



Beating the Bounds

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Images

Project Statement

Beating the bounds is an ancient English custom that, in a period that pre-dates maps, involved walking the boundaries of an area in order to re-establish its limits and remind a community of the extent of its territory through visceral experience of its natural and human markers. As a direct emotional and physical engagement with specific location at a particular time, it is a lyrical, rather than a narrative, response to place.

My Final Major Project, inspired and informed by my community engagement activities in east London, explores three areas of rapid and extensive redevelopment in the Barking and Dagenham, London's poorest and fastest developing borough. The urgent demand for new housing has put particular pressure on the outer boroughs of east London, optimistically referred to as the 'rising east'. A combination of availability of disused industrial sites, neglected housing stock, social demand and aspirational local government has led to a proliferation of large-scale housing developments. These regeneration projects have a profound impact on communities and the environment.

Three sets of images are presented here. Each set is a selection from my own photographic response to a particular development. The images were created from photographs made whilst walking around the periphery of each area, beating the bounds of the developments.

Whilst the images themselves, as a lyrical response to place, are not intended to 'tell a story', they can play a part in the construction of narratives by people resident in, or otherwise involved with, the respective places. In addition to exhibiting the work, making presentations and running workshops in the localities, I have created three more extensive sets of images (including my own, archive, resident and developer images), sound recordings, maps and documents. Each set is presented as an 'archive' in clamshell boxes that I have made for this project. Each archive is a resource for individuals or groups to explore, and from which to produce narratives, workshops and exhibitions of their own. People can add and remove items, making each collection dynamic, marking a transition from spectatorship to usership.

The project explores both the transformation of place, and, as part of a wider set of community engagement activities, the role that photography can play in multi-professional activity and interdisciplinary enquiry, thus beating both the physical bounds of the areas concerned and, in a modest way, the conceptual bounds of participatory forms of photographic practice.

Commerce

The town centre is a transport and retail hub that acts as a focus of activity for a diverse community. The local council vision of a ‘mini-Manhattan’ with high rise apartments and upmarket retail outlets lies in tension with the life-worlds of current residents in one of the poorest wards of the UK. A market, dating back to the twelfth century, runs along one edge of the development area. The images combine photographs to explore the complex entanglement of everyday human activity with the changing natural and built environment.



Soundscape

Scan the QR code with a phone to play the full soundscape.
Click here to open an extract in your web browser.



