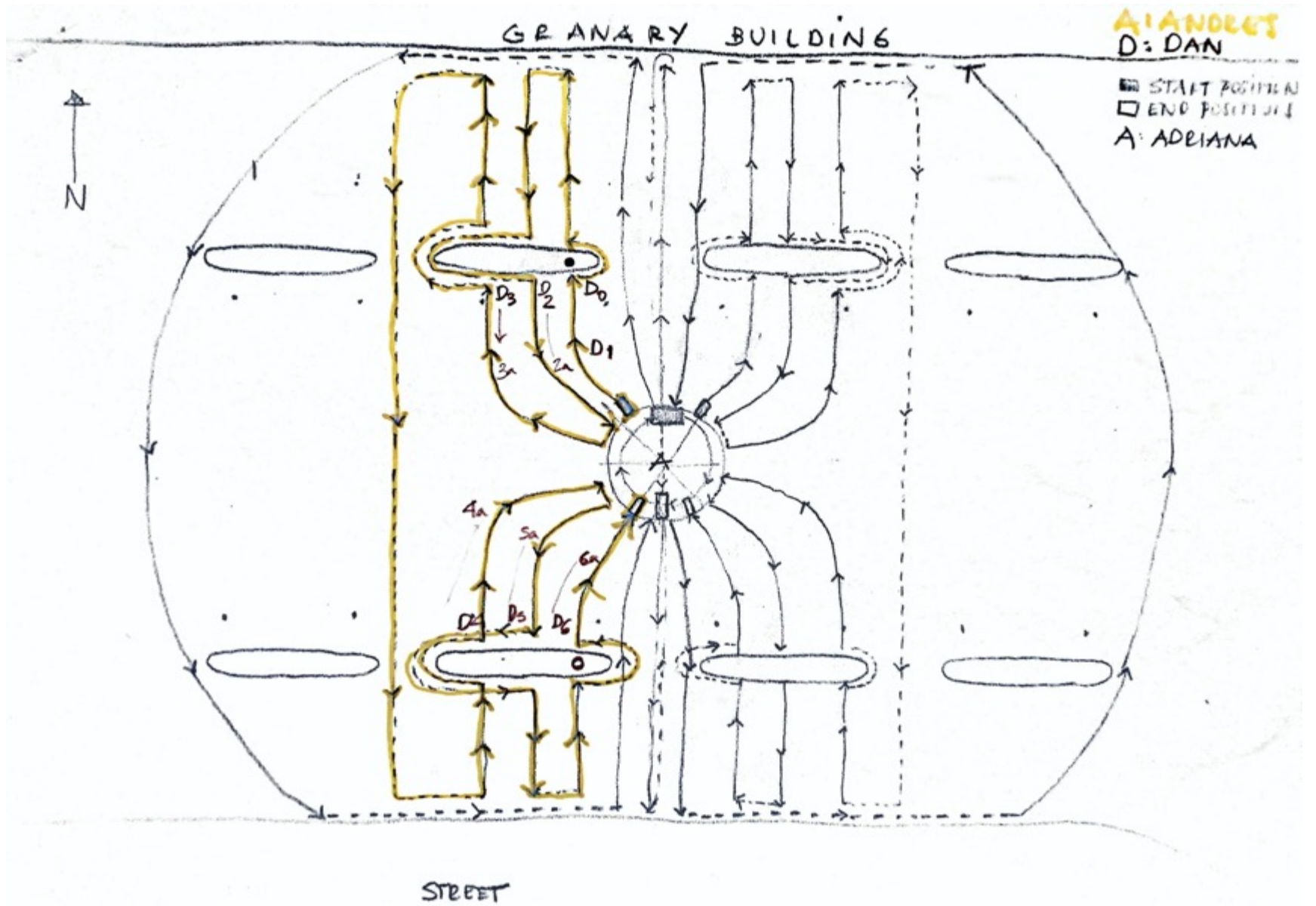
FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B34. February 2018.



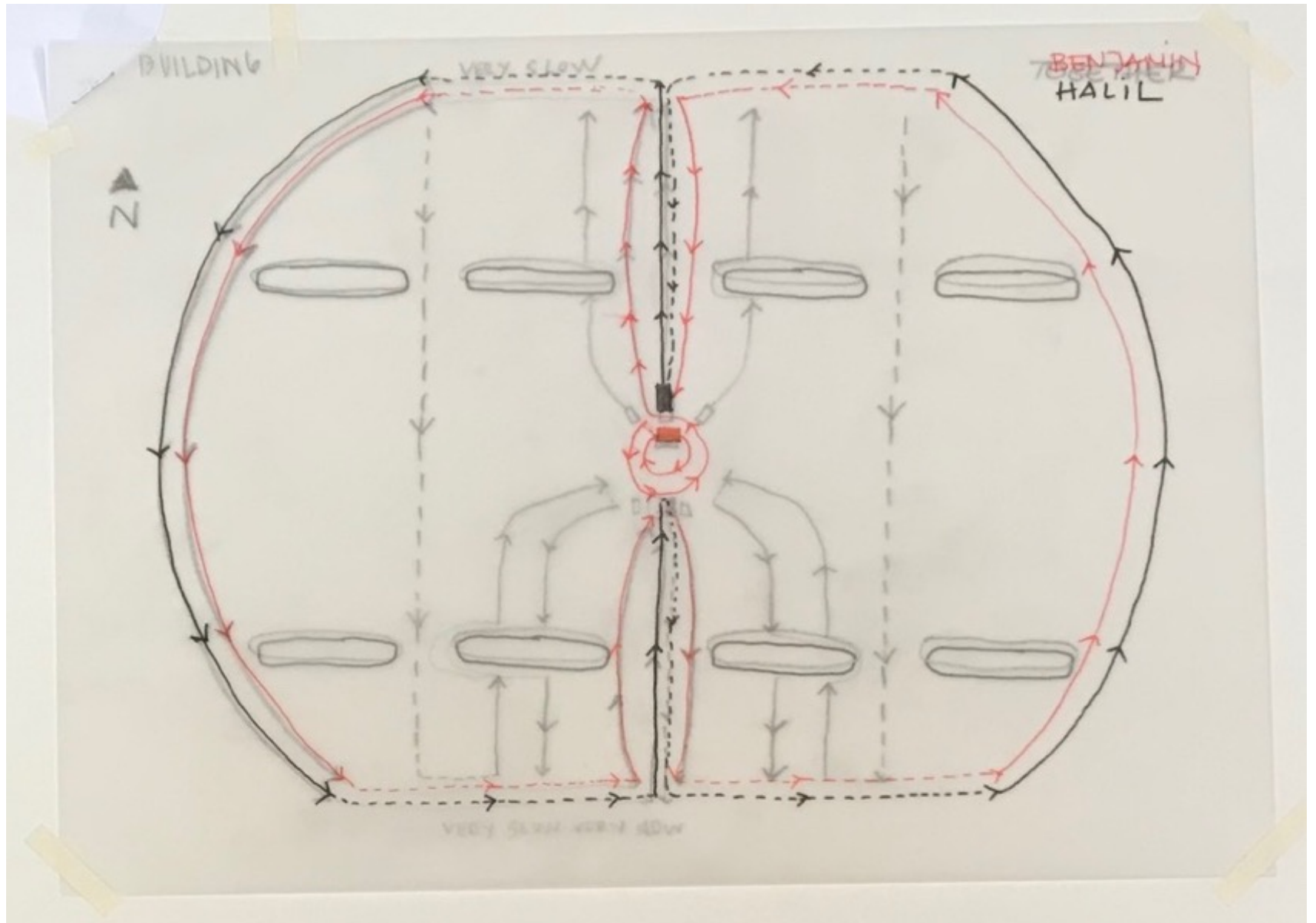
FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B35. February 2018.



FORTNIGHTLY REHEARSALS. FIG. B36. Marcelo and Andres. March 2018.

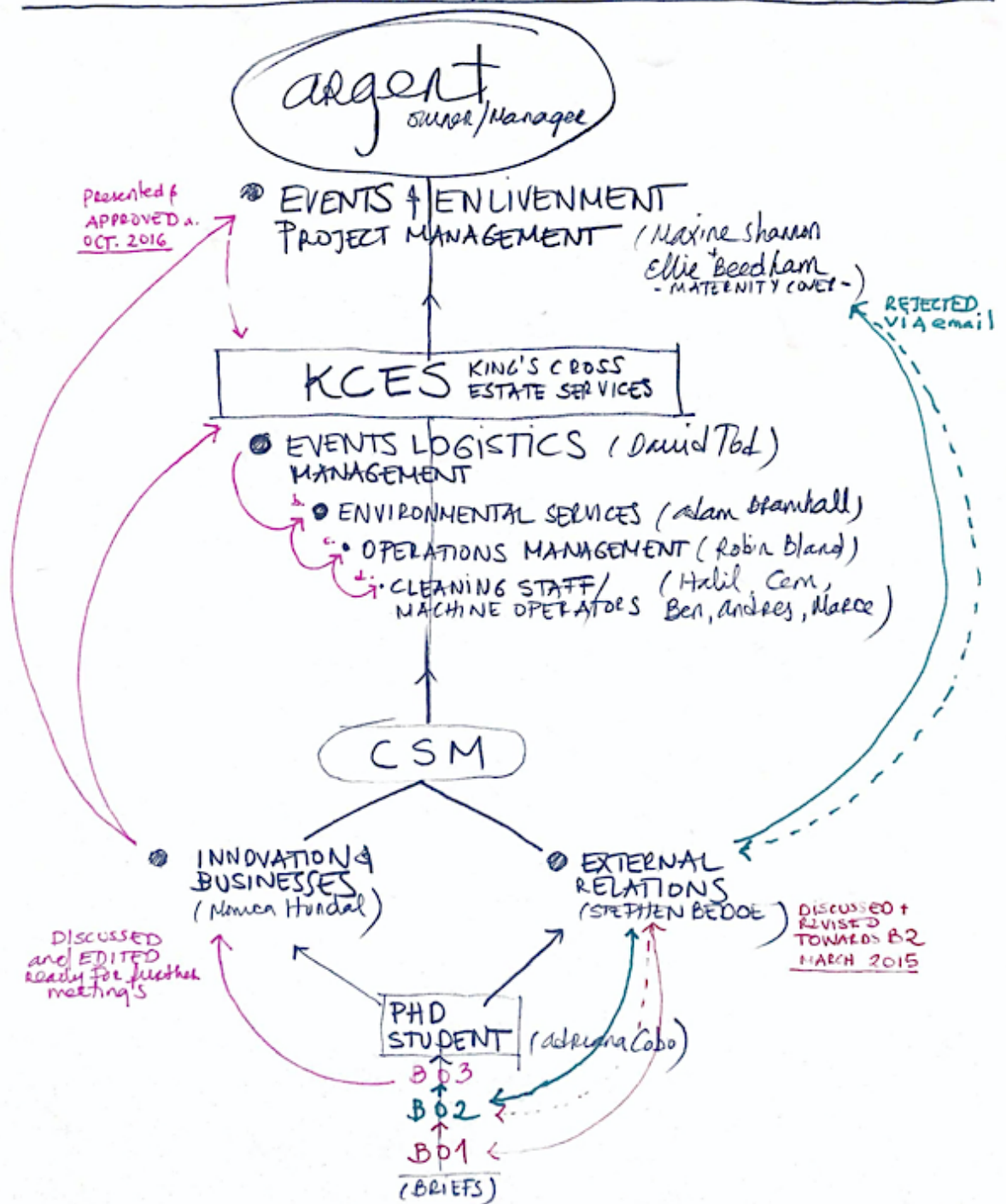


REHEARSAL PROTOCOLS BY PERFORMER. FIG. B37.



REHEARSAL PROTOCOLS BY PERFORMER. FIG. B38.

GRANARY SQ. — CSM
 site administrative and Managerial Structure
 → for project's negotiation ←



NOTE: DIAGRAM AS OF 2016-18 when negotiations took place. STAFF CHANGES ARE FREQUENT & ROTATION COMMON PRACTICE

PROJECT BRIEF'S TRAVEL TRAJECTORY TOWARDS FULL AUTHORIZATION. FIG. B39.



DRAWING BEFORE EVAPORATION / REHEARSAL. FIG. B40. 05 February 2018.



DRAWING BEFORE EVAPORATION / LAST PERFORMANCE. FIG. B41. 09 March 2018.

Video Record for the Disappearing Garden Project

Please copy the following Vimeo Link in your browser to see the video: <https://vimeo.com/501768655>

Password: ACC_10

Story 03: Betty, Dot and the Bird

During the making of the previous project, this third and final was in its initial stages. So far, engagement had been limited to the newly formed communities within the King's Cross redevelopment, so I was looking for a collaboration with a well-established local group from the surrounding area, ideally of comprising senior residents within the locality of St Pancras and Somers Town. As Sophie Handler explains in her research about senior citizens: "still all too often, in the public imagination at least, [they are] marginal to urban life – conceptually and often quite literally less visible".³⁵⁶ Within the new public realm infrastructure in St Pancras and Somers Town, their literal and conceptual invisibility are indeed evident in the everyday, with the King's Cross redevelopment still exuding newness at social, commercial, cultural, architectural and urban levels via its now characteristic blend of 'cutting edge' projects, trendy events and young publics.³⁵⁷

These initial conditions established, from the outset, the project as a more complex endeavour than the previous ones. Although maintenance had been established as a common thread for all interventions, I felt the subject needed to be sidelined, if only initially, to better focus on the potential brought by a new and very different group of collaborators, without external and conceptual impositions. During its initial stages, however, the project's briefs and visualisations were still reliant on post-rationalising previous interventions, and utilising methods characteristic of design practice. Additionally, my own ways of working proved too reliant on all kinds of time frames, set tasks and

³⁵⁶ Sophie Handler, 'Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook' (The University of Manchester Library, 2014), p. 12. See also Age UK - London, 'A London Plan for Older People 2018: Response to Consultation on the Draft New London Plan' (London: Age UK, 2018). Citing evidence to support changing policy on building strong and cohesive communities, the document states "older people have told us that they will not venture out if they feel unsafe, thus being deprived of opportunistic encounters for social interaction that help to alleviate loneliness. It will also undermine the value of spaces created for people if those spaces are not well maintained, as they will be perceived as undesirable places to visit", pp. 18–19. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Age%20UK%20London%20%28576%29.pdf> (accessed 11.07.2020).

Although Granary Square is safe and well maintained (and perceived as such), shade, poor wind comfort and unpleasant sitting provision also characterize it, in my view.

³⁵⁷ Although families, including grandparents, populate Granary Square during warm days, with children playing in the fountains, the space is not made comfortable for senior citizens, nor for those who want to spend longer hours there and cannot find shade or suitable soft surfaces to sit on. As we live longer, age-friendly cities have been prioritized within local governments' agendas, and the need to address it via tailoring urban cultural life to more senior citizens becomes more pressing.

schedules, proven soon enough to be irrelevant devices by my new collaborators' seasoned and wise approaches to time.

A final consideration shaped the initial approach to the new project. While rehearsing for the previous project, we realised the patterns of our water drawing could not be seen from the ground. We were working for publics located in positions literally, conceptually and socially higher than ours.³⁵⁸ The collective engagement experienced while rehearsing to perfect our choreographed drawing fortnightly was substantially different from the experience of spectators, watching the project materialise from above, as a visual event. This distant connection between publics and collaborators was not suitable nor desired for the new project—here, the temporary presence of sidelined communities in Granary Square could potentially allow those groups to test their agency in bringing the more detached and less engaged higher views to briefly collide with those built up from the ground.

Bird's-eye view

On 4th June 2015 we staged the first formally authorised performance on collective laundry for *The Great Unwashed Series*, on Granary Square, from 9:00 to 9:30 am. After washing and wringing-out with choreographed routines, we stretched the 'cleaned' clothes on and around one of the granite square benches, put small stones in the corners of each garment to prevent them from blowing with the wind, and left them airing outside for an hour. Eight months after that performance, while making a drawing of Granary Square in preparation for the next project, I opened Google Maps to double check the number of automated water-jets in the fountain bays on the satellite view. The usual brown and grey palette of London, replicated across the King's Cross Estate, coloured the screen as I zoomed into the area. Next appeared Granary Square, its pedestrians obediently walking through the paths outlined by wet surfaces. Some more clicks, and an odd patch of colour at the top right corner of the image seemed distinctively out of place. Intrigued, I kept zooming in until the yellow pyjamas, green and red sheets and pink towels we had washed and left airing on

³⁵⁸ It is important to note that, as the machines were working in a synchronized fashion and the lines of water were leaving symmetrical patterns across the floor, they often caught the attention of passersby, who would come in small groups and inquire about what we were doing. Inquiries were responded to by the MArch students, who were not operating machines and could therefore stop for conversation.

Granary Square's northeast bench back in June appeared clearly on the screen. The aircraft assigned to capture aerial photographs of St Pancras and Somers Town for Google Maps in 2015 flew over the area during the hour after we performed *The Great Unwashed*. The project was recorded unintentionally but mutedly featured by Google for about two years.

FIGS. C1A–C1B.

Excluding sunny summer days, when it is used in full by children and their families bringing props of all sorts for their playing with water, or by young executives, media savvies or artists having lunch under the sun, Granary Square shows its lonely, grand and stony self, yearning for some cushioning. Some of us frequent users, whose eyes often ache at the severity of its aesthetic, whose bums freeze after five minutes sitting on its granite benches, know this longing all too well.³⁵⁹ The image provided by Google, inadvertently documenting a series of minor coincidental events – the schedule of an aircraft taking aerial photographs overlapping with our performing slot, our oblivious decision to leave clothes airing on the square in spite of health and safety demands – captured a moment of disruption. This moment was, through online media, afforded a continued platform that emphasized the relevance of presence in the square, however subdued and short-lived, and rendered a disappeared event continually anew. Perhaps through making performance projects for Granary Square, displaced and/or alienated users could be given new presence via other, more informal means of endurance than those I knew how to deliver in my capacity as a traditionally trained architect.

