Thinking of the Outside

New art and the city of Bristol

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Cover
Nathan Coley,
Iceman, 2005 (detail)
Courtesy the artist
and Haunch of
Venison, London

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Introduction

"The form of the city, alas, changes
more quickly than a mortal's heart."
Charles Baudelaire

Critical responses to new artworks are often caught between the premature indulgence of an exhibition catalogue and the brevity of a review. When commissioning contemporary art in a city like Bristol, it seems only right to consider the impact of the individual works in context and the exhibition in hindsight.

This book offers an opportunity to see behind the scenes of this scattered-site exhibition, to follow the development of the commissions from proposals to finished artworks and to read responses to the works.

In 2003 Bristol Legible City, Picture This and the Situations programme at the Bristol School of Art, Media and Design formed a unique partnership to deliver six new temporary artworks for the city. All three partners are dedicated to the engagement of new audiences with contemporary art and artists.

Bristol Legible City is led by Bristol City Council and is a programme of identity, transportation, information and public art projects that seeks to improve people's understanding, experience and access to all parts of Bristol. Picture This is a moving image projects agency that commissions contemporary visual artworks and produces exhibitions, publications and touring initiatives. The Situations programme investigates the significance of place and context in contemporary art by commissioning new work for Bristol within a dynamic context of international lectures, conferences and publishing. Situations also forms part of PLaCe — a visual arts research centre into issues of place, location and context at the Bristol School of Art, Media and Design.

By combining the knowledge and skills of these programmes, *Thinking of the Outside* set out to create new opportunities for artists to respond to the city, to produce works that might move, surprise and delight their potential audiences in unexpected places.

We are immensely grateful to the artists, organisations and individuals that brought this project to fruition. The six projects have already begun to travel to other locations: Regent's Park, London; Austin, Texas; Tirana, Albania — creating new contexts for the works far from their starting point in Bristol.

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of the West of England

Josephine Lanyon
Director, Picture This

Context

Thinking about Thinking

Claire Doherty

"Fiction consists not in showing the invisible, but in showing the extent to which the invisibility of the visible is invisible."
Michel Foucault,
The Thought from Outside,
1966[1]

"As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know, there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know."
Donald Rumsfeld,
Department of Defense News Briefing,
2002[2]

I didn't want to start with the title. Exhibition titles have a tendency to act as the decoys of the contemporary art field, instrumentalising art through a prefabricated conceit. Perhaps that's one of the reasons (albeit unintentional) for the dispatching of our project title from the front of this book to the spine — an aside to the primary importance of the art and the experiences that the occasion of this exhibition brought about in the summer of 2005.

But really, there's no getting around the fact that Michel Foucault's description of the tensions between 'thinking of' and 'thinking from' the outside was a starting point for this project.[3] And it was also Foucault's 'Rumsfeldesque' characterisation of fiction (quoted above) that came to mind during initial discussions on the City Gates commissions in summer 2003.

The brief from the City Centre Projects and Urban Design Unit at Bristol City Council was to develop a new series of temporary art commissions in response to Bristol's medieval gates and walls, which were important physical, economic and cultural landmarks in the city. The commissions were to form part of Bristol Legible City, a navigation and arts programme, established in 1996, comprising projects and initiatives designed to improve people's understanding and experience of Bristol. There was a considerable fund available, a desire to do something ambitious and distinct and it was agreed that the City Gates commissions would be curated as the 'action research' component of Situations, a research programme at Bristol School of Art, Media and Design dedicated to the significance of place and context in contemporary art.

Castle Park and
Bristol city centre,
2005
Photo: Visual
Technology, Bristol
City Council

Given the common ground between the two programmes, the value of an open brief for selected artists was acknowledged early on in discussions. This would allow for deviation from a literal interpretation of the historic city gates. We sketched out some of the historical and contemporary implications of city gateways and walls; the organisation of urban space, for example; the construction of civic identity and civic pride; the polarisation of outsiders and insiders or the processes by which formal and informal histories of place are created. Despite these good intentions, however, I was somewhat apprehensive about our endeavour.

The commissioning of contemporary art works in response to the past is wrought with problems. Nostalgic indulgence in the specifics of place rarely leads, in my opinion, to significant artworks. Rather it seems to result in creative interpretations, which, whilst often engaging and informative, seek to memorialise rather than to activate, to represent rather than respond. Foucault was right. Art in its most potent form, like fiction, is an endeavour of veiling, rather than unveiling: a query rather than an explanation. It seeks not to reveal the invisible, but to show the extent of invisibility.

Research during the first two years of the Situations programme has focused around the writings of Miwon Kwon, who in her significant study *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, has argued that one might theorise the avant-garde struggle as a kind of spatial politics, "to pressure the definition and legitimation of art by locating it elsewhere, in places other than where it 'belongs'".[4] Hence, the intention to uncover lost histories, to reveal what is unknown to a city's inhabitants, is essentially negated by the contemporary art endeavour. Being situated, embedded, to feel that you belong or at least 'know' a place is not necessarily, Kwon argues, of artistic merit.

Throughout those early discussions about the City Gates commissions, I was reminded (by Foucault's notion of 'thinking of the outside' and Kwon's assertion of the potential artistic merit of being 'out of place') that the art which has bothered me and consequently which I consider to be of value, has invariably been that which resists a sense of being in the right place. It might dismantle the apparatus of civic promotion, play with navigational systems, and even construct fictions. Art's purpose, in my opinion, lies less in its capacity to 'reveal' a city's past or present, but in its capacity to reveal the ways in which the city conceals its past or present and what that means for a wider context.

Foucault's phrase 'Thinking of the Outside' gave us a starting point from which to think about the implications of the city gates and walls from a contemporary perspective. It suggested to me and my colleagues at Bristol City Council, Jonathan Banks and Jon Brett, and Projects Assistant, Carolyn Black, all sorts of questions about our history and contemporary lives in Bristol — a sense of longing for staying and leaving (and the spaces in-between) implicated in Bristol's geographical position at the western edge of England and Europe; its development as a city through a series of clusters of social groupings; the tension between a parochial sensibility and a cosmopolitan, outward-looking ambition. 'Thinking of the Outside' even seemed to suggest the desire to engage with the urban environment beyond the spaces of the art institution. But the phrase also reminded me that this was an opportunity to engender new ideas, to do some new thinking. Perhaps even to make getting lost of some value in this city.

Place matters
The predominance of 'place' as a motivating force in curatorial practice emerges from the convergence of two key models:

- the scattered-site international exhibition which preceded the swell of biennials, governed by the organising principle of place (from *Tyne International* and *Artranspennine98* in the UK to *Sculpture Projects in Münster* and the public art projects of Mary Jane Jacob in Charleston, Chicago and Atlanta);
- and the residency model with its concentration on experience, process and encounters with somewhere else.

Consequently, the harnessing of place for the promotion of art in support of civic identity was identified over ten years ago by Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne in their noteworthy article 'Mapping International Exhibitions',

"The locale of an exhibition is embraced in its title as a rhetorical manoeuvre to appropriate cultural status, the meanings and the myths that attend the collective imagination attached to the city, region or country named…"[5]

(It's interesting to note that an alternative title for this exhibition was *The Bristol Project*.)

Whilst it remains a strategy which harnesses the economic and cultural drive of regeneration and tourism and which posits the cultural event as an ideal cipher for the meeting of international and local, the promotion of place as the subject and site for an art event runs the risk of subjugating art to the specifics of location. Does place actually matter in the making of art after all? And is it of any use to us as viewers and participants? As one critic wrote of the *International 04* component of the Liverpool Biennial, 90% of which consisted of new commissions in response to Liverpool, "the Biennial was at its best when it wore Liverpool either lightly…or not at all."[6] How could this far more modest exhibition of new commissions wear 'Bristol' lightly?

Charged with the same duty of care that characterised the custodian's role within the museum, the curator of the context-specific international exhibition is faced by two primary responsibilities:

- to support the artist to produce a work that responds to place, but resists cliché, within the group dynamic; that is true to their practice, but which moves beyond a replication of previous work; that eventually may also operate outside its originating context;

- to support the audience's experience of the individual artworks within the logic of an exhibition which resists the unquestioning celebratory tones of cultural tourism.

One option is perhaps the most democratic curatorial model – the festival, whereby the curator acts as a producer or artistic director. In the UK in 2005, we might have looked to projects such as *Situation Leeds*, *Glasgow International* or *CAN05* in Norwich, or in Bristol we might have looked back to *Gallerie Substrasse* (1991), *Open City* (1996), *Workplace* (2000) and *dialogue* (2003), an impressive assemblage of projects, initiatives and exhibitions primarily led by artists.[7] The festival embraces a lack of cohesion and resists the thematic tendencies of group exhibitions and consequently may give the artworks the autonomy they desire.

Context-specific international exhibitions curated by a single individual or curatorial team such as the biennials of Dan Cameron (2003), Charles Esche and Vasif Kortun (2005) in Istanbul, Nicolas Bourriaud and Jerome Sans in Lyon (2005) or Isabel Carlos in Sydney (2004), show the potential outcome of a confident, cogent curatorial position.[8] Despite their scattered-site, open-ended form, these projects owe more to the history of exhibition making, than to the festival. The curator's contribution goes beyond selection and project management to the articulation of ideas and sensibilities through the plotting of dialogues between works, locations and participants. Whilst each work has its own mode of experience, such exhibitions (if done well) have the capacity to engender a sense of place. This is why, after sourcing artists via open submission and direct invitation, we decided upon a curated exhibition and invited selection format for *Thinking of the Outside*.

Whilst we were looking for a mix of generation, media and approach for the commissions, the final selection of just six artists – Nathan Coley, Phil Collins, Kathleen Herbert, Susan Hiller, Silke Otto-Knapp and João Penalva – owed more to a shared sensibility that turned out to be a predilection for the melancholic. These artists

Art in its most potent form, like fiction, is an endeavour of veiling, rather than unveiling: a query rather than an explanation.

had previously demonstrated a capacity for an intimate engagement with place whether through explorations of the unconscious, the aspirational or the built environment. This was going to be an experiment of new commissions, as opposed to the treatise of a collection of existing works or projects. So, as co-commissioners Picture This joined the project team, so the potential chemistry between works yet to be made, artists, commissioners and locations began to form the exhibition proposal.[9]

Whose Bristol?
Reflecting the current predominance of commissioning in the contemporary art field, the primary issue for the artists and curators who contributed to the Situations lecture series in 2003-2004 was engagement. The lectures revealed the diversity of aesthetic and social strategies and ethical positions adopted by artists and curators when responding to an invitation to make new work or exhibitions in response to specific situations or places. How artists (and curators) are introduced (or introduce themselves) to a context, whether they wish to conduct 'field research' and for how long, what kinds of access they are given or seek out, and what they choose to ignore all emerged as pertinent considerations for the context-specific project.

Subsequent to the lecture series, the one-day seminar *Untitled (Theory of Parachuting)* conceived by artist Jason E. Bowman for the Situations conference, and attended by a number of the *Thinking of the Outside* artists, explored the physical and psychological implications of freefall as a metaphor for an artist's encounter with place.

Considering that our six artists were employed in an array of other international projects during the research period from late 2003 to early 2005, would it matter if their engagement with Bristol resembled freefall or parachuting rather than 'intensive reconnaissance', what Declan McGonagle has termed, "wide and shallow rather than narrow and deep — sightseeing rather than insight"?[10] Would this necessarily result in less pertinent or significant artworks?

Bristol, like any regional city, certainly offered numerous statistics and tour options to our visitors from its architectural icons and feats of engineering (Clifton Suspension Bridge, SS Great Britain); to its male heroes (Thomas Chatterton, Edward Colston, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, John Wesley, Archibald Leach, Banksy); to its historical and contemporary failings (from its part in the transatlantic slave trade of the 17th and 18th centuries to present-day drug trafficking).[11]

But as the lectures and conference had also revealed, the emergence of a new terminology for how we understand place as a shifting and fragmented entity complicates the idea that a 'static' Bristol could be described to or encountered by the commissioned artists in *Thinking of the Outside*. On a basic level, their relationships with the city were likely to be coloured by time, weather, lucky breaks and personal circumstance, not to mention their own curiosity: after all, one artist had lived in Bristol for 11 years and was moving to London, one planned to come for six weeks, whilst another wished to make only two visits over the entire duration of the project. The idea that the artists' initial

encounters with Bristol could be homogenised was an anathema of course, but the introduction of a single starting point for the project – a tabula rasa of sorts – became a useful alternative to the tourist guide.

It seemed appropriate that all six artists would begin with a tour around the intended exhibition area: the route of the medieval city wall – from St John's Gateway along Tower Lane past St. John's Churchyard concealed in Tailor's Court, round to the remains of Bristol Castle and along the river to Queen Square. Each of the artists took this walk with city archaeologist Jon Brett. From this shared historical point of entry, the artists were then free to explore their own particular interests within or beyond Bristol:

- Susan Hiller was initially drawn to the history of the Jews in Bristol — in particular the establishment of the Jewish community in the 12th century outside the inner but inside the outer city wall;
- Silke Otto-Knapp investigated the 19th century landscape gardens of Humphry Repton at Royal Fort House and his infamous red books held in the Special Collections of the University of Bristol;
- João Penalva was intrigued by the mythology surrounding Clifton Suspension bridge, and in particular, the story of Sarah Ann Henley who survived a suicide bid from the bridge in 1885. Beneath her billowing dress she was wearing crinoline petticoats which slowed and cushioned her fall;
- Nathan Coley was drawn to St John's Churchyard, formerly known as Hasardysgarden granted in 1390 by Edmund Arthur for the church's use owing to the fact that St. John's Church which stood on the city wall had no cemetery. The churchyard has been disused since the 1850s, is closed to the public and preserved from development;
- Kathleen Herbert was intrigued by the absence of sea trade from the city centre with the removal of all port activities to Avonmouth and Royal Portbury Docks in the early 1970s (some seven miles from Bristol harbour) and in particular, to the role of the Seafarers' mission;
- whilst Phil Collins sought the aspirational spirit of Bristol's unsigned music acts across some of the city's live music venues.[12]

Many of these initial points of reference are intentionally obscured, and in some cases ignored by the artists in their final works. They avoid the representation of a particular historical anecdote or contemporary statistic which might have confined the artworks to the context of Bristol. Susan Hiller, for example, described her initial exploration of the history of Jews in Bristol as "deep research" for a broader consideration of the representation of the Jewish stereotype in Cinema in her final work *Psychic Archaeology*, 2005.

The coda to her initial proposal (reprinted here with her permission) is a useful reminder of the journey from commissioning brief to final work:

"The aim of art is not simply to communicate something that has been already formulated, but to create something unexpected. One of the reasons artists make their work is in order to take themselves by surprise, to discover something other than a reflection of their own intention. But for most institutional commissions, artists are hired to do the job of designers — that is, to work for a client and to operate within the client's 'brief'. The artist's work needs to be first and foremost responsive to the understanding of the client and to position itself within the unspoken limits imposed by the client's sense of decorum, responsibility to predefined audiences, sensitivity to public opinion, etc.

As time goes on, I find myself more and more resistant to working within these constraints, even though as time goes on there are more and more opportunities to work to institutional briefs. The flawed Romantic idea of self-expression seems, in contrast to the institutional model, to allow for or indeed to insist on, the artist's own ethical responsibility toward enlarging or re-defining what is already known and in place at the start of the project. I have found that thinking about *Thinking of the Outside*, and recalling the experience of walking around the Old City and learning about its history has provoked a very complex train of personal reflections which led to the brief outline of possibilities suggested in the above proposal.

However skilful and experienced the artist is, he or she is sometimes deliberately interested in exploring at the edge of their control."[13]

Workshop in progress at Nathan Coley's *Iceman* in St. John's Churchyard
Photo: Ian Cole

The specifics of location
As the proposals for the works began to emerge, a parallel process of locating sites and the practical concerns of access, production, installation and project management took over. The parameters set by Bristol Legible City were clear: that all potential locations for the works should be non-gallery sites, accessible to the public and ideally positioned within the city centre. It was felt that the exhibition should be easily navigated on foot within an hour or so, so that exploring the Old City would become integral to the experience of the exhibition.

The refurbishment and opening up of the disused sites involved the construction of a cinema in St. Nicholas Markets, a two-channel video installation in the Grade 1 listed Castle Vaults, and the 'de-pigeonisation' of a Victorian warehouse. The conversion of the sites was, as ever in such projects, a practical and financial feat of ingenuity on behalf of the installation team (nearly matched by the infiltration of the Orange Ashton Court Music Festival with Phil Collins' video of The Sandra Lilley Ballet School for the Over Fifties). But can the remarkable experience of encountering unexpected places override the experience of contemporary art? Did the conditions of display override the specifics of the artworks in this case?

"Might we be right to ask", suggested curator Penelope Curtis in an article entitled 'Old Places for New Art', "whether 'art' has been led down something of a blind alley in the willing co-habitation between artists and curators to inhabit the space of the city… Do we put our delight in one-off and largely nostalgic inhabitations of unexpected spaces because of a fundamental lack of security in more permanent projects?"[14]

The answer lies in the capacity for each of the works to operate on their own terms. Certainly, some visitors came to see individual works because of their sites – the Custom House in Queen Square proved the most popular lunch-hour destination, and many commented (rather guiltily) on the pleasure of exploring previously inaccessible sites. The majority of visitors followed the predetermined route across all five sites, taking in posters for Phil Collins' *the louder you scream, the faster we go* at twenty of the city centre's bus-stops. The selection of non-gallery sites served to highlight the partiality of any context for contemporary art, though offering perhaps a less intimidating encounter with contemporary art than the conventional white cube environment.

Conceptually, I hope *Thinking of the Outside* was prevented from slipping into the trap of cultural tourism by the careful selection of spaces which would complement rather than dominate the artworks. We avoided the pre-selection of sites and so, with many of the works completed in the later stages of the project, this meant some last minute negotiations for particular spaces. A lead shot tower, open-plan office environment and domestic flat were all considered for Silke Otto-Knapp's paintings, whilst Kathleen Herbert's installation almost took place in an apartment overlooking the harbour. These decisions certainly involved issues of access, facilities and availability, but, by and large, came down to the artist's intuition as to whether the site would help the work to do its job. Going back to Kwon's assertion that the avant-garde struggle may be, "to pressure the definition and legitimation of art by locating it elsewhere, in places other than where it 'belongs'", I felt these works needed to be somewhat out of place, leaving the logic of the exhibition to create a sense of cohesion and pace between them. Furthermore, the inclusion of Collins' process-based project would set up a different kind of engagement beyond a passive encounter in sites across the Old City.

Whilst the sites contributed to the impact and meaning of the artworks, none of the projects were overtly site-specific. Even *Iceman*, with its reflection of the structures of the tombs and surrounding architecture in St. John's Churchyard, has recently been reassembled temporarily in Regent's Park, London and Silke Otto-Knapp's painting *Golden Gardens (Conifers)* has appeared in *The British Art Show* in the upper galleries of the vast Baltic in Gateshead.

Whilst then it is the works' capacity to resonate in other contexts beyond Bristol that serves to illustrate the transience of the sites' role in the art's mediation, what distinguishes the experience of these artworks in Bristol from that of their afterlives are their relationships to one another in the context of *Thinking of the Outside*. The exhibition emerged not through a curatorial thesis on the implications of the city gates, but rather a series of emphases. These emphases became palpable as you moved from artwork to artwork and come to the fore in the essays, interviews and responses in this publication. They encompass:

- re-enactment and reinvention as processes for dealing with the past;
- tension between conformity and individuality, particularly in public space;
- the use of stereotype or the employment of artifice to construct the identity of insiders and outsiders;
- a sense of isolation;
- the employment of fictional selves to mask rampant aspiration and pervasive desperation.

Editing this book, I've been struck by the melancholy with which this exhibition was shot through. Despite the vibrancy and richness of the visual experiences created from Bristol, it seems, if there was a sense of place inherent in *Thinking of the Outside*, it was perhaps a place of uncertainty that characterises the time and place of Bristol in 2005.

As for the legacy of the project, perhaps we should leave it to Rumsfeld:

"Things will not be necessarily continuous. The fact that they are some things other than perfectly continuous ought not to be characterised as a pause. There will be some things that people will see. There will be some things that people won't see. And life goes on."[15]

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9 We were joined by Picture This as co-commissioners in 2004 for this project. Proposals for work by Joâo Penalva, Kathleen Herbert and Rosalind Nashashibi were developed with Picture This. Nashashibi's project was postponed due to the opportunity for the artist to take up a six-month residency in New York and is currently in development for 2006/7.
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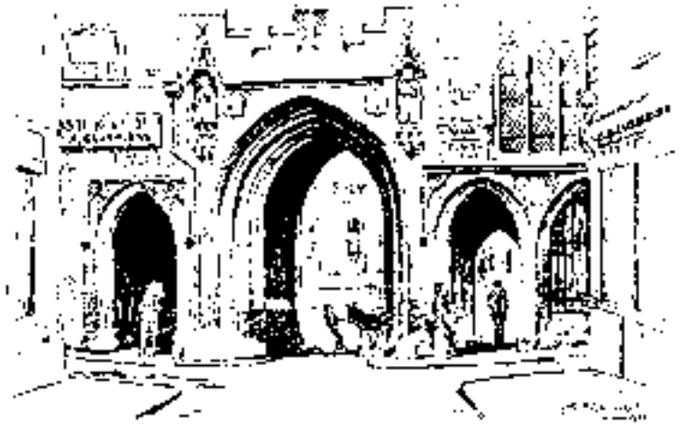
'it standith vpon a lytill hill bitwene iiij yatis'

Medieval Bristol and its Town Gates and Walls

Jon Brett



Opposite
St John's Gate from Broad Street, 1912
Samuel Loxton
(Bristol Reference Library X1698)

I When the Mayor of medieval Bristol used his seal of office he left in the wax matrix an image of a ship emerging from a crenellated gate. This choice of image was not casual, for it linked the two poles of Bristol's identity — maritime and urban. By the fifteenth century the town had long been established as a port, while the defining characteristic of an urban settlement of any pretension was its enclosure by stone walls. Bristol was circled by four concentric walls, with eighteen gates set in them barring the roads into the town. Medieval town walls have usually been thought of only in functional terms, as fortifications to defend against attack but, as Bristol's seal suggests, they possessed a complex blend of purposes and meanings for the people who lived within them.

II When Bristol was founded, in around 1000AD, the hilltop on which the town stood was almost certainly protected by fixed defences though archaeologists have not yet identified them with certainty. However, by the mid-twelfth century the heart of the town was enclosed by a stone wall which ran from the castle around the circular hill on which the town stood. Inside four main cross streets — Broad Street, Corn Street, High Street and Wine Street — divided the hill into quarters and each street had a gate at its end. Curving narrow lanes followed the inside of the wall between these gates and led on to subsidiary gates giving access to Broadmead and Old Market and the harbour.

