

Open School East

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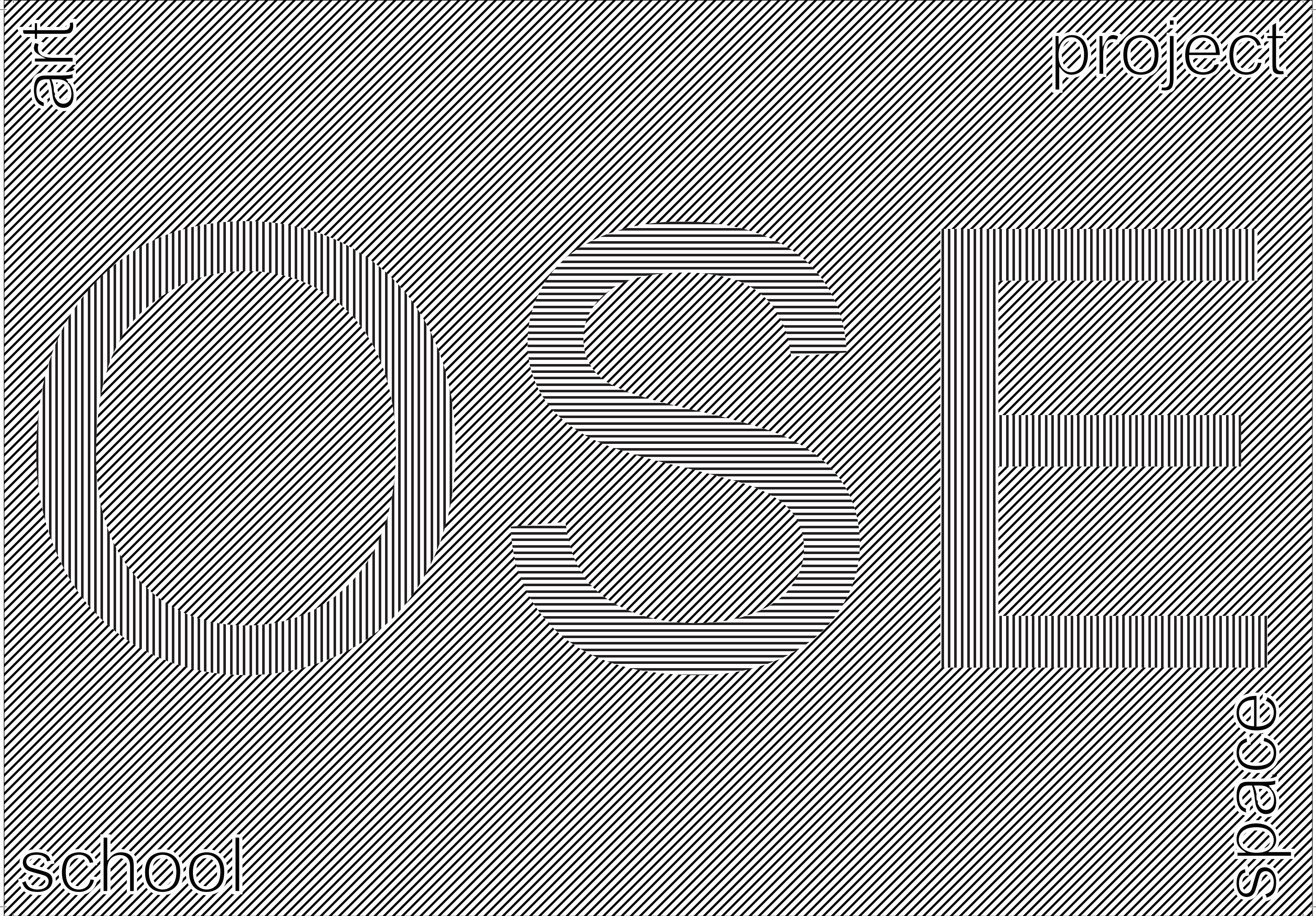
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spaces



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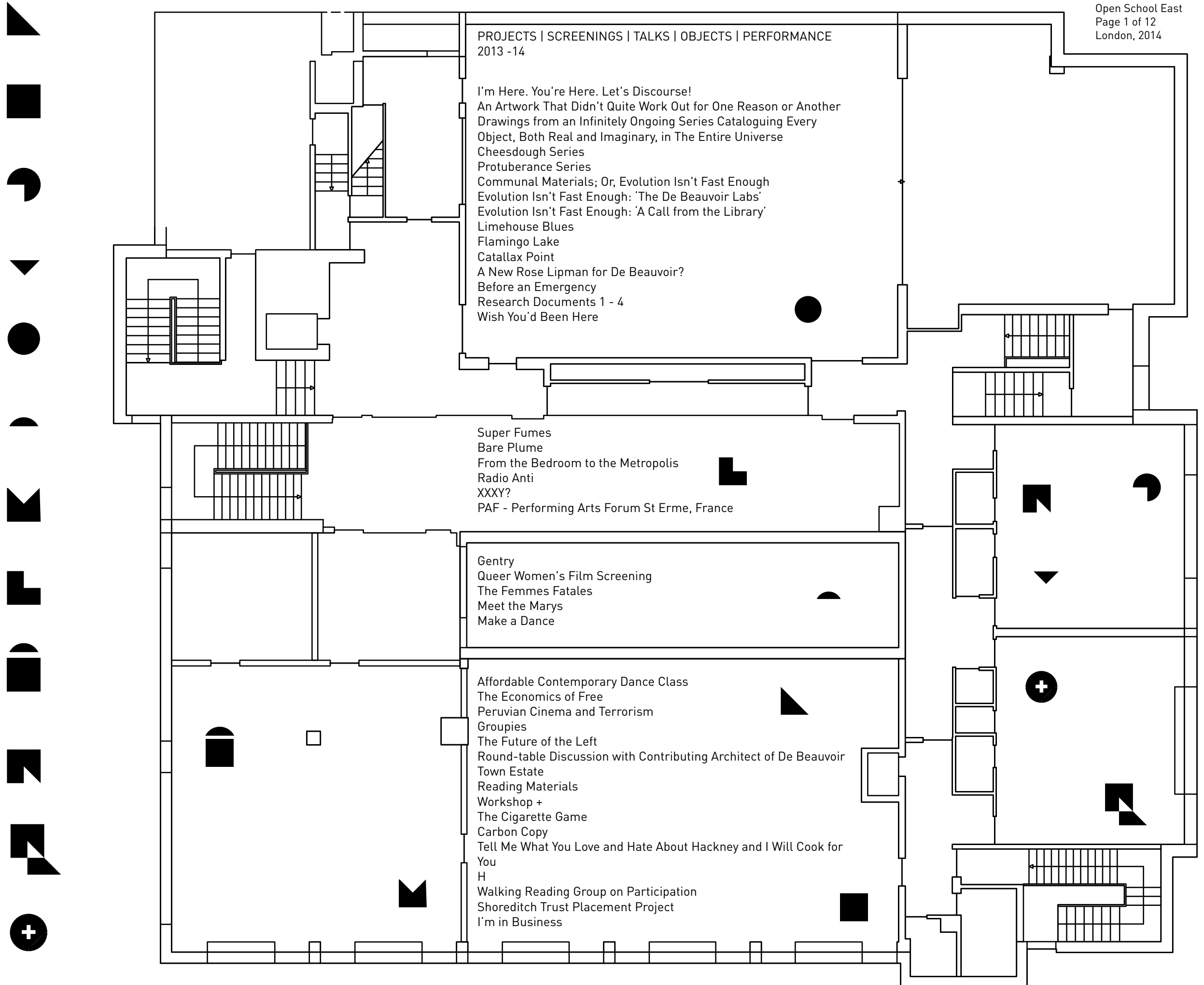
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Provocations

9.

Write a text using a piece of grey literature** as a point of departure. It could relate to your existing practice or be a totally new departure (up to you) and should take into consideration some of the ideas we covered, for example the performative aspect of dialogue.***

*A provocation from Season Butler assigned to the participants of the creative writing workshop. For more info and to join e-mail: seasoncmbutler@gmail.com

**grey literature is informally published written material (such as reports) that is not published commercially or is not widely accessible. Examples of grey literature include patents, technical reports from government agencies or scientific research groups, working papers from research groups or committees, white papers, and preprints. The term "grey literature" is used in library and information science.

***A short version of the provocation assigned by Sally O'Reilly to the participants of the session 'Crude Dialogue. How can we speak through strangers using vocabularies we might not be at home with?'

Jane adds People

Jane is often logged in as Admin to her life. She navigates quickly through her CRM, is adept at switching between her screens and confidently tabs through her fields. She firmly presses ENTER. She is great with people; she adds them as My Contacts. I often ask her for advice whenever I'm hesitating to select some or select all.

'Libby, don't be silly, just filter them' – Jane usually says – 'Filter them by type or status or territory. You don't want to have all coming to your birthday party, do you?'

She is precise and accurate. I admire that. She can in one evening add entire new groups to her life. With equal ease she removes selected contacts and/or spontaneously deletes them.

'That perv Gerry is long gone.
I can't believe he thought I wouldn't
know how to browse! I saw through
his activity. He used my own machine
for this dirt! I did a quick Vacumm.exe
just so there are no traces left.'

Jane's bespoke necklace,
a family heirloom made from gold and
diamonds, reads 'Save'. Made for her
grandmother around the time when
ZX Spectrum entered homes of the
middle classes. Jane wears it daily.

'I put it on and I feel as if I just
logged on!' - she told me once in
a moment of weakness, after she
blocked the entire G-H group from her
list. I couldn't help but spot that her
opportunities pipeline was empty and
she'd started using a single-column
diary - *so* not like Jane. The very next
day she was applying an alternative
theme. She was fine again. Group G-H
has been replaced.

We met when the Outlook
integration failed and I was the only
person in the building who knew how
to synchronise contacts. Jane arrived
with her exported Most Contacted
people and I helped them all. She
confirmed me as her friend and since
then we always install new plug-ins
together and look out for each other
on the network.
So it came as a shock. This
morning I was told that Jane had left.
Her uninstall is complete and in the
last line of the remaining history it
clearly says that the following contacts
are no longer supported:
*C:\Users\JaneDrive\Settings\
Contacts\WorkFriends\Liberty.
I am rebooting my system, as Jane
would surely tell me to.

Write a poem to an art collector. Use
a funding application as a source of
inspiration and vocabulary.

4.
Write a crime story. Choose the
perspective of: an attacker, a victim,
a witness, a reporter. The crime takes
place at a school;
there is a dead body.

3.
Write a dialogue between something
static that can't be easily moved (for
example a wall mural) and something
that is portable (for example a piece
of furniture). The objects don't get on.

2.
Write a short story that uses the
format of the minutes from a weekly
meeting or is inspired by its content.

1.
5.
Write a short piece in which
a character meets what
s/he fears the most.*

6.
Write a love letter from
an empty studio to
a non-studio based artist.

7.
Write a short story in which the main
character is not white, middle class,
Western, heterosexual or male.

8.
Write a song based on the contents of
your inbox. Don't ignore Doodle polls,
attached Excel spreadsheets
or booking confirmations.

6. Have you encountered OSE's locality? If yes please explain how, if the answer is no what would be necessary to do this?

I'm sure none of us would be naive enough to think that because a door is open with a sign saying 'everyone's invited', then it's 'open' or 'accessible' in any absolute, unimpeachable way. The only way to build this kind of 'open-ness' is to make OSE evermore embedded in networks, constituencies and communities, and this takes time. There was never any likelihood of this being achieved to any meaningful degree in this pilot year, but I'm amazed by what has been accomplished, especially as evidenced by the radio workshop broadcast at the Christmas party.

I think the programme (apart from the open days / Christmas party) still mainly appeals to a narrow group of people. I think we should concentrate on advertising initiatives to local already happening locally, foster stronger links with local initiatives that are under way. I think we are still seen as a group of people on a colonising mission.

What does open enough mean? The Christmas party was kind of beautiful though right? I think variety is the important only thing we can do – as long as it doesn't have to change its function to become open. Like, Hamish Macpherson's dance/politics workshop (my teaching day) can have some places that are open, but it's not going to attract anyone who (for e.g.) took part in Parallel Radio. So they're both open. Is one kind of openness more open than another?

5. Are the activities of OSE open enough? If not how could this be improved?

I think that the public activities worked well in the first term, given that the programme had just begun. Both the open day and Christmas party were successful in terms of a mixed crowd and people seeming to enjoy themselves. They were both beneficial to me in getting to know the area a little better and meeting some of the people who live in it. Distributing flyers was especially effective in starting conversations and I would encourage associates to do so in the future. I think the events could be improved by thinking more critically about their format and content, and why we are holding them. I do think that there's a risk of having parties for parties' sake: this easily addresses an element of engagement but does little other than give people a good time.



1st Term Associates' Feedback

1. Please explain what the teaching element of OSE has brought to you and your practice so far.

The first term seems to have focused on community engagement within art practice. The teaching brought certain things up:

- My practice does not work with or directly involve communities, though I am interested in social situations and policies that produce environments and locations to work in and with.
- Devising and working on a sustained project for a year about a specific location has given me an opportunity to go into much greater detail into an area than I would have otherwise. I think this is an important exercise at this point in my practice.
- Organising our own teaching day is not something I have done before and has pushed me to contact people who I probably wouldn't have contacted otherwise.

This semester made me slow down. I usually rush into things, establish frames for my practice and myself and start re-searching, establishing links, making. This time I let myself drift and use time to read, listen and absorb.

Most obviously: a greater familiarity with and understanding of a broad range of practices. More sophisticated thinking regarding the relation of one's work to 'publics', including but not exclusively in a 'socially engaged' sense. Coming straight from an academic MA (handing in my dissertation three days before OSE started!), the teaching has been very useful to adjust my attention to where I want to be right now.

More intangibly, but more importantly: the experience of seeing the 'match-up' between a practitioner's personal character and their work has been a really significant learning experience. I approach OSE as a space to redirect my own practice and this is part and parcel of determining how one wants to orientate oneself in the world.

Not enough tutorials. Not much critical engagement from you guys about projects. Feels like in the school you are more like facilitators rather than engaged in our practices. Maybe not so much in the pub, but I guess at school you're so busy that it becomes a bit practical. Crits are getting better but as discussed we should try and find someone Matthew Darbyshire-esque who knows and respects the crit format to help us use the time well.

8. Over term one have you received sufficient support in your development of OSE? Have you had enough tutorials? Have you had enough crits? How could the format of these change/be improved?

One of my favourite things about being in the building is how it gets used by other groups. My experience of this multi-functionality and the continual transformation of space (mainly the hall) to suit the needs of different groups, activities is really exciting, and is something I am very interested in writing into the script I am working on, I hope to be able (once funding is in place) to shoot/stage and hold workshops in a similar way – I would like the building itself with all its character to feature very heavily in the film.

Not really – the rest of users are quite frosty. I won't elaborate on the already well known problems with security, smell and potential bbgps but I do find it all really antisocial.

