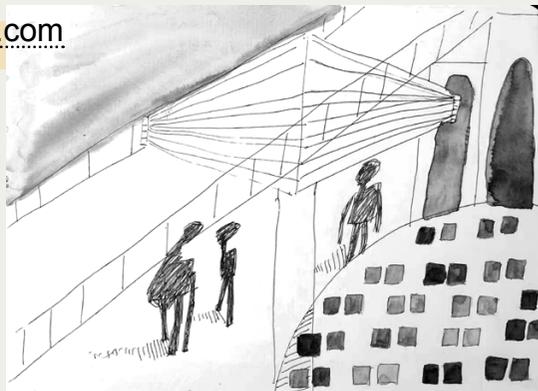


Issue 2
July 2022

Colouring In 'The City'

A research project by
Stephanie Black and
Luise Vormittag

ISSN 2752-9533
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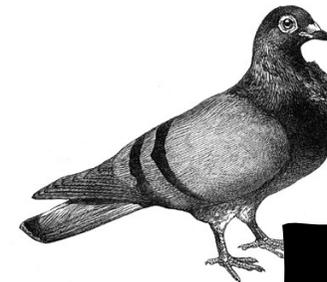
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Introduction

Cities are complex and in constant flux. How can illustration address something as overwhelmingly cacophonous and vast as the urban environment? What role can illustration play when it seeks to intervene in the fabric of the city itself?

Humans are becoming city-dwellers in increasing numbers, with over half of us worldwide living in a city today. Cities offer many ecological, cultural, economic and social benefits. However, their shortcomings are also significant, such as pollution, cost of living, quality of life and imbalances of power. In our second issue of *Colouring In* we tackle the relationship between illustration and the city: from street art to urban mapping, representations of fictional cities to the visual *dérive*, we explore illustrative strategies to draw out urban histories, reveal city dwellers' struggles for space and visibility, and present polyvocal narratives that uphold the vitality and richness of our urban environments.

In the same manner that we approached the first issue of *Colouring In* (*Colouring In: Nature* published September 2021) we tackled this topic as interested non-experts. To assemble this issue we conducted a broad survey of illustrative projects that engage

with the city, we held a roundtable discussion with illustrators and academics from other disciplines (geography and migration studies, sociology and urbanism) and presented earlier versions of some of the research to students on the urbanism programme at the LSE, and illustration students at Camberwell and Kingston, seeking their feedback and input. We also invited specialist contributions on related areas that we thought deserved to be included in this PDF to broaden the range of perspectives represented.

As this issue was taking shape, we noted common themes emerging across the range of contributions. With *Colouring In* we are interested in finding out what illustration *does* in relation to each theme, how it might be able to generate new knowledge and insights, how it might contribute to debates that are shaping the world and our future, and how it might provide new vistas for entrenched predicaments. In regards to the city we found illustrative practices speaking to questions of power and value: Who is given space? Who is seen? Who is a stakeholder and who is a bystander? We found illustration to be contributing to and intervening in these debates by laying claims for increased visibility and highlighting (but also occasionally perpetuating or even inflicting) social and spatial injustice. Another emergent theme is the ability of illustration to hold together discordant views and voices to present a polyvocal picture of our urban environments: the composite nature of illustrated images can accommodate different

times, voices and perspectives and thereby do justice to the complex nature of cities.

Of course illustration also does a whole range of other things in reference to the city. The PDF you are currently reading is one of a series of working papers – an initial insight into our investigations that we will continue to develop, and plan to reconfigure as a more fully researched and synthesised publication at a later stage. We therefore invite your scrutiny in the form of feedback, thoughts, and suggestions as to what we are currently missing. In this regard we invite you to get in touch. We want this research to be as polyvocal as the city itself!

SB, LV

Illustrating the City –Stephanie Black and Luise Vormittag

How can illustration investigate, record and intervene in urban environments? Stephanie Black and Luise Vormittag survey a wide array of creative strategies that reveal new insights.

Who studies the city? Generally it is urbanists, geographers, architects, planners and perhaps sociologists who are concerned with researching our rapidly growing urban environments. It is an almost overwhelmingly complex field of study – an endless array of methods and approaches are adopted in an attempt to gain insights to a subject that is itself in constant flux and movement. For this article we wanted to find out what contributions illustrators are making to these discussions.

We have scrutinised a broad range of different approaches, methods and locations, from Egyptian comics to doormat rubbings on a London council estate, gigantic murals in North America to representations of the miniscule spaces granted to Hong Kong's domestic workers. We have been delighted, fascinated and moved by the inventiveness

of illustrators and the powerful ways in which their projects speak of the joys, conflicts and complexities of living in such densely populated environments.

In order to maintain some order in what was threatening to become an unmanageably rich array, we have loosely grouped our findings under section headings. During the process of writing, this system itself was in continual flux as we were incessantly adding new examples, reexamining their achievements and drawing new connections between different practitioners and projects. Inevitably this article leaves out much more than it can possibly contain. Like the city itself constantly threatens to overwhelm its observer with boundless levels of detail and complexity, so too we were at times bowled over by the sheer amount of interesting work we were discovering. We can only offer a heartfelt apology for all the impressive projects that we had to exclude. We hope that the richness of the work we do discuss below makes up for it.

Walking, drifting & floating through the City

How the illustrator relates to their object of study will determine how they investigate it. For those seeking empirical evidence by way of a direct encounter with the phenomenon of interest, being within the city is key. One method of embodied, urban investigation is the *dérive*, which involves

drifting through the city on foot^[1] (see also Giada Maestra and Becky Moriarty’s accounts of walking through the city in their article pp.25–35).

Artist and writer Laura Grace Ford utilises the drift to produce images that offer a socially-enmeshed ground-level perspective of London. Her book *Savage Messiah* (2019) draws together a substantial collection of zines produced from 2006-2009, comprising her montaged drawings, photographs, ephemera, and typewritten text. Her use of cheap materials and production processes, and accessible (at times vernacular) language for the drawing, photography and writing to capture the places and communities she is situated within results in an overall informal tone of voice – a deliberate contrast to the slick, corporate and professional visual communication often used to present a sanitised and aspirational

view of the city (see also consideration of this in our roundtable discussion p.58).

Despite some methodological overlaps with the practice of psychogeography, Ford has come to distance herself from this association: “I think a lot of what is called psychogeography now is just middle-class men acting like colonial explorers, showing us their discoveries and guarding their plot” (Ford, 2019: xvii). Ford prefers the term ‘sociogeography’, which emphasises wider collective experiences over a more isolated, inward-looking position (Ford, 2017). She presents a view of London as someone within it, living and drifting against the dominant channels of movement and money as she traverses an increasingly gentrified space. In doing so, Ford seeks to document the changes she sees and feels “as the process of enclosure and privatisation continues apace” (Ford, 2019: ix). Urban studies scholar David Pinder highlights this aspect of Ford’s practice and locates it within a broader range of urban drifting practices, which he groups according to four themes: undoing, disorientating, losing and constructing. Ford is an example of ‘loss’, expressed in her concern for transience and change within the urban environment (Pinder, 2018:15).

Pinder notes further connections between Ford’s work and the concerns of artists associated with Situationist International (SI) in the 1950s and 60s, who were also keen urban drifters. The latter made an interesting proposal in relation to the point-of-view

[1] Reflecting on how the process has taken shape since the 1950s, urban studies scholar David Pinder (2018: 18) traces its origin to the practices and publications of both the Letterist International and subsequent Situationist International avant garde groups, and to Guy Debord’s 1956 publication on the strategy. Debord used the term to explore the relationship between location and emotion, which he called ‘psychogeography’.

IMAGE Artist’s impression of Laura Grace Ford’s book *Savage Messiah* (2019)



presented within images of the city, and what that suggests about the intentions behind that view. Pinder states that at the time of publishing *Internationale situationniste*, the aerial photograph was “favoured by urban planners and sociologists for the study of social space”, and that members of SI critiqued its role as complicit within the imposition of capitalist and state restrictions, for it represented “a disembodied administrative gaze that made the city ‘legible’ and enabled its ‘colonisation’” (Pinder, 2018: 20). Ford’s images very much refute this position, literally and ideologically (Ford, 2019: vix).

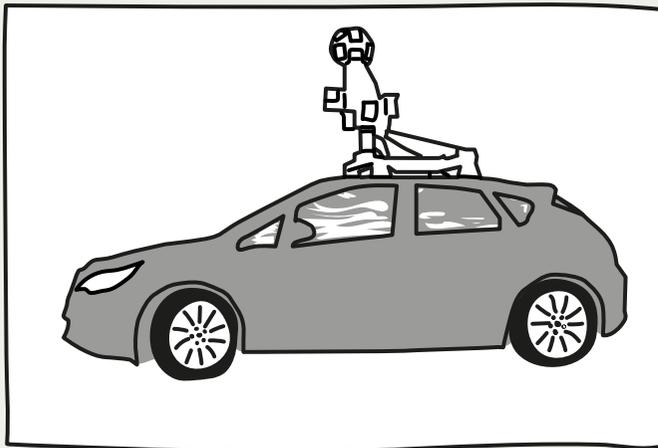
However Ford’s practice is also distinct from the Situationists’ approach. Her work operates as testimony in the form of material outcomes, whereas for her Situationist predecessors the *dérive* itself was primary (Pinder, 2018:24). Ford’s *Savage Messiah* zines bear witness to a different, now vanished city, caught up in and temporarily resisting the encroachment of capital and the marginalisation of working class communities on London’s streets. On another occasion (for a different project) her work was presented as an installation of a series of images in advertising poster sites within the city of Bristol (UK) in 2011. The accompanying maps that indicated the various poster sites offered the viewer the opportunity to experience their own unusual route through the city, allowing Ford’s work to operate as ‘disorientation’ – another theme that Pinder associates with the *dérive*. As archaeologist James R. Dixon notes, the work encourages the

casual bystander to consider the display site and its broader locale anew, by creating a discrepancy between the location and the urban decay pictured (Dixon, 2013: 568). Through doing so, Dixon suggests that Ford reveals the difference between the casual visit and her durational experience of a place: “We might suppose that [Laura Grace] Ford’s work exposes what is hidden by the veneer of respectability, imposed perhaps by lack of depth of engagement on the part of most who encounter central Bristol” (Ibid: 569). Beyond nudging our perception of the specific site of the work, Ford brings the lost futures of social projects inscribed within brutalist architecture to our attention.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased interest in the processes of remote investigation, see for example the Remote Sensing symposia. At the first instalment of this series, illustrator Serena Katt presented a project that uses archival photographs and Google Street View to revisit her previously embodied experience of urban Kenya.^[2] By setting herself and the viewer at a temporal and geographical distance the drawings offer a disembodied perspective of the city, in contrast to that presented by Ford. The point of view seems to be taken from at least one metre above the average human eye-level, and the figures have no discernible faces. Drawing from images produced by the car-mounted Google camera produces a sense of disconnection from the scene for the viewer: it becomes apparent that we are seeing technologically mediated imagery. Katt is

[2] For another illustrative practice using Google Street View, see Gareth Proskourine-Barnett’s work, which explores Birmingham’s virtual traces of brutalist architecture via this platform, a discussion of which can be found in Proskourine-Barnett (2016).

interested in highlighting the subjective presence of the illustrator (“I, in relation to a subject”, Katt, 2021:49), at play in any work. In this case her own experience of creating the drawings was dominated by her memory of the place, but what does this do for the viewer who is not party to the process of reawakening these recollections? Do the multiple levels of mediation result in a sense of floating detachment?



Observation: Inside and outside perspectives

Serena Katt is right to raise questions regarding the positionality of the illustrator: An insider, someone who knows and understands the places and communities they are making work about can often produce more nuanced and insightful work. Ford, for example, says: “I have spent the last 20

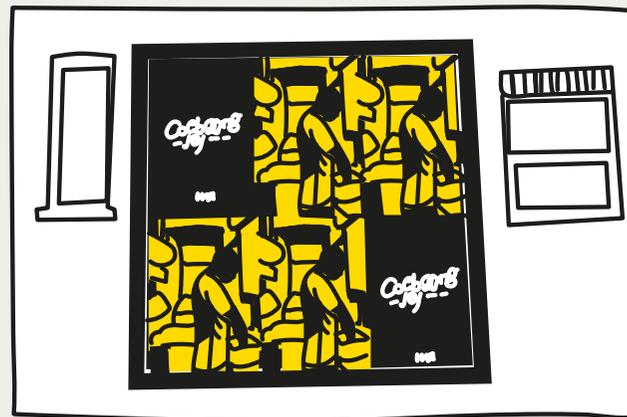
years walking around London and living here in a precarious fashion, I’ve had about 50 addresses. I think my understanding and negotiation of the city is very different to [that of other psychogeographers]” (Ford, 2019: xvii). While Ford is not a designer, her concerns overlap with discussions in social design, regarding the relationship between designer, context and outcome. Designers and writers Cinnamon Janzer and Lauren Weinstein propose a ‘Social Design Matrix’ to help scrutinise projects and the associated research methods that characterise these relationships. They distinguish between the inside and outside perspectives that Ford hints at above: “Outside perspective projects are characterised by ‘parachute’ designs where solutions are proposed for, and even implemented within, communities from which the designer is heavily, or even completely, removed. Conversely, an inside perspective refers to a context in which designers have developed a strong sense of solidarity with the community being addressed. Inside perspectives demonstrate a high level of earned trust from the community” (Janzer and Weinstein, 2014: 333).

London based illustrator Olivia Twist prioritises the position of insider in relation to the communities she works with and represents in her work. She explains how her interest in participatory design and human-centred research methodologies takes shape within her practice as an illustrator: “I like to celebrate my local community in my work and draw everybody who’s around me” (Duddy, 2021).

She observes from an embedded perspective to capture everyday and overlooked moments in order to produce outcomes that contribute to more nuanced representations of the city and its inhabitants. Twist explains that "...[g]rowing up, I saw representations of council housing that didn't feel fair or accurate. So through my work I try to show my experience, my truth, the people around me, and the mundane things I appreciate." The benefits of this lie in the rich intertextual references available to viewers and collaborators within her multi-layered communication. Twist explains: "You can put esoteric messages in your work – like the layout of a kitchen that is instantly recognisable to anyone who has lived in a council flat. You can communicate on a deeper level" (Ibid).

