

# FIELD STUDY





FIELDSTUDY 9





**Fieldstudy 9** marks the end of a one year research project, *Road: Artists and the Stop The M11 Link Road Campaign, 1984–1994*, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Photography and the Archive Research Centre, University of the Arts London.

The M11 Link Road was completed in 1999 and stretches just three miles, from Redbridge roundabout to Hackney Marshes, but destroyed almost 400 homes, displacing hundreds of people. Originally proposed in the 1960s, the M11 Link Road caused immediate controversy and the Save Wanstead Action Group (eventually to become the No M11 Link Road Campaign), was founded. In the 1980s artists had started to move into the area drawn by low rent, yet in the 1990s many found themselves unwitting participants of one of the most controversial road protests in the UK.

*Road: Artists and the Stop The M11 Link Road Campaign, 1984–1994*, investigated not only how residence on the M11 Link Road route affected artists' production, but also how far artistic production became a central part of the campaign from leaflets to sculpture, painting, installation and the functional architectural structures created by the protestors; tree houses, observation towers and treetop walkways.

Significant moments during the research were a public film screening at St John the Baptist Church, close to the M11 Link Road in Leytonstone, attended by over 100 people and reuniting many who had been involved in the protest; four public seminars held at Photography and the Archive Research Centre, University of the Arts London, with speakers including artists, protesters, archivists and critics; and documentation of three major archives, Museum of London, Vestry House Museum and Local Studies and Archives based at Ilford Central Library, plus a number of public and private image archives which were beyond the original scope of the project.

At the heart of the research is the production of an oral archive; interviews with twenty artists that lived and worked on the route of the M11 Link Road, before and during the protest. This series of interviews brings the artists' voices to the forefront of the research and provides a unique opportunity to hear their experiences first hand. Many of these interviews can be found at Photography and the Archive Research Centre's website [www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk](http://www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk)

*Fieldstudy 9* brings together a selection of artists' works, documentation, leaflets and posters from the campaign alongside short extracts from the artists' interviews. Full documentation is held at Photography and the Archive Research Centre, University of the Arts.

We are deeply indebted to the artists, photographers, museums, private collectors, archivists, galleries and individuals for their generous response and support.

Research was carried out by Alison Marchant and Hannah Liley under the direction of Val Williams, Director, Photography and the Archive Research Centre, University of the Arts London.



Cover:  
**Jason Royce**  
*Treehouse in Babylon*, 1994  
28 November, the first day of the final eviction of Claremont Rd.

“Taken around 9am whilst we were waiting excitedly for the impending eviction, their [the police] third attempt but we knew this was going to be the ‘one’.”

Above top:  
**No M11 Link Road Campaign.**  
*No M11 Link Road Campaign leaflet.*  
Indymedia UK website, posted by Road Alert! 18.02.2004

Above:  
**Jason Royce**  
*Hanging out with Dolly*, 1994  
28 November, the first day of the final eviction of Claremont Rd.