The first record of a grant by the Crown allowing Bristol to build walls is in 1232, coinciding with the enlargement of the port soon after March 1240. The river Frome was moved from its original course through the Marsh on the south side of the town to Welsh Back into a new north-south channel — St. Augustine's Reach.[1] As well as enlarging the capacity of the harbour, this also created new areas for development. A new wall, the Marsh Wall, was built across the Marsh from Welsh Back to St. Augustine's Reach and then following the Reach northward to a terminal tower near the end of Baldwin Street. This change made the gate at the end of Corn Street the main entrance into Bristol for people arriving by sea and it was rebuilt as a three-sided gate projecting over St. Stephen's Street. At around the same time a new wall was constructed along the south bank of the Frome. South of River Avon the Portwall was created, this time with a large ditch outside it, in the early-twelfth century suburb of Redcliffe, pushing through land owned by the Knights Templar and probably also through existing properties north of St. Mary Redcliffe Church. Each of these walls also set substantial new gates across the roads into the town.

III Most of what is known about the physical form of the gates and town has come from archaeological fieldwork and from watercolours and photographs from the remarkable nineteenth century visual record of the city. When Fry's new factory was built in Pithay at the beginning of the twentieth century a stretch of the earliest wall was revealed on the north side of Tower Lane. Between the 1950s and 1970s small excavations recorded more sections of this wall as well as the Marsh Wall, revealing a bastion behind St. Nicholas Almshouses in King Street[2] and a previously unknown watergate leading to the river at Broad Quay.[3] In the 1990s the pace of research increased and almost half of the length of the Portwall has now been archaeologically excavated. The circular terminal tower, Tower Harratz, at its north-eastern end was discovered[4] along with another watergate close by.[5]

The walls and gates were built of stone and seem to have had a uniform thickness of around two metres and stood some eight to ten metres high, probably with battlements and walkways along the top. The architectural style of the gates apparently varied substantially. The only remaining gate, St. John's Gate in Broad Street, originally had only a single arch with a ribbed fan vault and a slot for a portcullis. The thirteenth-century Newgate near Union Street had drum towers, at least on its

An integral part of both the physical and symbolic landscape of Bristol, the town gates and walls defined who belonged and who did not.

eastern side while a 1746 drawing of St. Giles's Gate, at the west end of Small Street, shows a late-medieval ogee arch. All of the gates were two-storeys high and the upper floors of the gates on the original circuit were incorporated into the adjacent churches.

Bristol's walls were comparatively weak in comparison with those of towns like Carcassonne. Although Bristol was not infrequently at the centre of political instability — an Angevin stronghold during the civil war following the death of Henry I in 1135 and played an important part in the usurpation of Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke in 1399, for example — it seems rarely to have been attacked. Indeed in 1399 the burgesses supported Bolingbroke and allowed his army to march into the town.

The best-documented attacks are those of 1643 and 1645 during the English Civil War. Contemporaries saw the medieval walls as a formidable obstacle. It was noted that "on the Key side next the City, there is a wall of stone neare eight or nine foot high above the mudde, whiche no horse can enter nor no foot…"[6] When Parliament re-captured Bristol in 1645, the Portwall proved too substantial an obstacle for its troops: "The works… were so high that the ladders could not near reach them".[7] On both occasions Bristol was captured.

IV An integral part of both the physical and symbolic landscape of Bristol, the town gates and walls defined who belonged and who did not. The walls literally circumscribed the lives of the roughly 10,000 ordinary Bristolians within them, and the gates crossed the only ways out of the town. Each evening, after the tolling of the curfew bell, the gates were locked and anyone outside could not re-enter the town until the following morning. Visitors reaching Bristol by sea were greeted by the sight of the town rising from behind the Marsh Wall and sailed alongside the wall before tying up at the quayside and entering beneath St. Leonard's Gate. Nor could anyone from Bristol's hinterland bring goods to market by road without passing through one of the gates and paying dues. The gates were also linked with the spiritual by virtue of the physical integration of several with parish churches. They were of practical significance as living accommodation and housed other services. From c.1426 until the 1460s a grammar school — one of only two medieval English grammar schools to be well-documented — was held in the room above Newgate. The master was Robert Londe and the curriculum, recorded by a manuscript of teaching materials copied "at Bristol, above the New Gate", derived from Oxford.[8]

The walls and gates were of greatest importance to the merchant oligarchy which controlled Bristol as a means to establish and maintain its position. An important symbolic marker, they articulated both the history and status of Bristol and its contemporary administration. St. John's Gate still carries medieval statues of Brennus, the mythical founder of Bristol, and his brother Belinus. When the town clerk Richard Ricart wrote a guide to his duties for the Mayor in the late-fifteenth century he returned frequently to an image of Bristol founded "to fore thencarnacioun of Crist, set as it standith vpon a lytill hill bitwene iiij yatis".[9] The parallel with Jerusalem, the centre of the medieval universe, is implicit. Crenellation, the right to add battlements to a structure, was an indication of aristocratic status and by achieving their addition to Bristol's walls and gates, equivalence was drawn between the town and the noble residence. It signified that the community possessed its own form of castle.[10] The town was marked as a distinct power, confronting local lordships and ecclesiastical enclaves.

V Although refortified during the English Civil War, from the second half of the seventeenth century Bristol's town walls and gates began to be demolished. Yet their disappearance was neither swift nor straightforward. While some parts were taken down for development or incorporated into buildings, other sections of wall, interval towers and gates were still standing in the eighteenth century, retaining a role in advertising Bristol's antiquity. Temple Gate and Redcliff Gate were even rebuilt in a Classical style in the eighteenth century. A crenellated arch was built at the south end of the avenue of trees leading to Redland Court in the early 1740s and the triumphal arch at Arno's Vale was constructed for William Reeve in c.1760. The town gate remained an icon, figuring in civic celebrations in the 19th century. A temporary cardboard arch was placed across Park Street to welcome the Duke of Wellington in 1816 after his victory at Waterloo, and elaborate temporary gates were erected across several of Bristol's main roads for the visit of the Prince of Wales to the city in 1878. The penultimate gate, St. John's Arch in Tower Lane, was only demolished in 1911.

Although they are now lost to sight almost entirely, physical fragments of the walls and gates remain encased within Bristol's buildings. It is still easy to read the imprint of the walls and gates in the modern city, and gain a sense of their physical role in the lives of its people. Their iconic status in the past is clear, but it is a more complex and subtle task to understand their legacy to the identity of Bristol and what it means to belong here today.

Opposite
St John's Gate from Broad Street, 2005

VI Turning to my part in *Thinking of the Outside*, perhaps the most important aspect of my role as an archaeologist in Bristol is to help people to explore the history of the city, although this is not straightforward. Over the last few years archaeologists have been thinking carefully about their profession and its relationship with the past. One criticism is that the practice of archaeology, by its very nature, creates a distance from the past and treats it as inert. Some archaeologists reject the implication that the past is safely dead and hold instead that we, its inheritors, are inextricably connected to it and must find ways of addressing the bonds.

These debates have significant implications for the way archaeologists approach what we do. The relationships between the history of a place and present identities are intricate, varying with personal origins and experience, and are also profoundly political. For example, the fierce debates — essentially about the place of the past in the present — which have taken place over Stonehenge[11] or aspects of Berlin's history are well documented.[12]

In working on *Thinking of the Outside* my own thinking was influenced by this background. By taking metaphors derived from the medieval walls and gates as a starting point, the project had an awareness of Bristol's history set at its heart, but the final form of the pieces was not for me to define. Rather, I hoped to see the artists take a reflective approach, drawing on the city's past in developing their ideas and by doing so produce richer work which would itself inspire curiosity and reflection in the audience. It was therefore important that the artists had some understanding of medieval Bristol and I took each on a walk through the historic city, following the line of the town walls. Every walk was different as new questions came up, and as the project advanced I was able to pass on some of the new, and in several cases unpublished, research. One can measure the success of the project in

different ways, but for me *Thinking of the Outside* allowed thousands of people to discover historic sites and buildings many had never entered before. As I had believed it would, the project also drew the audience into reflection about the city, and when viewing the works I was often engaged in conversations other visitors about place and history. Now it's all over, *Thinking of the Outside* has itself become an element of Bristol's inherited past and it is fascinating to consider what its legacy will be.

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Commissions

Nathan Coley
Phil Collins
Kathleen Herbert
Susan Hiller
Silke Otto-Knapp
João Penalva

Nathan Coley

Morgan Falconer on Iceman

Iceman 2005
Painted plywood and enamel spray-painted sculpture, 2.4m x 5.4m x 2.9m.
Installed in St John's Churchyard, Tailor's Court, Bristol.

Pages 22–24, 27, 30 and 34
Iceman, 2005
Courtesy the artist

"But you have to stand on a platform and see it coming or you can't know the feeling a writer gets, how the number 5 train comes roaring down the rat alleys and slams out of the tunnel, going whop-pop onto the high tracks, and suddenly there it is, Moonman riding the sky in the heart of the Bronx, over the whole burnt and rusted country, and this is the art of the backstreets talking, all the way from Bird, and you can't not know who we are, we got total notoriety now, Momzo Tops and Rimester and me, we're getting fame, we ain't ashame, and the train go rattling over the garbage streets and past the dead-eye windows of those empty tenements that have people living there even if you don't see them, but you have to see our tags and cartoon figures and bright and rhyming poems, this is the art that can't stand still, it climbs across your eyeballs night and day, the flickery jumping art of the slums and dumpsters, flashing those colours in your face — like I'm your movie, motherfucker."

Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, 1997

Nathan Coley transported a graffiti artist all the way from Dundee to Bristol to letter the lyrical blue tag that names *Iceman*. This didn't make the task of tagging the sculpture any easier. Although Coley had photographs of the original scrawled name on a building in Dundee, and merely wished to transfer it, he had neglected to consider that the Iceman had style. His signature held a distilled essence of personality, it was formed by habitual arm gestures, a certain velocity of movement, and these were the property of the original anonymous Iceman alone. Thus Coley and the hired vandal practiced with sheet after sheet of paper pasted up on the plywood structure of the sculpture, changed approach, swapped style, and only after forging Iceman's tag until it seemed rigid and stale, did they take away the paper, grit their teeth and try and recreate the anonymous artist's habitual flow one final time: Iceman.

There is an ethic of daring and trespass in vandalism, and so there would seem nothing unusual in the fact that a piece of public art sitting in a old, disused, bolted churchyard should be marked by a vandal who might have lept over the wall in the night. Tagging is a kind of urban baptism that draws the calm face of public structures into a less restful world of private clamour and conflict — it's a meaningful act of appropriation. Consequently, the tag has the peculiarly comic effect of lending the structure a certain stature and maturity in the urban landscape. If public buildings are the distillation of consensus, graffiti is the last word in disagreement; the last world perhaps, before something is accepted.

It is rather difficult to tell at first glance what kind of structure *Iceman* is. St John's Churchyard is secluded, shadowed by buildings, and so rich and dark with leaning trees that passing-by just outside its railings, all one sees is a sheer wall of light plywood. It might be a temporary outhouse, but it has no point of entry; it might be an architect's model, but it's rather too large; sitting among old tombs, it could even be considered a monument — were it not built from plywood. In other words, it might be a signpost to the future or a signpost to the past. It will most likely be recognised as art, yet paradoxically, the part which might not be read as art is the title of the work itself, because its scale is deliberately out of proportion with the model.

Iceman in the latest in a series of works Nathan Coley has created over the past ten years which look at architecture. In *Villa Savoye* (1997) he took the text of a lecture on Le Corbusier's paradigmatic Modernist domicile outside Paris and mismatched it with slides depicting a contemporary suburban housing development. In a similar project from 2003, *Show Home*, he created a model house based on an old-fashioned cottage and, accompanied by a publicity campaign, transported it around various sites in Tyne and Wear. Sat on an empty playing field under rainy skies on a housing estate in North Shields, the *Show Home* resembled a tardis holding out the promise of an escape to a different, pastoral livelihood.

If Iceman is a graveyard memorial, it is a memorial to a great many things: an ideology, a way of living, a modern landscape.

Architecture may be central to these projects, but it isn't the profession's conventional questions of style and design which appear to interest Coley, it is the way in which architecture crystallises inchoate private desires and translates them into public expressions. Of course, this is indeed work done by form and style, but Coley's interest is not in the profession's interest in evolving style; rather he is interested in the gap between the ideals of trained professionals and desires of laymen, laymen unschooled in style and more than content with the old fashioned. One might see a little tragi-comedy in the way *Villa Savoye* highlights the passage — maybe the decline — from Le Courbusier to Barratt, Wilson and Wimpey. Yet it would be wrong, surely, to dismiss these popular spec-built houses as thoughtless stylistic soups and inelegant failures. On the contrary, they too are streamlined machines for living: perfectly tailored to a narrow demographic. And they are not just tailored to the spatial requirements of a co-habiting couple and 2.4 children: they are expressive of ideals of settled life that the families probably never even thought they had. The polychrome brickwork and the frankly exposed slate roofing recall Victorian styles; the arches over the windows echo the Gothic; the way the garage juts out into the forefront might be taken as be a proud assertion of functionalism, and yet the garage door is smartly panelled like a drawing room interior.

I Don't Have Another Land, 2002
Stained wood and mixed media,
130 x 160 x 160cm

Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London
photo: G:ten
University of Manchester

With detail in mind one looks differently at *Iceman*'s apparently generic structure. It might look like a sketchy approximation of a four-storey social housing project, but you simply can't sketchily approximate such things. Like the graffiti tag borrowed from the side of a building in Dundee, the details of *Iceman*'s structure were also lifted directly from a building. And in that building each detail, each spot of colour, has been placed to crystallise a desire, a consensus. The expansive plate glass windows, the open plan rooms, the geometry: they all aspire to engineer equal communities.

Nathan Coley's *Iceman* also looks beyond itself to consider public appearances in Bristol, from the character of the city's public architecture to the character of its overlooked spaces. It is apt, in this regard, that it sits at the edge of the old city walls, like something pushed to the outskirts, buried like

the entombed bodies that surround it. But *Iceman* also considers public appearances in the sense that it looks at the passage from unformed private desire to public debate. Coley's work hasn't only addressed this theme in terms of architecture. In his series *Landmark Portraits* (1999) he depicted himself outside a variety of public buildings acting out public desires, or rather, making them absurdly literal. In *Waiting for the Scottish Parliament*, Coley sits idling on a bench, biding time: the title is a phrase drawn from media coverage, and yet no-one could have been said to be waiting for the Scottish Parliament in quite this way. Similarly, in *Applauding the Millennium Dome*, Coley stands clapping: whatever the Media might have meant by applause for the dome, they certainly didn't mean clapping.

The terms and idioms of public debate often bear no relation to perceived reality, but they do express real desires. We are not just people with families, we are social beings, and in that sense a part of our private self has the desires of a corporate, public self. It is a peculiar, somewhat irrational character — wounded by wars it doesn't fight; shamed by defeats it never witnesses — but a real one nonetheless. Society simply satisfies the needs of those different selves, the public and the private, by making some spheres of life the province of one self, and other spheres the province of another.

It used to be the difference between the home and the boardroom, though as the sphere of informality grows, even the boardroom can be a space to reveal individuality and personality. The ground between the public and the private is continually shifting, and it is on this shifting ground that Coley makes his art.

One characteristic that Coley's work has often revealed about these shifting spheres is the fact that private feelings can be muffled and suppressed if society does not have a category to accommodate them, does not give them an organ of expression. For example, many remark of the meanness and informality of modern funerals: they have travelled far from the theatre of Victorian mourning. In a sense, one can see a parallel of this in our inability to mourn the passing of certain public forms. If *Iceman* is a graveyard memorial, it is a memorial to a great many things: an ideology, a way of living, a modern landscape. Like the titular line which appears in the empty windows of Coley's blackened model of the demolished Marks and Spencer building in Manchester, a work completed in 2002, it is a lament: 'I don't have another land'. We are not meant to feel deep sorrow for such things as department stores, modern architecture, discredited ideas; and yet we do, and properly so, for mourning is a healthy form of contemplation.

At the conclusion of his own lament for modern society, *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett reflects that intimacy has become a kind of tyranny that has tipped the old balance between public and private life. Cults of personality, authenticity and individual expression have destroyed a settlement in which there was once a large personal realm in which man could invest one kind of passion, and a large impersonal realm where he could invest another. Post-Romantic art has been the victim of one aspect of this, as art has become a matter of compelling emotion above all else; the city has been the victim of another aspect: it has been shunned as the epitome of all that is impersonal. *Iceman* works across this territory: it turns its gaze on an aspect of the city which has been rejected and written over by a supremely personal expression, a signature. If, finally, *Iceman* is hard to decipher, and if some people passed by it day after day during the exhibition never quite knowing what it was, that is because it doesn't speak in the conventionally expressive voice of art. Its surface and structure speak in several voices of which the artistic is just one; *Iceman* is about all those voices.

Nathan Coley in conversation

Claire Doherty You first came to Bristol on a research visit in late 2003. Could you describe how your ideas began to develop from that initial encounter with the city?

Nathan Coley For me it's always a mixture of a lot of things. I think we spent as much time talking as I did looking: with me getting a sense of the hopes of the commissioners and, I guess, you're asking how this might work within my practice. I initially thought Bristol was the same as most English cities. Built with the wealth of another time, it has a past of which modern living is aware, but on the whole, uninterested in. Yes, it has this particular association with the water, but I didn't meet anyone who spoke about that as being part of their life. All places have pasts, and, on the whole, most are not that more or less interesting than others.

After visiting and researching a little (library, boat trip, tourist trail etc.), I decided to ignore specific information to be found in Bristol. I decided that the work should not come from this place, but would come to this place. This is clearly and deliberately against what some people consider good practice in making 'art in context'. I have very little time for work which attempts only to reveal its context, illustrate forgotten histories or show you what you don't know about this place. Thankfully, I think we have moved on from that model.

Having said that, I am clear that I have made a sculpture specifically from the starting point of St John's Churchyard in the old city of Bristol.

CD I think that position of resisting nostalgia, of allowing an artwork to speak from a different place, rather than operate as an illustration or entertainment on the city's tourist trail is fundamental to your practice. *Show Home*, *Urban Sanctuary*, *Waiting for the Scottish Parliament*, all respond to preconceived notions of place, but don't deliver what might have been expected. You start from an informed position though — and that is what interests me. You didn't just insert *Iceman* into St. John's Churchyard without 'surveying the ground'. Tell me a little bit more about what attracted you to the churchyard.

NC I think of all the places I visited the churchyard was the most forgotten. Right in the centre of town, it sits undeveloped, stubbornly unchanged through '60s and '70s modernisation, and inevitably lost to the city. With the last burial in the 1850s, it could be said to be disused. No-one lays flowers or visits a loved one there, and as far as I know its only real function is to be retained and overlooked.

Graveyards are often quite peaceful places, places of contemplation and should be looked at as being legitimate public artworks (along with follies). I like the fact that they are local in terms of who is buried there, but international in the sense that we deal with our dead the world over. Having researched the actual people buried in St John's and finding nothing of interest for me, I spent some time thinking of it more in terms of a garden; a hidden space, bursting with plants; a space actually more alive that you might at first think. I thought of it in terms of scale and size, in terms of colour and tone, and began thinking about what it would mean to activate it in another way. How might it change if people had access to it?

CD I remember we also began to talk about how this piece of land had remained out of reach from regeneration due to its consecrated status and

Tower and Wall (1937 prefabs), 2004
Painted plywood, rope, tarpaulin

Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

what occupying that space might mean to passers-by, residents of the adjacent blocks and visitors. Land-use is something that has interested you throughout your career — but I think it's always implicit rather than explicit in your work. (I'm thinking of the trace of Lockerbie and Kamp Zeist in *Witness Box*.) Do you think you've moved away from explicitly dealing with the specifics of location, the political and economic function of land, in say the way you did with *Urban Sanctuary* in 1997?

NC I think the voice of the new work is more mine and less the amplification of the place. I also see a growing preoccupation in developing a sculptural language, and a presentation of aesthetic decisions. *Iceman* is definitely a piece of sculpture and less a research project which presents itself formally. The opposite could and has been said of *Urban Sanctuary — A Public Artwork by Nathan Coley*.

Thinking about it in this way makes it seem very thought-out and formulaic. It is much more of a mess in my head. I didn't really know what the work was as I was making it. From the start it felt like it had to find its own place in the landscape of possible works. This, to be honest, happened despite the project, not because of it. It's a case of placing it within the conceptual framework and at the same time forgetting about the graveyard. This I think, along with the 'tag', is what makes the work successful — its edginess.

CD But would the work have come into existence without the commission? Do you think you need that invitation — that initial research — rather than the studio to develop such works?

NC I don't honestly know. My studio is increasingly becoming a 'somewhere' where all of these concerns and ideas meet. Works that have no place to go (yet) sit alongside ideas that have been born out of specific invitations to 'make something for here'. I find that one work borrows something from the other, and that just gets added to the language of the work.

CD Getting back to *Iceman*, one of the most prominent responses to the work by visitors was the identification of sculptural similarities between the tombs and *Iceman*. As the work developed, we had a number of discussions about other artists' work which deal with the facsimile or model of architecture as sculptural form. How did *Iceman* distinguish itself from a facsimile?

NC I think at a certain point, the scale, materials, and composition of the object started to ask their own questions. This

Show Home Minton Fields, North Shields, 2003
Painted wood, mixed media

Curated and commissioned by Locus+ / North Tyneside Council
Photo: Dave Harvey

room-sized sculpture, referencing a four-storey council housing block began to develop its own integrity. The plywood started to make me think of temporary housing structures (shanty towns or illegal settlement buildings), the scale made me think of garden sheds and I realized that it was a good thing to forget the starting points and try to resolve it as a work. 'Resolving it' is perhaps the wrong phrase as I think *Iceman* is a work which is just about finished, almost 'correct' but rather interestingly and deliberately doesn't allow the audience that satisfaction. It looks like it is fighting with itself. Crucial details like the painted windows and the doorways set up this anxiety, and the spray-painted 'tag' pushes this edginess further yet.

CD I agree the strength of the work lies in the way it resists becoming a mere facsimile. Comparisons with other recent work such as *Emanuel (1972 Settlement Offensive)*, 2004 and *Tower and Wall (1937 prefabs)*, 2004, both of which are small scale models, lead me to think about how *Iceman* distinguishes itself in this series. I think the fact that *Iceman* is neither a model nor a facsimile is important. It is of course a miniature of a generic housing block writ large — but the life-size tag brings this sculpture out of the pictorial frame. If *Iceman* had been finished to the detail of *Show Home*'s exterior or made simply of plywood — as an abstraction of the buildings seen in your work *Places of Worship* — then it would have perhaps become less dynamic in the churchyard. It resists nostalgia precisely because it is neither located in the past (a facsimile of an existing building — the housing block in a model village) nor is it a model for the future (the blankness of an architectural model has been marked and tagged).