Twist's work is also visible within the city. Her residency at a London youth club resulted in murals within and outside the space; her work has also been shown on billboards in London, Bristol, Birmingham and Sheffield. Where the work is experienced is an important part of Twist's practice, who is always keen to start conversations through her work: "For me it has to be on the streets or in the places the people who have inspired me frequent. From my experience private views aren't really an intergenerational space" (Williams, 2021). In both Twist's and Ford's practice, their focus on the production of a carefully considered material output allows them to intervene in the city that inspired the work.

For illustrator-researcher Mitch Miller earning the trust of the communities he works with is crucial for the production of his large-scale 'dialectograms'. Miller describes dialectograms as: "[images that] sit somewhere between a map, an architectural plan, comic strip and diagram. Using techniques from these disciplines to contain and arrange information... focusing on places that are deprived and marginal areas, hidden from public view or in a state of transition" (2013: 25). Information is gathered through ethnographic methods (such as observation, fieldnotes, drawings and conversations) to "collate personal narratives, local knowledge, feelings and imaginings about place, to create a unique social and aesthetic document" (Ibid).



Miller has used these methods to produce 'dialectograms' of various locations and communities in Glasgow, some he was already very familiar with

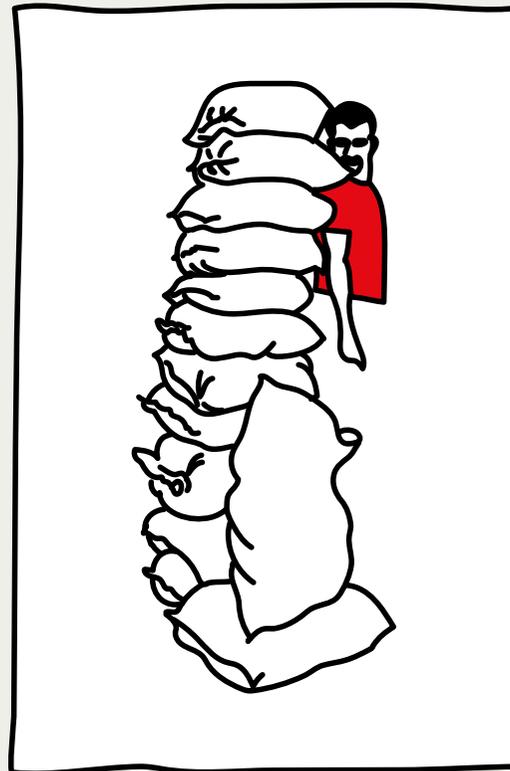
[3] Thank you to Mrudula Kuvalekar, who drew our attention to his work.

IMAGE Artist's impression of Sameer Kulavoor *This is not a Still Life* (2020)

and others where he spent time embedding himself through a long process: "I'll go into a place and work with the people for months and sometimes years, [...] I'll get to know them, I'll talk to them, I'll sketch them and I'll try to involve them as much as possible. I'll chat to them about where they live and work and get to know why their place means so much to them. All the while I'll be creating a drawing of the place I'm in, and include their opinions and stories within that" (Selbie, 2019). The years Miller has spent as an embedded illustrator-researcher creating 'dialectograms' have enabled him to identify a recurring theme: participants consistently highlight the superficiality of many urban renewal projects promising 'progress', noting that entrenched problems often remain neglected (Ibid).

Visual artist Sameer Kulavoor's practice^[3] also focuses on observing city life, in this instance he examines Mumbai. His illustrations invite us to consider concepts such as alienation and aspiration in relation to how people use the city, and are used by it in turn. In his *This is not a still life* series, his detailed understanding of the habitual practices of Mumbai's inhabitants allows him to make incisive judgments about what to include in his pared down images of roadside objects. The vertically piled up commodities in the paintings invoke urban skyward expansion via minimalist images of mundane everyday objects. Kulavoor's sharp observation and insider knowledge allows him to cast the familiar road-side assemblages in a new light.

Illustrators Lucinda Rogers and Olivia Twist have both made observational drawings of the Ridley Road Market in London, with outcomes offering different languages for different audiences. Twist's work takes the form of an oral history project presented as a zine, containing drawings, photos, direct quotes and close-up scans of materials. Rogers drew the market with great elegance, producing images for the more traditional gallery setting of the House of Illustration for her exhibition *On Gentrification* (2017).

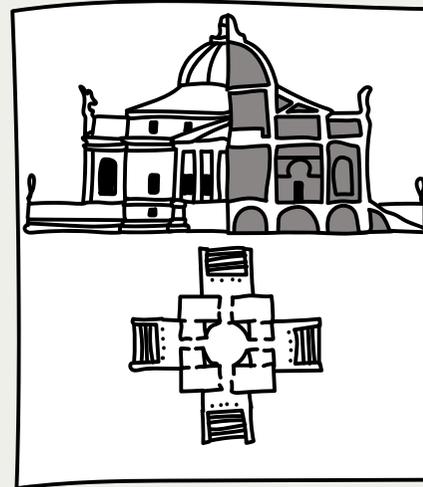


Both Twist and Rogers include evidence of primary research in their outputs (they both spent time in the market), but Twist's work also captures evidence of her building relationships and becoming embedded within the place. Rogers' work is more ocular-centric by comparison, making it feel (rightly or wrongly) like a more distanced observation (while Twist's inclusion of close-up scans of fabrics and materials found in the market also evoke the sense of touch). But this is not a reason to dismiss Rogers' work, rather it allows us to consider the different affordances of an outside perspective. By exhibiting the work in a gallery, Rogers is able to address a different audience, namely one that frequents galleries and is more likely to have different privileges and clout in relation to the problems faced by places at risk of development.

Of course illustration can also be mobilised to less benign ends within processes of urban gentrification and change. In her piece for Varoom Magazine's "activism" issue illustration educator and writer Emily Jost warns about the process of 'artwashing', for example through commissioning illustrators who have little knowledge of the bigger context to produce artwork for hoardings surrounding building sites of dubious redevelopment projects (2018:61). Jost's article is accompanied by an image of Cat Sims' *Black Matter* comic, an unsettling piece of dystopian fiction that warns us of the impact such housing developments can have on the 99% of us who can't afford them.

Utilising conventions

Architectural drawing and cartography are representational conventions closely related to the city. An architect's visual vocabulary such as elevation, sections, or floor-plans represent standardised and efficient modes of spatial representation. Similarly, cartographic renderings of urban environments that focus on technical accuracy have high use-value (such as Google Maps) and are a practical way to navigate the city.



The high levels of readability and mathematical exactitude of these plans and maps might suggest neutrality and universalism, however various scholars have highlighted the fact that they are historically and culturally specific mental constructs, borne out

IMAGE Architectural drawing conventions: front elevation, section, floorplan. Artist's impression of Andrea Palladio's drawings for Villa Capra 'La Rotonda', published in *I quattro libri dell'architettura* (1570)

of specific agendas and ideas.^[4] What affordances might these modes of representation offer? Architects, planners and illustrators who make use of these visual conventions must take heed of the mathematically quantifiable exactitude of this mode of representation – by harnessing, deconstructing, or undermining it. Whatever their project or approach, their work stands in relation to the calculable precision of this visual language.

Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi cracks open the confines of these spatial abstractions in his *Manhattan Transcripts* (1976-1981), a series of graphic experiments that push at the limits of architectural representation. Published as a book in 1982, these diagrams, drawings and photographs attempted to “transcribe things normally removed from architectural representation, namely the complex relationship between spaces and their use” (Tschumi 1982:7). Integrating space, event and movement they “transcribe” a series of fictional events playing out in Manhattan: a murder, a fall, a battle – represented through sequential arrangements and fracturing perspectives. This project is a good example of critical practice – i.e. practice that questions conventions by bringing them to the surface, showing up their limitations and suggesting alternatives.

Similarly, Mitch Miller’s ‘dialectograms’ (also discussed above in “Observation”) incorporate lived experience into the geometric framework of the architectural floor-plan. In contrast to Tschumi, whose interest

in movement and action derives from an abstract, theoretical notion of the “event” (see Fontana-Giusti 2016: 272), Miller works with participants to transcribe their actual lived experiences. The architectural floor-plan is gradually populated with Miller’s drawings of collectively and personally held views, stories and experiences relating to the location. What is included and how things are represented is repeatedly debated during meetings, where participants gather around the gradually emerging illustration. Here, the floor-plan becomes a stabilising frame to structure and hold the otherwise unmanageable heterogeneity of spatialised anecdotes, habits and biographies. The form is able to hold together divergent views, without resolving them into a simplistic or superficial consensus. This resonates with political theorist Chantal Mouffe’s position: she argues for the importance of institutions that permit conflict, where opponents don’t become enemies, but adversaries who can coexist in ‘conflictual consensus’ (2013).

Rather than working to enliven the cold precision of architectural representation, illustrator and activist Tings Chak harnesses its factual accuracy to draw attention to spatial injustice. In her project *Suitable Accommodation* (2016) she mapped out the miniscule spaces that live-in domestic workers in Hong Kong are typically assigned by the families who hire them.^[5] While employment contracts stipulate that “the Employer should provide the Helper suitable accommodation” (quoted on

[4] See for example sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* ([1974]1991), geographers and map historians such as Brian Harley and Denis Cosgrove (see retrospective collection of essays in Harley 2001 and Cosgrove 1999) and political scientist Benedict Anderson’s chapter ‘Census, Map, Museum’ in *Imagined Communities* (1991).

[5] See also this report from the Hong Kong Justice Centre for a more general account of Domestic Migrant Workers’ living and working conditions.

project webpage), in actual fact the interpretation of “suitable” is often stretched to (and beyond) its limit. Based on testimonies and interviews with domestic workers, Chak created floor-plans and interior elevations of the spaces that maids and other migrant domestic workers described. Chak marked up these architectural renderings at a scale of 1:1 onto the floor and walls of a gallery space, and invited viewers to experience the cramped conditions in relation to their own body. Chak’s work harnesses the accuracy of the architectural renders as a corrective to the obfuscation allowed by written language. The precise representation of actual spaces stands in stark contrast to the blurry notion of “suitable accommodation”.

Chak’s work reveals spatial injustice with a few precisely drawn marks, but this unforgiving exactitude of lines drawn in mathematically conceived, abstract space can also have the reverse effect. ‘Redlining’, an insidiously discriminatory banking practice in the United States during the 1930s and -40s, exploited the visual precision of lines on maps to inflict decades of discrimination upon those who get caught up with these marks and boundaries.^[6] The maps, produced by the Home Owners Loan Cooperation (HOLC), divided cities into colour-coded segments that were used as a basis to decide whether mortgages would be granted or withheld to applicants residing in these areas. Districts outlined in red were characterised as “hazardous” and the overwhelmingly Black and immigrant communities residing there were denied



access to finance. This was followed by yellow districts (“definitely declining”), blue (“still desirable”), and green areas (“best”), which were inhabited mainly by so-called “native-born white” families. Large swathes of the urban population were thus denied the possibility of home-ownership, arguably one of the most important inter-generational wealth creation mechanisms in the United States in the 20th century. Mapping Inequality has published a comprehensive and accessible website that showcases many of HOLC’s discriminatory maps, alongside contextualising information.

The long-term devastating impact of withholding finance cannot be overstated. Author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates draws a direct connection between the racist banking practices of redlining, and today’s alarming degree of incarceration in impoverished

[6] Other examples of environmental racism that are perpetrated by drawing lines on a map are documented by architect Adam Paul Susaneck on his independently run website [Segregation by Design](#).

IMAGE ‘Redlining’: Artist’s impression of the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation’s *Residential Security Map for Brooklyn (New York)* (1938)

black neighbourhoods (Coates 2014). The outrageous cost of maintaining this practice of the incarceration of populations from specific areas in US cities has been effectively visualised by academics and activists at the Justice Mapping Centre and the Centre for Spatial Research at Columbia University. They coined the term “Million Dollar Blocks” to describe specific housing blocks, where around one million dollars are spent annually to incarcerate people usually resident there. When examining maps pin-pointing the location of these Million Dollar Blocks, their position overlaps with depressing predictability with the areas that were redlined a few generations earlier.

The colour-coded city-maps produced by HOLC acted as a particularly destructive form of top-down design – a cruel application of a disembodied administrative gaze: drawing those lines condemned generations of mainly Black families to run up against the banking system’s structural racism. The graphic simplicity of these maps produced harrowing and complex effects on the ground. The maps functioned as a potent tool to inflict harm. They are reminiscent of design historian Gavin Grindon’s notion of ‘Cruel Designs’: “These objects compose and embody state and capitalist order, accompanying the formation of repressive laws and unjust social relations”, all the while passing as bureaucratic necessities of no one person’s particular responsibility (Grindon, 2015). In contrast, the visualisations coming out of the Centre for Spatial Research, such as the “Million Dollar

Blocks” represent a masterful synthesis of complex data on the ground – a bottom-up approach. Rather than being a tool or precursor for discriminatory behaviour, they illustrate the complex ramifications and spatial injustices of these practices through their inspired act of visualising data that is otherwise presented in inaccessible tables and reports. They bring to mind W.E.B Du Bois’ ground-breaking infographics of the 1900s that chart black lives in the United States. These maps, similar to Du Bois’ hand drawn graphics, shed light on harm that has been wrought, and urge us to strive for greater social justice.

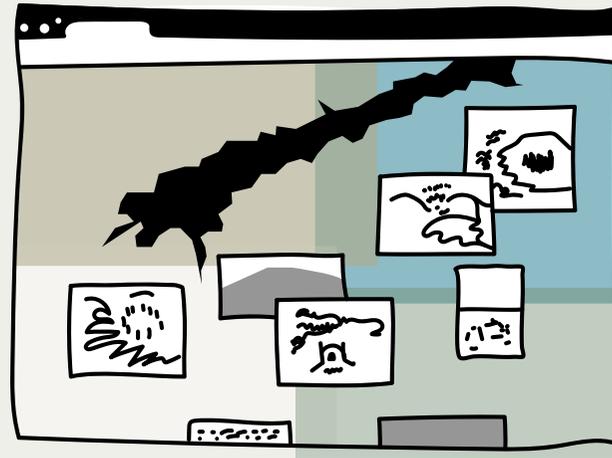
While the above discussion has shown how the precision of geographically accurate maps can be deployed with both devastating and revelatory effects, the concept of ‘mental maps’ stands in opposition to the mathematical exactitude of cartographic surveys. Urban planner Kevin Lynch notes in his book *The Image of the City* (1960) how individual and subjective perception of the urban environment is quite distinct from graphically drawn maps. “Most often our perception of the city is [...] rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all” (1960:2).