Fig. 1

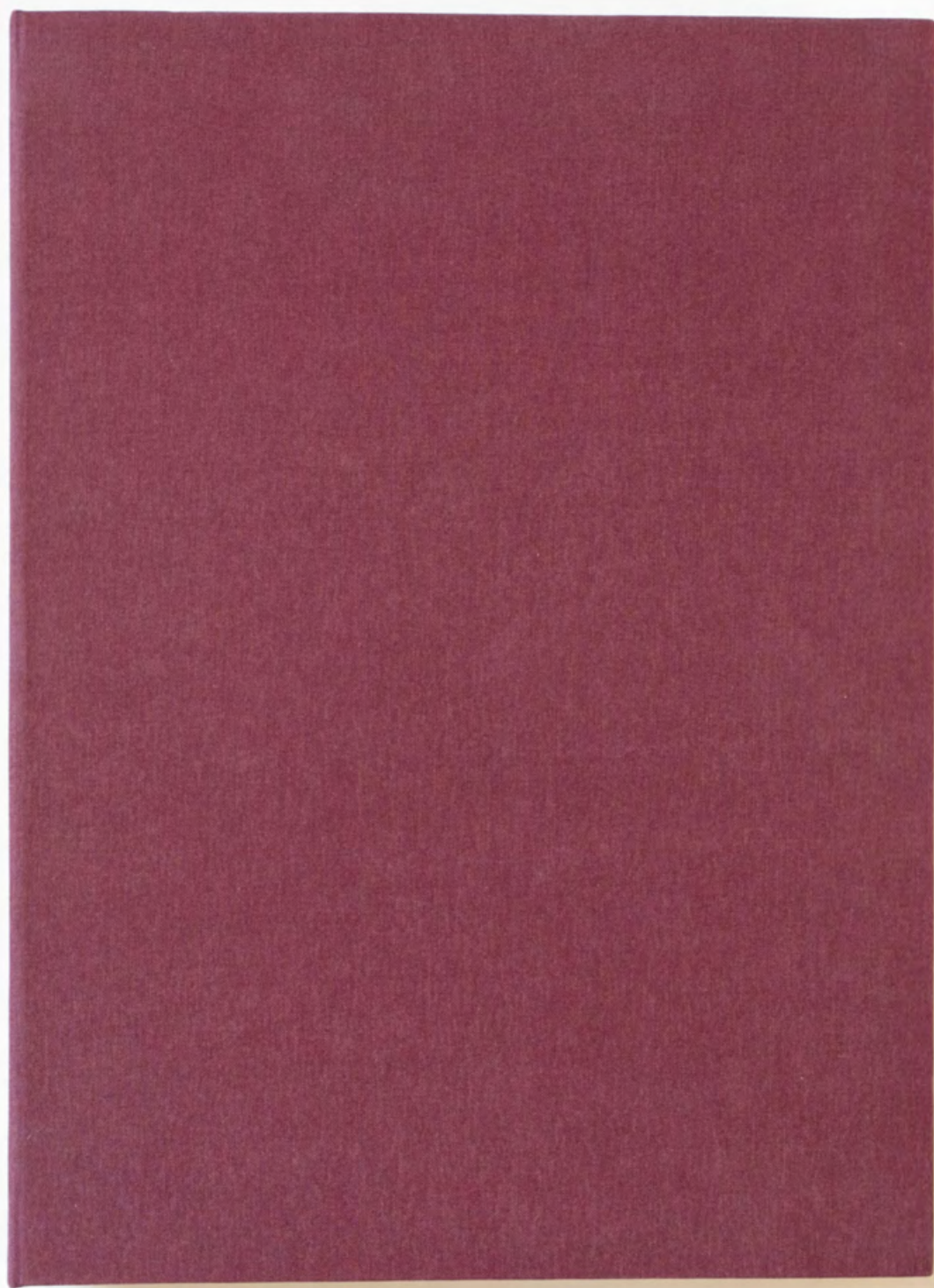


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

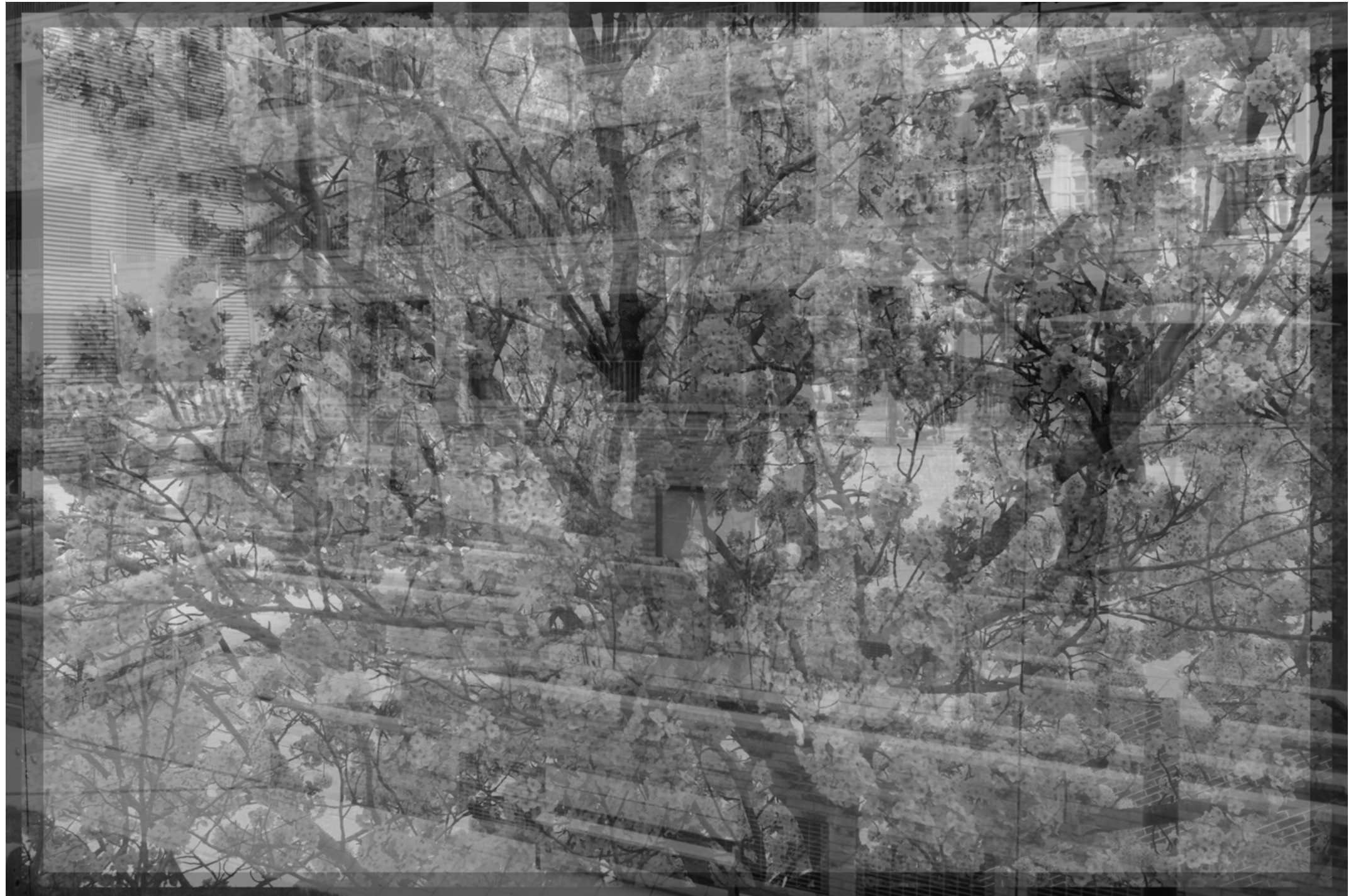


Fig. 8

Wharf

Barking is an ancient parish, dating back to the seventh century. It straddles the River Roding and developed around fishing and boat building from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, at which time it was home to England's largest fishing fleet, the Short Blue. The industrial properties and retail parks that built up around the river following the decline of fishing are now the site of a number of large high-density housing developments, collectively dubbed 'The Roding Riviera'. The images explore the developments reflected in the river that flows alongside them and represented on the hoardings which separate the development from the historical site along its eastern border, including the Church where Captain James Cook and Elizabeth Batts were married in 1762. Two miles to the north along the Roding is the site of the former Ilford Photo manufacturing plant and HQ (1883-1976).



Soundscape

Scan the QR code with a phone to play the full soundscape. [Click here to open an extract in your web browser.](#)