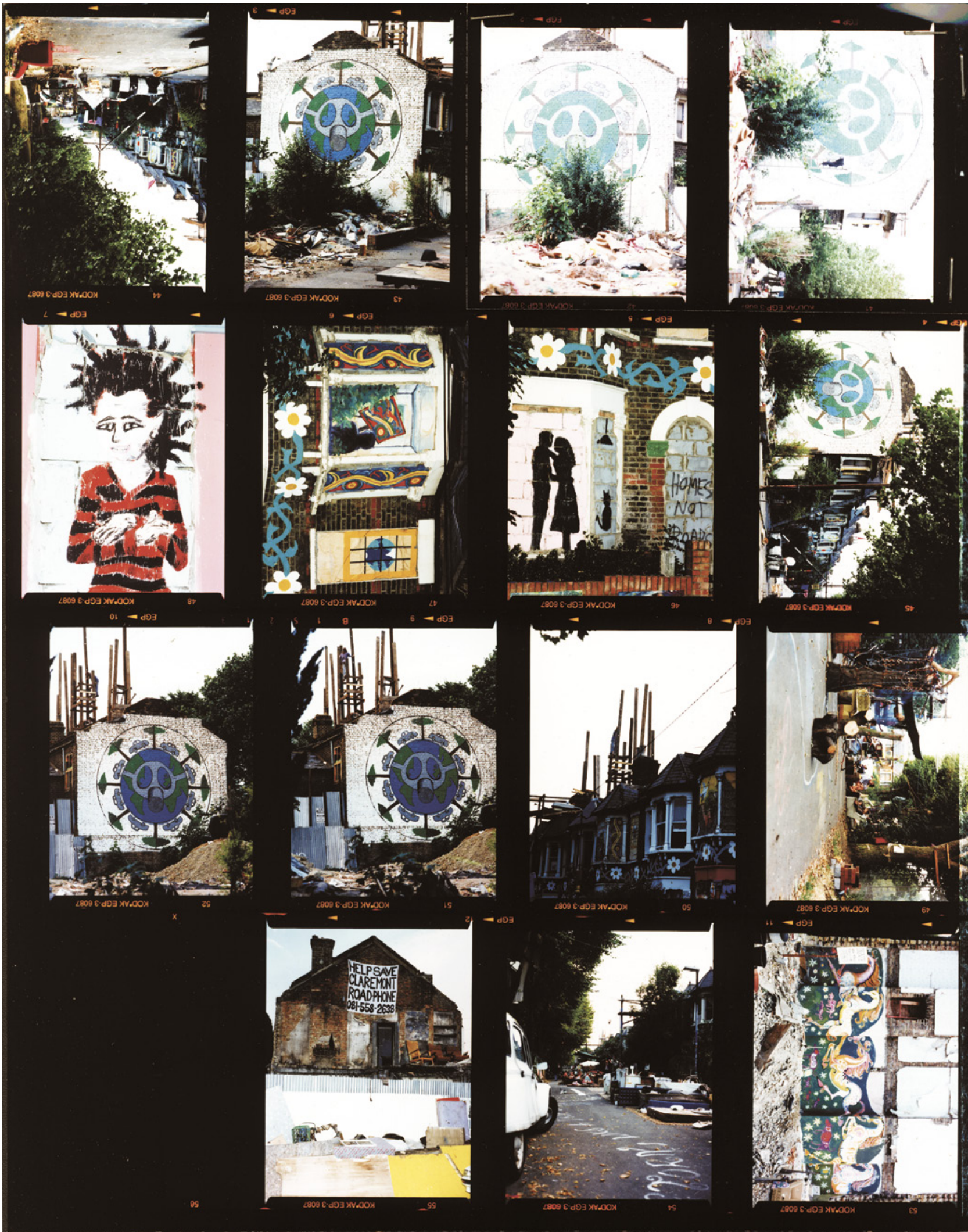
“Dolly, the 100 foot scaffold tower, caused the police a headache after cutting people out of ‘lock ons’ in the road and on the roof. The police now had to cut four people from the very top of ‘Dolly’ who had welded themselves in. Finally they had to bargain with Phil, the last protester to come down, who kept climbing all over Dolly. The eviction cost 2 million pounds and took 5 days and nights - the campaign’s strategic use of ‘hitting them where it hurts’ was to influence the eco activist movement that exploded all over the U.K. in the 1990s”.

Opposite:  
**Jason Royce**  
*Kerplunk*, 1994  
28 November, the first day of the final eviction of Claremont Rd.

“The T.S.G. look on in awe as they are greeted by whoops and cheers from the people on the roofs and the task ahead of them. The ‘porcupine’ in front of them just one of many ingenious obstacles put in their way to hinder and prolong the eviction”.







Above top:  
**Undercurrents.org**  
*Undercurrents Alternative News*  
Video issue 1, 1994  
[www.undercurrents.org](http://www.undercurrents.org)  
Museum of London, M11 Link Campaign

Above:  
**M11 Link Campaign**  
*No M11 Link Road Campaign leaflet.*  
Indymedia UK, posted by Road Alert! 17.02.2004

Right:  
**Museum of London, M11 Link Campaign**  
Protest badge

Opposite:  
**Richard Primrose**  
*No M11 Protest, Claremont Road, E11. C1994.*

In 1980 the Department of Transport offered Acme Studios short-life houses that had been compulsorily purchased prior to the building of the M11 Link Road in East London. ACME let these houses to young and emerging artists, enabling the movement of artists, through economic necessity, to the abandoned spaces of the East End. During the 1980s to the mid 1990s, from Leyton to Wanstead in East London, existed the largest artists' colony in recent times. It included sonic artists, painters, sculptors, filmmakers and photographers, and in the early 1990s was at the centre of a the No M11 Link Road Campaign uniting artists, local people and activists, against government departments and the police. The artist Jeffery Dennis stated that 'the artists' community in Leyton was curiously unique in the history of such colonies in London. In Hampstead, Chelsea, Camden or Wapping, artists were the unwitting 'advanced guard' for gentrification... But our (that is the artists') influence in Leyton was almost completely delimited by the road construction' <sup>(1)</sup>. The area would subsequently become a focus of the 'anti-road movement' in the early 1990s and received extensive media coverage.