The fragmentary and sensorially mixed nature of this “image” presents a problem to anyone trying to capture a mental map in pictorial form. Geographer Franz Buhr, who uses mental maps

as a research tool to study migrants' relationships to urban territories, is acutely aware of the multiple processes of translation and interpretation that are at work when someone is invited to draw a mental map of an urban area (Buhr 2021, see also his contribution to our roundtable discussion pp.58–63). He reminds us that drawing skills, the level of familiarity of cartographic codes, as well as the prompts and materials offered by the researcher all impact on the resulting drawing. Instead of treating the mental maps his research participants draw as a straightforward representation of their subjective perception of a city, he uses them as a prompt for further conversation that often takes a more interesting turn after the maps have been produced.

Buhr's research participants are not professional illustrators, and their drawings were made relatively quickly with simple materials. Illustrator and researcher Imogen Humphris' project *Govan Deep Map* (2021) is a more professionalised attempt at rendering a mental image of a place, in her case the Govan Graving Docks in Glasgow. Similar to Laura Grace Ford's 'sociogeography' discussed above, Humphris blends her own sensory impressions of the site with snippets of remembered conversations and other recollections that relate to the location. Clearly her mixed-media, collaged website is not a direct 1:1 representation of Humphris' interior mental representation of Govan Graving Docks – such a thing would be impossible. But in its oscillating, scattered yet interconnected form,

it is a convincing translation of Lynch's "partial, fragmentary, [...] composite" mental image into a tangible picture (Ibid).

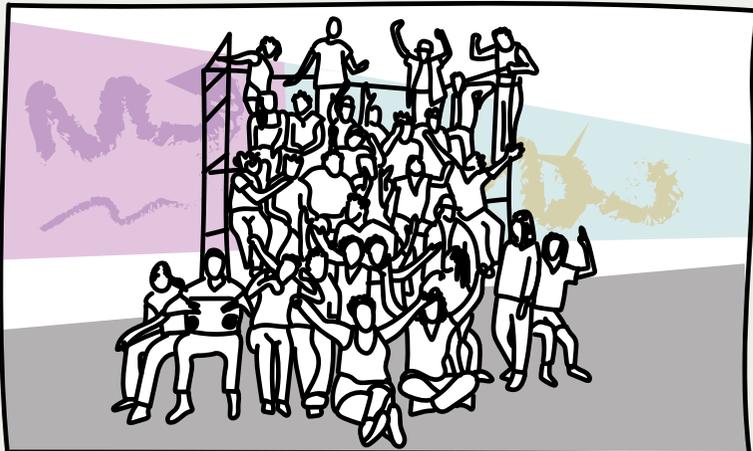


Intervening: Marking & inscribing the City

Illustration inserted directly into the texture of the city (through street art, wheat-pasting, murals or poster-sites) has the potential to change a city, and the relationships within it. (See Sergios Strigklogiannis' piece pp.36–41 for an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon in contemporary Athens.) In the confines of this article, we focus on work that uses a city's walls to lay claims for increased visibility, presence and respect within its contested scopic regimes. Who is seen? Who

is noticed? Who is recognised as a legitimate participant in the life of the city? Who is able to claim space for themselves and their communities?

Chicago's *Wall of Respect* (1967) is a powerful example of a community asserting their presence and making themselves visible.^[7] It grew out of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960-70s, and was created through a collaborative process of shared creative labour and discussion. The presence of the wall immediately changed the nature of the site: it became a place for community and congregation – political gatherings, celebrations, and tourism, but also for violence and sabotage. As a self-assured celebration of Black experience it was tragically short-lived (it was destroyed in 1972), but it catalysed a larger community mural movement in Chicago and beyond.



Artist Judy Baca's *Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1974 – ongoing!) operates on a different (monumental!) scale, but has similar aims and ambitions. The mural, one of the longest in the world, presents the history of California through the eyes of women, immigrant, and minority communities. It affirms the legitimacy of their continuous presence in California and acts as a counterpoint to traditional textbook accounts of history, which often privilege a white colonial perspective. Like the *Wall of Respect* in Chicago, this mural was also created with grassroots community involvement, but is embedded in greater levels of institutional support — with many youth groups, scholars, municipal bodies and funders contributing to its creation.

The practice of using illustration to affirm and celebrate otherwise marginalised communities' rightful presence in a site, is also evident in powerful contemporary examples of politicised wheat-paste activism. French street-artist JR's piece *Women are Heroes* (2008) in the Favela Morro da Providência, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, operates along these same principles. Impressively large visual representations of people who are typically undervalued in a particular urban environment, are produced in collaboration with the community it portrays, and inserted into the city's fabric. New York-based illustrator and activist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's project *Stop Telling Women to Smile* (ongoing) strikes a more defiant tone in its vigorous rebuttal of gender-based street harassment.

[7] Additional information on the *Wall of Respect* can be found here: ['Legacies of the Wall of Respect'](#) (audio recording of conference presentations, Block Museum of Art, 2017), article forming part of the 'Picturing Place' series in the *Guardian* (Campkin, Mogilevich & Ross 2014), summary of its history and a short video documenting activities marking its 50 years anniversary (Art & Design in Chicago 2017).

IMAGE Artist's impression of a group of young volunteers working on the 1950s section of Judy Baca's *Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1983)

IMAGE Artist's impression of a poster in Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's project *Stop Telling Women to Smile* (ongoing)

Her pencil-drawn portraits of women talk back to their harassers, from the walls of those neighbourhoods where they experienced the unwanted attention. These women may have been seen, but not respected. These powerful posters demand the dignity they have been denied.



Taken together, these examples demonstrate how illustrative practices can make an intervention in relationships of power in urban territories. It is also interesting to note how street art, murals and posters can change the nature of the walls they appear on: constructed as a material expression of a boundary, a separation, deterrent or impediment, they have the potential to become an opening towards new ideas, and a site of public discourse. Instead of hurrying along, people are now invited to pause,

realign their bodies and lift their gaze: passers-by become attentive, as they are invited to reflect on visibility in the city.

Another factor that the projects introduced in this section have in common is their organic integration with the communities who inhabit the neighbourhoods where the visual intervention takes place (as discussed above in 'Observing as an Insider'). When this link is missing, a project can lose much of its force. Our review of the recent ambitious public-art project *Aeroarte* (2021) in Guayaquil, Ecuador, suggests that this vital community integration was largely absent in this case. It is of course hard to gauge the intricacies of an urban art project at considerable geographical distance, but a local newspaper informs us that there was no consultation process supporting the selection of the (mostly international) illustrators and artists who were commissioned to create images "celebrating the heroes of the Covid-19 pandemic". Perhaps that is why, as the same newspaper piece suggests, there is limited public support for this project. The 14 poster sites (so far 9 have been realised) are elevated above the city's roofs to make them visible to passengers on a newly constructed cable-car service, literally removing the artwork from the ground, and the grassroots involvement that is so vital in sustaining this type of work. Is this an example of top-down, 'parachute' design, where solutions are proposed and implemented by designers largely removed from the communities they are intended to serve?

City, time & polyvocality

Time is a theme and factor common to a lot of work concerned with the city, capturing the continuous growth and decay within its fluctuating form and fortunes. In Anne Howeson's evocative drawings of the Kings Cross area in London the passing of time is captured in multiple interpenetrating layers. She describes how she put engravings from the Museum of London's archive into conversation with her own drawings of contemporary views of the same area in composite landscapes to create her series entitled *Present In The Past*. Howeson's work draws our attention to the palimpsest of human experiences in one place through the appearance of figures from different eras traversing the same ground. There are overlaps with Richard McGuire's book *Here*, but Howeson's project demarcates time and location more loosely. Her focus on human experiences in these places and through time allows her to comment favourably on the changes she observed in the King's Cross development, seeing the potential in the new public spaces established and their enthusiastic use by younger generations, and reminding us that "change is inevitable" (Howeson, 2018:16).

This may be true, but the question of who is consulted on how this proceeds is a theme common to the following examples. Illustrator Jessie Brennan raises the question of agency in the face of urban change in her series of drawings *A Fall of Ordinariness and*

Light. The four images show Robin Hood Gardens, a London estate (designed in the brutalist style in 1972 by Alison and Peter Smithson) in a process of collapse. The building in the drawing has since been demolished, with the estate's 252 flats removed in order to build over 1500 new homes with a reduction in proportion of social housing on the newly 'regenerated' site, undermining its capacity to provide decent, low-cost homes for low-income households, as Brennan (2015) observes. The artist describes the series as reflecting greater shifts in policy, planning and architecture, explaining that in her series of drawings: "the story is one of social failure – the fall of post-war aspirations of progress, the end of architecture for social good" (Ibid).

This is a theme echoed in Cat Sims' Space zine (2017), which foregrounds the progressive values of postwar council estates. Places such as the Alexandra & Ainsworth Estate and the Barbican Estate (both in London) are presented as desirable utopias, characteristic of a more equal society. Sims states that "this work is full of hope and celebration of architecture and public spaces that were, in their very essence, designed and built to make people feel good. All people. Not just the wealthy" (Oliver, 2018).

Brennan extends Sims' point with echoes of Mitch Miller's interest in amplifying under-represented voices from within the process of regeneration. In relation to the wider practice of demolishing brutalist

blocks she notes that “The buildings – and their apparent architectural successes and social failures – are debated and argued over, but the residents’ feelings are often either ignored or misrepresented” (Brennan, 2015). In her project *Regeneration!* Brennan seeks to capture a polyvocal view of the experience of living in Robin Hood Gardens, addressing this omission of residents’ views in many discussions of brutalist architecture. Her publication of this project contains different perspectives alongside her drawings, including former residents’ photographs and interviews, essays by architectural commentators, and archival materials. The heterogeneity of the material is reflective of the tussle over the representation of the place, and its contested value and existence. Incidentally, when Brennan first started work on

this project she was an “outsider” and as such encountered some resistance from the residents of the block. Brennan recalls that “a radically different approach to engagement (socially, conceptually, critically, spatially) was required for the project, and it came in the form of conversations – developed out of the process of making doormat rubbings” (Ibid). Here drawing successfully created a bridge between an outsider-researcher and the communities she wanted to engage with.^[8]

Geographer and illustrator Giada Peterle’s *Lines* (2020), a picture book based on research undertaken on public transport as public space, also includes the voices of those consulted during the research, allowing participants to be heard in their own words. The book focuses on the history of (the now-defunct) trams in Turku, Finland, and “uses comics as a research method for human geography” (Peterle 2021: 8). It presents the tram as part of the city’s cultural heritage, linking its lifespan with broader social shifts related to gender. Peterle’s methods range from archival research, her own experience of the contemporary bus system that replaced the trams, scheduled interviews, and informal conversations. The materials collected during two weeks of fieldwork are incorporated in the book. Participants’ testimony is differentiated from the author’s voice through the use of different typefaces; diagrammatic representations of the transport system are superimposed over representational drawings

[8] Author and musician Darren McGarvey suggests that more socially-engaged art projects would benefit from considering this gap between researcher and community and how it might be bridged. He criticises the social distance at which such projects often operate, comparing them to “an imperial power” and “predicated on the assumption that people in those communities don’t have any ideas of their own” (McGarvey, 2018:79). McGarvey offers the sobering thought that often it is the commissioning arts-organisations that benefit from such projects rather than the community it is ostensibly supporting. By not designing self-sufficiency into the project, organisations maintain their position of influence.

IMAGE Artist’s impression of Jessie Brennan’s doormat rubbing, part of *Regeneration!* (2015)



of archival and contemporary images. Geographer Juliet Fall praises Peterle's use of the comic format (with Peterle herself naming it a "geoGraphic novel") to communicate research, describing it as "a creative, clever, and subtle reflection of what can happen when scholars take risks and experiment [with] new ways of doing and communicating research" (Peterle, 2021: 5). In Turku, comics pasted onto the hoardings surrounding building work on a new tramway are part of the ongoing conversation surrounding the public transport system; contributing to conversations that are shaping the city to come.

Like Peterle, Egyptian illustrator Nora Zeid also uses the comic format to present a polyvocal argument for a city's future. In a large-format series of comics



pages, Zeid questions the value attached to places simply because they're old, a blunt and arbitrary tool. She examines the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood of Heliopolis, a comparatively new area threatened by rapid development in Cairo. Through interviews with (mostly) women her work presents an argument for why Heliopolis should be protected for its social (as well as architectural) complexity. Her comics hold together many perspectives to make a sound case, in particular amplifying voices usually not heard within discussions on urbanism. It is, as designer and academic Hala Al-Ani states, "women claiming their rights to the streets of Cairo" (Khatt Chronicles, 2022).

Indigenous Indian artist Rajesh Vangad uses drawing to highlight the process of urbanisation threatening rural areas traditionally occupied by the Warli people of western India. The Warli speak an unwritten language (Varli) and their culture is recorded through oral history and drawings. Vangad's concern for the survival of his people, their culture and environment is evident in his collaborative work with photographer Gauri Gill, where he layers a detailed illustration of an encroaching modern city on top of a photograph of a rural landscape. In a recent short film for the BBC, Vangad can be seen using a Google Tilt Brush to tell the urgent story of the destruction of this community through urban development and environmental devastation. By extending his drawing practice into VR, Vangad uses the medium

to underline his assertion that his tribe has a right to be part of the conversation: “We are not against change, but let us choose what we want and what we don’t” (BBC, 2019).



Hypothetical Cities

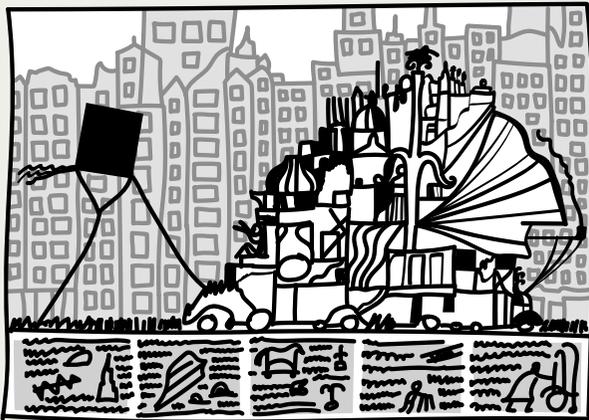
Hypothetical cities have a long literary history, as do their pictorial representations. In this context architectural images of buildings and cities were never intended to be realised through construction. Instead these projects use the motif of the city to present a hypothesis, thought experiment or argument. Admittedly, one of the best-known early examples of speculative world-building, Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) with an illustrated frontispiece

by Ambrosius Holbein, is more island than city. Holbein’s image is a straightforward “editorial” illustration, visualising this historic exercise in detailed scenario building, but not adding much to it. Probably the more interesting point here is that More’s intentions of creating this comprehensive account of a possible future society remain famously unclear. It is precisely this ambiguity regarding the author’s position that reveals itself as a dominant feature of many of the hypothetical urban scenarios in this section.