Within Bristol, such an assertively anxious occupation of empty space within the city seems to respond to the colonisation of land within the city and our uneasy relationship with regeneration. Do you feel that *Iceman* has a strong resonance in this context?

NC If that has happened, then great. Like many post-industrial cities in the UK, Bristol has a tension between the private and the public. Our thinking behind regeneration reflects that. There is a particular relationship between the home and the city-square in terms of ownership, and this idea manifests itself in the work. The 'home' in terms of the original housing block in that the sculpture is fashioned on, and the individual within the public realm presented in the sprayed text — ICEMAN.

About the site
St John's Church, next to St. John's Gate on Broad Street, had been built on the earliest of Bristol's town walls by the late 1100s, though it lacked a churchyard because of its position. In 1390 Edmund Arthur gave his garden to the Church to remedy this situation. Burials continued there from the garden's consecration in 1409 until the churchyard closed in the 1850s. The churchyard is now maintained by Bristol City Council on behalf of the Diocese of Bristol.

Iceman was commissioned by Bristol Legible City. The artist would like to thank Steve Lawrie, Paul Manton (Bristol City Council), Diocese of Bristol, doggerfisher, Edinburgh and Haunch of Venison, London.

St John's Churchyard,
Bristol, February 2005

About the artist
Nathan Coley was born in Glasgow in 1967 and lives and works in Dundee. Working predominately with urban spaces, he examines how the values of a society are reflected in and determined by its built environment. Coley has become known for works of public sculpture in which he actively engages with the local environment through a range of media that includes sculpture, photography, drawing, video and installation. His work reveals the conflicting systems of personal, social, religious and political belief through which we structure the space around us.

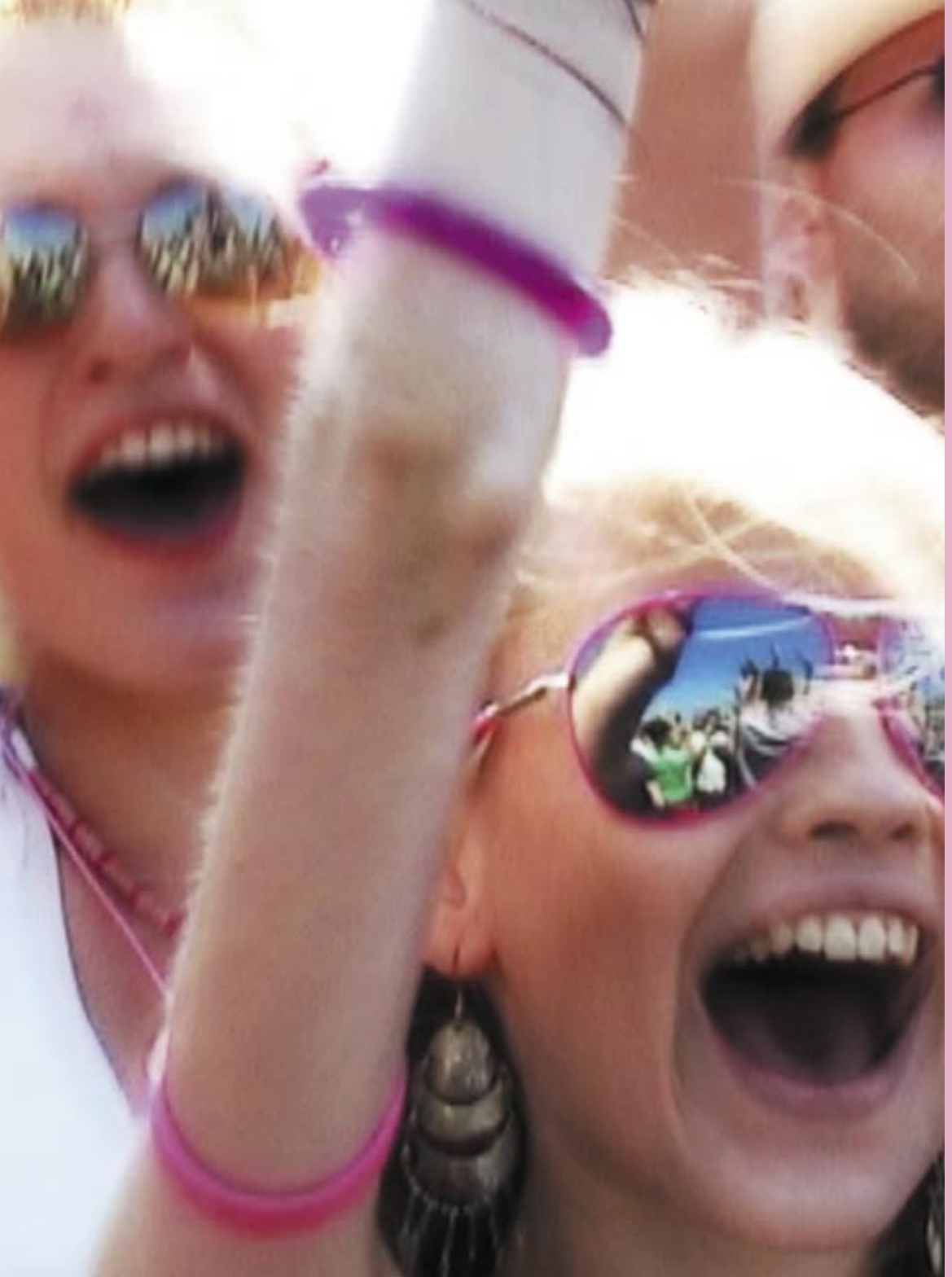
Selected recent solo exhibitions
Jerusalem Syndrome, University of Dundee Cooper Gallery, Dundee 2005; *Nathan Coley*, Haunch of Venison, London, 2005; *Nathan Coley*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 2004; *Show Home*, City Arts Centre, Dublin; Milton Keynes Gallery, Milton Keynes, 2004; North Shields, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2003; *Black Tent*, Portsmouth Cathedral, Portsmouth, 2003; *The Black Maria*, Scape: Art and Industry Urban Biennal, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2002; *Nathan Coley and Bas Jan Ader*, Vilma Gold, London, 2001; *The Italian Tower*, Kielder Reservoir, Northumberland, 2001; *The Land Marked*, Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, 2001.

Selected recent group exhibitions
British Art Show 6, BALTIC, Gateshead, 2005; *Changes of Mind: Transformation and Belief*, Haunch of Venison, 2005; *The stars are so big, the earth is so small... stay as you are*, Schipper & Krome, Berlin, 2004; *On Reason and Emotion*, 14th Biennale of Sydney, 2004; *Art School*, Bloomberg Space, London, 2004; *Tales of the City*, Arte Fiera, Bologna, 2004; *Independence*, South London Gallery, London, 2003; *Days Like These: Tate Triennial of Contemporary British Art*, Tate Britain, London, 2003; *Recent Acquisitions*, City Art Centre, Edinburgh, 2002; *Fabrications*, Cube, Manchester, 2002; *The Gap Show*, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, 2002; *Happy Outsiders*, Zacheta Panstwowa Galeria Sztuki, Warsaw, 2002; *Audit*, Casino Luxembourg, Luxemburg, 2001; *Believe*, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, 2001; *Here and Now*, DCA, Dundee, 2001; *Making History*, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, 2001; *Circles 3*, ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2001; *Local Motion*, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2001.

Selected reference material
www.doggerfisher.com
www.haunchofvension.com

Nathan Coley: There will be no miracles here, Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2003

Opposite
Installation in progress at St John's Churchyard, May 2005



Overleaf and opposite
***the louder you scream, the faster we go*, 2005**
(video still)
All video stills courtesy the artist

the louder you scream, the faster we go 2005
Phil Collins established a video production company, Shady Lane Promotions, in Bristol and sent out an open call for unsigned music acts. I Know I Have No Collar, Forest Giants and Frànçois were selected and three promo music videos were produced for their tracks, *Sleeptalking*, *Beards*, *Il Stragniero*.

Phil Collins

Alex Farquharson on the work of Phil Collins

Originally published by *frieze*, October 2005

The photographer asks the Kosovar boy to remove his shirt. He's 15, he says, but his chest is still that of a child. A bullet wound circles his navel, and his leg is in plaster, right up to the groin. "Should he put his baseball cap back on?", the translator asks the photographer. "Yeah, hat on", comes the reply. After a minute or two a vase of flowers comes between the boy's torso and us. The manoeuvre, in itself modest, seems full of significance. We sense, for the first time, the presence of the video camera through which we view the scene, and with it the ethical and emotional distance that separates its operator from the stills photographer and the feature writer, who are out of the frame but whose speech we overhear. In retreating behind the bouquet, it seems as if the camera is being directed by our own feelings of discomfort at having been implicated in this choreographed exploitation of another's misfortune. Only a moment ago he was being used as a cipher for war and its victims, but now, with his head and shoulders protruding from the colourful flora, the boy — whose name is Besher — is no longer a social type but a fulcrum of individualised ideals: youth, health, beauty, happiness, sensitivity, etc. He could be the privileged, poetic subject of a society painter circa 1890, rather than the victim of a brutal civil war. While this transfiguration takes place, the bouquet scrolls through various functions: it metaphorically dresses Besher's wounds; it screens his modesty; it hides our shame; it pays tribute to his beauty and bravery; it consoles his pain.

how to make a refugee, 1999 (video still)

Made in 1999, *how to make a refugee* is one of Phil Collins' earliest videos. Read literally, the title is misleading: the conversation between the news crew and the family, via the translator, gives little insight into the events that led to this boy being shot and his family becoming refugees during the Kosovan War. Instead, most of the talk centres on posing the boy for his portrait and, when that's over, assembling two large families (his own and another they live with) on a single sofa for a group photo: hurried directives are issued, kids and grandparents shuffled around, lenses and apertures selected and cursory biographical details elicited. In a few minutes it's all over: job done, editors happy, money wired, move on. Witnessing this callous process, it quickly becomes apparent that it is the media, not the warlords, who are the missing agents from the title, while the 'making' the title refers to is the production of representations of refugees by the media for mass consumption.

By the standards of Collins' other work, our awareness of his presence in *how to make a refugee,* and of what he has done to influence its outcome, is relatively slight. Elsewhere, though, manipulation is a hallmark of his films and photography. Like many artists whose work could be likened to reportage, Collins' itinerary resembles those of the world's press corps: in the last five years he has worked in Baghdad, Belfast, Belgrade, Bogotá, Ramallah, the Basque Country and Ground Zero in New York. Like his contemporaries, Collins is partly motivated by a distrust of, and distaste for, the way the media exploits subjects for the sake of a good story. He, too, directs the camera away from the flashpoints that constitute the mass of imagery we see in newspapers and on television. Apart from this, his work diverges from most neo-documentary work being made today, much of which is characterised by a sense of heightened *vérité*: long static shots of everyday activities seemingly unaffected by the presence of camera or artist. In contrast, instead of trying to negate the ideological perspectives through which events are framed, Collins amplifies them to the point where his involvement with the images becomes their structuring principle and *raison d'être*.

Parody and satire often result from this amplification of the ways the media manipulate people, viewers and truth. *the video hero* (2001–2) turns the tables on a New York journalist who, like so many other 'lifestyle' columnists, found himself having to cover the reality of the lives of those caught

they shoot horses, 2004 (video still)

in the aftermath of 9/11. Every so often Collins' arm enters the frame with a mug of whisky, from which the genial hack is obliged to drink, like some terrible reality TV forfeit or an endurance piece of Performance art. Intermittently we hear Mariah Carey warbling her 9/11 hit *Hero*.

Oddly, what begins as an inchoate ramble becomes more cogent as the video proceeds, since segments of the hour-long footage have been reassembled in reverse order. In *hero* the techniques commonly used by the media to manipulate interviewees and viewers become the work's content, along with the journalist's soliloquy: the off-screen loosening of an interviewee's tongue with alcohol, the colouring of the sentiments of a story through a sound-track and the strategic distortion of a sequence of events through the editing process.

In recent years Collins has departed more radically from the language of reportage. Whereas earlier work tended to result from relationships formed while living in Belfast, Belgrade and New York, for example, he now often advertises for participants. Sometimes he holds auditions, a process associated with cinematic fiction. The individuals that feature in projects such as *real society* (2002), *they shoot horses* (2004) and *el mundo no escuchará* (the world won't listen, 2004), aren't so much subjects of the work as performers and participants. Rather than inviting cameras into their lives, Collins' collaborators take leave of what they would otherwise be doing to enter a highly contrived, game-like situation. This sense of the action in his work being time-out from the continuum of life is emphasized by the artifice and exoticism of many of these projects' backdrops, which, although often provisional, signify that the participants are transported to some desirable elsewhere: in real society local participants have their photographs taken, in various states of undress, in repose or exhibiting themselves, by an 'international photographer' (Collins) in a luxury hotel suite in San Sebastián; in *they shoot horses* nine young Palestinians take part in an eight-hour dance-athon in a pink gymnasium; in *el mundo no escuchará* Colombian fans of The Smiths sing along to backing tracks (a note-perfect rendition of the album *The World Won't Listen* by a band from Bogotá) against photographic wallpaper of Mediterranean holiday villas and a tropical island at sunset. Despite their deeply voyeuristic nature, these works deny us access to the environments

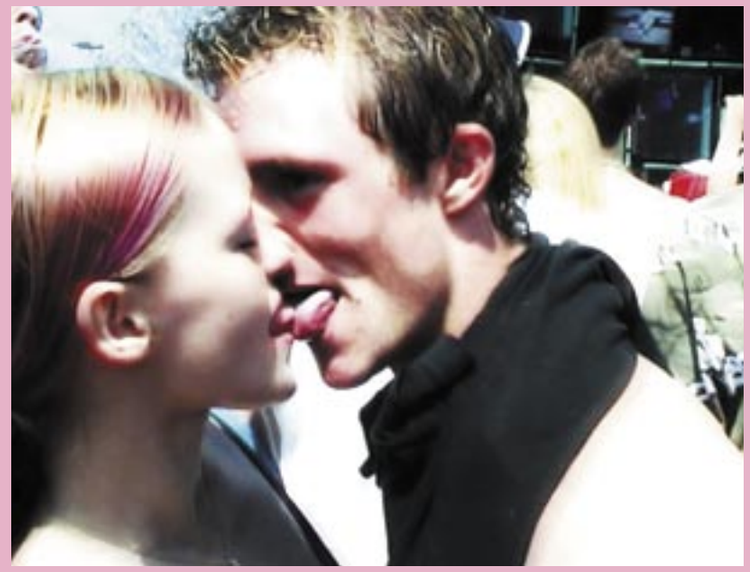
within which their participants normally exist. Rather than reducing people to interchangeable representatives of a given socio-political malaise, this process of abstraction forces us to engage with the participants as individuals, as we would someone who shares our own cultural co-ordinates. Despite this, the political reality immediately beyond the threshold of the work is barely kept at bay: the outcome of *they shoot horses* was partly determined by power cuts, calls to prayer, a curfew and the confiscation of an hour-long segment by the Israeli authorities.

Seen a certain way, these works aren't so much series of photographs or video installations as documentations of participatory performances or relational art works. Yet this would be to ignore the way Collins' work is re-activated when installed in galleries. In *el mundo no escuchará* the 'karaoke machine' used in the original performance — a monitor showing the scrolling lyrics and playing the backing tracks — is displayed alongside a monitor (or video projection) showing footage of the various fans performing each song from the album in sequence. This mode of display suggests that we too can use the 'karaoke machine' for a sing-a-long in the gallery, though this desire is frustrated by the lack of microphone. In *they shoot horses*, viewers are partly surrounded by two adjacent projections of the two life-size teams of dancers.[1] The seven hours of music they dance to — Diana Ross and Joy Division, Britney Spears and Soft Cell, James Brown and Olivia Newton-John — are pumped out at night-club levels, which soon transforms viewers into dancers and gallery spaces into discotheques. Its duration roughly corresponds with most gallery and museum hours; seen at a biennial, we will emerge at the end of the day almost as exhausted as the dancers themselves. This reproduction of the spatial, temporal and aural conditions of the original event within the exhibition space produces a strong sense of identification with the participants.

Collins himself speaks of wanting viewers to over-identify with the subjects of his work: to want to be them, to fall in love with them, as he says he does himself. His work, he asserts, is about love and exploitation, which, in portraiture, he sees as inseparably interlinked. The scenarios he precipitates turn the suppressed psychodrama that occurs any time a camera is introduced between people into a full-on de-sublimated melodrama. His recent works involve a literal transaction between himself and the participants: a day's wage for each hour of dancing, a beautiful hotel suite in exchange for a modelling session or, in *free fotolab* (2005), one's photos developed and printed on the condition that the artist has the right to use any of the images however and whenever he likes. But beyond that, the work also represents a transaction of identities, between the artist and participants and between the participants and viewers of the work. Rather than effacing the self, as most anthropologists would, to arrive at a supposedly objective assessment of others, Collins, as a subject, is evidently part of each of these transactions.

For Collins the camera is a libidinal apparatus, rather than one that reduces others to stereotypes.

One sign of the interpenetration of love and exploitation in Collins' practice lies in the role assigned to pop music, that most overt signifier of sexuality and romance. On the one hand, a Beyoncé CD in Ramallah inevitably symbolizes Western capitalism, yet on another level a work such as *they shoot horses* also asks us to question the assumption that a hormone-fuelled Palestinian teenager wouldn't relate on his or her own terms to *Crazy in Love*. It isn't so much the endurance of the dancers in *they shoot horses* that keeps us captivated as the creativity of their improvisations, alone or in synchrony. Songs well known to Western audiences, but evidently unknown to them, take on unexpected qualities: Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart* suddenly sounds almost Arabic. Consisting of music he loves and music he loathes, the seven hours of music Collins has assembled acts as a self-portrait. At the same time, the selection emphasizes what he and the dancers have in common, while also highlighting differences between them. Where it's music he loves, the soundtrack functions as a gift: a way of enveloping those he wants to love in music he loves. Where it's music he loathes, it evokes the insidious, the insidious global spread of the most cynical excesses of the Western entertainment industry. One aspect of himself that he doesn't leave at home is his own identity as a queer artist,



the louder you scream, the faster we go, 2005 (video still)

a factor oddly excised in virtually all commentary on his work, but which, one senses, has contributed to the formation of his distinct brand of radical cosmopolitanism and his desire to reach across differences. Plainly an undeniable irreverence, which one could call camp, arises from staging a Smiths' karaoke in Bogotá, a 1970s' disco in Palestine or re-making Andy Warhol's *Screentests* (1963-6) in Baghdad (*baghdad screentests*, 2002). Within normative patterns of sexual identity Collins is himself Other. Instead of repressing this aspect of himself when he engages with geo-political issues (sexuality, typically, playing little part in these discussions), he builds it into the work through his choice of cultural signifiers, leading one to suppose that the politics of his own identity, as much as any one else's, lies behind his desire for heightened exchange. For Collins the camera is a libidinal apparatus, rather than one that reduces others to stereotypes. In his hands it gives rise to shared moments of catharsis and emancipation in the face of everyday oppression.

References

[1] "The title is a reference to the American pulp fiction writer Horace McCoy's 1935 novel, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* about a suicidal young woman forced to make a living by exhausting herself in a marathon dance entertainment, for the diversion of a paying audience coming and going as it pleases, and to its 1969 movie version starring Jane Fonda." Bill Horrigan, *Happening in Mine*, in Phil Collins, *yeah.....you, baby you*, Milton Keynes Gallery and Shady Lane Publications, 2005, p. 39.

Phil Collins in conversation

Alex Farquharson In *the louder you scream, the faster we go* you've put yourself in the position of the pop promo director — an apparently low form of filmmaking. How did this come about and what was your thinking?

Phil Collins I wanted to approach the idea of making a public work, but one which would be essentially private in its nature, and which would be primarily functional, but would depend upon the potential of others in how it was exhibited or distributed. So the target community of the project was unsigned bands or acts, three of which would have a promo made to accompany their music, each of whom would receive a copy to use however they wanted — as visuals as part of their act, send it in to MTV, or make it into an ash-tray. They would have no control over the content though, so there was no saying that they might actually like what they received.

AF What was the process? Did you advertise and do auditions?

PC First I set up a promotion company — Shady Lane Promotions — at Situations' base at Bush House and began advertising myself as a new pop svengali. From there I constructed a campaign which might reach a wide range of musicians. I made posters and flyers which were distributed to record shops, guitar shops, libraries and, obviously, bus shelters. Then I went to see bands in sticky back rooms with plastic pint glasses just about every night for two months. And, from there, you know, the CDs just started arriving in manila envelopes every morning. Me and Nim, my assistant, went down to Dixons and bought a horrible boogie-box, lay on the floor of the office and pressed play.

AF I actually really liked the three you picked. None were obvious choices: the first is a slow and enigmatic instrumental, the second a whooshy indie guitar song and the third an introspective, bossa nova-flavoured ballad. All are modest and low key, but in their own way quite beguiling. What drew you to these three acts? Did you have any specific criteria?

PC Bristol has a lo-fi DIY culture really from the mid-80s (indie labels like Sarah Records) and even now it's very strong, these groups of people making music with friends in bedrooms and on analogue equipment, producing limited-edition vinyl, sharing musicians and playing insane gigs at the upstairs rooms in bars like the Louisiana or the Folk House. It's very romantic — in the summertime. And this is what I wanted to reflect in my choice of acts.

AF So you didn't feel like a judge on Pop Idol?

PC No.

AF So, tell me about the first video?

PC The first video was shot at the T4 Pop Festival at Weston-super-Mare. I wanted the content of the video to reflect the demographic of pop marketing, so, to concentrate on teenagers. But T4 was a pop festival designed to be televised, so people would be asked to scream on cue. The party motivator literally stood on stage and said, "Right, it's an advert break coming up so we need you to scream for thirty seconds." And what was incredible was how everyone complied. No one stuck two fingers up, no one booed at a succession of people miming to backing-tracks. Everybody screamed. For thirty seconds. Exactly. You know, you really do have to worry. To me it looked like 1970s Britain, like the *Young Beaver Club* — and, yes they really did used to call it that — at Butlins.

AF Strangely, though, this sense that they were being choreographed and manipulated doesn't come through in the film at all; it transcends those circumstances. I felt it came across as a rather beautiful image of a coming of age: you see all these teenagers, alone and together, sensing, it seems, almost for the first time, the thrill and fear of impending adulthood, of independence, of sexuality, of what their bodies can now do. The scene is a hot summer's day — the perennial teen season — and the sun bleaches out their faces in a way that's technically imperfect, but which lifts them

Overleaf and this page
the louder you scream, the faster we go, 2005
(video still)

out of the specifics of that particular moment in time. Abstracted in this way, it becomes a more universal picture of adolescence with all the ecstasy, anxiety and distress that that implies. The kids in your viewfinder seem to run through the gamut of those feelings during the song's three minutes, not unlike classic footage of fans at the height of Beatlemania. Maybe nostalgia's getting the better of me.

