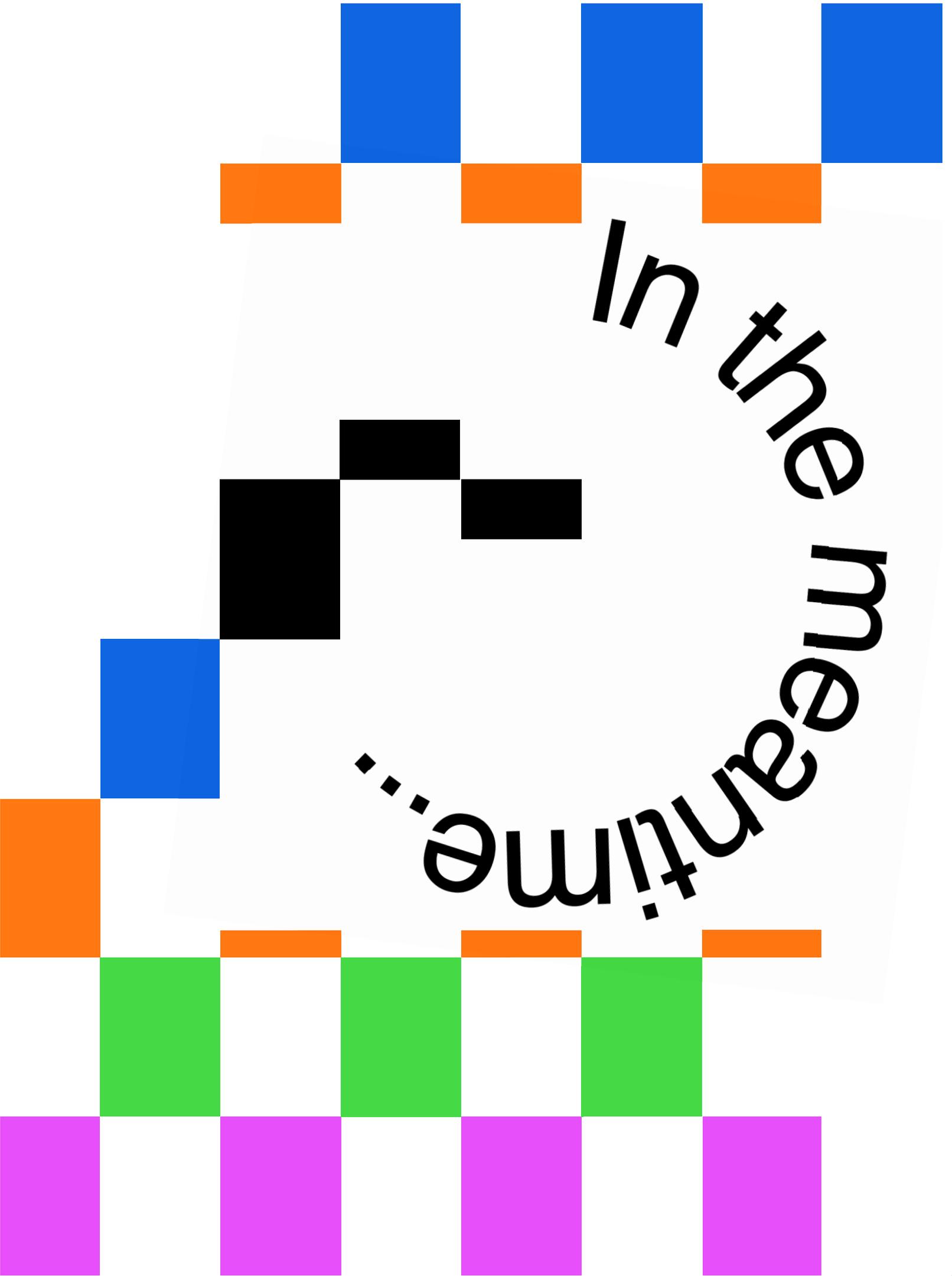


In the meantime...



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Forewords

This PDF is an accumulation of exchanges, anecdotes and personal resonances that speak to moments missed and moments that have remained and sustained them in the area between Camden Art Centre and Somers Town. We invite you to engage with each contribution as a companion while you walk, wander through Camden and wonder.

What is our travel influenced by, when listening?

In the meantime... weaves narratives into an experience for viewers by celebrating the everyday anecdotes of life lived in Camden.

What shapes our perception of certain surroundings from the process of wandering and listening?

In the meantime... adopts a slower, more considerate approach to programming that not only aligns with walking, but also the autonomy of space and belonging.

What truly belongs to us in local areas?

In the meantime... works with a selection of contributors embedded in the socio-political landscape of Camden.

How do we interact with and understand being located in the urban landscape?

In the meantime... aims to foster a collaborative approach that operates within existing community relationships.

What local narratives and unheard voices exist within the stretch between Somers Town and Camden?

In the meantime... invites audiences to engage with the work of artists and local residents whose practices bring the experience of belonging to the area of Somers Town.

INSTRUCTION NOTE FOR PRINT

To print this PDF use the 'fit to paper' option on your computer.

Introduction to contributors

Esther Leslie

Notes for the Use of this Companion

This companion is designed to accompany a walker on a stroll along Chalton Street, NW1. It takes the walker from South to North and points out locations where companionship has exerted, or continues to exert, some sort of influence.

This companion, like dreams and the unconscious, or like the city street itself, does not aspire to chronological ordering. Times are tangled. Events pile on event. Buildings steal foundations from those that went before them. There has been much destruction here. Ghosts walk amongst the living. The walker will encounter absences, presences, layers, glimpses, buried meanings, half-formed thoughts, observations, disavowals, things plain for all to see, cyphers in the cityscape, defaced signs, departed people, living souls, events from long ago that still pervade the atmosphere, and occurrences that have vanished into thin air, or are barely registrable.

Each stopping point on this walk is called an association and there are 18 of them. The first is not at the top of Chalton Street, where it meets Euston Road. It is too noisy and polluted there to begin a disquisition on friendship – one can barely hear one's own thoughts, let alone dialogue with a milieu. The walk begins further down Chalton Street, in front of an arch connecting two buildings: a symbol, one might say, of being together apart. Here, tucked further into Somers Town, the feeling might more easily arise of being inside an enclave, and of being tangled in its histories and strange vibrations, its peculiar out-of-timeness, its dislocatedness, its curious reinforcement of a sense of being stranded with others.

Sonia Uddin

Minutes is a zine response to the redevelopment of Camden Studios exhibition hall from a resident's perspective. We adopt council language and procedures to address decisions that impact the lives of local people. A group is formed, meetings scheduled, minutes taken and actions planned. This archive, newsletter or pamphlet speaks to the losses and gains of an artists' community through recordings, notes, drawings, articles and photographs taken during this time.

Minutes was printed with the support of Rabbits Road Press, a community Risograph print studio and publishing press run by OOMK, using largely recycled paper and soy-based inks.

Minutes can be bought as an original risoprint on Instagram via @camdenstudios.

Javier Calderón

Javier was invited to speak to the project from the position of a local organisation, the UK Mexican Art Society, and reflect on how the area has influenced the practice of running an art space. Javier's contribution explores the influence of centralised networks in the area of Somers Town and questions how we might seek to decentralise. The primary difference between centralised and decentralised networks depends on who has control. In a centralised system, a singular authority or administrator retains control, whereas in a decentralised system the control is distributed through a wider network. Javier's work encourages us to visualise our networks in order to better understand them.

Jaimie Denholm

Jaimie has lived in Somers Town for his whole life. He was invited to speak to the project from the position of a local resident to reflect on the area and its influences. His writing navigates the ideas of interwoven narratives, memories and home.

Joygun Nehar

In 2019, Joygun staged a series of weaving workshops called 'Joy in Weaving' as part of 'MAKE @ Story Garden', which brought together Somers Town locals from all walks of life. 'Joy in Weaving' encouraged people to experience the playfulness of a textile weave, creating a space for the community to come together and tell stories through the making of cloth. The approach to classes was freestyle – each participant learning a range of weaving techniques to then design and translate into their own style. The fabric shown in the image, Hot Loom, was a celebration of working on a piece together. Over an eight-week period, participants wove at a communal table loom. Each taking their turn, members would offer varying fibres and colours to the cloth, composing a selection of unique points and patterns. The yarns chosen were of various thicknesses and helped add different tactile textures to the piece. Some of the sections are very tightly woven, while other parts are loosely assembled with strips of fabric. Each of the different approaches coming together to form a single body of work.

As the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak took everyone by shock, the collectively woven sample had to be temporarily put on hold, something which on reflection we've chosen to interpret as a promise to come back together again.

A big thank you to participants for their fabulous weaving: Stacey, Amalel, Ella, Rafin, Cecilia, Josha, Nazma, Jesses, Jade, Yayha, Silvia.

Caroline Mawer

Caroline was invited to speak to the project from the position of a local artist and reflect on how the area has influenced her practice through engaging in an activity. Caroline's contribution explores the Wood Wide Web- the connections between neighbouring trees and what our local trees say about our communities.

Lucy Joyce

Lucy engaged in a Q & A to reflect on a site-specific installation she made in 2011 on Christchurch Hill, called *Disco Tower*. For this work, Lucy placed strobe lighting behind a sheet of tarpaulin covering building work at the top of a flat block. We reflect on the work a decade on.

Esther Leslie

A Companion on Chalton Street
2021

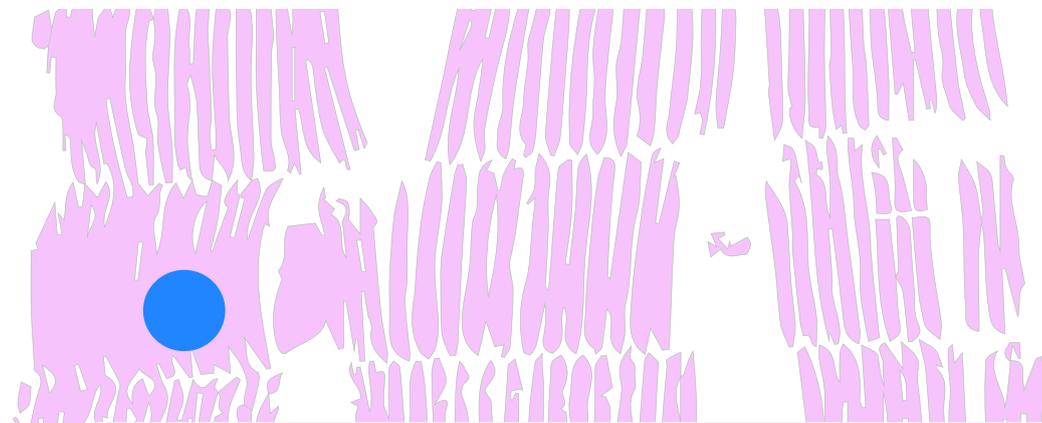
Association 1: The archway between 26 and 28 Chalton Street
Godwin and Wollstonecraft: Building a Partnership

In Somers Town, along this route, a love developed, slowly, a bond that tightened over time, even if it loosened again on occasion. Here, Mary Wollstonecraft, feminist, and William Godwin, anarchist, cultivated, for a few years, a relation between equals. These two broke or rewrote the rules. A book drew him to her: *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, from 1796, in which she ruminated on how difficult it was to find and sustain friendship, that is to say, to come upon a life companion. Wollstonecraft's philosophical politics rested on the notion of friendship, 'the most sublime of all affections'. Her most widely read book, from 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, considers friendship of utmost importance to living well - be it that between man and woman, child and parents or between those of the same sex. Friendship requires equality and rationality – as opposed to the enemy's adherence to rank, pomp and custom.

Godwin became a friend of Wollstonecraft, touched by her writing's melancholy and tenderness, which combined with intelligence and genius. She came to visit him in Chalton Street, sometimes at his home - number 25, in the old numbering. Through Godwin, Wollstonecraft found a circle of associates who were accepting of her radical ideas about emancipation and education for women. They were tolerant too of her daughter Fanny, born out of wedlock. But for them to become counterparts took time – and friendship is complicated by love. In the many periods of rift and retreat, Wollstonecraft would call herself – in an effort to compel companionship from Godwin - a 'Solitary Walker'.

Association 2: The Bench outside Mai Sushi restaurant, 36-38 Chalton Street
Friends Indeed

The three women meet most Friday lunchtimes here at the market. They collect on a bench near the café to catch up on the week's events and watch the world, over a cup of tea, from this tiny corner of it. They have been in Somers Town for ever or, at least, a very long time. One remarks on how long ago it was she met her 'beautiful people'. They remark on how there used to be places to go around here and people to see and how everyone talked about everyone else and what they were up to – but it was never mean-spirited. Now, even without the pandemic, everyone is shut up and shut in. Homes have become cages. Companionship is in short supply. Only St Mary's Flats on Doric Way still has a bit of to and fro and some friendliness about it. One of them announces that she is going away to her daughter's for a couple of weeks. Her friends look shocked. 'Suit yourself'. 'Don't worry about us!', they quip in that sarcastic London way, when one party feels hurt but concedes to the good fortune of the other.