The Google image allowed me to fabricate a bridge for ideas of domestic embellishment to travel from the home to the public square, via crochet pieces knitted by hand. My family home in Cali was embellished by the many crochet pieces, large and small, made by my maternal grandmother, who came to lunch with us every Sunday. Often, she would bring along crochet treasures she had knitted. Her small doilies,

³⁵⁹ The inviting nature of some public space furniture, and benches in particular, is not a new issue, with the infamous Camden Bench an extreme example (this is a convoluted design for a concrete bench, shaped so activities such as sleeping, or skate boarding pirouettes are rendered quite unlikely). Wind and lack of shade are off-putting issues in Granary Square. Many of the *Granny Square* project participants expressed they did not mind the rain but found the wind outside difficult. Group visits arranged to see the bird exhibited for the Spotlight exhibition in 2019 had to be cancelled twice due to strong winds. See **FIG. C2**, for an eloquent image illustrating the lack of sufficient shade on the square.

placed under glasses, lamps and ashtrays, along with tablemats and throw blankets, embellished our living, dining and sleeping rooms. I made sure the beautiful bronze bed my architect uncle (who designed our house) gave me for my eighteenth birthday, would always be dressed with one of her creations: an intricate white-cotton crochet quilt, the much-loved piece I readily arranged on top of my bed, completed my making-the-bed morning ritual in style.³⁶⁰

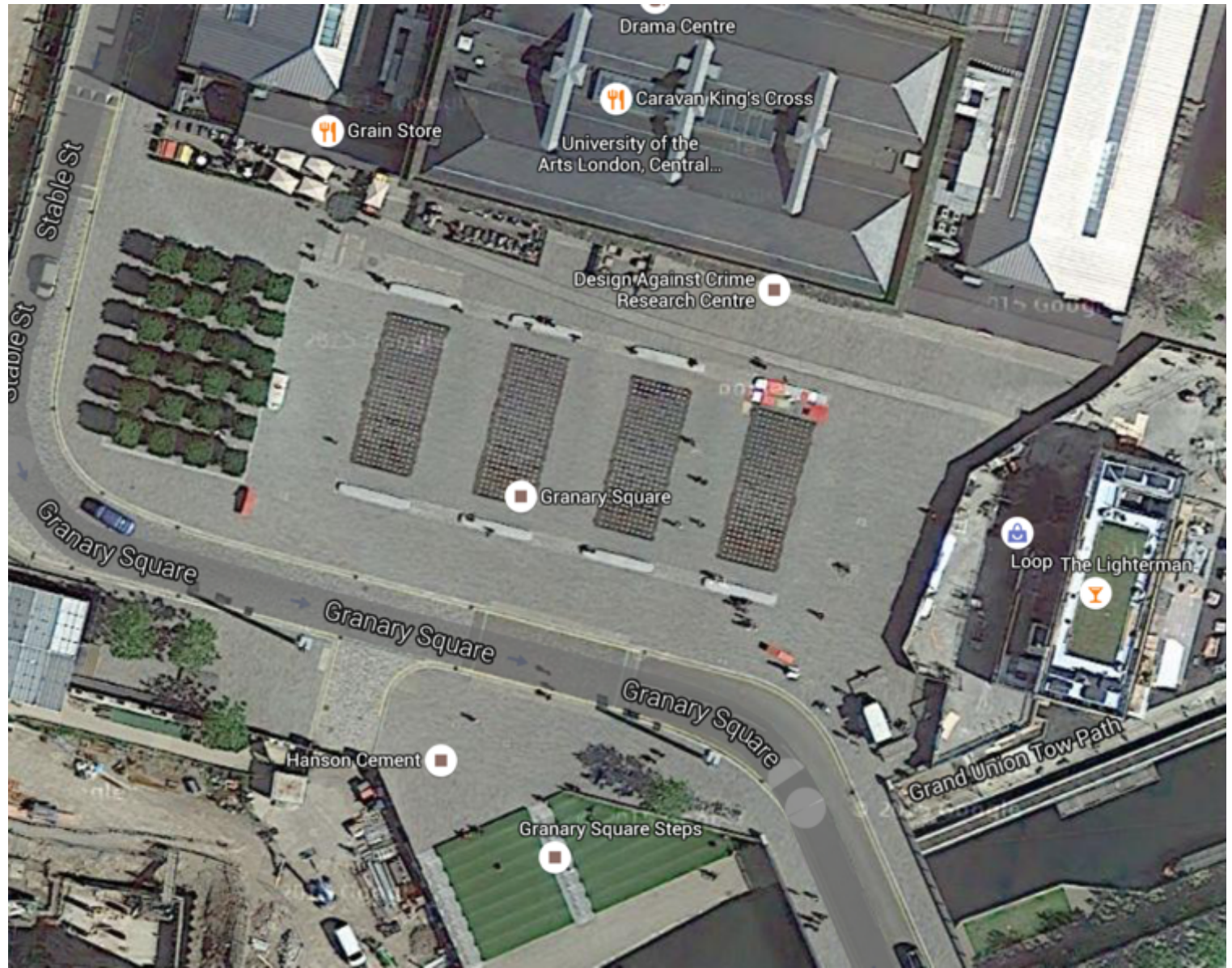
Although unclear as to which specific actions to take next, I saved Google's aerial view of 'our project' in disbelief. Haunted by its ghost, however, I enrolled in a one-day crochet course for beginners, where I was introduced to the fact that crochet could be made with *plarn*, or plastic-bag yarn, an ideal material, I thought, to crochet covers for benches by water fountains, for example. I also learned that the most classic of crochet motifs is called a *granny square*, a sweet and versatile crochet piece usually measuring 5 by 5 centimetres, used to make assemblages of all colours, sizes and forms.³⁶¹ After this course, the new project started to take shape. It got a name, and its first blurb was drafted:

The Granny Square Project consists of making crochet covers tailored to the eight granite benches on Granary Square, in collaboration with senior female residents from Saint Pancras & Somers Town. Using Granny Squares made out of plarn, or plastic bag yarn, we will knit and assemble large crochet pieces using diverse patterns negotiated collectively.³⁶²

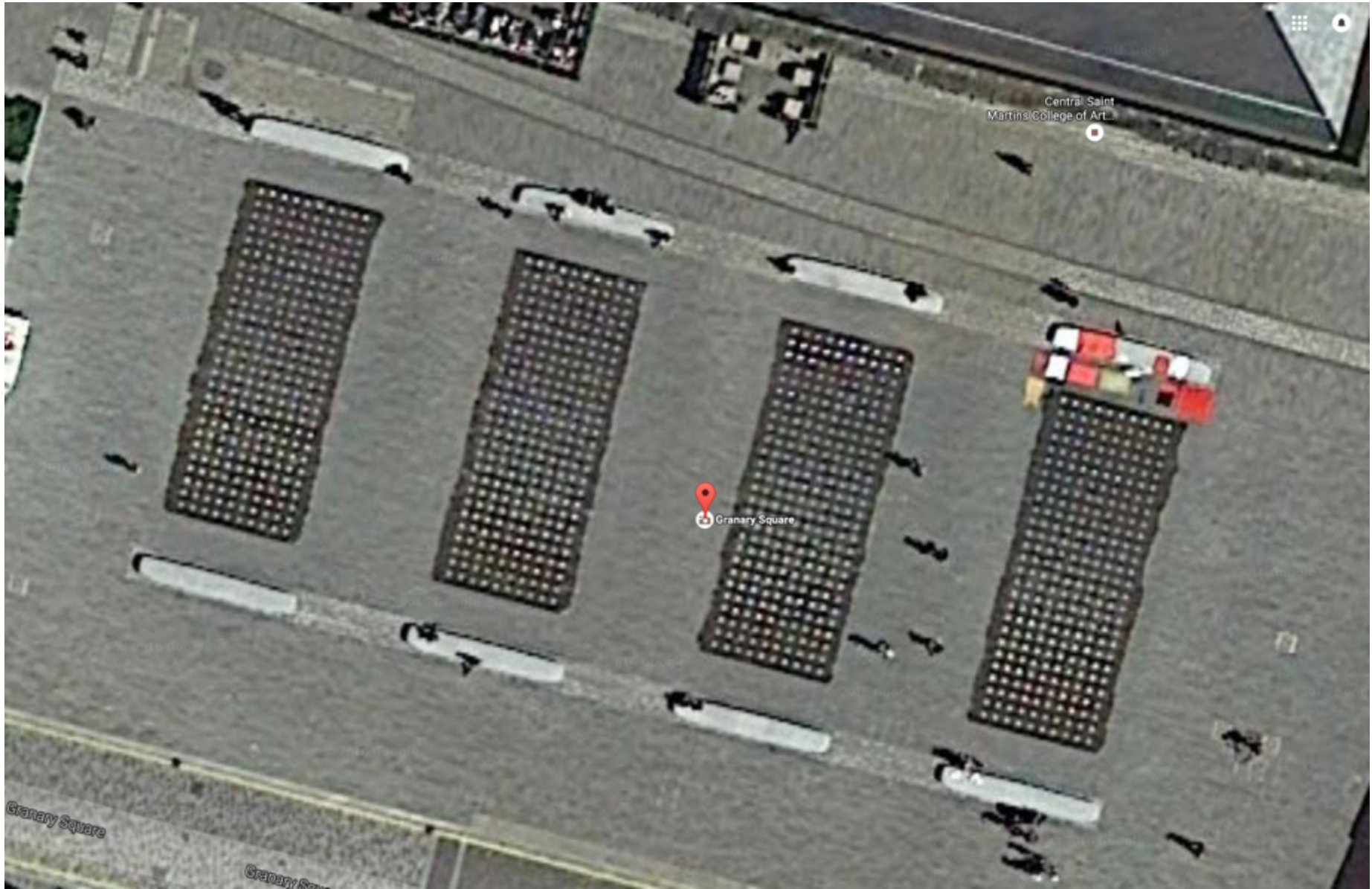
³⁶⁰ This is an uncanny link, as one of the un-authorised performance projects proposed for this research was based on the action of sleeping, as discussed in the subsection *Interim*, in Story 01. However, four test performances were done. See **FIGS. A32–A33**.

³⁶¹ Once the making of a granny square is mastered, varied shapes and endless colour combinations can be composed to serve wrapping purposes, ranging from rugs and quilts to ponchos, jumpers and dresses.

³⁶² The initial ambition for knitting crochet covers for the eight benches on Granary Square soon proved implausible. A simple look at the numbers was eloquent enough: a total of 96 square metres of crochet were needed. That is 4,800 granny squares per cover, equivalent to 38,400 for the eight benches (each bench measures 1.5 by 8 metres, or 12 square metres, and a granny square measures an average of 5 by 5 centimetres). Considering that a beginner crocheter can spend one day mastering the making of a granny square, and a proficient one can finish one in about five minutes, the total time to be invested on the making of one cover could have varied from 200 to 17 days, working 24/7. We had a maximum of two hours per week to work together, including chatting, having tea and cookies, making plarn, getting used to the new material, etc. At the time, I literally had no clue about how far off this ambition was, so the time range for completing the initial task was not calculated from the outset. It could have varied from a total of 200 weeks (the equivalent of four years) if done by one person, to roughly 7.5 months, if we were to average six people involved (that is 33 weeks). Today, after a year working on the project, we are only halfway through the first (and only?) bench cover.



GOOGLE MAPS – KING'S CROSS, AERIAL VIEW. FIG. C01A. 04 June 2016.



GOOGLE MAPS – KING'S CROSS, AERIAL VIEW. FIG. C01B. 04 June 2016.



WOMAN SITTING IN THE SHADE PROVIDED BY AN ARROW SIGN IN GRANARY SQUARE. FIG. C02. 06 July 2018.
AS I WALK BETTY AND JANE TO THEIR TAXI, AFTER A MORNING OF WORK AT
THE MAKE EXHIBITION

View from the ground

With the project advancing in the form of a design brief, I continued my search for local community groups to progress the project and test common interest. I was put in contact with Sarah Hoyle, Project Coordinator for We Are Ageing Better, St Pancras and Somers Town. We met by the end of January 2017, in the lobby of the recently opened Living Centre. It soon became clear that Sarah was used to being contacted by academics doing research about the ward. She spoke of people in Somers Town suffering from “research fatigue”, and advised not to “do your research, take your photos and disappear”. Our conversation about partnering for the project touched on concerns similar to those that appeared when negotiating with a very different organisation, Argent LLP: specifying gains for all involved was paramount, otherwise interest would be lost no matter how appealing a project brief could be.³⁶³

After talking for a while, Sarah asked if I really knew the area. “Not quite”, I replied, so she decided to take me out for a walk. She showed me the diversity of housing types condensed in some of Somers Town’s most treasured housing blocks, and introduced me to the legacy of local icon Father Basil Jellicoe, who transformed living conditions in the ward between 1924 and 1935.³⁶⁴ We took Doric Way first, where post-war housing stock built by the council stands in stark contrast with that made by the St Pancras House Improvement Society, founded by Jellicoe during the interwar period. Although aesthetic approaches informing social housing in decades as far apart as the thirties and sixties would be expected to be different, Sarah was keen to emphasise that pride in the quality of housing stock, as one of the ward’s most distinctive features, was and still is strongly sited within Jellicoe’s projects, but not the council’s. She emphasised this point through the examples she chose to show me during the walk. **FIG. C3.**

³⁶³ Sarah suggested some ways of ‘giving back’ to the community, for example arranging a small tea party at the end of the project, which to me seemed the bare minimum and something the project should seek to better.

³⁶⁴ For the historical role played by Father Basil Jellicoe in Somers Town, see: Malcom J. Holmes, *Housing Is Not Enough: The Story of St Pancras Housing Association* (London: St Pancras Housing Association, 1999), pp. 9–21; Campkin, *Remaking London*, pp. 19–36; and Andrew Whitehead, *Curious King’s Cross* (Five Leaves Publications, 2018), pp. 52–57.

On the south side of Doric Way stands Euston House, a medium-scale modernist block with its concrete frame exposed, brick walls and long access corridors framed by the endless rows of iron-framed glass panes laid as guardrails.³⁶⁵ In front, St Anne's Flats stands as material evidence of Jellicoe's belief that beauty dignifies life. Together with the sculptor Gilbert Bayes, who was to become part of the St Pancras House Improvement Society, he delivered a consistent project for the embellishment of façades, entrance halls, staircases and communal spaces in most of the housing projects they both worked on. St Anne's Flats is a building made with what look like typically yellow London stock bricks.³⁶⁶ The building's layout is symmetrical. Long balconies cutting across the central axis are the façade's most distinctive feature, their thick and long cast handrails standing out against the yellow brick, along with the round corners at the far ends of the second floor balconies, plastered with cast engravings. Mirrored eagles, standing in majestic pose, are displayed on either side of the white rounded corners, and an open-mouthed fish, head down, appears right on the bend of the curve, clutched between the birds.³⁶⁷ "Look at this street", Sarah said, pointing in turn at the contrasting buildings on Doric Way, "it's obvious why we love Father Basil".

We continued walking north from Doric Way, and took Aldenham Street. Just past the corner with Werrington Street I noticed a fence opened towards a courtyard that serves as the entrance to Jellicoe's St Nicholas Flats. I took a peek inside and stopped. "Sorry Sarah, what is this?" "One of the airing courts. They are not very much used anymore, unfortunately." FIG. C4.

An airing court. Disused. An airing court with seventeen concrete airing post on display, all painted white, sixteen of which have square, thirteen-centimetre sections with concave sides and round protruding corners. The posts get slightly slimmer as they get taller, reaching approximately two metres in height. Iron hooks are nailed to their ends. They are topped with dedicated, half-metre long finials in the form of brown and blue boats that

³⁶⁵ Although there is no investment on ornament, design or detail work for common and exterior spaces, this type of housing block usually delivers good design in the flat's interior outline. The point I am emphasising here is mainly concerned with the quality of exterior design and ornamentation, and the messages these might or might not convey.

³⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_stock_brick (accessed 25/03/2020).

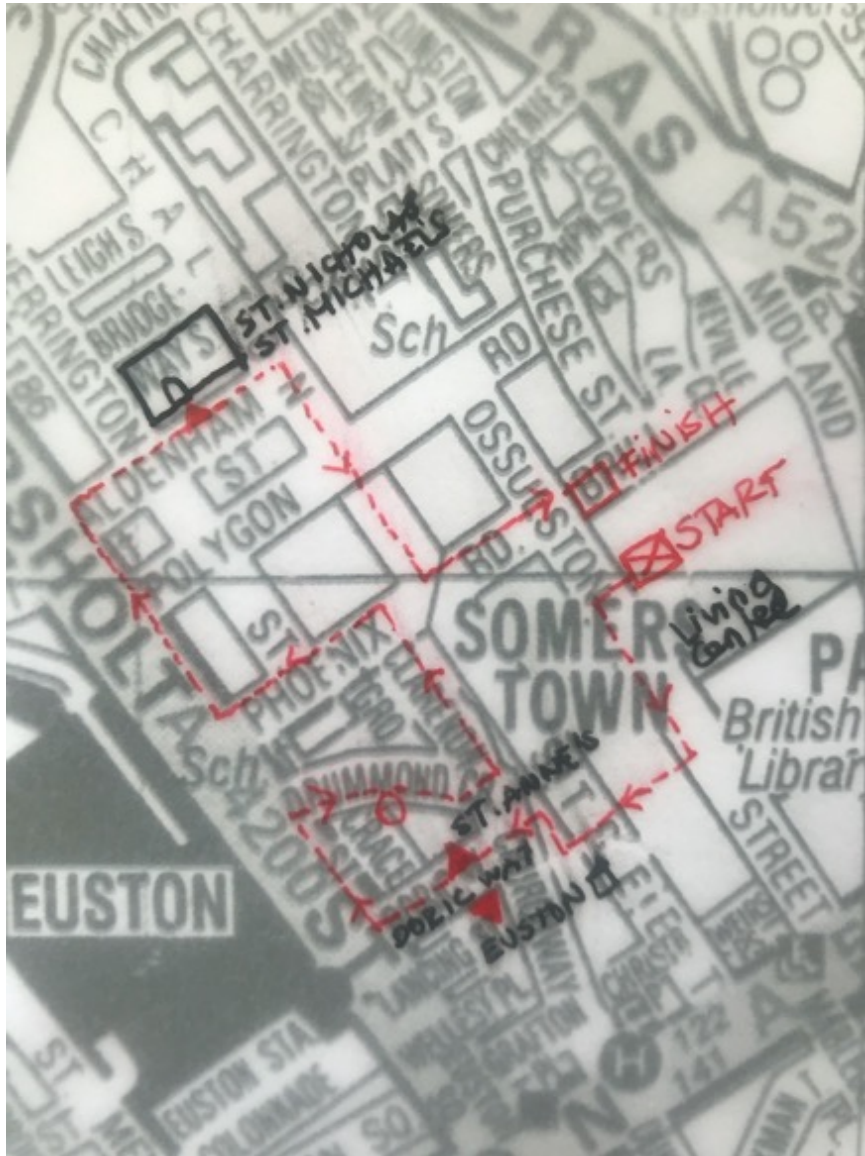
³⁶⁷ Some other flats display characteristic balconied French windows, with Doulton Stoneware lunettes made by sculptor Gilbert Bayes using cast wood or salt-glassed ceramics.

stand on green bases carved with undulating incisions on two of their sides to indicate the sea. The posts are arranged in three parallel lines of three posts each, at three metres' distance from each other. There are eight additional posts forming a semicircle at the top end of the arrangement, which is rounded off by a central post about a metre taller than the rest, and also wider, its octagonal section about twenty-five centimetres in diameter. Nailed to the top of this central post sits an iron crown made with two circles, the higher one wider than the lower one. The circles are joined together by eight curved iron strips with pulleys at each end. Eight iron hooks are nailed at the smaller base of the crown. A bigger finial in the shape of a Christmas tree tops the central post, lighted candles showing at the tips of its branches, and there is a banner around it with a written message that reads: *Peace on Earth – Good Will to Men.*³⁶⁸ FIG. C5.