PC No, but it's also in the texture of the work: it's solarised and saturated so it looks like Super 8 or cheap video and it's about 70% of the normal speed. And even more importantly it's about people's love affair with the camera, performing themselves directly, unquestioningly to the lens. The one question they asked quite rightly was, "Am I going to be on TV?" And I had to answer, quite honestly, "I don't really know".

AF Also, of course, an important factor in all this is the disparity between the soundtrack and the music the kids would actually have been listening to. The instrumental resembles a lullaby. Although it's you that's slowed down the film in post-production, it's as if the music itself is doing it. The effect is quite psychological: we feel we're able to enter the minds of the film's subjects.

You couldn't think of a more different group of people than the late middle-aged ladies in black dresses that appear in the next film, but again there's a contrast between what we imagine these people would normally listen to and the music they appear to be dancing to: a 'shoe-gazing' style guitar band. And again, there's a sense that we're observing a group of people's relationship to their bodies, though this time their movements are highly synchronised.

PC The Sandra Lilley Ballet School for the Over Fifties! A friend of mine's mum attends the dance group. They were so warm, so kind, you know

Screening of *the louder you scream, the faster we go* at the Orange Ashton Court Festival, Bristol, 16 July 2005

they invited us in with such good grace and yes, I found them incredibly beautiful to be around. They have this incredibly English well-preserved feel, all in leotards with black net and tutu skirts.

AF A bit indie-looking...

PC Yes, they are. They all have different levels of proficiency at dance; they do tap, they do ballet, they do national dances, and it was such a good time filming. So yes, hopefully that will be an ongoing relationship. One of the things with age is it lends a very distinct kind of beauty, there's an incredible grace in an elderly tap dancer. There's a sense of recall. If there's one thing I can say to support the video, it is that the music and the image each dignify the other.

AF Also, there's the sense that the one periodises the other: the dancers allow us to imagine ourselves their age looking back on this music we listened to during our adolescence.

PC And maybe in years to come when we're kicking around in sheltered accommodation we'll do our work-outs to acid house.

AF The third and final video is very different again in that it just involves one person. It's a close-up of a young man, shoulders up, who seems to be in some state of private ecstasy — we guess he's pleasuring himself, though there's no actual evidence. It places the viewer in a familiar situation, yet one that's rare in film. What led to this?

PC I asked five guys to wank off for the camera and I was looking really at the inherent disappointments of these moments when you lose yourself or aim to lose yourself, but it's such hard work and so fleeting. In the end from all the footage I just took one complete section which had this melancholy pall and, most importantly, no edits.

AF Was the pop video your first exposure to a certain approach in filmmaking? Since we're both teenagers

of the 80s, I'm also aware that our first infatuations with pop music came around the time when pop video was invented.

PC I was a really ridiculously obsessive pop fan. From about the age of eight when I got a tape recorder I diligently recorded the Top 40 and Top of the Pops every week, pausing the cassette at the DJ's interruptions, and annotating a small notebook with all that week's chart movements. I kept obsessive scrapbooks which I still have, on Bowie, Soft Cell, Yazoo and Siouxsie. The charts seemed much more open at that time, so much less controlled.

AF Singles would stay there far longer. A pop act's place in the charts in a given week wasn't so directly a result of some marketing campaign. It seemed a more participatory situation: there was a greater sense of being invested in a group's fortunes. They were more innocent times. We were less manipulated.

PC There was actually a disconcerting amount of manufactured pop at the time, like Stars on 45, Tight Fit. But you would still have access to a really wide variety of music even in the Charts. 2-Tone was incredibly popular with kids, Northern soul was still massive when I was going to my first discos. Bauhaus, New Order and Japan were in the Top 40. At the age of 12 or 13 I was already listening to and buying Echo and the Bunnymen, Gina X, Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel, Virgin Prunes, The Fall. But in the early 80s when video really arrived you'd previously had tracks duffly illustrated by Legs & Co. or Hot Gossip.

AF Much like the old ladies in the second video. They're your Legs & Co. And let's not forget Zoo.

PC My very own Legs & Co! *Ashes to Ashes*, for example, was such a terrifying video for me at the time. I was probably about 10 when I first saw it. And the impact of it is still seared on my brain. I found Bowie compelling and terrifying in equal measures. I would linger over his album covers in the local record shop. And as much as these had a forbidden, unsettling quality for me, as a very early teen, so too did pop video. The early videos of Eurythmics, Klaus Nomi, Dead or Alive, or Frankie or Soft Cell's *Non-Stop Exotic Video Show* were incredibly bold and disturbingly sexual. At the onset of the pop video I would look forward more to the release of the video itself than in seeing the band perform 'live'. In fact, I regularly used to invite my friend Simon Will, now a performer with the live art company Gob Squad, round to my house to play at being in Kate Bush's videos; we'd make up videos from *The Dreaming* and perform them together round the record player.

AF Do you think that the difference between then and now was that the early videos had a kind of a theatrical quality? You were aware they were dressing up and that what glamour there was was ad-hoc, which made it quite democratic, unlike million dollar videos on MTV today. There was more of a sense that you too could take on a given identity. The imagery — the cover art, the wardrobe — was as important as the music, particularly to someone that would end up an artist.

PC Yes, and at the time you saw comparatively cheap videos shot on Super 8 and Cinecam by people like Derek Jarman and John Maybury, or Tim Pope's early low-budget videos for Soft Cell and later The Cure. I think they truly opened up the possibilities of another world, another life, other values.

AF And one that relates far more to video art, particularly its more narrative or allegorical strains. The two have, at various times, converged I suppose.

PC One of the most formative experiences for me, when I was about fifteen, was taping from the telly *Hail the New Puritan*, a fictionalised day in the life of Michael Clark with Leigh Bowery and The Fall, which seemed to offer up this complete world, a revolutionary idea of the possibilities of sexuality, drugs and clubbing. There's this strand of 80s video directly influenced by the avant-garde

and by experiments in early film, like Dziga Vertov, Maya Deren or Warhol, and it's a legacy of visual culture which is not current in pop video any more, which is not explored, maybe because most are big budget glamorised representations of life around a Miami hotel pool. And that's just the British ones.

AF I want to ask you a big wide-angle question now. One aspect of your work I find fascinating is the way you make highly subjective work in pressing geo-political circumstances. This marks it out from most neo-documentary work we've become so used to seeing in biennials. Music, it seems to me, acts as a way of bridging the divide between you and the participants in your work, the individual and her society. Is this how you see it?

PC The first thing is that music sets its own terms so it's an imposition. If it's a bridge it's also a barrier. My most memorable experience of music is probably not the ability to lose yourself in it, but the absolute self-consciousness it can make you feel. Observing a crowd of people, drunk on cider and black, seemingly lost in some form of contagious happiness, music can also serve to highlight your inability to lose yourself, this exquisite reminder of your failures to connect, to surmount the barriers between you. Music it seems can transport you absolutely nowhere.

Popular music is also a really deep-set indicative marker of belonging or difference. On the one hand you might be surprised if everyone in the world doesn't know who The Beatles or Elvis Presley or Christina Aguilera are, just as, on the other, you might be shocked to register that there's no real reason why they should.

AF The music in *they shoot horses* represents you and the culture you're from. It's music you know well, which has been the soundtrack to your life, yet it's largely unknown to the Palestinian kids in the video. It's what you bring to the transaction, and it becomes the impetus for the action, not its accompaniment. The typical documentary filmmaker would have taken the opposite approach: they would have sourced local music and added it after the event.

PC It was crucial that this was British and American music, that they were dancing to these particular forms. Disco and dance music superficially relate to questions of freedom, like punk or indie music might do to ideas of revolution or rebellion, but they are of course highly formatted largely commercial expressions of these ideas. It makes you ask the question of what it would be like in Britain, holding an Arabic disco-dance marathon. You know, it really depends on the participants, the area, and the specific purchase of the musical style. At times in *they shoot horses* there's some moments of apparent transcendence or apparent liberation. But the terms themselves are really quite cruel – to dance for eight hours to someone else's musical choices. For the entertainment and edification of art-lovers everywhere.

AF The avant-garde has been too quick to write off popular culture as mindless and exploitative spectacle; often, I think, a certain line of Marxist thinking simply serves as a cloak for naked snobbery and philistinism. Your approach to pop culture is much more nuanced. Pop music, your work seems to imply, is not intrinsically less meaningful and profound than art, for all its apparent commercialisation.

PC No, and neither is art or documentary for all its own myriad hypocrisies. I think pop music can mean the same, if not more, to so many more people. It's a truly wonderful, potent structure. Cover art and pop ephemera can be as moving as a love for a particular piece of artwork or a painting — they have a real parity. I can distinguish the frames of reference, but in terms of an emotional response, there would be as many in pop as there would be within fine art or cinema. The toil, labour and evident artistry within something like Ziggy Stardust and the phenomenon surrounding it is a work which you can spend as much time thinking around as you can thinking about Hans Haacke.

AF Also, pop music, particularly in the hands of an individual like Bowie or Morrissey, is a direct manifestation of, or catalyst for, much wider social phenomena. When The Smiths breached the Charts for the first time there was a genuine sense of rupture. It united hundreds of thousands of people on a deeply emotional level. But it was also an intellectual affiliation. The Smiths were an education, a subcultural education; they provided an alternative syllabus for a generation of young people alienated by 80s values.

PC You felt you entered a really exacting world with The Smiths, and with a dedication and retrieval of a submerged quoted visual history which was akin to an art practice.

AF Another thing about Pop, I feel, is that it can be the most eloquent vehicle of expression for certain types of feeling: sex and romance, disaffection and rebellion. There's a marvelous eloquence to the perfectly crafted pop song, for all its simplicity. There are certain registers of feeling that pop songs encapsulate better than more complex media that might meander around these subjects. The idea of 'perfect pop' reminds me of Greenberg and all that formalism in 60s art: something that is the epitome and ultimate refinement of its medium, something that's irrefutable in its simplicity. A Phil Spector song has that authority from the first drum beat — a less-is-more ethic that exudes power.

PC Within contemporary art there's often a response to the liminal, to the spaces in between things, whereas pop grabs you by the throat, and gives you one in broad daylight. There is a directness about pop music which often is of less interest within high art forms and yet this loneliness, this separation from the other, the agony of 'I – Want – You' is what many art forms also elaborate. My title for the show I did at Milton Keynes Gallery *yeah.....you, baby you* is about the strength of a specific address. It's interpellation, you're being directly hailed, "yeah, you baby you". You and no-one else. You know, it's incredibly specific.

AF In music the irony is it's addressed millions of others in the exact same way.

PC Yes. It comes from James Brown's *Live at the Apollo* 1963 from '*I Lost Someone*' and it's such an incredibly torturous, beautiful song. In this extended sequence he says to the audience, "You don't have to tell me but I believe someone over here lost someone", and there's an applause. So he goes over to the other side and says, "and I feel like someone out here lost someone"...

AF Like a Pentecostal preacher...

PC Exactly. And the woman in the audience laughs and says "Yeah, You Baby, You."

AF Oh so it's her not him.

PC Yeah, it's like this beautiful reversal. She suggests, against all the evidence, that he's lost out, that he could be with her tonight. At this moment, she's writing the song.

AF Which relates, again, to how you use music in your work: in *they shoot horses*, a song that has been danced to by many million of people is seized upon by the participants, each in their own way, as their badge of identity.

PC But you are so particularised by pop music, it individuates, it separates you in ways that you couldn't predict or account for. I always remember smashing my copy of *Hatful of Hollow*; this feeling of Morrissey's that nobody loved him seemed so desperately unfair, because I loved him, so passionately, so absolutely, I kissed his picture above my bed for years, and it was true nobody loved me. And it seemed so unjust, this confusion of pronouns, that I took the record off the turntable and broke it over my knee.

I was sorry in the morning.

the louder you scream, the faster we go, 2005
(video still)

Open call for unsigned bands through poster campaign at bus-stops throughout Bristol city centre, June 2005

About the project
the louder you scream, the faster we go was premiered at the Orange Ashton Court Music Festival, Bristol on Saturday 16 July 2005 in the Blackout Marquee. The work has also been screened at *Sweet Taboos: Episode 1*, 3rd Tirana Biennial, National Gallery of Arts & Pyramid Centre, Tirana, Albania (10 September — 10 November 2005) and as part of *phil collins: greatest hits 1& 2*, Cinematexas 10th International Short Film Festival, Hideout Up, Austin, Texas, USA (14 —18 September 2005). The work will tour as part of *You Made Me Love You*, the Commotion programme curated by Claire Doherty and organised by Picture This in association with Arnolfini, Bristol throughout 2005–06.

Credits
Sleeptalking written & performed by I Know I Have No Collar;
Camera: Nim-Jo Chung, Phil Collins, Juanan Eguiguren, Amy Feneck, Afshan Javed

Beards Written & performed by Forest Giants; Camera: Jonathan Weinman; Camera assistant: Emma Anton

Il Stragniero Written & performed by Frànçois; Camera: Phil Collins; Camera assistants Phil Barry, Nim-Jo Chung

Edited by Jonathan Weinman
Assistant to Phil Collins Nim-Jo Chung

Directed by Phil Collins

Production assistants on audio CD Lucy Badrocke and Sinisa Mitrovic

the louder you scream, the faster we go was commissioned by Bristol Legible City. The artist would like to thank Phil Barry, Sandra Lilley & The Balandis-Lilley Ballet School for the Over 50s, Jem Noble & Blackout Arts, Felicity Croydon, Simon Will, Darragh Hogan, Kerlin Gallery, Sinisa Mitrovic and Ringo.

About the artist
Phil Collins was born in 1970 in Runcorn, and has lived, worked and exhibited in numerous locations, including Belfast, Belgrade, New York and Baghdad. Collins belongs to a generation of artists whose engagement with people, place and community is central to their work. He is well known for his striking intimate portraits in video and photography. Often communicating through forms of popular and youth culture such as dance and pop music, his work combines an infectious humour and energy that creates an immediate connection with the viewer and participant.

Selected recent solo exhibitions:
assume freedom, Temple Gallery, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA, 2005; *yeah.....you, baby you*, Milton Keynes Gallery, Milton Keynes, 2005; *phil collins: they shoot horses*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH, 2005; *el mundo no escuchará*, Espacio La Rebeca, Bogotá, 2004; *real society*, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast, 2003; *sinisa & sanja*, The Wrong Gallery, New York, NY, 2002; *becoming more like us*, Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, Dublin, 2002; *face value*, Context Gallery, Derry, 2001.

Selected recent group exhibitions:
British Art Show 6, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, 2005; *Istanbul*, 9th International Istanbul Biennial, Deniz Palas Apartments, Istanbul, 2005; *Les Grands Spectacles:120 Years of Art & Mass Culture*, Museum der Moderne Salzburg Mönchsberg, Salzburg, 2005; *Populism*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Vilnius, 2005; *Belonging*, 7th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah Art Museum & Expo Centre, Sharjah, 2005; *Universal Experience: Art, Life, and the Tourist's Eye*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL & Hayward Gallery, London, 2005; *Witness: Contemporary Artists Document Our Time*, Barbican Centre, London, 2003; 1st Tirana Biennial, various venues, Tirana, 2001; *Uniform: Order and Disorder*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY, 2001; *Borderline Syndrome*, Manifesta 3, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2000.

Selected reference material
www.kerlin.ie
www.tanyabonakdar.com

Phil Collins, *i only want you to love me*, Brighton: Brigton Photo Biennial & Photoworks, 2003

Phil Collins, *yeah.....you, baby, you*, Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Gallery / Shady Lane Publications, 2005

Kathleen Herbert

Grande Spagna 2005
This installation consisted of a series of videos on eight monitors (durations varied between 58” and 3’45” looped) in an interior ground-floor space of the Huller Warehouse, Redcliff Backs, Bristol.

Francis McKee on Grande Spagna

Sited in Bristol’s Floating Harbour, the Huller Warehouse is one of the last industrialised buildings in the area to remain untouched by redevelopment. Around it, other warehouses have been transformed into chic flats or restaurants, mirroring a process that has taken place in all of the old industrial centres across Britain. The bustle and hectic activity of dock life has long vanished and with it, the exotic promise of sea travel. Even the gulls seem less urgent.

Inside the warehouse, Kathleen Herbert’s *Grande Spagna* (2005) occupies the ground floor which still bears all the traces and scars of busier times. A pillar of black DVD players audit the situation, coloured LEDs and digital signals blink calmly, maintaining order and choreographing the small screens planted around the space. Speakers broadcast a low thrum of engines as monitors flicker to life or fade to black.

The series of fragmented details that comprise *Grande Spagna* were recorded during a three-day voyage from Antwerp to Bristol on a cargo ship carrying a crew of 28 and 5000 cars. At first sight, the vessel appears abandoned, a latter-day Mary Celeste. Tables are unoccupied, corridors are empty, cargo bays deserted. At last, in one scene, a few solitary crewmen appear to raise a flag but the overwhelming sense of desolation remains.

Gradually we realize that this is the reality of seafaring today. Risk and disturbance are reduced to a minimum to protect the cargo. Computerisation and high technology enable the ship to function with a skeleton crew who maintain the systems. On an ideal voyage nothing at all occurs. This is a form of transport designed and dominated by accountancy. The maintenance of monotony ensures the best possible financial result. Movement is restricted to the faintest flicker of screens or strip lighting. The trembling of a cardboard cereal box on a galley table is the most visible sign of greater energy and excitement but that is the upper limit of the Richter scale in this controlled environment.

Tidiness too is endemic. Corridors are immaculate. Table tennis bats are carefully returned to their wall hangings and on the cargo deck an unearthly array of identical cars are perfectly parked to avoid any potential damage. On such a voyage banality is the ambition.

Grande Spagna, however, doesn't simply document this banality. Herbert's images often offer hints of alternative dimensions that might counter the deadening implications of the ship's systems. The crewmen raising a flag may be undramatic but in their actions they repeat an age old ritual that connects them to a more vibrant seafaring culture. The flag is a potent artefact that defies the reductive logic of contemporary cargo transport. Likewise, a trembling image of Mary and Jesus beside a radio telephone fractures the surface of machinic efficiency. It opens a fissure that allows faith, belief, hopes, and superstitions to flood into this closed down world. Human needs and the unruly sprawl of illogical, chaotic histories are all alluded to in this one simple, ephemeral image.

And, if these images defy the rule of monotony, then the detail of a lifeboat outside a porthole window is even more subversive. The image Herbert has framed is almost abstract. Light, colours and reflections all merge to create — at first glance — a deep, painterly sunset. Gradually, however, the image flips into the figurative realm and reveals a static dockside scene below the lifeboat — orange sodium lights illuminating a stark wasteland of concrete and cars.

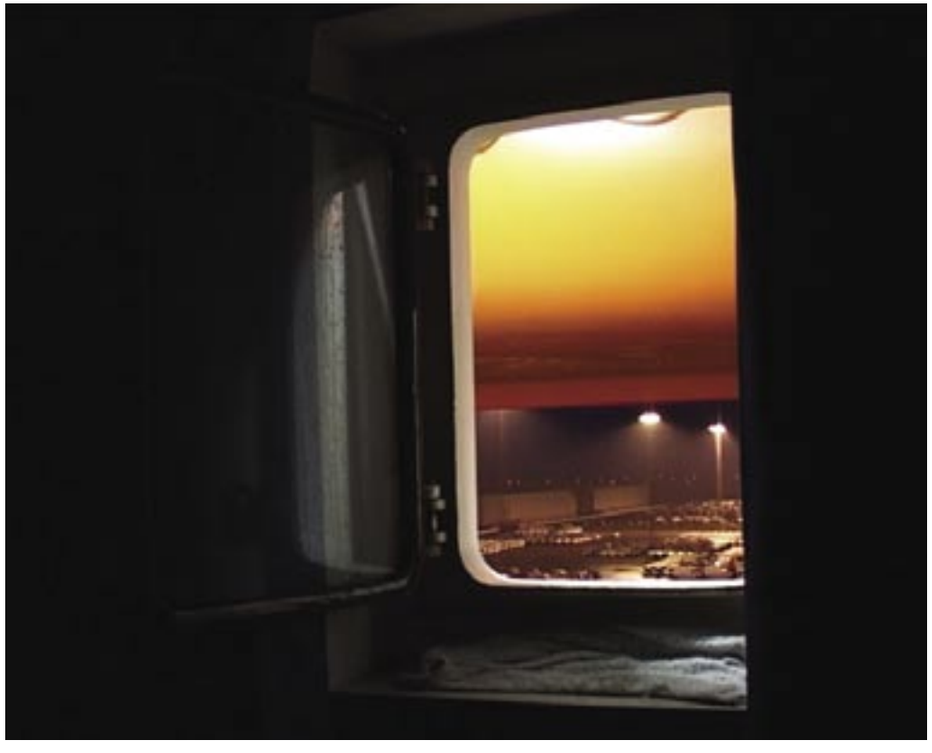
The perceptual illusion that animates this image overturns the dominant mood of banality. Figuratively we may be confronted by another soulless tableau but the more abstract shock of colour and composition contradicts all the signifiers of monotony. This particular detail of the voyage opens the interpretation of the entire piece as we begin to glimpse a more playful reading of the ship's environment. The juxtaposition of the porthole, the lifeboat and the dockscene is framed theatrically. It is knowing in its ambiguity as it suggests a sublime sunset only to leave us with the reflection of sodium lights. Similarly, the shots of a tantalisingly half-open door and long empty corridors emphasize the labyrinthine qualities of the vessel but they also bring us to another painterly image of a red door.

These fragments highlight the artist's presence in the work. We become aware of her acute eye for detail, of the precise selection of each image. Their oblique allusion to a more orthodox sense of artistic composition also brings them into the orbit of art history. The stillness of all the elements of *Grande Spagna*, and their persistent focus on the undramatic and the everyday, recall the calm, non-eventful painting of Dutch 17th century artists such as Vermeer and De Hooch. Materiality and surface replace action and narrative. The blue and red table tennis bats or the never-ending expanse of cars and ventilation pipes do not transcend their situation to become an allegory or metaphor. Instead, the viewer is confronted with a materialistic world where the object or commodity is the point. Herbert documents a landscape designed to protect and deliver the object to the retailer. The sheer weight of material detail in these images, though, resists any attempt to interpret them as a straightforward critique of a deathly consumer society.

It would be easy to read the desolate landscape of the ship simply as a sign of the banalisation of

On such a voyage banality is the ambition.

Pages 58–63
Grande Spagna, 2005
(video stills)



society. The various screens of Grande Spagna do present a series of quasi still life images and this could easily be construed as a funereal reading of the modern world. The presentation of a sequence of fragments might also signal the rupture of consciousness in a materialist landscape.