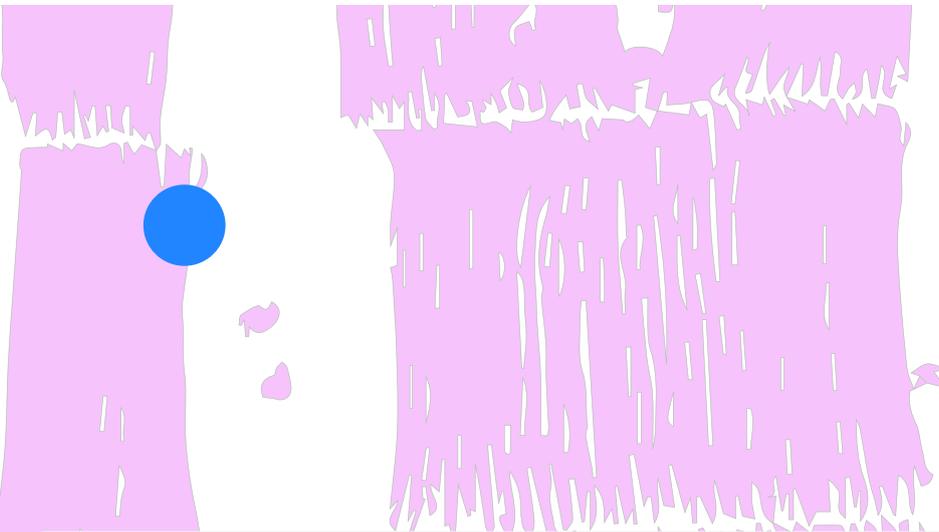


Association 3: Pinner Café, 44 Chalton Street
Companionship Interrupted

The wide pavement seemed even emptier. The tables and chairs were stacked in a corner of the café. For some time, the café could no longer function as a meeting place. It was forbidden by the extra-ordinary laws that came into being in the time of Coronavirus. All those people who had known each other for decades, had gone to nursery and primary school together here, could no longer meet on Fridays, during the market. In any case, the market had dwindled down to a couple of stalls. It was cold. It was a grey winter and sometimes an Arctic wind whipped along the street. Those who had been friends for years now mostly existed separated, shut away in their flats, domestic prisoners. Under such circumstances of quarantine, it might be expected that Google and the web would become their friend.

In Somers Town, the network was patchy. Some lucky ones, schoolchildren, received dongles, donated by a tech company to try to extend the reach of the network, to boost the powers of connection, and yet the coverage remained poor. Surrounded by Google, Facebook, YouTube offices, digital start-ups and rentable hotdesking outfits on Chalton Street, the people of Somers Town languished in digital poverty. The cloud platforms were rarely friends to them, were not the conduits of friendships through online calls and online clubs and quizzes and parties and communal film-watching sessions.

When might they again begin to break bread here together at the café, or share a few triangles of toast and margarine. Those who once walked these streets, when the settlement of Somers Town was first built, were French and they too met in cafés on Chalton Street to eat *boeuf à la mode*. They might well have known that the word companion comes from the Old French, and is based on Latin, *com-* and *panios* – one who breaks bread with another. As Spring brought some blossoms, even if it brought snow too, and the lockdown cautiously lifted, café life began to return, cutting into the isolation that was the only thing to brew for months. Slowly, they edged in towards Pinner café, hugging the edge of Levita House, an ambitious housing development from the 1920s, with a design sensibility derived from radical developments in public-housing in Vienna, specifically the Karl-Marx Hof. Vienna has its coffee culture – could Somers Town have one too? Companions collected again, cradling instant lattes in paper cups, and friendships were re-established.



Association 4: The Gardens behind the Archway Gates, Levita House, Ossulston Estate
Insiders Outside

With the café's seating removed and the builders bringing supplies backwards and forwards through unlocked iron gates, the gardens became accessible as a place to gather, masked or not, seated on the old benches or perched on a low wall. A man from the café brought over cups of coffee and tea and sausage sandwiches, as people sat and chatted. One day, a woman recalled, for those amassed, the details of her billeting during the Second World War: six long years at various addresses in Dunstable, away from her widowed mother and siblings. At the age of twelve, she returned to Somers Town, fearful of being suddenly removed again, with nothing but a school-issued barley sugar stick for the train journey and the trauma, once she arrived, of her best coat being flung on a fire, because London children, it was said, brought lice with them. Back home, at the war's end, friendships had to be formed again and family re-encountered. She did not recognise her brother when he returned from the Battle of Monte Cassino. Soon, she found a husband-to-be in the neighbouring block of flats – one named after one of the saints, just like her block was. Once married, the two of them moved into a third block close by – named after another saint. She did not stray far from home again.

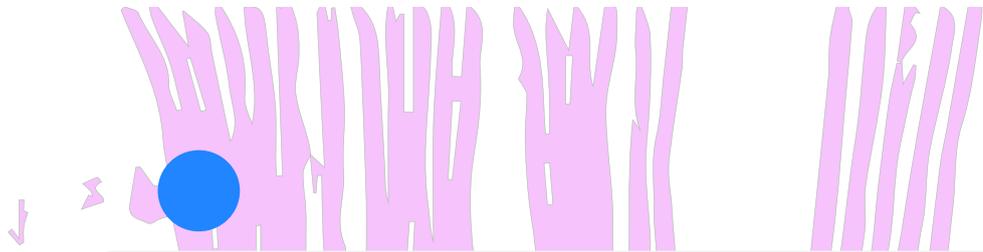


Association 5: Somers Town Coffee House, 60 Chalton Street
Hangouts for Contacts: Out of Towners

Last Summer, the Somers Town Coffee House set out striped deckchairs on the wide pavement. In the Winter, there appeared a lavishly decorated Christmas tree. As the pandemic restrictions ended, several old barrels appeared, settings for outside drinking and dining, in small standing groups. This pub has money. It is a pub for fortunate people who have done a well-recompensed day's work at the nearby tech companies or in the creative industries. You see them arranging and celebrating their meet ups on Twitter, with links through afterwards to Instagram, where they have posted photos of 'office drinks with the team'. The pub has kept its name for centuries but has changed a lot over that time. It had nosedived into being a dark and dismal place for serious drinkers, before it was scrubbed up as a French gastropub for the 21st century. This refurbishment was a throwback in time in a way, for the coffee house's origins lay with the French exile community of two hundred years before, though in its earlier days it occupied a different building, no. 32, a few houses South of the spot where it stands today. A description from 1878, at the point when it had already existed for nearly a hundred years, presents it as 'the only coffee-house' in what was 'a delightful and rural suburb, with fields and flower gardens' and nearby bathing wells and tea-gardens.

'Many foreign Protestant refugees had taken up their residence in this suburb on account of the retirement it afforded, and the low rents asked for small houses. At this time the coffee-house was a popular place of resort, much frequented by the foreigners of the neighbourhood as well as by the pleasure-seeking cockney from the distant city. There were near at hand other public-houses and places of entertainment, but the speciality of this establishment was its coffee. As the traffic increased, it became a posting-house, uniting the business of an inn with the profits of a tea-garden. Gradually the demand for coffee fell off, and that for malt and spirituous liquors increased. At present the gardens are all built over, and the old gateway forms part of the modern bar; but there are in the neighbourhood aged persons who remember Sunday-school excursions to this place, and pic-nic parties from the crowded city, making merry here in the grounds.'

No more of that. Or rather perhaps it is still some of all that, if inverted. It is not a pub for locals, those crammed in the crowded city surround, but one for merry-makers who come to the city centre from the suburbs or the distant out-of-town stations, whose terminus is nearby Euston or St Pancras. Now part of the Yummy 'boutique' pub chain, it is surrounded and swallowed up by stone and concrete and it regulates its custom by the price of its alcohol, food and, indeed, the coffee, which it now serves again. It is especially welcoming to those who take up the offer of a £750-a-night serviced apartment on the upper floor.



Association 6: Between 65 and 67 Chalton Street, at Churchway
Faithful Companions



Religion permeates this corner of town: the waves of Catholics from France and Spain, who set up their chapels and institutions, long gone some of them; other lost institutions, such as the West London Mission at Weir's Passage or Christ Church, the thousand-seater church on Chalton street, bombed in the war, or the Presbyterian Mission Church by George Lethbridge. Not so far away, the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers, built a headquarters, a Friends Meeting House, on Euston Road. St Aloysius Church and the mosques in community halls and repurposed rooms persist, as does St Marys – which established the Magdalen College Mission in 1908. Under Father Basil Jellicoe, it set up the St Pancras Housing. Improvement Society. For a much longer time, the Faithful Companions of Jesus Sisters have ministered in Somers Town, since the 1830s, when they worked amongst the French émigrés. Over the years, a friend in one God or another for so many poor and unfortunate people marooned on Earth, in the island enclave of these tight four corners. No walker is solitary. Another silently walks among us on this path.



Association 7: Ball Court, 84 Chalton Street
Thick as Thieves

The ballcourt is like a prison. Its fences are high – so that the balls do not break out. It seems to stop people going in. Sometimes friends gather here to smash a ball around. It must feel like being in cage. Who really wants to be in a cage, even if with friends? There are rules to abide by – metal signs itemise them. No drugs. No skateboards. No fires. No cigarettes. No alcohol. No dogs. No bikes. Everything is ornamented in rules these days. Metal square after metal square lays out the rules. Up the road, a Camden Council sign on a corner of Levita House announces, 'Do not use this area as a urinal'. Its thin strip of a man spraying a dotted line of urine is now covered over by another petition: 'Stand Up! We do not consent. No new normal.' The pandemic has added another layer to everything. The signs are conversing with each other, a war of words on the street. On the ballcourt, the distance between us – a social distance - is enforced by signage.



Association 8: UK-Mexican Arts Society, 96 Chalton Street
Comrades and Lovers: Frida and Diego

The gallery showcases Mexican culture – a faint reverberation of the Latin Americans who lived and worked in the area, in exile, in the 1820s. One such was Andrés Bello, who would come to feature on Venezuelan and Chilean banknotes for his political, philosophical and literary work.

In March 2021, large photographs appeared on the gallery windows and on the building site hoardings opposite. They included several images of Frida Kahlo, who also features on a banknote, a Mexican one. The photographer was her friend Hans Gutmann, who had fled fascist Europe and renamed himself Juan Guzmán. One photo shows Kahlo, in 1950, in her hospital bed at the Hospital Inglés, where she had been fitted with a plaster corset, after surgery that attempted to alleviate the chronic problems with her spine and right leg. Diego Rivera leans in to kiss her, she who is prostrate, adorned with a large ring on each finger, earrings, bracelets and a head dress. They are husband and wife – for a second time - and they love each other, even if they also love others and have endless affairs. On her corset, a cage for her back, Kahlo has painted a Communist hammer and sickle. Kahlo and Rivera are comrades too. Comrades and lovers. They love each other and they are lovers of others. They are comrades for each other and for others. The house where they lived, in Mexico City, was called Casa Azul and it was an open house. In those last years before she died, friends would come to stay and some would take photographs of the interior crammed with arts and crafts, or of the garden with its cactuses and lava rock paths and a scaled pyramid that displayed Rivera's collection of pre-Columbian art. Guzmán took several photographs of Kahlo using a mirror to decorate her corset. Underneath a hammer and sickle, she painted a developing baby in a uterus, just where her womb was. It looked back to her fetuses lost to miscarriage and lamented the impossibility of her birthing a child - a little Dieguito - with Rivera. Gisèle Freund stayed at Casa Azul for two years around this time and also photographed Kahlo in her garden, in her studio, in her wheelchair. She was another friend, and her name, Freund, in German means friend.

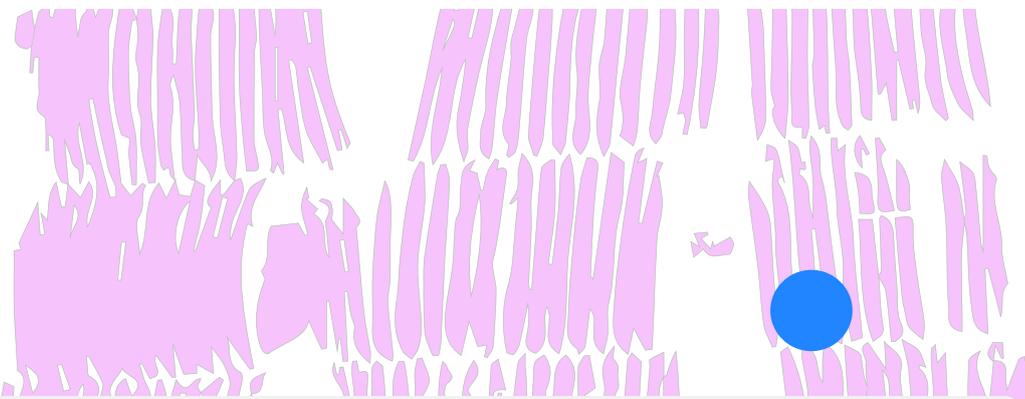
*Association 9: Hoardings, next to Chalton House,
built on the site of Evesham Buildings*
William G. and Mary W.: Comradeship and Communication

Wollstonecraft fell pregnant in 1797 and she and Godwin married, four months into the gestation. They lived together at the Polygon, in the heart of newly built Somers Town. It was a semi-circular block of three-storey houses. Bedrooms were on the second floor, a dining room on the first and a parlour on the ground. Around the Polygon was open country – for little development had taken place in the locality at this time. The anarchist Godwin, rule breaker, rule bender, had preached against marriage and both he and his wife had written of independence. This was no fairy-tale marriage. Friendship, observed Wollstonecraft, was compromised by love and love was compromised by marriage. Indeed ‘friendship and forbearance’ would have to take the place of a ‘more ardent affection’, as marriage settled into everydayness. To keep some distance between them, perhaps to save their love or to sustain their friendship, Godwin rented another space for himself, a room to write in, at 17 Evesham Buildings – twenty doors away from the marital home. As both existed in their separate locations, Mary, their maid, acted as a courier, transporting notes up and down the street through the day: reminders to bring a certain book home, notices about visits and appointments.

*Association 10: Crossroads Chalton Street and Phoenix Road,
looking towards Oakshott Court*
Mary Loves William Loves Mary

Wollstonecraft, in her moments of solitude in the Polygon, wrote about art and beauty and worked on a novel titled *Wrongs of Woman*. It was about friendship – a three-way relation between a woman who has been imprisoned in an asylum by a cruel husband, a warder who befriends her and a lover, who, in the end, will abandon her. Friendship is brittle in a world that is brutal.