I feel part of OSE but not as much RLB. I don't find the building easy to inhabit, as it is full of rules, regulations, red tape, dos and don'ts. The ground floor studios have a commercial feel; people are always busy with projects and chasing deadlines.

As in, the local area? We drink at the Talbot a lot. Could try Duke's but the bar area is a bit small and it's more expensive... I speak to the guy in the Price Fighter quite a lot. I'm still waiting for the keys to the community no-tice board at the Southgate Road Tesco. I'm writing about micro-transumas in the local area as part of my research. I wander around a bit, take some photos, speak to people. We bought all those sausage rolls from Kingsland and shopping centre.

7. Do you feel a part of the Rose Lipman Building? How do you find sharing the building?

16. Do you have any other comments about OSE?

At times, I've found the concept of creating a communal space together and working on a collaborative programme difficult without having the full agency and knowledge of OSE's funding, governance, ambitions and future plans. There has been a separation between directors and associates which is fine and understandable as you've been working since before we started, and since, to get OSE set up and running. I think we're now all starting to become more involved in helping to run OSE, by programming the teaching, running workshops, etc., but I personally would find it valuable for you to share what you're working on as it would help to create more of a dynamic between us in developing OSE and helping to run it. I know I have mentioned it before, but sharing with us the website 'manifesto' and your reasons for changing it since we started would really be so helpful in understanding how you feel the project is developing, how we fit into it and what's expected of us.

I think there needs to be some clarity – and perhaps you're not there yet, and this is a pilot year to work it out - as to whether this is an art school which we're attending as 'students' and therefore there needs to be a bit more of a guided educative element for us, like a mentor or regular tutor, or it is a cooperatively produced and led project, in which case we need to be more closely involved in the core organisation and development of it. Perhaps it is both! In which case, I think these two things need to be considered.

I want to end by saying that I know you've put a lot of work into this project and have had to deal with a lot of admin, hard work, public criticism and questioning right from the outset as well as a sort of overwhelming celebration which seems to have created its own pressures too. OSE is a really important project and I hope it can continue and grow – and it's so great to be a part of it now.

the projects we are developing.

Yes. A bit less structure each week could give us more time to focus on creating and working on

12. Does the schedule of teaching work for you? How could this be different?

That is often the best time to sit together and share ideas, it's invaluable.

Informal chats with the other associates sitting in the Tin Tin room and studio.

There's enough structure but some of my most useful moments have come from

11. Does OSE's schedule offer enough organisation and structure? How could this be improved?

The individual catch ups have been the most beneficial to me, these have been the times when I have felt a concrete sense of how the project is developing and have offered an opportunity to talk about the details of the project I am very keen for the meetings to remain regular and perhaps even longer in order to talk in more depth about the project itself as well as the logistics of bringing it to fruition – it would be great to speak with both of you together.

10. Are the regular individual catch up meetings offering you enough support? How could these be improved?

Yes, they are informative and important to have them weekly. But it's frustrating when people are not on time so I think we should just start bang on time from now on otherwise we lose time waiting for others to arrive. One thing that would be helpful next term is to give the last five minutes of the meeting to a roundtable 'what's on' of the forthcoming week(s) – as we're each starting to plan more events and make more public use of the Tin Tin room. Everything should be in the calendar but it would be good to run through it each week too to allow room for questions and clarifying things – and potential clashes/possibilities to link up.

They're too long in my opinion. I get quite frustrated that on the one day free to work on my practice the meeting can often go on to lunchtime, followed by a communal lunch – which is lovely but it doesn't make art.

9. Do the weekly meetings provide enough information? How could the meetings be improved?

Both Anna and Laurence are so incredibly generous, engaging and supportive. In the context of term one, I think that one crit and the amount of tutorials were enough but in term two I would like to have more than one crit as my project has moved from development to production stage. One suggestion is that OSE organises in-house crits without any external people.

Less teaching in general; some mandatory teaching days alongside elective teaching days; more tutorials; longer less compacted crit days with less people showing; half days leaving time to get admin/preproduction/organisation done.

13. Aside from funding what further support could help you develop and deliver your projects?

A regular mentor/tutor, with an interest/relevance in the area of research I'm interested in, would be a useful support to help hone and develop my ideas.

Some guidance on content: I tend to think too broadly and actually appreciate help refining what's possible, realistic and most relevant (to the school).

14. What further resources could be helpful to your development?

Just funding, between us there is a lot of knowledge.

Basic tools in the workshop. Access to academic libraries/other college libraries.

15. Does being a part of OSE have an impact on your practice?

Obviously. It's great. It's kind of nightmarish but it's great. It's unpredictable change, not the change you would expect. I'm not just slowly becoming more socially engaged. I'm learning about what form of openness I want, what form of engagement I feel is useful or meaningful. I've learned that I value art way more than I thought I did. We've been challenged a lot, by the structure and politics of OSE itself, to defend some axioms or values we had. Or, realise that we had some values in the first place.

I think I've had space to think more consequentially and critically about my work, its impact and its political value. OSE has created for me a very comfortable space where questions that you wouldn't necessarily want to face alone can be faced and discussed in a group.

Having a group of like-minded peers around me is a benefit to my practice that can't really be overstated. I've never had this before. I studied applied art at art college; I was a sore thumb on that course and most of my friends from then are graphic designers, as well as a few painters. OSE is the first time I've been around/got to know/learnt with people who happen to be both socially engaged and artists (better even than 'socially engaged artists'...!).

Yes, generally. And steadily improving. More associated-led public events will step it up a dozen notches, making OSE far more multi-faceted, as I think it should be. It's good for OSE to have a permanent identity crisis: Eva's gigs, Matt's reading groups, the radio workshops, open days, local interest lectures, esoteric art-interest lectures... I think OSE is best as an assemblage of events and activities reflecting the constituencies involved, and driven by clearly identified, mutually acknowledged directing principles.

4. Are the public activities functioning? What could be improved?

Frank Leibovici's workshop was a brilliant insight into a complex methodology, the workshop was relevant to the specifics of our dynamic as a group as well as offering a framework to interrogate my own working method. Frank made sense of why we might attempt to engage collectively in producing something; the instigation of a form of collective action was a means of questioning our own modes of production. The practical focus on methods of generating/dis-seminating ideas as well as ways of engaging collectively was extremely productive.

Second term Stephen Wright and Mabel Tapia.

Different moments had different values! When Ed Baxter came in and spoke about gesture in cinema for four hours, it was massively important because it came after a number of sessions about practices that were concerned more with social practice and it served as a reminder that it's okay not to do that. In terms of value to my practice the most important moments have been in one to one tutorials: speaking to Polly Brannan was especially good, and in the past learning experiences were most valuable to them, who their trusted voices are, etc, etc.

3. What was the most valuable teaching moment so far? This could be a particular visitor or session format.

Someone's practice, and then it's over with. (Beyond this monologue-presentation model, the worst approach of all is the kind exemplified in X's pre-sentation, who seemed to use the time to proselytise for their own conceptual framework, without any space or willingness to interrogate that framework, despite being enormously problematic.)

If a practising artist/artist-teacher wishes to do a monologue-presentation, they should be very strongly encouraged to talk about the strategies and means they used to develop ideas and material, the problems they came up against and how they overcame them, which artists they stole from (!), which past learning experiences were most valuable to them, who their trusted voices are, etc, etc.

2. Was the teaching what you expected? What would you change? What is missing?

I think the second half of the term was more exciting and engaging. Though no-one's fault, the first half kept being an exercise in self-reflection, but we had no self to reflect on. I think we are better prepared, and more willing to engage with "what OSE is" (see Franck Leibovici's workshop). Franck and Myriam (Lefkowitz) were THE BEST ONES. I think I'm into their techniques + underlying philosophy anyway. The reason they were good was because they had their specific "thing" and they came to OSE and they did it. The teaching was the doing. Not that I'm against lectures – I love a lecture, or I love watching people perform lectures. But only when they want to perform, you know?

There has been no overlap between my teaching experience at OSE and my previous experience of education so I was especially privileged to see all the speakers. Naturally, not every aspect of the teaching relates directly to my work, but I don't see that as a problem. It's still very useful. The first eight weeks flew by quicker than expected and I was really conscious of time. Looking back I feel that a less rigid structure could have helped to alleviate those frustrations. It might be helpful to programme an intensive 5-day week at the very beginning of the year which includes an introduction to the space, local visits, and teaching based on the core themes related to OSE. I would reduce teaching to just one speaker a day, allocating either a morning or afternoon, leaving half a day free to work on individual projects. This could help us cultivate our projects in conjunction with OSE's wider aims. I found it very difficult to develop my personal project alongside two full days of teaching especially with lunchtime meetings often squeezed in.

I was expecting a more-hands on approach, more 'assignments', 'homework'. I found the sessions with practical aspect challenging me more, opening up new avenues, although on quite a few occasions it was great to listen to people who had a wealth of experience and interesting stuff to say. I would like a more balanced listening-doing programme. What was missing: time within 'school' days for our own work but this has been addressed in the forthcoming term.

A lot of people have given a run-through/slide-show of their practices, which is always much less helpful. It does have some value (especially as it's been targeted to OSE's interests; e.g. 'social engagement'), but it's more like going to a symposium at Tate, or suchlike; just getting a brief introduction to



Credible Passion is a short film charting the growth of a network of female funeral specialists – gravediggers, embalmers, celebrants and funeral directors – and their efforts to gain visibility outside the traditional male-centred business. An attempt to deconstruct the gendering that dominates the ceremonies we perform for the dead, the project gives voice to a groundswell of alternative funeral practitioners that constitute a burgeoning sub-community of care-givers. In this predominantly female-led reinvention of the industry, female ‘virtues’, like empathy and ‘relationality’, have gained increasing currency in this new affective economy. The focus of the film is to interrogate how a neatly packaged language of feminism has been mobilised in this respect. ‘The Good Funeral Awards’, a weekend celebration of alternative funeral excellence, described as “the nucleus of the industry’s female revolution is an event forms that forms a narrative framework from which the fictional screenplay is built.

Credible Passion



her all female workforce could now lift the deceased

Gaye to Lisa’s space. I heard Eva ask Marvin Gaye if she wanted a cup of tea,

‘No I’m ok but have you got any chocolate or just sugar, any sugar.’

‘We’ve got some of those biscuits left from this morning.’

‘Oh yeah that would be so great. I just feel like I need to keep eating everything so I can do this ICA talk tonight.’

--

Me and Ross went through to the hall and got the big ladder. We carried it off the stage and back through to the courtyard. Ross had some bin bags to black out the windows of the hall where we were showing some films as part of the open studios, ‘Have you got the gaffa?’, I said.

‘No I couldn’t find any gaffa.’

‘I think there’s some in my studio or maybe Eva’s.’

I went to the studios and looked around for gaffa tape, found some on Eva’s shelves and brought it through to the courtyard, twirling it on my fingers. It was hot outside and the sky was pale, like it had faded in the sun.

Ross climbed up the ladder first and got onto the roof, I climbed up after him, passed him the bin bags and the tape, then pulled myself onto the roof. We walked across to the windows that overlooked the hall and I said,

‘How come you didn’t get me to come and watch your film?’

‘Oh mate, I set everything up and then when she came in I asked her if she wanted to see the film and she said she’d watched it.’

We began to tape the bin bags onto the windows. It had felt like a big job until we began doing it and realised how easy it was. We worked together, I held the bag over the frame of the window and Ross taped it down.

‘Oh cool, that’s good. She’d done her research then.’

‘Yeah kind of, but then she was just like, “What’s the point of it? I don’t get it”’

I laughed, ‘What, like what’s the point of the film?’

‘Yeah!’

‘What did you say to that?’

‘I dunno, what do you say to that? Do you know what I mean? Like, where do you go from there?’

‘Fucking hell that’s a shame. She was really good with me. Well, actually, what I was going to say was that she was super positive, like really nice about everything but maybe just didn’t have much critical helpful stuff. I thought that would be what happened with you too.’

‘Yeah I wish. I mean I dunno what I expected.

‘Yeah it’s hard, like her films aren’t really about being films, it’s more documentation. She’s not exactly your desired audience.’

Ross screwed up his mouth and his eyes closed slightly.

It was properly hot on the black roof. It felt like summer had started and would never end. We stood for a while, looking north over De Beauvoir town.

‘You coming to the pub?’, I said.

‘Yeah but only for a few. I have to finish this film for tomorrow.’

‘Me too. Got to go to an opening in town and meet Ada.’

‘Oh yeah, how’s that going? I keep meaning to ask you’

‘Yeah it’s good. She’s funny. She makes me laugh. She’s only just broken up with her boyfriend though, like literally two days before she came to that party, that’s when he moved out.’

‘Fucking hell!’

‘Yeah I know. I’m just not thinking about it really.’

We got down off the roof and went into the Tintin room. People were finishing up for the day. Jon was sat at the table on his computer, designing his publication to be printed for the open studios. Andrea had gone but Eva was still pottering about, doing stuff for their bar. Laurence and Anna were in the office with the door open.

‘Are there any beers Eva?’

‘Yup. In the cupboard.’

‘Shall I put some in the freezer?’

‘Oooh yes that’s a good idea.’

I asked who wanted a beer. Everyone wanted a beer so I put more than we needed in the freezer, put a timer on my phone, and while I waited for them to get cold, I cleared up the projector and speakers that Marvin Gaye had used that morning.

‘Does anyone want to come to this opening at Paradise Row tonight?’

Eva said, ‘Why what’s on?’

‘Dunno just some group show but I used to work with the curator and she’s a hot Italian and she smells really good.’

Eva made a distasteful face and no one else spoke. I wound the jack leads around my arm and carried the box of cables to the cupboard where they were kept.

When the beers were cold, we drank them and chatted.

‘After we have these shall we go to the pub?’, I said.

Laurence poked his head out of the office, ‘Are we going to the pub?’

--

We walked towards The Talbot, the pub we all hated but always went to. We’d given up trying to identify cheaper, less bourgeois places. Laurence had drunk a few bottles of beer and was telling me about Open School’s funding situation.

‘The thing is, and obviously don’t mention this but if the Arts Council doesn’t give us the funding, then we have to think about whether we fit into their national vision for the arts.’

‘What, like...?’

‘Like, the Arts Council support so many projects and institutions that if they aren’t willing to help us then we have to think about whether or not it’s worth looking for other funding.’

‘Like it’s a stamp of approval and if you don’t have it...’

‘Exactly. And I’m just wondering whether I want to spend the next six months banging my head against a brick wall, working my arse off for funding but then fundamentally changing what the Open School is.’

‘What, like the thing about people maybe paying for it?’

‘Yeah, no one else seems to have a problem with it but I think at some point you have to step back and wonder whether it’s

worth continuing with something if you have to change it so much.’

‘Ross said something really good about that, when we were talking about running a space next year. With every plan, you have to build in the possibility that maybe it’s just not a very good idea.’