These readings miss an important aspect of this exhibition. The various scenes and details presented by Herbert are meticulously arranged in a specific space and any experience of the piece inevitably draws the viewer into a consideration of the site as well as the fragments. The use of sound and the awareness of sightlines across the warehouse floor as screens flicker into life prompt us to see the building as a more primitive ancestor of the systems that dominate the cargo ship. Even the warehouse windows offer us a perspective on a larger trade system beyond in Bristol that not only created the city itself but continues to evolve today in a less tangible form. And, in the darkest corner of the space, the pillar of DVD players and sync units remind us that our movements are choreographed by its decisions and that we are a vital element within this system, completing the work as we move from screen to screen.

In *Cosmopolis* (2003), the novelist Don DeLillo invents a billionaire who crosses New York in a limousine, all the time studying the financial market figures on computers in his car. DeLillo uses the character to meditate on the new, increasingly intangible world of trade systems and data:

> He looked past Chin toward streams of numbers running in opposite directions. He understood how much it meant to him, the roll and flip of data on a screen... It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole.

The system Herbert documents in *Grande Spagna* is an element within this world. And the system she creates within the viewing space is yet another. The banalities recorded on the ship and the small miraculous moments reflect the vast system that now holds the world together — a fragile, almost invisible network of logical elements that underpin the vast chaotic sprawl of human civilization across the globe.

The most intimate revelation within this work, then, is the degree to which we now work in tandem with machines, relying on their rational grace to sustain tenuous and vital links in this global system. This is an increasingly close relationship and it may not be as soulless as it at first seems. In a key text entitled 'Ascribing Mental Qualities to Machines' (1979), the computer scientist John McCarthy discusses the possibility of machines having beliefs, arguing for example, that thermostats operate on a simple system of belief — "When the thermostat believes the room is too cold or too hot, it sends a message saying so to the furnace." So far, he continues, we have not constructed more complex machines — "the machines mankind has so far found it useful to construct rarely have beliefs about beliefs, although such beliefs will be needed by computer programs that reason about what knowledge they lack and where to get it." As our complex global system grows, however, and we find ourselves cocooned in systems of data then we may begin to evolve more responsive machines. *Grande Spagna* hints at this evolution as we move around the warehouse constantly aware of Kathleen Herbert's selection of detail and equally aware of the DVD players' contribution to our experience.

Kathleen Herbert in conversation

Entrance to Huller Warehouse

Claire Doherty Would it be fair to say that *Grande Spagna* was a research project before it was a work? You began at the Seafarers' Mission in Avonmouth. How did those initial encounters begin?

Kathleen Herbert Yes, I think it is fair to say that at the beginning it was very much a research project. Initially, I was unsure what work would be produced and I had no fixed idea about where the project was heading. Although my experience of the site was from driving past (on the M4) a vast industrial area, I knew that I was more interested in the individuals entering and leaving the site on the cargo ships, than the physical site itself or the people who managed it.

From my research into seafaring, I came across a society called the Mission to Seafarers. They have over 100 centres in ports around the world that provide facilities and care for seafarers and their families. I noticed that there was a centre based at Portbury Docks in Avonmouth, so I contacted them to explain my project. The initial meeting was very productive. I learnt so much more about the organisation and contemporary seafaring as a whole to the extent that, although, I didn't exactly know how the piece of work would materialise, I knew that from this point onwards my research would be based at the Mission to Seafarers Centre.

CD Going into such an environment, as an outsider could have been fraught with problems and tensions. What kind of questions did you ask and how did you conduct this process?

KH I suppose I saw myself as a guest within that environment, and tried to behave appropriately. I did see it as a privilege to be there. People were giving up their time to support me.

Reverend John Herbert, Roy & Brian were particularly supportive. I didn't really ask too many questions, nor have a plan of action. Through these initial conversations with Reverend John Herbert & Roy, I learnt about the difficulties that a contemporary seafarer faces in an highly technologised industry where increases in efficiency have meant reduced time spent in port and reduced crew numbers. I learnt about the role of the Centre as a place for seafarers to go to relax away from their ship. It's a place where they could make phone calls home, buy essential toiletries, or collect clothing from the donated clothing box. Being away from home for between 4-12 months at a time, the Centre provided a refuge of sorts. These conversations gave me a good grounding into the situation I was about to encounter at the Centre and potentially on the three-day voyage and the possible difficulties that might arise. From then on I would go down there, hang out for an afternoon or evening, where I would be introduced to seafarers arriving at the Centre.

With the majority of visitors being of Filipino nationality there were problems with the language barrier and it was difficult to have conversations with them. There were possibilities for a chat with some English speaking seafarers, but I'd say it was more about a conversation rather than conducting an interview: we would talk about the weather, their families back home etc. Some of them were quite open about their experiences on board, and in one case a seafarer became quite agitated about the conditions on his ship.

I did think about recording these conversations but it seemed inappropriate to do so. I wasn't going to force a conversation.

CD This reminds me of your earlier project *Station X*, where you interviewed former staff of Bletchley Park, the code-breaking centre of World War II. For *Grande Spagna*, you didn't include those initial interviews, but rather chose to film a three-day journey which resulted in a work almost entirely devoid of human presence, save for the figure of the man hoisting a flag on deck. You say that you avoided interviewing the crew, but did you also remove people from shot in the editing process?

Grande Spagna, 2005 (video still)

KH I did purposely remove people in the editing process. During filming, however, I decided that if I did film anyone the individual would be unidentifiable, either by being in the distance or appearing fleetingly in the shot. Although I had permission from the shipping company [Grimaldi] to film the journey, I was not sure if the crew had been consulted in that decision. I always asked individuals for there permission to film especially if they were in shot. This wasn't just a place of work for them; essentially it was where they lived. It was also very much a working environment, so there were issues of Health & Safety and individual working. Conceptually, from my research at the Seafarers' Centre the experiences of isolation felt by many seafarers seemed to manifest themselves through the architecture and technology of the ship. The continual humming and reverberations of the ship's engine making items on the breakfast table quiver gently and lights flicker, created a sense that you were part of a machine or system. The living quarters consisted of two long corridors connected by a shorter one, and leading off from this were a series of cabins, a hobby room, two separate messes one for the officers and the other for the rest of the crew. They were much compartmentalised spaces and felt like practical working environments in comparison to the cargo decks which were vast and open plan. The scale of the vessel dwarfs any individual and this was highlighted during our journey. Though there were 28 crew we must have seen only half of them during our time onboard. It was like a ghost ship.

I made a decision to have one shot in the work that contained a human presence. I choose the man hoisting the flag as I was fascinated by this individual against this highly technologised environment (even the ship runs on auto-pilot when out at sea) and the way in which he is dwarfed by the scale of the boat and the vast expanse of sea in front of him, as he battles against the wind to raise a flag manually.

I wanted the work to reflect the practical compartmentalisation of the environment onboard ship, and so each monitor contained a single shot that was looped, allowing its repetition to emphasize the monotonous passing of time.

CD The choice of site for the work, type of monitors and configuration of the installation for *Grande Spagna* in Bristol was particularly important. Were there particularly choices pertaining to site and equipment that resolved the work for you?

KH Although my research and work at the Seafarers' Centre was well underway when we started looking at exhibition sites, I hadn't taken the voyage on the cargo ship or shot any film footage for the final work. From the several sites that I looked at; including a hotel room, and a converted warehouse apartment, it became apparent that I was trying to second-guess the appropriate site before I had any footage to work with. It was good to see these sites at this stage as it helped confirm why they were not appropriate and consequently what I was looking for. I found Huller Warehouse once I had completed the journey and was attracted to it by its situation. Huller is one of the few remaining warehouses that has yet to be redeveloped and retains the original qualities of industrial storage. It was this interior; with its low ceilings and uniform columns that gave the sense of the cargo decks onboard the ship.

The choice of 'edit monitors' came down to the aesthetic I wanted to convey within the space. I didn't want televisions but something more industrial or production-based. The use of different sized monitors allowed for intimate and expansive shots. I wanted the work to reflect the practical compartmentalisation of the environment onboard ship, and so each monitor contained a single shot that was looped, allowing its repetition to emphasize the monotonous passing of time. The arrangement of the monitors around the space created a sense of movement through the space, including the way in which visitors would enter. The warehouse had a truck loading entrance, which allowed me to build a long entrance ramp, echoing that of the ship.

CD You worked with Duncan Speakman on the sound. What changed in the processing of sound editing from the raw material you had gathered on ship?

KH Duncan has such a good understanding of sound, not just technically but also how to translate sound in an artwork. I wanted to create the feeling that you were inside the machine. The sound itself was quite simple but nevertheless crucial to the work. The recording of the monotone engine noise, heard constantly all over the ship, was accompanied by a rhythmical beep from one of the navigational instruments on the bridge. The recordings themselves came from several elements, the air conditioning system, engine, and navigation systems.

I had recorded these on separate tracks, which Duncan mixed together and cleaned up. He suggested that we combine the sounds so that one gradually arose above another and then the sound would suddenly drop away, almost like the swell of the sea. This proved very effective. The beep, which appears every few minutes, acted as a marker of time passing.

CD Were there aspects of the commission that you found particularly difficult?

KH Filming in a working environment is very difficult, especially if you have little experience of the specifics of that situation. When first on board, I was informed that I could only film if I had a member of the crew with me. The officers were keen to monitor what I was filming and were quite strict about what I could or could not film, after a while they became more relaxed and they were happy for me to go off on my own. So I would say that I was constantly judging and responding to different situations, remaining flexible to what might happen. It was only when I returned to the editing suite that I gained some control over what this work might be.

CD In your description of the working process, the piece emerges very much as a response to a specific environment which then translates into the environment of the installation. You recently showed *Grande Spagna* in London and I was wondering about how you felt it translated?

KH I was unsure how the work would translate to another space, especially a 'white cube' environment. I was concerned that losing the context of Huller Warehouse would diminish the work. The space in London was very different, a small room with no windows and lit by strip lights. Strangely this created a similar feeling to some of the cabins onboard the ship. I made specific changes to the work to fit within that environment, reduced the amount of monitors, and changed their arrangement. Overall I thought the piece translated well, taking on new forms and meanings.

This page
Huller Warehouse from the Floating Harbour

Opposite
Installation in progress at Huller Warehouse, May 2005

About the site
On the waterfront, the Huller Warehouse is one of many large Victorian warehouses that lined a section of the Floating Harbour. It stands on a site reclaimed from the River Avon since the Middle Ages and looks out towards the likely site of the Saxon port at Welsh Back. By the time Huller Warehouse was built, the trade of the Port of Bristol was well past its mid-18th century peak and, despite the development of new port facilities at Avonmouth from the late 1870s, decline continued into the 20th century, leaving the waterfront warehouses redundant. In recent years, many have been converted into flats or restaurants and bars.

Grande Spagna was co-commissioned by Bristol Legible City and Picture This. The artist would like to thank Scott Martin, Rev. John Herbert at the Seafarers' Mission; Duncan Speakman; Roy Postlethwaite and the crew of the *Grande Spagna*, Grimaldi; Tom Littlewood, Gingko Projects; Charles Style and Angel Property.

About the artist
Kathleen Herbert was born in Watford in 1973 and lives and works in London. Her work has encompassed sculpture, video and installation, investigating history and social politics through the details of individual experience and the everyday. She allows the viewer a glimpse of an intimate moment or object, which might at first appear to be rather ordinary. Her work draws on the conventions of documentary and film to build a series of narratives. Often by redefining location and scale, or through a layering of details, Herbert creates a sense of intrigue, never quite exposing the full extent of the situation or story which she is telling.

Selected recent exhibitions
Auckland Triennial, 2004; *Out of Site*, Arnolfini, Bristol, 2004; *Time & Again*, Crawford Gallery, Cork, Ireland, 2003; *The Heimlich/Unheimlich*, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia 2002; *Art & Industry Biennial*, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2002; *BOP*, Gallery Caldeira 213, Porto, Portugal, 2001; *Silk Purse Procedure*, Arnolfini & Spike Island, Bristol, 2001.

Selected reference material
Juliana Engberg, *The Heimlich Unheimlich*, Melbourne Festival of Visual Arts Programme, 2002

Susan Hiller

Psychic Archaeology 2005
Susan Hiller re-edited and juxtaposed excerpts from feature films of the 1920s to the present-day to create a two-channel video installation (20' and 4' durations) in the 12th century Castle Vaults, Bristol.

Jörg Heiser on Psychic Archaeology

There are art works that confirm and neatly express what you already knew. There are works that rupture and frustrate what you knew. And there are works that not only rupture, but surprisingly expand and transcend what you only thought you had known: Susan Hiller's *Psychic Archaeology*, 2005 is such a piece.

Not that I'm an expert on anti-Semitism, let alone Judaism and the history of Jews in Europe. But I had a feeling — possibly typical of Germans of post-War generations who have tried to understand what led to the Holocaust — that I had a general grasp, at least. Now I know I really didn't. And it's not just because of the hard facts that I learned from Hiller's video piece: for example, that England was the first European country to officially expel Jews from its territory. But it's because of the 'soft' particularities that Hiller weaves into a network of interlocking sequences: the spectrum of cultural archetypes and stereotypes that have existed about Jewish identity since the Middle Ages (and possibly longer), evidenced in the way they appear and are twisted and reassembled in 20th and 21st century film. All of this material was 'out there', but it has (at least to my knowledge) never been brought into this kind of perspective, which is so unsettling because, like a dream, it hints at the desires that connect things that had seemed distinct, and disturbs the distinction between different protagonists (and at least since her collective dream-in organised for *Dream Mapping* of 1974, Hiller is an expert when it comes to the logic of dreams). Precisely because archetypes (as ciphers of cultural tradition) and stereotypes (as tropes of prejudice and propaganda) appear deeply intermingled in films and the tales they are based on, the pressing question is raised — how we can learn to distinguish them without resorting to illusory distinctions between the authentic and the fake.

Pages 78–82
Psychic Archaeology,
2005 (video stills)

And as Hiller made me realize, I'm closer to the source of that question than I would have thought, courtesy of childhood Saturday afternoons spent in front of the TV watching films about heroic knights.

The idea of the project *Thinking of the Outside* was to commission artists to realize new works in response to Bristol's historic or imagined landscape. This synced with Susan Hiller's interest in the history of Jews in Europe. Over the last three years, she had been working on her expansive J-street project, filming and photographing the 303 roads, streets and paths in Germany whose names refer to a Jewish historic presence, effectively producing a mental map of German provincialism, and ambivalence.

In Bristol, her attention turned to a notable detail about its Jewish population in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Jews lived under the protection of Bristol Castle, inside the outer, but outside the inner city wall, topographically marking their precarious status as a minority that was under the protection of the ruling power (in return for extra taxes imposed), but only as long as it appeared advantageous on fiscal, or propagandistic terms — making clear that 'Thinking of the Outside' inevitably means to think of what is 'inside' as well, and who has the power to delineate that difference.

A small building is tucked in one corner of what is now a public park. From the outside, it looks like a cross between a chapel and a public lavatory. A small tourist information panel informs us that it is in fact the only remaining functioning building of the former castle: it consists of two small, cross-arched porches that used to be adjacent to the King's Hall, and the private chambers of the Monarch; one of them built between 1225 and 1230, the other in the 14th century. It is here where Hiller's video was congenially sited as a two-screen installation.

The piece has the power to excavate what's buried in our unconscious, from childhood onwards.

Upon entering the first of the two parallel spaces, a video projection filled the blank arch at the back of the room; the soundtrack of that first projection could be listened to on headphones, while the soundtrack of the second projection, which one encountered after passing through the first and turning around a corner into the second space, was on loudspeakers. This had the effect that one could neither fully see both projections, nor hear both soundtracks at once, and yet their lights and their sounds overlapped and 'leaked' into each other. This was also echoed by the flickering of a few candles, and the way the two videos actually interrelate: because the first of the two is shorter — about four minutes — and more specifically related to English medieval history, while the second — 20 minutes — encompasses a broader range of European history from the Middle Ages to the Present. In a way, the first loop relates to the second like a 'site-specific' trailer to a more globally encompassing 'feature', locating it like an 'establishing shot' locates a plot, allowing the story to unfold.

That first projection, with a simple text panel sequence, confronted possibly a majority of its viewers with a fact hitherto unknown to them, or 'overlooked': that, as mentioned, England — by a decree of Edward I issued on 18 July, 1290 — was the first European country to expel the Jews from its territory. However, that information is not illustrated BBC-feature style with re-enacted scenes and a fatherly voiceover explaining what happened. Rather, what is actually seen is the way this history is reflected, as if in a weirdly warped mirror, in post-World War II 'dream factory' production — scenes from Ivanhoe of 1952 — and how this production in turn is warped again in our visual memory.

We all know the story of King Richard the Lionheart, heroically off to fight the crusade, while his evil brother John, in his absence, attempts to take over the crown. The scene from *Ivanhoe* (1952: Dir. Richard Thorpe) shows John delivering a demagogic speech in Bristol Castle's King's Hall, accusing Richard of secret bonds with the Jews, whose 'soiled' blood threatened the English, and he demands the Jews, and Richard with them, to be thrown into the sea (John actually did take Bristol Castle as his headquarters, and he actually did imprison Jews, and did impose enormous fines on them in 1210, to solve his financial problems).

The scene of John's speech appears twice: once in English, once in the dubbed German version. This doubling eloquently plays on the way the rasping German of a demagogic speech inevitably conjures up a reference to German fascism, how the sound of the language itself has been affected by history. On another level, the doubling of English and German versions is also quite haunting for me, personally: how can it be that I remember seeing the film on TV when I was a kid, but can't remember the anti-Jewish speech? And on top of that, oddly, the figure of Isaac of York, a bearded old man who appears as the moneylender, is stored in my childhood memory as a kind of pagan Merlin figure, a wizard. How can that be? Maybe I simply don't remember because the Jewish references were not part of what interested me in such a film as a child? Or was it that the scenes had been censored for German afternoon TV, in an awkward attempt to 'save' the audience from the complex issues of anti-Semitism? This would fit with the Germans' '50s and '60s attitude of 'moving on', present in the German entertainment industry of that time: of simply avoiding, where possible, any reference to Nazi past, and replacing it with escapist stuff (like the 'Heimatfilme' — romantic family feel-good pictures set in the Alps). In any case, what was, not least for a kid like me, escapist stuff — knights and maidens and castles — is suddenly interspersed with scenes of burning houses, and horror-film-type shaky hand camera

footage of burned-down ruins.The reason why so little remains of Bristol Castle is that it was demolished by order of Oliver Cromwell in 1665 — whose verbal guarantee, one year later, allowed Jews in England again to practice their faith openly. This piece of information resonates with Hiller's piece as does the fact that the only other part of the Castle that was saved from Cromwell's order was St. Peter's Church, which was bombed by the Germans during World War II. The ruin is now located at the centre of the Castle Park and the shaky footage Hiller uses was actually filmed around the empty shell of the church: a visual marker of fear and destruction, linking the 20th century with earlier ages. I have to think of W.G. Sebald's thesis that the Germans after WWII failed to create appropriate literary representations of the air raids because that denial was a kind of unconscious 'trade-in' for the denial of the Holocaust ('we didn't know'). And I have to think of my mother's stories of being 'ausgebombt' — losing her home due to air raids — twice as a child in my hometown Mainz, Germany; and of pogroms against Jews in Mainz: in 1096, in 1283, and 1938.

The second looped projection is a rhythmic, musically edited meditation, a hallucinated symphony on the representation of Jewish archetypes and stereotypes in 20th and 21st century film: from *Der Golem* (1920: Dirs. Carl Boese, Paul Wegener) to the recent film version of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (2004: Dir. Michael Radford), starring Al Pacino as Shylock. Its structure is not that of a didactic line of reasoning but of a dream: scenes that seem unconnected are intertwined nevertheless, connected by music and voices that 'leak' from one scene into the other, while the warm crackling white noise from the soundtrack of early films reoccurs like the aural marker of memory, signifying its ambivalence between fullness and emptiness, storing and forgetting. But the logic of this 'dream' does not become absurd: even as we watch it consciously and awake, it continues to have the kind of 'natural' logic that you experience in a dream while you're actually dreaming it.

The cycle of the loop starts with money changing hands, a tumultuous scene on the Rialto Bridge in Renaissance Venice, people thrown into the water, cellos and a furiously accusatory speech on the soundtrack quoting the Old Testament's book of Ezekiel about God's forbiddance of usury — the excuse for the pogrom against Jews. This is followed by Jeremy Irons spitting into Al Pacino's face, a moment in which the scene turns from black and white to colour. Hiller altered the scenes she used subtly, but substantially: the scene, in the original, is of course not in black and white but she made it so, so she could insert this colour rupture — the visual equivalent of the traumatic break of the 'real' into the projective status of stereotypes. In fact Hiller made everything black and white to emphasize the aura of memory, the long ago and far away and yet closely familiar, except for these specific clashes of colour into black and white that reoccur a couple of times later in the piece: when Ingmar Bergman's Jewish money lender-cum-magician is screaming out of frustration and horror after being insulted and hit by the anti-Semite stepfather in *Fanny & Alexander* (1982); and in 'magic' sequences spirits are conjured up or demons appear.

The 'Jewish miser' stereotype is accelerated to a grotesque Dickensian caricature impersonated by none other than the epitome of Britishness, Sir Alec Guiness, in a scene from *Oliver Twist* (1948: Dir. David Lean): big hooked nose, in dirty rags, fake smile while holding up the hand for a bribe, smile dying once coin received — a shockingly blunt stereotype of the vile Jew just three years after the end of Nazi terror. The money-lender-motif continues in a scene from *Der Dybbuk* (1937: Dir. Michael Waszynsk): a Jewish father is counting money, while his baby daughter is soothed by the mother, and — cut — 18 years on, the baby has become a grown-up girl, but father is still counting money, ignoring his daughter.

The Jew as wizard; the Jew as Samsonian strongman: both of these motifs are intertwined in the figure of the Golem, the clay ancestor of Frankenstein's monster, brought to life by the

cabbalist Rabbi Loew, with a magic piece of writing (*Der Golem* of 1920). In Werner Herzog's *Unbesiegbar (Invincible)* of 2001, the strongman Zische Breitbart, taking off his blond wig and Viking helmet on a Berlin stage, reveals himself to be not a new Siegfried, but a new Samson, answered by chants of 'Judensau' from the SS-officer audience. It's an absurd scene, embarrassing in its naïve attempt to create a 'positive' image of the manly Jew who fights back against violent persecution. And one could even laugh, if it wasn't so horrible, at the sight of Nostradamus — a 'secret' Jew — scribbling notes while watching a puddle in which visions of the evils of the 20th century appear — from Nazis to a starving African child to early 90s Saddam Hussein — before exclaiming 'Hister, Hister', and painting a blood red Swastika on a medieval arched wall, just like the one the video is projected onto: prophecy kitsch meets Nazi kitsch, an irresistible tabloid-type combination.