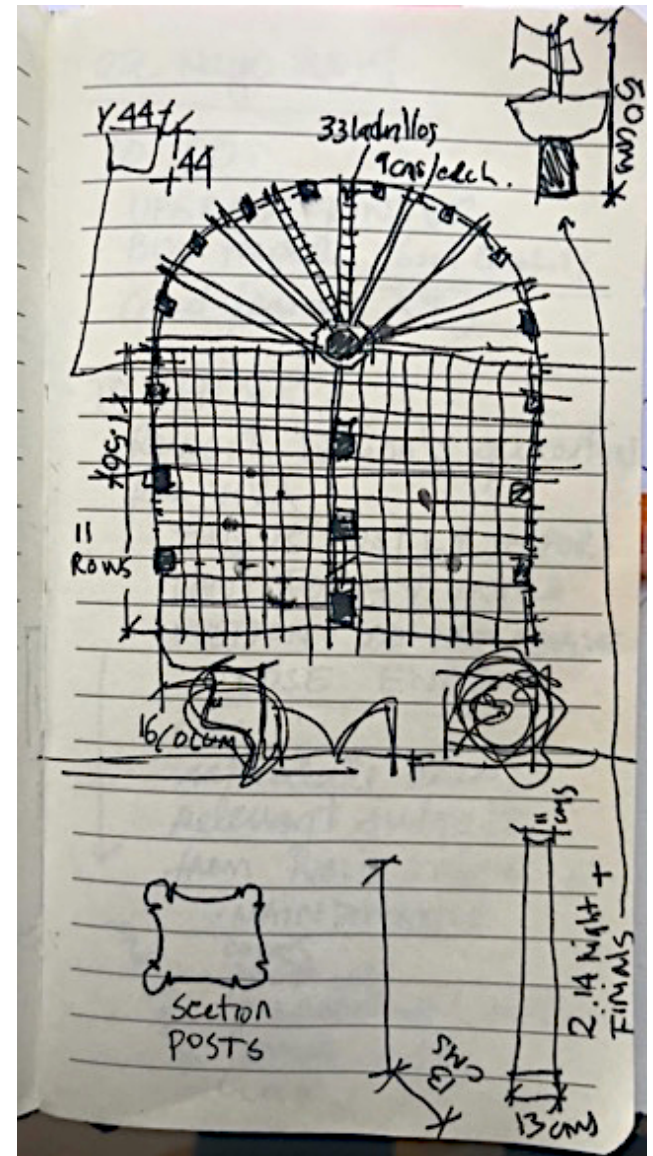
³⁶⁸ It is very likely Bayes made copies of the finials for commercial purposes. Their prices are high in the art market, with the Christmas Tree presumed around at £8000.00 by Miller Antiques. (See <https://blog.millersantiquesguide.com>). Today, Saint Nicholas is still celebrated as a great gift-giver in several Western European and Central European countries. According to one source, in medieval times nuns used the night of 6 December to deposit baskets of food and clothes anonymously at the doorsteps of the needy. According to another source, on 6 December every sailor or ex-sailor of the Low Countries (which at that time meant virtually all of the male population) would descend to the harbour towns to participate in a church celebration for their patron saint. On the way back they would stop at one of the various *Nicholas fairs* to buy some hard-to-come-by goods, gifts for their loved ones and invariably some little presents for their children. While the real gifts would only be presented at Christmas, the little presents for the children were given right away, courtesy of Saint Nicholas. This and his miracle of him resurrecting the three butchered children made Saint Nicholas a patron saint of children and later students as well. Santa Claus evolved from Dutch traditions regarding Saint Nicholas (Sinterklaas). When the Dutch established the colony of New Amsterdam, they brought the legend and traditions of Sinterklaas with them. Howard G. Hageman, of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, maintains that the tradition of celebrating Sinterklaas in New York existed in the early settlements of the Hudson Valley, although by the early nineteenth century had fallen by the way. As well as this: Nicholas is said to have visited the Holy Land. The ship he was on was nearly destroyed by a terrible storm, but he rebuked the waves, causing the storm to subside. Because of this miracle, Nicholas became venerated as the patron saint of sailors. From Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Nicholas (accessed 11.07.2020).



DORIC WAY – EUSTON HOUSE AND ST ANNE'S FLATS. FIG. C03.



WALK MAP. FIG. C04.



ST NICHOLAS – AIR COURT SKETCH. FIG. C05.

Such extraordinary airing courts can be found in many of Jellicoe's other housing projects across St Pancras and Somers Town, such as St Mary's and St Joseph's Flats, and those which constitute the so-called Garden Estate or Sidney Estate, consistently named after saints: St Nicholas, St Christopher, St Anthony, St Francis and St George. All the finials on these estates were made by Gilbert Bayes, and display different motifs that range from boats to birds to well-known characters from children's fairy tales.³⁶⁹ With no exception, the courts look neglected, damaged and in some cases vandalised, but, just like the washerwomen dressed in simple, short sleeves dresses with aprons, metal laundry baskets topping their heads like finials dignifying their labour, the airing courts still maintain a dignified presence that speaks of cherished times, long gone.

Some of the most iconic social housing estates characteristic of the modern tradition of architecture during the 1920s and 1930s were designed to spatially organise domestic labour, particularly that of doing the laundry, by providing dedicated communal facilities, including for washing, airing and ironing. Placed at the centre of communities, these spaces stood as architectural testimonials for domestic labour, and celebrated it as a collective practice, performed by efficiently organised groups of female residents.³⁷⁰ Although it could be argued that such reconfiguration of domestic labour temporarily counterbalanced the invisible nature of cleaning and washing chores – doomed as they were to evaporate both in reality and metaphorically – in the short space of three decades (roughly from the 1930s to the 1960s), the practices of washing and airing clothes collectively in housing estates have inevitably travelled along disappearance lines. Lines that connected dedicated communal spaces placed at the centre of social housing projects, with kitchen corners in their small flats, via washer-dryer machines.³⁷¹ In Somers Town, the airing courts stand as sited evidence of this trajectory. My encounter with them offered *The Great Unwashed* project, and its Google depiction, an additional layer of meaning, which, to my eyes, materialised within the communal spaces of the King's Cross Estate's neighbouring locality.

³⁶⁹ More examples can be found in other two Origin Housing Estates in Kentish Town and Tufnell Park. They show different configurations and diverse motif variations for finials, in the form of birds, fish, fairy-tale characters, flowers and demons.

³⁷⁰ Iconic Housing Estates constructed during the Red Vienna period are some of the most relevant examples. See Blau, Eve, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919–1934* (MIT Press, 1999).

³⁷¹ Pseudo-public realm here refers to communal spaces within housing estates, i.e. not open to the general public. For a longer view on the evolution of laundry practices, see Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1993). Although this publication focuses on North America, its insights are relevant beyond.

In her book *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, Susan Strasser explains that “washing machines – and eventually, clothes dryers – altered daily and weekly routine, depriving housewives at the same time of the compensations of their arduous work. No longer gossiping at the hydrant or competing over the clothesline on Mondays, modern women draw water and dry their clothes in the isolated privacy of their own homes”.³⁷² Communities in St Pancras and Somers Town, not only having been displaced from the airing courts to their private flats back in the 1930s, ‘40s and ‘50s, but also sidelined from the pseudo-public spaces created by and for more affluent groups through privatisation today, travel along trajectories akin to those of housewives displaced from communal open spaces to the isolated privacy of their homes in the opening decades of the last century. Strasser’s analysis connects the changing practices of laundering and airing with industrialisation processes, pointing at the fact that “socially provided laundry could not succeed in an economy that depended on growth, and rewarded socially wasteful decisions for their profitability”.³⁷³ In the context of privatised public space today, spatial practices around user communities – the curation of new herds, the displacement of unfitting ones – continue to sustain a growth-dependent economy, while transforming spatial, functional and aesthetic dynamics and configurations of everyday life through, amongst other things, the privatisation of urban land.³⁷⁴

Analysing the transformation of laundering activities at the beginning of last century, Elizabeth Shove draws attention to “the complex of economic systems at stake in promoting washing as a private activity *and* undermining other more collective arrangements”.³⁷⁵ She explains that “fabric, detergents and appliance manufacturers have together tightened what amounts to a corporate grip on the meaning of cleaning”.³⁷⁶ The codes and practices of contemporary public space, re-adjusted to suit privatised public environments, impact heavily on the ways in which specific communities of users are

³⁷² Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 121.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁷⁴ See Michael Edwards, *King’s Cross, Renaissance for Whom?*, which offers an economics based analysis on the financial and political framework leading to the redevelopment. In John Punter, *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 189–205.

³⁷⁵ Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness + Convenience: The Social Organisation of Normality* (Berg Publishers, 2003), p.121.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

specified, monitored and controlled in the name of corporate profitability, this time with developers/managers as well as architects and urban designers – rather than fabric, detergents and appliance manufacturers – tightening the corporate grip on the meaning of cleaning. Just as sanitised aesthetics, curated publics and regulated maintenance practices extend the ethos of modern architectural practices through to today's public spaces, in the 1920s "the imagery of hygiene was as important as that of machines, and it had an equally significant place in the work of countless other designers",³⁷⁷ as Adrian Forty explains in reference to the architecture of Le Corbusier during that iconic decade for modern architecture.

A century on, such spaces as Granary Square speak for the work of architects and urban designers who contribute to furthering, rather than counterbalancing, the corporate influence over what cleaning means, as it materialises through contemporary public space design. Away from recoding the imagery of hygiene in the form of ersatz contemporary versions of the urban public realm, spatial practices today are more attentive to users and the practices through which they qualify their environments daily. That is, to the link between place and time, the recontextualisation and translation of what would have been the gossip around the hydrant or the competition around the clothesline, in contemporary practice.³⁷⁸

Use, disuse and maintenance

In 1997, The Virtual House architectural competition was launched by FSB – Franz Schneider Brakel, who invited some of the most prominent architects of the time, including Peter Eisenman and Toyo Ito, to design the house of the future.³⁷⁹ I was working at Eisenman's office in New York at the time as an unpaid intern and was assigned to work

³⁷⁷ Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750* (Thames & Hudson, 1986), p. 157.

³⁷⁸ In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau writes "every story is a travel story – a spatial practice", a short sentence that nevertheless manages to describe space, lived experience and the specifics of a place as elements of a practice. Here, Strasser eloquently collapses place, weekly routines, domestic labour and their transformations, by simply putting a hydrant by the action of gossiping, and the clothesline by the Monday competitions. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011). Kindle Edition, loc.1756.

³⁷⁹ The Virtual House Competition was launched in the mist of 'the digital revolution in architecture', conceptualised as it was by architects like Eisenman. See John Rajchman, ed., 'ANY 20: Architecture Looks for the Key Conditions for The Virtual House' (Any Corporation, September 1997).

with The Virtual House project team. The lease contract between Eisenman Architects and its landlord required the office to be vacated by 6:00 pm every day. So from early evening, and well into the night, my rather cramped shared flat, which was located close to Eisenman Architects, became an extension of the office during the competition period. While our group of young and skint idealistic architects worked on my kitchen table, struggling to glue pieces of acrylic into thin metal wires to make a 'real', three-dimensional model of a virtual house that could remotely replicate the digital one (created through a very sophisticated software, for the time, that was programmed to set a nine-square grid in motion), Toyo Ito decided to submit the White U house, built in Tokyo for his sister in 1976, as his competition entry. This house had been uninhabited for a while and was scheduled to be demolished that year. Ito presented a series of compelling pictures showing its derelict structure taken over by vegetation, and the story of the building, which embodied a critical moment in the family's history, along with the photographs.³⁸⁰ From its conception to its imminent physical disappearance and beyond, this piece of compelling architecture was set to be timelessly maintained through remembrance.

So there we were, my Eisenman mates and I, sleep-deprived, trying to make an uninhabitable house look like the future, testing all sorts of glues, which left fingerprints and tangled transparent threads all over our shabby, shaky model, while the story of a disused house at the verge of demolition, standing steadily as an architectural presence into the future, was told via the sheer power of lived and remembered experience.³⁸¹ Through notions of inhabitability, use and disuse – both in terms of discourse and through shape and form – the experience of working on The Virtual House project exposed me to a charged overlap of time and meaning, purpose and futility, maintenance and decay, that I now know has subconsciously escorted my inner architect since.

³⁸⁰ The story of this project is one of grief and mourning. It was designed by Ito for his sister and her two daughters, after her husband died of cancer. The house symbolised a new beginning for them, and became the site of their mourning and personal renovation. See Toyo Ito's text *White U*, in John Rajchman, ed., 'ANY 19: The Virtual House' (Anyone Corporation, September 1997), pp. 8–11.

³⁸¹ Eisenman, however, knew how to transform a collapsing model into a hot image in a blink of an eye. The morning we arrived at the office carrying the 'finished' model of the virtual house, which we had walked with some fear and shame from my flat, he looked at it briefly and then said "slide a mirror underneath it and it will be ready to photograph". He was proved right.

In St Pancras and Somers Town today, the disused airing courts of housing estates – as any other abandoned, decayed and/or vandalised places – convey the notion that use is the ultimate maintenance labour in architecture. However, and while reconstructing this story through my writing, Toyo Ito's entry to The Virtual House competition emerged from the back of my mind in the form of a maintenance operation far removed from use or Health and Safety regulation, but delivered through remembrance and storytelling.³⁸² Delivered, that is, through strategies which could re-qualify spaces in a way that is equivalent to "the word when it is spoken...when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by successive contexts",³⁸³ as Michel de Certeau explains in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Contextualised within Somers Town today, these strategies would be fitting for the maintenance, reconstruction and repair of other, public environments, which although disused are located at the heart of the community's history and pride.

The Snug

Almost a year and a half after I was taken for a walk through the ward by Sarah Hoyle, I was put in contact with the new Project Coordinator for Ageing Better UK, Jess Grieve, who manages the monthly program of events for the ageing community.³⁸⁴ Jess invited me join a session at the Knit and Stitch Club, which meets every Thursday morning at the Saint Pancras Community Association (SPCA) in Plender Street, in a room called The Snug. She wanted me to present the *Granny Square* project, and see if the group would be interested in participating.³⁸⁵

³⁸² This, in spite of the fact that sustained use causes wear and, subsequently, the demand for traditional maintenance operations. See section *Labour: The practice of maintenance in contemporary public space*, where I reference Shannon Matters explaining this connection. See note no. 185. See also the subsection *Celebrating: Alternative strategies to controlled commonality*, in reference to the work of Francis Alÿs and his use of anecdote and storytelling.

³⁸³ My emphasis. Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, loc. 1738. For de Certeau, 'a proper' concerns the stability and static nature of an object. Objects, he explains, have a location and only one, and no two objects can occupy the same place, but only exist by each other. That is what constitutes 'a proper': 'a distinct location, a location it defines', loc. 1751.

³⁸⁴ Sarah left her post with Ageing Better UK in St Pancras and Somers Town soon after we first met and I lost contact with her. This, and the fact that the previous project was being negotiating in parallel and had been fully authorised just before we met, meant the *Granny Square* project was put on hold for a considerably lengthy period.

³⁸⁵ CSM Public were extending an invitation for the *Granny Square* project to be part of the exhibition *Make in Camden 2018*. This presented a good opportunity to get work going, and devise a pilot project for one of the eight square benches. See a video about the exhibition, including the project, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eb-aMlicrnw> (accessed 11.07.2020).

The Snug is a spacious room with generous glassed windows looking towards the street, and a dark green carpet covering the floor. It is used for diverse purposes, from local clubs and parties to executive events, so it is furnished with foldable tables and stackable chairs. There are, however, eight big and heavy comfort chairs fixed and lined up against the room's longest wall. The arrangement leaves the centre of the room free to move the lighter furniture around, but it is odd, as people sitting on the comfort chairs look like an audience, or as if posing for a group photograph, and cannot face each other. The club runs from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Members arrive at different times. Early birds sit in the comfort chairs, and continually look sideways as they talk to one another. Those who arrive later arrange stackable chairs in small groups around the bigger chairs, so the club is often framed by the room's long back wall. Four medium-size oil paintings hang above the comfort chairs. They are nailed, unframed, with uneven gaps between them, at slightly different heights. My inner architect had the urge to realign, measuring-tape in hand.³⁸⁶

The paintings are compelling. Their colourful images seem whimsically put together: Popeye standing by an antique-style flat iron with a double-decker bus, a green bottle of Old Spice for men and some domino pieces scattered on the floor; an old pram signed *Somers Town Pram Race* below a panda bear and a zeppelin flying over and next to a gramophone, a teddy bear and a pair of boxing gloves by a tea pot; a wash bucket with foam and wooden washing board inside; a boat named the Jenny Wren next to a giant lizard. **FIG. C6.**

When I asked about the paintings, Betty and Dot, two good friends who were sitting together, explained the group had made them some months back, in a series of art workshops about childhood memories run by the SPCA.³⁸⁷ They spoke fondly about how they used to iron clothes, heating irons on coal stoves. "They were very heavy and burned your hands... Today they are used as door stoppers", they said. "We had only one record

³⁸⁶ After almost a year engaging with the Knit and Stitch Group, we secured some funding to frame three of the five paintings. The chosen frames are simple but good looking. Jess was happy with the idea, but concerned about where to place the paintings once framed. A week after delivering the newly framed pictures to a small storage room at the Living Centre, the managers decided to hang them in the waiting room, by the stairs and in one of the meeting rooms. **FIG. C15.** Framed Painting Living Centre.