--

Beth turned up and when she heard us talking about funding for Open School she tutted and rolled her eyes. She asked Laurence what he wanted, then asked if we all wanted a drink. I only wanted a half. I had to get to this opening.

I went to the toilets as Beth went up to the bar. One of the few merits of the pub was that the cubicle was relatively clean so I locked the door and sat down to take a shit. I looked at my phone while I sat on the toilet and saw a few tweets about the open studios tomorrow. I retweeted them and put my phone back in my jeans pocket. I wiped and flushed and unlocked the toilet door. I went to the sink and washed my hands. The pub had paper towels or a Dyson Airblade. I sometimes went with the paper towels, but mainly I went for the Airblade. There was still something novel about how efficiently it dried your hands, but then really the paper towels were probably more efficient, their technological presence was just less obvious.

I came out of the toilets and saw Ross grinning at me as I approached the table,

‘Alright mate. Have a good one?’

‘What? Ahh yeah it was alright yeah.’

There was a pint sitting in front of my empty chair,

‘Ahh man, I only wanted a half. I’ve got to go to this thing.’

Laurence looked at me, ‘I can finish it if you want, but you’ll end up drinking it no?’

The conversation came round to Marvin Gaye Chetwynd. I said how attractive I found her and Laurence raised his eyebrows and picked up his drink,

‘Mate, I had such a crush on her back in the day.’

‘Really?’

‘Yeah of course! Why do you think I was so up for performing for her? Just like this hot girl writhing around covered in paint.’

Yemi was laughing, Beth was making a face, ‘I don’t mind. I’ve heard it before. We can all writhe around covered in paint.’

Laurence continued, ‘The thing is, I got really worried today because I think when she said she hates it when people wear boxer shorts under tights, I think I definitely did that once.’

I woke up at 8am and when I pulled back my curtains it was sunny outside. I hadn’t drunk anything the night before and I felt healthy like I do when I haven’t drunk the night before. It’s more of a smugness.

I sent a tweet to Ross saying, ‘Is there Olly lunch today? Or is it packet noodles again for me? x’.

Olly was an artist who cooked lunch for Open School East. We’d somehow ended up with £5,000 of funding from some organic farm for him to make us vegan food once a week. It was embarrassing and uncomfortable to have a chef and we enjoyed complaining about it and making jokes about how we took it for granted. Also, the food was good.

I ate breakfast and took a bath. The day before I had woken up with a cold and Ada had gone out to buy me echinacea drops which I’d taken, but only to indulge her kindness. I’d gone back to bed and she’d gone to her studio. When I’d got up again and taken more echinacea I started feeling better. Then I’d taken more drops before going to bed that evening and though it seemed to make my piss a very dark yellow colour, I now felt good. Great, maybe. Pretty good.

I went outside to see how warm it felt. I stood outside the front of my house for 20 seconds with my eyes closed, leaning my face into the sun. I packed my bag, put it on my bike rack, and carried my bike out of the house. I rode to Open School. For the first time that year I wasn’t wearing gloves or a hat or a jumper while I cycled. Sometimes I whistled parts of a song by the band Weezer. I seemed to be able to ride very fast. I occasionally thought phrases like, ‘I am happy’ and, ‘Riding a bike is so easy when it is sunny’ and, ‘I should move to Los Angeles where it is always sunny’. I smiled and felt casual about my life. I felt like I was always happy and casual and relaxed about life, like I had never not been happy and casual and relaxed about life.

I got to school earlier than I needed to and said hello to Ross, Eva and Charlie who were in the Tintin room. It was called the Tintin room because there was a bad painting of Tintin on the wall from a long time ago when the room had been used as a children’s library. Since then it had been used for Hackney’s archives, and now us. Apparently, until we got the building, the heating hadn’t worked since the 70s and in the winter I’d sometimes thought about unhappy 70s people looking after things no one cared about in a cold room with Tintin painted on the wall.

Eva had organised the teaching for that day which was a lecture and tutorials by the performance artist Marvin Gaye Chetwynd (she used to be called Spartacus Chetwynd but she changed her name). The projector was set up on the table with some speakers. Eva had put jugs of water with cucumber and lemon on the table. She had bought cinnamon biscuits and arranged them in small bowls. There were plums and strawberries in other bowls. I told everyone how great I felt because of the echinacea.

Charlie said, ‘Maybe it was the placebo

The Day Before

The Open Studios

Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau

effect?’

I said, ‘But that only works if you’re not a cynic. I’m a cynic.’

Charlie formed her lips into an upside down bottom lip smile of agreement and nodded.

I sat down and drank some water. Jon sat down next to me. We chatted and I said it sounded like he had a cold. He said, ‘Oh I don’t know. Do I? Yes maybe.’ I started telling him to take echinacea and then Yemi, who was sat on the other side of Jon said, ‘Nuh uh, I’m not getting a cold’ while shaking her head. Yemi fetched fizzy vitamin C tablets from her studio and we got small cups and filled them with the cucumber water and then put vitamin C tablets in. Then we waited and watched them fizz and then drank them.

Andrea pointed out that if I’d really beaten my cold with the echinacea then I didn’t need the vitamin C tablet.

As Jon watched his tablet fizz he said, ‘It looks like really cheap orange squash.’

I said, ‘It looks like really dark proteiny urine when you haven’t drunk enough water and the urine smells like chicken nuggets.’

Andrea had bought some fresh baguettes from a bakery near school but there was no butter in the fridge so we sat eating the bread with margarine and Laughing Cow cheese triangles while we waited for Marvin Gaye Chetwynd to arrive.

I’d said to some people who weren’t at Open School that I would record Marvin Gaye’s lecture and email then an mp3, so I fetched the digital recorder from the cupboard and set it up on the table.

When Marvin Gaye arrived, she was holding a takeaway cup and a brown bag.

‘Oh wow you’ve got biscuits and everything. Look at this water, it looks amazing. What’s that? It’s got cucumber in it. Wow! I’ve got a croissant because I knew I’d need the sugar because I’ll be talking so much.’

‘Do you want a tea or a coffee?’, said Eva

She gestured at her takeaway cup, ‘I got this amazing hot chocolate on the way here.’

Eva began to introduce us and Marvin Gaye took over and shook everyone’s hand and said people’s names back to them.

Marvin Gaye asked if anyone had watched the films that she had sent through as a kind of reading list. One was called *The Mad Masters* and was an anthropological film from the 50s by a French guy called Jean Rouch and the other was a weird Brian De Palma film with Robert De Niro called *Hi, Mom!*

‘What did you think of them?’, she asked the group.

‘Amazing! They were crazy’, said Eva.

‘Who watched them?’

Me, Eva and Charlie all looked at each other and said yes.

‘I had to leave in the middle of the Robert De Niro one’, I said.

‘Which one? You had to leave in the Brian De Palma film? Which bit?’

‘The bit with the black theatre group making the white people black up.’

‘No way! That was the bit I wanted you to watch, with the Wooster Group? So why did you have to leave?’

‘Ahh I just started freaking out. I wasn’t watching it properly, I was trying to read something while watching it and then suddenly they were in this house and Robert De Niro was a policeman and someone was being raped.’

‘OK, OK, so did everyone leave, did you turn it off?’

Eva and Charlie shook their heads. Eva said, ‘No no, we watched both of them. It was quite intense.’

‘You watched both films in a row? That’s mental! That would make anyone want to leave. I don’t know how I’d feel if I watched them both. I’d feel sick probably.’

We decided to go outside and talk because it was so sunny, and then maybe we’d come back inside and watch some DVDs of her performances afterwards. On my way out I looked at the digital recorder and realised that I couldn’t take it outside because it didn’t have any batteries and needed to be plugged in.

We brought all the water and the biscuits and the fruit outside to the courtyard and sat around the table. I sat in the shade with my computer on my lap ready to take some notes.

‘I bet everyone gets here and wants to know all about you don’t they? Does everyone come and ask loads of questions about you? Are you really bored of that?’

There was a murmur of assent around the table.

‘Well I’m going to do the same thing. You’re really international right? There’s loads of people here from different places.’

A kind of semi-murmur. Tommy said he was from Canada, ‘But I studied in London last year.’

‘Oh great. Where did you study?’

She went around the table asking where people had studied. Lisa said she had two MAs and Marvin Gaye said,

‘Woh! Two MAs! So you should be teaching the class? What’s this then? Is this like a cherry on top? Like decoration.’

Lisa pulled her face back in distaste and said, ‘No.’

Marvin Gaye spoke about her work. She said that she’d learnt lots of practical things by being in high profile shows. Particularly the Beck’s Futures Prize when it had existed. She spoke about a guy who had prepped her for a TV interview.

‘Here - if I get up’, she walked over to the end of the courtyard, ‘Do I look tall?’

We laughed, and some people said no and some people said yes.

‘He said I look tall, like my actual body looks tall because I have a short body and long legs so even if I’m next to a tall person then I look tall.’

Laurence came in through the front door, and stood just inside the doorway to the courtyard.

‘Hi’, said Laurence.

‘Who’s that?’, said Marvin Gaye.

‘Hey’, said Laurence and came out into the sun.

Marvin Gaye stood up and said, ‘Oh my god, no, but it was just the sun and I couldn’t see you because you were in the dark. Of course it’s you, let me get up and give you a kiss!’

She got up and they hugged and Laurence said, ‘Do you mind if I join you out here?’

We talked about Laurence getting married for a bit, then spoke more about art. She talked about how people perceived her work to be messy,

‘Like they think I don’t care, but I do care. I care very much, but just not about things other people care about. I don’t care, for example, if a performer is late, or doesn’t turn up to do a performance. Yeah I don’t care about that. I don’t mind. But I really, really *do* mind if someone... erm I dunno, wears boxer shorts under tights. Like, why would you do that? I don’t get it. I hate it. I really, really hate it.

She gave us some options of what DVD of hers we could watch. She said she’d been using the same DVD to do talks for years and recently someone had asked her why she didn’t show any work made after about 2009. She said that she wanted to try out talking about some later work so we agreed to watch her newest DVD. I kept thinking it was funny that she had DVDs but I couldn’t quite form it into a joke.

We went inside, taking the water and the now less full bowls of biscuits with us. I carried my computer, my bottle of water, my sunglasses and a water jug from the table. Graham was putting up some vinyl banners on the outside of the building for the open studios we were having the next day. Now we were nearer to where he was working the occasional drilling was very loud. Eva opened one of the windows and shouted out to the scaffold tower to see when he would be finished. I helped set up the computer but the Mac cable was playing up. By the time it was ready a conversation was already happening so it took a while until we started watching her DVD.

Marvin Gaye showed us the films one by one, working down the DVD menu. They were edited really strangely, with snippets of documentation coming one after another and then abruptly ending. She showed us a film of some puppets speaking French. She showed us a film of a performance that Laurence had been in, dressed in a paper costume, trainers and tights. Then she showed us a film of some people dancing and singing about alternative energy. The film ended with an out of focus Marvin Gaye saying, ‘Hey we forgot to do that bit so we’re going to do it again.’ When it ended she was laughing,

‘The guys who made this told me I’m a total nightmare when it comes to editing documentation, so I told them to make two minute films of random 10 second clips from throughout the performances. That’s why the films are so weird.’

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It turned out that Olly couldn’t be here so

he’d sent along his friend Felix to make us lunch. It was potato gnocchi with a carrot salad, plus parmesan for the non vegans. No one at Open School was an actual vegan, but there was a bit of vegetarianism, and a small amount of lactose intolerance which amounted to the same thing. Felix had also brought some cider from a company he was doing a bit of design work for.

We went back outside with plates and glasses and drank cider and ate food. I poured cider and Marvin Gaye said she wanted a very small amount. Then she drank the very small amount in one go and Ross poured her more. I drank one glass and the sugar and the alcohol and the sun combined very quickly. The food was good and we put a lot of parmesan and salt on the gnocchi.

The talk had overrun so Marvin Gaye was giving a tutorial to Charlie over lunch. The rest of us talked about the open studios and other stuff. I spoke quietly to Laurence about Open School’s funding situation - I’d missed a meeting when he and Anna had revealed that they hadn’t got the Paul Hamlyn award they’d applied for to support next year’s Open School. He didn’t really want to talk about it in front of Marvin Gaye.

I went to get more food and people followed me. There wasn’t loads left, but there was enough for a small plate of seconds for a few people. I came back out and ate the second plate.

Laurence said, ‘I love parmesan. Do you think I can just eat parmesan on its own?’

‘You can do what you like I think’, I said and passed him the bowl of parmesan.

I thought for a second and took another handful of parmesan for my gnocchi.

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After lunch I washed up the plates in the sink at the back of the studios. The water from the hot tap was scalding, and the only way to wash up was to run both taps at the same time and pass the plates from hot to cold so as not to burn yourself.

I brought the plates back through to the Tintin room and laid them up against the skirting board to dry. I sat down to do some emails. Ross sat across from me,

‘Bro, I was gonna set up my film on the projector for my tutorial, would you be about to watch it at the same time?’

‘Yeah course man, you need help setting it up? I have to sort out the back room for my performance tomorrow but I’ll defo watch it. Come give us a shout.’

‘Alright I’ll come give you a shout.’

That made me decide that I should go and sort out the back room for my performance the next day. I got up and shut my laptop. I went over to the kettle to make a cup of tea and saw two toilet rolls that I decided to use for the performance. I made my tea and picked up the toilet rolls. Then I grabbed some yellow parcel tape from my desk and went to the back room.

As part of a deal with the company, Mill Co., who ran the building, Anna and Laurence had given away the back room to be used as an office by an arts and regeneration company called Create, who were part funders of Open School East. I’d been really angry at this but Anna and

Laurence had said that I could use it for the open studio, with Create moving in on Monday.

People often used the back room as a kind of dumping space, which always pissed me off. When I walked in and saw a load of trestles lined up against the wall next to two blue wheely chairs, I assumed it must have been Aaron who ran the pottery in the room next door. I was annoyed, but then realised that I could use the trestles to block off one of the doors - which I’d been planning to do anyway for the performance. I took the trestles one by one and piled them up in the doorway at odd angles. I took the wheely chairs and balanced one on top of the other. I thought for a second, went to the studios and got two more blue wheely chairs of different sizes, and brought them to the back room. I balanced them on top of the others, then taped them all together with yellow tape to make a precarious wheely sculpture that I figured Daniel might be able to use in the performance.

I threw the toilet paper over the floor and set up a desk where Daniel could sit and read in between performances. I needed to go to the shop to get some packets of cheap crisps to spread across the floor so I went through to the studios and got my wallet. I went through the back door, down the stairs and outside.

It was super hot outside - like, summer hot - and I felt happy that we would be at school while it was summer. A fat white guy, with long hair and a dog, sat on a bench in the pedestrianised area outside the Pricefighter. Next to the door of the Pricefighter was a handwritten sign that read,

‘BENEFIT CUTS?
DON’T WORRY
WE WILL HELP YOU
WITH LOW PRICES
ON EVERYDAY GOODS’

I went inside and said hi to the guy behind the counter. Two women were asking him something. They held up a plastic bag of brown spotted bananas with a lot of condensation on the inside, ‘One pound’, said the guy.