Much more sophisticated, and brilliantly ambivalent, is the scene of Klaus-Maria Brandauer as the famous psychic Hanussen in Istvan Szabo's eponymous film of 1988. (Hanussen allegedly predicted Hitler's rise to power, and met him on several occasions, but once the Nazis found out he was Jewish, he was arrested and murdered in 1933). We see the clairvoyant in a public appearance, blindfolded; he holds his palm on envelopes to answer questions written inside them:

"Shall I be a Member of Parliament?", he reads out; he hands away the envelope again and turns his head towards the ceiling, as if he suddenly sensed a second, much more important level of the vision:

"Member of Parliament?! Where?"

"In the Reichstag?"

He walks a few steps forward, impulsively takes off the blindfold: "But sir?" — a short, mocking smile,

"The Reichstag? The Reichstag is no longer there. It will soon be in flames. I see flames in its dome. The sky over Berlin is red!"

Hanussen switches to a rasping scream:

"The whole building will be ablaze. The only question is: who has set it alight? The Reichstag will burn!"

With hindsight of the way the Nazis made propagandistic use of the Reichstag blaze, blaming it on the Jews, the scene turns all the more gloomy. There is, however, one scene in *Psychic Archaeology* that is maybe even more haunting — from *Der Golem*: a simple image of people walking in a line, disappearing into a dark tunnel, to the hollow, ethereal sound of crashing cymbals.

All in all, the piece — in different ways with different viewers — has the power to excavate what's buried in our unconscious, from childhood onwards — mixed up with the terrifying and seductive aura of fairy tales and legends (as, for example, in my case, the 'Isaac-of-York-as-Merlin'). But what do we make of this wild yet seamless flow of scenes: of 'wizard', 'miser', 'clairvoyant', 'moneylender' and 'strongman', and what does this tell us about the connection between archetypes and stereotypes? Can we dare to ask what is perhaps the most difficult question of all — why were the Jews the 'favourite' scapegoats for all kinds of contradictory accusations and persecutions, that they stole Christian children and cannibalised them, or sullied the holy Host, or poisoned the wells, that they were anarchic communists or ruthless capitalists?

The second looped projection is a rhythmic, musically edited meditation, a hallucinated symphony on the representation of Jewish archetypes and stereotypes in 20th and 21st century film.

One might well doubt whether or not this is a question any work of art can even try to answer — but *Psychic Archaeology* certainly makes it visible: at least for any viewer affected by the seductive power of the stereotypes, the magical allure of the archetypes, and the reality of a chilling, effective dream-like logic that weaves them together; for any viewer willing to admit that there is no 'clean', detached viewing position, that they have inflected and infected us so that, in a way, we have already taken part in weaving them together like this in the first place.

The importance of fairy tales as both a medium for, and a 'documentation' of, the formation of stereotypes is confirmed by an essay that Arnold Zweig published in 1936, on the tale '*Der Jude im Dorn*'[1], which the Brothers Grimm had included in their collection. It tells the story of a labourer defrauded of his wage who manages to obtain the money from a Jew instead of his master. The point of the story is that he feels perfectly entitled to trick the Jew, as he himself had after all served his master dutifully for three years. As Zweig points out, the tale encapsulates a 'classic' characteristic of anti-Semitism (and it's no coincidence that the fairy tale stems from around 1500, the time of the German *'Bauernkriege'*, the Peasant Wars): the anger of the masses against oppression by the ruling class is coupled with their 'internalised' willingness to submit (and their fear of retribution) — and so their anger is deflected instead onto the Jews, which allows them to run riot without any risk of arousing their masters' wrath. Of course this is just one aspect of anti-Semitism, but in any case it becomes clear that there is a 'decipherable' relation between the logic of tales and that of social reality. Archetypes are cultural motifs that persist and recur in relation to what is new and embodies change. The 'Modern' has a 'hidden' connection to the archetypical, the ancient, in order to differentiate itself from the merely recent (think, for example, of Le Corbusier's references to Greek architecture). In that sense and on another level, the Jewish people in diaspora have the characteristics of a modern people: they value education, they have developed, due to trade and diasporic conditions, an advanced social flexibility, yet at the same time their religious belief is archaic. Thus they appear, as the psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel put it, "to be in touch with ancient elemental powers that other peoples have lost contact with."[2]

Stereotypes bespeak the disavowal of the connection of the ancient to the Modern. They recur again and again as a resistance against the 'frightening' aspects of modernisation. They are attempts to dehistorisise the uncanny mixture of connections between the Ancient and the Modern, by 'translating' the Ancient into the wickedly 'magic' and the Modern into the wickedly 'clever', and to endlessly reiterate that 'translation'. Susan Hiller has used as her basic material, film scenes that are still ambivalent enough to reveal that the difference

between archetype and stereotype thus largely depends on the actual connections made between history and the present.

Ultimately, archetypes and stereotypes can never be neatly distinguished: they retain a 'secret' connection to one another, or, to put it differently: archetypes can easily be turned into stereotypes, and — much less easily — vice versa. Watching *Ivanhoe* as a kid, I could, apparently, 're-imagine' a moneylender as a wise wizard. As in a dream, I traded one stereotype for another. The effect of *Psychic Archaeology* is to make that process a reflexive one: it brings all of these stereotypes together, thus on one level allowing their full power of seduction to unfold so that viewers become totally immersed, but on another level, exposing the reiterative character of stereotypes precisely by reiterating, 'quoting' them (because we are and remain aware that Susan Hiller has not 'made this up', is using actually existing films). And so, as we find ourselves frightened by giving in to the pleasure of that immersion, we resurface confronted with our own entanglement in the recurrence of stereotypes.

References

[1] Arnold Zweig, 'Der Jude im Dorn', in: *Die neue Weltbühne*, Prag, Zurich, Paris, XXXII No. 23, 4 June 1936, pp. 717–721, No. 24, 11 June 1936, pp. 744–747, quoted in: Otto Fenichel, 'Elemente einer psychoanalytischen Theorie des Antisemitismus', pp. 35–57, in: Otto Simmel (ed.), *Antisemitismus*, Frankfurt: Fischer Wissenschaft 2002 [1993], p. 39.

[2] Otto Fenichel, op. cit., p. 44 (my translation).

Opposite
Psychic Archaeology, 2005 (installation view)

This page
Castle Vaults, Castle Park, Bristol, May 2005

About the site

Castle Vaults are believed to be part of the entrance to the medieval Great Hall of Bristol Castle. The Castle was built in the early 12th century on the site of an earlier motte and bailey castle. Most of the Castle was demolished in the late 1650s. Castle Vaults were incorporated into a house which survived until the area was bombed during World War II. In the 1950s a new shopping centre was created at Broadmead, and the site of the Castle was turned into a park. The area of Broadmead is about to undergo another dramatic change through a major redevelopment scheme.

Psychic Archaeology was commissioned by Bristol Legible City and funded by Bristol City Council as part of Creative Bristol.

Opposite
Installation in progress at Castle Vaults, May 2005

About the artist
Susan Hiller was born in Florida in 1940 and has lived and worked in London since the early 1970s where she became well-known for her innovative and influential practice in a wide range of media, from drawing to video installation. Her work can be seen as an excavation of overlooked, ignored, or rejected aspects of our shared culture.

Selected recent solo exhibitions
Kunsthalle Basle, Basle; Timothy Taylor Gallery, London; Compton Verney/Peter Moores Foundation, Warwickshire (2005); Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle; Museu Seralves, Porto (2004); Galerie Volker Diehl, Berlin (2003); Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde (2002); Gagosian Gallery, New York, Fondacion Mendoza, Caracas (2001); *Witness*, Artangel, London (2000).

Selected recent group exhibitions
Monuments for the USA, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; White Columns Gallery, New York; *Itinarios del Sonida*, Centro Cultural del Conde Duque/City of Madrid (commissioned audio installation), Madrid; *Looking at Words*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York (2005); *Dream Extensions*, SMAK, Ghent; *Haunted Media*, Site, Sheffield; *Artists' Favourites*, ICA, London (2004) *Your Memorabilia*, NICAF, Tokyo (2003); Biennale of Sydney; *Real Life*, Tate, St. Ives; *Self-Evident*, Tate Britain, London; *Memory*, British Museum, London (2002); *Empathy*, Taidemuseon, Pori, Finland (2001); Bienale de Habana, Havana, *Cuba; Live in Your Head: Conceptual Art in Britain 1965-75*, Whitechapel Gallery, London; Museu do Chaido, Lisbon, Portugal; *Intelligence*, Tate Triennial, London; *Amateur/Eksdale*, Kunstmuseum, Goteborg, Sweden; *The British Art Show*, quinquenial touring exhibition (2000).

Selected reference material
www.susanhiller.org

Susan Hiller, *The J.Street Project*, Warwickshire: Compton Verney/Berlin: DAAD, 2005
Susan Hiller: Recall, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2004
Susan Hiller, *After the Freud Museum*, London: Bookworks, 2000
Barbara Einzig (ed.), *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller*, Manchester University Press, 1996

Silke Otto-Knapp

Golden Garden (Lake) 2005
Golden Garden (Apple Tree) 2005
Golden Garden (Vista) 2005
Golden Garden (Conifers) 2005
Golden Garden (Tropical) 2005
Golden Garden (Perennials) 2005
Six paintings in watercolour and gouache on canvas installed in Custom House, Queen Square, Bristol.

Golden Garden (Shrubs), 2005 (detail)

"To chart Repton's career in terms of the changing geography of his time, to show how his landscape gardening combined and competed with the various forces that transformed later Georgian England, this involves examining how Repton's art engaged with other modes of representation and design, such as painting and architecture, as well as how his practice engaged with forms of production and exchange, from deciduous forestry to the mail-coach system. Repton had to reckon with the stubborn realities of physiography, the distribution of highland and lowland, the course of rivers, the configuration of coasts, to turn them into a resource for his art. This was not a matter of working on the raw material of nature: the natural world was fully incorporated in the cultural consciousness of polite society, its ideas of landscape, regional and national identity, and it was this that made Repton's commissions in unfamiliar country, perhaps appropriated by rival improvers, all the more challenging."

Stephen Daniels, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England*, Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art, 1999

Emily Pethick on Golden Gardens

"The perfection of landscape gardening consists in the four following requisites. First, it must display the natural beauties and hide the defects of every situation. Secondly, it should give the appearance of extent and freedom by carefully disguising or hiding the boundary. Thirdly, it must studiously conceal every interference of art. However expansive by which the natural scenery is improved; making the whole appear the production of nature only; and fourthly, all objects of mere convenience or comfort, if incapable of being made ornamental, or of becoming proper parts of the general scenery, must be removed or concealed."

Humphry Repton *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening,* 1803

At the turn of the 19th century, landscape gardener Humphry Repton worked extensively in the Bristol region designing gardens. His creations were undisturbed, idyllic places which sought to omit all distractions and to block out the signs of the city, forming constructed artificial spaces where natural beauty was enhanced by art. The designers of the 18th century garden had found their inspiration in literature, painting and theatre design, using architecture and perspective as frameworks for dramatic constructed vistas in which visitors were required to become both actors and spectators within the scenery.

By contrast, Repton strived to make his gardens appear natural. He saw himself as an 'improver of landscape' and invented the term 'landscape gardening' to express his theory that art requires, "the united powers of the landscape painter and the practical gardener". Repton notoriously kept 'red books' that contained notes, drawings, maps and plans of his work, and created garden sketches using a technique of plates that would slide over one another, with before-and-after impressions of proposed designs for his clients, revealing the subtle manipulations of the natural landscape (see below).

Where 18th century garden designers employed the language of painting to construct three-dimensional spaces, in her series of *Golden Gardens*, Silke Otto-Knapp has appropriated landscaped gardens back into painting working in layers of thin washes of gold and silver gouache. Beginning her research

View from the Fort, near Bristol, from *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* by Humphry Repton © Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

with Repton's gardening techniques, the paintings are based on multiple image sources that include photographs and found topographical imagery of landscaped gardens and botanical gardens, such as Huntingdon Gardens in Los Angeles, where plants from entirely different origins grow side-by-side as highly orchestrated impressions of the natural. The hybrid nature of these gardens is reflected quite literally in the process of the making of the paintings, some of which are based on collaged images of different gardens that seamlessly merge and transplant mismatched plant life together, with flora and fauna from all climes finding common ground, evading geographical distinctions. This subtle sense of dislocation in *Golden Gardens* not only comes from the sources of imagery, but from the fact that most of the works were painted in Istanbul during the artist's residency. Thus the notion of site in these works is fully displaced, a feint sense of the orient creeps into their decorative, shimmering surfaces.

Exhibited across one wall of the disused building of a former 18th century customs and excise office, the faded grandeur and former function of the site serve as an apt reminder of the imported origins of the paintings. At first glance *Golden Garden (Apple Tree)* appears as an entirely naturalised established garden, but on closer inspection, one finds the incongruous coexistence of a silvery bare apple tree and a wealth of luscious golden cactuses and palm trees. Through the layers of transluscent silver and gold gouache, a clash of seasons and plant life form an image of species that would not naturally coexist in one ecosystem, although probably entirely feasible in a controlled climate, or in the constructed environment of a botanical garden. Drained of colour, the softness of the glistening metallic paint creates an ambient twilight. Adjacent, *Golden Garden (Conifers)* shows a more conventional picturesque landscape, taken from the viewpoint of an arabesque balcony that directs our vision over a hazy view of a sculpted pond surrounded by delicate ornamental trees. Here the less manipulated image appears equally artificial, our gaze held at a distance from nature as a tool for contemplation. Shifting further into the realm of artifice, *Golden Garden (Vista)*, is a more graphic representation of a French baroque formal garden with heavy gold curling balustrades, sharp perspective and clipped hedges that create an illusionary space where nature is repressed to mere surface decoration.

The constructed vistas of the more European gardens are contrasted with wilder, more untamed tropical landscapes. *Golden Garden (Perennials)* depicts a tangle of vegetation that covers the surface of the painting without any defined notion of space, bringing to mind Repton's use of nature to cover borders. Looser in style, the plant-life blend and merge in dappled sunlight with diffused watery

paint dripping down the canvas, yet still retains an underlying sense of composition and cultivated order. In *Golden Garden (Lake)* a jungle of luscious palm trees and bamboo skirts the edges of a large lake, which resembles a slightly uncomfortable meeting of a landscaped garden and a tropical wilderness. *Golden Garden (Tropical)* is a similarly dense tropical forest but has a pathway carved into the undergrowth that brings it back into the genre of the picturesque.

Otto-Knapp has consistently used constructed landscapes and artificial representations of nature as a basis for her paintings, most notably Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and a series of works based on the tropical interiors of the palm houses at London's Kew Gardens. In her paintings of Los Angeles, the landscape is demarcated by hazes of orange streetlights and artificial vegetation, with impenetrable jungle-like shrubbery and avenues of palm trees flourishing in an entirely cultivated arcadia fed on borrowed water and sprinkler systems. Both idealised and verging on the apocalyptic, the watery, misty effects used in the paintings could be interpreted as the effects of a heat haze, smog or a rare bout of stormy weather, tapping into age-old notions of sunshine and noir. The embedded plant-life in these paintings seem to creep over the city, enveloping it to the point of ruination, the sprawling centreless city becoming buried in the undergrowth. While vegetation permeates and hides the structure of the city, the diffused transparency of the highly diluted watercolour she uses often deconstructs the images to the point of obliteration as the whiteness of the canvas glows through the translucent paint with its drips and mottled, sprayed effects.

In contrast to the overgrown Los Angeles vistas, the sense of wildness becomes contained in the *Golden Gardens* and the paintings of the palm houses in Kew Gardens, with altogether more genteel, refined spaces, where the gardens become almost like stage sets. In these paintings, Otto-Knapp creates a dissolution of the image less in the application of the paint, but rather through their reflective surfaces that change depending on the angle from which they are viewed and the direction of light. At points they throw back so much sunlight that the image becomes entirely invisible. The lavish surfaces and staged quality of the paintings also relate to a series of paintings of Las Vegas showgirls, where the ornamental feathers and festoons of fans and exotic outfits replace the palm fronds and ferns of the earlier landscapes to form an altogether different kind of constructed landscape. In choreographed formations, the gaudy-looking girls float on the surfaces of the paintings and dissolve into pools of spotlights and glitter.

While often abstracted to the point of non-recognition, all of the Los Angeles cityscapes are named after their precise street names and not only are they inextricably tied to their specific locations, but they play on the familiarised, in most cases mediated, identifications with these sites and their resonance in our collective imaginary.

In contrast, the *Golden Gardens* evade any specific notion of place, joining together multiple locations and types of landscapes and vegetation, to create archetypal landscapes that retain a similar sense of familiarity, reflecting a way of looking at landscape that has been channelled through the conventions of painting, photography, theatre and landscape gardening into the depths of our subconscious.

In both series of paintings there is a sense of distance that not only comes from a disjointed notion of site, but from the use of photographic imagery and its translation into paint, where the image retains a loose association to its origin, losing its sense of place and becoming dislocated from the real. As Humphry Repton's employment of nature as a tool to block out the present, hide defects and to disguise boundaries, created an abstracted notion of 'place' by covering over any signs of the outside, Otto-Knapp's palm trees, ferns, showgirls and the hazy glimmer of her *Golden Gardens* play on the exoticisation of the real, creating a de-stabilised, but wonderfully idealised notion of site.

Golden Garden (Perennials), 2005

Golden Garden (Conifers), 2005

Watercolour and gouache on canvas
Both 130 x 120cm

Silke Otto-Knapp in conversation

Claire Doherty When I first came to your studio Silke, you mentioned that you had never worked to commission before. Tell me a little bit about how your work has developed before.

Silke Otto-Knapp The painting I am working on would not be possible without the one that came before. Paintings develop in series that are connected in source material, palette and process — I am figuring something out and instead of doing it in one painting, it emerges over a series of five or ten. The paintings are based on photographs that I take myself or find in books and magazines. I photocopy them and have a wall in my studio where I arrange them in different constellations and groups — almost like an imaginary exhibition. The relationship of one painting to the others both in the studio and in an exhibition is an important part of how I think about my work.

CD There is certainly a clear trajectory in the palm-house and Las Vegas series which were shown in your exhibition at the Kunstverein Dusseldorf (*Orange View*, 2003), but in 2004, you worked on quite a different subject matter — a series more formally structured around the female figure. I wondered how you began to approach the commissioning brief for Bristol, given that you were clearly immersed in these new ornate representations of showgirls and female figures?

SOK The first figure paintings were based on Las Vegas stage shows and Busby Berkeley movie stills. I was interested in the showgirls as ornamental compositions defining an interior space — the stage, complete with its lighting and sets. Even though colours of the showgirl paintings range from bright red and oranges to glittery silver and gold, they developed out of an interest in tropical greenhouses as interior spaces which were the source for a series of paintings with dense surfaces and hardly any illusion of space. Since the first showgirl paintings I have become interested in the relationship of figure and ground, and developed much more graphic shapes which stand in contrast to the background, emphasizing a gesture or movement or maybe the pattern of a dress. I started thinking about the project in Bristol with these concerns in mind and returned to landscape in the form of the European Garden which works with perspective and the illusion of space. By deciding to use metallic paints, the illusionary space of a view from a bridge, or a formally designed vista instantly becomes abstracted into a flat pictorial space. The mix of sliver and gold also creates a strange sense of light, the source of which is difficult to trace.

CD Watercolour on canvas is not the most conventional of media for a contemporary artist. Are there particular painters that you have looked to in the past — that influenced your decision to use watercolour from photographs?

SOK I always liked the translucency of watercolour but could never quite make it work on paper. So I decided to try it out on canvas and was instantly interested in the result. Working on canvas allows me to layer and spray the paint, wash it off and then continue with the traces left on the canvas. The paintings go though quite a long process but still retain an immaterial surface. Recently I have started to combine

Opposite
Golden Garden (Lake), 2005
Watercolour and gouache on canvas
100 x 120cm

This page
Goddess, 2004
Watercolour on canvas, 40 x 30cm
Collection
Clark/Kalmar, London

watercolour with gouache which allows me to have flat opaque areas of colour contrasting with the sprayed and dripped layers of watercolour.

CD And how did Humphry Repton's vision relate to that interest in the illusion of space within the context of Bristol?

SOK It was interesting to think about Repton's idea that nature needs artificial enhancement in order to create the perfect idyllic space. He was trying to create spaces that hide defects and omit distractions as if they existed in isolation. The red books are great documents of this with their 'before and after' collage technique. I found the inner-city gardens designed for Bristol particularly interesting, where Repton proposes to actually hide all views of surrounding buildings and city life. When I started thinking about a series of paintings for *Thinking of the Outside*, I made collages, combining different images of gardens, trying to 'improve' the original image. The collages became the starting point for the paintings which create pictorial spaces rather than relating directly to a specific place.

CD The paintings were actually completed in Istanbul. Was that a significant factor in the development of the work, with a particular end location in sight but physically far away?

SOK I started the paintings in London — the decision to use silver and gold had already been made before I went to Istanbul and I had begun to work on some of the collages. The residency in Istanbul had been planned in advance and I thought it would be good to take some work with me and continue in a new situaltion. Initially I found it very hard to work in Istanbul, I was overwhelmed by the foreigness of the city and its culture. I walked around, visited mosques, palaces and the gardens surrounding them. Once I started painting, I continued with the paintings already begun, concentrating on the idea of the formal European Garden. I only worked from source material that I had brought with me, but somehow the foreign city made an impact on the paintings. The use of gold and silver became more extreme and the introduction of ornamental elements like bridges and fences seem to relate to the city of Istanbul. Even though I continued the project I had set myself, the experience of a new place made an impact on its development.

The collages became the starting point for the paintings in the exhibition which create pictorial spaces rather than relating directly to a specific place.

CD After a long search, we found the empty Custom House building for the work. When we spoke about a potential site for the work, we discussed the importance of natural light, and a sense of space for the work. Carolyn [Black] and I looked at a range of possibilities from domestic houses to offices, even a lead shot tower. What struck us about the Custom House, was its proximity to Queen Square and its faded grandeur. Did the site for the work become an important issue for you?

SOK Once you had found the site, everything fell into place. After visiting it, I could imagine the paintings that should be shown in the space. The site and its surroundings definitely influenced the development of the paintings. So it was quite a surprise, when I arrived at Custom House with my finished golden paintings, to find that they were almost invisible against the magnolia coloured walls in the glaring sunlight. The decision to paint one wall in a muddy green-brown colour seemed quite a risk to take at the time but the result was amazing — suddenly the colours and space in the paintings became visible and the room felt like it had always looked like this.

CD Has the opportunity to show the work in a non-gallery space influenced future developments in your work or do you see that as quite a separate issue?

SOK I have just come back from the Istanbul Biennial where I exhibited ten new paintings in the setting of an empty apartment that consisted of four adjacent rooms, with changing light throughout the day and an amazing view over the Golden Horn onto Istanbul's historic city. Both in Istanbul and Bristol, I was worried that the strong identity of the space would impact too much on the paintings and in both cases I was very excited about the result. The metallic colours used in the paintings make them almost invisible, dependent on the source of light, with uncontrolled natural light they really become alive and change throughout the day and even with the weather. I also really like how the paintings work with a view. They don't compete but disappear even more, taking on an almost mysterious quality. Saying that I don't think that the site has a direct influence on the development of the work and it will be interesting to show them in a controlled gallery environment.