³⁸⁷ The art workshops were ran by Anna Rootes. We used my photographs of the paintings to make postcards to sell at community events. The postcards have some of the quotes from our conversations printed at the back.

to play on the gramophone, a six-inch from Woolworths. The neighbours kept it under the arm. We used to play it, play it, play it, drive mama mad!" They spoke about the fun of pram races and summer fairs. There was one painting missing on the wall, they said, which might have been stored in a cupboard somewhere. When I presented *Granny Square* project to the group they said it was "very clever", and readily got on board. Shelagh O'Gorman, the club's leader and knitting expert, generously offered her guidance and became indispensable for the project, in spite of her initial (and still ongoing) reservations about the choice of material.³⁸⁸ Betty and Dot soon became the driving force behind the project's development. FIGS. C7–C8.

With Jess's help, we chased the missing painting that afternoon and found it covered in bubble wrap, inside a cupboard back at the Living Centre. As we unwrapped it, four airing posts with a pair of blue shorts, pink and purple bed sheets and some red socks pegged to airing lines emerged from the top left of the painting. This was a depiction of one of Jellicoe's airing courts, set by King's Cross Station coloured in orange and with its main entrance occupying the centre of the painting, a big red steam locomotive pushing cargo below it, a red, single-propeller bi-plane flying over it, and a yellow and purple Peace and Love sign with a red heart on the side. A small green bird with salmon-pink wings resting on one of the airing posts, ended up right at the top centre of the picture.³⁸⁹

I went back to the Knit and Stitch club the following Thursday, told Betty and Dot we had found the missing painting, and asked about the airing courts. "That was Dot", said Betty. Dot carried on. "The airing courts are one of my first and most loved memories of childhood. I brought that image to the art workshop."³⁹⁰ Dot was born almost ninety years

³⁸⁸ Shelagh became instrumental for developing the project, which could not have been achieved without her kind and constant drive. She was right having reservations about plarn, as it proved unfriendly for the hands and skin especially of older people. This required us to look out for soft plastic bags for the making of plarn bundles.

³⁸⁹ The posts in the painting are topped with finials displaying what appear to be beacon birds, a strange and difficult figure to find in available records of Gilbert Bayes work. In conversations with Dot, however, taken here as primary reference, the bird in the painting was meant to stand for the finials topping the airing courts of her estate, St. Mary's Flats. For the art workshop in which the paintings were made, participants were asked to bring images of childhood memories. Dot brought pictures of the airing courts, as they were "the first, most obvious thing I thought of".

³⁹⁰ I visited this Estate's court with the Somers Town History Club, on a Saturday event based on the work of Gilbert Bayes. <https://aspaceforum.club/2019/02/19/saturday-film-walk-on-bayes-march-9/> (accessed 11.07.2020).

ago in St. Mary's Flats, where birds were chosen as the motif for the Estate's airing court finials.³⁹¹ FIGS. C10–C12.

After that second visit to the Knit and Stitch Club, the project's brief developed as follows:

The Granny Square Project consists of making a crochet cover tailored to one of the benches on Granary Square, in collaboration with senior female residents from St Pancras and Somers Town, and using Granny Squares made out of plarn, or plastic bag yarn. The motif selected for the cover is an iconic bird drawn by the participants themselves in an art workshop about childhood memories. The bird is a cherished everyday feature of times past, when children gathered around the airing courts of St Pancras and Somers Town while their mothers were hanging clothes outside to air. FIG. C09. Most airing posts in the ward are topped by finials in the form of birds and other evocative figures, made by sculptor Gilbert Bayes. The bird, initially painted as a small four-by-four-centimetres detail of a larger oil painting, will be scaled to the size of a bench on Granary Square, to construct a crochet pattern measuring eight by one and a half metres.

Although *The Snug*, which was to become the project's site for many months, was evidently defined in terms starkly at odds with those of Granary Square – the main research site where rigour and control define the everyday – little did I know at the time of my first visits to *The Snug* that the differences that defined the research work sites could be extended to every other aspect of the new project. My collaboration with maintenance workers was driven by efficiency, the hours they worked for *The Disappearing Garden* were payed as part of their daily shifts, and depended on overarching schedules dictating maintenance operations and the management of events across the King's Cross site. With senior women in St Pancras and Somers Town, time was a flexible variable. We had no deadlines, no sense of urgency, apart from what my presence could flimsily convey on Thursday mornings, when I sat in *The Snug* to practise the art of making plarn granny squares, with Shelagh's guidance and trouble-shooting advice. Shelagh and I together did most of the work, helped by architecture students and other, younger collaborators linked to the project in different capacities: daughters, grandsons, friends, managers, informal plastic

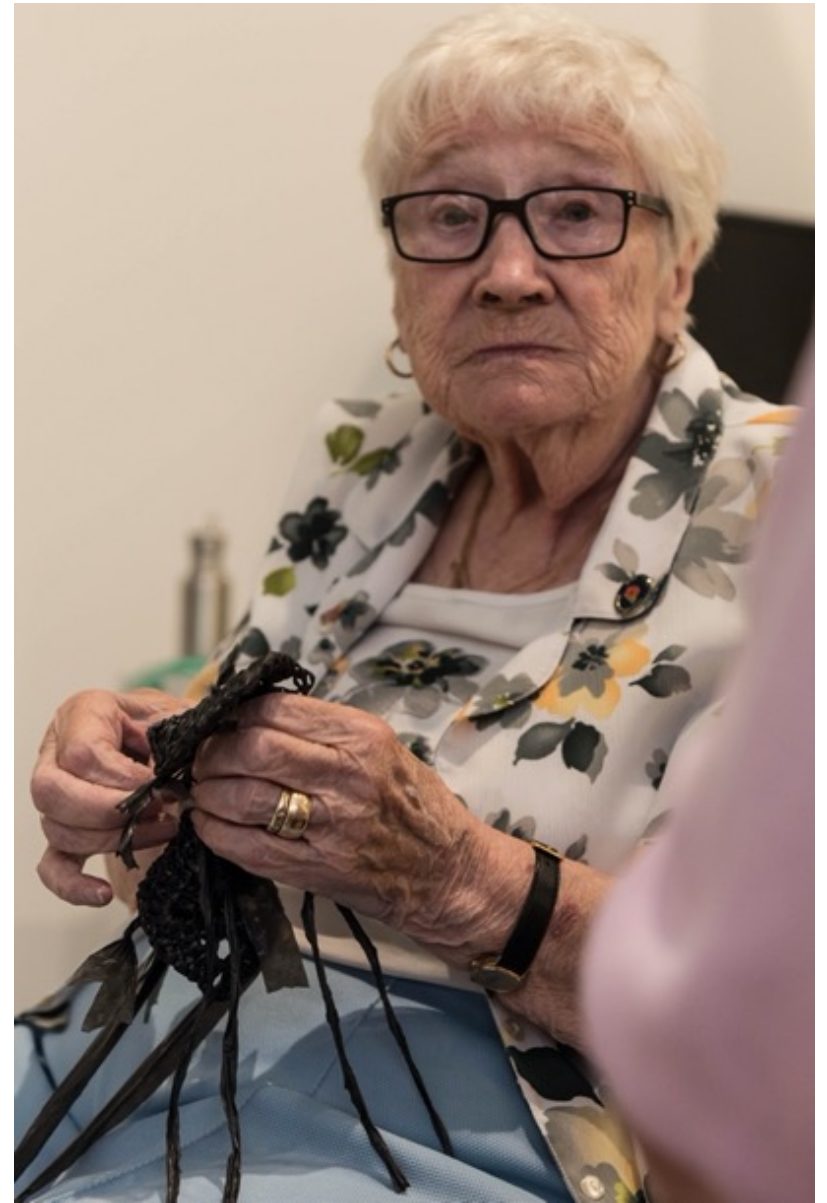
³⁹¹ In St Mary's Flats, the finial topping the central post of the airing court arrangement displays is a bag of tools, perhaps representing Joseph being a carpenter. The finials atop the posts surrounding it, forming a full circle, display doves, which are symbol of peace. This is according to Steve McCarthy, from Somers Town History Club.

bag suppliers, interested members of the public. Given the fluid ways in which this project moved across time frames, the senior women involved had already made their most vital contribution very many years ago.

Distant from any notion of profit, 'remuneration' for participants – namely what Sarah Hoyle highlighted when she advised me to clarify 'what the community gets back from the project' – came in diverse forms, including a series of variations to the set monthly schedule of activities for the ageing community: having lunch in a sunny afternoon in Granary Square with Betty, Dot and others; and the ongoing, though subdued, celebration of some key pieces of shared history that our knitting allowed over a sustained period of time. For the cleaners, on the other hand, non-monetary remuneration came in the form of an unusual acknowledgement of their skill, and materialised as we disrupted restrictive protocols of labour, including by sitting on square benches and chairs eating brownies and drinking hot chocolate with the group at the end of rehearsals. When it came to outcomes of our collective work in the form of perennial cultural objects, however, both groups seemed to have been left with little: a water drawing of a spider (evaporated), and an unfinished plarn-crochet bird.



THE PAINTINGS IN THE SNUG. FIG. C06.



BETTY. FIG. C07.



DOT. FIG. C08.



ST. ANTHONY'S AIRING COURT WITH WOMEN AND CHILDREN. FIG. C09.



AERIAL VIEW OF ST MARY'S AND ST JOSEPH'S. FIG. C10.



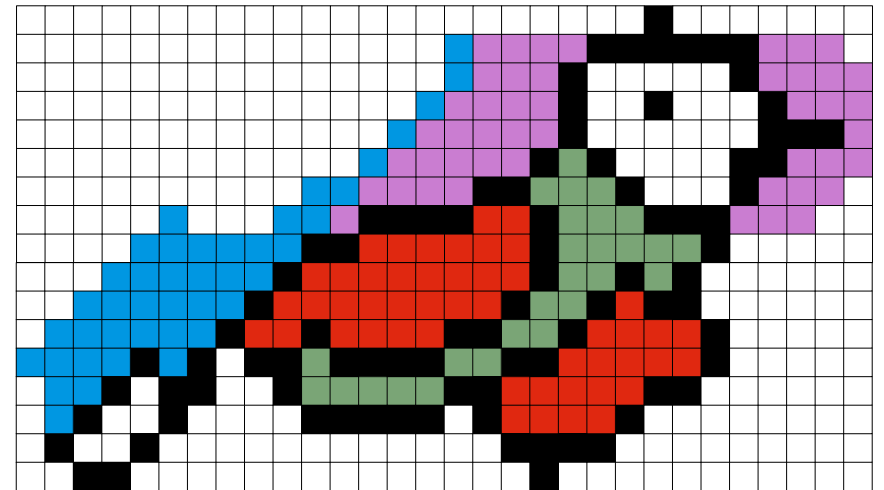
ST MARY'S AIRING COURT. GROUND VIEW. FIG. C11.



AIRING COURT PAINTING. FIG. C12.



ST MARY'S AIRING COURT, AIRING COURT PAINTING AND BIRD'S ZOOM FIG. C13.



BIRD'S CROCHET PATTERN FIG. C14



FRAMED PAINTING AT LIVING CENTRE. FIG. C15.

The birds

Google's aerial view featuring *The Great Unwashed*, my bronze bed covered with the crochet blanket handmade by my grandmother; Susanne Lacy's *Cristal Quilt* (1987);³⁹² St Nicholas' and Mary's and Joseph's flats disused airing courts, and the painting featuring them; and Susan Strasser thoughts on laundering and industrialisation; and Toyo Ito's White U house at its most derelict; and Betty and Dot playing around the courts while their mothers hung clothes to air; and the Thursday get-togethers for stitching and knitting in Plender Street; Francis Alÿs, *The Collector* (1991–2006);³⁹³ the fountains and benches of Granary Square with children and families playing around in the summer... All these places and events collided at different times and through different conversations as we collectively constructed the plarn-crochet bird. In *The Snug*, at the Lethaby Gallery – CSM, at home or on Granary Square, the bird, in its capacity as an object constantly in the making, performed as a story-telling prop of our own making. That is, as "an object that creates and sustains a dynamic relationship with the audience as a given performance unfolds",³⁹⁴ as Andrew Sofer explains in *The Stage Life of Props*. In the context of the *Granny Square* project, 'performances' took the form of collective gatherings that were only sometimes public, with audiences varying in size and nature, from our small group knitting in *The Snug*, to larger gatherings with members of the public in and around the King's Cross estate.

FIGS. C16–C21.

Through our chatting and story-telling, the plarn-crochet bird evoked not only the original, colourful salt-glassed ceramic finials that beautified airing courts in St Pancras and Somers Town, but also their opaque, sad replicas, which today stand in their place, emulating the process by which "the temporal and spatial dimensions of the material prop in performance... tend to vanish when the prop is considered a static symbol".³⁹⁵ These replicas, devoid of the original link with the proud history of a community that rebuilt itself through a successful housing reform project, are left as mere, second-rate symbols of the past, as well as of institutional abandonment. The cultural value of Somers Town's history

³⁹² See subsection *Celebrating: Alternative strategies to controlled visibility*, in Chapter 02.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (The University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. vi.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

sacked and transposed to the supposedly higher spheres of art and culture via the mysterious loss of the originals, valued out of context today only as high art commodities.³⁹⁶

FIG. C22.

But, as Neil Leach explains in his short text *Belonging*, “Although objects – such as books or pictures – can be said to be the repositories of objectivated cultural capital, they have no value unless they are activated strategically in the present by those seeking to modify their incorporated cultural capital”.³⁹⁷ Just as Toyo Ito might have done with an architectural object, his White U House, back in 1997. Through the making of the plarn-crochet bird, the *Granny Square* project temporarily borrowed the practice of embellishing daily life through decoration from the St Pancras and Somers Town of the 1930s, and recontextualised it within the public realm of King’s Cross. Although Granary Square might not be thought of as a place in need of embellishment, this view had been challenged in my eyes. Not only by my critical study on the codes and practices of contemporary public space, but also by Google’s aerial view, as well as the view from the PhD room window, seen many times over during desolate, cold days, and the view of the leafy and beautifully laid-out Parque Santander in Bogotá, imprinted on my mind from my days as a young architecture student.³⁹⁸ Not only in need of embellishment, but of social and spatial awareness beyond itself, Granary Square, with its benches covered by a plarn-crochet blanket knitted collectively by senior woman and many others, featuring an iconic bird from the other side of the tracks, could temporarily meet its local other: the airing courts of St Pancras and Somers Town. **FIG. C23 / FIGS. C24–C26 / FIG. 27.**

³⁹⁶ As Bourdieu explains, “The appropriation of symbolic objects with a material existence, such as paintings, raises the distinctive force of ownership to the second power and reduces purely symbolic appropriation to the inferior status of a symbolic substitute”. This way, the appropriations of “the dominated, less wealthy fractions...must, in the main, be exclusively symbolic” Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 277 and 279.

³⁹⁷ Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Ashgate, 2005), p. 298.

³⁹⁸ In Parque Santander, small spaces are differentiated within the overall layout by a few steps, trees, and benches. This allows for a diversity of uses that change through the day, with people choosing their preferred corner, sitting comfortably for long hours on benches below the shade of magnolias, Colombian pines and palm trees. As part of the curriculum of architecture in many of the city’s architecture schools, students are brought to Parque Santander to focus on drawing the iconic skyscraper of the Avianca building, which stands on its northern side, and/or to get to its rooftop to see Bogotá from above.

Neil Leach observes that as “narratives of use stand largely outside architectural concerns, there is no accepted framework for exploring how people make sense of space and relate to it”.³⁹⁹ The agency of an object, sustained by the process of its making, can be understood here a set of actions aiming to reconcile individual subjective experience (placed mainly in the past in this project), with the objective structures of society in the present. The crochet bird enabled fleeting moments when prop and history collided in conversation, and mutually activated and enhanced their individual cultural value in a given present, as a prop that “creates and sustains a dynamic relationship with the audience as a given performance unfolds”.⁴⁰⁰

Commercially focused depictions of the new in the neighborhood, constructed by and for the King’s Cross redevelopment project and its publics, dominate local narratives, whilst telling a story of commonality and distinction. This emulates a process whereby “practices of group identity [which] are about manufacturing cultural and historical belongings delineate the politics and social dynamics of ‘fitting in’”.⁴⁰¹ In Granary Square, the bird fitted in temporarily – as did its makers and others it represents – but passed largely unnoticed as the square’s crowds swirled around the fountains. The cultural capital of a class that works, plays and dines in the King’s Cross redevelopment is distinctively secluded from that of those who hung out their clothes to dry and played around the airing courts in social housing projects in the Somers Town of the 1930s. Architecture, understood as the spatial layout within which the daily practices of different class groups unfold, is instrumental in the production and maintenance of such distinctions.

³⁹⁹ Leach, N., *Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification With Space*, in Hillier and Rooksby, *Habitus*, p. 298.

⁴⁰⁰ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props*, p. vi.

⁴⁰¹ Leach, N. in Hillier and Rooksby, *Habitus*, p. 302.



THURSDAY SESSIONS @ KNIT AND STITCH CLUB. FIG. C16.



THURSDAY SESSIONS @ KNIT AND STITCH CLUB. FIG. C17.



THURSDAY SESSIONS @ KNIT AND STITCH CLUB. FIG. C18.



MAKE IN CAMDEN – EXHIBITION OPEN WORKSHOPS. FIGS. C19. 03–06 July 2018.