Painter Steve Rushton wrote in the 1990 Whitechapel Art Gallery, Open catalogue: 'Since 1987, Leyton Artists Group have been opening their studios to the public. But unlike most other open studios ours are in the houses we live in, in a community of adjacent streets threatened with demolition by the planned M11 road extension. We belong to a larger local culture united against a common threat...' <sup>(2)</sup>

Artists and activist filmmakers documented the demolition of the houses sited on the M11 Link Road route, for instance John Smith's 1994 film 'Blight' which uses reminiscence and documentary to produce an elegy to a lost community. The events of the No M11 Link Road Campaign became the catalyst for a number of artistic counter cultures, the activist film collective 'Undercurrents', an alternative news company, videoed events at the height of the campaign. The Campaign was also the focus of early editions of schNEWS.

(1). Jeffrey Dennis, 'Was that Bohemia?' Written in 2004, on the anniversary of its demise, a small memoir on the artists' community of the M11 link route.  
(2). '1990 Whitechapel Open: East End Open Studios' Introduction by Andrea Finn, co-ordinator East End Open Studios.



The derelict houses became sites of placement for artists' work created as a response to the area's changing landscape; Housewatch, a collaboration between a number of artists, created a series of site specific works projecting film onto the inside of windows of terrace houses lighting them up at night to be viewed from the streets. Paul Noble's 'heritage' plaques stating 'this house was once a home' were sited on a number of derelict house frontages and 'Close To Home' by Alison Marchant, an enlarged family photograph covered a doorway already blocked up by corrugated iron. The resonances of a fast changing environment are embedded in the on-going practice of artists such as Graeme Miller and John Smith.

While artists like Yoshimi Kihara photographed the M11 Link Road demolitions and clearances from the window of her house in Fillebrook Road, and Steve Johnson documented the on-going campaign as resident anti-road protester, also significant were artists who were drawn to the No M11 Link Road Campaign by their own personal and professional interests; photographers Tom Hunter, Gideon Mendel, Nick Cobbing, Maggie Lambert, Alison Butler, Steve Johnson, David Hoffman, Jason Royce and Nick Middleton. At the time of the No M11 Link Road Campaign the creative uses of public space to address issues of political and cultural significance functioned outside the mainstream art market. The artist Terry Smith visited the area between 1992 and 1994, gaining access to the condemned houses from where he began the project Site Unseen. During this period Tom Cousins and Christine Binnie set up the art house in Claremont Road, hosting an exhibition of work by artists and protesters.

A comprehensive No M11 Link Road Campaign archive was donated to the Museum of London consisting of a large collection of photographs, news cuttings, ephemera and legal papers. Vestry House Museum and Ilford Central Library also hold collections of early anti-M11 Campaign information, news cuttings, maps and plans, and an extensive collection of back issues of campaign newsletters, from the 1960s to the present.

Alison Marchant & Hannah Liley





**Jason Royce**  
*The Rooftop Protest that launched a thousand protests, 1994*  
 28 November, the first day of the final eviction of Claremont Rd

“Taken during the actual eviction. It was a freezing cold November day and the final protester was taken down 5 days later from the very top of ‘Dolly’ the 100 foot scaffold tower affectionately named after the street’s eldest protester who was born in house number 32 nearly 93 years previously”.

Following spread:  
**Jason Royce**  
*Postman nonchalantly delivering mail, 1994*  
 28 November, the first day of the final eviction of Claremont Rd

“Hours before the eviction. He [the postman] walked quite amiably through the cordon of 700 police officers and 400 security guards to deliver the last mail Claremont Rd would ever receive”.