Young Romantics turned up at the Polygon. Friends and admirers, such as William Hazlitt, Samuel Coleridge and Henry Fuseli. And so Godwin and Wollstonecraft enjoyed an enlightened and romantic union, one between two who held onto their independence, shared circles of friends and cultivated their own – though not without jealousy arising at times. But a rotten placenta left behind by baby Mary as she left the womb was soon to kill Wollstonecraft. Companionship was interrupted at 29 Polygon Square. Godwin later married his next-door neighbour.



*Association 11: Crossroads Chalton Street and Phoenix Road,
looking up at the sky*
Desperately Seeking a Friend

A letter appeared in the local newspaper, the Camden New Journal on 25 June 2020

Can you help me to find my old friend, Bill?

I LIVED in Godwin Court, Somers Town, in 1999 and had a friend called Bill who lived in Polygon Square.

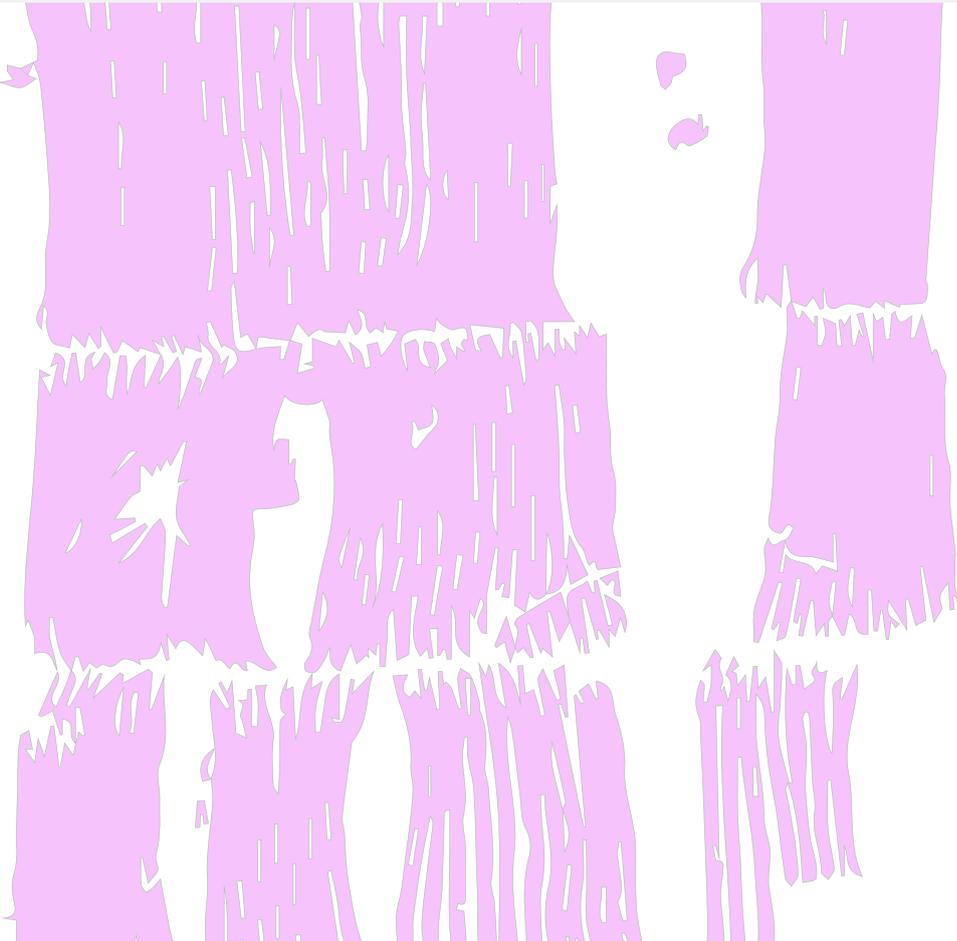
He was born and bred in London, about 5ft 7ins tall, down-to-earth, slim, wore jeans and jumper.

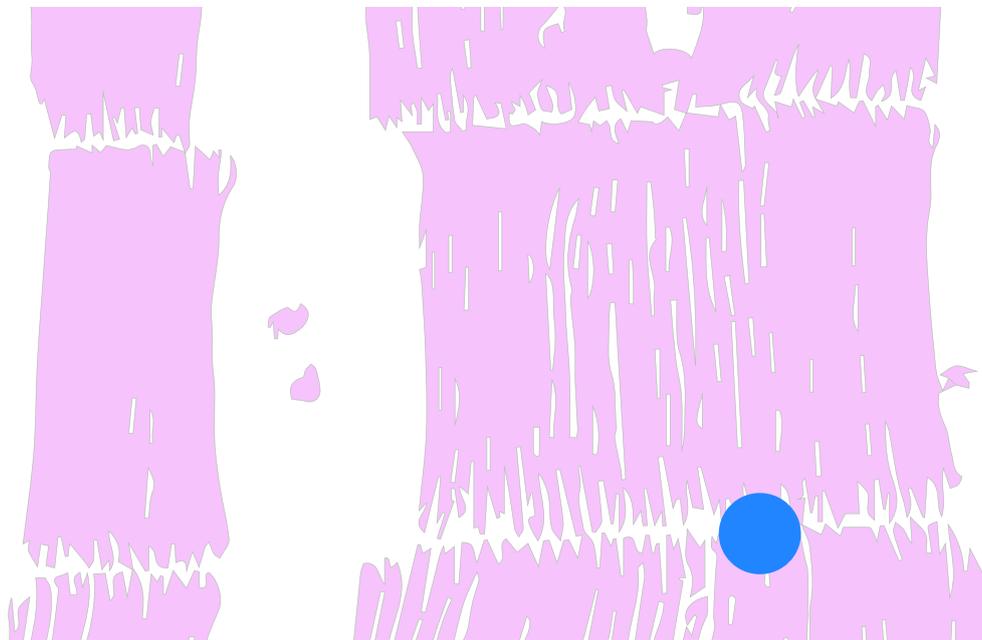
I'm from Cornwall. He nicknamed me Dizz/Dizzy. Can you help in any way to find him please? I forgot his surname.

LEONORA STOCKER

Cornwall

Bill lived on Polygon Square, she wrote. But there was nowhere of that name since Mary Wollstonecraft had lived in the area. And after her day Polygon Square was renamed Clarendon Square. In the 1970s, it became Oakshott Court. Did Bill inhabit another dimension?





*Association 12: Crossroads Chalton Street and Phoenix Road,
looking East towards St Pancras International Station*
Tomo and Marek: Buddy Movie

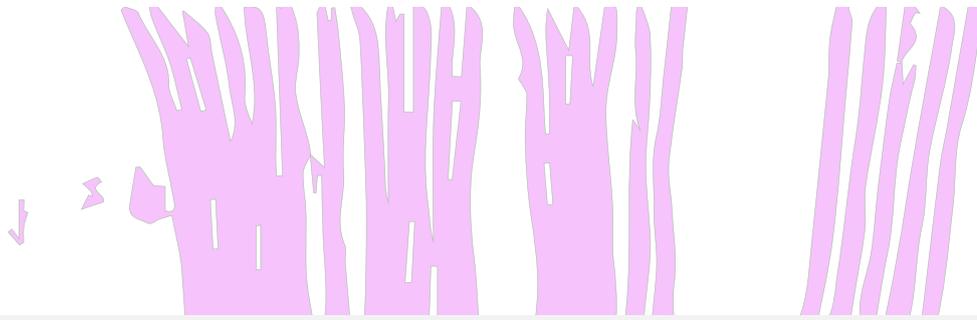
There is a fantastical version of Somers Town. It exists in a film by Shane Meadows, made in 2008: *Somers Town*. That Somers Town is black and white and bleak. The film was paid for by Eurostar and conceived by a marketing firm, Mother, to promote the nearby high-speed rail service to Paris. Its version of Somers Town is a dismal grey, foil to a Paris that appears in the closing scenes as colourful, charming and hopeful. The film is, nonetheless, a fairy-tale and is heart-warming, even if the location is chilly. It is about an unlikely friendship, between a runaway boy, Tomo, born of violence and hopelessness, who takes a train to St Pancras and stumbles into Somers Town, where he is immediately mugged. He runs into a Polish boy, Marek, the same age as him, newly arrived and without friends. They bond, despite no common language, and they both fall in love with a French woman who works in the greasy caff on Phoenix Road. Just as we consume the pleasures of their friendship through film, Marek and Tomo indulge their fantasy of a relationship with the waitress through photography. Paris is close – Marek's father works on the railway and gushes about the swift journey under the sea. Perhaps the boys only dream that they make it to Paris, chasing after their dream woman, who gave them the time of day for narratively inexplicable reasons. But really it is a buddy movie, even if not one in which two friends have adventures while on the road. These two boys loiter around the playground on Chalton Street and in the underground lock-ups of Oakshott Court, in Marek's cluttered flat, in laundrettes and on balconies, going nowhere much, caged in Somers Town and its few streets. Outsiders both – they fit in with all the other misfits in the area, past and present. Somers Town has always been a place for people who did not fit elsewhere – migrants, remnants, dissidents, awkward customers. But everything changes. The kaleidoscope that is Paris is hurtling down the line now. Phoenix Court, where the two boys live, was, at the time of the film's production, situated above trade union offices. Soon afterwards, those shabby ground-floor offices got a lick of Egyptian blue paint and had mirror windows fitted. It became LocalGlobe and Latitude, a hub for Venture Capitalists. Inside, now, there is bright yellow upscale lino flooring and some clouds float on the ceiling. The chairs are rainbow-striped. Venture capitalists' friends are on Linked-In.



Association 13: The Cock Tavern, Crossroads Chalton Street and Phoenix Road, looking North
Friends and Sidekicks

On 16 October 2020, the night before London moved into Coronavirus Tier 2 restrictions (preventing mixing between different households indoors, in homes or pubs and restaurants), an anarchic spirit rose up on the crossroads outside the Cock Tavern. The pub landlord said they came from nowhere. Within minutes, one hundred and fifty young people were thronging outside the pub, drinking beer bought from there or from the off-licence across the road. They had congregated, it was said, as a result of Snapchat posts flashing between friends. It was, the pub landlord supposed, a 'last hurrah' before restrictions were imposed again, after a Summer of mingling and 'eating out to help out' and, then, the slowly-gathering momentum of Coronavirus cases spreading across the country. Soon, the police arrived, accompanied by the heavy public order enforcers, the Territorial Support Group. The police's blue lights fused with the energy of the event. Fights broke out. There were arrests. Being friends is problematic in a pandemic.

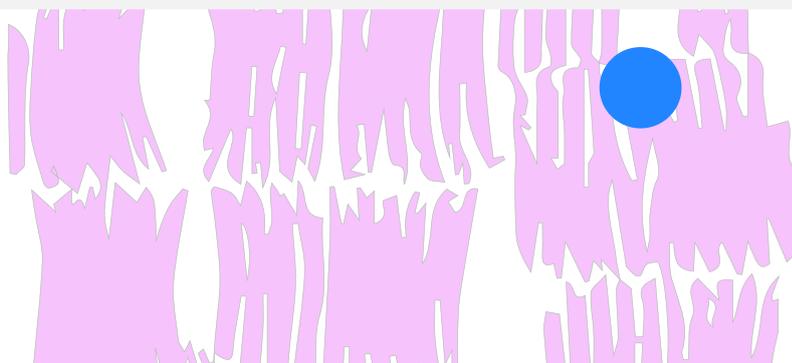
After that, the pub stood empty for months. The drinkers were holed up between their own four walls, caged in again. Loneliness is an epidemic in a pandemic. Who will still remain, who will have survived the bleak months, expatriated from this tiny exile patch of Sligo?



Association 14: Polygon Road Open Space, or Chalton Street Gardens Our Mutual Friend

There were mountains round here, raging on the skyline where King's Cross stands now – and close to where the new Merck pharmaceutical research hub will tower high above the horizon. These mountains were made of ash and dust, of cinders from fires, of rubble, of broken bricks, of dead animals, of grit and excrement. Precarious piles of waste, this made of the locality a suburban Sahara – some dust blew away on the wind, some was made into bricks, some found its way to Russia to build a new city. That the dust could be separated out and sold to various industries taught there was value in anything. Dust heaps take on a central role in an 1865 novel by Somers Towner Charles Dickens: *Our Mutual Friend*. Nicodemus Boffin inherits wealth from his employer John Harmon, who amassed a fortune as a dust contractor in Somers Town. Value is in muck. The true heir to the fortune, Harmon's son, fakes his own death in order to find true love and not one based on a fortune he should and will rightfully possess. The novel, Dickens' last complete one, scandalised grammarians with its title. It should be rightly 'A Friend in Common', the pedants cried. Mutual admiration, mutual love, mutual respect, mutual hatred involves just two people – each bonded by a quality they share in an act of reciprocity. The mutual friend in the novel should, by that logic, refer to two people who are friends to each other. But literature need not follow logic and Dickens' indicated by his usage a third person, the friend of two people, who might not know each other.

Nowadays, we are drawn into a circuit of friends in common each time we dally on social media. Facebook calls 'mutual friends' the friends that are common between profiles, my friend X and I share six mutual friends. Once, in the functionality of Facebook, there was the ability to share things with friends of friends. News might sweep between friends of friends of friends of friends. What patterns of mutuality now extend across these complex systems, as we are required to select between the various options of posting publicly, posting to all friends, posting to friends except these named friends, posting to specific friends, posting to customised friend lists, or to only oneself? What pixel dust heaps, what data mining and recycling might these various decisions yet be sustaining? (And here, as a side-note, observe that it is said that Facebook uses specks of dust on a lens transferred to a photograph to correlate images from different profiles in order to compile its suggested friend prompts.) In Linked In, we are given degrees of separation on those we look up, each person a node of direct or indirect linkage. On TikTok or Twitter, informally, our friends are our mutuals, or moots – that is, people we might never meet, but we follow them and they follow us in an act of reciprocity, in just that way that following happens in the portals of social media, where no one may walk alone.