The ambiguous intentions of More’s writing are mirrored in the equally enigmatic ambitions for the creation of another well-known historical example of hypothetical structures: Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s images of *Imaginary Prisons* (1750, 1761) reveal a series of nightmare-ish vaults and subterranean interiors, from which there seems to be no escape. The vast and looming staircases don’t appear to lead anywhere. Ladders and arches don’t deliver you to a new terrain, but confront you with only more walls, vaults and staircases. This architectural dystopia offers many interpretive possibilities, at least partly animated by the lack of certainty we have regarding Piranesi’s motives for its creation.

Russian architects Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin produced a stunning portfolio of graphic etchings of architectural fantasies during the 1980s. They sidestepped corrupt architectural practices and restrictions by avoiding any actual construction in

favour of participating in design competitions in international magazines (Kurg 2019:688).

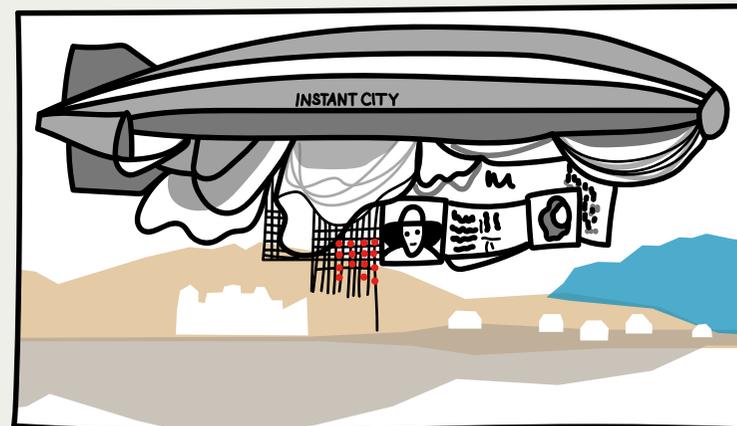


Their work is characterised by breathtaking levels of detail and complexity, many of their prints contain multiple panels, suggestive of wondrous narratives and spectacular urban hallucinations. Reminiscent of a gothic architectural fairytale, the exact details of each story are difficult to make out for us, although the overall sense is one of escapism (as a form of critique of the dreariness of state-controlled building work of the time?) and a concern for the preservation of architectural heritage. *Wandering Turtle* (1984) for example depicts a gigantic mound of historic, architectural matter on wheels, being pushed past seemingly endless facades of featureless buildings: this image appears to be a delightfully formulated argument for conservation in the face of destructive and ill-considered planning policies.^[9]

In contrast to Brodsky and Utkin's weighty cultural heritage in *Wandering Turtle*, *Archigram's Instant City* (1964) comes effortlessly suspended from an airship "like a giant circus" (Cook 2020). The British group were less concerned with architectural preservation; instead they focused on playful innovation.

Through illustrations and graphic presentations they introduced the idea of an urban wonderland of gadgets and machines descending on innocent rural environments, but do so without asking why the countryside might desire the buzz of a city and how anyone might be able to meaningfully interact with or benefit from it.

Seen from today's perspective, the image of a floating airship heaping unsolicited urban 'delights' on an unsuspecting community is an almost-too-perfect visual representation of 'parachute' design.



[9] See also *Galilee* (2007) for an account of Brodsky's ongoing concern for the preservation of architectural heritage.

IMAGE LEFT
Artist's impression of Brodsky & Utkin *Wandering Turtle* (1984)

IMAGE RIGHT
Artist's impression of Archigram *Instant City* (1964)

In its historical context, its value remains as an innovative example of architects creating illustrations as a form of irreverent, speculative thinking, rather than a more sober utilitarian step towards construction.

Frackpool (2014) is a more recent example of an architectural thought-experiment presented via a series of striking illustrations. Aspiring architect Jason Lamb's final project for his postgraduate degree is based on rigorous research and detailed scenario planning. He imagines an economically prosperous future for Blackpool enabled by Chinese investment and dominated by fracking (hence "Frackpool"). The extremely damaging environmental consequences of this process of fossil fuel extraction is widely documented, and the UK government withdrew its support for it in 2019. In *Frackpool*, Lamb expends considerable effort designing an urban infrastructure where fracking is practised in as wholesome a way as is possible; with job-creation and "sustainable" economic revival at the heart of his vision. It remains a distinctly jarring fantasy. The detailed images impress with their accomplished composition, sweeping vistas and technical specificities, and yet the bigger picture remains opaque: What kind of hypothesis are we looking at? Is this a cautionary, promotional, satirical or predictive scenario? Perhaps, just like in the case of More's Utopia, the enduring indeterminacy of these images is precisely what lends them their currency and allows us to evaluate potential futures.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, no straightforward claim is possible about the affordances that illustration brings to exploring, intervening in and representing the city – the sheer variety and incongruity of the illustrative work we have reflected on in this article, both in terms of method and outcome, escapes the grasp of a neat summary or conclusion. We did, however, discover a few emergent themes that arise at various junctions where common qualities of the urban (e.g. density, multiplicity, power struggles) intersect with common qualities of illustration (e.g. visibility, perspective, synthesis).

We noted practitioners using different methods to observe and record from different viewpoints within the city, bringing the position of the maker to the fore through their use of methods that relied upon being and, conversely, *not* being there. On occasion the work produced asked us as viewers to consider *our* position, in order to then in turn highlight the experiences of others. Reflecting a wider interest in positionality within the study of illustration, we also examined the respective merits of insider and outsider perspectives in relation to the urban communities documented, celebrated, and consulted by the various projects surveyed here. In these examples, the act of picture-making helped the illustrator move from an outside to an inside perspective, although we are keen to note that the outsider perspective comes with different allowances and it would be simplistic to

define either approach as right or wrong. We saw that in a crowded urban environment projects resulting from such community-based projects can give much needed space and visibility to those represented, and elevated their concerns.

Some practitioners harnessed the strength of the illustrated image as a complex and polyvocal form of communication, able to hold together different perspectives, times, voices, and forms of information. Others used the fabricated quality of illustration to hypothesise about entirely new realities (and whether we should set to work on changing course immediately in order to avoid – or realise – them). Beyond the breezy speculations of hypothetical scenarios, illustration and visual culture can also be harnessed for plainly vicious objectives – insidious forms of graphic cruelty that have the power to devastate the prospects of those who are unlucky enough to get caught up in them. Any discussion of positionality such as this is rooted in recognizing power relationships between the illustrator and their subject within its political and social context. In this respect the overarching tendency emerging from this survey of diverse practices is that illustration as both verb and noun is a valuable tool for enacting, revealing and contesting power.

SB, LV

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The Everyday and its Inhabitants: How can we use illustration as a method to understand place? –Yo Hosoyamada, Giada Maestra, Becky Moriarty and Xiaobin Wang

We are four recently graduated illustrators of different backgrounds. We all use illustration to engage with our urban surroundings, to discover and uncover, to connect and understand, and to remember and preserve a common object. For this article we shared our projects with each other and identified commonalities and differences. Four recurring themes emerged in our discussion: Time, Experience, Routine and Gentrification. These key-words gave rise to paragraphs of reflection and analysis, personal and collective.

Giada Maestra: *Ofthoughtsandpeople*

During the pandemic, while studying for an MA in Illustration in London, Giada Maestra felt the need to find a deeper connection with the city she

lived in. Working across different disciplines such as illustration, street photography and poetry, she discovered and uncovered urban places, combining text fragments with visual elements.

Ofthoughtsandpeople^[1] is an attempt to grasp the elusive, to connect to a reality that seems to fade whenever you try to hone in on it and to seek comfort in the familiarity of a road travelled several times or in the eyes of a total stranger.

Through observational drawings, photos and notes collected on site, Giada shares with us intimate thoughts and moods, creating a therapeutic path as well as a physical one. Walking plays a fundamental role in this work, becoming a practice in its own right (see 'walking practice' in *glossary*), as well as being a tool and means of her journey within the city. The routine of going out for a walk, almost every day, no matter what weather, allows her to get to know the neighbourhood and its inhabitants better, involving all the senses.

“Have you ever felt close to a stranger just because you look into his eyes and something clicks just because he is running your same street or walking the same side of the footpath”.

(*Ofthoughtsandpeople*)

Yo Hosoyamada: Tsukiji Stories

Yo Hosoyamada's project titled *Tsukiji Stories*^[2] looks at the Tsukiji Fish market in Tokyo. As the largest wholesale fish market in Japan, it operated from 1935 to 2018. In 2018, the main inner Tsukiji Market was demolished and relocated to a newly constructed site in Toyosu due to regeneration projects in the area. Since then, only its secondary market, the Tsukiji Outer Market, continues to operate without its former counterpart, catering for both wholesale and retail customers.

Yo immersed herself in drawing the Tsukiji Outer Market as a way to record the streetscape. Along the way she interviewed the vendors in order to learn more about their views and experience of the regeneration in the area. Hearing their personal stories and histories, she discovered their strong community bond and their passion for the Tsukiji food culture. Through her project, she tries to bring to light these personal stories and celebrate the culture of Tsukiji with the hope of bringing visibility to this community and their voices.

Becky Moriarty: Traces (rianta)^[3]

Originally from Ireland, Becky Moriarty is an outsider who moved to Hackney, East London, and made it her home. Her work^[4] focuses on connections between memory and place in this



[2] *Tsukiji Stories*
<https://www.tsukiji-stories.com/>

[3] Becky Moriarty
https://www.instagram.com/beckymoriarty_draws/

[4] *Traces (rianta)*
Becky Moriarty
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpAF-hqARxul>

IMAGE TOP LEFT
Becky Moriarty
(2021) *Hoxton Market*
1986, carbon paper
print

IMAGE MIDDLE Yo
Hosoyamada (2021)
Tsukiji street scene,
riso print

IMAGE BOTTOM
Xiaobin Wang (2021)
90s food stall, sketch
based on archive
material

London borough, asking questions such as how might the physical imprint of memories on a place contribute to shaping its identity?

Due to the pandemic, Becky spent the last year wandering the streets, noticing the same faces. She wanted to understand this place, through collecting traces of the people living here now and before. Embodying a true flâneur (see *glossary*), she started using her daily walks to ‘drift’ through the landscape collecting photos, rubbings, video recordings and drawings. She explored parts of the area she had never been to and came across many hidden gems, off the beaten track but popular with the locals.

Towards the end of the project, Becky began to question how she herself fitted in within the community, which led her to connect with a group of Irish Elders living in Hackney. She has been sharing and exchanging their stories of similar journeys, made at a different moment in time. The project has developed into a quest to find connections to Irish memory within the borough she now calls home.

Xiaobin Wang: Traces of Living Existences

Xiaobin Wang’s project^[5] started from daily reflections on her living environment and her interest in architecture and history: she wanted to capture traces of existence, disappearing because of urban

regeneration processes. She decided to focus on people living in Shikumen (a special house style in Shanghai influenced by colonial culture) to show the rapid development of the city.

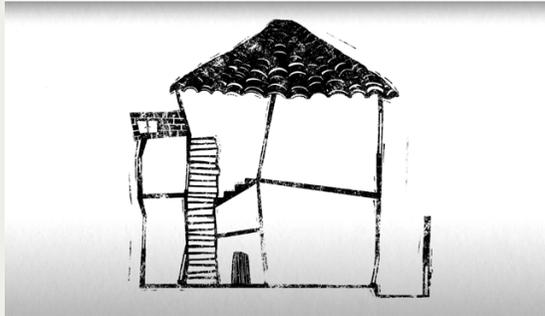
Xiaobin sketched domestic scenes from archives and made-up story lines inspired by interviews and research. After experimenting with different materials and processes, she decided to expand her illustrative repertoire to include sound and three-dimensional methods such as printing on layers of perspex to tell the story the disappearing living traces in Shikumen.

The outcome re-animates vivid life in Shikumen and arouses sad or nostalgic feelings for those who once lived in them. The work bears witness to the experiences of Xiaobin’s own generation, her parent’s generation, and generations of inhabitants before them, and invites viewers to critically reflect on the processes of urban regeneration.

Time

We believe the unique characteristics of a city come from its history – in other words, from the accumulation of time.

In his BBC series *A House Through Time* (2018–2021) historian David Olusoga examines how history can be revealed by exploring the stories



behind individual houses. Xiaobin was inspired to look at this idea in her own project, *Traces of Living Existences*. She brought a now demolished Shikumen house back to life, along with three generations of its inhabitants, who once lived there. The audience is encouraged to reflect on what has been lost, as a result of urban regeneration.

The examination of the changing structure of a place can also be seen in Yo's project. She questions what the future of the Tsukiji market will be and illustrates time through experimenting with warm or cold tones of shadows.

Through animation Xiaobin fades in and out the stories of the Shikumen house's inhabitants, expressing how time is constantly evolving, while the house's structure only alters slightly.

Similarly, Becky plays with the 'faded image' through screen printing, looking for connections between Irish memory and the borough she lives in. Layering visuals of the same area, past and present, on top of one another, in an attempt to form a new, 'complete', collaged image of one place.

In contrast, Giada focuses on the precise moment of the now, as it presents itself to her. She uses time to record the feelings drifting in a city, grasping at what surrounds her through poetry and sketches. Regardless of whether one is looking at the past, present, or even the future of the city, we all

collectively observe and record our findings. As illustrators, we have been inspired to unravel urban histories and visualise the fragments of life we found.

Experience



“When you learn to recognise the beauty in ruins and weeds, or the accidental poetry of other people’s phone conversations, you’re really getting somewhere.”
(Walker, 2019)

“Walking makes the world much bigger and thus more interesting. You have time to observe the details.”
(Abbey, 1991)

Individually we have all pondered the question: ‘What does an illustrator really do?’ Obviously there is no right or wrong answer. One thing we can agree on that is essential to the practice, especially when the city is involved, is experience: “something that happens to you and affects how you feel” (Cambridge Dictionary).