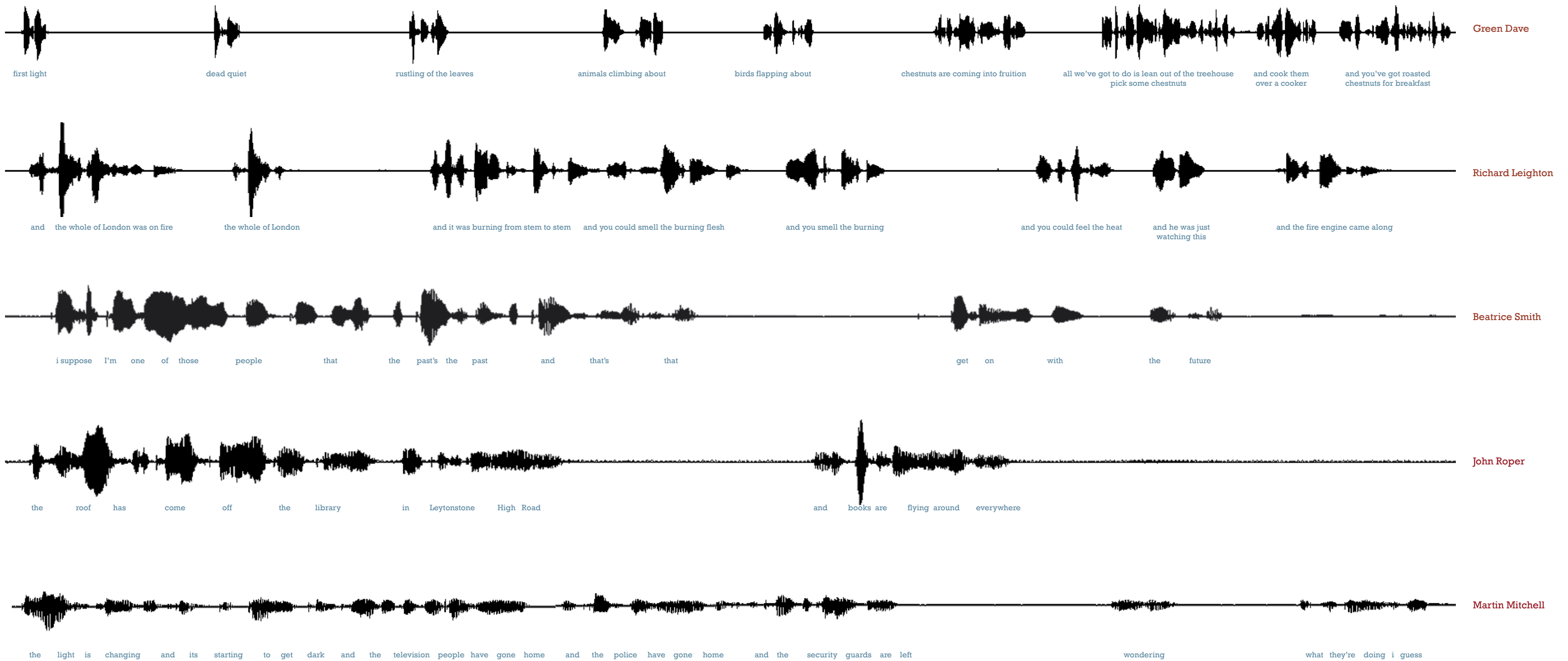
Opposite:  
**Museum of London,**  
**M11 Link Campaign**  
 Handbill, Claremont Road /  
*The End Of The Beginning*











Leytonstone Grove Green Road: near Bent's Farmhouse. C1890. Photograph by William Price  
Vestry House Museum. London Borough of Waltham Forest.

**LINKED, 2003 ongoing, created and conceived by Graeme Miller. An Artsadmin project commissioned by Museum of London.**

LINKED is a chain of twenty radio transmitters that border the three miles of the M11 Link Road. Since 2003 they have broadcast the voices of former residents and users of 500 houses demolished to build the road - including my own - and they will continue to fill the space now occupied by six lanes of traffic for decades to come. It is a work designed to participate in its own whereabouts over time. The narratives of the hundred or more people interviewed

for the work are archived in their complete form at The Museum of London, but function in the landscape as fragmented voices and unfinished narratives, inviting completion by the listener. The stories that reach furthest back touch on the time when the houses were yet to be built - a hundred years before their demolition when a girl stood by Bent's Farm on Grove Green Road. Now they interact with the shifting presence of the listener in the

shifting present. LINKED is narrative made lace, more gap than substance. Its net embraces the unpredictable play of real events in real time and invites connection - reconnection even - of the damaged narrative tissue of this swathe of East London. It broadcasts night and day and can be received freely. (see [linkedm11.net](http://linkedm11.net)). Graeme Miller, 2009.