Association 15: The High School, Chalton Street
Schoolfriends and Frenemies

At around 3.30, weekday afternoons, they spill like fizzy drink from a bottle onto the pavement outside the school, effervescent, but each one damped down in black blazers, black sweatshirt, black trousers, black skirts, black tights and socks and black shoes. They cluster, chatter, banter, then slowly break away from the grouplets and float off to their various homes or onward destinations. Sometimes, amongst the boys anyway, a playfight develops and they leap against or pile on to each other, but they laugh a lot too.

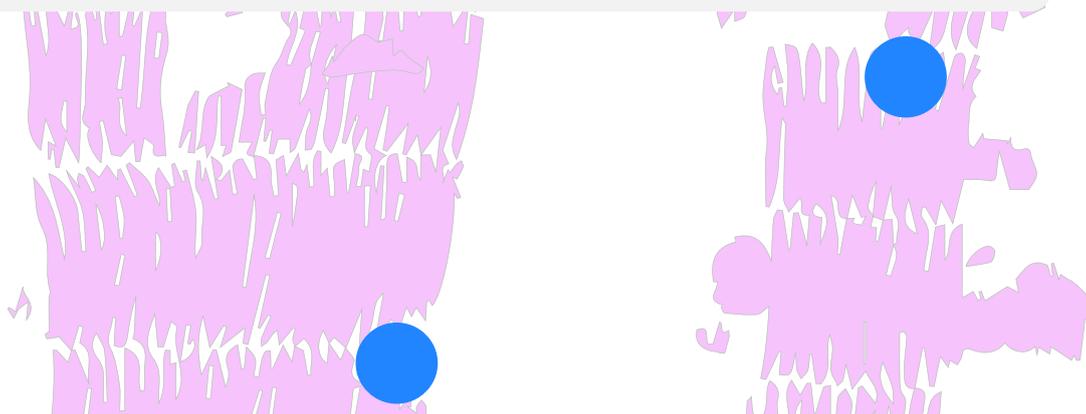


Association 16: St Anthony's Flats, Chalton Street
The Princess and the Swineherd: False Friends

St Anthony's Flats is one of a cluster of social housing blocks built through charitable campaigns in the 1930s. The St Pancras Housing Improvement Society believed in beauty for all and the improving qualities of environment. The nicely-appointed flats were ornamented with decorative art. Working with Royal Doulton on novel procedures for polychrome salt-glazed ceramic designs, Gilbert Bayes made geometrical clusters of washing line posts, topped by finials, and, on the buildings, he included illustrative roundels for the spandrels of windows. The window features drew on nursery rhymes, Biblical stories and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. At St Anthony's, the roundel depicts the fairy tale of 'The Princess and the Swineherd'. Two figures, Princess and the Swineherd, are close, about to kiss. He holds a bowl in his hand and they are surrounded by his pigs. What love is this? It appears to be one, but is not. The story goes that he, a poorer Royal than she, attempted to woo the Princess with beautiful gifts: a rarely flowering rose; a nightingale. But she desired only artifice. In order to be close to her, who he desired, the unfortunate Prince took on a role as a worker at the palace. One uneventful day, he made a metal bowl, which allowed anyone to smell whatever was cooking in kitchens right across the town. The Princess wanted it. He demanded as his price ten kisses. She paid. Some days later, he made a musical box, which played, as if by magic, songs that they both recalled. Again she wished to possess it. The cost was inflationary: one hundred kisses. Fulfillment of their transaction was spied by her father, the King, who banished them both from his palace for misconduct. In the fields outside the town, the Prince revealed his true noble status to the Princess. Now impoverished, the Princess demanded to become his wife, so she might regain some rank. But the Prince rebuffed her for she had revealed herself as avaricious and shallow and in love only with baubles. Abandoned, she wept by the tree for ever more. They did not live happily ever after.

Association 17: St Francis' Flats, Chalton Street
Love and Tinder: Of Making Up and Breaking Up

There is a hopeful story of love depicted on the roundel at St Francis' Flats: 'The Tinder-box'. A poor soldier finds a magic tinder-box inside a tree. He then discovers, in the same tree, three chambers, each guarded by a fierce dog. The chambers contain, he exclaims, enough gold to buy 'all the sugar-sticks of the sweet-stuff women; all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the world, or even the whole town itself'. The soldier thwarts the dogs and the witch who controls them and, rich with cash, he goes to a city to spend all his money on wine and women and song. Reduced in time to an impoverished life in a dark attic, he strikes his tinder-box, only to find the dogs reappear. They bring him money again – and, at night, a Princess who is held prisoner by her parents. He kisses her, but sends her away again by morning to her custodial tower. The experience registers on her as if it were a dream. The soldier has the dogs bring her back night after night to ravish her. But her captor parents find out about his activities and track him down. They sentence him to death. On the scaffold, the soldier lights his final cigarette by striking the tinder-box. This causes the three dogs to appear and they dash at the judge, the King and Queen and the councillors. These smash to pieces as they hit the ground. The soldier and the Princess marry and the dogs attend the wedding feast. All is forgiven. All is forgotten. All ends happily ever after.



*Association 18: The crooked part of Chalton Street,
an alley running behind Godwin and Crowndale Courts*
Fairweather Friends

Most years, as the nights get hotter, young men start to gather in the carpark between the blocks of Godwin and Crowndale estate. Some are clustered around cars, smoking, talking. A rumble of chatter bubbles through any open windows. Some boys gather on bikes and do wheelies around the courtyard. There is a crackle in the air. It feels ripe in a way – as if the atmosphere could turn violent or ecstatic. Everyone is waiting for something, anything, to happen. The heat raises the temperature of things. Sometimes cars rev up and down Chalton Street - noisy engines, yelps of joy. If there has been a wedding or a big celebration, fancy cars are hired and, then, they have to be shown off, driven at speed, raucous, paraded. If they congregate again this year, it will seem like the prison years are over, like a sign of hope,