Although the projects involved in this piece are different in their nature and aims, the illustrator’s experience always plays a role. It can be touched. Each of us, every day, leaves our homes to meet a city that to some might always seems the same,

The Everyday and its Inhabitants: ...
 -Yo Hosoyamada, Giada Maestra,
 Becky Moriarty, Xiaobin Wang

Colouring In, Issue 2: The City

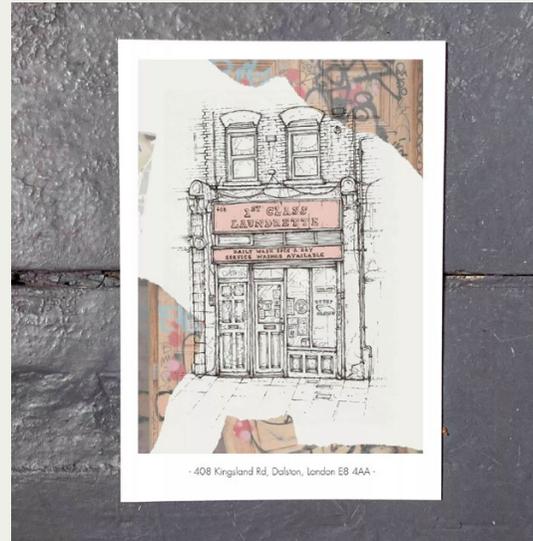


IMAGE TOP LEFT
 Xiaobin Wang (2021)
90s food stall, sketch
 based on archive
 material

IMAGE BOTTOM
 LEFT Becky Moriarty
 (2021) *scenes
 from Ridley Road*,
 colouring pencil

IMAGE TOP RIGHT
 Becky Moriarty
 (2021) *1st Class
 Launderette*, ink and
 collage

IMAGE BOTTOM
 RIGHT Yo
 Hosoyamada (2021)
*Yamamoto Sho-ten
 storefront*, ink and
 digital illustration



but that in reality hides an entire universe. These projects are about taking a moment to connect with the outside world, noticing the details, re-discovering our identities through memories and stories of places and people.

Becky spent the last year wandering the streets, collecting traces of people and eventually finding her personal connection with a place she now calls home, in the London Borough of Hackney.

Yo, by means of interviews, reconstructed the history of a market in her hometown Tokyo, preserving its importance while foreseeing changes that were not always easy to accept for her.

Using illustration as a way to record everyday life Giada captured on paper a personal, sensory experience; an attempt to find herself, drifting through the city and passing total strangers.

Lastly, combining illustration and animation, Xiaobin draws on her experience of witnessing the demolition of her home in Shanghai, and with it, of her roots and childhood memories.

Routine

Each one of us dealt with this idea of routine in different ways, reflecting on how to record the repetition of the everyday within the city. By doing

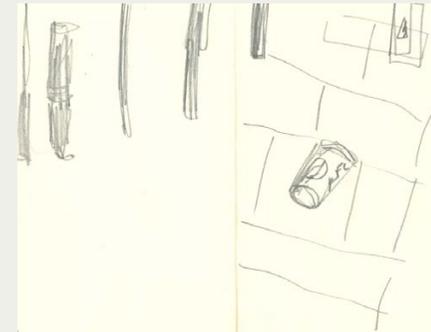


IMAGE TOP LEFT
Giada Maestra (2021)
lockdown, personal
camera roll

IMAGE TOP RIGHT
Giada Maestra (2021)
walking the city,
personal sketchbook

IMAGE MIDDLE
RIGHT Giada
Maestra (2021)
Seven Sisters Road,
personal sketchbook

IMAGE BOTTOM
Giada Maestra (2021)
pigeons, personal
sketchbook



so we discovered something unexpected, maybe hidden within the layers of its walls: people make the city. Beyond the physicality of the urban landscape, there are hidden stories, moments and narratives worth sharing.

For Giada, this came through noticing small everyday occurrences in the city, finding the unordinary within the ordinary. She questioned the place of the artist within the routine of the city. Through the repeated act of walking around her neighbourhood, she recorded what she observed and in return discovered something new about herself, as well her surroundings.

Xiaobin explored routines that no longer exist and illustrated them using the consistent framework of one single building. She aims to preserve the forgotten patterns of the inhabitants, that have now been lost due to gentrification.

Yo's work looked at the routines of the workers within the Tsukiji fish market and how these change through both past and planned future gentrification of the area. Both projects looked at the impact of gentrification on the everyday life of inhabitants and illustrate the impact on ordinary routines when the physical fabric of the city is altered.

Gentrification

When considering the impact of illustration on our understanding of the city, we must also consider the city as an ever-evolving and changing entity. As David Olusoga pointed out, it is fascinating to “find your house on a map and then seeing that the city around it is not the city you live in today but a previous city” (Olusoga 2020). Issues surrounding the gentrification and continuous development of our cities can be uncovered, studied, and told through the practice of Illustration.

For Yo, this came through looking at the specific regeneration scheme of the Tsukiji Fish market. She uncovers the personal experience of the people of Tsukiji and their views on the gentrification and development of the area. To do so, she offered illustrations of the merchants' and their store in exchange for personal interviews, using illustration as a means of exchange. Additionally, through on-site investigation and reportage illustration, the meticulous repetition of drawing the same place multiple times allowed her to study the small shifts that occur in the market.

In contrast, Xiaobin's project reveals huge shifts of the same place from a macro perspective, based on archive materials she collected and recollections of the inhabitants living at that time. She tells the story of an ever-evolving Shikumen house during a hundred-year time scale, showing the changes on



IMAGE TOP Xiaobin Wang (2021) 90s *life near my home*, sketch based on archive material

IMAGE MIDDLE Yo Hosoyamada (2021) *workers of Tsukiji Market*, pencil and riso print

IMAGE BOTTOM Becky Moriarty (2021) *palimpsest*, screenprint

the urban fabric through multiple generations. The gradual shift of the drawing reveals the progressive effect of gentrification on the historical buildings of Shanghai. At first, scenes of a big family fill the newly constructed home, only to fade out, revealing a gradually ageing edifice and changes of the inhabitants' social and familial structures such as shrinking family size.

Scene after scene, cracks and signs of ageing worsen, only for the building to be demolished in the final scene. Personal histories are erased. The rise of commercial development comes at the expense of historical buildings. The pace of regeneration has never slowed down since the 1980s in China. The Shanghai municipal government requires the completion of the regeneration of over one square kilometre of old buildings, affecting 56,300 residents by the end of 2022 (Yao in Sheng, 2021).

Large-scale urban regeneration in metropolises is common and perhaps inevitable. On one side, it can bring a higher quality of living standards for citizens, but it also has a negative impact. Architecture critic Oliver Wainwright describes a process where residents were forcefully driven out to edges of the city, resulting in a waste of resources, not to mention the loss of regional cultural characteristics (Wainwright, 2021). We used illustration as a tool to study the effect of gentrification on a particular place and to focus on specific personal stories of change and loss.



Conclusion

When using illustration as a tool to better understand the city, there are many visual approaches one can take. What we all share, as investigative illustrators, is the desire to open the door and step outside into the heart of our chosen subject matter; immersing ourselves in our surroundings, to observe and absorb every little detail.

For Giada, her approach was to literally walk her way through an urban space. Unsure initially what exactly she was looking for, she began to see the city as a new friend. On *Ofthoughtsandpeople* she captures a picture of an almost personified city, breathing new life at every turn.

Like Giada, Becky also used her daily walks during the pandemic to connect more deeply with the area she lives in. Her approach was to eventually collate all the visual research she accumulated into a collaged film – a moving scrapbook of her journey.

Xiaobin also used film to tell her story. This medium allowed her to fade effortlessly through different memories of the same place, capturing traces left behind.

As for Xiaobin, preservation through illustration also played a key role in Yo's project. She documented Tsukiji's spirit through colourful drawings and allowed

the market people's voices to be heard beyond the physical boundaries of the market.

This article is born from the comparison of our projects of different nature and objectives. What we have in common is the use of illustration as a means of understanding and expressing the reality that surrounds us. The resulting work assumes multiple meanings, based on the experience, intentions and personality of the creative practitioner. What we learnt from putting this article together is that the possibilities on how illustration can interact with place are endless, ever-changing and evolving, just like the city itself.

YH, GM, BM, XW

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Glossary

Gentrification: the process by which a place, especially a part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live
See also: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gentrification>

Flâneur: Flâneur is a French term meaning 'stroller' or 'loafer' used by nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire to identify an observer of modern urban life
See also: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/flaneur>

Walking Practice: Walking meditation can be a formal practice, like watching the breath. Or it can be informal, bringing awareness to this everyday activity, whenever you need to travel from point A to point B. Walking meditation gives us an opportunity to gather our awareness which so often becomes distracted or even stuck when the mind is left to its own devices. Whether moving between floors of a building, on a city street, or in the woods, it is an opportunity to guide ourselves out of the distracted autopilot we live in throughout so much of our day.
See also: <https://www.mindful.org/daily-mindful-walking-practice/>

Colours on Ruins: A visual narrative on urban art and gentrification

–Sergios Striklogiannis

The urban fabric is multilayered: stories, imaginaries, realities, and collective memories are spatially intertwined in a mosaic of perceptions. Creative inscriptions on the skin of the city in the form of urban art can reveal hidden narratives and untold stories of the city.

Through five urban art pieces in the Athenian neighbourhood of Psirri, Greek architect and researcher Sergios Striklogiannis examines the paradoxical relationship between urban art and gentrification in the city of Athens.

All photos of the artwork were taken by Sergios Striklogiannis between December 2021 and January 2022 in the neighbourhood of Psirri, Athens.



IMAGE TOP Barba Dee (2018) *Cocktail Party Downtown*

IMAGE MIDDLE LEFT A forum for social dialogue: Various artists express themselves on the facade of an occupied theatre in Psirri.

IMAGE MIDDLE RIGHT Cacao Rocks (2018) *This is a Great Hipster Instagram Opportunity*

IMAGE BOTTOM LEFT Alexandros Vasmoulakis (2011) *Superman*

IMAGE BOTTOM RIGHT INO (2020) *Apocalypse Now*

What's the colour of a crisis?

From 2008 to 2018 Greece went through a long period of economic austerity and social crisis that resulted in the povertisation of a big part of its population. While the country was enduring brutal years of economic collapse and social hardship, the street art scene in Athens was booming (Tsilimpounidi 2013). The Athenian cityscape was transformed into a canvas by young artists as its walls were used to express their anger, their disappointment with the uncertain future, and their protest against the crisis and austerity policies in the country.

The inscriptions of emotions on the urban fabric in the form of political street art were performed in diverse forms: stencils, illustrations, graffiti, tags, or even simple black writings on the city's surfaces, on the skin of the city. Creating a visually rich urban environment, especially in certain Athenian neighbourhoods, these walls became a visual palimpsest for the expression of feelings of rage, thereby creating a sort of crisis urban art aesthetic.

The spirit of disappointment and anger was illustrated (along with others) by the artist Barba Dee on the door of an abandoned house (an urban ruin) in the neighbourhood of Psirri in 2018. The artwork entitled *Cocktail Party Downtown* represents a bottle of a local Athenian beer as a Molotov cocktail that the furious young protesters used to throw during the demonstrations against austerity measures.



Ruins and colours

During this period and in response to the economic crisis, the city took the path of prioritising the tourism industry, thereby turning the Athenian urban landscape into a (battle-) field of antagonistic meanings, representations and ways of inhabiting. On one side, the official authorities were trying to enhance the image of the city for the average tourist by highlighting the ancient, glorious past of Athens through a revival of classical aesthetics to fulfil certain imaginaries of Western civilization and boost tourism.^[1] On the other side, the flourishing political graffiti scene responded by re-visioning the city's aesthetics and stereotypes of ancient Athens and to express through visual messages the completely different reality of the city's population. The city's walls became a forum for social dialogue, where voices from the margins could express their opposition to the hegemonic aesthetics of spatial production that occur through gentrification, touristification and commodification. The image to the right shows this: the word written with a black brush towards the top is "βασανίζομαι", which translates as "I am being tortured". This intervention by an unknown urban artist appeared on several walls in Athens during the crisis.

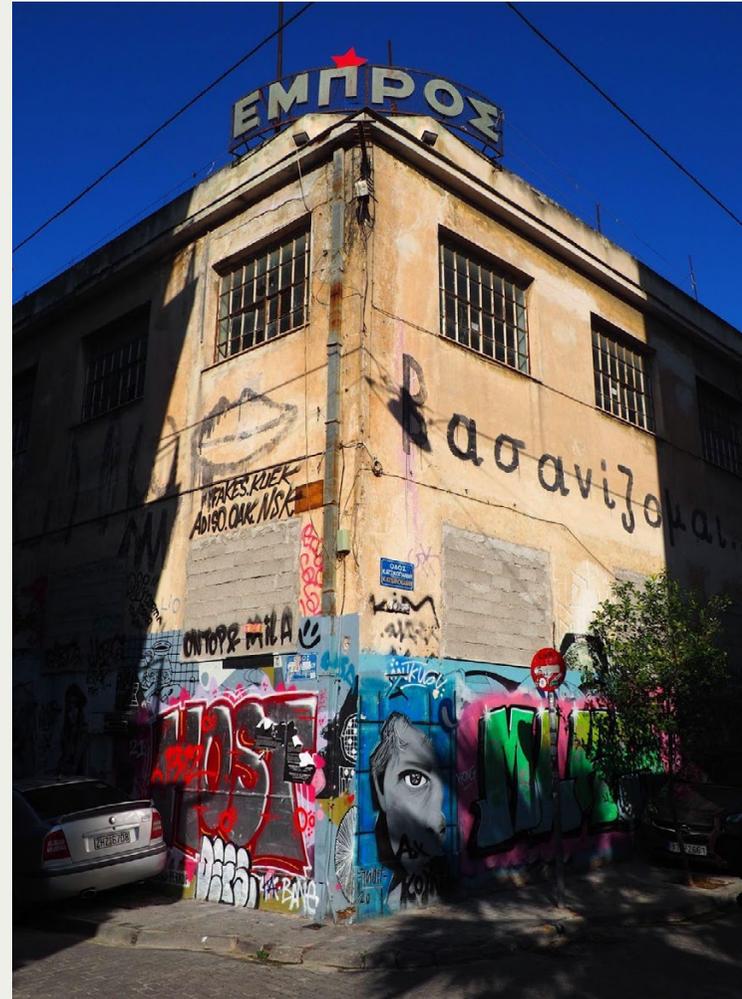


IMAGE A forum for social dialogue: Various artists express themselves on the facade of an occupied theatre in Psirri.