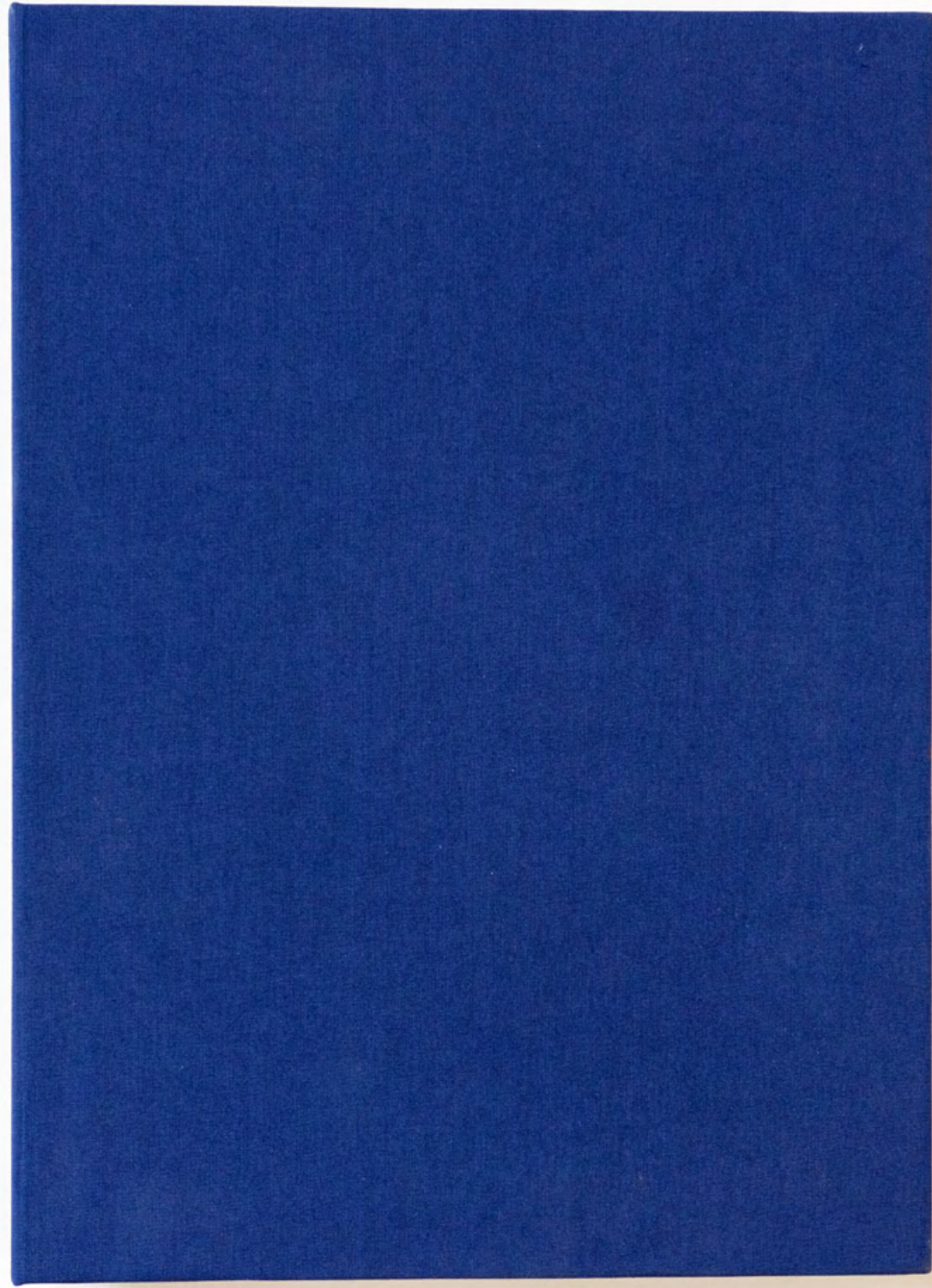


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Industry

The Barking Riverside development runs along the Thames and is surrounded by industrial units, scrap yards and waste processing plants. It sits on marshland adjacent to former sites of power stations and chemical plants, which have left high levels of pollutants in the land. This development is one of the largest in Europe, comprising of over 11,000 units. The aspirations of the local council are to create a 'Barcelona on the Thames', a reference to the regeneration of the derelict industrial eastern Barcelona waterfront in preparation for and following the 1992 Olympics. In this series of images, I have adapted a *Processing 3* procedure for pixel sorting, to explore the unruly industrial and natural periphery of the Barking Riverside development through the digital degradation of my photographs from the bounds.



Soundscape

Scan the QR code with a phone to play the full soundscape. Click [here](#) to open an extract in your web browser.