Sonia U Public

Minutes
2021

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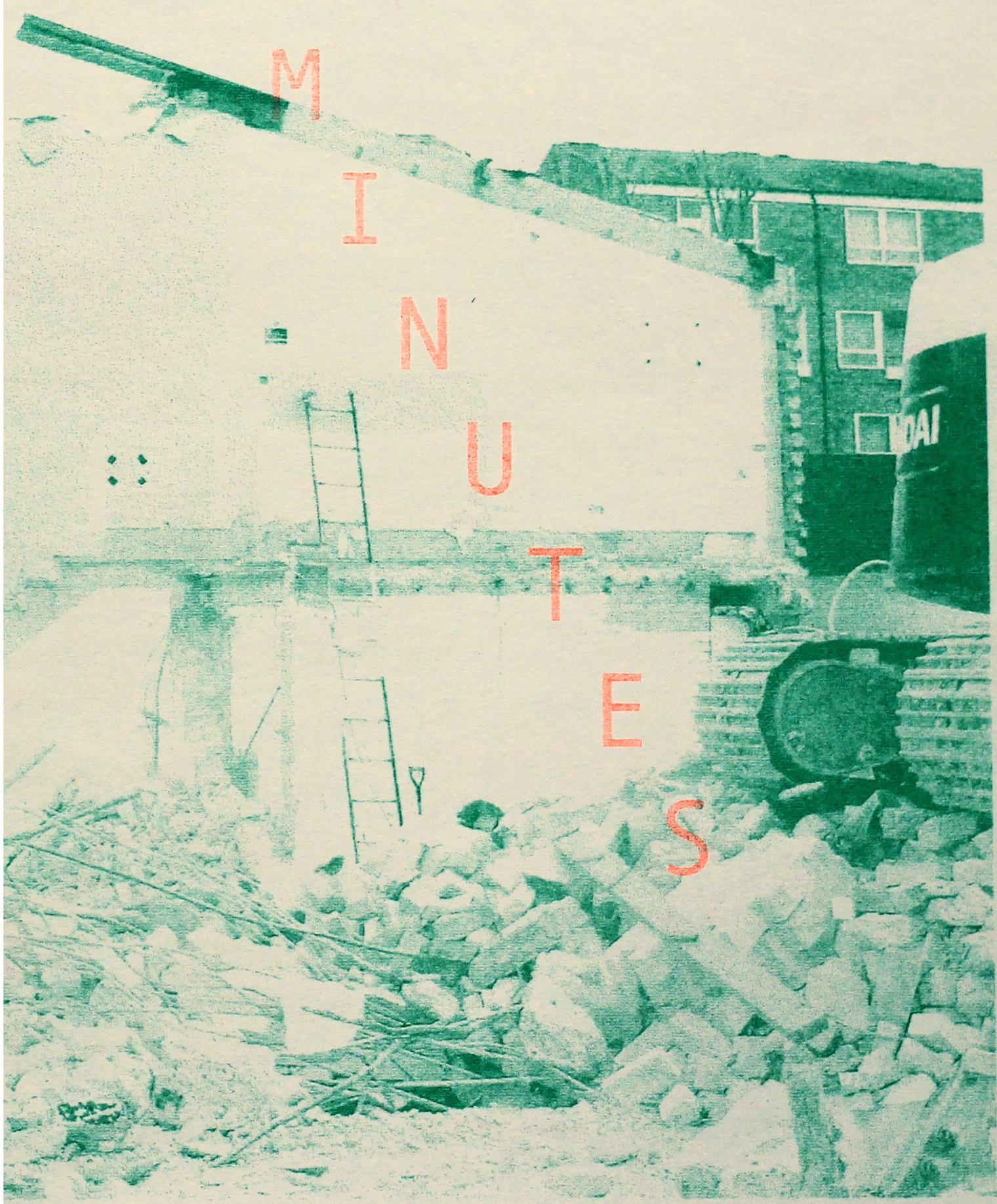
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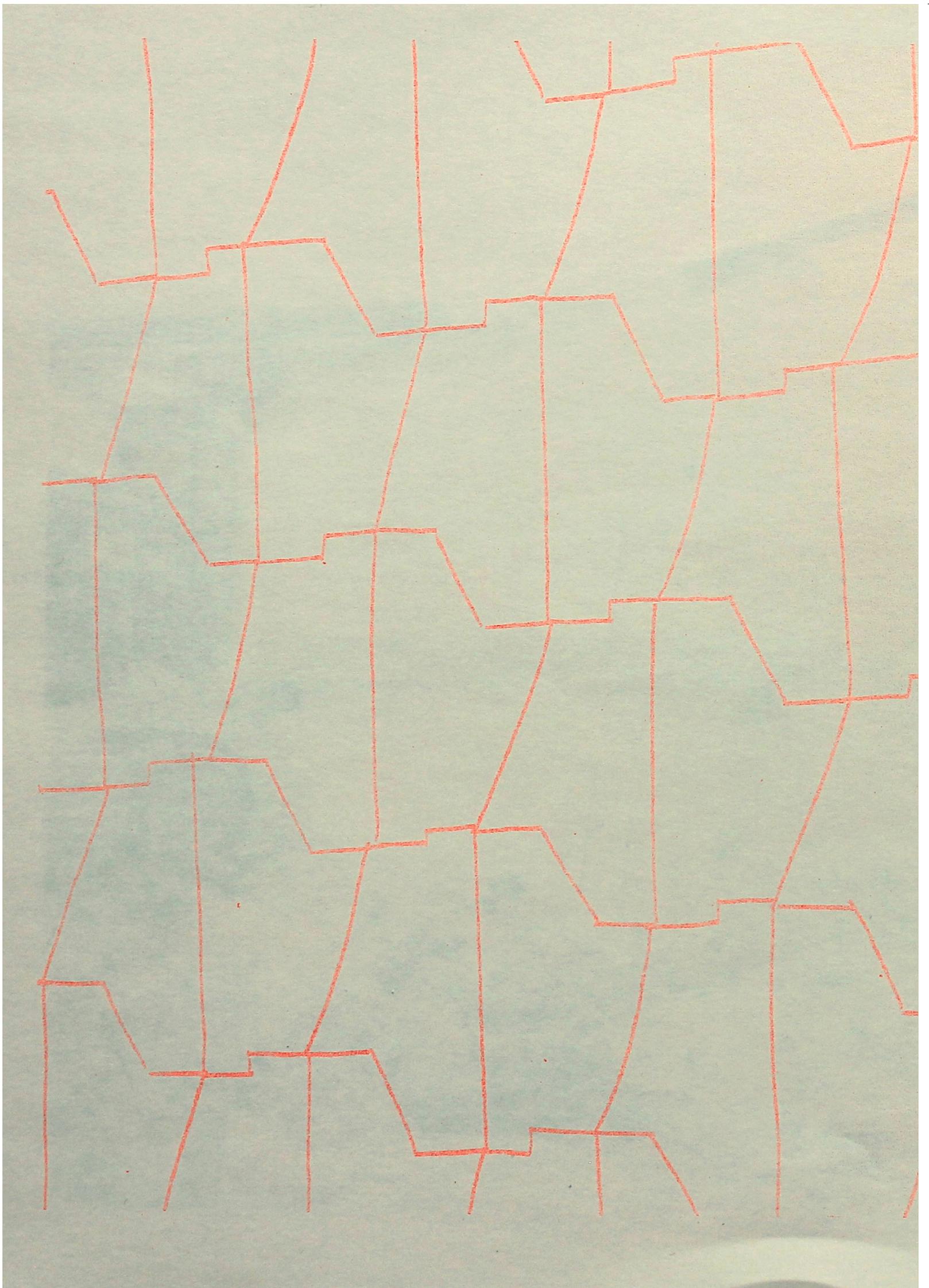
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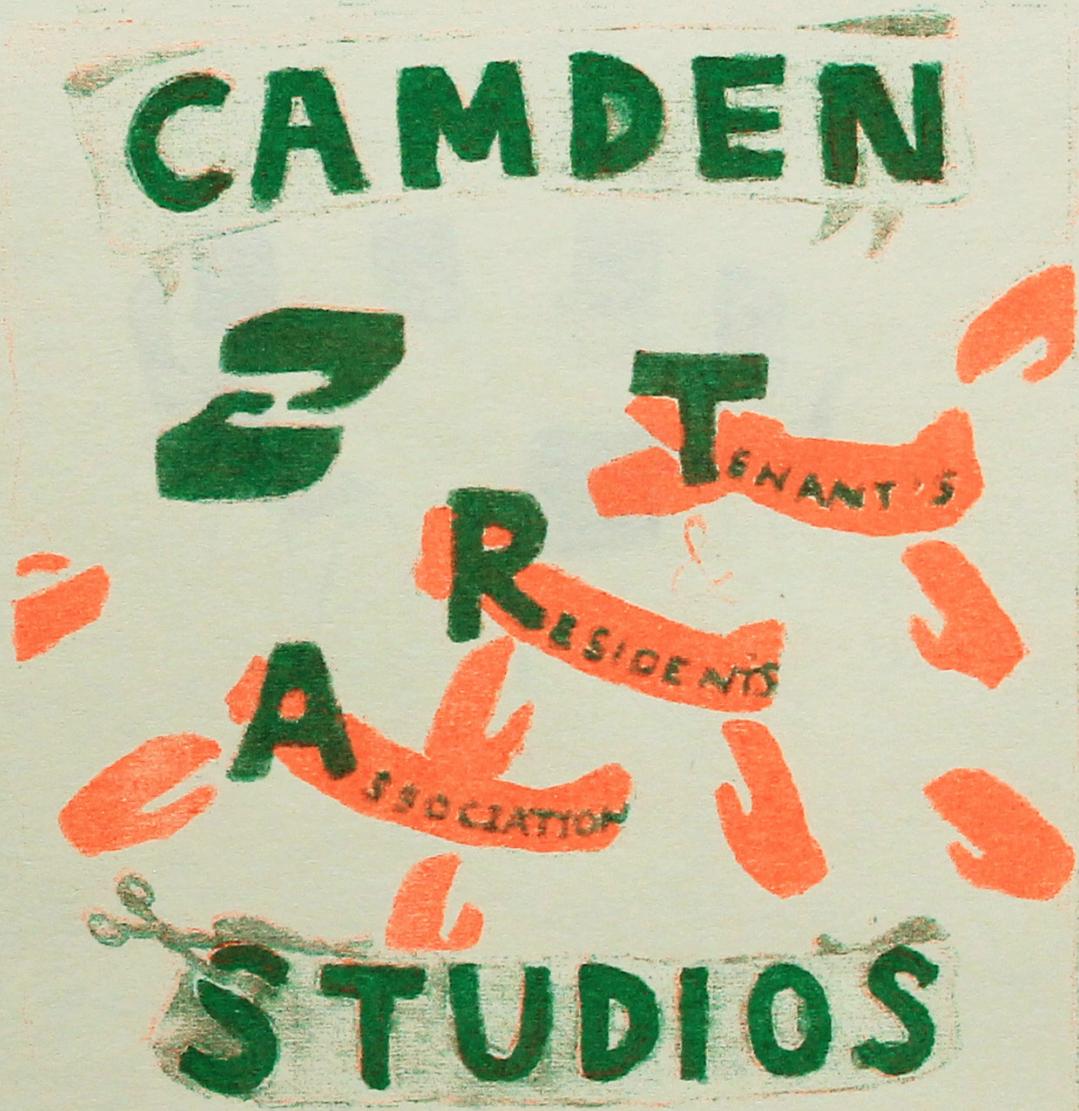
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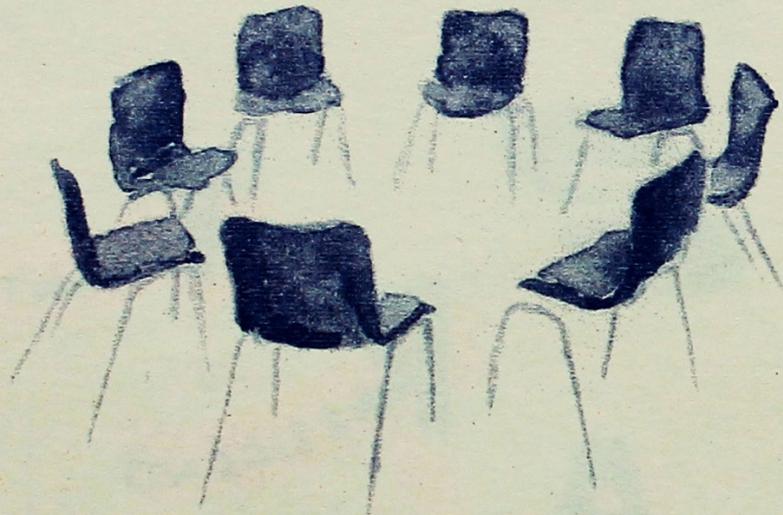
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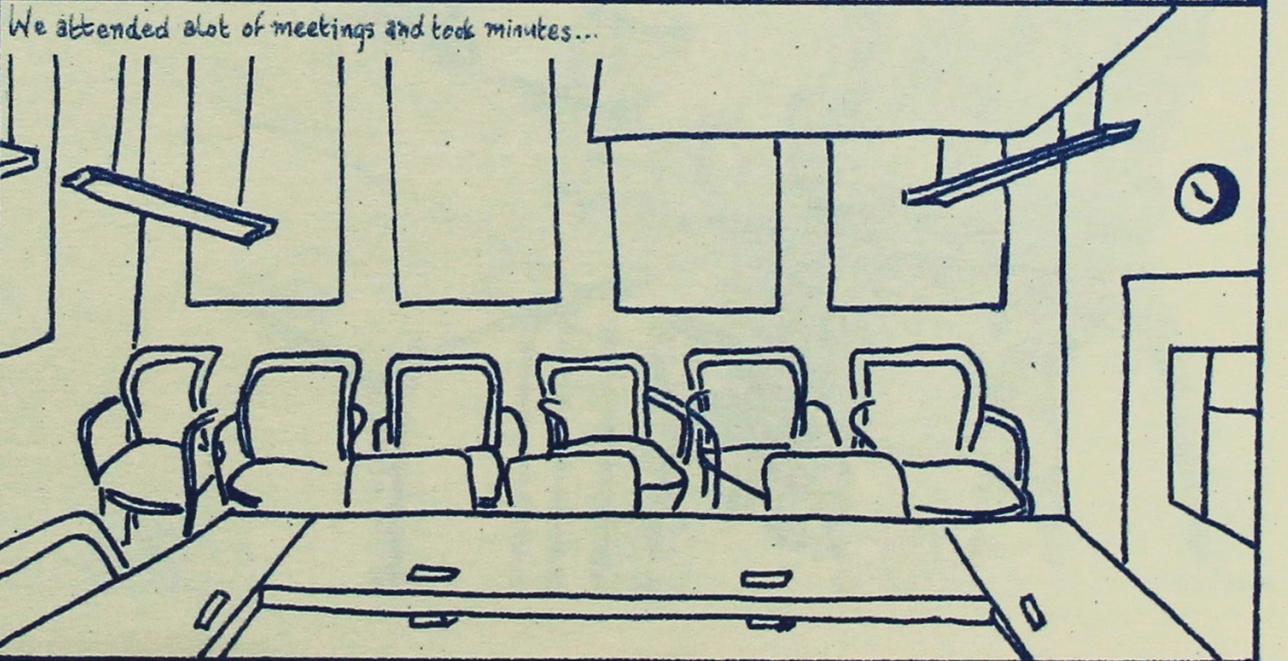
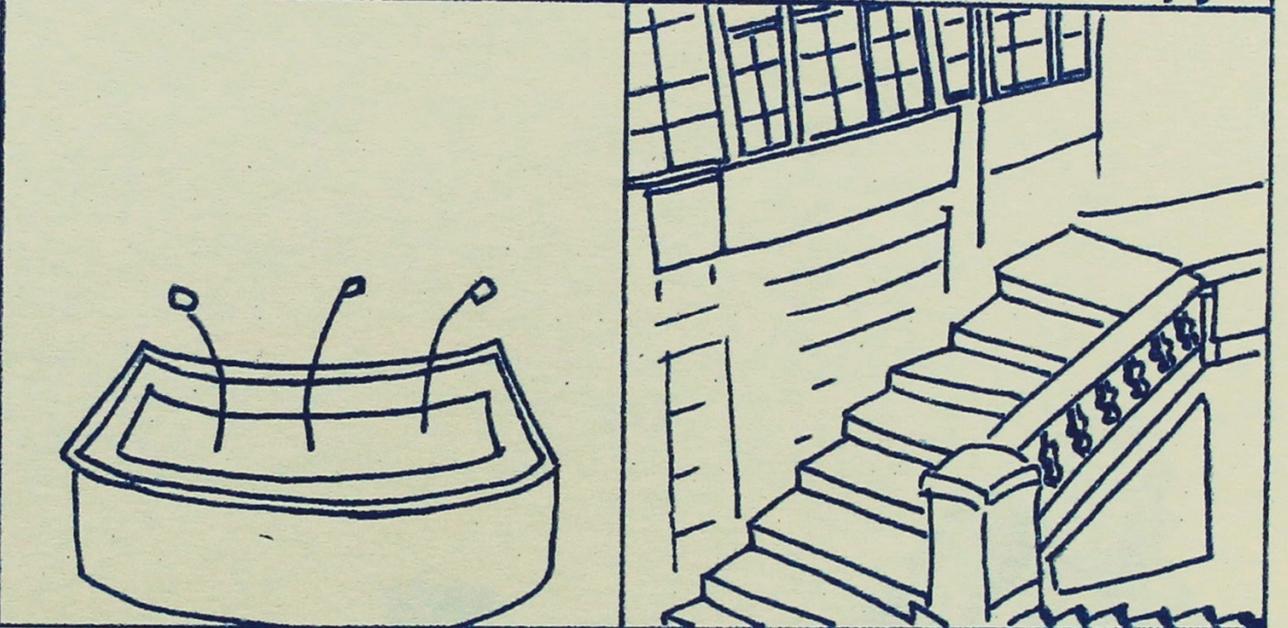




I became involved in setting up our tenants and residents association (tra) with my neighbours at Camden Studios to try and stop plans to demolish our community hall - as part of Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP).



Camden council formed a company so it can act as the developer.



CIP is a 15-year programme of regeneration projects where council homes and community facilities (public owned assets) are demolished to make way for development of new homes, many sold at market rate.



!...regeneration but at what cost?!

Fran Heron - Local activist and Chair Camden Town Dmc

meals, and some such
and was therefore in
public use.

Camden Council now
propose, through an
agency, to demolish and
develop the St Pancras
Centre next week. They
propose to override, in
this respect, Dicey's rule
of law and Montesquieu's

separation of the powers,
the fundamental
principles of British
democracy. They will
fund this project by letting
the nearby luxury flats in
Plender Street.

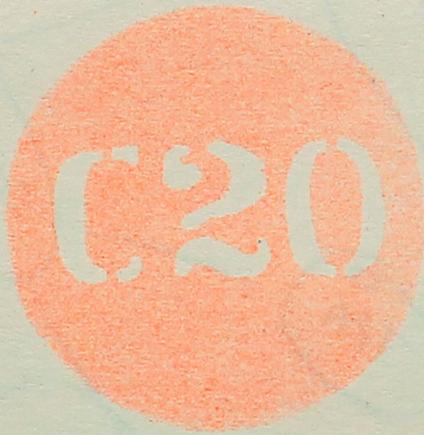
Building four storeys
high, they will cause
untold distress to those in
Camden Studios through

lack of light, as well as all
the dust and noise.

And they will have
broken all the basic
principles.

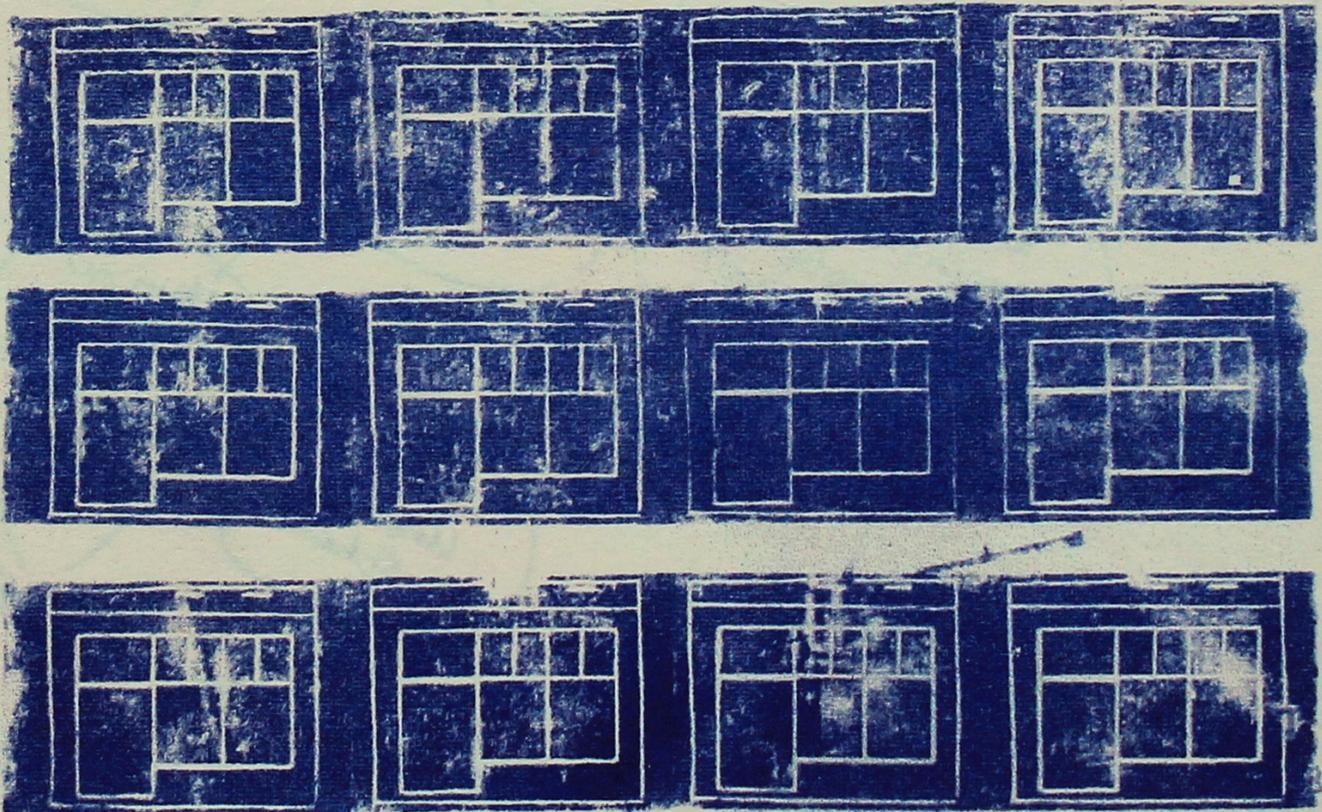
Are we going to let the
council become dictators
in Camden like Mussolini
and Franco?