Golden Garden (Vista), 2005
Watercolour and gouache on canvas
100 x 80cm

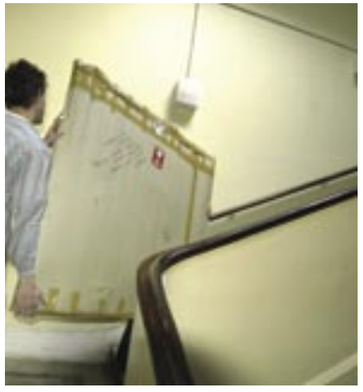
This page
Queen Square, 2005
Photo: Bristol City Council

Opposite above
Custom House, 2005

Opposite below
interior prior to installation

About the site
When Queen Square was created at the beginning of the 18th century, a new Custom House was built to oversee the collection of excise duties and other revenues from ships entering the port. The building was burnt down during riots over the Reform Bill in Queen Square in 1831 and in 1836 Sidney Smirke designed the present building on the same site. Queen Square itself has seen many changes including the construction of a dual-carriageway through the middle of the Square in 1936. In 1999 the road was removed and the 18th century layout of gravel paths restored. Queen Square is now a location for live outdoor events and film screenings.

The *Golden Garden* series was commissioned by Bristol Legible City. The artist would like to thank Daniel Buchholz and Chistopher Müller at Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne and Cornelia Grassi at greengrassi, London.



About the artist
Silke Otto-Knapp was born in in Osnabrück, in 1970 and lives and works in London. Her paintings are based on either her own photographs or images found in newspapers. Otto-Knapp's work often depicts unsettling, artificially planted "nature" such as areas of Los Angeles or Kew Gardens. Otto-Knapp uses her layers and washes to weave together different levels of image and reality. Otto-Knapp's images never function merely as representations. Instead, she plays with their capacity to confirm or destabilise our sense of place. Her imagery ranges from the lush cultivated vegetation of tropical gardens and landscaped European Gardens, to figures on the stage.

Selected recent solo exhibitions
50ft Queenie: Art Now, Tate Britain, London, 2005; *Silke Otto-Knapp*, Greengrassi, London, 2004; *25th Floor*, Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, 2003; *Orange View*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 2003; Galerie Karin Guenther, Hamburg, 2002.

Selected recent group exhibitions
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www.greengrassi.com
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João Penalva

The White Nightingale 2005
A film (duration 39' 55") screened in a specially constructed cinema in the market hall of 1-3 Exchange Avenue, St. Nicholas Markets, Bristol.

"...this is not my voice..."[1]

"All the better if I don't recognize myself. Better still if you don't recognise me either."
João Penalva[2]

"Perhaps there is none of his higher functions in which (man's) mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role…"
Walter Benjamin[3]

Denise Robinson on The White Nightingale

João Penalva sites his film *The White Nightingale* in the amplitude of the dream, yet it is prescient that he does so through an act of mimesis: by creating a scenario for the screening of the film that is a copy of a cinema auditorium. Even this is not quite what it seems for Penalva's work is well known for its feints, its slight-of-hand and its persistent contradictory dynamic. His cinema is temporarily located in the midst of a busy 15th century market in Bristol. Already 'out-of-place', it mimics all the features of a cinema with its curtained walls, cinema seating arranged with aisles on either side, the screen, the darkened space and the projected film. He has constructed other cinemas before, each time arranging the seating to mimic that of a cinema or theatre. What is it that inhabits these empty cinemas, with their ambience of absence

reproduced and given considerable significance in his publications? Here is a truly evocative ambivalence towards the ambit of the history of cinema, theatre and the museum; one given some added significance through Penalva's history as a dancer.

There are sequences in Dziga Vertov's film *Man With a Movie Camera* that turn on what Penalva opens out here. In Vertov it is the paradox of a camera filming a cinema that waits for the darkness that would complete it. The film cuts from an illuminated cinema space to the screen empty of images, to an empty auditorium, to the long drape of the curtains, and then to the entrance of its audience: not the lost ideal that nostalgia embodies but the cinema itself as a transitional place. Guliana Bruno describes cinema as a 'mnemonic palimpsest... before motion pictures memory was understood spatially'.[4] *The White Nightingale* cannot help but be engaged with mnemonic traces, yet this doesn't settle it, as it's also deeply immersed in its mimetic capacity.

In the original 19th century story of *The Nightingale*, the Emperor suffers, close to death, as a consequence of his substituting the transcendent healing powers of the 'real' nightingale's song for its mechanical copy.[5] Penalva's *The White Nightingale* has possibly nothing to do directly with this story — and I have just found myself in one of the many traps that lay in wait in his work. Guy Brett has also found that, "A person can, like me, experience this narrative as so peculiarly bewitching that he or she can't put so much as a toe into it without being pulled right in, or a person could be completely indifferent to it or…"[6]

Nevertheless… the film 'opens' as the screen fills with a dark surface of moving water on the threshold of visibility, intermittently fading to a deeper black, with a soundtrack that appears to scour the surface of sound and image. Its acoustic effects, derived from a microphone being moved under the surface of the water creates a sound that is reprised throughout the film. Ineluctably strange, the sequence that follows is that of a close-up of a woman's arm wrapped across her body, and thick with age and immersed in an ink-like darkness. Her long fingernails and a glistening bracelet become the sources of light in the image, fetishised, because they are isolated fragments charged by our speculative gaze and relying upon the complicity between the work and the viewer. Penalva's work circulates around a series of ruses. Ruses that amongst other things recognise our formation by and through our encounter with language — including the infinity of the distinctions to be had between voice, writing, and sound that turns on the effects of mimicry. In the opening sequence the subtitled voice of a woman speaks in Italian and addresses an unknown subject:

"Why did you ring my bell?"
"So why won't you answer?"
"Ah! You cut your finger!"
"Why do you want to die?"

These are simultaneous fragments and self contained utterances. Often repeated, they are additive, not linear, just as are the utterances of the voice rumbling beneath hers: a voice, subterranean in the sense that it is less audible and not understandable, perhaps a dream language — one that's formed from two languages. It speaks as if in response, yet with no desire to be heard, evocative of a thwarted attempt at mimicry. Yet Penalva 'translates' the untranslatable — what cannot be understood: nonsense overlaid with readability. He subtitles this voice in English, disturbing any narrative logic, as it is the translator who now appears and speaks:

"But you are falling…"
"Don't hold my hand!"
"Don't touch my finger!"
"It's contagious!"

The Italian woman's speech is translated to the dream language, the dream language translated to subtitles and the translator — that voice often denied in a text, yet ever present in Penalva's work — here has a say.

Elsewhere Penalva has used handwriting — that most permeable form of a text, that is inevitably a trace to and of the unconscious.

The White Nightingale is Penalva's speaking against his 'self'. It is possible that it is through this he attributes significance to the site of Bristol's Clifton Suspension Bridge and the River Avon. Like a divining rod he attempts to record what ultimately cannot be found in these sites, presenting them instead as a disturbance in the context of the stability of the city as a memory theatre — for memory theatres are what all cities inevitably become. He wrests the work away from the narratives, and the representations that surround the bridge, the gorge and the river: its iconicity, its tourist potential, its 'feat of engineering', the local folklore and the emblematic part this site plays in

Pages 104–105, 109 and 111
The White Nightingale, 2005 (video stills)

this city's modernity: that fantasised break with the past. Through the most intangible means, Penalva retrieves something of the repressed in its inventions. This work's relation to the city is associated more with what is left when the affects of change outstrip and outmaneuvre our being — as it was for Baudelaire, "The form of the city, alas, changes more quickly than a mortal's heart".[7]

A transitional shot in the film is the fall from the bridge; it is swift and soon brings all from the above to the below; a move achieved through one of the early tropes of cinema often used to shift the beholder between states of consciousness, for the image of the river below spins like the storm that brought Dorothy into her journey in *The Wizard of Oz*. After all, Penalva's film never really settles on whether we are in the ambit of absurdity or grace.

The 'fall' can be traced through many of Penalva's works, such as *The Great Wallenda* (1997-1998), a large projected image of found footage from television of a tightrope walker filmed falling. Using another trope of early cinema, Penalva uses 'the wipe' to cut the shot before he falls and then loops it to ensure infinite repetition. Is this the artist reminding us of the moment when one is just falling asleep, when our dream is one of falling, so violently we awake, terrified — the intangible fullness of the threshold of consciousness?

The White Nightingale title appears one third of the way into the film, after the 'fall'. It is another aporia, casting doubt as to the parameters of the film. Silent cinema is invoked again, as the story is told through inter-titles along with a ghostly synchronisation of image via the return of the

underwater sound. Sound and story are sutured together and irreparable. Slavoj Žižek speaks of the trauma when the voice and synchronised sound were introduced into silent cinema, specifically for the form of the burlesque, corrupting the ”innocence of the silent burlesque... voice smears the innocent surface of the picture, a ghost-like apparition which can never be pinned to a definitive object, giving us double sense, hidden meaning, repressed desire... a lure”.[8]

This story told through inter-titles is in a form I cannot adequately describe: perhaps a pseudo archaic tone, certainly a distorted mimicry of the fairy tale, more likely the veiled meaning that constitutes the dream. It is elaborate, and strange, imagistic, yet also a classic journey that begins — here in the midst of Penalva's film:

> “The dress the Princess wore was made by the birds. The whitethroats did the ruffle around her neck, the red shanks the ruffle on one sleeve, the greenshanks…”

> “And so the Princess was dressed and ready to set on her journey. ”

The point is, however, that her journey is not what it seems:

> “Through her lips, slightly open, passed no air. And her eyelids, so suddenly heavy, briefly closed and she dreamt.”

> “She said she was going to the cave where the white nightingale dwells.”

Penalva sets up our impossible point of view, for it is and is not her death she journeys through: this is of course the gift of the dream, for “no-one is ever sovereign who does not lose (him)self”.[9]

The texts which tell of the journey of the princess occur in three places: between the first departure to find the white nightingale, followed by the long subterranean tracking shot, then again between her realization that she will never hear the nightingale:

> “For it is so pure and beautiful a trill that were it to linger in the ears it would shatter them.”

> “The memory of the white nightingale can only be the memory of its memory but not the memory of its sound...”

What follows, contradicts: “For those who hear it will live in blissful happiness”, all of which doesn't matter because Penalva's is a mimicry of a style, so quotidian that we all are easily deceived. The subterranean tracking shot is also not what it appears. It appears to give the beholder a point of view submerged, but Penalva does this extraordinary thing — this tracking shot 'below' is actually filmed on the surface of the water, it is the image itself that is inverted, confounding the threshold of above and below. The accumulation of the infinite play of materials against meaning both constitutes us as subjects and dissolves us — we are invited to 'be', somewhere else.

The tracking shot that moves across the silted surfaces under water in the River Avon is an image of settled silt formed in patterns — the colour of dust. The slightest current or shift in orientation and all would alter, and this matters because these surfaces, our point of view, reflect a Rorschach-like pattern, with its inbuilt capacity to elicit the projections of the beholder. Produced by the meeting of the water's surface and the riverbank, it reflects that which is just above ground. It is a threshold and always accompanied by the underwater acoustics. At the point of the return — both the Princess's and our journey — the movement appears to track back on itself and another layer of sound is added, an attenuated continuous musical pitch. I don't know, however, whether we are traveling back or whether the film is reversing, leaving us with a remainder — this 'left over', that exceeds comprehension and will have its own place in the veiling that constitutes our sub-conscious.

It has been said that the temporality of cinema could only have emerged from our capacity to dream. Early movie houses were after all 'dream palaces', as well as being considered a crude technology to be discarded as trivial entertainment for the 'underclass'. Its hijacking by the economy of high capitalism hasn't prevented a two-way leak in relation to this past, one so beautifully exploited in the ellipsis and misdirections of Penalva's dream-film — along with the fabricated sensorium that contains it.

References

[1] *João Penalva, on the other hand, this is not my voice*, Francis McKee-João Penalva, Glasgow: Tramway, 2000.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Walter Benjamin, *On the Mimetic Faculty, One Way Street*, trans. E. Jephcott, K. Shorter, New York: Verso, 1992, p. 162.

[4] Guliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*, New York; Verso, 2002.

[5] Hans Christian Anderson, *The Nightingale* mid-nineteenth century fairy tale.

[6] Guy Brett, *Carnival of Perception, Selected Writings on Art*, London; InIVA, 2004, p. 128.

[7] Charles Baudelaire quoted in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in The Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, New York; Verso, 1989, p.82. Benjamin goes on to say of Baudelaire's poem Le Cygne, “...the city which is in constant flux grows rigid. It becomes as brittle and as transparent as glass — that is, as far as its meaning is concerned”.

[8] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!, Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, NY & London; Routledge, 2001, p. 1.

[9] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley, Vol. 1 & 11, New York; Zone Books, 1993, p. 379.

João Penalva in conversation

Filming for *The White Nightingale* in progress, April 2005

Josephine Lanyon Did any of the ideas behind *The White Nightingale* exist before the invitation to produce a new work in Bristol?

João Penalva None, and this is true even if some of the film material precedes the project. It was 'found' footage from my archive, something I had filmed by accident while recording sound with my camera.

JL I like the idea of the fortuitous accident but I suppose I was really wondering whether you had thought about ideas of journeys and fairy tales before and how the work related to previous projects.

JP Yes, I did think about folk tales at the time when I was starting this project and that I had used them twice in video works — in *336 PEK (336 Rivers)*, in 1998, and in *Kitsune (The Fox Spirit)*, in 2001. And, even before I had any idea of what I might do, the one thing that I was determined not to do in this project was to use them again. It wasn't until very late in the project that I was told by the image that the language of the fairy tale was the only language I could use.

JL I thought the project fitted really well with both the project brief and your artistic practice. How did your position as 'an outsider' or 'stranger' to Bristol, help or hinder your ability to draw on the city as a research base?

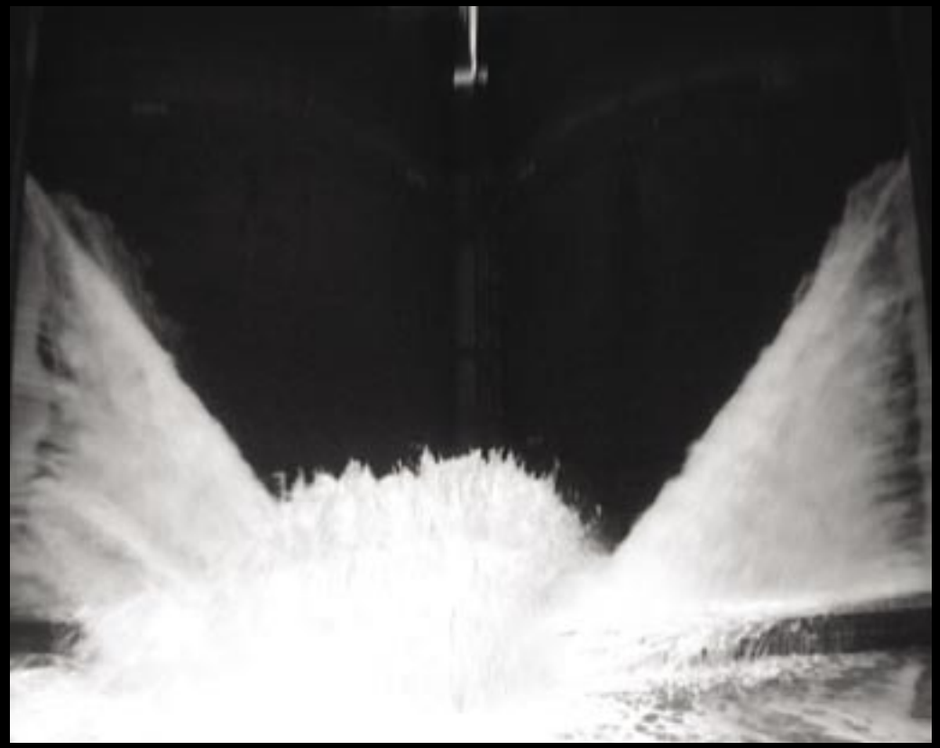
JP For most of my life I have been a stranger, an outsider, and as an artist I consider this is a very good position to be in. One looks at everything with immense curiosity. Nevertheless, this curiosity needs its freedom to roam and find what, as an artist, one may identify as a possible source of material that may generate a work. This proposal to produce a work specific to Bristol was not easy for me, though. It was not so much this specificity that I found difficult to deal with but the fact that the 'brief' itself presented a metaphor — the city gate. The metaphor is not my favourite rhetorical figure. I had to find and develop ways to discard the suggestion that the language I was to use in an unspecified work had already been pre-decided at source. So, I would say that I was hindered by a question of phrasing, and though it was interesting to try and resolve it, it was a problem.

JL We also had to overcome some practical problems — the height of the Suspension Bridge and the large rises and falls of tide in the Avon combined with the volume of muddy deposits in the water rendered the production process highly risky and according to some potentially futile. Do such challenges fuel your work?

JP No, and it didn't occur to me that there would be a risk in what I wanted to do. I started by wanting to film only the water directly underneath the bridge and its muddy bed and was strongly discouraged by our underwater cameraman. He kept saying that there was nothing there. But to me, whatever we would find there would be the image of the water under the bridge. It could have become problematic to me if it were so dark as to be indistinguishable from a black piece of film, but even then I would not say that there was nothing there, only that it was difficult to see. So, when some people said that this was 'potentially futile' they were missing the point that I am making now and was making then. I had no image in my mind that I wanted to get. I wanted 'the' image of this underwater place, under this bridge. The boat trip to reach the bridge then became something worth documenting and, again, something that could bring potentially interesting material. It turned out that I was right about both and that the film was composed out of material gathered during these two day-trips on the river.

JL We had a lot of discussions about authenticity, is the process of 'forensic investigation' important to you?

JP I would say that it is rather a question of work ethics. Here it required a sort of 'forensic investigation', in another project it may be some other form of authenticity. But whatever it is, no matter



The White Nightingale, 2005 (production still)

how difficult it is, there is in my mind the absolute certainty that there is no alternative to working methods governed by ethics.

JL I think it is interesting that you work carefully (but not conventionally) with each constituent part of a moving image production — script, cinematography, music, editing and draw on a team of specialists. Do you see your role as akin to a film or theatre director?

JP Once I have talked to my team about what I am interested in, I actually direct very little, preferring to leave my team to do what they feel they do best, talk to each other and develop their own interest in the piece as a team. Inevitably, I end up with a lot of material that I cannot use, but this freedom allows my camera and sound crew to bring back the truly unexpected. With this material in hand I feel closer to a composer.

JL It was a really interesting process persuading people to let us carry out the production because of all the obstacles. Do you think the fact that the project was artistic made the Bristol Port Company more suspicious or more sympathetic in assisting with research and permissions?

JP In my experience, the 'artistic' is often a passport to areas that would otherwise be off limits. People usually enjoy participating in something that — even if they don't understand it fully — they feel proud to make possible, and the Bristol Port Company was no exception. Having said that, I try to keep as quiet as possible at initial meetings, leaving it all to those more able to judge natural apprehensions…

JL The journey was remarkable and the shoot incorporated three conventional cameras, one underwater camera and boat trips that lasted nearly two days. Can you explain the role that intuition and experimentation has for you on such a logistically heavy shoot?

JP I would say that intuition is my guide at all times and that includes the conceptual parameters of the work. So, intuitively I knew that I needed to do these shots, improvising through the shooting, deciding what could turn out to be useable. I think it is worth mentioning here that my attempt at influencing the shooting towards a narrative that anticipated the filmed material proved completely fruitless. The work started to take shape as a film only when after the two days on the river we came back to the office and I saw the material I had to work with... The journey turned out to be the treasure trove.

JL We didn't talk much about the ideas for the final form of the work whilst we were so active in the production. I usually really enjoy this exchange. Did your decision not to show rough cuts of the work, alleviate or increase the classic artist's 'fear of failure' during the commissioning process?

JP I hope that I do not sound arrogant if I say that my 'fear of failure' does not involve anyone else's criticism but my own. This is not the reason why I never show work in progress to curators or commissioners, though. It is, rather, that I much prefer to talk about the work in a dialogue that does not share the language of the work itself. The work's voice is still trying to find its own language and while its mumblings are intelligible to me I don't believe that they are intelligible to anyone else. I understand that this is particularly frustrating to those who should be most interested, curious and anxious about a new work being made, as it would not have been made without their invitation.

JL At what points in the commissioning process did you reach an epiphany or get lost?

JP I would say that I was lost until I realized that there was so little contrast between the muddy river banks and the muddy river water that if I were to flip the image — turning its base into its top — a completely new perspective would be created. Even the direction of its travelling movement became confused. It was only the switch of a very simple technical tool, but it suddenly transformed strictly documentary footage into something from the realm of the magic, the dream, the unknown, and it led me straight to the piece as a whole.

JL It seems apt that the mud footage plays such a large part in the look, feel, duration and structure of the film. Could you explain how the idea to transform treacherous river banks into an underground quest came about?

JP As I said, the flipping of the image changed it so radically that it made me look at it anew and this encouraged me to make further changes. I slowed it down to the point where even I forgot that it was the same footage I had filmed with a crew on the Avon. This journey, that now bore no relation to reality, did look tenebrous and very dangerous. It was the phantasmagoric in those images that made me question who would go down there, and the answer was that neither the traveller nor the journey would be of this world.

JL The Avon Gorge supports species of rare birds and the Suspension Bridge is a notorious spot for suicide attempts. Are these the kinds of site-specific facts that influenced the fiction?

JP Yes. The enormous amount of research material that both Picture This and the Situations Office provided me with was very helpful, even if so very little of it ended up directly in the piece. Indirectly, it was invaluable to its definition, though. It was very important to me to know the names of those birds and the one bird that does not fly the gorge — the white nightingale — would not have come to me were I not traveling around on the London Underground and on planes and trains abroad with

this list in my pocket that I would take out and read. The research on suicides from the bridge changed, for instance, my idea that August is a quiet month of good weather and leisure, with little anxiety attached to it. In fact, August is the month when more people decide to jump to their death from the bridge.

JL How about the tradition of fairy tales and *The Nightingale* (1844) by Hans Christian Andersen in particular — did this influence your approach to the narrative text?

JP I did not know of Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale whilst I was producing the work. I knew only Stravinsky's libretto for his *The Nightingale* but did not realize it was the same tale and did not think of it while writing the text. I drew on the tradition of the fairy tale being something 'of old', but riddled mine with inconsistencies designed to make you wonder. As if the tale were being told within a dream.

JL Could you also tell me about the dream-like relationships you set up between sound, image and text in the prelude section with the use of a two-language dialogue, English sub-titles and the elderly woman's arms?