[1] Architect and academic Stavros Stavridis criticised the efforts of the municipality of Athens to promote a certain identity and image of the city through their city-branding strategies during the Olympic games in 2004. The same identity and image was also promoted during the years of the financial crisis in order to support the touristic development of the city (Stavridis 2008).

“You’ll love: Outlaw art in the urban landscape!”

Soon, apart from the ancient ruins of Greece’s glorious past, the ‘entrepreneurial city’ of Athens discovered and identified the symbolic capital^[2] of the Athenian urban art scene. The spirit of the ‘alternative city’ was supported by the municipality through commissioned murals that would enhance and support the commercialisation, appropriation and promotion of urban art as part of the city’s rebranding strategies. With this market logic in mind, areas of the city characterised by their uniqueness, creativity and originality were rebranded and redefined as commodities for the visitor-customer. Private tourism companies promoted neighbourhoods, streets or public places rich in visual urban culture as “open-air art galleries” and included them in guided urban street art tours^[3], which gradually led to their transformation into consumerist recreational spots.

Psirri, a neighbourhood that during the crisis of the last decade was known for the diversity of its street art, was radically transformed and promoted as a must-see tourist attraction. In the case of Psirri, street art and the performance of its creation are balancing between two opposing views of the city. On the one hand, street art exists as an expression of re-appropriation of urban space, as a tactic that performs the right to the city, and on the other hand, it becomes a tool for the commodification of the space from the tourism industry.

The transformation of this Athenian neighbourhood into a ‘theme park’ offered up for consumption to the tourism and entertainment industry, is ironically captured on the oversized (fake?) smiles of the famous mural by Alexandros Vasmoulakis, located on the most central square of the neighbourhood.



The faces with their disproportionate smiles resemble actors of a TV commercial who, in a state of ecstatic euphoria, seem to be advertising the space that they are overlooking. The piece belongs to the artist’s Pseudo-Advertising Series that takes a critical position towards the current use of public space. Has this neighbourhood become a homogenised space of consumption, a sterile area where negative emotions and deviant behaviour are not welcomed?

IMAGE Alexandros Vasmoulakis (2011)
Superman

[2] In 2016 the municipality of Athens launched an urban regeneration program, which on the one hand aimed to clean the city’s surfaces from “vandal” urban art and “to effectively reverse the phenomenon of delinquent visual noise”, while simultaneously publishing open calls to artists for the creation of urban art murals in certain neighbourhoods, in order to enhance their artistic identity and symbolic capital. See [here](#) for more information (in Greek). The symbolic capital of neighbourhoods and cities is extensively discussed in David Harvey’s book *Rebel Cities* (2019).

[3] Ads from a guided-tours company read: “Athens street art tour - Immerse yourself in the European mecca for street art”, “You’ll love: Outlaw art in the urban landscape!” (retrieved from [Alternative Athens website](#))

“This is a great Instagram opportunity”

Nevertheless, parts of the neighbourhood resist this ongoing process of gentrification and this resistance is also registered on their ‘skin’. *This is a great hipster Instagram opportunity*, a message on the walls of an occupied theatre, ironically invites people to consume the rich visual urban culture of the area [see right image].

The obvious irony and the fact that it is written in English make it clear that this is intended as a critique of the touristic commercialisation of the surrounding urban space. The artist is targeting the superficial and consumerist approach towards urban art, which favours the commercial over the social value of the place and questions its relationship to the neighbourhood where it is created and to the communities it affects. This critique, in the form of an ironic call for spatial consumption by means of Instagram, highlights the paradox of urban art, which can exist as a way to amplify marginalised voices and can simultaneously act as a tool for urban exclusion through gentrification.



Defacement

“Defacement refers to acts aimed at destroying the ‘face’, the expressive centre of something’s or someone’s appearance, by distorting it, by partially hiding the face’s characteristics. There is always a kind of latent violence in the defacing gesture. And there is always a kind of confrontation with an appearance with an image representing an identity.”
Stavros Stavridis (2016: 185)

In 2020 the Athenian street artist INO created an oversized mural of a person with a full-face balaclava mask, that gives the impression of someone who already has, or is about to undertake an important action [see image below]. The look, straight into the eyes of the observer, is self-confident and determined. Are they putting on the mask, or are they taking it off to reveal their face?

The title *Apocalypse Now* conjures up the famous war film directed and produced by Francis Ford Coppola. In Greek the word ‘apocalypse’ can be traced to the Ancient Greek ἀποκάλυψις (apokálupsis), literally meaning ‘uncovering’ or ‘revelation’.

The viewer is left with a set of questions. Is the person uncovering their face or are they putting on the balaclava in preparation for the apocalypse? Moreover, is the mask defacing the identity of the person or is it adding meaning to it?



Drawing parallels with the relationship of urban art to the city one might ask: Does urban art reveal or conceal the true identity of a city? What kind of urban art might resist its co-option into the dominant urban rhetoric and continue to divulge a city’s most hidden narratives and untold stories?

SS

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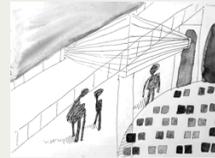
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The Storied City –Various

On 4 April 2022 Stephanie Black and Luise Vormittag held an online event for illustration students from Kingston School of Art and Camberwell College of Arts (UAL) to share some of the research for this issue of Colouring In. Afterwards we paired students into break-out rooms and asked them to give each other a brief tour, using Google Street View, of an urban area that was meaningful to them. The other students then had to draw their impression of the city they had glimpsed.^[1]

In the discussion that followed the subjective nature of illustration became a key theme. Students reflected on the challenge of translating the complexities of the urban environments they had been introduced to. How to capture something as vast and unknown as a foreign city? The workshop format prompted them to make quick and pragmatic decisions.

Students drew on their personal impressions and interpretations, “*imposing our own experience on things*”. The results represent an amalgamation of representation and interpretation, where Google Street View’s slick illusion of objectivity is replaced with the inventive subjectivity of more obviously crafted, illustrated images.



Illustrator: Zitian Li
Tour guide: Mrudula Kuvalekar
Location: Mumbai

Zitian: Thank you Mrudula for showing me the city where you have lived most of the time. In my impression Mumbai has always been a historic city with ancient walls. At the beginning Mrudula showed a bridge over a river – there were many people from all over the world and I feel Mumbai is a young and energetic city.



Illustrator: Tien-Tzu Lin
Tour guide: Lucy Daley
Location: Southend-on-Sea

Tien-Tzu: I rearranged the view and buildings that I got from Lucy's description according to my own preference. It was about the place she grew up. I did struggle when representing a place that I've never been to, especially someone else's memory of one place. My point of view was fairly restricted by google street view, both spatially and temporally.

[1] WEB-LINK Since running this workshop we've been made aware of [Sketchbook eVenture](#), an initiative by [Georgie Bennett](#) who has been running very similar workshops online since the pandemic. There is a joining link on the project's Instagram page.



Illustrator: Guanqi Yang
Tour guide: Yee Ki Cheung
Location: Hong Kong

Guanqi: This is a street scene of Hong Kong shown to me by Yee Ki. I was impressed by the streets in the twilight after school and I could see many primary school children in the street scene.



Illustrator: Zhanjiang Liu
Tour guide: Qihao Jiang
Location: Wukang Road, Shanghai

Zhangjiang: When I see such tall and narrow buildings that were previously built to solve the problem of high populations like in New York I feel insecure, so I draw them at an angle.



Illustrator: Yee Ki Cheung
Tour guide: Ola Dajani
Location: Amman, Jordan

Yee Ki: I found the structure and elements of the neighbourhood quite rectangular. So I illustrated it in a linear composition as this was how I saw it.



Illustrator: Junying Chen
Tour guide: Arran Semple
Location: Grassmarket, Old Town, Edinburgh

Arran: Really like the drawing! Bright colours and unusual perspectives add character to what can sometimes be intimidating buildings.



Illustrator: Arran Semple
Tour guide: Junying Chen
Location: Tianning temple, Quzhou, China

Junying: I like your drawing! You drew the temple! Thank you! It was a really enjoyable experience to visually communicate with others.



Illustrator: Ola Dajani
Tour guide: Guanqi Yang
Location: Beijing

Ola: I was shown a small collection of images taken from Guanqi's apartment. Guanqi lived in an apartment in a high-rise building overlooking many

other high-rise buildings. The cityscape transforms and is reduced in my eyes to lines and simple square and rectangular shapes.



Illustrator: Mrudula Kuvalekar
Tour guide: Zitian Li
Location: Unknown

Zitian: Thank you, Mrudula! I noticed you drew the art market and the river. It is surprising how you combine these two sites and your layout of the whole area is really interesting – you focus on this downward slope.

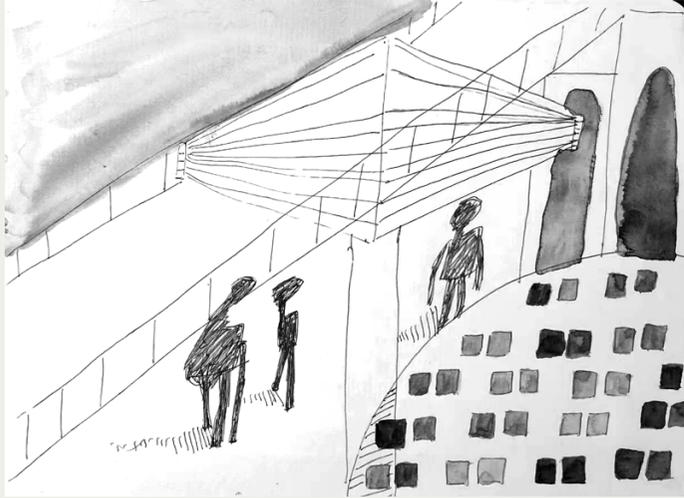


Illustrator: Lucy Daley
Tour guide: Tien-Tzu Lin
Location: Colliers Wood, London

Lucy: I was really influenced by the directions and overlapping shapes I saw on the tour. I also made note of the areas where elements of nature interrupt the urban landscape as this was something the tour guide spoke about with some affection. I found it interesting that my drawing manifested as a mish-mashed collection of observations, elements and memories rather than a more traditional drawing of a place.

Tien-Tzu: I'm really surprised by your attention to directions!

The Storied City
-Various



Colouring In, Issue 2: The City



IMAGE TOP LEFT
Illustrator: Zitian Li,
Tour guide: Mrudula
Kuvalekar, Location:
Mumbai

IMAGE TOP RIGHT
Illustrator: Arran
Semple, Tour guide:
Junying Chen,
Location: Tianning
temple, Quzhou,
China

IMAGE BOTTOM
LEFT Illustrator:
Tien-Tzu Lin,
Tour guide: Lucy
Daley, Location:
Southend-on-Sea



IMAGE MIDDLE
RIGHT Illustrator:
Guanqi Yang,
Tour guide: Yee Ki
Cheung, Location:
Hong Kong



IMAGE BOTTOM
RIGHT Illustrator:
Yee Ki Cheung, Tour
guide: Ola Dajani,
Location: Amman,
Jordan

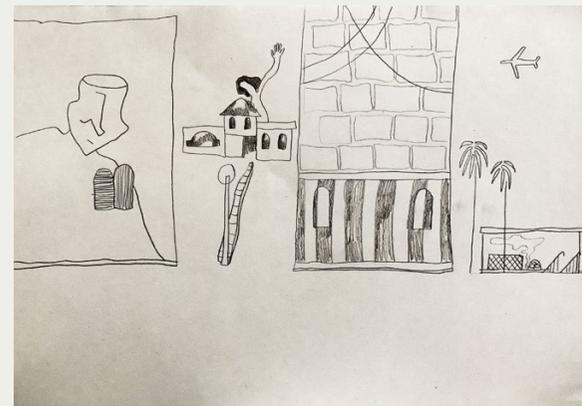




IMAGE TOP LEFT
Illustrator: Zhanjiang
Liu, Tour guide:
Qihao Jiang,
Location: Wukang
Road, Shanghai

IMAGE MIDDLE
Illustrator: Ola Dajani,
Tour guide: Guanqi
Yang, Location:
Beijing

IMAGE TOP RIGHT
Illustrator: Lucy
Daley, Tour guide:
Tien-Tzu Lin,
Location: Colliers
Wood, London

IMAGE BOTTOM
LEFT Illustrator:
Junying Chen,
Tour guide: Arran
Semple, Location:
Grassmarket, Old
Town, Edinburgh

IMAGE BOTTOM
Illustrator: Mrudula
Kuvalekar, Tour
guide: Zitian Li,
Location: Unknown



A Container For A Thing Contained –Stuart Bannoeks

Designer Stuart Bannoeks on the influences that shaped City Strips – a series of zines laying bare “the most read cities of fiction”.

I'm already unhappy with how I'm coming across. We've probably gotten off on the wrong foot. Sorry (totally). It's my fault (obviously). Because, come close... to be frank with you, I'm somewhat unhappy to be writing this and I have almost zero interest in you reading anything I have to say. But it's more than just a general reluctance or disinterest. Don't get me wrong, it's not because I don't care about you. Please. No. I. Wouldn't want you to think that. I do care. And that's exactly why I don't want to talk about this. I've had some success in not talking. But I've also failed a bunch. If this is done in time and manages to be accepted here into this space of Colouring In – it'll be another failure.

If it were possible, and you know – only if you wanted to, we should both go back in time. No not we. Just you. Alone. You don't know me, and to fully labour, bore and blunt that point – it's because you don't need to know me. This isn't about having a meeting, a talk,

or reading some text that primes or frames something. It's about a thing. Quite a simple image, object - thing. A cold form.