Nicholas Middleton  
Claremont Road, 2nd August 1994

Opposite:  
**Grayson Perry**  
*M11 Link Campaign Ceramic pot*  
Museum of London, M11 Link Campaign

Following spread:  
**Nick Cobbing**  
*M11 Protest Eviction, c1994*  
David Hoffman Photo Library



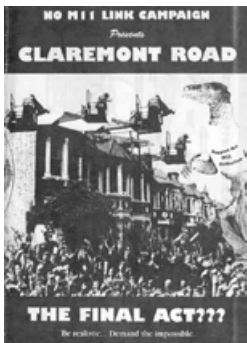






**Nick Cobbing**  
*Walkway at Claremont Road, 1994*  
 Taken from black and white Silver Print 12"x16".

"This image was made in the Summer period before the eventual eviction of the No M11 Link Road in London, November 1994. That time was spent by the residents reinforcing the defences of the street (barricades, tunnels, nets and walkways), around this the community strengthened. A lot of the fortifications were blended with art installations to make a richly sculptured environment. The plank walkway leads between trees on one side of the road and the terraced houses on the other. Both were later occupied and played a strategic part in the eviction, the road was eventually completed but at increased cost, which contributed to the UK wide roads programme being scaled down drastically. The pictures I took at Claremont Road came at the beginning of my career as a photojournalist and led to many of my earliest published pictures. It was an exciting time, many people felt part of a movement that could actively change government policy and attitudes at the time. Many other protest movements were catalysed from gatherings at the M11 link road".



#### No M11 Link Road Campaign.

No M11 Link Road Campaign leaflet. Indymedia UK website, posted by Road Alert! 17.02.2004

It was such a physical thing living in those houses because they were in such bad condition and then they had been so badly changed, so they were bitterly cold, there was no proper heating. There were a lot of open fires that people had because there was quite a lot of wood around, you could gather wood from skips and things. Nobody had central heating, that was unthinkable, so in winter time it was pretty rough, particularly as half the roofs were missing, and ceilings were missing, and subtle things like that. So in winter time everyone ends up looking like tramps wearing just about every piece of clothing they've got, which inevitably created a difference between the artists' community and the other people in the area, if there weren't already enough differences anyway. But the artists had this look of people who survived some kind of terrible disaster, everyone was wearing every bit of clothing because it was to so cold. [Julian Perry]

We were all living like kids really... our model was being artists and that meant you weren't measuring success by kids, houses and cars, you were measuring success by respect and interest in this peculiar activity. [Gary Stevens]

I remember painting the stairs, the wooden stairs, I remember painting them sort of a primrose yellow, a pale primrose yellow because we definitely wanted to make a sort of a homely feel that was separate from the downstairs studios, which had a small scale industrial feel really, and wasn't homely, so I remember that feeling quite important, to paint those stairs that yellow colour, because it was a bit brighter and lighter, and also because that hallway was so freezing, and chilled, and dark. [Sheila Whitaker]

I wanted to live on my own and work on my own and have space to live and work on my own, and the ACME housing association properties that I had been to before allowed me to do that. It was quite a good deal really- £17 a week I think, maybe £17 a month for a house: two bedrooms, three bedroom house, garden, and I had studio space and lived there. It wasn't very comfortable because it was cold and run down, but that was the reason I had it in the first place, and why it was so cheap. [Pete Owen]

It felt really hostile when I first moved there because at that time I think there were only two or three other artists living in the street and most of the people that lived there had been there for generations... it was quite a close knit sort of east London community. And although everybody knew that their houses were under threat from the road, we were the evidence really of the fact that things were physically changing... That relationship really changed over the time that I lived there, and by the time I had lived there for quite a few years and the real squatters started moving in, then those people saw me as being a pillar of the community and the new people were the enemy. [John Smith]

Rolls Royces would appear in the road as major West End dealers would bring collectors out to this no man's land, as it were compared to west London, to go nervously into an ACME house and buy somebody's work. That was quite a regular phenomenon. I can visualise it now, because I think the collectors and the gallerists liked the bit of rough; going to the coal face as it were, where these people beavered away making their art – you know, there was a kind of credibility to it, that just buying off the peg at Cork Street you could never really get. Yeah, that was really amusing, and I remember kids, because there were a lot of kids that lived in that road, gathering around and standing and staring at these Rolls Royces, because they were just so out of place. [Julian Perry]