I went over to the aisle with the sweets and crisps and picked up a packet of Bobby’s Onion Rings, a packet of Bobby’s Cheesy Curls, some Bobby’s Beef Grills, Bobby’s Bacon Streaks, Bobby’s Bar-B-Q Sauce Potato Snax, Bobby’s Salt and Vinegar Spirals and Bobby’s Prawn Cocktail Spirals.

I waited behind an old woman while she paid for her shopping. I noticed she had a four pack of Calippo lollies in her basket. I looked behind me and saw the ice cream freezer. I couldn’t decide between a Crunchie ice cream and a Malteser ice cream, but then I saw they had Double Decker ice creams which I’d never seen before. I opened the freezer and took one out. It felt a bit soft.

I paid for the crisps and the ice cream and then went outside into the sun. The old woman was sitting on the bench, slurping at her Calippo. I laughed to myself and tried to think of a way I could tell Ross about the old woman gobbling her lolly that didn’t seem cruel. I realised

that there wasn’t a way and decided to file away the image for later use.

I opened the back door and passed from the heat into the relative cool of the building. I went upstairs into the back room and scattered the packets of crisps on the floor. The script for the performance had a bit in it where Daniel gestured to the crisps and said,

‘Do you want some crisps? You can’t have any crisps. They’re vegan. They’re not vegan they’ve got milk powder in. They’re vegetarian, but only the bad vegetarians would eat them. The fat vegetarians.’

I was kind of finished doing the room so I went through to the Tintin room. I saw Marvin Gaye and Ross sitting together looking at his laptop screen. I thought it was weird that he hadn’t asked me to come see the film like he’d said he would. Maybe he couldn’t find me.

In the room next to the courtyard Eva and Andrea were setting up for the open studios. They were going to run a bar, serve cocktails and talk about their project which involved parties, conviviality; stuff like that. There was a spinning light on a table and they were putting up handwritten signs all over the walls. It looked kind of shitty and panicked.

‘What’s this?’, I said

Andrea was on her way out of the room, but Eva said, ‘We tried to write the text we were talking about but it just didn’t work. We were sat emailing each other and, well, it was just shit. So now we’re just going to put up all these quotes from people and texts that have inspired us and then have conversations about parties and partying.’

I didn’t say anything.

‘I had been thinking about getting people to come in and do 20 minute presentations about their practice, like Marvin Gaye would have been perfect...’

‘That’s a great idea! You should ask her, I think you could organise it for tomorrow. It’s totally worth it.’

Andrea came back into the room and gave me a dirty look, ‘Stop making yourself into a curator Eva! You’re an artist you can speak for yourself, you don’t need to invite people in to speak for you.’ I watched Andrea climb a ladder and pin another handwritten sign to the wall. Some of the signs were done in charcoal on coloured sugar paper.

Graham walked in from outside, ‘Is there any food left?’

I made a grimace and looked around for help, ‘Erm I think we ate all the food.’

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‘I think he’s through there just sitting at his desk.’

Eva and Marvin Gaye came into the studios and I looked round at them like I hadn’t known they were coming. Eva left as she saw me greet Marvin Gaye. Marvin Gaye said hello and I said, ‘Let me get you a chair’ and got up to go and find her a chair.

We sat down and I opened up my laptop without knowing what I was going to show her. She had pieces of paper and flicked through them.

‘So, what did the email say for you?’ she

said while looking at the paper, ‘Oh yeah, it seemed like you had a like a really succinct question like it made sense and was quite direct. Oh yeah ok.’ She found the bit that I’d emailed to Eva to pass on to her, ‘So how do you want to do this?’

‘Erm, so I thought I could show you a bit of older work. Like, I’ve always made these performances where it’s just me sitting in front of an audience talking with a slideshow. But I’ve been wanting to start working with the audience and with props and stuff.’ As I spoke I loaded up my website and started finding a piece of work I’d made for Wysing in 2012. ‘And I did one thing a while ago which worked really well where I got the audience to get up and form a healing circle and I think I should use that as the basis for how it might work.’

When I found the video, Marvin Gaye spoke, ‘Oh I think this is the one I watched. I went on everyone’s website when Eva emailed me and I think I watched this one. Just click through it and show me.’

I clicked through the video, landing on various points of the documentation of the performance. Most of the video just showed me sitting in front of a computer with a projection screen behind me, then towards the end, the angle of the camera changed and the audience were stood in a circle holding hands.

I said, ‘Yeah and there was something about this where it worked really well. Like it was uncomfortable and embarrassing but also it was powerful or something.’

‘Yeah, I liked this one, I thought it was really funny. Really funny actually. Yeah this was good. And so what are you saying here? Let it play for a bit.’

I let the video play. On screen, the people stood in a circle and I stood outside of the circle in front of a projector screen that displayed words which I made the audience read out loud in unison.

‘This healing circle. Wants to take responsibility. Wants to move on. Wants to feel a strong and powerful urge to return to life. Wants to escape the cycle of blame. Wants to embrace love over fear. Wants to embrace itself. Wants to love itself again. And again and again. And again.

--

I took Marvin Gaye to the back room to show her where my performance was going to happen the next day. I roughly explained how the performance would work and then performed a half-hearted version of it by alternately reading bits of the script and then describing how Daniel was really good at making people do what he wanted. In the part of the performance where Daniel would force the participant to hold a sticky piece of wet dough, and then hold their hand whilst delivering a story, I held Marvin Gaye’s hand for a few seconds before I got embarrassed and said, ‘I won’t hold your hand but Daniel would hold your hand.’

While we were talking Laurence came to the door of the back room. Behind him was Glen who used to be the caretaker but now worked at another building that Mill Co. ran.

Laurence paused for a second before he

spoke, ‘Glen’s meant to be putting the office for Create in here and he said that someone came in and moved everything around.’

‘Yeah it was me. I have a performance in here tomorrow - you know that.’

‘He was told he could start putting stuff in here today.’

‘Well he can’t.’

Glen was large but I always thought of him as a boy. He was positioned slightly behind Laurence.

Laurence said, ‘Well there’s obviously been some miscommunication.’

Glen moved forward, his voice was cracking and his eyes looked a bit wet, ‘Well that’s no good for me. No one tells me. I get told to do something and then I get here and everything I do is all messed up.’

I hesitated, ‘That’s not my problem’, I said and they left.

Marvin Gaye started walking around the room, looking at the way it was dressed - with the toilet paper and the wheely chair sculpture and the trestles stacked up in the other doorway.

‘Why are you interested in... It’s not like a criticism or critique or whatever I’m just really interested in why you want to create this situation with the audience.’

‘Like, the power thing?’

‘Yeah like, letting them in the room, then not letting them in. Like, I know I make people do things where they’re uncomfortable but in the end its because I just want them to enjoy themselves. It’s for the greater good or something’

‘I... I dunno. I guess. It’s like, every performance involves a power relationship. Like every art work. Even your work, you might know that the audience will enjoy it at the end, but you have to overpower them. Or like, they have to let you take control before they can enjoy it. I enjoy playing around with that stuff.’

Marvin Gaye’s eyes were very clear and bright and her face was very beautiful. It was hard and worn by years of partying. It was the face of someone who had enjoyed themselves a lot when they were younger.

We spoke about books we were reading or wanted to read - she said she knew someone who had written about crisps and their relationship to politics in Northern Ireland. I wrote down the name on my phone. She said positive things about the performance but they weren’t very useful. At one point she said that her teaching style was to be blindly affirmative to any student she spoke to. I felt a strong connection with her but for no reason.

My time was up so I led her back through to the studios for her next tutorial.

‘I was going to ask you how you ended up using props, but maybe it’s a stupid question because it seems like you’ve always used them since you started.’

‘I’ll tell you what actually, there’s like a really good reason for that. My mum used to do props and costumes for films so I grew up around her making stuff like that. When I was young I wanted to be the special effects person who made severed heads and stuff. Like things that squirted blood, chopped off arms, things like that.’

Eva saw us coming in and led Marvin

Wish you'd been here

is a collaborative project by
Eva Rowson and Andrea Francke

Hospitality and DIY have always been an important part of our individual practices but at Open School East it quickly became clear how the type of spaces and social relations we were interested in creating conflicted with many of the characteristics of the institution that we inhabited. Through *Wish you'd been here* we organise different types of events, from film nights to parties for 200+ people, to using profits from the bar to buy a barbecue (which should not be underestimated in its pedagogical function). Our process has involved researching the history of parties in all their potentially radical forms, with a special focus on how they can be bubbles in which to experiment with different ways of setting an event and hosting it, and how these can conduce different social relations.

We funded the first parties at OSE ourselves, using any profit to pay the performers and contributors, and putting the remainder towards the next event. Early on, we were asked to separate our parties from the main OSE public programme, as our model for charging for entrance and refreshments, which was seemingly making a profit, could not be aligned with OSE's charitable accounts. *Wish you'd been here* has had to exist outside the economy of school, and instead we have been able to create an economy of our own.

At one of our parties, for example, we stopped charging for entrance and food at a point when we had made enough money to cover our costs. This transformed the interaction between people who didn't know each other, and suddenly everybody started treating each other as if they were friends of friends. At one point party guests were manning the bar, just because they enjoyed being part of it and helping. For every party we now do, we always have people volunteering in different ways, which has been a helpful and interesting way to reflect on questions of economy, labour, politics, organisation and consequence, and in particular how to remunerate people and share authorship.

We decided to combine *Wish you'd been here* with Andrea's text *The Economics of Free* because they have fed into each other during OSE. We make a clear point of not labelling our events as art projects as an attempt to show how a project that doesn't act out or represent parties but actually hosts them can help remind us, even if just for a small period of time, that there are different ways to do things, to relate to each other, to exist in the world. It's about hope as the belief in the potential of the future, of little utopias of possible alternatives, replacing the fear of failing, of not making sense, of not building something that can be incorporated by art and the institutions of art.

Wish you'd been here began as a response to the discourse of socially engaged art we found embedded in OSE and as a way to think about different frameworks for practices that involve working with people. So should you wonder about the critical relevance of throwing parties, the viability of a project that resists a clear outcome or targeted audience, and the market-ability of something that is only describable in an incredibly long list of interests and demands to be experienced in the flesh, we would like to say: please come and party with us, to see the possibilities of a different kind of social practice - we wish you'd been here...

Eva and Andrea
wishyou'dbeenhere.tumblr.com
@wishyou'dbeen

ORGANISE IN HOPE NOT FEAR

³ For an example of these debates outside of the UK listen to *State Cultural Gabfest* March 19th 2014, a discussion on trigger warnings in American universities: <https://soundcloud.com/stateradio/the-culture-gabfest-prime>

⁴ When I moved to London just a few

⁴ When I moved to London just a few

Although OSE is free, we don't receive a stipend to support ourselves or to finance our art projects. This means all of us have to work on the days we have left and sometimes on the days we are supposed to be at school. We are all so busy, all the time. The art world is

it could become an interesting tool for test-

changes in policy that are needed. OSE functions, in this essay, as a temporarily enacted utopia. An idealisation that has come into being and can now be used to make visible ideologies that are commonly hidden from view through their common sense qualities.

The case of OSE can then offer valuable insights into social and power relations established within a non-fee paying art school, and how they affect our experiences as students. I believe that what we -- students, teachers, institutions, society -- must re-define our expectations of educational relationships, for only through that process can we effect the

of a bigger cultural shift in our understanding of what higher education is and what its purposes are. Several anecdotal descriptions can be found that speak of a similar cultural change taking place in American universities³ where neither tuition fee levels nor the number of scholarships have suffered any recent overhauls. It has also caught my attention that most of the critique comes from the perspectives of higher education teachers who blame universities' problems on fees and student behaviours without analysing the reproduction of an institutional mindset in which they are actively implicated (along with their students).

ing different models and approaches to art education outside of the fee paying university system.

The fact that OSE is a non-fee paying education programme is constantly proclaimed, not only as a PR narrative reproduced and disseminated to and through funding bodies, art institutions and the press, but also internally, which consciously or not functions as a reinforcement of the internal power structure of the school. In this essay I'm not going to discuss the political or ideological interests at play in the decision that OSE should be non-fee paying. My interest in this proclamation is in the use of free as a means to make present a monetary transaction while simultaneously attempting to obscure it. The term free becomes a negation of the term fee-paying, erasing the history of higher education as a right and generating a new type of debt.

I went to a state funded university in Brazil. No fees were involved, yet this was never couched in the terminology of "free," because higher education was and still is considered a common right (though a meritocratic one). I've spoken to several friends who had the opportunity to study in Britain before tuition fees were instituted, and to them, much like in Brazil, higher education was never described as free, it was seen as a right. At OSE, education is not framed as a right⁴. It is a privilege granted to us by the generosity of funding bodies, individuals and art institutions: a

quotidian experience.

I would posit that the main problem with transactions that are framed around an idea of free, is also the way in which they become so powerful: a "free" transaction monetises a relation, but its price is not agreed upon before the transaction takes place. Consequently, you enter a situation of unextinguishable debt. When does our debt to OSE end? Should we consider that every subsequent career development actually increases our debt? Though we instinctively self-identify with those debts, it is hard to identify whom we are indebted to. Is it OSE as an institution, its directors, the other associates, or the community? This is not a simple debt. It is a chain of debt. We are indebted to the school, its directors and founders. They are indebted to all the funding bodies. The funding bodies get their money from government bodies or private funders to whom they are in turn in-

privilege we should be grateful for. When the school's structure was created, a choice was made to make these funding relations and expectations visible, and, unlike in a MA Fine Arts structure, we constantly have to deal with their presence. Knowing the funders' expectations in relation to what should be produced or what the school and students should be like generates a constant feeling of guilt: the guilt of having something for free and never being grateful enough, compounded by the fear that by failing to conform to expectations we could threaten the continued existence of the school and of this community we have built ourselves into. These feelings permeate, even shape, all our relations within/to the school. It is hard to know how this vicious cycle began. Did the institution project this guilt onto us or vice-versa? Inevitably, we are all implicated in replicating and reacting to this model which quickly shaped itself into a

art students (and yet as this is a commission, it must be fulfilled so we must be productive, outcome-driven, labouring students).

This essay uses OSE as an example but it hopes to illustrate the fact that our relationship to higher education has not changed only because of fees. We have allowed the rise in tuition fees to happen because our understanding of what education is and is for has violently changed. I am not arguing that there is a historical model that we can go back to or try to replicate but I believe that we need to re-think our expectations and understanding of those structures and ideologies. As OSE redefines itself in its second year and hopefully continues to elaborate its own utopian model, it is important to consider how this debt has affected us and how we could have negotiated it differently. The best thing about utopias is not only that they remind us that there is always the possibility of a future different from to the one commonly envisioned, but also that they help us see the ideologies that we've been unconsciously reproducing. By making these ideologies visible, we are choosing how to interact with them.