Design as a verb and noun, actions and things, has a vast set of interpretations, deployments and readings. In amongst all of that nested, entangled mess – is one of the live tensions that has shaped and formed our understanding, misunderstanding and engagement in design. The interplay between the anonymous and the known – the onymous. The auteur, the hero, the brand, the signature vs something else (you tell me...). A sub-set of that tension would be the differentiation between a mode and result of an intentionally sought anonymity vs the emergent or happenstance anonymity that comes along with a certain moment's staging of a range of practices. Which is to say that at any given time sits a cluster of forms, gestures, undertakings – kinds of things that 'we' (whoever we are at whatever given time or place) have less (to zero) interest or concern in knowing who the signer, the maker, the putter-together-er was (or what they thought, or what they intended, or what they might have thought or currently think about other things). That to my mind should not be thought of as a binary state, a yes or no, an on or off situation. It's better thought of as an amount or variable, a dimensional value (X,Y,Z,N etc.) or an amount of something that is presently thought of as measurable (Temperature, Taste, Weight... Scarcity etc.), and that 'present value' is malleable



and susceptible to similar forces to those that afflict the physical qualities of a thing.

So just you. You go back a little bit in time. London. Go wandering into one of two comic shops Soho way. Gosh! Or Orbital, either would equally do it. Might be raining, might be shine - that's up to you (either are equally fine - it's your time machine. What a waste of a time machine!). Take a stroll up from Leicester Square station (preferably) and head on over to the small press section (Gosh!: it's back and to the right - Orbital: midway to the left) and get a copy of *City Strips*. Hope it's still in stock! If it is - get it, £3.50, or just have a quick free rifle through. Flick pages in corporeal. In the kinetic comix context. That's the intended, the 'designed for' factors.



Rifle is apparently an old French word for stealing stuff. Riffle might be a composite of 'ripple' and 'ruffle' (said the internet). Both would be fine. Steal a browse. Thieve an eyeball. Zine is a compression or shortening of the word magazine. The word magazine in relation to rifle evokes but is etymologically unassociated with firearms. Fire through it (mixed metaphorically).

What follows is not really to do with *City Strips*. *City Strips* was (and still is somewhat ongoingly and unfinished) a set of comics. Comics is a good description, but sometimes they are described and thought of as fanzines - which is also true enough. As publications they attempt to portray the cities,

architectures and objects of certain comics. It does this through a simple and unoriginal (in more than one sense) gesture or 'protocol'. Step 1: Characters, dialogue and non 'diegetic' text are erased from the original source. Step 2: In the now empty spaces left by that erasure a reconstruction, a redrawing, a restoration of the image is undertaken, and performed in as 'faithfully' or 'seamlessly' a way as plausible. The result is a portrait, a foregrounding of the architecture and objects of the comic. The spaces. The things. The vistas. The Mise-en-scène. That's the idea. As stated; simple and unoriginal. It's also relatively time consuming, more so than editing together a dinner, but considerably less than other things (you tell me...).

At the start of each issue there's a short introductory blurb in ALL CAPS (which you are about to read) and then no words. What follows here (after that introduction - which is coming shortly) is words, many more words than are warranted. Other's words. The comic doesn't know, and even if it could know, it doesn't need to have any of these things associated with it to make sense of itself or to do what it was designed to be. In fact these things, here in this context most likely actively hinder what it was designed to be. Sorry.

"ALL ACTION ARCHITECTURE - OBJECT ORIENTED VISTAS FROM ONE OF THE MOST READ CITIES OF FICTION EARTH. OUR 'HEROINE' - THE LOCATIONS WHERE

DEEDS OF DARING TAKE PLACE: HOMES OF THE INNOCENT. THE STREETS AND SIDEWALKS BUSTLING WITH BYSTANDERS. A SERIES OF BADLY LIT BACK ALLEYS PATROLLED BY WRONGDOERS, EMPLOYED AND GOVERNED VIA A SECRET LAIR BELONGING TO SOME VOCATIONALLY EVIL GENIUS. A 'BY-DAY' HUMBLE OFFICE FOR THE ALTER EGO, AND OF COURSE THE 'BY-NIGHT' HI-TECH HIDEOUT OF THE PHILANTHROPIC, HOME TO THE GENUINE SUPER-SELF. AND SO, HUMANS OF ALL AGES, WELCOME TO THIS ISSUE OF CITY STRIPS -"

Now can you just have a list of quotes? Is that fair use? Like, for review and criticism purposes? Hmmmm. Maybe. But it's probably not worth the risk. So I'll add some filler in-between just to try and cover bases.

"We see subversion as a sort of phenomenological scalpel, cutting through the surface of the spectacle of the commodity & bringing to light all the most subtle presuppositions on which the society is based."

Anonymous, *On Wielding the Subversive Scalpel* (1970)

Also something... something over used, something... something William S. Burroughs: "When you cut into the present, the future leaks out." But also other



things like the past, sofa foam, fruit juice, next day delivery distractions. Guts.

"Kublai Khan does not necessarily believe everything Marco Polo says when he describes the cities visited on his expeditions, but the emperor of the Tartars does continue listening to the young Venetian with greater attention and curiosity than he shows any other messenger or explorer of his."
Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1972)

To paraphrase Timothy Morton, reality retreats as we attempt to study it. It is inexhaustible in the lines of enquiry and the indexable modes of retreat. In one of their Sci-Arc talks about "The Golden Stain of Time" (Ruskin) they have a passage about the inability to fully know what a building is through discrete analysis. At one point (paraphrasing again from memory), if you 'look' at a brick you get 'brick looks', if you 'lick' a brick you get 'brick licks'. That's what Marco is depicted as doing in that book, he's looking, listening, licking et.al bricks for Khan - and Khan is loving it!

"I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks, spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news."
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1989)

You could say, if you really wanted, here, for the purposes of stretching over and loosely sketching some associated sense – that the city here is the container - the carrier bag for a way of life, a container that is made into the 'news'. But that might be stretching it too far. It's easier to pilfer some sense through this text to state the gesture of – 'hero under erasure'.

"He had once told me that he wished to become a spy but was not sure who to approach. In the afternoon he took me to the Chatham Street car park overlooking the Ramada Hotel where it turned out he was now living."
Patrick Keiller, *Robinson in Space* (1997)

Who do we ask about that? I guess we don't - someone asks you. You are invited. Also, why can't I live in a hotel?

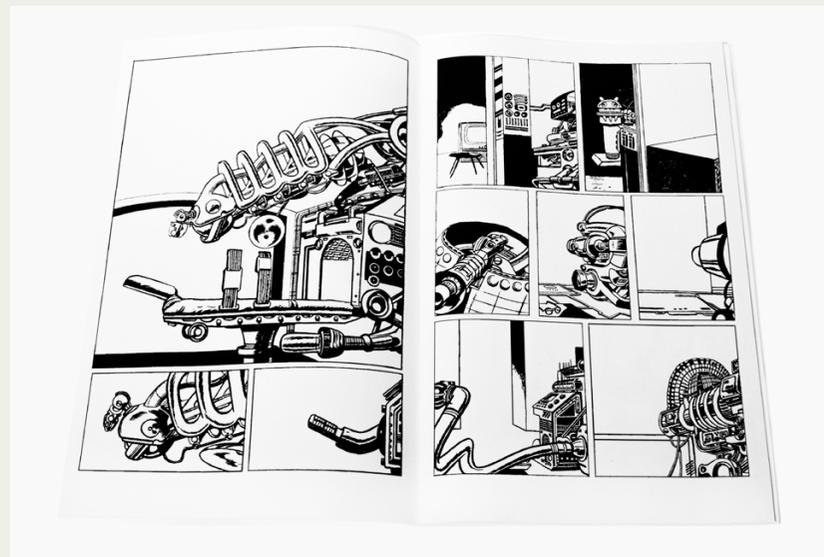
"...somebody once said to me, 'Don't you want to see it built, don't you want to be an architect?' To my mind, the assumptions behind these questions betray a misunderstanding as to what the work of Archigram represents. A misreading of it as a set of proposals, a set of windows through which to see a 'new world', is only a rather pathetic regurgitation of the dogma which asserts that architectural drawings are representations of something that wishes to become."
David Greene, *Concerning Archigram* (1998)

A certain set of lines, shapes and descriptions of 'form', rendered in the associated gestures of design - misdiagnosed as a plan that you build physical things from. But that's obviously not the only kind of plan, and not the only way to enact, use and transpose.

"The only legitimate discourse is loss; art replenishes Junkspace in direct proportion to its own morbidity. We used to renew what was depleted, now we try to resurrect what is gone.... Outside, the architect's footbridge is rocked to the breaking point by a stampede of enthusiastic pedestrians; the designers' initial audacity now awaits the engineer's application of dampers. Junkspace is a look-no-hands world.... The constant threat of virtuality in Junkspace is no longer exorcized by petrochemical products, plastic, vinyl or rubber; the synthetic cheapens. Junkspace has to exaggerate its claims to the authentic. Junkspace is like a womb that organizes the transition of endless quantities of the Real - stone, trees, goods, daylight, people - into the unreal."

Rem Koolhaas, *Junkspace* (2001)

I've never been to New York. Delirious or otherwise. But I did briefly live and work in Rotterdam. I've also been to Sesame Street. Where does this fit in the discussion of 'Embodied Knowledge' vs 'Abstract Knowledge'?



"Grove Street, home. At least it was before I fucked everything up."

Carl "CJ" Johnson, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (2004)

I spent a large portion of my childhood in Springfield, Chelmsford. Also Springfield, Evergreen Terrace (via BBC2).

"I had realised that, in this instance, shops make astonishingly little difference to the city's complexion. They hardly impinge on it – they're wee zits rather than boiling Etnas of acne. And they will, in any case, soon be gone the way of the Civil Service Stores and Lipton's and Timothy White's and Augustus Barnett and Lyons Corner House. [...] The buildings that shops inhabit for their moth-life will (mostly) endure."

Jonathan Meades, *Museum Without Walls* (2004)

The Strand or just *Strand* is a thoroughfare in the City of Westminster. This short excerpt is from a section in *Museum Without Walls* titled *The Strand* (because it's about *The Strand*). This book along with an internalised conjuring of Meades' voice, stance and demeanour accompanied me for sometime on the many trips up-town to re-stock the comic shops that sold *City Strips*. It feels as if the relationship we have with 'place' is not so much a dialogue or genuine exchange, but two seemingly indifferent monologues. Two very separate accounts of space. One is oriented

in on our day to day readings, purposes, encounters and uses for them, the other is everything else - the environments themselves which remain silent. I tend to agree with Meades, lifting here from *Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness* (2014) "Architecture does not have a language [...] it does not speak to us, it does not sign". But from time to time I think it just might be that we don't live long enough to hear them say anything.

"Crime novels are tours of the city, but they are tours that take you off the tourist map... [...] Location is the sine qua non of detective fiction; poorly lit alleyways, offices at night, derelict buildings set in overgrown wastelands, expensive houses and hotels. The detective has to navigate across a city animated by social distinctions and divided by social antagonisms. [...] The detective is required to access both space and information and to do so invisibly."

Ben Highmore, *Cityscapes* (2005)

With our tour guide erased, their words and lens gone, we are left with the toured. A kind of home. We didn't do any of those things but it's where we remember growing up.

"London in the 21st Century. For the people who live here it can be the best of times and the worst of times. This is the story of both in one place. Of two separate worlds coming together in a bend in the river at Deptford. This is the tale



of the tower."

Anthony Wonke, *The Tower: A Tale of Two Cities*
(2007)

Open. Fade in from black. Overlaid onto panning shorts of the 'deep ford' on the edge of the 'dark river'. "No, no, don't exist anymore, it's time to say goodbye," sings that singer what sings that song. Nearly every day I walk in eye-shot of that tower, and in those moments of looking, the meaning (not the information), the noise of that documentary looms.

"I believe in one matter-energy, the maker of things seen and unseen. I believe that this pluriverse is traversed by heterogeneities that are continually doing things. I believe it is wrong to deny vitality to nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, and that a careful course of anthropomorphization can help reveal that vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds my comprehensive grasp. I believe that encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests."

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2009)

The temptation is to imagine back in the humans, with their personalities, movements and words. That's OK. But don't.

"Who Made that Barrel? You Did!"

Olivier Lebrun, *A Pocket Companion To Books From The Simpsons in Alphabetical Order* (2012)

I have a handful of books that once belonged to my grandparents. Those books now sit on my own shelves. I've never read them, but I have read the titles.

"I'm Kenneth Goldsmith, a poet who lives in New York City. A city full of words. Poetry is all around us, we just need to reframe it, and suddenly it becomes our own. Now I'm going to read you a very short poem. Something brand-new. Entitled: French Writer Wins Nobel. Stockholm, Patrick Modiano of France who has made a life-long study of the Nazi occupation and its effects on his country was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature Thursday. The Swedish academy gave the 1.1 million dollar prize to Modiano (69) quote: for the art of memory with which he has evoked with the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life world of the occupation - AP" Kenneth Goldsmith, *Interview: Poetry in a Newspaper* (2014) (Retyped 2022)

In 2015 there was a small pop-up show and shop of City Strips at a small gallery called 310NXRD. In the bathroom was a small plaque which read: "So is this design research? It may look like a comic and feel like a comic. But don't let that fool you. It really is a comic."

"Citation: Bannoeks, Stuart, 2014-2019 City Strips (open square brackets) Project (close square brackets). Reviewer score between 0 and 4 in increments of 0.2. 'I think it scores extremely high on Originality (capital O) but the Rigour (capital R) (open brackets) while absolutely embedded in the work (close brackets) isn't explicitly visible. It's also personal (open brackets) NICHE (question mark) (close brackets) rigour rather than something using conventionally recognised research methods and techniques'. Score 3.2 out of 4."

Anonymous, *Research Excellence Framework 'Internal Dry Run'* (2019)

Some years ago now I unintentionally and inconveniently became an educator as well as a researcher (clarification: the educator part was intended and is joyous, the researcher part was/is the itchy side effect). Unintentionally, because right now and for the time being those things in higher education are predominantly enmeshed. Inconveniently, because you are confronted with an inherited and inherent impasse, a dilemma that comes about through a tacit but also tangible dichotomy between 'teaching & research', and then with *disciplines* like design the sub-dilemma of 'research & practice'. There are those who think these things can be, or already are reconciled. I honestly don't want to waste our time bemoaning and begrudging their valid and well supported position. But this is not my project and I don't believe in it. Oh well. Never mind. It must be done

regardless. Done a bit like this. Done until such a time that something which genuinely nurtures rather than delineates, encourages rather than justifies, values rather than converts might emerge. A something that comes from and belongs to 'a *thingy*', a making, a happening, a doing-based enquiry...