**Alison Marchant**  
*Close To Home, 1987-9*  
 Colville Road, London/Whitechapel Art Gallery Open Studios

#### Artists interviewed:

Sally Barker  
 Christine Binnie  
 Ian Bourn  
 Tony Daley  
 Rachel Garfield  
 Matthew Hale  
 Alison Marchant  
 Mary Lemley-Miller  
 Graeme Miller  
 Steve Nelson  
 Paul Noble  
 Pete Owen  
 Grayson Perry  
 Julian Perry  
 Joe Rodrigues  
 Steve Rushton  
 John Smith  
 Terry Smith  
 Gary Stevens  
 Sheila Whitaker

All interviews 2007 with the exception of Grayson Perry, which took place in 2008

**Julian Perry** interviewed by Hannah Liley, Photography and the Archive Research Centre [PARC].  
**John Smith** interviewed by Alison Marchant, PARC.  
**Sheila Whitaker** interviewed by Alison Marchant, PARC.  
**Pete Owen** interviewed by Hannah Liley, PARC.  
**Christine Binnie** interviewed by Hannah Liley, PARC.  
**Julian Perry** interviewed by Hannah Liley, PARC.  
**Graeme Miller** interviewed by Hannah Liley, PARC.  
**Steve Rushton** interviewed by Alison Marchant, PARC.  
**Gary Stevens** interviewed by Alison Marchant, PARC.  
**Grayson Perry** e-mail to Val Williams, 2004, PARC.

**Christine Binnie**, artist. Lived with Grayson Perry on Dyers Hall Road and Grove Green Road, E11, 1990-1994. Potter and co-founder of The Neo-Naturists performance group. 1980-ongoing. Performances include B2 Gallery Wapping 1982 and Neo Naturalist Cheer Leaders with Leigh Bowery and Michael Clark. Archive exhibition, 2005, The Secret Public-The Last Days of the British Underground 1978-1988, Munich and London ICA.

**Graeme Miller**, theatre maker, composer, intervention and installation artist. Lived and worked on Grove Green Road, E11, 1984-1994. Co-founder of Impact Theatre Co-operative in the 1980s, his own work now embraces a wide range of media and reflects a sense of landscape and place, he regularly makes site-specific works to commission.

**Pete Owen**, painter, sculpture, drawing and installation artist and Senior Lecturer at University of Westminster. Lived and worked on Dyers Hall Road and Grove Green Road, E11, 1985-1997. Co-founder of City Racing, an artist-run exhibition space in London (1988-1998).

**Grayson Perry**, ceramic artist. Lived and worked on Dyers Hall Road, E11, 1988-1993. Best known for his ceramic works, he uses a variety of media, which includes embroidery and photography. Awarded the 2003 Turner Prize. He is represented by Victoria Miro Gallery, London.

**Julian Perry**, painter. Moved into Leytonstone in 1985, lived and worked on Colville Road, E11. His paintings often represent this corner of East London, recently focusing on a series of allotment sheds in the Olympic Zone. Perry was nominated for the prestigious Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award in 2007. He is represented by Austin Desmond Fine Art, London.

I remember going to parties in Claremont Road, and the whole street I think was transformed. You know, they knocked walls down like in that Beatles film, you know where it's that whole terrace but it's all one house, you got that sense of the warren, just a complete alternative community. [Steve Rushton]

The road itself was such a monstrous thing, it was this monstrous beast that never, ever slept. So half the time you thought 'God, just build a fucking link road, do something to get rid of this polluting hell' you know? It was visibly polluted. It was cars edging along day and night. But edging along in the rush hours, less than walking pace. Belching out huge amounts of this gritty, dirty, filthy, contaminated fug. And you couldn't leave the windows open because this would come in and blacken the sheets, it was foul. [Graeme Miller]

I got very interested in that sort of obscenity of how when a house is knocked down you start to see the private world of the person who used to inhabit it before. So, just looking at the wallpaper and things like that, it sort of feels very cruel in a way, that kind of exposure of a private world to anybody's view who goes by. [John Smith]

I remember thinking this was the most heavily documented demo ever, after every protest the road was littered with empty video cassette boxes! [Grayson Perry]