RICHARD NIMAN
Camden Street, NW1



The 20th Century Society wrote a letter of support

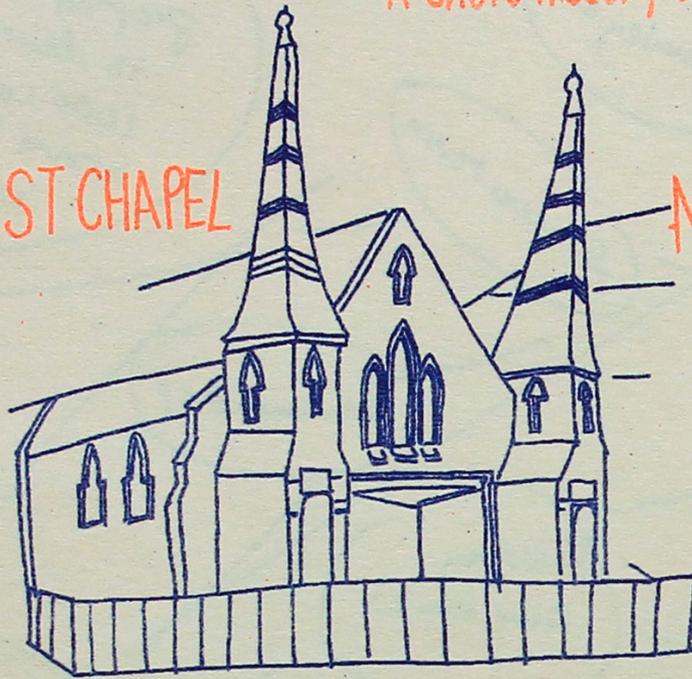
The studios are modern, utilitarian in design,
rebuilt in the 60s to replace the 19c artists'
studios on the same site.



A short history of demolition...

1860

METHODIST CHAPEL



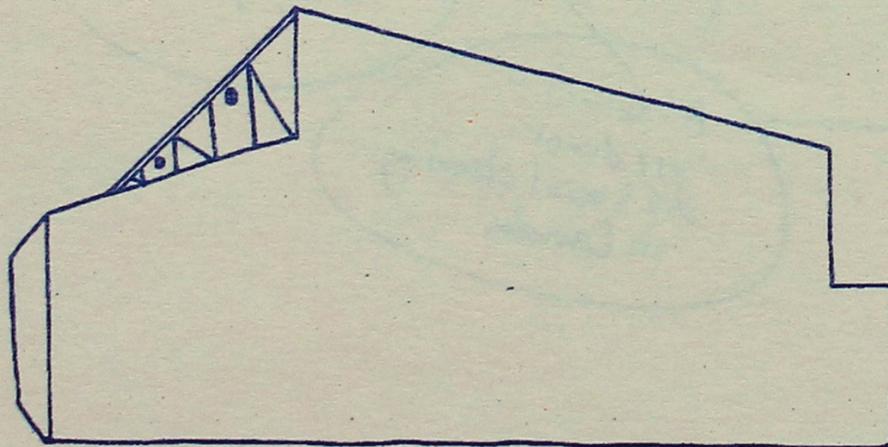
MISSION HALL

DEMOLISHED IN 1965

1966 CAMDEN STUDIOS EXHIBITION HALL

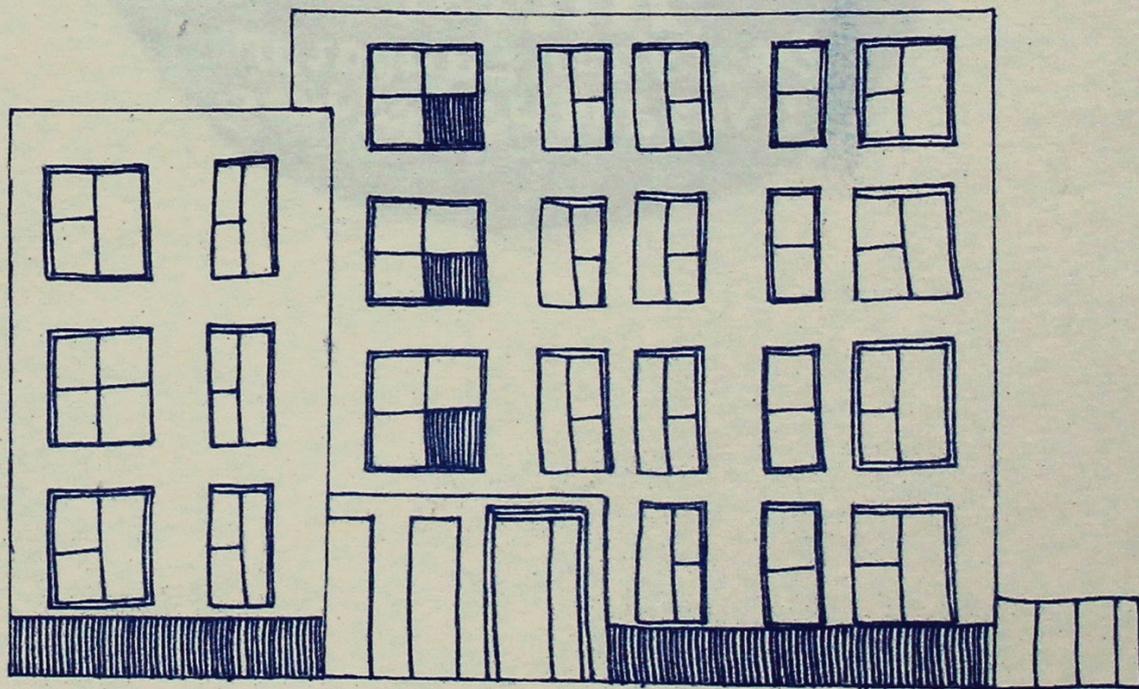
1968 CAMDEN ESTATE

1979 ST PANCRAS COMMUNITY CENTRE



DEMOLITION PLANNED 2017

2017 CAMDEN STREET DEVELOPMENT



CAMDEN COUNCIL PROPOSAL FOR AFFORDABLE / SOCIAL HOUSING

PEGGY
ANGUS

1904 - 1993

Artist
Designer Educator
lived and worked here

Designed as an Exhibition Hall for the artists working at Camden Studios in 1966. Awarded the only London Medal for Good Design in 1968 for appearance, layout, space and landscape.
Built as part of the Camden estate.

St Pancras Borough Council



Camden Council have granted planning permission for the demolition of St Pancras Community Centre due to take place in early 2017. Historic England say the building doesn't merit statutory listing but has important historic significance and is deserving of the protection of local listing.



Javier

Everything gravitates towards a centre
2021

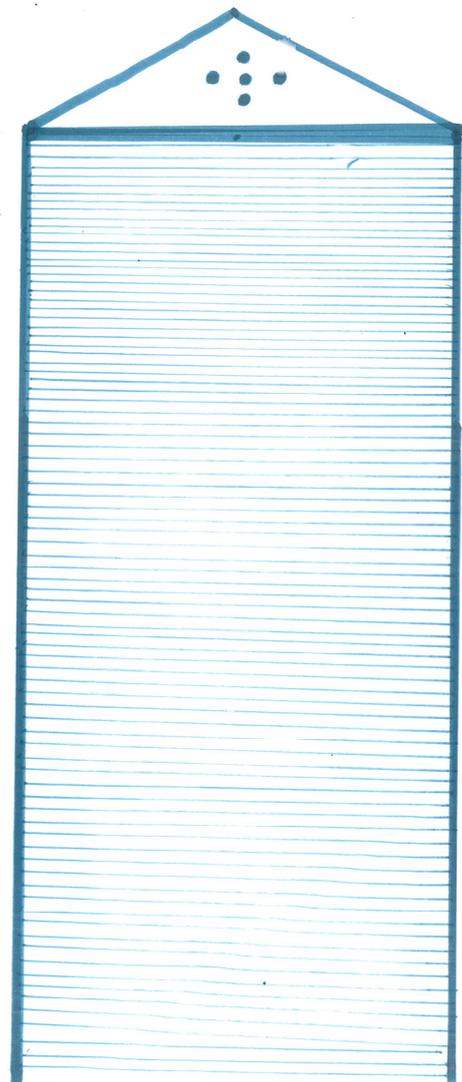
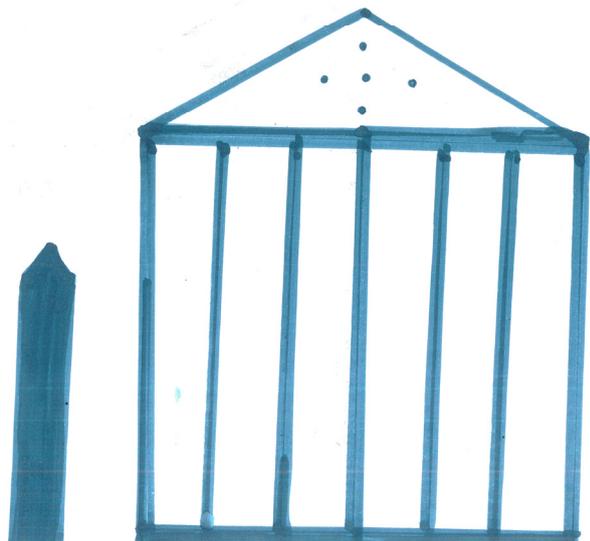
Calderón

What inspired this work and what are your interests in centralisation/ decentralisation?

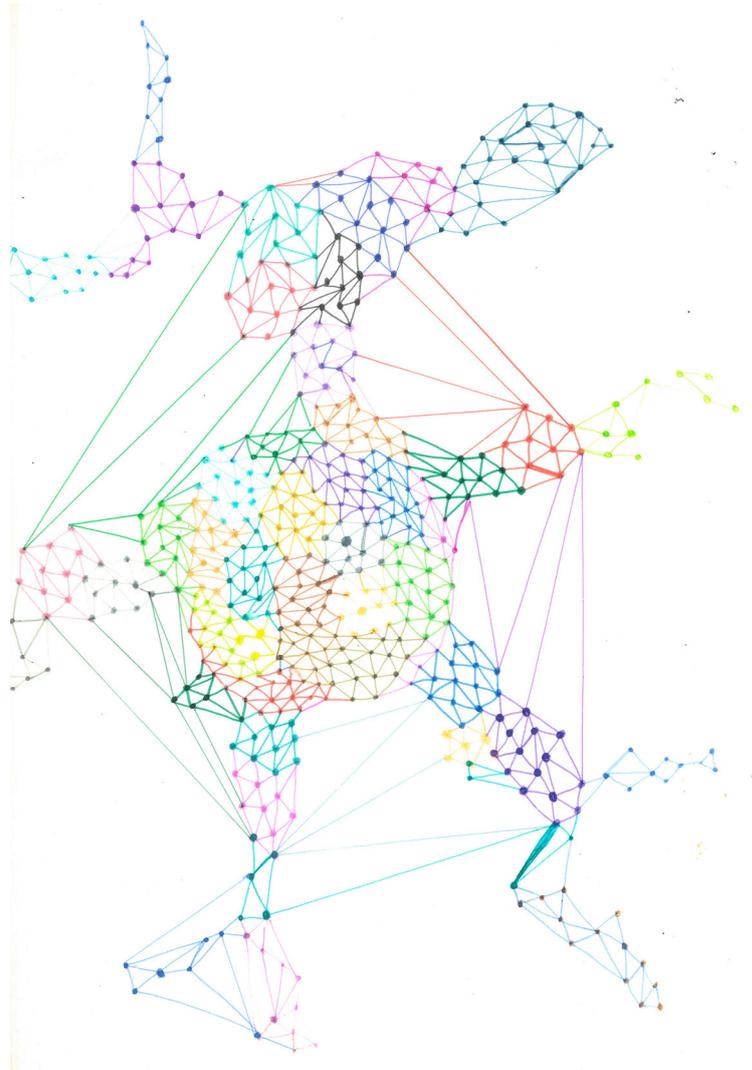


How is decentralisation relevant to the local area and community that you are a part of in Somers Town?

15
Centralisation
Determined?



Create
your
own
network!



What additional layer is added to your reflections in the context of the online?

Disconnect.