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already accused of paving the way for precarious labour by dressing it up as the freedom of self-employment. We justify the need to constantly provide free labour by thinking of it as a way to build our careers. Self-financing art production, and interning for free in institutions are the obvious sacrifices we implicitly must make because we have faith in art. At OSE, we could be seen to pave the way for a model of the precarious student. This marks a multiple shift in perspective wherein we move from a position in which education is seen as a societal benefit, to that of a consumer relationship, to one in which we must give whatever is needed from us, be eternally grateful and conscious that if we don't fulfill expectations this opportunity will be taken away from us. As such, it makes perfect sense that keeping abreast of next year's funding process and being burdened with the unremitting knowledge that OSE may not survive should be part of our experience as associates.

As we internalise the pressure of our role in the school's survival, our study time is transformed into labour time that needs to be productive and we lose some of the most important characteristics of the time spent in education: we should avoid failure, we should occupy all our time, we should try to make everything public instead of creating a bubble of protection where we can experiment with no defined objective or outcome in sight. In a sense, we have replaced the relation of being education consumers demanding to get what we paid for, with a debt relation to the institution that is unmonetised and yet also brings monetised value into the picture. The difference between those relations is that, as associates, we behave as objects of consumption rather than as consumers. We have been subcontracted as artists, and commissioned to be

cent rise in tuition fees in the UK. OSE has successfully addressed the accessibility issue created by fees. The associates come from a range of backgrounds and previous levels of study (in my case a MA from Chelsea College of Arts) and some of them have made it clear that they wouldn't be able to participate if it was a paid-for programme. In this context, I am interested in considering a popular argument about the way students behave after a rise in tuition fees. Much has been written on the impact tuition fees have had in transforming students into consumers², but what I would like to propose here is that there has been a confusion between causality and correlation. These transformations are the result

² Mark Fisher "Capitalism Realism" is a good example of the kind of critique generated by the rise in tuition fees.

High Art, Low Art, No Art

An endurance test of education in De Beauvoir

Charlie George

Robert Frost says: “Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.”



I do not have this ability, I often lose them and frequently at the same time, it is ugly and sad, but it is always authentic.

Poverty has influenced my learning for as long as I can remember, from the poverty that meant I had to embarrassingly be called into offices about payments unmade, bursaries running dry and crying on the steps outside of classes late from work, exhausted, hungry and overwhelmed. To the more subtle poverty of emotional intelligence: i.e. the gut wrenching fear of failure that made each minute part of a process torturous, the egoic judging and comparing of yourself to others, the longing for validation, “good” grades and the longstanding esteem of a scum ridden wrinkly sock, fallen off the back of a bus headed to ‘no hope land’.

It would’ve always been better for me to get a job with a decent wage and work my way up and never think about doing a course or a project ever again. The trouble is, I have always been so incredibly hungry to learn, regardless of what my supposed status was, is, or will be. I wanted to be out there with the big thinkers, the big dreamers and the big doers. I did not want to be reduced to my rent and my class however persistent they were, I did not want to always be the one whom the project was delivered for or to.

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The Twelfth floor of Rozel Court on De Beauvoir estate was one of my favourite rented room abodes, the lift smelt of bubblegum bleach thrown down once a week to cover the other smells of weed and wee and on a good day you could run up the stairs with your shopping for a free workout. David who I lived with was in his 80s. He was spritely and delightful and our casual interludes were filled with the kind of loving cheer that soothed my soul more than I had the chance to express.

I worked in a gym in Bow at the time as a personal trainer and fitness instructor. It wasn’t too far off dancing and the shifts meant I had time available to do projects and keep my dance company running. And when the 5am cycles along the canal in winter and the physical exhaustion of rehearsals got too much, I could sweat it out in the ‘staff perk’ sauna and appease my weary bones. It was indeed one of the better incarnations of my London life.



The building across the road had prompted intrigue for some time in my head. Who was Rose Lipman? Why did she have a building? What happened there? Google, as ever, reduced all the above to finite entities and I found myself sat in a meeting with the fresh management of The Mill Co. discussing the possibilities of dance classes and rehearsal space. On the 12th floor of De Beauvoir Estate, 2012 was blossoming.

By summer 2013 it had withered considerably, expectations on both sides had fallen and energies and trust waned under the mounting pressure to make regular money from the pockets of everyday people in Hackney and/or reach higher numbers of un-monied attendees that could secure outside funding from a noticeable impact in the community.

I had felt I was running out of time and wanted to find a way to remain working longer in the area and gain more support and momentum with what I was doing.

Open School East appeared on the scene. It didn’t sound like it was for me and it probably wasn’t, but I wanted it, I wanted to be around other artists, I wanted to learn, I wanted to get better at what I was trying to do with my work and I wanted to have a proper practice. I still remember the phone call I received saying they were worried about taking me on because of my background and how a lot of the tutors would be from the visual arts and the format would be lectures and I knew I would have to convince them that someone like me should have that space and be part of that journey.

I had lost my sublet at Rozel Court and after sofa surfing in the depths of North London - making travelling to everywhere significantly challenging - over a strenuous summer working at the gym, volunteering to gain experience at a community dance company and giving time to Dark Island Dance and The Mill Co. I made the decision of a reckless heart to move in with my partner who was moving conveniently to Haggerston and, a short walk from The Rose Lipman to cut down mounting costs. I later lost my job at the gym due to a reduction in hours on my naively signed zero hour contract and was on the dole at the time I started Open School East.

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I needed a job, but I needed a job that would allow me to have 2 days off in the week so I could be part of Open School East, and develop myself and develop a practice in De Beauvoir. I didn’t want to sell people fitness anymore. There are many reasons why I stopped working at the gym but the repetition of the same Rhianna song in the gym studio for over a month is the one I remember.

People often said I should get a supporting job in the arts, like arts management or something well paid, but that was still ‘arty’. But, what happens then is you end up appeasing your love by being near it, behind it, across the road from it, for me this would be like a living hell. Like falling madly in love with someone and then agreeing to do their finances rather than sleep with them. I love art, I want to make it. I don’t want to produce someone else’s. And even if it is shit, small, made in a dank room with no mirrors, DIY, misguided, pretentious, demonstrative, not critical, obvious and unsophisticated, at the very least it will still be an attempt at an original expression or proposition and I don’t want to live a life that is devoid of that.



After several tearful job centre episodes, I got some interviews for entry level youth work jobs in East and North London. I wanted to help people really, because if you’re going to have to work and work your way up and then work some more for larger portions of life, I wanted to at least feel, in some part of my being, that this work had a positive impact. This isn’t altruism, I don’t think that’s possible really. It’s all very closely linked to my own shortcomings and the relatability of the longstanding after effects of an inadequate youth, wanting somehow to learn how to improve or change the possibilities for the future. In October 2013 I started working part-time for an arms length organization for the council who coordinate various Youth Hubs working with challenging young people on estates in Tottenham and I am working towards an NVQ in Youth Work & Youth Offending Social Work qualifications with the company. It is the biggest sigh of relief I’ve had whilst trying to make my way in London in a long time, at last a job with some forward stretching path.

First term Open School East teaching was all like: Let's be radical, we'll all sit on chairs around a massive table and have someone of privilege come and talk to us about their experience for 5-6 hours till we can't feel our bums or our faces. However, first term Open School East events and parties were the golden formula of bringing diverse groups of people together and having valuable discussions and sharing ideas, we were also the talk of an 'art world' - of which I knew nothing about - and the Guardian had called us a 'threat to universities', with others chipping in to give their views on the state of the current education system and mounting academic interests in self-organizing groups. I was confused and excited, excited and confused and I was delivering a weekly affordable dance class again, doing pop-up performances, free yoga classes and was ready for what was to come.

What with modern love being about as stable as modern money, after a swinging start my relationship came crashing down and by the end of 2013/start of the new year I was folding my belongings into a chequered IKEA bag and moving out.

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Second term Open School East teaching was all like: Active workshops and responsiveness, physical teaching days and city walks, let's abolish the table and embrace the body! Tasks and open/informal discussions and a residency in France. Second term Open School East events and parties were fast gaining a reputation for hybrid house party/gig vibes, with impromptu performances, great décor/costumes and cheesy nibbles. Everyone started to feel the tensions of managing a study programme merged with a residency/their studio practice, the delivery of extra projects and the ticking of boxes on little yellow sheets of evaluative measuring.

The demoralization of homelessness returned and I shrank. Feeling sorry for myself and everything, I sofa surfed and room surfed at the kindness and mercy of others and occasionally lucked out, staying in places I could never dream of living, no bubblegum bleach in these swank lifts!

After much desperate caterwauling I found a room that I thought would work out but swiftly didn't and then found a place that was better and that worked, (all to great financial detriment of course). And there was some ill health thrown in there too, but by March 2014 I was settled in an affordable single room in South Tottenham and some type of equilibrium, who knows whose, was being restored.

I missed quite a bit of school during this time, which made me feel bad because I wanted to squeeze so much out of this experience - and prove I was worthy of it in some way too I guess - but sometimes experience squeezes things out of you. The aim is: DON'T BE BITTER JUICE. I hosted a feminist feast event and made a dance-theatre show in April at the Yard Theatre which was a mean feat considering all that had gone down.

The forecast: Third Term Open School East teaching will be all like: This is it, what have we got to lose! Distinct groups of subject areas. Trips, lectures, physical teaching days, seminars, reading groups and crits. Third Term Open School East events and parties will be their own glowing breed and hosted by the wondrous *Wish You'd Been Here* evolution. There is a residency in Cornwall planned and an exhibition at PEER gallery in Hoxton. The space is being hired out and encroached upon at an alarming rate. A table has been returned- and tensions mount between partners and interests/usage within the building. A second year cohort of Open School East hangs in the balance of funding challenges and the first year is on the hunt for space to continue their own version of what's been created... LONG MAY THE VIBES CONTINUE!

The reflections: I've learnt so much about ideals and ideas of community on this project and I truly believe now that art should not be used as a tag-on to social inclusion work. Working in Tottenham has taught me very quickly these are two very distinct things with distinct needs and unless they genuinely correlate, have focus and purpose what you have is 'funding fodder' and a farcical experience for participants, building genuine relationships and working on social inclusion is a long haul process or at least it should be, otherwise how can you create genuine lasting impact beyond a one off 'good experience' that benefits an art institutions annual report more than it does a person or a community?

Also is there not great value in allowing artists a studio practice and development programme without turning people in the local community their in, into targets, but rather creating their own inherent community through shared space and organic interactions; surely we aren't losing faith that if art is good enough, interesting enough and accessible enough it will be engaged with. But these are my thoughts.



The Tintin room of Open School East will be infamous for many things, but I remember one of the dimmer moments letting in some light for me. Too scared, ashamed and heartbroken to tell anyone what was happening for me in my life at that moment, I slept one night on the brown sofa by the bookshelf with my little wheelie suitcase at the foot of it. And as I lay there crying emphatically with a snot bubble forming at my nose, this epiphany came:

It's not about climbing up a ladder at all.

It's not about being exhibited in a big gallery or on a big stage, or being great and then imparting greatness to the lowly.

It's about standing still and being open, and letting it all flood in and out and through you.

It's about self-organizing, evaluating and re-organizing and having strong questions even if you don't yet have strong answers.

It's about simple maneuvers, slow advances and retreats.

It's about FUCKING DANCING

And it's about enriching yourself in the process

And it doesn't matter what the "world" says

Whether you're a wrinkly sock with no BA or a golden slipper with a PHD the best way to grow from where you are is just to do it.



"The best thing for being sad,' replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, 'is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing, which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn."

— T.H. White

<http://www.themillcoproject.co.uk/>

<http://www.openschooleast.org/>

<http://wishyoudbeenhere.tumblr.com/>

I wonder whether the incorporated person has had a similar history to the human person, as a consolidating legal fact which has given rise to a social one. I wonder whether Open School East and other incorporated persons' fuzziness can be seen as these persons playing with this social fact, with interesting consequences.

Marcel Mauss was a French sociologist active in the first half of the twentieth century. In his essay *A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of the Person, the Notion of Self*, he argues that 'personhood' (in the usual sense that we normally associate with a single human body) existed prototypically long ago, before consolidation by a legal mechanism of Roman law, before advancing over the centuries to become the 'social fact' that we know today.

The new body, the *corpus*, that is brought into being when individuals are incorporated is not only a legal object but a social one as well. It only exists conceptually, but it's taken to be a fact in the world.

Open School East is a fuzzy person.

It jars in my mind with the more familiar reality of sitting in a meeting with the thirteen other OSE associates and directors for hours every Friday morning. This scene is typically a room of fourteen completely divergent positions being vocalised. But then, you wouldn't expect the OSE person to be particularly compelling in the forum where each of the associates can each assert their own, individualistic agendas. This is where the fuzziness starts to come in. These meetings can be a space of disincorporation, as their long duration attests. But the following week an OSE patron might visit, and the incorporated person is reassessed, as the associates return to being advocates for OSE.

This is a good example of a fuzzy person incorporating by cultural means. It sees cultural artefacts mobilised and leveraged, rather than legal ones.

The page does a lot of work towards suturing OSE into the typology of an art college (albeit an 'alternative' one). Once you accept OSE as an organisation with parallels to the (well-entrenched) organisational type of the art college, then an existence and identity for the OSE *corpus* is on its way to becoming established.

Go to the OSE website and you'll find a biography of myself and each of the other OSE associates. There's a good reason we're all there: the associates' study programme is one of the main reasons for OSE to exist. It shows the individuals who have become incorporated.

The fuzzy incorporation of OSE has always struck me as extraordinarily pragmatic and resourceful, achieving all that it has in a very short space of time by responding to very specific, current cultural circumstances concerning visual art education, the socioeconomics of East London, state funding patterns, the casualisation of labour, and 'enterprise culture'. It's an impressive achievement!

But I wonder to what degree this makes OSE dependent on the cultural circumstances on which the conceptual existence of its *corpus* is predicated. I wonder to what degree it relinquishes a right I would expect most artists would hold very dear, to occupy a position that is fraught, vulnerable, open or generous, and to move ambiguously between many such positions. Relinquishing this right for the sake of maintaining a specific relation to other, key cultural artefacts (art college, tropes of incorporation, the socioeconomics of East London, the conception within local government of artists' responsibilities, and so on) sounds like it could be a recipe for an extreme banalisation, if not the compromise of things one firmly believes in. As long as incorporated artists' trajectories and works do not conflict with the cultural circumstances on which the *corpus* is predicated, all is well. When the two come into tension or conflict, it might become necessary to choose which of the two should be more highly valued.

The ‘cultural institution’ I’m interested in is not Open School East at all, but that of incorporation. I’m interested that different individuals and contexts are able to affect the personhood and degree of incorporation of a fuzzy person in different ways.

Open School East does have a legal status of incorporation, of course. State recognition does a lot to make the existence of the new body compelling, but it’s not easy to point to where the importance of the state ends, and where other, more informal, cultural, significances begin.