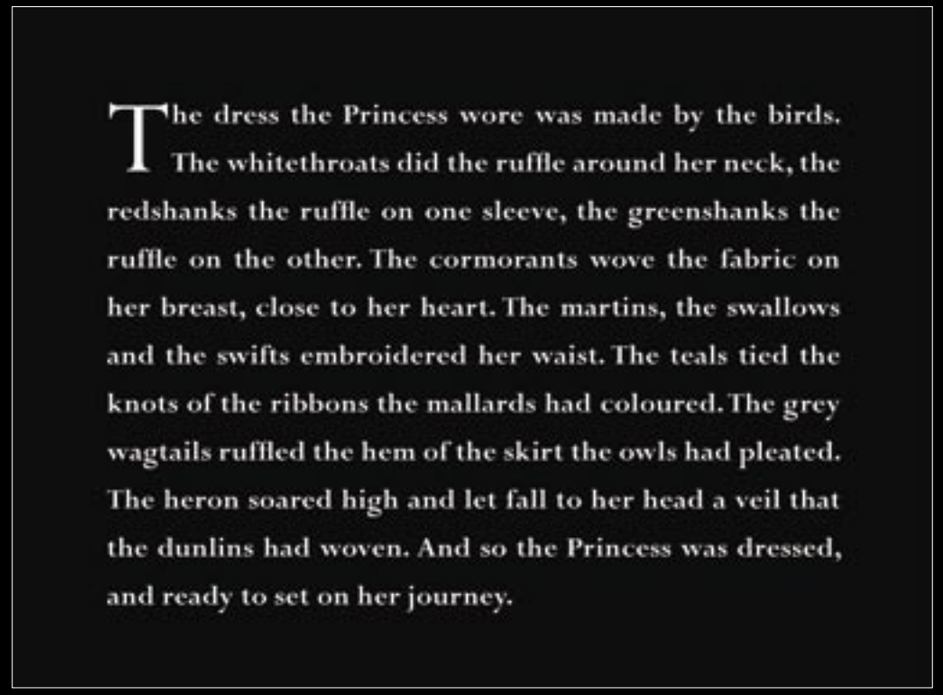
JP It is interesting to me to hear you describe the beginning of the film as 'the prelude', and I can only suppose that you do so because the part of the film you are referring to precedes the title *The White Nightingale*. In fact, I did not structure the film to have a prelude at all. I simply moved the title to a point where it was no longer expected. When it does appear, it is as part of a new format within the film — the 'inter-titles'. We are talking about the codes that come with the cinematic experience and the expectations that define them as a language. I wanted to speak the language of dreams. This dialogue in two languages subtitled into a third language is confusing in terms of its subject, timing and image. The image is the one I mentioned when you asked me whether any ideas preceded the project, and something that I shot by accident. I wanted to create an uncomfortable feeling of misunderstanding and disorientation. I also wanted that from this dialogue one would retain a memory of something about childhood, old age, disease and death. Beneath these voices is the sound that runs continuously throughout the film — the much altered sounds recorded with a hydro microphone on the Avon and that one could hardly say are descriptive of any place at all.

If I were to flip the image... it suddenly transformed strictly documentary footage into something from the realm of the magic, the dream and the unknown...

JL The work does challenge audiences because of its duration and also because visitors (used to the orthodoxy of a gallery visit where they are free to move through a space at their own pace) are required to enter at timed intervals. Did you feel that the work particularly needed the cinema environment in order for fiction to take control of reality?

JP Yes. The piece is almost forty minutes long and where else but in a cinema can one keep an audience for forty minutes, comfortably seated, to watch a film? This is only the practical aspect, but there is also the fact that the cinema is still the place where, once one is sitting down, one enters a world of images, words and sounds that takes us very far away from that cinema seat that one rarely leaves before the end. If this cinema is perceived as a 'fake' cinema, made up for the occasion, all the better. Then, as an audience, one is pretending one is at the cinema, and that complicity is a sharing in the make-belief.

JL I felt that the cinema context was particularly necessary to suspend



The White Nightingale, 2005 (video still)

disbelief in Bristol because of the appearance of the Suspension Bridge which is such a strong icon in the city. The work is not specific to the market but can you tell me more about your decision to place the project there?

JP I think that it is interesting here to go back to our first meetings. At first we were looking at different sites where I could develop a site-specific, video-based project, and we visited many different kinds of spaces. The market was one of them and I originally dismissed it as having nothing distinctive that could trigger ideas. Eventually, when all the other places, potentially more interesting weren't that interesting after all, and those that might have been were no longer available, the market space was just what it was; a space longer than it is wide, with a good height, and a slope. It looked very much like a cinema space and it was very clear that were it to be dressed up it would be the right shape, the right height and the right inclination to be a cinema. So, we could say that we looked into my own history of made-up cinemas and found the perfect space for one. And even if *The White Nightingale* may be shown in many other cinemas, it was the knowledge that I had a cinema that guided me to do a forty minute-long film to be viewed at the cinema. So, my work is site-specific after all.

About the site
St. Nicholas Markets was built in the early 1740s as part of a major project that re-organised the commercial heart of Bristol. The Exchange was opened in 1743. The site, Market Chambers, was built on the site of the Somersetshire market at the end of the 1840s inside the earliest of Bristol's town walls. Today the three parts of the market — Exchange Hall, Glass Arcade and Covered Market — each have a slightly different focus selling clothing, second-hand books, housing cafes and food stalls, the Farmers' Market, and resident psychic.

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This page
Entrance to 1-3 Exchange Avenue, St. Nicholas Markets, Bristol, May 2005

Opposite
Filming for *The White Nightingale* in progress, April 2005

About the artist
João Penalva was born in Lisbon in 1949 and has lived in London from 1976. Initially working as a painter, Penalva has, since the 1990s, incorporated numerous other art forms and media into his diverse practice. Penalva's work often explores ideas of translation — and perhaps more aptly — mistranslation. Drawing on aspects of documentary and memory, the line between fact and fiction is often blurred, particularly in his films.

Selected recent solo exhibitions
Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Oporto; Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary (2005); The Power Plant, Toronto (2003); Rooseum Centre for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden (2002); Portuguese Pavilion, XLIX Biennale di Venezia (2001); Camden Arts Centre, London; Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius; Tramway, Glasgow; fig-1, London (2000).

Selected recent group exhibitions
The Gesture: A Visual Library in Progress, Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki; Quarter, Centro Produzione Arte, Florence (2005); *Under Ground*, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden; *The Labyrinthine Effect*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; *Prophetic Corners*, The 6th Peripheric Biennial, Iasi; *Process — Landscape*, KIASMA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2003); Biennale of Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; *Body Power/Power Play*, Württenbergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; *Tech/No/Zone*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (2002); *Berlin Biennale 2*, Berlin; *This side and beyond the dream*, Sigmund Freud-Museum, Vienna (2001); *Art & Industry Biennial*, Christchurch (2000).

Selected reference material
João Penalva, Milan: Electra, 2001

Opposite
Installation in progress at St. Nicholas Markets

Responses

A consideration of the exhibition *Thinking of the Outside*, a series of responses to the city of Bristol, seems incomplete without a record of the responses to the exhibition itself. Amongst the 5500 visitors were the participants of a project conceived by the artist Frances Bossom entitled *Bumping the Bounds* which would eventually bring those participants back to Arnolfini. *Bumping the Bounds* was an audience development project designed to attract and support new audiences to contemporary art inside and outside the gallery. It was just one strand of an information programme to support responses to the work, which also included a guide for young people and talks by a range of non-art specialists such as an asylum-seeker support officer and lay chaplain to seafarers.

The origin of *Bumping the Bounds* is a historic ceremony which can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Once a year, residents walk around the boundaries of the city, reinforcing the status of the communities living inside as Bristolians. This project offered the opportunity for a variety of community groups from Bristol to explore the city's boundaries as an integral part of their visit to the exhibition, alongside artists Frances Bossom and Joff Winterhart.

Whilst experiencing the works, participants were encouraged to reflect on what it means to belong or to be excluded and to question what a city can be. Recording the responses, experiences and incidents during these visits, Joff Winterhart produced a series of drawings, which remain as a record of the discussions which were inspired by the sites and artworks in this exhibition.

Now the artworks have been removed or dismantled and the sites have returned to their non-art status, the drawings reproduced here are a lasting reminder of the encounters in *Thinking of the Outside*: an aspect of such projects that is rarely recorded.

Bumping the Bounds was conceived as part of Arnolfini's audience development programme, which seeks to engage people in contemporary art projects often through initial encounters outside our building. *Thinking of the Outside* presented us with an ideal opportunity, during our period of closure for refurbishment, to introduce contemporary art to a range of new groups of people and crucially, to offer the project the opportunity to maintain relationships with those individuals through Arnolfini.

Visiting Arnolfini a few months later, the participants in the project were offered another chance to discuss contemporary art and its context (at the exhibition *This storm is what we call progress* in the purpose-designed spaces of the newly reopened building). Involving Frances and Joff once again, these encounters were also recorded as another set of drawings for future publication. The participants in the project included individuals from art + power, a group of disabled artists working together for change; City of Bristol College, Hartcliffe Centre; a young mother's group from the YWCA; Refugee Action; The Royal National Institute for the Deaf; CLASS, a continuing learning group and the Barton Hill Writers Group.

Michael Prior
Access and Education Programmer, Arnolfini


WAS IT A CARPARK ?
I THINK IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
GOOD PIECE, yeah... ...ROCKIN THE BOAT!
ha ha ha ha ha ha!
it's almost like a ghost ship...
I FIND THIS ONE SCREEN MORE INTERESTING BECAUSE THERE'S ACTUALLY A PERSON IN IT FOR ONCE
IT'S STERILE, IT'S BLEAK, LONELY, A BIT SAD...
ANOTHER BORING DAY ON A BORING SHIP... IN A BORING JOB
the obsolescence of humanity, isn't it?
Where are the crew?
...it made me happy, cos i had been there before...
IT DOESN'T MAKE ME FEEL RELAXED IN ANY WAY...
when you're risking your life on the ocean, you do get a little more religious or what have you...
THEY KNOW IT'S THERE, KEEPS THEM SAFE
MADE ME FEEL A BIT... WATCHED. INTERROG--ATED OR SOME-THING ...WEIRD
i bet hes got cold fingers !


i think all graffiti is a form of sacrilege
IT'S HERE NOW, IT MUST BELONG HERE...
WHY PUT IT IN HERE?
I USED TO COME DOWN HERE FOR A HAIRDO
IS IT SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT LIVING WITH THE DEAD?
it's a bit like Hartcliffe...
whats inside it?
...anything could be in there...
rat's nest?
SPACE?
HOMELESS PERSON?
PIE?
i'd turn it into a shed. make it functional...

we had a Jewish maths teacher at school, we all went to her wedding... it was like this...

...a bit

it dosen't tell you what it's about...

YEAH, QUITE POWERFUL THAT...

poignant

I THINK IT WORKS FOR PEOPLE WITH SOME HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE.

IT'S HERE TO SHOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE IN THE OLDEN DAYS, 'ROUND HERE...

thought-provoking

COULDN'T FIND THE STORY!

they all have a common theme of segregation...

ISOLATION?

IVE SEEN THAT PLACE IN BRISTOL SOMEWHERE, I'M SURE OF IT...

brings back the memories

I THINK THOSE ARE RAILINGS FROM A HOUSE WHERE GHOSTLY PEOPLE LIVE

the light changes the pictures...

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE THOSE PALM TREES AND THOSE GRASSES TOGETHER...

I think it's just something she made up

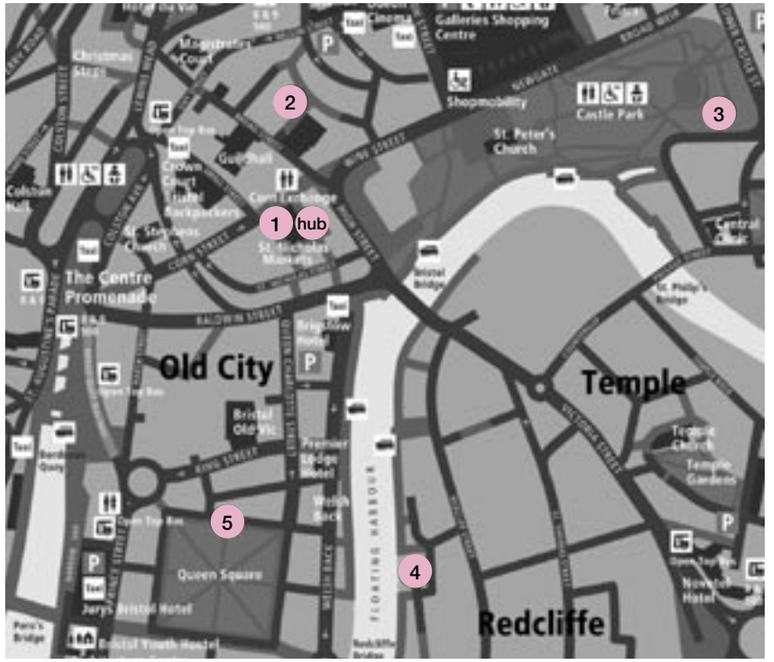
the dragonflies 'round here were two foot long...

MAKES ME THINK, A COLD WINTERS NIGHT, WHEN MY DAD WAS ALIVE, WE'D WALK TO SCHOOL THROUGH PRIVATE LAND... THE FENCE KEEPS YOU OUT...


IT MOVES ALONG
AND SADLY
SLOWLY
IVE GOT TO ADMIT...
ITS MAKING ME FEEL LOW
ALL THESE REFERENCES TO DEATH.
ITS A BIT LIKE A BAUHAUS VIDEO FROM 1981...
It LOOKED LIKE SNOW,
SEE THE PATTERNS IN IT...
the mud moves like elastic stretching on the beach
some of the concepts.
some of the imagery.
i did like...
i got so relaxed in the end i could
have dropped off..


I DON'T SEE VIDEOS AS
AS ART...IT'S A THOUGHT
PROCESS RATHER
THAN AN ARTISTIC
PROCESS.
i mean children can take photographs and videos and do it quite well, but i don't know if it's art
YOU GO ROUND IT AND FIND ALL THESE AMAZING PLACES...
I CAN LOOK AT SOME ART AND NOT LIKE THE SUBJECT MATTER
Sometimes quiet places like this in the middle of a town can mean an awful lot
that's really weird in there,
i never knew that was in there...
i come up here to sunbathe
I FEEL GUILTY 'COS I'M FINDING THE SPACES FAR MORE INTERESTING THAN THE ACTUAL ART...
the environment is just as important as the pictures...

Information



Thinking of the Outside
21 May – 3 July 2005

1 João Penalva

2 Nathan Coley

3 Susan Hiller

4 Kathleen Herbert

5 Silke Otto-Knapp

hub exhibition information hub

The open call for unsigned music acts by Phil Collins was distributed throughout the city on bus stops, local radio and at live events.

Saturday Talks
Starting at the Exhibition Hub, each talk involved a visit to several of the works in the exhibition. These informal talks, lasting about 90 minutes focused on works that related to the speaker's own area of interest, allowing time for visitors to view the works, discuss ideas and ask questions.

Speakers included:
Peter Wilkinson Parks Service Manager
Rev. John Herbert Lay Chaplin to the Seafarers' Mission
Veronica Smith writer
Jonathan Mosley architect
Lorraine Ayensu Asylum Support and Refugee Integration Team, Bristol City Council
David Thorp curator

About the contributors

Jon Brett
Jon Brett is Archaeological Officer with Bristol City Council. He has held that post since 1998 and before that worked as an archaeological contractor in the Bristol area and elsewhere. Originally trained as a historian, his main interest is in the archaeology of the more recent past. He is currently completing the first detailed review of Bristol's archaeology since the 19th century and is also working on a project investigating the colonial landscape of St. Christopher in the Leeward Islands in partnership with National Museums Liverpool and the University of Southampton.
www.bristol-city.gov.uk/archaeology

Claire Doherty
As Senior Research Fellow in Fine Art at Bristol School of Art, Media and Design, Claire Doherty leads the Situations programme. From 1995-2000, she was Curator at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham and has recently held positions as Associate Curator at FACT in Liverpool and Spike Island, Bristol. She lectures widely on curatorial issues pertaining to place, location art and context and has published in a diverse range of art magazines and exhibition catalogues. Most recently, she edited a major volume of critical essays, interviews and case studies *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation*, published by Black Dog.

Morgan Falconer is a journalist and critic. He spent many years as a graduate student researching art and life in New York in the 1920s; the result now props up his computer. He writes on art for *The Times*, *Art Review* and *Modern Painters* among others.

Alex Farquharson is a curator and writer living in London. He is co-curator of *British Art Show 6* (Gateshead, Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol, 2005-6) and of *Le Voyage Interieur, London-Paris* at Espace Electra, Paris (2005-06).

Jörg Heiser is co-editor of *frieze* magazine, London, and writes for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Most recently he curated the exhibition *Funky Lessons* (Büro Friedrich, Berlin, and BAWAG Foundation, Vienna, 2004/2005) and edited the accompanying catalogue (Revolver Verlag 2005). He has also written a piece on Susan Hiller's *The J.Street Project* for an eponymous artist's book to be released in conjunction with her exhibition at Compton Verney. Other recent catalogue and book contributions include essays on Gerwald Rockenschaub (Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna 2004), Chris Cunningham (kestnergesellschaft, Hanover 2004), Thomas Scheibitz (Venice Biennale 2005), Tal R (CFA, 2005) and Marina Abramovic/Janine Antoni/Monica Bonvicini (De Appel, Amsterdam, 2005).

Josephine Lanyon is Director of Picture This, a moving image projects agency based in Bristol. She has worked extensively on commissioning and presenting film and video works with artists such as John Wood & Paul Harrison, Lucy Gunning, Mariele Neudecker, Tim Macmillan, Erika Tan and John Smith. She has also curated exhibitions and produced publications and touring initiatives and held the posts of Exhibitions Officer at Arnolfini and Assistant Curator at Norwich Gallery.

Francis McKee is a writer and curator based in Glasgow. Currently a Research Fellow at Glasgow School of Art, he is working on the cultural history of open source and free software movements. Since 2005 he has also been curator of Glasgow International, a festival of contemporary visual art.

Emily Pethick is director of Casco, Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht. She is also currently curating a programme for Sala Montcada, Barcelona for 2006 (with Peio Aguirre), and co-organiser of *Publish and be Damned*, a touring archive of self-published publications and annual self-publishing fair (with Kit Hammonds and Sarah McCrory). From 2003-2004 she was Curator at Cubitt, London. She has contributed to numerous publications and magazines including *Frieze*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Untitled* and *Artforum.com*. She is based in Amsterdam and London.

Denise Robinson is an independent curator and writer based in London. Previously the director of a number of contemporary art galleries in Australia and a film festival in England, from 1997-1998 she was Head of Artistic Programme for Arnolfini Bristol. She has curated international exhibitions, organised conferences and published widely in international contemporary art magazines including *Camera Austria, Flash Art, Framework Finnish Art Review, Artpress*, and contributed essays for international exhibition catalogues, and independent publications including, Gillian Wearing, Tracey Moffat, Peter Doig, Lucy Gunning, Susan Hiller, Pasolini and a chapter for a forthcoming book on art and anthropology.

About the team

Thinking of the Outside was produced by the following individuals:

Bristol City Council
Jonathan Banks
Jon Brett

Project Curator
Claire Doherty
Projects Assistant
Carolyn Black

Picture This
Josephine Lanyon, Andy Moss, Anja Musiat, Afshan Javed, Jane Connarty

Installation Co-ordinator Scott Martin
Installation crew Rob Anderson, Christopher Barr, Roy Black, Colin Brown, Kieran Brown, Charles Farina, Alex LeFeuvre, Jerry Ortmans, Seamus Staunton

Invigilation Co-ordinator
Lucy Badrocke
Invigilation Team Barbara Ash, Christopher Barr, Vera Boele-Keimer, Jess Brand, Chloe Brooks, Susanna Claiden, Ashley Dando, Amy Feneck, Karen Di Franco, Hannah Godfrey, Gemma Haynes, Gillian Hemmings, Toby Huddlestone, Tom Johnson, Alex Le Feuvre, Donna Lobb, Lady Lucy, Winnie Love, Kerry Mead, Emma Myers, Lizi Sanchez, Karen Stevens, Rosanna Traina.

Student Placements Harriet Godwin (University of Bristol), Katherine Daley-Yates, Mark Coleman, Karen Stevens, Donna Lobb, Gemma Haynes, Gillian Hemmings (University of the West of England).

Education programme co-ordinated by Michael Prior, Arnolfini
Lead artist Frances Bossom
Artist Joff Winterhart

Talks Co-ordinator Beth Alden

PR Campaign Fripp PR

Credits

We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their commitment to and sustained enthusiasm for this project:

The artists; Arnolfini; Jason Bailey; Paul Manton, Joanna Mellors, Bristol City Council; Steve Morris, St. Nicholas Markets Manager, Bristol City Council; Prof. Paul Gough, Mark Dunhill, Wayne Lloyd, Susan Matheron and Anne Conoley at Bristol School of Art, Media and Design, University of the West of England, Bristol; Claire Teasdale, Creative Bristol, Bristol City Council; Mariam Sharp, Arts Council England South West; David Richmond, art + power; Brian Cleary, Stage Electrics; John and Orna Designs.

Bristol Legible City is a programme of identity, transportation, information and public art projects that seeks to improve people's understanding, experience and access to all parts of Bristol. Bristol Legible City is led by Bristol City Council in association with other partners.
www.bristollegiblecity.info

Picture This
Picture This is a moving image projects agency that commissions contemporary visual arts works and produces exhibitions, publications and touring initiatives. The agency provides creative technology services and organises residencies, research and presentation opportunities.
www.picture-this.org.uk

Situations is a research and commissioning programme led by the University of the West of England, Bristol. It investigates the significance of place and context in contemporary art by commissioning new work for Bristol within a dynamic context of lectures, conferences and publishing.
www.situations.org.uk

Funders

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Arnolfini; Arts Council of England; Bristol Legible City; Bristol City Council (as part of Creative Bristol: an initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West); Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Henry Moore Foundation; Rokeagle; South West Screen; University of the West of England, Bristol.

supported by
Bristol Legible City

Phil Collins
the louder you scream, the faster we go (audio selection)

Scouring the local music scene and sending out an open call for unsigned music acts, Shady Lane Promotions selected three acts — I Know I Have No Collar, Forest Giants and Frànçois — from the city-wide campaign and created pop promo videos for them. This selection of 10 audio tracks was made from over 30 submissions by Phil Collins.

I Know I Have No Collar	Sleeptalking
First Degree Burns	Rootin' and Lootin'
Bucky	I am dark
Figment	The Chase
Forest Giants	Beards
Fortune Drive	Start to Finish
Betamaxx	I think yr really
Frànçois	Il Stragniero
Morning Star	Sunbeam
Cogs	Hairstyle