MAKE IN CAMDEN – EXHIBITION OPEN WORKSHOPS. FIGS. C20. 03 July 2018.



MAKE IN CAMDEN – EXHIBITION OPEN WORKSHOPS. FIGS. C21. 03 July 2018.



BIRDS AND OTHER FINIALS – ORIGINALS. FIG. C22A. Including the boats in St Nicholas' Flats, of which there are replicas today.



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LOT 216
TWO GILBERT WILLIAM BAYES (1872-1953), ROYAL DOULTON (EST.1815) STONEWARE 'BIRD'
POST FINIALS

CIRCA 1930

Price realised ⓘ
GBP 27,500

Estimate ⓘ
GBP 1,000 - GBP 1,500

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TWO GILBERT WILLIAM BAYES (1872-1953), ROYAL DOULTON (EST.1815) STONEWARE 'BIRD' POST FINIALS
CIRCA 1930
Each modelled and cast as birds, covered in streaked glaze, both signed *Gilbert Bayes*, impressed *Royal Doulton Roundels*
19¾ in. (50.2 cm.) high (2)

Contact us

Contact Client Service
info@christies.com
New York +1 212 636 2000
London +44 (0)20 7839 9060
infoasia@christies.com
Asia +852 2760 1766

Ella-Jane Harvey
eharwy@christies.com
+44 (0)20 7752 3102

Lot Essay



These polychrome stoneware sculptures were used as finials for washing line posts at St Pancras Housing association Estates, and also as garden ornaments. They featured in exhibitions around the country and abroad from 1936 and until 1939.

BIRD FINIALS AS ADVERTISED ON CHRISTIE'S WEBSITE. FIG. C22B.



CROCHET BIRD. FIG. 23. As at July 2018.



THE CROCHET BIRD IN GRANARY SQUARE. FIGS. C24-C26.

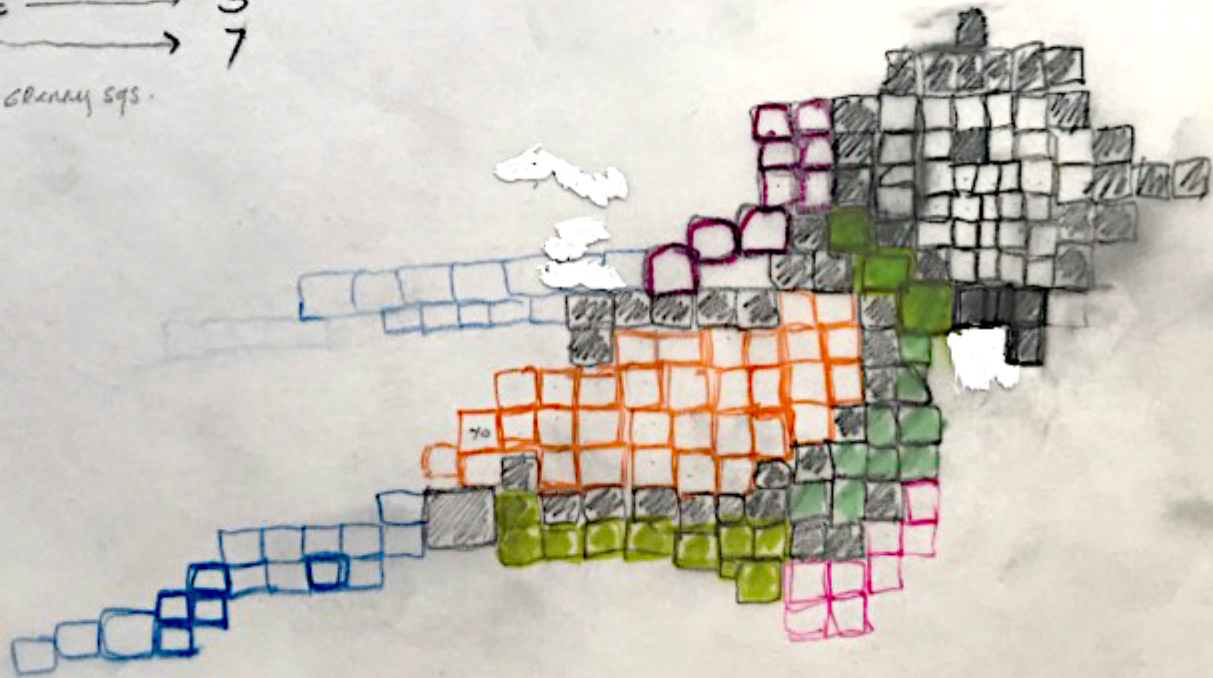


FIG. C25.

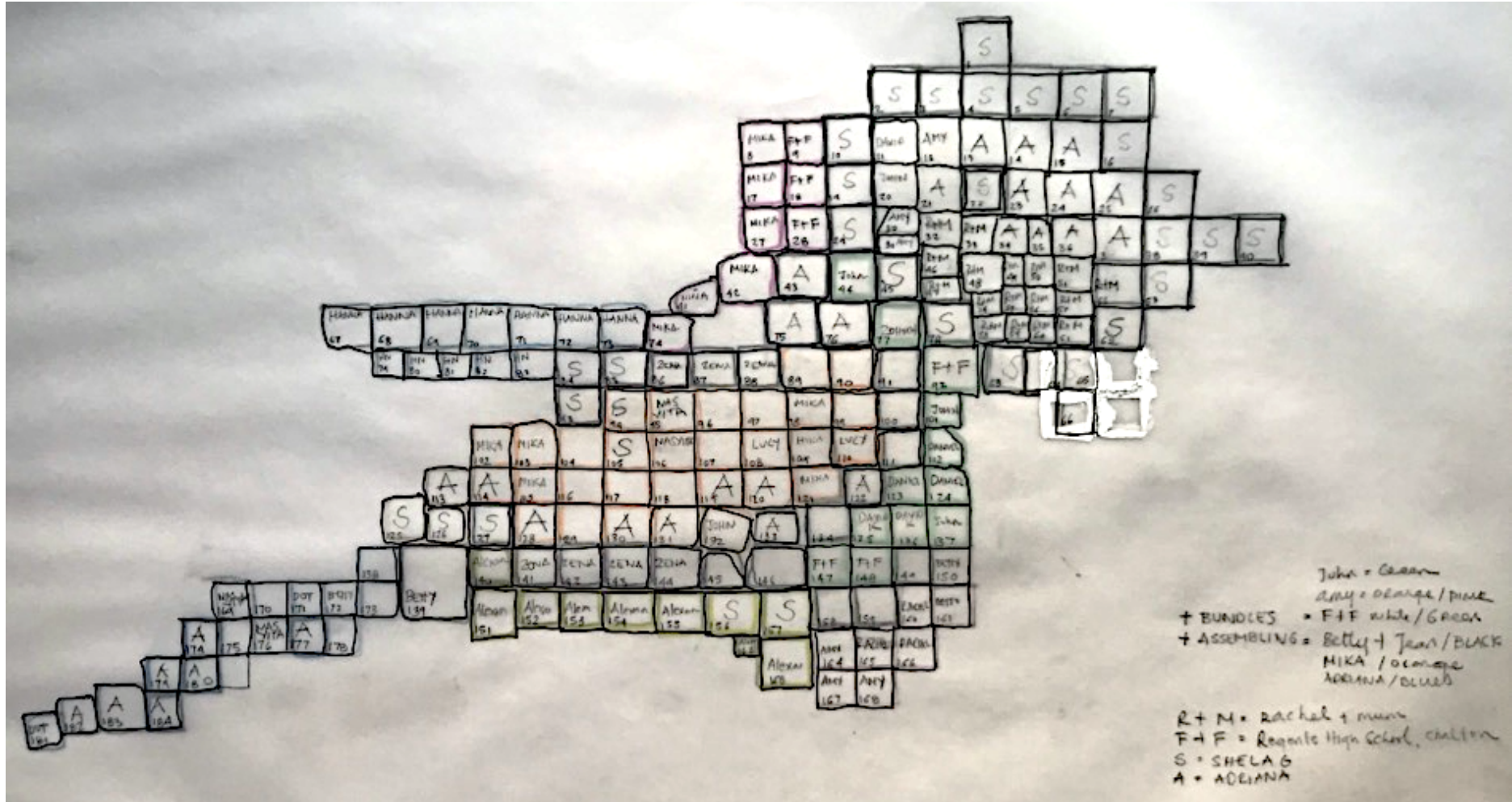


FIG. C26.

WHITE	→	32
BLACK	→	23 (rabeza) 26 (resto) = 49
PURPLE	→	9
PINK	→	8
DARK GREEN	→	12
LIGHT GREEN	→	10
ORANGE	→	33
LIGHT BLUE	→	18
DARK BLUE	→	5
CELESTE	→	7
Total:		183 granny sqs.



CROCHET BIRD MAP. FIG. C27. Number of granny squares per colour.



CROCHET BIRD MAP. FIG. C27. Granny squares by crocheter.

Commonality and distinction

In the book *The Favored Circle*, Garry Stevens decodes Bourdieu's theory of Distinction within the field of architecture. Stevens explains how for Bourdieu, "the dominant class maintains social closure and transmits power and privilege through the generations by erecting symbolic boundaries around itself. These take the form of distinctive lifestyles and tastes. Tastes, lifestyle, culture and class are intimately linked."⁴⁰² Furthering the analysis on the connections between power, class and culture, Stevens explains the main three systems that contribute to practising power, namely control, the economy and the symbolic. For Bourdieu, symbolic power constitutes "the more potent and more pervasive form of power...Symbolic power involves the wielding of symbols and concepts, ideas and beliefs, to achieve ends".⁴⁰³ As Stevens further explains:

At the highest level, that of society as a whole, we call the field in which symbolic power operates 'culture'. It is Bourdieu's contention that the logic of the cultural field is such that it operates to create, legitimate and reproduce the class structure, a system of inequality...Bourdieu believes that the class struggle of modern societies is iniquitous, denying to some what could be theirs, while ensuring that others are granted privileges they do not deserve.⁴⁰⁴

In reference to the composition of each different class, it is important to note there are subordinate and dominant fractions within the classes. In the dominant class, subordinate fractions own more cultural and less economic capital, and they "are responsible for the production of symbolic goods".⁴⁰⁵ Architects fall within this category.⁴⁰⁶ As designers of the built environment – an all-encompassing symbolic good – architects become complicit in the maintenance of the dominant power or, as Stevens would put it, contribute to "create, legitimate and reproduce the class structure, a system of inequality",⁴⁰⁷ guided by the professional principles outlined by 'the men of taste'. When architectural objects cohere with lifestyles, discourses and tastes that members of the dominant class agree on and

⁴⁰² Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, 1st Edition (MIT Press, 1998), p. 69.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, p. 60. Here, Stevens explains that For Bourdieu power is defined as "the capacity to impose a specific definition of reality that is disadvantageous to others".

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 66.

⁴⁰⁶ Amongst academics, artists and other producers of culture.

⁴⁰⁷ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 66.

value as worthy, architecture aids the process by which the dominant class erects symbolic boundaries around itself. Commonality here operates in clusters of privilege, its symbols aiding a 'commonality of culture' that belongs to the specific class it bounds together.

In King's Cross, symbolic power is practised, and private ownership communicated, through diverse codes, including the construction and maintenance of aesthetic value and other, less perceptible but equally pervasive codes, such as naming. Here, we need to go back to the finials for a moment, as it is in the small, 'unnoticeable' scale of a neighborhood that the politics of distinction, along with increasing inequality and disengagement with local communities, manifest more poignantly. The airing courts' finials, as the railway lands, have been subject to the shifting of ownership from public to private hands.⁴⁰⁸ As Malcom Holmes, author of *Somers Town: A Record of Change*, explained to me, "there is a lot going on in Somers Town by way of campaigns to denounce this, but the finials are impossible to locate".⁴⁰⁹ As he spoke, he reached for his leather bag and took out an invitation to the opening of the exhibition *Gilbert Bayes 1872–1953*, held at The Fine Art Society in 1998, and which he has kept since. On the cover, a picture of the finials they had on display then.⁴¹⁰ With Google's help, other finials can be traced, advertised by auction houses such as Christies, where an original pair of birds appears valued at GBP 27,500.⁴¹¹

Although in some cases the path to the acquisition of these pieces by art galleries and auction houses is unknown, and in spite of the fact that Gilbert Bayes might have made reproductions of the finials for commercial purposes, their economic and symbolic value has

⁴⁰⁸ Filmmaker Tom Tremayne explained the 'privatisation' of the finials at the event *Bayes Somers Town "Art in the Every Day", What Happened to It?*, organized by the History Club at the Living Centre in March 2019. See Tom Tremayne's film *Gilbert Bayes – Maker of Images* here <https://vimeo.com/75383115>. (accessed 11.07.2020) The timeline of the railway lands was discussed in the section *Power: The practice of control in contemporary public space*, in Chapter 02

⁴⁰⁹ Malcom Holmes, cited in the above quote, was present at the event, where I took the opportunity to talk to him. Saturday Film/Walk on Bayes, Somers Town History Club, The Living Centre, Saturday 9 March 2019.

⁴¹⁰ See The Fine Arts Society <https://thefineartsociety.com/user/library/documents/main/140-years-of-exhibitions-at-the-fine-art-society.pdf> (accessed 23.02.2020). P. 68.

⁴¹¹ This is the 'price realised', which means hammer price plus buyer's premium (a fee the auction house charges to the buyers, on top of the hammer price), and excludes taxes or other applicable fees. Estimate prices don't reflect hammer prices, and don't include buyers' premiums or taxes. This particular pair of birds finials remains on display for an estimate price of £1,000 to £1,500. Between St Mary's and St Joseph's flats, there are 32 airing posts (not counting central posts, which display boats), each topped with a bird finial. In terms of economic value only, within the art market, these pieces would be worth about £16,000 (estimate price, that is, its lowest estimate value) or £440,000 the realised price. For the community denouncing the loss of the original finials, see: <https://aspaceforus.club/2019/03/12/what-happened-to-the-finials/> (accessed 20.07.2020). To see the bird at Christies: <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/two-gilbert-william-bayes-1872-1953-royal-doulton-5663094-details.aspx> (accessed 11.07.2020).

been hijacked by and confined to the art market nevertheless, leaving the Somers Town community without their very own iconic symbols – representative of local housing reform for the underprivileged – and more importantly, without the possibility to get them back.⁴¹² Through the finials, dialectics between private and public ownership re-emerge, this time within the wider frame of reference comprising the whole ward of St Pancras and Somers Town. With the Bayes finials considered exclusively as art objects, cultural capital is locked away from any reference to the wealth of symbolic value attached to the Somers Town community.⁴¹³ The finials, that is in their quality as sculptural objects, have been exclusively translated into codes that dominant classes can, and want, to read.⁴¹⁴ A cynical operation rendering their chronological/historical and spatial/local value invisible, and attesting to the fact that, in the words of Stevens, “symbols, are always codes of one sort or another, and must always be decoded. An accountant looking at an Eisenman house sees something very different from an architect”.⁴¹⁵

Going back to naming as a form of practising symbolic power within the King’s Cross Estate, it is important to emphasize the obvious. The name *King’s Cross* is omnipresent across the estate, including the sign printed on the back of the yellow vests that maintenance and security staff wear, an itinerant reminder about the estate’s careful management of the ideal conditions – i.e. cleanliness and safety – for practising lifestyles

⁴¹² According to Steve McCarthy, from the Somers Town History Club, 81 finials have disappeared across the ward’s communal spaces. According to Diana Foster, the club’s Chair, Bayes did make some copies of the finials for commercial purposes, in addition to those made for housing estates in Somers Town. However, the community thinks that as so many finials have been lost it is difficult to believe none of those have ended in commercial galleries or auction houses across London or the UK. Somers Town History Club is very active in campaigning to get as many finials restored or replaced as possible.

⁴¹³ As Bourdieu explains, appropriation is a strategy of distinction by which members of the dominant classes for example, can own ‘priceless’ objects, and “the appropriation of symbolic objects with a material existence, such as paintings, raises the distinctive force of ownership to the second power and reduces purely symbolic appropriation to the inferior status of a symbolic substitute.” Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 277.

⁴¹⁴ As Stevens explains: “The wealthy can promote the interest of their class under the guise of promoting society’s” (i.e. if they lobby for tax cuts for the rich it appears as a crass act for the advancing class interests but if they become patrons of cultural institutions, it appears as a selfless act for the betterment of society as a whole, when it is actually an investment on symbolic capital for dominant classes. Stevens, *The Favored Circle*. p. 70. “Symbolic power, operating in the field of culture, is used by the dominant classes in society to maintain their dominance. Economic power is not enough, nor is physical. The groups that benefit most from society do so with minimal social conflict because the cultural system of that society is constructed to make their dominance appear natural”. Ibid, p. 61.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, p. 63. Although it is likely that Bayes made reproductions of the pieces originally made for housing estates in Somers Town for commercial purposes, a fact that may appear to weaken the argument about de-contextualised cultural capital, the comparison between public and private ownership, especially in connection to maintenance stands. This mainly because Bayes, in his capacity as a Christian socialist committed to social reform and to the motive, believed that beauty dignifies life and, made works for Somers Town at no cost, to remain outside commercial profit circles. It is the privately owned finials and lunettes that can travel into circles of profit, which exclude Somers Town communities.

the estate curates, maintains and profits from. Except, when we stand on Granary Square or elsewhere on the estate, we are not in King's Cross. Administratively, we are in the ward of St Pancras and Somers Town,⁴¹⁶ as Andrew Whitehead explains in his book *Curious King's Cross*:

King's Cross has never had a parish which took its name; there has never been a King's Cross vestry, or borough council or Parliamentary constituency. A Camden Council ward bears the name – but bafflingly, it doesn't include the station nor indeed anything north of Euston Road and stretches deep into parts of Bloomsbury which might not be entirely comfortable with the connection. King's Cross has endured an almost complete administrative anonymity. Yet somehow, the name has always shone more brightly.⁴¹⁷

The name does shine brightly on the estate's website. Its greeting of “*King's Cross – Welcome to the Neighbourhood*” is followed by “Shops, restaurants, bars, galleries. Beautiful new parks & squares. Things to see and do. Arts & culture. Coal Drops Yard shopping.” It delivers a seemingly natural association between the place and its carefully curated idea of what constitutes new, cutting-edge urban redevelopment: expenditure capacity, embellished and legitimised by art and culture; the key into what Bourdieu denominates distinctive tastes and lifestyles, practised, sustained and legitimated via symbolic power.⁴¹⁸ **FIGS. C28–C29.**

⁴¹⁶ See <https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/Community/Camden-Neighbourhood-Profile-Somers-Towns/dv62-dsg9> (accessed 12.07.2020). Considerations of the social equality agenda in Camden, as the framework for negotiations was established during the planning application process for the King's Cross redevelopment, and acknowledgement is given to the levels of deprivation within the St Pancras and Somers Town wards. See Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, *Planning, Politics and City-Making: A Case Study of King's Cross* (Routledge, 2019), p. 45.