**Museum of London, M11 Link Campaign**  
 Postcard

I can remember one day, I was just in the house in Leytonstone and thinking, oh I must take the dog for a walk, and this kind of procession went by, it was one of the first M11 link road events, or one of the first on the street. Somebody in the procession said, why don't you join in? And I thought, actually, it's a nice sunny day, I want to take the dog for a walk, so why don't I? And I did. I think it's one of the best things I ever did, I became part of the protest. Before I was just a lonely artist, trying to work out who I was. I devoted at least a year, maybe more, of my life to the protest. [Christine Binnie]

**Steve Rushton**, artist and Organiser, Visual Arts and Sciences, Workers' Educational Association. Lived and worked on Fillebrook Road, E11, 1986/7-1994. Took part in Leyton Artists [sic] Group Open exhibitions. Paintings include social and political events such as the Wapping printers strike and events during the No M11 Link Road Campaign.

**John Smith**, film, video and installation artist and Professor of Fine Art at the University of East London. Lived and worked on Colville Road E11, 1982-1994. Smith's films have been shown internationally in cinemas, galleries and television and awarded major prizes at film festivals.

**Gary Stevens**, performance and video installation artist and a lecturer at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL. Lived and worked on Grove Green Road and Fillebrook Road, E11, 1982-1995. Created Performance Lab at Artsadmin in 1999-2009.

**Sheila Whitaker**, artist and teacher. Lived and worked on Dyers Hall Road, Claremont Road, Fillebrook Road and Grove Green Road, E11, 1985 to 1997. Co-founder of ARTEAST collective, co-ran their exhibition space on Leytonstone High Road, 1986.





**Nicholas Middleton**  
*Colville Road, 18th February 1994*  
*Back Gardens, Dyers Hall Road, 31st December 1993*  
*Dyers Hall Road, 18th February 1994*



**Nicholas Middleton**  
*Dyers Hall Road, 18th February 1994*



**Maggie Lambert**  
*Claremont Road, 1994*





**Paul Noble**  
*Our heritage – this house was once a home*  
 Plaque  
 Museum of London, M11 Link Campaign

*Fieldstudy* is published by the Photography and the Archive Research Centre, based at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.

The Centre conducts research programmes and organizes seminar series, study days, film programme, conferences, exhibitions and publications, and also has a core group of research students attached to it. PhD student activities include practice-based research master classes, seminars and the Centre hosts the Re-Photo group.

This issue of *Fieldstudy* was originally edited by Alison Marchant and Hannah Liley, revised and re-edited by Lorna Crabbe with a further version re-edited by PARC staff in 2009 to incorporate oral history material.

Recent PARC activities include *When Photograph meets Film*, part of the LCC Expanded Cinema programme for BA students, and a collaboration with MA Design Writing and the BT Archive, featured in *Fieldstudy* 13.

PARC is also a partner in the *Journal of Photography and Culture* seminar series with the University of the Creative Arts and the Photographers Gallery. For more information about the seminars and booking details, see [www.photonet.org.uk](http://www.photonet.org.uk)

PARC's major current project is *Fieldwork*, an exhibition and book exploring the career of the photographer Daniel Meadows, in partnership with Photoworks UK, Birmingham Central Libraries, National Media Museum and Ffotogallery Cardiff. The exhibition will open in October 2011 at the National Media Museum.

Brigitte Lardinois and Paul Lowe have recently been awarded a JISC award under the scheme Enriching via Collaboration for the project NAM, around three archives from the Vietnam War.

PARC is the founder organization of the *Journal of Photography & Culture*, co-edited by Val Williams, Kathy Kubicki and Thy Phu, with Monica Takvam as Assistant Editor.

PARC has also led on two major AHRC research projects, on British photography in the 1970s and on the Acme artists who lived and worked on the site of the M11 Link Road.

In 2009, PARC collaborated with LCC's Faculty of Media in the first *Big Conversation*, between Martin Parr and Grayson Perry.

Core members of the Centre include Wiebke Leister, Tom Hunter, Patrick Sutherland, Brigitte Lardinois, David Moore, Paul Lowe and Pam Skelton.

For information about its activities and past and future events, see PARC's website at [www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk](http://www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk)

The ROAD oral history interviews, from which extracts appear in this issue, will be available online at the PARC website. The Photography and the Archive Research Centre and the Journal of Photography and Culture host Facebook groups which are open to all.

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