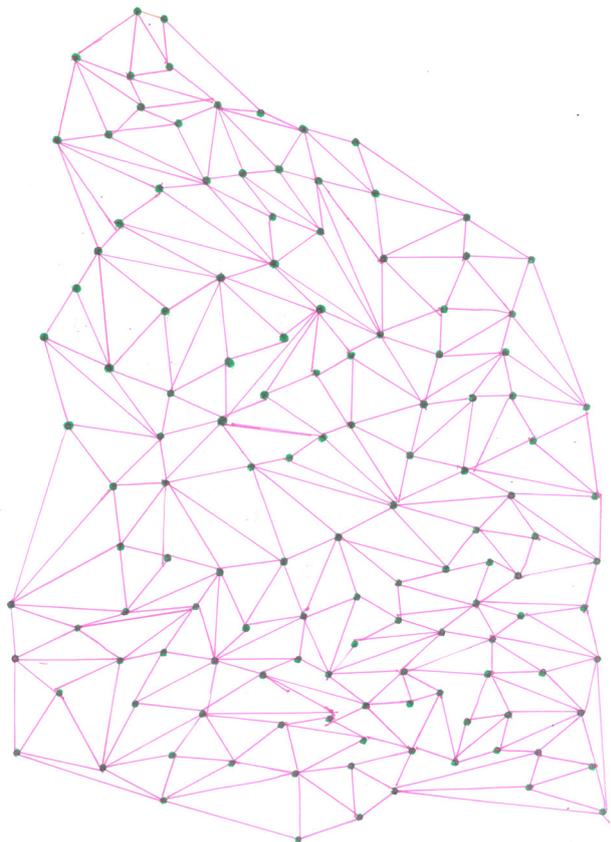
Go off-line



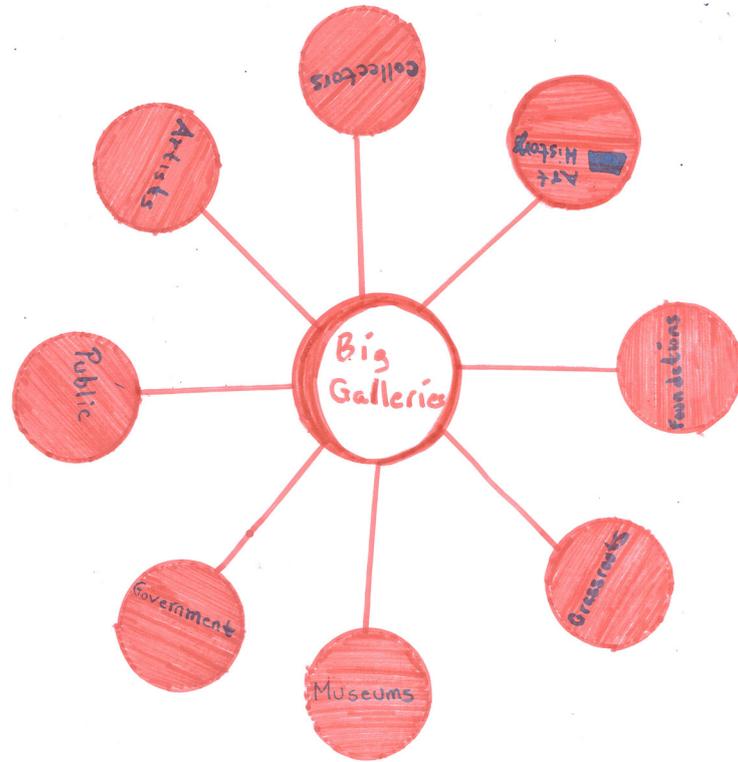
How do you think our shift online, in this moment, has affected the networks you are a part of?

Connect

Go online



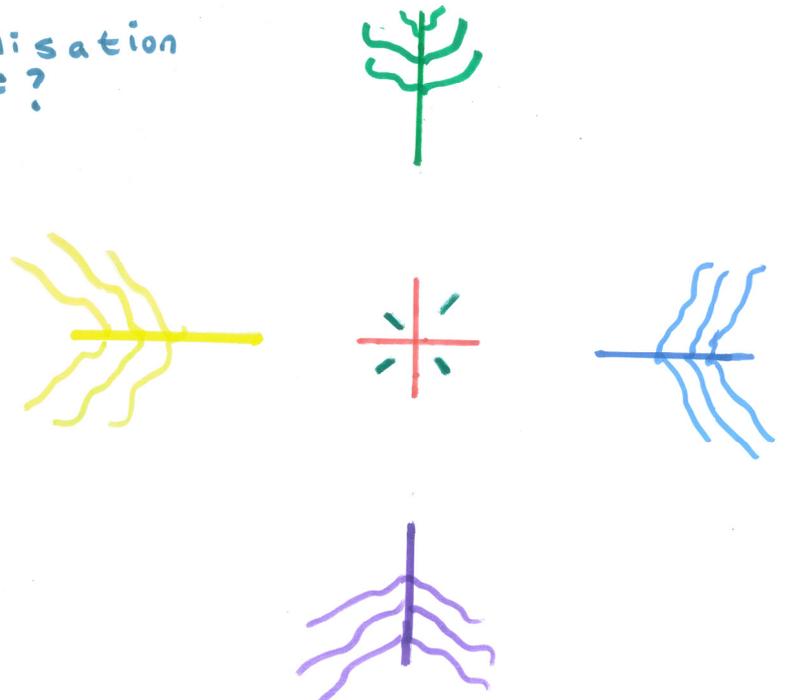
'Divine seems to be everything in this World and Universe.
 Just observe the smallest creatures living in the soil and then
 look at the sky and the celestial bodies and then think about you.'
 Can you tell us a little bit more about what inspired this quote?



What is useful about considering your own network and your place within it?

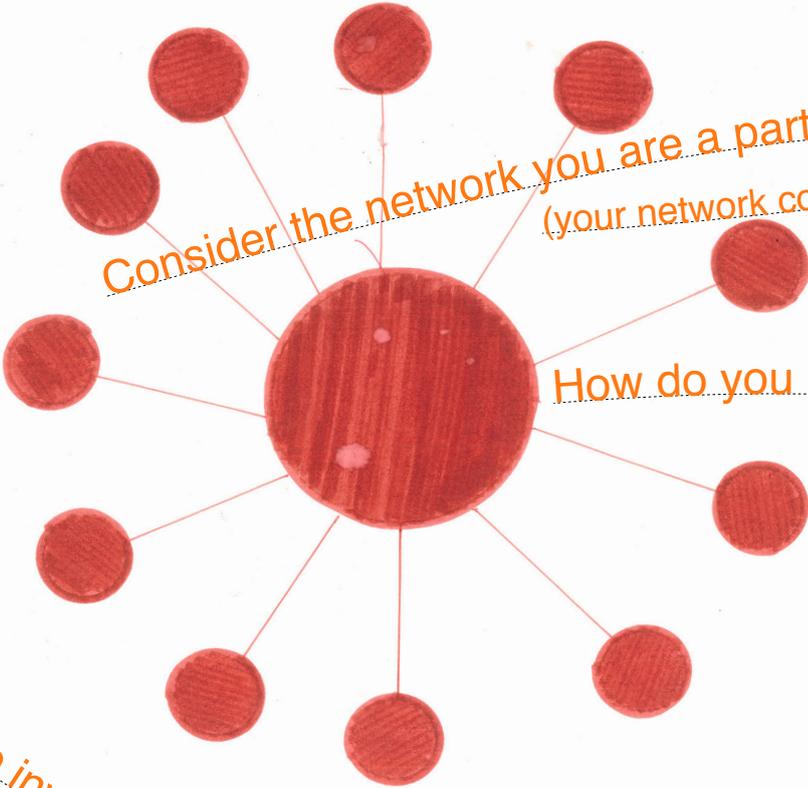
How can we create our own networks?

15
 Centralisation
 Divine?



Activity

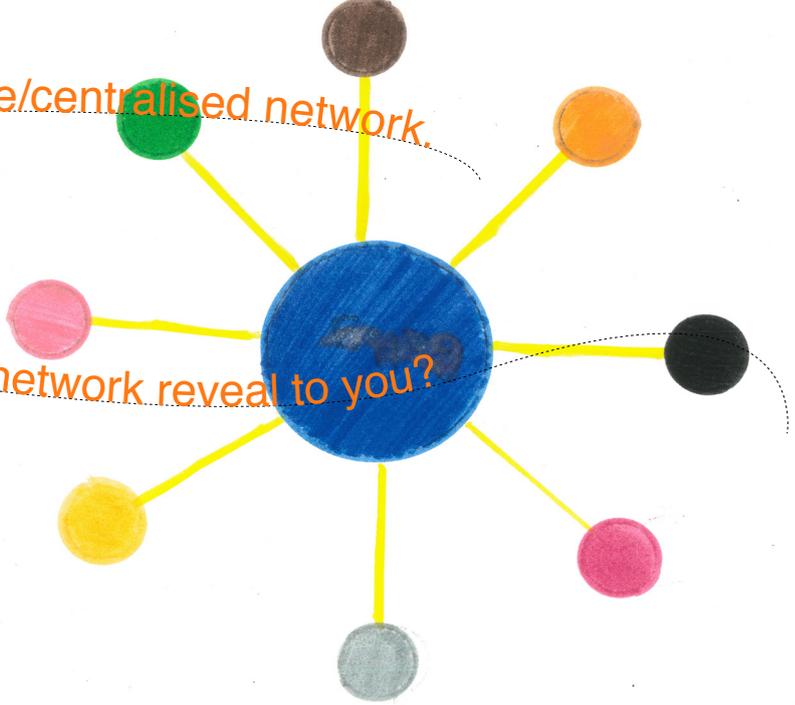
Feel free to submit text or visual submissions to our Instagram @inthemeantime or email inthemeantime_rca@outlook.com



We invite you to use the network templates on this page, or draw your own

and visualise your de/centralised network.

What does the visualisation of your network reveal to you?



Jaimie Denholm

Solitary Geographies
2021

For those who stick close to home's edge, balancing on its sticky membrane, who do not venture far, their solitary geographies reveal a life's totemic nodes, skeleton keys, waymarkers on a map for ghosts.

Somers Town, the railway lands, becomes a CGI model, unrendered, its musculature exposed amidst a grid of pathways that you walk without knowing why, and forlorn voices murmur action scripts that loop around again and again, sets of checkpoints that reload your character into the game where you always are going to lose. You can't navigate using someone else's maps. When you speak, a part of you is emitted into the air and you rely on hearers for recognition, to connect your words back to your body.

What is a territory without its network of affective dependencies?

I have become a performance without an audience, the mind's Camden synecdoche jutting into and jarring with the human-machine matrix, the liquid, formless disaster that life is.

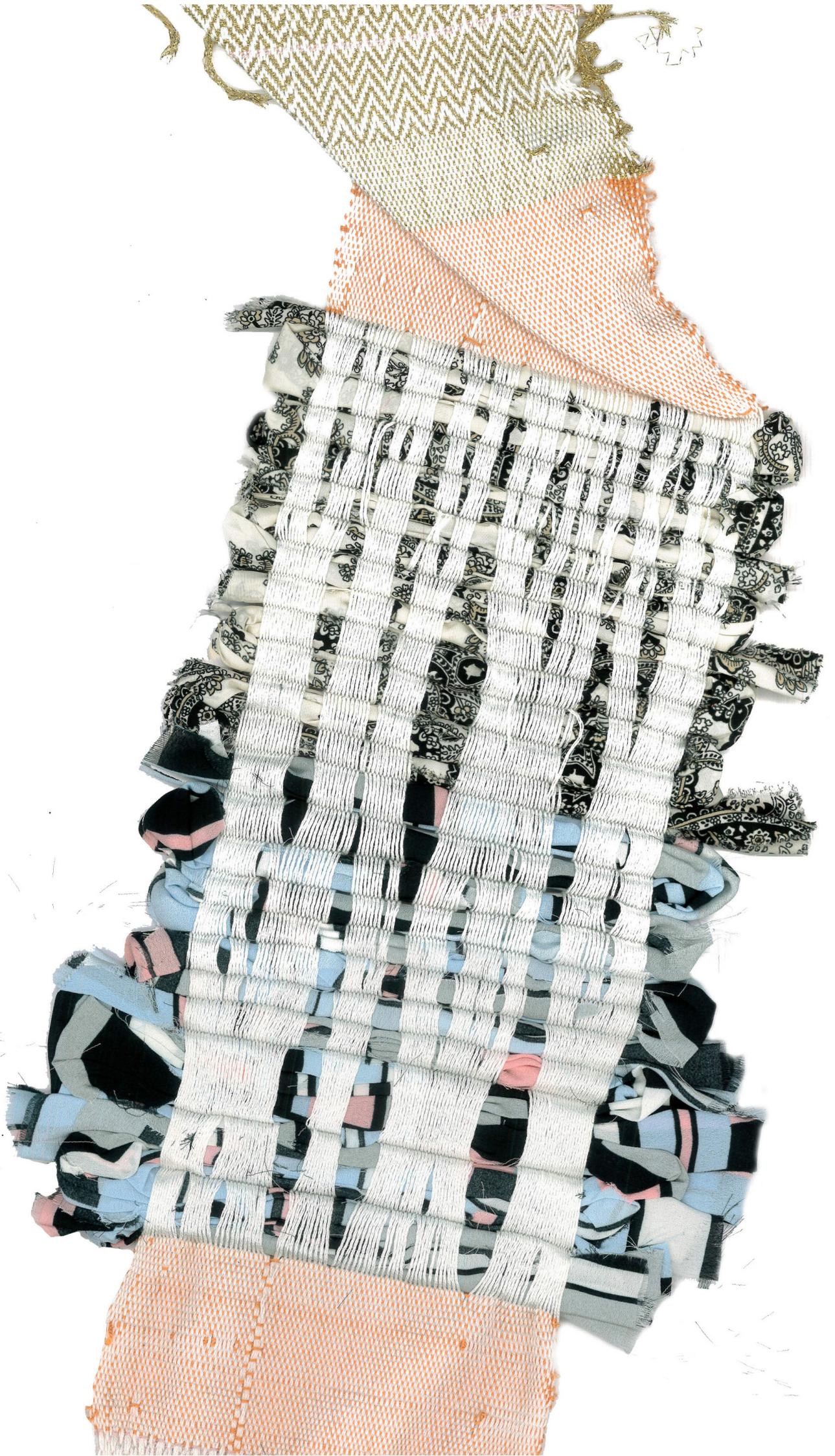
I fall into these anecdotes, the red doors of homes in **Goldington Street** where no one you know lives anymore, where folk songs were bellowed by an old man 'in the heart of London' around the kitchen table. Yet today's sunlight is the same sunlight of remembered childhood; I see now the same windows I daily and nightly gazed towards in resonant longing, castrated of their auratic power. The street where you live is suffused with the sound of time. There are lost oases in the urban flux, hidden worlds and the words that point there: Polygon, Calthorpe, Medburn, Charrington, Gloucester, Carol, Pancras, Camley. I glimpse door numbers numinous with occult significance: **1, 5, 18, 23.** Fictions are terrains through which characters move, allegorical landscapes that chart a pilgrim's progress – through Earth and City for mortal shadows, Limbo and Purgatory for characters who have never really been born, Hell for brutal youth and the savage lost who still roam and return, zonked, **Londoned.**