The other problem is that they make you stick your name on it.

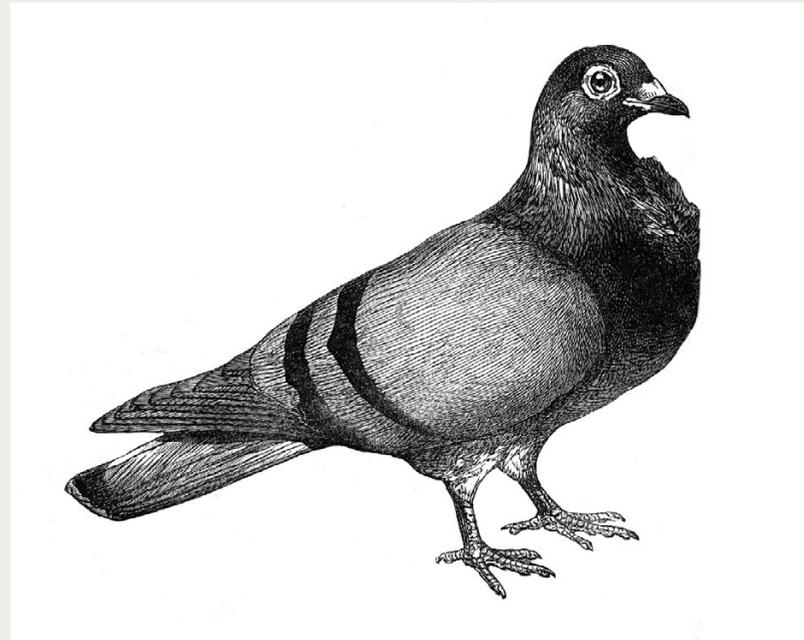
SB

Colouring In: The City, A Roundtable –Billie Muraben

Earlier this year, a group of illustrators, artists and academics met for a discussion on ‘the city’; how to define it, how those definitions inform practice, and the potential of illustration as a tool to expand our understanding and experience of it.

The discussion was led by Stephanie Black and Luise Vormittag, with: researcher [Franz Buhr](#), who works at the intersection of migration and urban studies in the Institute of Geography at the University of Lisbon; [Ksenia Kopalova](#), independent researcher, educator, and co-editor of [Slonvboa](#) online magazine; [David Madden](#), Assistant Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics; illustrator, artist and researcher [Mitch Miller](#) (Glasgow); and illustrator, arts facilitator and educator [Olivia Twist](#) (London).

The conversation was written up by [Billie Muraben](#).



The Shock of the Familiar

“I don’t feel like every story has to be spectacular in order to be documented”, says Olivia Twist. Seeking to capture social history as it unfolds, Twist “want[s] to make it easier for marginalised communities to look back”; supporting and facilitating the formation and documentation of communal identity through drawing, murals and conversation. “I use drawing as a way to demonstrate worth, and as a conversation tool. All of my work acts as an ‘i c u’, which is a colloquial term that we use in the community I grew

up in. When someone is working hard and maybe not getting recognition, or doing things that we take for granted but make a difference, we call that ‘i c u’.

Twist’s practice is rooted in connection; documenting stories to demonstrate worth, open up conversation, and bring communal expression into the gallery. “In the past when I’ve brought my Dad to art galleries, to see exhibitions I’ve wanted to check out, that I think he’ll connect with; he hasn’t expected to see things that he relates to, things that [he] doesn’t think are a big deal.” Twist sees drawing and showing work as a way to inspire the “shock of the familiar”; to “bring about esoteric moments in places where you wouldn’t expect to see them”, or see yourself reflected.

For Twist, how and where the work is experienced is as much a part of it as the individual pieces; “I always bring it back to the people who have inspired my work.” Reiterating the importance of recognising and demonstrating worth, and the value of the exchange of expertise, Twist says: “You [need] to be sharing at the same time”.

Mitch Miller describes his ‘dialectograms’ as “a hybrid form of map, comic, ethnography, with elements of activism, oral history and memory work — a mish-mash of stuff comes together...”.

“The fabric of [a ‘dialectogram’] is a lot of conversation. Almost all of the lettering is from

an observation of some sort, and the drawing is marbled [with conversation] all the way through, from when I start on a piece.”

Miller uses his sketchbook both to document the experience of him getting to know the site, and as a conversation tool: “I use the sketchbook in various ways. Sometimes it is just getting a chance to draw something and ‘get it’ in my head, it can also be an invitation, a way of drawing people in and creating a sort-of incident. People want to look over your shoulder, see what you’re doing.”

Like Twist, Miller brings each community of people he works with into the project, not only observing them, but encouraging them to observe and contribute to the work: “I’ll take the drawing out of the studio and bring it back to the community, so they can see how it is starting to form and how it might take shape. As the drawing starts to develop over time, the discussion gets interesting, and people of the community ask: ‘What can we have here?’, ‘What should be there?’ It serves as a way of letting people see how I’ve used the material along the way. It is a constant conversation, and the drawing is the engine of that.”

For Franz Buhr, mental maps form an integral methodology for understanding how people place themselves in relation to the city. In one project, Buhr studied the ways people who have migrated to Lisbon learn to use a city they were previously unfamiliar

with, identifying: “What the practical knowledge they have produced and acquired can tell us about segregation, about circuits of sociability, mobility; about the urban experiences that they have access to, and the ones they don't have access to”.

Mental maps are a popular research method in behavioural geography. They sit within the tradition of hand-drawn maps, when you might sketch a specific, single route on a scrap of paper; showing the best way to get to the closest supermarket, or a walk from a bus stop to a cafe. Researchers often interpret them alone in their office, without the input of participants; to Buhr, it is necessary to analyse mental maps with the participant, in order to see the full picture. “Mental maps are not an illustration to a story. By drawing something, participants talk about something they wouldn't talk about in a regular sit-down interview. It is a method that requires participation and engagement, that needs to be contextualised all the time.”

When approaching participants, rather than asking them to draw a map — “because the word ‘map’ is scary to everyone, even people with cartography training” — he offers the prompt “draw the Lisbon that you use”: “I pay attention to the first thing they draw, the routes they take. I ask about mobility and how they first got to know that particular place, making an archaeology of their knowledge about the city, and how it came about.”

One story that stayed with him is that of a Brazilian participant in Lisbon: “She was a cleaner working in houses and shops all over the city. I was expecting her to draw a very intricate, rich map, and she basically drew her way to the beach — crossing the river and going to the beach. If I went to traditional interpretations of mental mapping, Lisbon was absent from her map, there was a blank space, which surprised me. I asked ‘Do you feel like you know Lisbon?’, and she said ‘Yes of course, I know everything around here. I use the metro very much, and I work very long hours, so I try to do everything I need — like buy groceries — at the shops inside the metro stations’. The blank space in her map prompted her to tell me about the subterranean city that she knew, which was more difficult to represent.” Without her drawing, and its unexpected omissions, the conversation about the underground city would not have taken place.

Hand-drawn maps exaggerate and omit information according to our perspective, what we are seeking to represent, and what we are likely to notice on the street — a tree in blossom, a particularly ostentatious house, an abandoned car, the launderette with interesting signage, a road sign that reads like a pun. For Ksenia Kopalova, hand-drawn maps were once a big part of how she would navigate the city. “When Franz was talking about [mental maps] I thought: ‘Wow, 15 years ago I used to draw the city a lot!’ To explain something, I would draw a very straight-forward, sketchy thing to show how to go somewhere.”

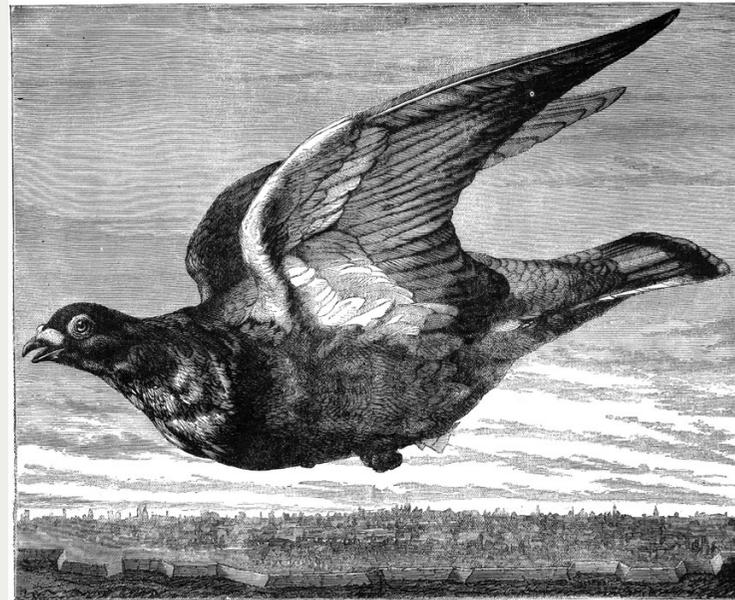
Before the dominance of smart phones and GPS, hand-drawing maps was a regular practice. “We don't really draw like that anymore; the way I see the city is not the same as it used to be.”

Different Perspectives

A city can be understood from an involved perspective, or from a detached position; Buhr suggests that cities can change according to how we interact with them, and how we become locals: “It is about learning to ‘play’ the city, not in an abstract way, but in a way that makes sense to your own needs, your references, and your habits. You become so accustomed to each other, the city is like an instrument that you play in your own unique way.” He also reflects on Michel de Certeau’s essay ‘Walking the City’ (1980), which contrasts two different vistas of New York City: one detached view from above looking down at the city, and the other from the position of the pedestrian, who is walking the streets, embedded in a more intimate experience of the urban environment on the ground.

For Miller, whose ‘dialectograms’ are in bird’s-eye view, the position of potential detachment had initially been a source of conflict: “What has always interested me and bothered me about bird’s eye view, is that it is a view of power, a view of privilege. From the get-go I was always trying to hijack that, mess around with it, and complicate it. One day, it clicked that some birds fly very high — they don’t

care much about the ground, because they are just passing through — that’s pretty much the classic bird’s-eye view. But pigeons, for example, they really care about what is happening on the ground.



They are there to eat the old kebabs and discarded chips, they need to understand the street; they do that by first going up, but they also relate that to the ground. It is a simple idea, but once it clicked with me — that pigeons were the ideological and intellectual inspiration for my work — it became a lot easier to work out what was going on. I’ve always been trying to achieve a tension between the overhead view and the ground view.”

Drawing and Erasing Boundaries

Our understanding of a city, how we relate to it, and how it relates to us, can have a lot to do with whether we see ourselves reflected. The way a city speaks to its communities — through which places are preserved or redeveloped and the images blown up on hoardings and billboards — makes its priorities known and felt. Through the Royal College of Art, Twist worked on a mural for a youth club in Battersea close to the RCA building, where there is a lot of redevelopment. “The youth club is in the centre of an estate, and the kids are really familiar with the space, they feel a strong sense of ownership. They all refer to the youth club with such love. There’s a park next to it, and they really use the space, it’s billowing out. That kind of ownership is what we wanted to show”, says Twist. “I asked the kids: ‘What do you want to say, how do you want to feel when you see the mural?’ and they said: ‘Olivia, we want it to be like a family photo album, we want to show people that we are here’. We illustrated the youth workers, brothers and sisters, and the schoolmates who go there together. The kids love it, they take pictures and post them to me on Instagram. I think that power of showing yourself, seeing yourself in things, it makes you think, this is for me. It’s a way of showing people around you that ‘I’m here’, and it’s not something you can overlook.”

Cities, and the depictions of cities — and the people who seek to profit from them — selectively overlook

people, places and practices. For David Madden, official representations of space — Google Maps, architectural renderings, hoardings — are “closed texts full of omissions, drawing boundaries that people don’t experience or erasing boundaries that people do experience.” He uses visual material, including reference photographs of street art, to understand how “people living in cities use urban space to speak back.” Studying the street art and murals of a city is a way for Madden to understand a place: “You can really tell a story about peoples’ location within a city, not just place, but their social location, their relationship with the state, with their neighbours, inter-communal locations. It’s not only claiming space, it really is a whole statement about the city itself — who the city is for, and what the city is for.”

For Kopalova, the ways we try to connect with a city, and its non-places, provides interest and inspiration. “Non-places are about transition”, she says, “It’s hard to belong to a motorway... to feel that sense of connection.” In the same way that processes of gentrification and preservation show us who the city is being designed for, there are many ways that people — and communities, who really are the city — can speak back. In Russia there is a ubiquitous practice called “ЖКХ-арт”, which roughly translates as ‘yard art’, where people decorate the territory around their homes. “It’s about the attempt [...] to claim space and to get that feeling of belonging to a place. The majority of the yards that these sculptures are in are used by a lot of people, as they are located

in front of big apartment blocks with hundreds of apartments. The majority of them get installed without any permission and could be removed at any moment, but they often stay there forever. They appear in an interesting transitional point where the artistic vision of the space is neither legal nor strictly illegal, it is in between. I'm really interested in how these micro-interventions may become a practice of 'unauthorised-familiarising' of space and a characteristic part of the landscape."

While illustration, and illustrative practices, can be used to imprint the experiences, relationships and sense of community within a city, it can just as commonly be used to re-draw it. "Where I live in East London, when I walk down the main road I see so much redevelopment happening," says Twist. "These illustrations of couples on a balcony eating spaghetti... It's just so annoying, because where I live, it's families. Everyone's got two or three kids, there are loads of old people, and the houses they are building, none of us will fit in them. It does start talking to you."

"There are plenty of illustrations that are used by real estate, and by the state", says Madden. "[Illustration] is not only an avenue to give a voice to the voiceless. It is also a way that space is made marketable and sold. I think some of the most influential illustrations about the city are these ubiquitous architectural renderings, with imagined city dwellers doing imaginary things, and it really is using illustration to will into existence a

totally different set of city dwellers, a totally different purpose of urban space."

In Miller's first 'dialectogram', on a travellers' yard, he saw the way mapping could will another reality into existence: "The travellers' yard was in the way of a development. I'd been looking at plans and the entire area was represented as white, as if there was nothing there. These illustrations [architectural renderings or photographs commissioned by developers] are really powerful, because in every line there's an enforcement of what is going to happen to the city. There is a whole industry behind those drawings, a whole system of illustration as a weaponised aspect of capital. Let's not pretend illustration has always been pure. There's a very sharp edge when it comes to cities and how cities change."

BM