The idea of a fuzzy person begs the question, how can incorporation exist by a matter of degree if it’s identified through a legal status which is either held, or isn’t? The answer is, the incorporation of fuzzy persons isn’t established by legal means, but by cultural ones.

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ii

I made that word up, from:

‘Fuzzy’ logic, in which a proposition is not simply either true or false, but exists by a matter of degree. The degree of truth is determined by the context of facts in the world. For instance, “it is hot” is true to different degrees in different contexts.

‘Person’, which isn’t interchangeable with ‘human’. In a lot of legal systems, the mechanism of incorporation allows a group of human individuals to be identified as a single ‘person’. The human membership changes but, once incorporated, the ‘person’ stays the same.

So a fuzzy person exists because a group of human individuals have become incorporated. That incorporation remains by a matter of degree, which changes with the context.

In some instances, there’s no tension between an associate’s trajectory and the OSE *corpus*. At other times, there can be quite a lot of tension. The event that inaugurated my project was covered in an article by a local newspaper which apparently offended some within local government. This is also the body that rents physical space to OSE, and so marketing material for the event emphasised that the project is mine, personally, and not so strictly from the body of OSE. The fuzziness of OSE meant its incorporation could be loosened in a particular way, at a particular time, for a particular purpose.

There are probably no better examples of OSE’s fuzziness than the ‘outward facing’ projects associates are tasked with producing.

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At other times, a degree of disincorporation would have been good for everyone, but very difficult for anyone.

I took part in an event in New York in April, called ‘Composing Differences’. The curator was interested in new arts organisations and so invited Open School East to be represented. The event was not an entirely happy time for the three of us from OSE who were lucky enough to attend. I can say this very easily, because it doesn’t feel like it was anyone’s fault.

There was an incongruity between what the three of us felt we could offer the event, and how the curator had hoped OSE would appear at it. Neither position was unreasonable. The curator had done a good job of discerning a singular, personal identity of OSE. The problem was, that singular person doesn’t exist and so instead, we were there. This made for an ill fit, but OSE’s *corpus* was the object of interest, and so there was no room for us to disincorporate from it to any meaningful degree. The event couldn’t accommodate the fuzziness of OSE.

A similar frustrated disincorporation has come about at other times throughout the year. The times when each associate has been able to produce what they identify as their own work are the scarce times when that associate has been able to forcibly withdraw from the OSE *corpus*. At least, this is my experience.

The fuzziness of OSE is not wholly, freely manipulable. It is only so at particular times, and in particular contexts.

Inside

I was placed and then isolated.
The possibility that I had been lost worried me.
I waited for a signal, as I had done before.
I was bored but I deferred any kind of search until hours, days, weeks later.
When I finally took action it was unorganised and without purpose.

Listening

I began to listen to the radio. If a message was to come it would be through the radio, there was a precedent for this.
I scanned through stations, listening for something to connect to.
I pushed through static into new accents and languages that rubbed up against each other, jostling for space.

It seeped through walls and into bedrooms and kitchens.
I moved around the room, arms outstretched, standing on chairs, stumbling accross the path of stations with weaker signals.
Bursts of song, then static, sermon, then static, advert, then static. A layer of landscape flooding the space between the buildings and topography.
I listened closely to adverts because they signified a physicality beyond the static.

Outside

Outside was no better than inside.
I started walking from where I was placed to the source of the radio adverts.
I hoped that they'd reveal something.

The businesses advertised were located towards the edge of the city.
Here the language of the city broke down and the relationship between the exterior of buildings and their function was disrupted as shops were used for homes, warehouses for nightclubs, factories for churches.

As I walked from high streets to retail parks I felt a lack.
Not in the place but in me.
I could see and hear the city and I could feel the spirit of the city.
But I couldn't reach the social.
I concluded that searching was pointless. That I was a single thing looking for something so big that it was implicated in everything.
If it wanted me, it would find me.

The Message

I stopped walking and began to drive.
I usually drove at night because I enjoyed the feeling of leaving the city and looking back and seeing its lights.
It was from this view that I could feel the city best, at once removed and connected.
I was sitting in a car on Epsom Downs scanning the radio bandwidth when I heard a voice:

The voice strained over the static:
listen
Static.
listen

I listened.
The voice didn't return.
As I drove back into the city I carried on listening to the static, the radio fixed on the frequency that hosted the voice, waiting for it to return. And then one came, sporadically at first, jumping in on the static, bursting with words.

Gradually the bursts became more consistent and the sound of a pirate radio station brushed away the static. I realised that the voice that told me to listen had been placed just outside of the broadcast range of this station.
I focused my search on these new points created by the limits of a radio station's reach. I drove away from the city, my destination determined by where any chosen station's broadcast range stopped.
The limits of the stations took me to golf clubs, underpasses, lay-bys, fields.
It didn't seem to matter what direction I drove in the messages would be there.

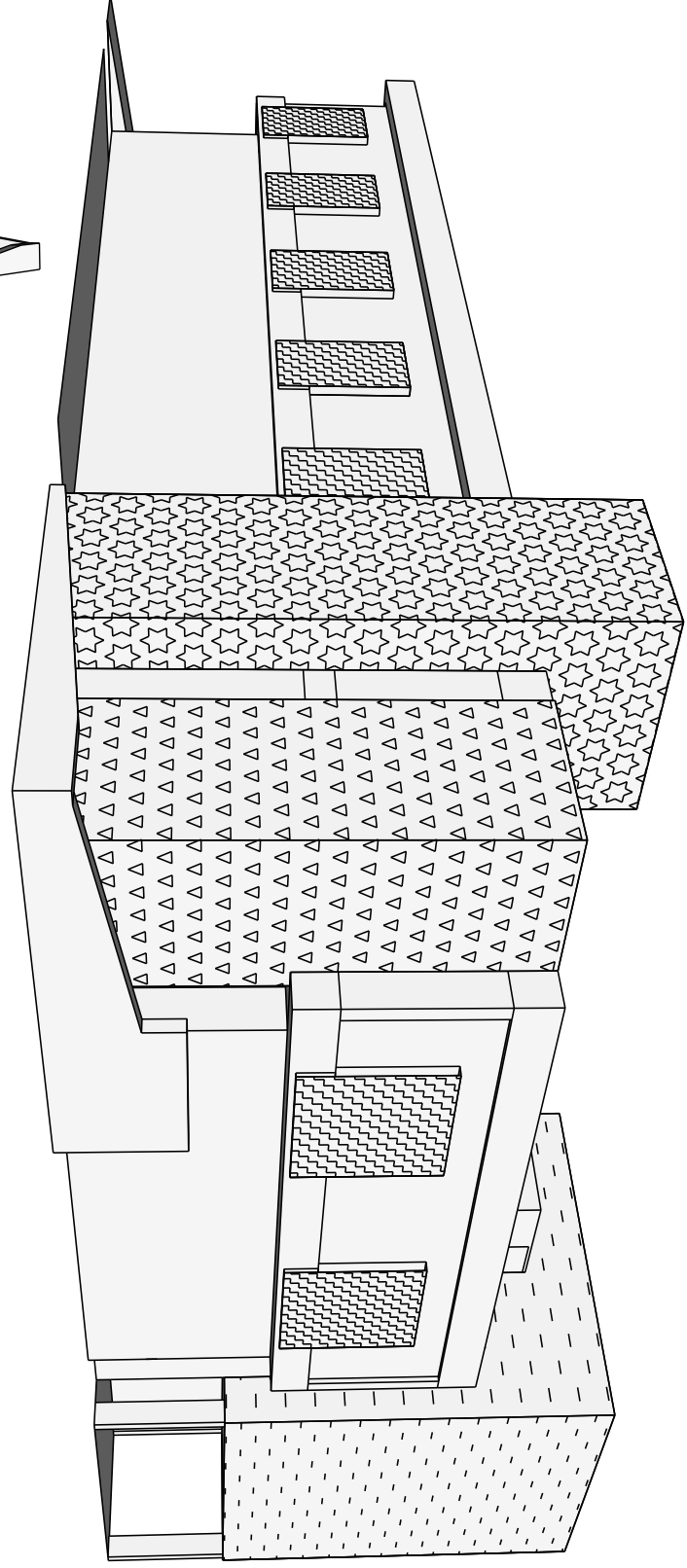
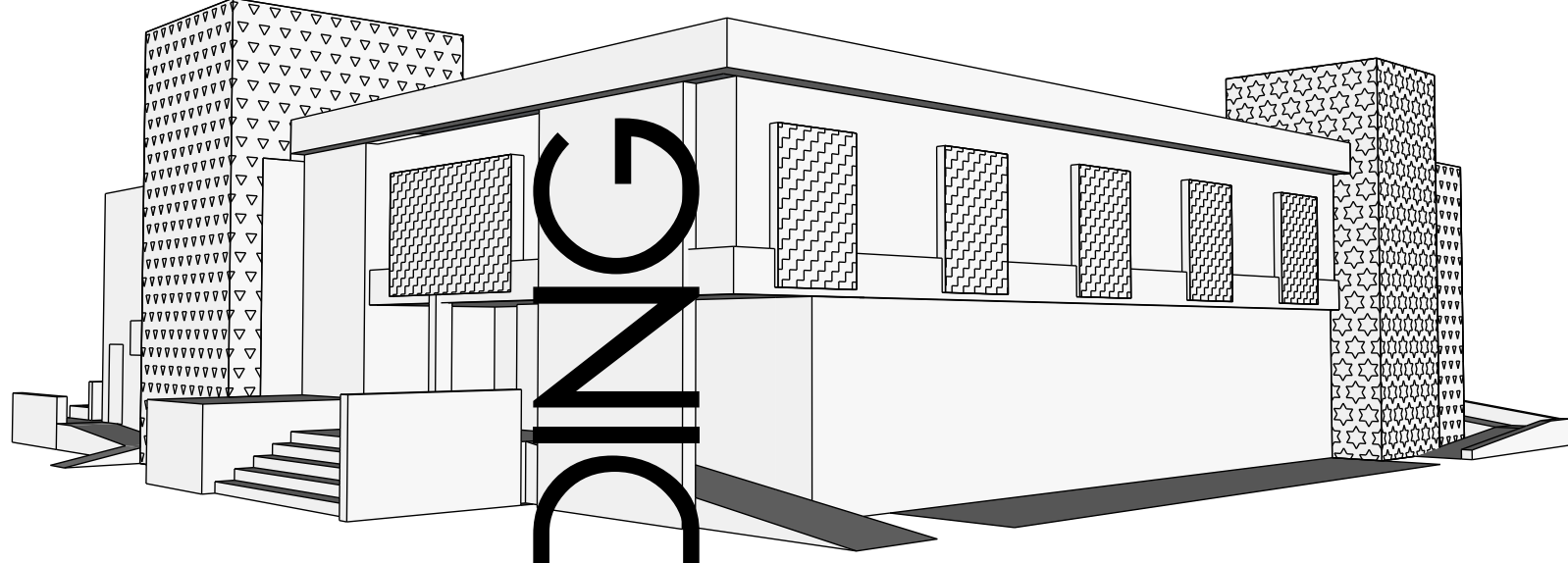
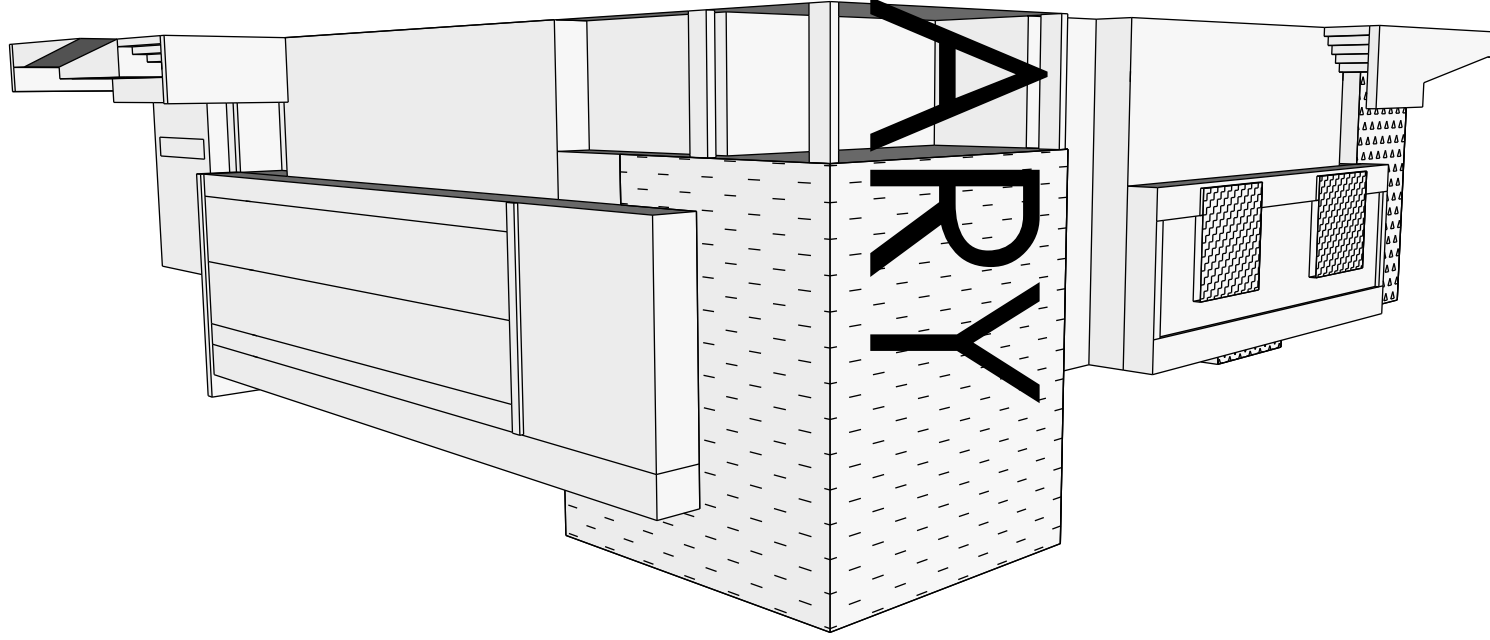
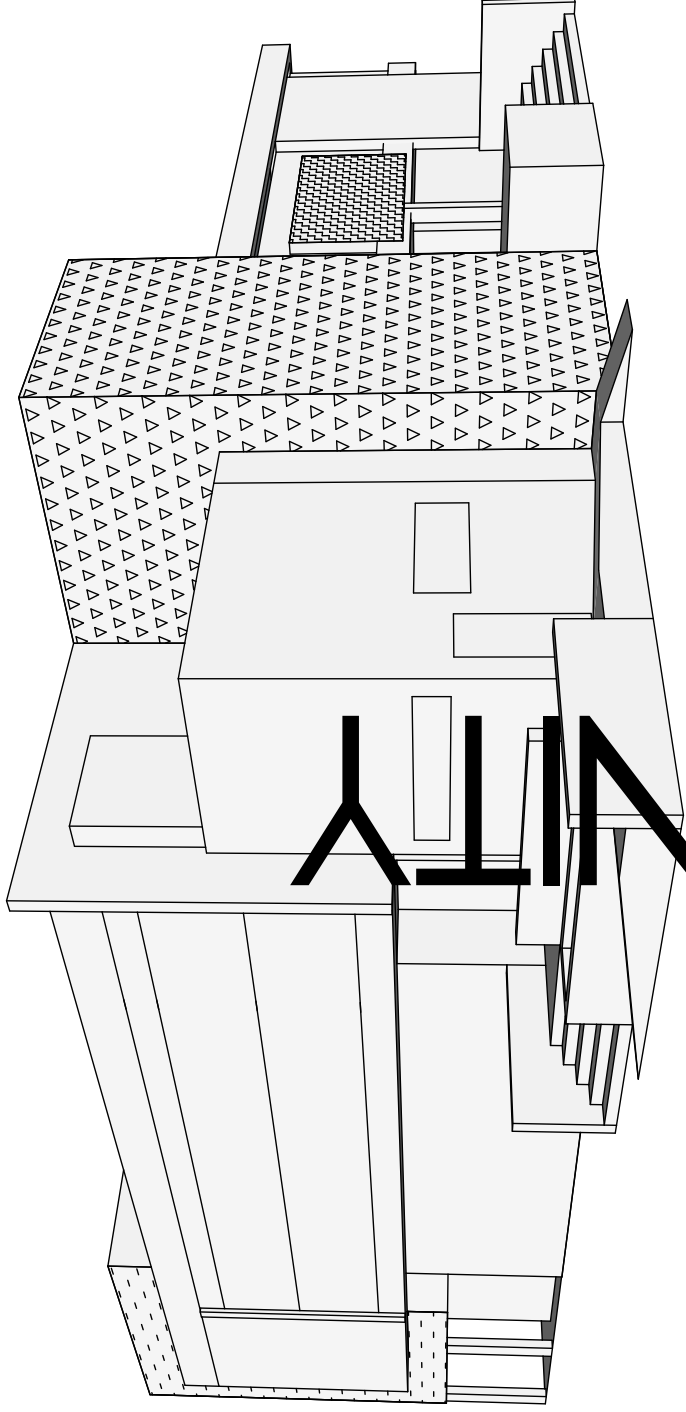
Inertia