⁴¹⁷ Andrew Whitehead, *Curious King's Cross*, p. 8. See also:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070306144548/http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/leisure/local-history/camdens-history.en> (accessed 12.07.2020). Here, the origins of the name King's Cross are described as follows: “King's Cross was previously known as Battle Bridge until 1830, when a short-lived monument to George IV was erected at the junction of Euston, Grays Inn and Pentonville Roads. Euston Road, initially called the New Road from Paddington to Islington and London's first by-pass road, was opened in 1756. Lord Somers was a landowner who took advantage of its construction to develop his fields as Somers Town. The area later became home for many refugees from the French Revolution and people fleeing from Spanish-ruled lands, particularly from South America. It is now home to the new British Library on Euston Road, opened in 1998.” For further accounts on the origin of the name King's Cross, see Angela Inglis, *Railway Lands: Catching St Pancras and King's Cross* (Matador, 2007), pp. 94–103. The name, I guess, has stuck due to the name of the train station, which today stands where the first building named King's Cross stood originally. This little building had the first, and short-lived statue of King George IV on top. The building, erected on the small triangular piece of land left by the intersection between Euston Road, Pentonville Road and Grays Inn Road, was indeed located south of Euston Road, in line with Whitehead's description of King's Cross not including ‘anything north of Euston Road, apparently, from the very beginning’.

⁴¹⁸ As Ben Campkin explains, “There is an assumption that businesses and property-led redevelopment and the housing market will cause a ‘trickle down’ effect, ultimately raising the quality of life and income levels of communities living in such

As with the previous project, crocheting the bird allowed reflection on how “artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in its challenging”,⁴¹⁹ which, as Chantal Mouffe concludes, “is why they necessarily have a political dimension”.⁴²⁰ The temporary agency that the *Granny Square* project might have delivered so far has been shaped by aiming to reconcile individual subjective experiences and memories of Somers Town with objective dominant structures active within the ward more widely.⁴²¹ About a year ago, I met Betty by the reception desk in Plender Street. I was looking for a set of the postcards Jess Grieve and I had made, featuring the paintings in The Snug. The receptionist handed over some sets. Betty watched as I opened them and said, “they are the pride and joy of my life, them paintings”.⁴²² Nothing is worth celebrating more.

At the time of writing, the last public performance for the *Granny Square* project, scheduled for the beginning of April 2020, has been indefinitely postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis. The performance, to be sited on Granary Square, has been titled *This is Somers Town*, and aims at furthering the socialization of the history of the ward and its senior citizens, while continuing to use the granny square plarn-crochet bird as a prop. We have planned to continue to knit it as the performance unfolds, at the end of which the crochet sign *This is Somers Town*, would have been ready to be knitted into it, while we sit with it on a granite square bench. Although the initial aim to crochet covers for the eight square benches in Granary Square might still seem unlikely, the possibility remains for this project to continue in the future, in keeping with its open-ended nature.

areas. In practice, however, in London and elsewhere, the neoliberal strategies the Plan promotes have been widely criticised for working directly against such objectives: increasing inequality, reducing the amount of genuinely affordable housing, instigating the demolition of estates rather than their renewal, alienating communities instead of engaging with them, and so on. See Campkin, *Remaking London*, p. 5. Although here he is referring to The London Plan 2001, and the King’s Cross redevelopment was negotiated before this, Campkin focuses rather on its effects on the politics of regeneration and the strategies that it had been promoting, which, as he writes, are indeed relevant in reference to the King’s Cross redevelopment project. At the end of this quote, a note directs to a number of texts where wide criticism on the strategies promoted by the London Plan can be found. Particularly relevant here is the reference to Michael Edwards’ text *King’s Cross Renaissance for Whom?*, where he contextualises the King’s Cross redevelopment within historical, political and economic frameworks. See Punter, *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance*, 2009, pp. 189–205.

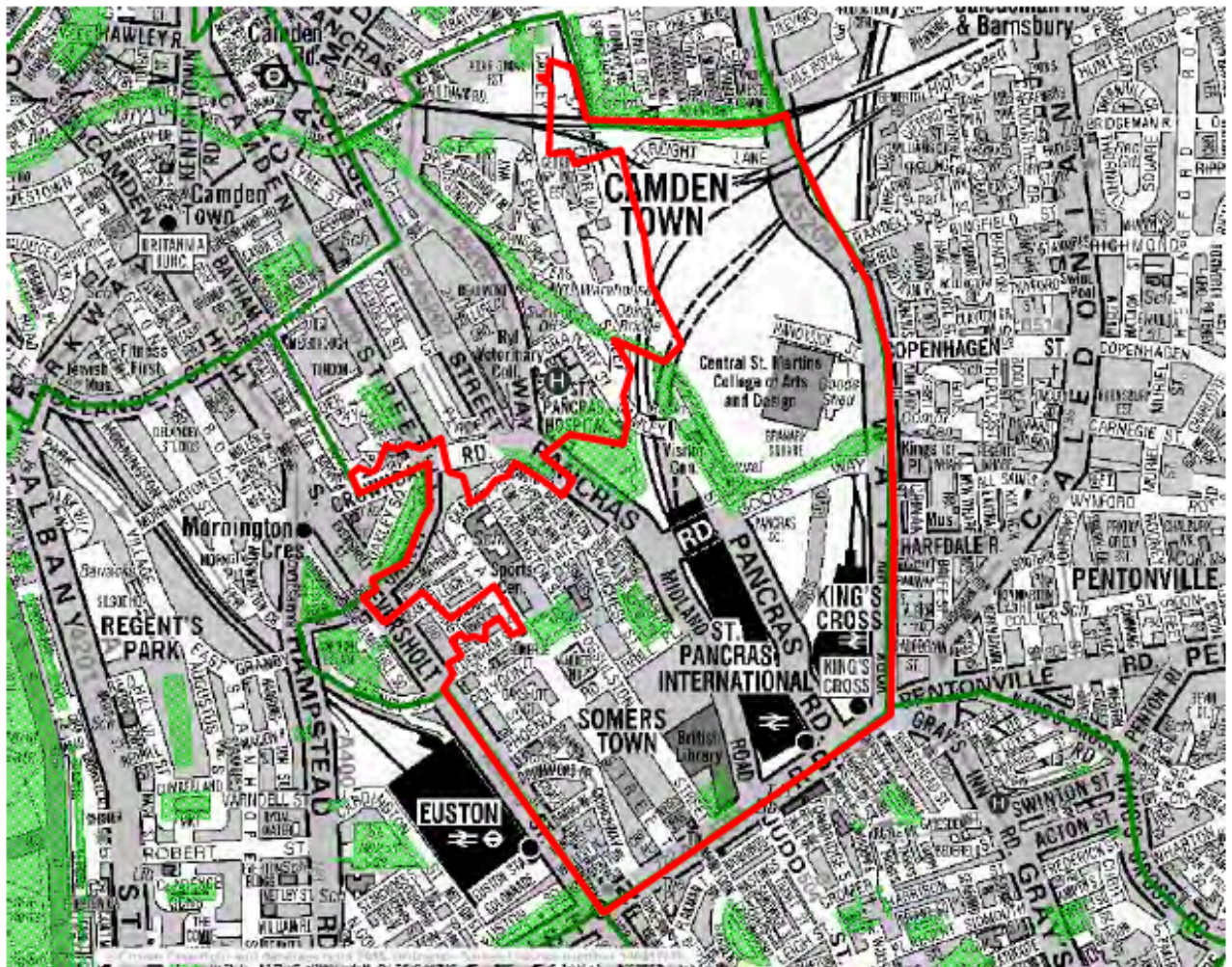
⁴¹⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, p. 91.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

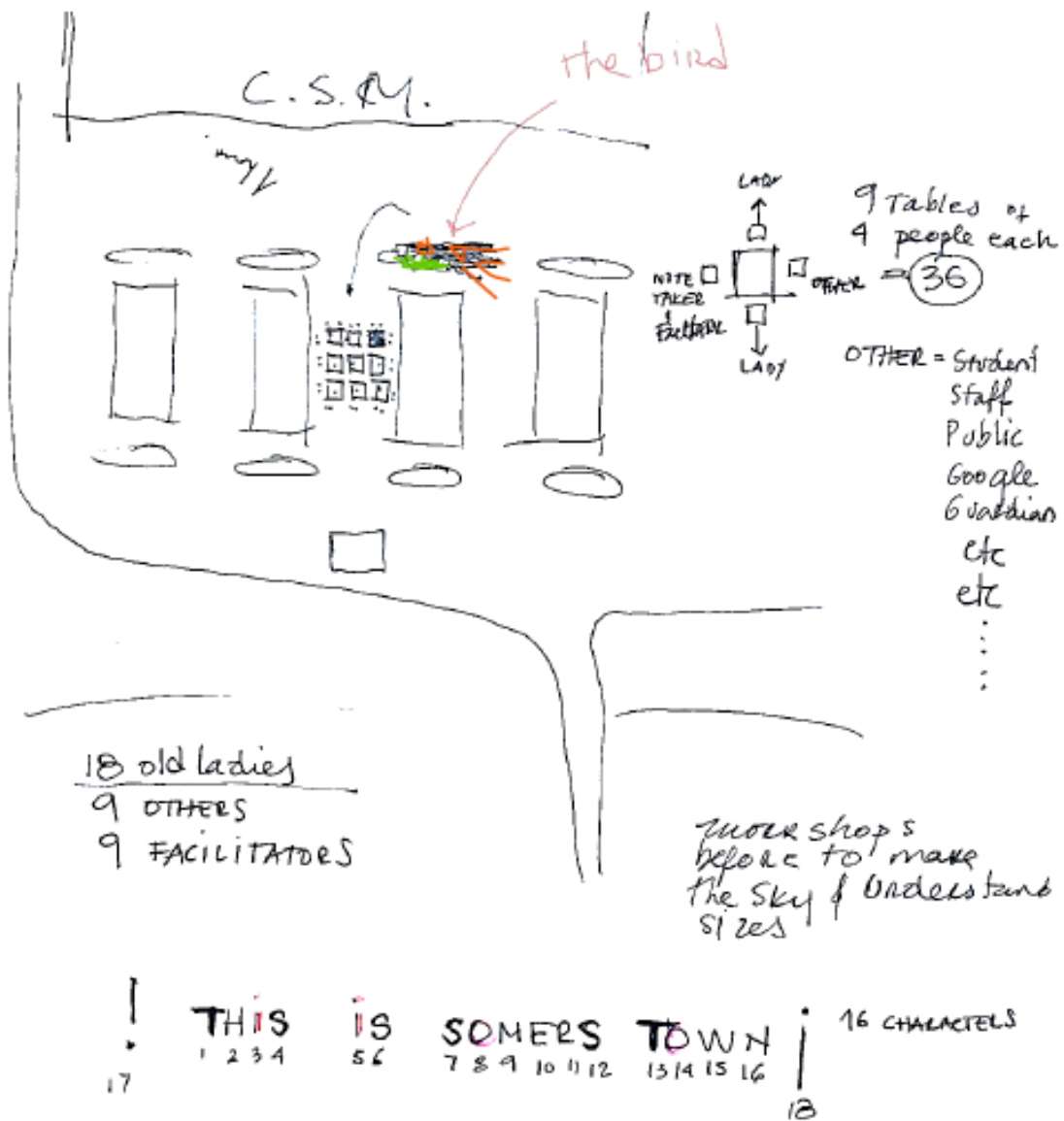
⁴²¹ I refer to Somers Town here as the area “contained within Hampstead Road, Euston Road, Pancras Road and Eversholt Street” as described in Malcom J. Holmes, *Somers Town: A Record of Change* (London Borough of Camden-Libraries and Arts Department, 1985), p. i. These borders are how the ward is most often perceived locally by residents.

⁴²² Thursday, 30 May 2019.

Somers Town



SOMERS TOWN WARD ADMINISTRATIVE BORDERS – CAMDEN COUNCIL. FIG. C28.



The performance will take place in Granary Square, where we will place nine tables with four people sitting each, at the centre of the square. Our crocheted bird -the bench cover we have been crocheting for the last year - will be placed on a bench close to the tables. Sitting at each table will be: two members of the SPCA and/or Somers Town & Saint Pancras residents, one facilitator/note taker and one other member of the community which could be a CSM Student, a member of the public, or a member of staff from nearby institutions such as CSM, Camden Council, The Guardian, Google, etc.

THIS IS SOMERS TOWN! – BRIEF PREVIEW. FIG. C29.

Conclusions

*After the revolution, who is going to pick up the rubbish on Monday morning?*⁴²³

*I associate dirt with poverty, with loss of control;
and as a somnambulist, I am walking to the rituals and responding to the symbols
that really meant something seventy years ago.*⁴²⁴

After five years undertaking practice-based research on architecture and urban design, I am left with a plarn crochet bird, some pictures of a vanished water-drawn spider and a set of memories about dirty laundry washed in public. Motivated by a long-sustained suspicion that the rituals of practice and the ethical symbols provided by modern architecture – the dominant model for professional practice during my formative years – were leaving some important clues for me in how to practise my profession, I set out to look for and reclaim the ‘discarded elements’ I believed had been left by the practices of the established architects and urban designers who had influenced my education. These elements, I believed, related to engagement with the diverse groups of people usually and necessarily involved in the creation and preservation of projects. One of the conclusions of this research is that I have been able to specify, with greater confidence and accuracy, practices other than those I was trained to undertake as a young professional architect, and to understand that these practices could be critically located within existing environments that are often created in accordance with ethics dictated by the dominant practices I have been keen to question and to temporarily subvert. To a large extent, these other ways of practice I have been interested to explore deal with ‘picking up the rubbish after the revolution’. That is, they focus on material that has been unnoticed and/or discarded as inconsequential by dominant discourses and practices of architecture, often shaped by the form-centered project to sequentially revolutionise and counter-revolutionise the profession in the last century.

⁴²³ Mierle Laederman Ukeles, *Maintenance Art Manifesto*, 1969.

⁴²⁴ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology From the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, (Basic Books, 1983), p. 218.

Within my own domestic space, there is an inner voice that tells me daily: 'house work never ends – the rubbish needs to be picked up'. In the context of architecture and urban design practice, the making of this research has allowed me to recontextualise this inner voice within the more public endeavour of professional practice, as a necessary reminder about the fact that maintenance work never ends either: it deals with material that can be reclaimed and reworked as spatial practice. That is to say that, as the everyday at home produces inconsequential and forgettable 'products', so does my profession produce seemingly inconsequential objects, such as a bird, a spider or a set of 'clean sheets', which, through the process of their making, can nevertheless inform other, more open ways to practise.

Within the field of architecture and urban design, the hegemony of modernism has produced symbols, which, to paraphrase Ruth Schwartz Cohen, meant something seventy years ago. Although she was speaking about her domestic labour and how her laundry chores ensured the presentable appearance of her children at school, a parallel with architectural history can be made, taking into account the power of the white wall, which, as Mark Wigley describes, provided an ethic and aesthetic bond between architecture and urban design practitioners in the heyday of the modern project.⁴²⁵ Furthering the reference to Schwartz Cohen's quote at the beginning of this section, scrutinizing the processes of production and maintenance of contemporary public space has allowed me to substantiate the claim that associations of dirt with poverty and loss of control continue to transcend the space of the home and the dynamics of domestic labour, continue to be placed at the heart of architecture and urban design practices, and that they contribute to defining the politics of control in public spaces after projects have been delivered. The spatial practices proposed in this investigation have explored ways to create bonds between lay spatial practitioners and architecture and urban designers, other than those dependent on exclusive design and the associated maintenance practices, all aimed at preserving the sites of contemporary civic life as pristine and orderly as possible.

⁴²⁵ As discussed in Chapter 02 under *Labour: The Practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space*

The current Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the extent to which inequality and structures of distinction permeate all levels of society.⁴²⁶ Architecture and urban design practice are no exception. In any given project, structures of distinction specific to site and place manifest through the relations that the everyday making of a project entails. Architects and urban designers have the choice to consider and address the structures of distinction that emerge through practice at any given place and time, and to adjust their practices accordingly. As explained in the Interim Chapter, practices change, emerge and disappear in a process characteristic of social dynamics and how they unfold in everyday life. The analysis conducted by Shove, Pantzar and Watson in the book *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, explains these processes, and the ways in which they can exert positive change.⁴²⁷ However, theories of social practice such as theirs are mostly used to advance policy changes necessary to tackle the most pressing issues of the day, such as climate change. In my capacity as a spatial practitioner, I have reflected on these theories, to understand and reconsider how practices of maintenance in contemporary public spaces have changed and impacted spatial practice, and to create bridges between them and more socially responsive and collective forms of work.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that the construction of dominant narratives of taste has been an important tool to legitimise and perpetuate the knowledge base of architects and urban designers. When architects and corporations pair-up to advance urban redevelopment projects, dominant narratives take hold of the two core issues that define architecture: space – via the aesthetics of form, suitable for the validation of images, which, coded by architects eloquently (or not), communicate how future representations of power and civic life should look like; and time – via the curation and control of maintenance strategies managed by developers/managers, which include varied user programs and events that largely proscribe civic life. The result is that aesthetically controlled public spaces – and when I say aesthetically I am including the effects caused by maintenance protocols via exclusive design, cleaning-and-repair labour and user programs – translate

⁴²⁶ See Michael Marmot, 'Covid Exposes Massive Inequality. Britain Cannot Return to "Normal"', *The Guardian*, 15 December 2020.