Hot Loom
2020

Joygun Nehar

The weavers... Stacey, Jade, Amalel, Ella, Rafin, Cecilia, Josha, Nazma, Jesses, Yahya & Sylvia





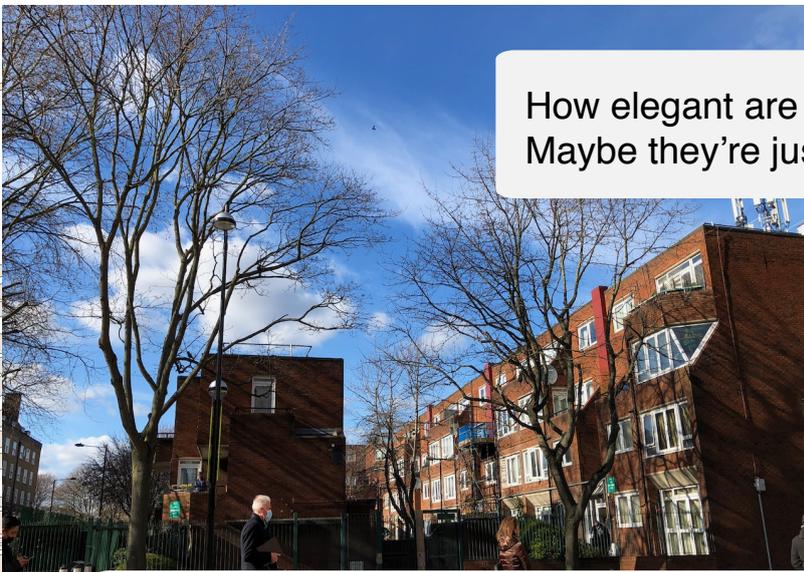




Caroline Mawer

Pillars of Somer
2021

How elegant are your local trees?
Maybe they're just .. crammed between buildings?



But they provide shade. Reduce pollution. They're homes for the birds I heard in the dawn chorus for the first time in the first lockdown.

And if you look closely, our trees mirror our local communities.

After the 100-year old trees in Euston Square - pillars of the local tree community - were murdered, some smaller trees were left.



They would have been supported by their elders in a complex collaborative underground network called the Wood Wide Web. Now, they are effectively orphans. Covid19 killed far too many human pillars of the local community.

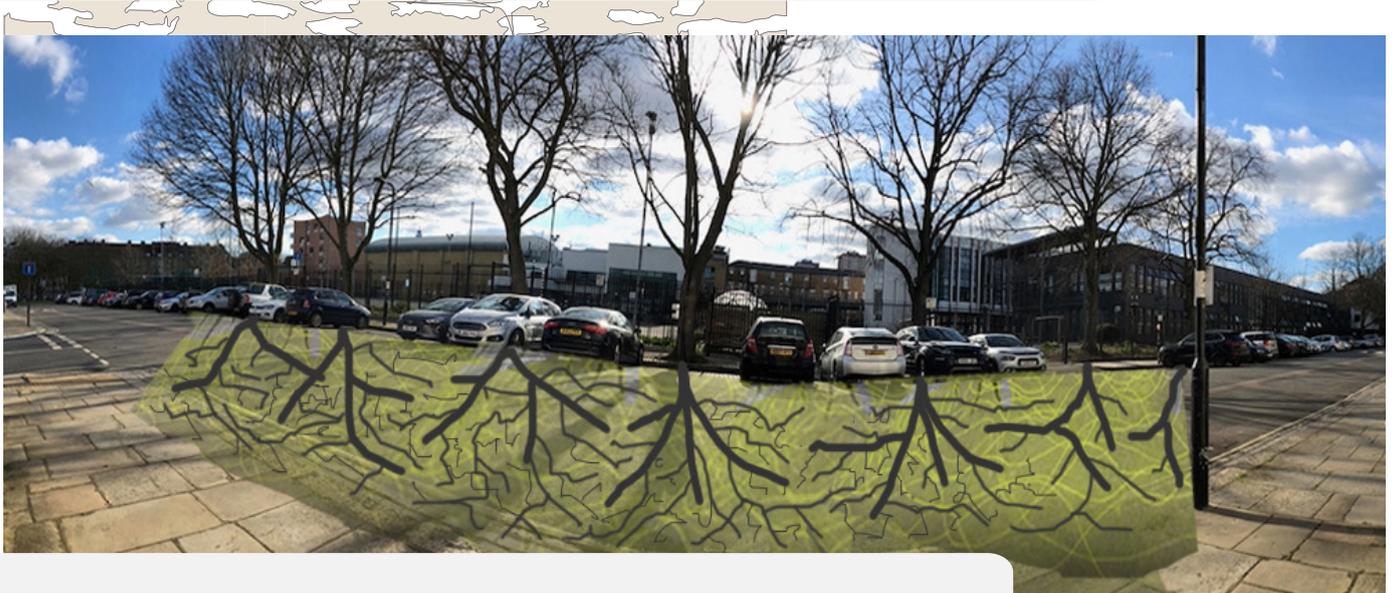
Are you feeling orphaned?



These trees survived - marooned - when the buildings around them were destroyed. What, I wonder, do they remember?
Who do they remember?
Do you know other marooned trees - or people?



Some trees live alone, isolated from the Wood Wide Web. This tree is surrounded by such different buildings: old and new. And she keeps on resiliently surviving. I can't help but believe that the huge construction crane belongs .. to her.



The trees here are close enough to support each other. I've seen them dancing together in such a neighbourly way in the strongest winds and rains. Could you be more neighbourly? To your local trees? Or to your human neighbours? When will you start the dancing?

References:

- TED talk on Wood Wide Web with Canadian forester.
- Camden Forest Project: If you want to host a (free) tree of your own, please contact the Camden Forest project.

Activity

- Feel free to submit text or visual submissions to our Instagram [@inthemeantime](#) or email inthemeantime_rca@outlook.com

We invite you to introduce yourself to your local trees.

You can do that as quietly or loudly as you like.

Draw them. Photograph them. Admire how they feel under your hands.

If you're quiet and attentive, you may even be able to hear their stories.

Lucy Joyce

Disco Tower
2011

Lucy Joyce Q&A

(In the meantime...)

Drawing on our fruitful previous conversation, could you share some of the concepts at play in Disco Tower on Christchurch Hill?

(Lucy Joyce)

A lot of my ideas and work around the time came from walking; I would pass the same streets each day to and from my part-time job. There was a sense of breaking the monotony with staging something else – an interruption, an artwork... would people know it was an artwork, did that matter? This instinct to just do and not think too much became important – react, act, action.

I suppose I would notice buildings being in a state of renovation or repair. I like talking to people and always felt challenged to try and make something different happen within my local environment. I was interested in how I could shift people's walk to work perhaps, pose a question, offer something to contemplate, make someone notice. These were the things I was thinking about at the time, and still am on some levels.

Walking past the same buildings and streets each day I would start imagining how I could interfere with the surroundings of the everyday. How could I change, trigger, intervene with what already exists? I would sometimes get drawn to a specific site, which happened with all these site-specific works at the time (Look Up, A Painting for a Building and the Crane Drawings). I would call these sites of possibilities my 'Sites of Desire'. I was stalking them almost daily on my routine walk, as I started making plans for works to be made site-specifically, walking past them and then drawing and writing at home.

Disco Tower came from an unconscious place at first – it was more of an instinctive reaction. I usually find that once I have an idea, there is a small window of time within which I have to make it. This comes from the fact that building sites are temporary. Also, if I leave things too long, I run the risk of allowing doubt to stop me from making, from approaching the site, to negotiate and get someone else to believe in what I want to do. The faster I work the less doubt sets in, otherwise it becomes an idea in a sketchbook.

These emotions aren't too dissimilar from the reactions we have recently felt going through three lockdowns and living in a pandemic. Haven't we all been walking past buildings, looking into windows from the street, or out of our own? Feeling connected and disconnected, longing to be part of something to be connected. Being present.



Watch the video here:
<https://vimeo.com/87389220>

(ITM)

What motivated you to instinctively make this site-specific installation?

(LJ)

At that time, without even realising it I was perhaps commenting on the constant eruption of building work going on in the city – conversations about regeneration were increasing and I suppose it has continued since. It was like a party that no one came to – lighting, flashes above. Looking up at architecture, noticing, looking again. I was distracted by this idea of interrupting people's everyday... I wondered whether they would notice. The silence of the work, the almost loneliness of what I saw once I made it was what I found most interesting. The slight colours of the lights, the subtlety in the landscape within the architecture. There was no control over who would see or notice it.

I can also remember my thoughts at the time about communication, I also made a series of proposals about this that didn't get made.. Who was it communicating to – another world? The sky? I don't know, but something about communication through light, a language similar to Morse code even, a beat, a pulse, an activation of some kind. I suppose things I had been thinking came through – ideas, writing I had done – in my sketches and plans. We filter all this stuff into our work as we make it.

That's the best bit – when you put it out there, people will project or take from it what they want. Or it might go unnoticed...

(ITM)

What were some of the complexities of installing the strobe lighting?

(LJ)

The complexity with this work was negotiating with the builders. I've always started with face-to-face conversations, getting people on board with my ideas and trying to give a sense or understanding what I was trying to do. I had the lighting on timers, which meant they came on during the last hour of sunset over three days. Like with a lot of the work I make, I have certain controls at the beginning stages then I have to take the risk, I had to hand it over to the builders

I'd met and trust them to collaborate. I didn't know if it would come off.

The flash is a recurring theme in my work; there has always been a shock of that moment when something catches the light, it keeps reappearing. It's like a rupture, a clash.

Last year, as part of a performance I did at E-Werk Luckenwalde in 2020, plans were much more staged – performers were holding pointed, mirrored arrows in daylight. But again the risk of the impact – action, the light, sun, weather – on the day was what I could only hope for. It added contingency to the work. The light strikes a shiny object, sparks something that captures your eye, causing the viewer to stop perhaps.



(ITM)

What drew you to choosing that particular building?

(LJ)

It was a similar site I was used to seeing. I am drawn to building sites, the canopies and fabrics of building sites I've always found beautiful.

It was an ordinary building, local to where I was living at the time, so I would pass by and keep imagining it while I mustered up the courage to go ask someone on ground level.

Today, I find Health & Safety shuts everything down. I want to chat with someone physically, not email the head office.

I always admire how construction builders work, their practical approach, problem-solving – getting the job done. Things have developed and evolved in the building industry and now it's not uncommon to walk past building sites with more creative initiatives surrounding them: artworks on hoardings, painted murals on buildings advertising fashion brands, regenerated sites depicting the outcome of an architect's vision on wood panels that close off the public, keeping people out, but giving them something to look at. Back then I was more interested in the mundane and interrupting.

(ITM)

Disco Tower makes us think about the impermanence of life. You make the connection to a beat, or a pulse. As many buildings in London have such a fleeting timespan, do you strive to encourage people to appreciate the infrastructure that surrounds us with your art?

(LJ)

I've always been interested in the moment, not so much objects that commemorate a moment in time, but the memories you can make through an artwork. I appreciate bringing people together through the making too. I don't know how easy it will be to do now, as we look to life beyond the pandemic.

In terms of the building site, the temporality at play is what interests me. The fact that there is only a certain amount of time during which the building might be in repair, being renovated, reconstructed or restored. This time frame sets it in a specific moment. But it also makes me think about the activity of buildings. For Disco Tower, the building had been given a new sense of life.

(ITM)

Temporary interventions are inherent to your artwork, especially in Disco Tower and Look Up, which was made more recently, in 2017. These two installations have significance for the distanced companionship we are currently experiencing because of the pandemic. When reflecting on past work now, how do you feel the concept of time intervenes?

(LJ)

This past year has given me time to reflect on past works; before I hadn't had the opportunity to slow down. We all reflected on the benefits of slowing during the third lockdown, didn't we? To slow down, sit with work, have conversations years later. Maybe this comes from who my audiences are. I've always been interested in taking art directly to people, in the sense of passers-by being my primary audience, or the one I'm most interested in reaching.

Looking back brings opportunities. You can project different meanings you were not aware of when making. I was always told you have to beware of nostalgia and paradoxically, I'm not a particularly nostalgic person. I hope that each of my work informs the next – so I often borrow ideas and transpose them into other works. It's a process of development: research, informing and supporting what comes next.

(ITM)

To conclude, let's talk about Camden more generally. As someone who's lived and worked in the Borough for most of their life, do you often reflect on how the built environment has changed? Do you ever feel compelled to visit the sites where your installations were staged? Would you ever restage them?

(LJ)

I grew up on Finchley Road, which has always been busy. The palpitating sound of traffic inspired a work I made called *Motorway Becomes Sea* (year), in which the sound of the motorway transforms into the sound of the sea. There's been an exodus for a long time; people can't afford to live where they were born anymore, and given everything we've all been through this past year there's been time to reflect on the necessity of living in the city.

I still come back this way. I've walked past the sites, but they've become more familiar through the site-specific works I've made. I don't think you can restage something so specific to time and place. Time moves on, ideas evolve in different locations, buildings and sites. But past works inform new works.

End credits

In the meantime... is curated by Ted Targett, Lolita Pearl Gendler, Olivia Abando, Johnnie Valentine, Seulki Yoo and Isadora Graham in partnership with Camden Art Centre.

Camden Art Centre
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Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