The messages were clear; they told me where to go and what to do. But they failed to acknowledge what had happened and what would happen. Many of the messages provided tasks but they were menial and seemed meaningless. It felt like it was stalling. The tasks became more and more bureaucratic and seemed to serve only the purpose of affirming the legality of me being in the place where I had been placed. The boredom returned and I stopped driving and the tasks. I stopped going out. I just stopped.

COMMUNITY

BUILDING D B T

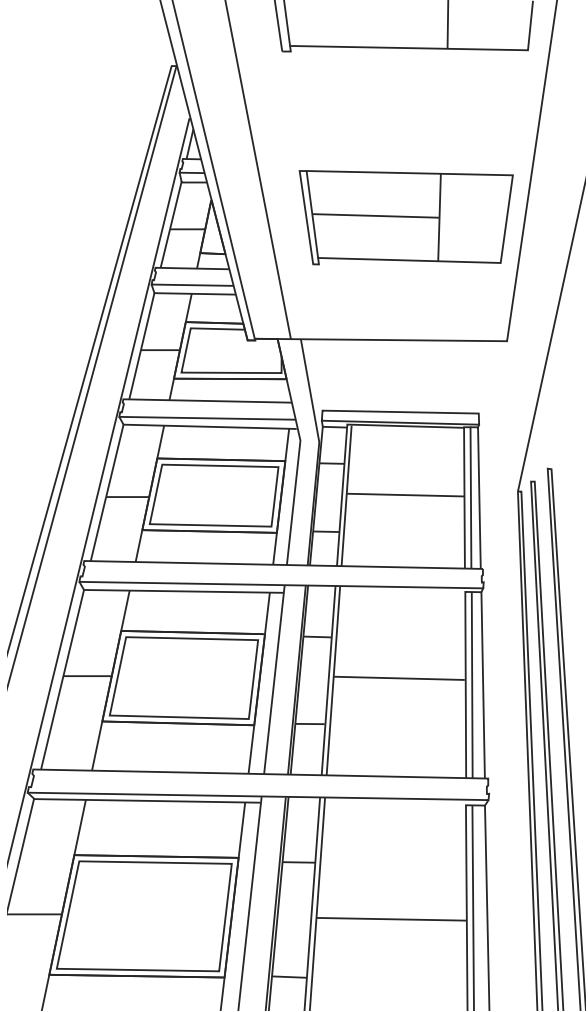
LIBRARY



DEVELOPMENT OF THE DE BEAUVOIR ESTATE

Part One of the redevelopment of the De Beauvoir Town (DBT) South area was approved in 1956 and a compulsory purchase order was issued for properties south of Beryon Road. In the same year, the Housing Subsidies Act (in effect until 1967) focused on redevelopment and rebuilding. It provided increased subsidies to offset the cost of building above six storeys. This was only shortly after the abolition of post-war building materials rationing, ending in 1954. Both of these changes in policy encouraged site clearance and rebuilding with high-rise accommodation. ‘Crisis’ initiatives such as Harold Macmillan’s 1951 promise of 300,000 new homes a year was still influential in planning and housing policy.

In 1958, the London County Council gave Town Planning Approval for the development of the De Beauvoir Estate, appointing as architect Sydney Burley of Burley & Moore, the practice becoming Burley Associates (with Wilson Briscoe) during the design of the estate. Burley & Moore had just designed the Public Library in Dalston for Hackney Council (pictured below), opening in 1959. This was replaced by another building designed for the estate by Burley, named on plan: *DBT Library Community Building*.

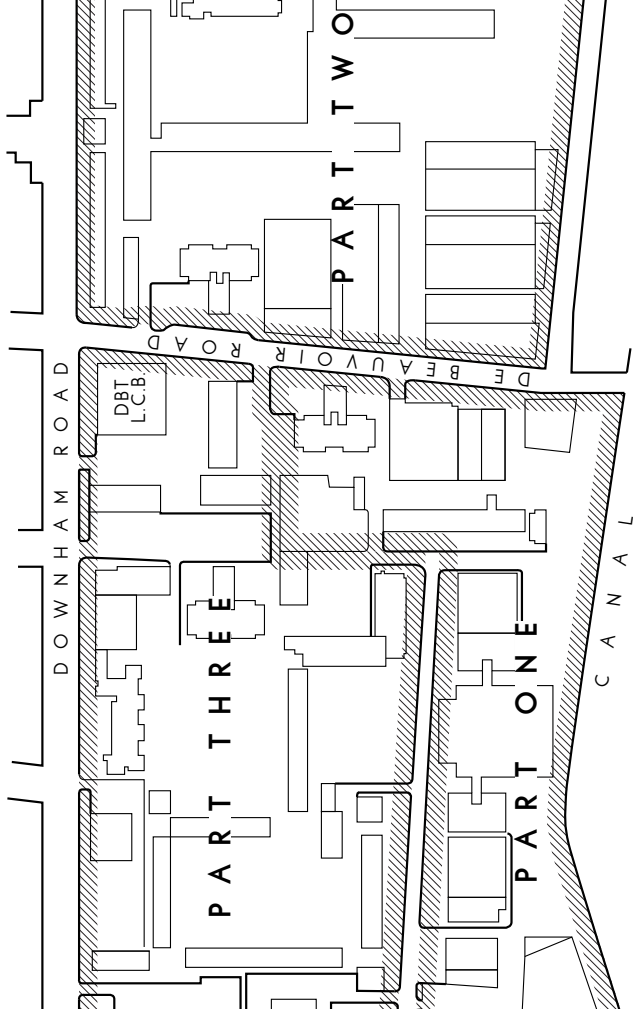


In 1962, Hackney’s Housing and Town Planning Committee approved the possible inclusion of 18 storey, two bedroom maisonette blocks, allowing these to be designed into Burley Associates’ scheme. During the design of Part One of the DBT redevelopment and a year before the 18 storey blocks were approved in principal, the *Parker Morris: Homes for Today and Tomorrow* report was published in 1961. This report set out minimum dwelling space standards per person, highlighted storage space and called for all rooms to be heated, legislating a rise in the quality of council housing to match the rise in standards of living in the post-war decades.

Whilst only becoming mandatory in 1969, the guidelines set out by the Parker Morris report were seen as the new minimum standard for council housing and its criteria were incorporated into the design of the DBT Estate.

The plans for the Part One of the estate were finalised by 1965. However shortly after these plans were completed, Burley Associates were asked to modify the layout of the estate to allow for a new motorway extension of the M11 forming part of the *London Ringways* plan, put forward by the London County Council and then overseen by the newly created Greater London Council. The extension would have run from Hackney Wick to Angel Islington to meet the A1 and the inner ring road, along a filled-in Regents Canal, less than 65 feet from the edge of the DBT Estate. This necessitated re-planning, replicating two of the estate’s previously designed high-rise blocks along the side of the proposed motorway: structures that would be more resistant to the noise of motorway traffic. Due to fierce public opposition and the enormous cost, the *London Ringways* plan was cancelled in 1973, the DBT motorway extension remained unbuilt. However, this protected line for the M11 extension can still be seen in the estate as a green, landscaped belt running parallel to the canal.

Part Two of the development included a revised scheme of 300 dwellings, approved in 1967. Part Three, approved in 1968, included 337 dwellings, 11 shops, 4 houses, a public house (the unbuilt *Mortimer Arms*, that would have been run by the Brewery Watney, Combe, Reid & Co), a doctors surgery, an old people’s home and a library and community building. By 1969, the first residents moved into the DBT estate, with its residential building completed by 1972. The *DBT Library Community Building* was not finished until 1975, incorporating a lending library, children’s library, borough archives, community hall and nursery.



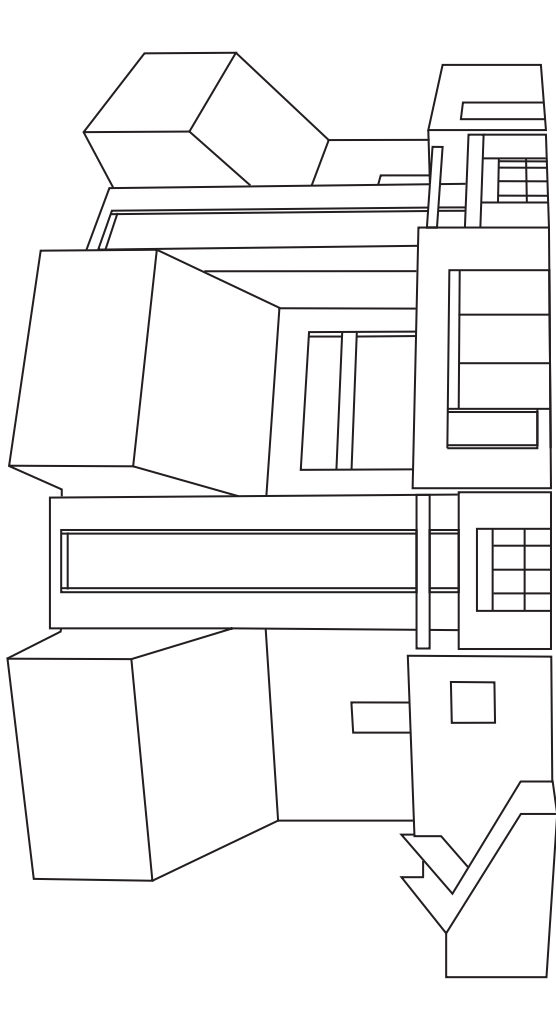
DESIGN OF THE DBT LIBRARY COMMUNITY BUILDING

On opening in 1975, the *DBT Library Community Building* was known as the *Rose Lipman Library* by the signs on one side of the building and *Rose Lipman Community Centre* on the other. It was named after a Hackney Councillor, who died a year before the building’s completion. Four aspects of the Rose Lipman building are pictured on the reverse of this page, clockwise from “Building”: view from North East, North West, South West, South East. The drawings show sections of the building decorated with four different hatch patterns. These patterns follow and highlight external massings that are evidence of how the building was designed.

These external forms are shaped by internal uses of the building: book shelves (zig zags), stair cases (triangles), store rooms (stars) and the stage (dashes) are all identifiable as brick protrusions on the outside of the building. The library appears to be designed from the inside out.

“They expect to see each function given a clear and separate volume, which ideally speaking, is an outline of the function... They would have designed the building as a series of boxy fly towers and wedge shapes”
[Charles Jencks talking on the ‘expressive functionalism’ of modernist architects in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*]

The 1928 Rusakov Workers’ Club (pictured below) in Moscow by the architect Konstantin Melnikov, is a building that helped establish this paradigm: the envelope of the building closely follows the volumes needed for the function within. Once informed that the three sloped cuboid protrusions are the exterior expression of three auditoria within, it’s easy to imagine the banked seating they contain. However, this direct translation of necessary internal space to external building shape codifies it more as a modernist manifesto expressing structural requirements, than elucidating the structure’s social function.



The Rose Lipman building shares the Rusakov Workers’ Club’s derivation of building shape from uses. As analogised by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, these buildings are designed like gloves, not mittens: their form follows as opposed to accommodates the function.