⁴²⁷ Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (Sage, 2012), pp. 21–25.

into sites through which dominant narratives are absorbed into the everyday life of cities, taking hold of notions of citizenship tied to dominant power structures.

In his text *Protest as Spatial Practice*, Carl Fraser explains that, “a significant element of [cultural hegemony’s] effectiveness is our unawareness of its processes.”⁴²⁸ However, attending to the subject of maintenance in a context wider than that offered by technocratic understandings,⁴²⁹ offers the possibility to highlight and bring into awareness other, more sensitive, empathic and inclusive ways to practise. The sum of small-scale and critical actions against dominant structures of power and practice might aid a more coherent maintenance operation in which new forms of social relations are envisioned, leading to more inclusive and tolerant civic life and civic spaces. Today, in the context of the pandemic, sanitation concerns have taken centre stage, posing the frightening prospect of human contact being regarded as dangerous and becoming ever more mediated. However, critical practices can contribute to responsibly bridge these concerns by continuing to bring solidary forms of civic engagement to the centre of practice, so the sum of seemingly minor interventions could ultimately contribute to a wider project of much-needed repair.

⁴²⁸ Fraser, Carl, *Protest as Spatial Practice*. In Melanie Dodd, *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City* (Abingdon, Oxon England; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), p. 28. (He articulates his thought in connection with what he calls the reduced status and dwindling regularity of protest and their effects, when comparing occupy London (2010–11) with the Brixton Riots (1985) and the Poll Tax Riots (1990).)

⁴²⁹ Refer to my considerations on health and safety at the start of the section *Labour: The Practice of Maintenance in Contemporary Public Space*. See also note no. 180, on the O & M Manual.

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Photos by Nathalie Harb.

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Photo by Catarina Heeckt.

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Photos by Adriana Cobo.

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Photo by Catarina Heeckt.

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Photo by Catarina Heeckt.

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Photo provided by Steven McCarthy.

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Photo by Adriana Cobo.

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Photo by Adriana Cobo.

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Photo by Adriana Cobo.

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Photos by Catarina Heeckt.

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Photos by Catarina Heeckt.

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Photo by Adriana Cobo,

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Annexes

Annex 1: Methodology Booklet

Please find this annex in the form of the following PowerPoint presentation:
[ACobo_PhD_MethoBook.pptx](#)

Annex 2: Negotiation Process Sample

This is a brief compilation of the most important moments in the process of negotiation conducive to the delivery of the second performance intervention devised for the research, *The Disappearing Garden*.

Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

FIRST NEGOTIATION PROCESS FOR PERFORMANCE PROJECTS ON GRANARY SQ.

Length of negotiation: May to September 2016

Projects Proposed:

1. Dressing the Square benches for sleeping for three afternoons
2. Re-arranging movable furniture at 30 minute intervals for one morning
3. Constructing a water drawing for the Big Draw 2016 with Maintenance Staff on site

Outcome to May 2017: Not agreed

STAGES 1-2

20 MAY 2016 / FIRST CONTACTS / CSM and KCES

Sent to: Jessica King And Holly Buford-Thomas – Visitor and Events Scheduling Management - CSM
David Todd – Events and Logistics Management - KCES
Stephen Beddoe – Director of External Relations - CSM



Adriana Cobo Corey <acobocorey@gmail.com>

20/05/2016 ☆



to S.beddoe, David, Jessica, Holly

Dear Stephen,

I am Adriana Cobo, a PhD student at CSM, investigating notions of taste and functional scripts on Granary Square.

As part of my research, I devise performances on the square. Please find my project outline and proposals attached to this email for your perusal.

I have been in contact with David Todd, Jess King and Holly Buford-Thomas about my proposals, and very happy to meet in order to further discuss them.

Many thanks for your time and attention to this.

My very best,

Adriana



20 MAY 2016 /Brief 01

Taste Untold: Performance as Spatial Narrative in Public Space

Proposal for participation and related events 2016/2017

Adriana Cobo/PhD Candidate, CSM

<http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/current-research/student-research-projects/architecture--spatial-design/adriana-cobo/>

Project Outline

My PhD questions how notions of taste play out in the public realm, specifically on Granary Square, using performance as a method. The project focuses on use and functional scripts. It aims to understand how notions of style, cultural programmes and maintenance structures intersect on site. It explores how these intersections might steer the everyday dynamics of place, and leave an imprint on the ways in which we perceive, use and appropriate public spaces.

Generally, the project investigates spatial, political and cultural agendas driving perceptions and functional programmes in public space. For this, I devise performances and site testings on my own, in duos or groups of up to ten people. Specifically, the project aims at understanding distinctive communities operating on site, and focuses on those which are crucial to the maintenance of its space, though usually

not regarded as active agents of its cultural diversity and programmes. In the case of Granary Square⁴³⁰, the Kings Cross estate staff operating 24/7 on site, constitute a highly relevant community for the development of my PhD investigations, both theoretically and practically.⁴³¹

Below, I have outlined **five key instances of work** for investigating the maintenance communities on site, and the potential involvement of members of the Kings Cross Estate staff as research participants. Please would you kindly consider them.

These instances would be as follows:

1. **Presenting myself as an architect/performer** and a member of the Central Saint Martins research community, along with my project for investigating Granary Square.
2. **Attending briefing meetings** in order to comprehend work guidelines and protocols
3. **Carrying out interviews** and conversations regarding working/living routines and daily experiences, as well as overall perceptions, readings and understanding of place, deriving from the staff's unique and ongoing exposure to the site.
4. **Having out-sessions on site** with staff members, in order to observe (and train myself on) the set of skills the staff performs daily when cleaning and warding the site.
5. **Involving members of staff as collaborators** and participants for the design and delivery of specific performative projects, to be proposed as part of the site's cultural agenda. (Please see Project's proposal below for further description)

Projects

- A. Solo, duo or group performances on site:

⁴³⁰ A space I have been enjoying, observing and investigation for the past year, looking out of the window of the PhD Research Office in the Granary Building 1st Floor of the library, as well as intervening with small performances to do with washing, cleaning and doing the laundry.

⁴³¹ The performance work of Mierle Laederman Ukeles on Sanitation Aesthetics and Andrea Fraser on Institutional Critique, constitute the basis for the practice of performance as one of the project's research methods.

- 'Dressed for a Rest'/Sleeping in the square (dressing the benches –maximum three of the eight-) for inviting members of the public, students and teaching staff to sleep on the square. The rationale for this project deals with issues of vulnerability and intimacy as well as comfort, exhaustion and appropriation in public space.

Proposed dates: 29, 30 of June and 1 July, 2:00 to 4:30 Daily (including rehearsals)

- 'Tidying up' Re-arranging the square's furniture in diverse configurations (yellow and purple benches) for collective chatting drinking and eating. The rationale of this project explores issues of borders, order and routine within public space.

Proposed dates: Week 20-25 June from 10am to 1:00 pm/daily (including rehearsals)

B. Working with members of the KX Staff

- Presenting myself and my research. *Week of 13 June*
- Carrying out Interviews and conversations. *Fifteen minutes per day for three weeks /last two weeks of June and First Week of July. Times as directed by KX Estate*
- Having out-sessions with members of Staff on site. *Week of the 4 to 8 of July. Times as directed by KX Estate.*
- Designing and delivering performative projects with members of KX Staff. I propose to construct a scale drawing on granary square, with members of the cleaning staff; using their skill and the cleaning equipment, as well as programming the water fountains. My proposal is to devise a final event within the context of the big draw, *October 2017.*

This project requires sitting down sessions including brain storming, negotiating and designing the project, as well as rehearsal time towards the final event.

Thank you for reading

03 JUN 2016 / FOLLOW-UP on brief 01

With External Relations – CSM



Adriana Cobo Corey <acobocorey@gmail.com>

03/06/2016 ☆

to S.beddoe, David, Jessica, Holly

Dear Stephen,

A quick note to follow up on my email regarding my research project on Granary Square.

I would be very grateful if you could make some time to meet about this please. I am based at CSM, and anytime would suit me this coming week.

Thank you.

Very best,

Adriana

...

Meeting scheduled for 14 Jun 2016

Verbal feedback received in meeting: To write the brief focusing on practical issues – when, what, how –

14 JUN 2016 / Brief 02 (Amended B01) – Sent to External Relations CSM

Taste Untold: Performance as Spatial Practice in Public Space

Proposal for participation and performance events on Granary Square 2016/2017 - Adriana Cobo/PhD Candidate, CSM

Project Outline

My project investigates taste, style and use on Granary Square. In order to do this, I devise performances on site. Since the efficient maintenance of the square is a key to its success, the Kings Cross Estate staff operating 24/7 on site, constitute a highly relevant community for my research.

This proposal kindly asks for the possibility to work with members of the Kings Cross Estate staff (cleaning, security, management) as research participants for my investigation. Below, I have outlined five key instances of work to investigate the maintenance communities on site, for your consideration:

1. Meeting the staff and introducing myself as an architect/performer and a member of the Central Saint Martin's research community, along with my project on Granary Square.
2. Attending some briefing meetings in order to comprehend work guidelines and protocols

3. Carrying out interviews and conversations regarding working/living routines and daily experiences, as well as overall perceptions, readings and understanding of place, deriving from the staff's unique and ongoing exposure to the site.
4. Having out-sessions on site with staff members, in order to observe (and train myself on) the set of skills the staff performs daily when cleaning and warding the site.
5. Involving members of staff as collaborators and participants for the design and delivery of specific performative projects, to be proposed as part of the site's cultural agenda. (Please see Project's proposal below, for further description)

Projects Proposal

Please note all suggested dates here are aspirational, and will be accommodated to the Kings Cross Estate scheduling needs and suggestions.

Solo, duo or group performances and testings on site:

- Continuing to do my laundry in the fountains once a week / To set a recurrent weekday desirable
- Sleeping Out: up to six performers set up colourful fabrics and a cushion to take a 30 minutes nap, out on the square benches (a maximum of four out of the eight benches would be dressed).
Tentative dates: *second or third week July, 6:00 to 7:30/Three times (including rehearsals)*
- 'Tidying up'/Re-arranging the square's furniture: different movable furniture configurations (yellow and purple benches) will be laid out, for collective chatting drinking and eating.
Tentative dates: *Last week July, 11am to 2:00 pm/Three times (including rehearsals).*

Working with members of the KX Staff: *Times as directed by KX Estate*

- Presenting myself and my research / *July 2016*
- Carrying out Interviews and conversations. *20 minutes per day for three weeks / Jul-Aug 2016*
- Having out-sessions with members of staff on site / *Jul-Aug 2016*
- Designing and delivering performative projects with members of KX Staff. I propose to construct a large scale drawing on granary square, with members of the cleaning staff; using their skill and the cleaning equipment, as well as programing the water fountains. My proposal is to device a final event within the context of the big draw / *October 2016*.
Note: This project requires sitting down sessions including brain storming, negotiating and designing the project, as well as rehearsal time towards the final event.

Thank you for reading

STAGE 3

04 JUL 16 / COMMUNICATION FROM ARGENT VIA EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS – CSM


Outcome: Not Agreed

Objections/Reservations:

On Washing-Performances that restrict access to the public enjoyment of the square can't be allowed

On Sleeping: Nervous about depictions of rough sleeping through art projects

On Water-Drawing: KCES Security Staff are exceptionally busy and additional pressures to the provision of services are not desirable

 **Stephen Beddoe** <s.beddoe@csm.arts.ac.uk>
to me

04/07/2016   

Dear Adriana

I hope you're well.

I have recently spoken to David Tod and Maxine at Argent regarding your proposal, and (as you know) I sent your proposal on to them to consider. I know that they have now discussed this themselves and I'm sorry to say that they have some reservations about agreeing to the project happening on the King's Cross estate. I trust you'll understand their point of view as both the developers, and the estate service organisation (KCES) that keeps the area ticking over. They have given me feedback as to why they can't support the project; including that (primarily) the KCES security team are exceptionally busy and they don't want to add additional pressures to provision of services. Moreover, they are somewhat nervous about depictions of rough sleeping in the area through an art project, and couldn't allow performances that restrict access to the public's enjoyment of the space (i.e. The proposal to do a 'washing' performance in the fountains). I know you'll be disappointed in their feedback and decision on this, and I don't know what you would like to do now. It may be that you want to rethink the project in the context of this space, or take the idea to a different local neighborhood. Or, indeed, consider approaching a different service provider. I have heard, for example, that Yeolia, the large french sanitation and waste services company that have their HQ nearby, are quite enlightened (though perhaps a bit too close to Merle Ukeles' projects in the past?). Indeed, they were a sponsor of the Litre of light installation during Lumiere last year. We have contacts there if it is of interest.

Get back to me if you'd like to discuss further.

Best regards.

Stephen


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.....
Stephen Beddoe
Director of External Relations

Central Saint Martins
University of the Arts London
Granary Building, 1 Granary Square
London N1C 4AA
T: 020 7514 9831

CSM: [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)

Suggestions and support from ER-CSM: Look for other sites, agencies, organisations and service providers

 **Stephen Beddoe** <s.beddoe@csm.arts.ac.uk>
to me

04/07/2016   

Dear Adriana

I realise and sympathise that you are disappointed in Argent/KCES's decision not to support your project. I think they simply find it (possibly) too contentious and challenging for them. They are the owners and custodians of the space and services of King's Cross so ultimately it is their decision and we cannot argue against that.

It's for you to decide whether you want to amend your proposal and send back to them, but I suspect the answer and decision would be the same from them.

Therefore, difficult though it is, you may need to look for other (local) sites, agencies or organisations (i.e. Camden Council, or British Canals and Waterways, or perhaps one of the many local charity organisations in the kings Cross area) that may be interested in your project and it's outcomes. I'm happy to talk through with you some alternative options.

Best regards.

Stephen

.....
Stephen Beddoe
Director of External Relations

06 JUL 16 / REPORT ON BRIEF NEGOTIATION OUTCOMES TO SUPERVISORS

Hello Mel, hello Jeremy,

After two months of conversations towards getting approvals for my practice on Granary Square; I was informed yesterday that unfortunately, both Argent (Maxine Shannon-Project Manager/Events and Enlivenment) and the Kings Cross Estate Services (David Tod-Events Manager), have reservations about agreeing to my proposals.

Stephen Beddoe informed me that they are nervous about artistic depictions of rough sleeping on the square, and what kinds of public perception this might trigger. They are also concerned about ongoing projects i.e. my washing, as these might obstruct public enjoyment. About my proposal to devise a project in collaboration with members of the maintenance staff (security + cleaning), they consider personnel (specially security) are extra busy to add pressure on the provision of services.

However low my expectations to succeed pushing this forward might be (at the moment), I will insist and send an amended proposal adjusted according to their concerns. I will also be asking for an appointment, in order to personally explain the project and have a dialog about how could it be modified towards mutual agreement and trust.

As you know, my intention is not to confront the management of the estate, but to explore potential intersections and juxtapositions between spatial practices and maintenance structures on site. And to make these visually available, working in conjunction with and for the benefit of all involved, including Argent, KCES and my academic research at CSM.

If there is any way in which you think you could help me pushing this forward, I will greatly appreciate your comments, suggestions and support. However, for the moment, it does not look as if I will be able to run a performance any time soon in July, on Granary Square, as I had been planning to do (Mel, I had promised to confirm a date with you as soon as I had news).

This, of course, raises important questions and themes for the overall subject of my thesis, which I will elaborate and incorporate to the sample chapter I will be handing in by the end of the month.



For now, I will be busy re-considering my practice strategy, studying alternatives, re-adjusting my proposals, and writing towards confirmation. If you are around and have a moment to discuss these in the following weeks, I will be at college most days until the end of July.




My best,


Adriana

22-26 JUL 16 / FOLLOW-UP on Argent's decision

With External Relations – CSM

Adriana Cobo  [Inbox](#) 

 **Adriana Cobo Corey** <acobocorey@gmail.com> 22/07/2016 ☆  

to Stephen 

Dear Steven,

Since I have not heard from you, I am assuming there have been no news from Argent/Maxine Shannon. I will be away from Thursday 28 July, but with access to the internet most of the time. I will also be working most days. So please do let me know when there are developments regarding my proposals.

I have decided not to change my location and continue working on Granary Square. I am aware of the fact that I need to work within the framework provided by Argent and KCES. This might imply a re-formulation of my performance strategies for GS, which I am considering now.


It would be wonderful to discuss this with you in due course. Perhaps in September, when the summer break draws to a close?




In the mean time, have a great summer break.


Hope to hear from you soon.

My very best,

Adriana



 **Stephen Beddoe** <s.beddoe@csm.arts.ac.uk> 26/07/2016 ☆  

to me 

Dear Adriana

Thanks for your email. Yes, I'm afraid Argent/KCES have not got back to me.

When you have reformulated your proposal for further consideration by Argent/KCES please send it to me, and we can perhaps follow up with a meeting in September, as you suggest.

In the meantime, have a lovely summer break.

Best regards.

Stephen

.....

Stephen Beddoe
Director of External Relations

Central Saint Martins
University of the Arts London
Granary Building, 1 Granary Square
London N1C 4AA
T: 020 7514 9831

CSM: [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)

I decide to continue amending the briefs, and present these to Argent for reconsideration

Core amendments:

No involvement of security staff in projects: clarifying water drawings are proposed with cleaning staff only

No large groups: limiting the number of cleaning staff to collaborate with water drawing to six people

No on-going performances: reducing washing, sleeping and tidying-up performances to one final session

No long performances: reducing the duration of performances to one hour

Request: To make a short presentation of the project myself, to Argent

16 SEP 2016 / Brief 03 (Amended B02) – Sent to External Relations – CSM

Proposal for participation and performance events on Granary Square 2016/2017
Adriana Cobo/PhD Candidate, CSM

As I understand that Argent and KCES have expressed reservations about my submitted proposals for performances on Granary Square, I have re-considered them and made amendments according to your concerns. This, in order to seek for a dialog, as I believe my proposal could contribute to the life and cultural programme in Granary Square, and bring benefits to all involved. My main request at present, would be to have a short appointment to visually present and personally explain what I am intending to do, how and why. For now, I will be very grateful if you could consider the amended proposal below.

General amendments

- No involvement of security or management staff within the proposal
- Minimising activities involving cleaning staff
- Reducing the frequency and duration of the proposed performances
- Specifying proposed interventions in detail (requires a brief presentation)

Potential work with some of the cleaning staff has been reconsidered to include the following only:

- Meeting the staff and introducing myself and my project
- Involving six members of the cleaning staff as collaborators and participants for the design and delivery of one specific performative project, in the context of the Big Draw (see below)

Project amendments

Performances and testings on site:

- Washing: One final performance on the square (Three people/One hour)
- Laying down: One performance, minimal props (Six People/One hour)
- Tidying: Different movable furniture configurations (yellow and purple benches) to be laid out, for chatting, drinking and eating. Then cleaned and put back in place (Two people/Three hours)

Working with members of the KX Cleaning Staff:

- Presenting myself and my project (45 minutes)
- Designing and delivering one performative project with members of KX cleaning staff: constructing a large scale water-drawing on granary square, with members of the cleaning staff; using their skill and the cleaning equipment. In the context of the Big Draw/October 2016.

Note: This project requires one sitting down session for discussing and designing the project, as well as two rehearsals towards the final event. (Six people/ten hours of work each-total/performance duration 1.5 hours)

Thank you for reading

Outcome: no response to date

MAY-JUL 2017 / TO FOLLOW-UP on Argent's decision

With amended brief

MAY 2017 / Brief 04 (Detailed and revised B03) – To be discussed and sent to External Relations – CSM

Key events and following meetings breakdown from **first encounter on 20 MAY 2016:**

06 JUN 2017: PhD Confirmation granted, informal notification by DoS

27 JUN 2017: Supervision with DoS and Introduction to Monica Hundal, Director (Interim), Innovation and Business, CSM

13 JUL 2017: Meeting with Monica Hundal to present brief – Brief approved

18 JUL 2017: Meeting with Monica Hundal, Stephen Beddoe and Ellie Beedham, Project Manager - Events and Enlivenment (Maternity Cover), Argent LLP – Brief approved

14 SEP 2017: Meeting with David Tod, Events Logistics Manager KCES and Maxine Shannon, Project Manager - Events and Enlivenment, Argent LLP – **Brief approved**

29 SEP 2017: Conversation with Georgia Jacob, Creative Producer, Local Encounters, CSM Public, to discuss project support

06 OCT 2017: Meeting With David Tod and Adam Bramhall, Head of Environmental Services, KCES (Subcontracted) – Brief approved

25 OCT Meeting with Chryssi Tzanetou, CSM to discuss support for the project, budget and funding options

03 NOV 2017: Meeting with Robin Bland, Personnel Manager for Environmental Services, with maintenance staff Cem Iskender, Halil Ibrahim and Benjamin Gonzales

8 NOV 2017: Meeting with Gary Campbell, Sustainability Coordinator, CSM, to discuss socialising the project as part of the Green Week Programme in Feb. 2017

14 NOV 2017: First mini-pilot takes place on Granary Square, with Cem Iskender, Halil Ibrahim and Benjamin Gonzales and CSM March students Matt, Dan and John

Annex 3: Projects Credits

The Great Unwashed and We Have Got to Wash!

Performers for *The Great Unwashed*: Daniela Sanchez, Laura Del Somar, Isabela Aragao, Adriana Cobo and Farhad Dawi. With Thanks to Elena Veguillas and Carla Capeto for helping with the logistics of video making and handling equipment.

Performers for *We Have Got to Wash!*: Laura Steiner and Adriana Cobo

Photography: Catarina Heeckt and Nathalie Harb

With special thanks to:

Susan Trangmar and Steven Ball, convenors of the research group Sensingsite – CSM, which made this project possible

The Disappearing Garden

The Disappearing Garden is a project by Adriana Cobo, in collaboration with Andres Alvarez, Halil Ibrahim, Cem Iskender, Benjamin Gonzales and Marcelo Samaniego – Cleaners and Machine Operators for Environmental Services KCES. Matthew Brown, Jonathan Shmulevitch, Amy O’Shaughnessy and Daniel Wilkins - MA Students from Spatial Practices CSM. It has been possible thanks to the kind support and cooperation of Environmental Services, King’s Cross Estate Services.

Photography: Catarina Heeckt and Nathalie Harb

Video: Hugo Glendenning with Tilly Shinner

With special thanks to:

Robin Bland, Operations Manager Environmental Services

Adam Bramhall, Head of Environmental Services – KCES

David Tod, Events Logistics Manager – KCES

Maxine Shannon, Project Manager Events and Enlivenment – Argent LLP, and Ellie Beedham, Project Manager (Events & Enlivenment) Maternity Cover

Monica Hundal, Director of Innovation and Businesses – CSM

All work titles as of April 2018.

Granny Square project

Our enthusiastic participants and community members, who every week welcomed me patiently in the Stitch and Knit Group are: Betty Davies, Dot Godwin, Doris Kent, Shirley Shand, Zohreh Rahimi, Zena Robinson, Lucy, Jean. Also Terry, who collected material from different sources for our plarn-making every week. And: MA Architecture graduates Jonathan Shmulevitch, Amy O'Shaughnessy, Daniel Wilkins and Matthew Brown, and Mika Lapid, UAL Short Courses Student, and plarn crotchetier.

Photography: Catarina Heeckt and Nathalie Harb

Special thanks to:

Jess Grieve, Project Coordinator for We Are Ageing Better UK – St Pancras and Somers Town.

Georgia Jacob, Creative Producer for CSM Public, who made our first pilot possible and invited us to be part of the Camden wide project MAKE.

Shelagh O'Gorman, Volunteer for the Saint Pancras Community Association, SPCA, and community organiser for The Knit and Stitch group.

Camilla Brueton, Postgraduate Community and Events Manager, UAL

Abigail Fletcher, Postgraduate Community Coordinator, UAL

Rachael Taylor, Project Manager for Origin Housing, and thanks to her mother who knitted many granny squares for us.

Rachel Mathews, Artist and Knitting Expert, for her time, kindness and valuable advice.

Alexandra Rigillo, Crochet expert, for her generosity, assistance and enthusiasm

Annex 4: Ode to Odila

I wrote this short text in June 2018. It was part of a writing exercise aimed at finding the different voices involved in the research, and which would ultimately constitute the overall text. Writing the Ode to Odila was the first step towards finding my own voice amongst the others. Odila Piedrahita was my High School History Teacher in Colegio Liceo Benalcazar, Cali, from 1984-1987.

During my last year of secondary school, I had to attend an hour per week for career advice. Some months into it, we reached the conclusion, with my advisor, that a strong choice would be to pursue a degree in architecture. My interests at the time ranged from medicine to art, and included dance, drama and literature. Architecture was not a clear option to me, but it somehow made it to the top of my list. Why? Well...

Architecture has traditionally been able to convincingly promise the accomplishment of a historically failed project aimed at blending humanities and science (the eternal emotion/reason dialectic). In my parents imagination such promise, which they regarded as fact, meant becoming an architect could satisfy my 'artistic inclinations', while also ensuring some financial security for my future. At least a better one than if I pursued a career in dance, drama or art. Shit.

Odila, oh dear Odila, was my history teacher at the time. She appreciated my stubborn dedication to studying (which needless to say, made me very popular amongst some bullish mates), and was keen to help me develop my character and learning. When she found out I had decided to study architecture she got genuinely worried, and called me aside to discuss. Architecture... Why? You are a very social person Adriana, you like people, you are good with people. Have you considered the social sciences? Why do you want to study a career so cold, so nothing-to-do-with-people?

Oh please Odila... I thought. What are buildings for if not for people? Honestly...

On I went to spend three decades of my life delving into architecture, only to become, from very early on, increasingly suspicious about the profession's obsessing over form and taste and class and status. Retrospectively, I see my career today as a fight against my young decision to

study architecture Odila so wisely warned me against. Odila. You had no clue about architecture. How could you be so right? Did you know that your mundane view - that architects design (sometimes) beautiful buildings, full stop - was destined to be placed at the heart of post-modern architectural critique, and of my own professional research into how performance architecture can contribute towards staging more socially responsive practices within the profession?

So yes Odila, I am now on route to make you proud. I have worked through a research to place my 'good ways with people' at the centre of an architectural practice focused on use and program and working with non-architects, mainly. And I am translating my concerns into short stories about how people – what they do and what they desire - are the core maintenance forces that sustain our built environment. It has taken me thirty years to understand what you meant. To understand how to be myself and still be an architect, that is.

Annex 5: Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969, Mierle Laederman Ukeles

MANIFESTO!

MAINTENANCE ART

Proposal for an exhibition "CARE"

MIERLE LAEDERMAN UKELES
© 1969

I. IDEAS

A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct:

The Death Instinct: separation; individuality; Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one's own path to death—do your own thing; dynamic change.

The Life Instinct: unification; the eternal return; the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species; survival systems and operations; equilibrium.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.

II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: "CARE"

Three parts: Personal, General, and Earth Maintenance

A. Part One: Personal

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife
I am a mother. (Random order).

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I "do" Art.

Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. I will live in the museum and I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby, for the duration of the exhibition. (Right? or if you don't want me around at night I would come in every day) and do all these things as public Art activities. I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings") cook, invite people to eat, make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse.

The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be maintained in full public view.

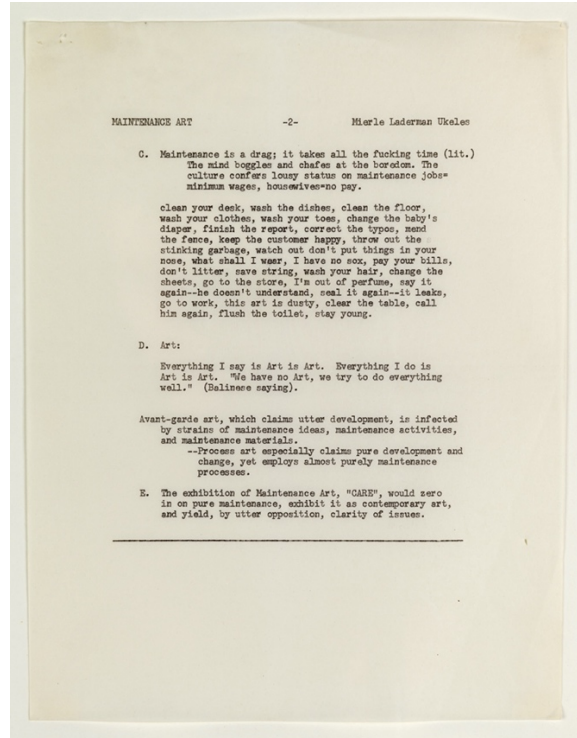
MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK

B. Part Two: General

Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds:

1. Previous individual interviews, typed and exhibited.

Interviewees come from, say, 50 different classes and kinds of occupations that run a gamut from maintenance "man," maid, sanitation "man," mail "man," union "man," construction worker, librarian, grocery store "man," nurse, doctor, teacher,



-what is the relationship between maintenance life's dreams.

view Room—for spectators at the Exhibition:

om of desks and chairs where professional (?)
nterview the spectators at the exhibition along
ped interviews. The responses should be per

se interviews are taped and replayed throughc
l.

Earth Maintenance

ontainers of the following kinds of refuse will b
um:

tents of one sanitation truck;

iner of polluted air;

iner of polluted Hudson River;

iner of ravaged land.

exhibition, each container will be serviced:

Annex 6: Participant Consent Forms

Taste Untold: Critical performance Practice and Contemporary Public Space

Participant Information and Consent Form / PhD project - Adriana Cobo

I would like to invite you to take part in my research. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it would involve for you. We will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have.

Purpose of the research

General

The purpose of this study is to investigate the codes and practices of public space, by designing specific projects performance projects where knowledge, experience and skill will be shared and exchanged in the making of site-specific interventions.

You have been invited because your role as a member of a significant community for this project and/or your knowledge of place and/or your expertise in the fields of public space maintenance, public space management, architecture design, art or performance will inform and contribute to the making of the project.

You are invited as part of a group of approximately 20 people, as a collaborator and/or co-author for one, or a series of site-specific interventions involving cleaning, knitting, parading, drawing, modelling, and/or performing, as well as conversations and discussions taking place in specially designed workshops and seminars.

It is up to you to decide to join the research. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Your participation will be acknowledged as your role as a collaborator and/or co-author will be credited, if you consent, in all future publications, exhibition projects and displays, as well as for lectures and presentations of my research within academic and non-academic contexts. Photographic and video records of specific projects will be made and archived by project. These records will constitute material for further work advancing a process of reflective practice, which will inform and sustain the research.

For this purposes, consent forms will be kept and filed as part of this research's archives. They will not be shared, nor made available to any other researchers.

Specific

The specificities of this workshop (i.e. programme, aims, participants roles, etc.) will be described in a separate form, as well as discussed verbally.

If you have any concerns, please contact:

David Greene

UAL Research Student Administrator

Research Management and Administration

University of the Arts London | 5th Floor | Granary Building

1 Granary Square | King's Cross | London | N1C 4AA

0207 514 9389 | d.greene@arts.ac.uk | www.arts.ac.uk/research

CONSENT FORM

Project: Inclusion in Architecture: Visual Culture, Taste and Space

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk

Date: 04 JUN 2015

Version: The Great Unwashed

Name of Participant: LAURA del SOMMAR

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided above, for the research study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to take part in the above project

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

If you have any concerns, please contact: David Greene, UAL Research Student Administrator, Research Management and Administration, University of the Arts London | 5th Floor | Granary Building, 1 Granary Square | King's Cross | London | N1C 4AA, 0207 514 9389 | d.greene@arts.ac.uk | www.arts.ac.uk/research

CONSENT FORM

Project: Inclusion in Architecture: Visual Culture, Taste and Space

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk

Date: 04 JUN 2015

Version: The Great Unwashed

Name of Participant: DANIELA SANCHEZ B.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided above, for the research study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to take part in the above project

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

If you have any concerns, please contact: David Greene, UAL Research Student Administrator, Research Management and Administration, University of the Arts London | 5th Floor | Granary Building, 1 Granary Square | King's Cross | London | N1C 4AA, 0207 514 9389 | d.greene@arts.ac.uk | www.arts.ac.uk/research

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: CEM SKENDER

Occupation: CLEANER

Role within the project:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided above, for the research study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to take part in the above project, or

I agree to take part in the above project, but wish to remain anonymous

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: RONNIE

Occupation:

Role within the project:

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Participant's signature

Researcher's signature: dylan-ronnie@hotmail.com

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: HALIL IBRAHIM

Occupation: CLEANER

Role within the project: TICKETS OPERATOR

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Participant's signature: Halil Ibrahim

ibrahim.halil@gmail.com

Researcher's signature: acobo

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: BENJAMIN GONZALEZ

Occupation: CLEANER

Role within the project:

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Participant's signature: Benjamin Gonzalez

Researcher's signature: acobo

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: MATTHEW BRAVE

Occupation: Student

Role within the project: Participant

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Participant's signature

Researcher's signature: acobo

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: DANIEL WILKINS

Occupation: Student

Role within the project:

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Participant's signature: Daniel Wilkins

Researcher's signature: acobo

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Critical Performance Practice for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific Intervention: Drawing Workshop - Disappearing Garden Project

Location: Central Saint Martin's / Room B002

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JAN 2018

Name of Participant: JONATHAN SHMULEVITZ

Occupation: STUDENT

Role within the project: PARTICIPANT

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Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

P

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Performance Architecture for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific activity: Knit and Stitch Club - Granny Square Project

Description: Weekly club session where a group of community members get together to knit and contribute towards the Granny Sq. Project. Photographs and voice-memos documenting conversations between members about the area and project, might be taken to record the activity.

Location: Saint Pancras Community Association SPCA - 67 Plender Street, NW1 0LB

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JUN 2018

Name of Participant: DOLORETH GODWIN

Occupation:

Role within the project:

- Community Member / Knitter
Knitting Expert
Co-Organizer

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Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Performance Architecture for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific activity: Knit and Stitch Club - Granny Square Project

Description: Weekly club session where a group of community members get together to knit and contribute towards the Granny Sq. Project. Photographs and voice-memos documenting conversations between members about the area and project, might be taken to record the activity.

Location: Saint Pancras Community Association SPCA - 67 Plender Street, NW1 0LB

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JUN 2018

Name of Participant: DORIS

Occupation:

Role within the project:

- Community Member / Knitter
Knitting Expert
Co-Organizer

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Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Performance Architecture for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific activity: Knit and Stitch Club – Granny Square Project

Description: Weekly club session where a group of community members get together to knit and contribute towards the Granny Sq. Project. Photographs and voice-memos documenting conversations between members about the area and project, might be taken to record the activity.

Location: Saint Pancras Community Association SPCA – 67 Flender Street, NW1 0LB

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JUN 2018

Name of Participant: ZENA ROBINSON

Occupation:

Role within the project:

- Community Member / Knitter
- Knitting Expert
- Co-Organizer

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Zena Robinson
Participant's signature

acobo
Researcher's signature

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Performance Architecture for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific activity: Knit and Stitch Club – Granny Square Project

Description: Weekly club session where a group of community members get together to knit and contribute towards the Granny Sq. Project. Photographs and voice-memos documenting conversations between members about the area and project, might be taken to record the activity.

Location: Saint Pancras Community Association SPCA – 67 Flender Street, NW1 0LB

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JUN 2018

Name of Participant: Shirley

Occupation:

Role within the project:

- Community Member / Knitter
- Knitting Expert
- Co-Organizer

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Shirley
Participant's signature

acobo
Researcher's signature

CONSENT FORM

PhD Title: Taste Untold: Performance Architecture for the Contemporary Public Space

Title of Specific activity: Knit and Stitch Club – Granny Square Project

Description: Weekly club session where a group of community members get together to knit and contribute towards the Granny Sq. Project. Photographs and voice-memos documenting conversations between members about the area and project, might be taken to record the activity.

Location: Saint Pancras Community Association SPCA – 67 Flender Street, NW1 0LB

Researcher: Adriana Cobo

Email: acobocorey1@arts.ac.uk / acobocorey@gmail.com

Date: 21 JUN 2018

Name of Participant: Shelagh O'Boorman

Occupation:

Role within the project:

- Community Member / Knitter
- Knitting Expert
- Co-Organizer

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Shelagh O'Boorman
Participant's signature

acobo
Researcher's signature