The Rose Lipman building was designed and still functions to serve the local community. Its broad range of planned and successive uses has necessarily resulted in a visibly and structurally nuanced design. One of the new functions of the Rose Lipman is to accommodate Open School East. As a model of a non fee-paying school, an architectural comparison to recent analogous *Academy* and *Free Schools* seems valid and both are structures of public provision. In October 2012, the Education Funding Agency (Department for Education: DfE) published a series of guidelines for the design and construction of new schools called *Baseline Design for Schools* (part of *School Building Design and Maintenance*). The document attempted to prescribe aesthetic restraint as a solution to new budget requirements in school building, with stipulations such as:

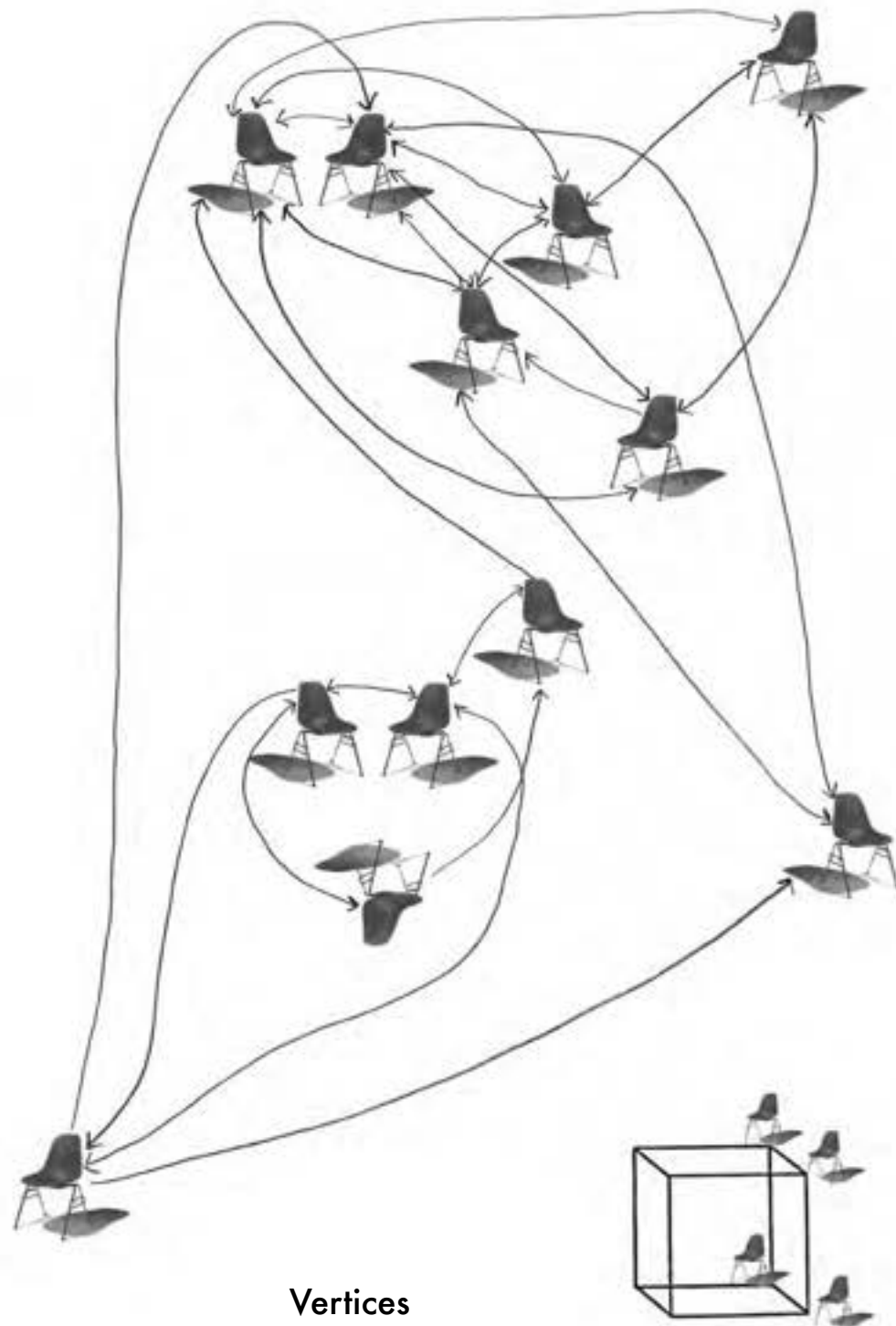
“Using orthogonal forms with no curves or ‘faceted’ curves, having minimal indents, ‘dog legs’ and notches in the plan shapes... design replication (for example, elements of layouts can be replicated across more than one site)... design repetition (for example, limiting the range of window sizes/types)... no glazed curtain walling or ETFE roofs, low cost envelope materials such as render or metal panel”

With current governmental civic design policy calling for “*minimal indents, ‘dog legs’ and notches*” a simplicity of plan and lightweight and low cost cladding material, the specification of the highly tailored and confusing layout of the Rose Lipman seems all the more antiquated. The housing of the DBT estate was faced in dark engineering brick, and the library in a lighter tan coloured brick, closer to the colour of the London stock bricks used on the North side of DBT (north side of Downham Road). Arguably similar to the DfE guidelines, this was a lower cost and politically appealing envelope material. The decision to design with brickwork followed from the chairman of the housing committee who deliberated on Burley Associates planning requests between 1958-1962 who was trained as a bricklayer and wanted support the business in Hackney.

The hatch patterns in the drawings on the reverse of this page retrospectively apply a crude form of BIM (Building Information Modeling) to the Rose Lipman. This is a technique of generating digital and graphical representations of physical and functional characteristics of structures. Effectively it produces a diagrammatic model of the building so its different functions can be read by a broad audience of parties invested in the building. This practice will be mandatory on all public projects in the UK from 2016. If the Rose Lipman were to be demolished, its replacement would be modelled in this way.



Basic assumptions, time, and development



Vertices

LISA SKURET
Version 1

One of the striking things about utopian experiments is their tendency towards a short life span. Perhaps this is in the nature of experiment – an evolution of thinking in which one moment learns from the next. However, these projects tend, rather, towards implosion or explosion. While financial sustainability certainly plays no small role, their demise seems to stem from the difficulty of thinking about and engaging with difficult interpersonal dynamics perhaps arising from habitual self-interest. This is not unusual and is common to all groups. How can change be sustained when dynamics are reproduced within a new template? In 'Remaking Social Practices', Guattari suggested that "without modifications to the social and material environment, there can be no change in mentalities", and perhaps one might in tandem listen to the 'individual' forces already in operation. For example, the rush towards a comfortable consensus shuts down and pushes out dissenting voices. However, an errant voice may be articulating that which needs to be said on behalf of the group. To quote artist Franck Leibovici, it is important to "keep alive the polyphony" of a group, else we are in danger of shutting down resources. People are either listened to and felt to be part of the structure, or they disengage through silence or absence. What is difficult gets swept under the carpet or blamed on individual personalities.

In the absence of a shared intention how can a group develop? Does a group need to have a leader? When there is no shared intention or structure, structure in the form of an uncontested leader often operates under the radar. Can a group without active self reflection be productive? If so, of what? As a result of unacknowledged lines of force and uncontained primitive dynamics, does it produce only centres, margins, cliques, rivalries, envy and paranoia. A production of more of the same. Are other modes of production possible?

The stackable, moulded plastic chairs currently in use at Open School East are remnants of a former Rose Lipman Library (RLL) in its previous life as a public library, archive and community centre. The iconic design for the chair was produced at around the same time as the construction of the building and wider De Beauvoir estate in the late 60's - early 70's. One of my enduring memories of OSE is negotiating these chairs during the weekly group meetings. A company currently selling these chairs to schools and other institutions has branded them as value for money 'Affinity' chairs.

The term 'affinity group' was coined during the same time period by Murray Bookchin, political activist and theorist of social ecology. As the name suggests, an affinity group is linked by a common interest or purpose. In Bookchin's terms this would be a self-organising, nonhierarchical group that shares a (micro) political and often revolutionary intention, which in turn, informs its form and movements. The structure of the pre-fabricated affinity chairs have, like the invisible process of group dynamics, an unacknowledged hand in determining the individual's form and movement.

The diagrams in this piece are, like OSE, one manifestation of a process of responding to present conditions. I sit at one vertex of a matrix. It is difficult to know what the OSE matrix is. The diagrams map some possible configurations.

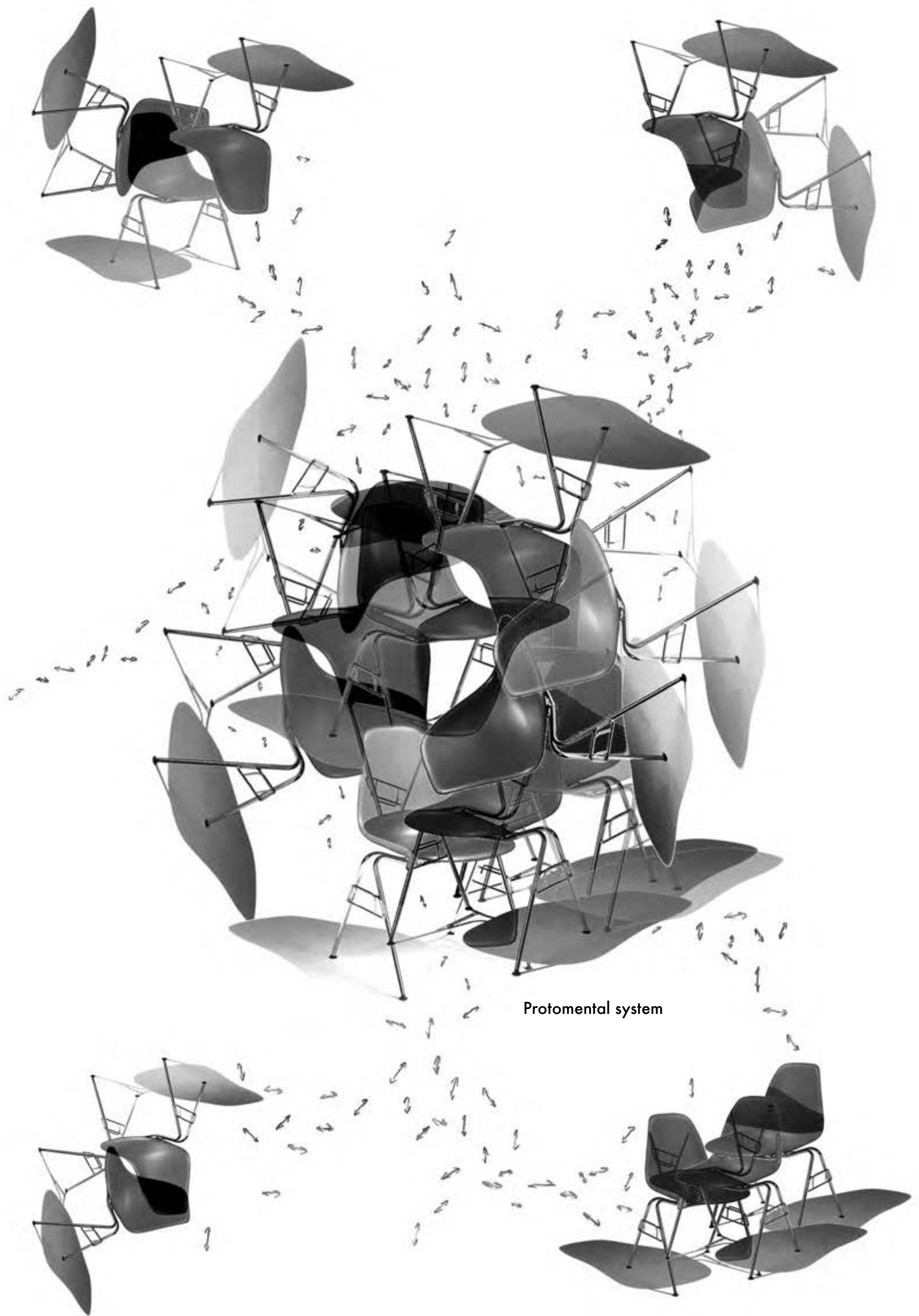
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The questions above informed my ongoing project which has developed out of my experiences in and outside of OSE, and the building and the contexts in which all are currently set.

COMMUNAL MATERIALS; OR, EVOLUTION ISN'T FAST ENOUGH is comprised of three interrelated strands: different methods of speculative problem solving, related to the rise & demise of utopian projects, with different groups. For more info: www.lisaskuret.com.



The dilemma of the individual



Protomental system

Score for measures 1-76. The score includes staves for Voice L, Voice M, Voice R, and various percussion instruments: Big Gong, Small Gong, and Triangle. The lyrics are: "Listen and be gentle, if you will, Story". The score includes multiple "Ahhhhh" vocalizations with performance instructions: "(Deep inhalations, slow exhalations, in ecstasy)" and "(whisper)".

Tommy Ting
Limhouse Blues
Part I of III

Score for measures 77-121. The score includes staves for Voice L, Voice M, Voice R, and percussion: Small Gong, Triangle, and Cymbals. The lyrics are: "In Lime house Where we", "is kind to the least of men!", "love to play In Lime house Where you can hear those blues all day". The score includes multiple "Ahhhhh" vocalizations with performance instructions: "(exclamation) ooo-awa!!!" and "(exclamation) ooo-awa!!!".

Score for measures 122-176. The score includes staves for Voice L, Voice M, Voice R, and percussion: Woodblocks, Big Gong, and Triangle. The lyrics are: "It is kind to the least of men", "It is kind to the least of men", "It is kind to the least of men". The score includes multiple "Ahhhhh" vocalizations with performance instructions: "(exclamation) ooo-awa!!!" and "(exclamation) ooo-awa!!!".

Score for measures 177-231. The score includes staves for Voice L, Voice M, Voice R, and percussion: Big Gong, Triangle, and Cymbals. The lyrics are: "Listen", "Listen", "Listen". The score includes multiple "Ahhhhh" vocalizations with performance instructions: "(Deep inhalations, slow exhalations, in ecstasy)" and "(no pause)".

[illegible]

417

Triangle

417

Cymbal/Ring

Voice 1.

You can buy your self a bit - a vi - oa

pipe of

Voice M

You can buy your self a bit - a vi - oa

pipe of

Voice R

You can buy your self a bit - a vi - oa

pipe of

And fin here...

So what do we care?

You're here...

The image shows a musical score for a three-part vocal setting. The voices are Soprano (Soprano), Alto (Alto), and Tenor (Tenor). The lyrics are in English and German. The piano accompaniment includes a 'Triangle' section with a '140' tempo marking. The score is written for three voices and piano.

Lyrics:

English: It was a hard fall of snow
German: Fortsch-dam dreasen of o - p - unt
English: They help you
German: Fortsch-dam dreasen of o - p - unt

Triangle Section:

140
Triangle

Figure 1 displays the musical score and lyrics for the song "Cymbalsong". The score is written for three voices (Voice I, Voice M, and Voice R) and includes the lyrics: "Go-ing the way the rest of them did". The lyrics are repeated for each voice part. The score is divided into two systems, each containing three staves. The first system shows the vocal parts with lyrics, and the second system shows the vocal parts with lyrics. The lyrics are: "Go-ing the way the rest of them did". The score is divided into two systems, each containing three staves. The first system shows the vocal parts with lyrics, and the second system shows the vocal parts with lyrics. The lyrics are: "Go-ing the way the rest of them did".

2

18

Voice L

Voice M

Voice R

In Little house. Where we love to play. In Little house. Where you

101" Small Gong/ Triangle

107" Small Gong/ Cymbals

114" Small Gong/ Triangle

85

Triangle

7

Voice

li-un or a hand-ful of snow For-bid-den dreams of o - gi um They help you

Voice R

li-un or a hand-ful of snow For-bid-den dreams of o - gi um They help you

Triangle

The musical score for "Blues for Mr. Jones" is written for three vocal parts (Voice I, Voice M, and Voice R) and percussion. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Above the staves, there are labels for percussion instruments: "Small Gong/ Cythara/ Small Gong" and "13\" Triangle". The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The lyrics are: "can hear those blues all day. You can buy your-self o-bli-vi-on pipe of".

90

Triangle-Small Gong

Small Gong

Triangle

Voice

bridge the gaps But, there's no rose with-out a thorn— Re - mem-ber that, Love

Voice R

bridge the gaps But, there's no rose with-out a thorn— Re - mem-ber that, Love