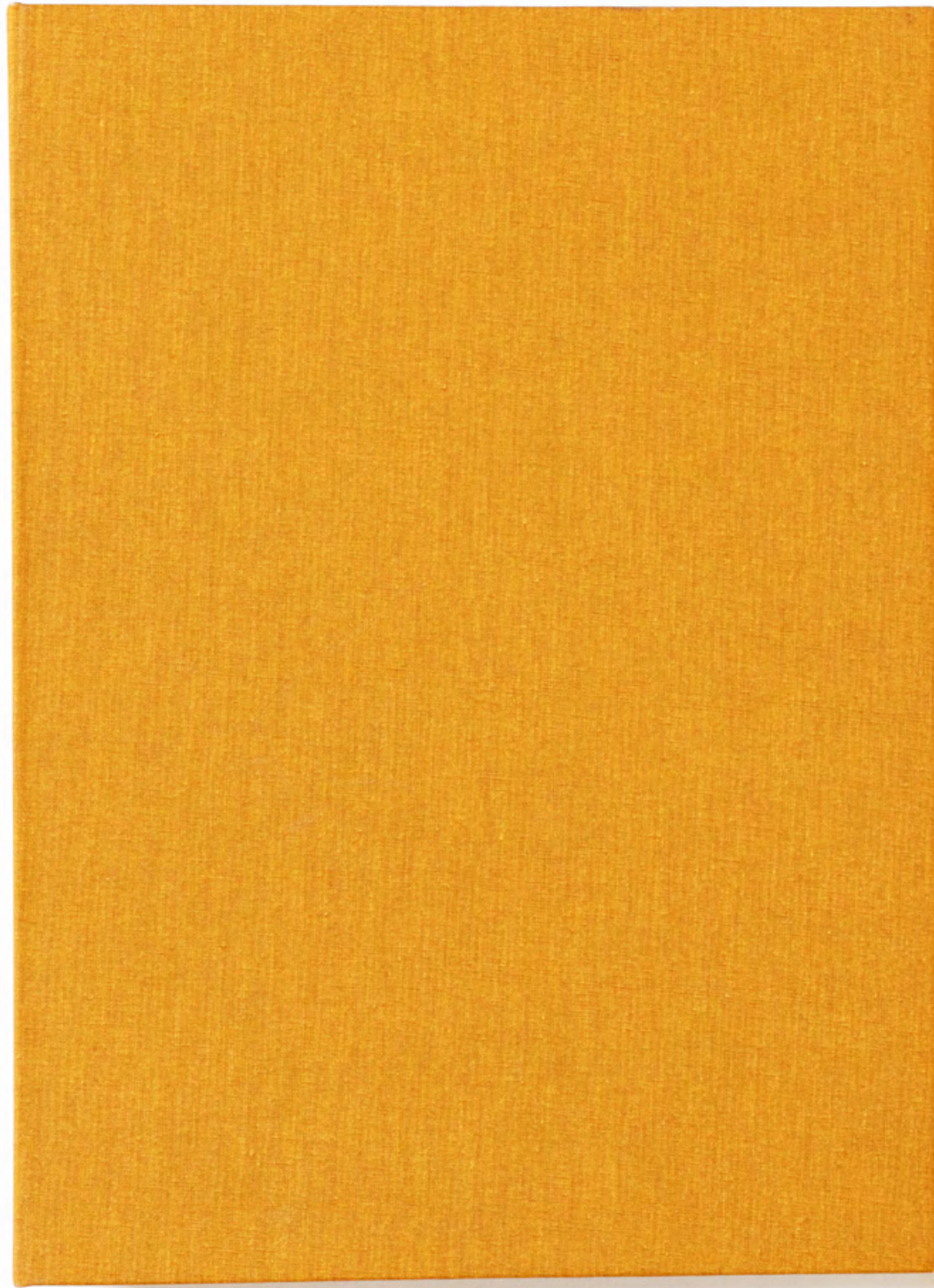


Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

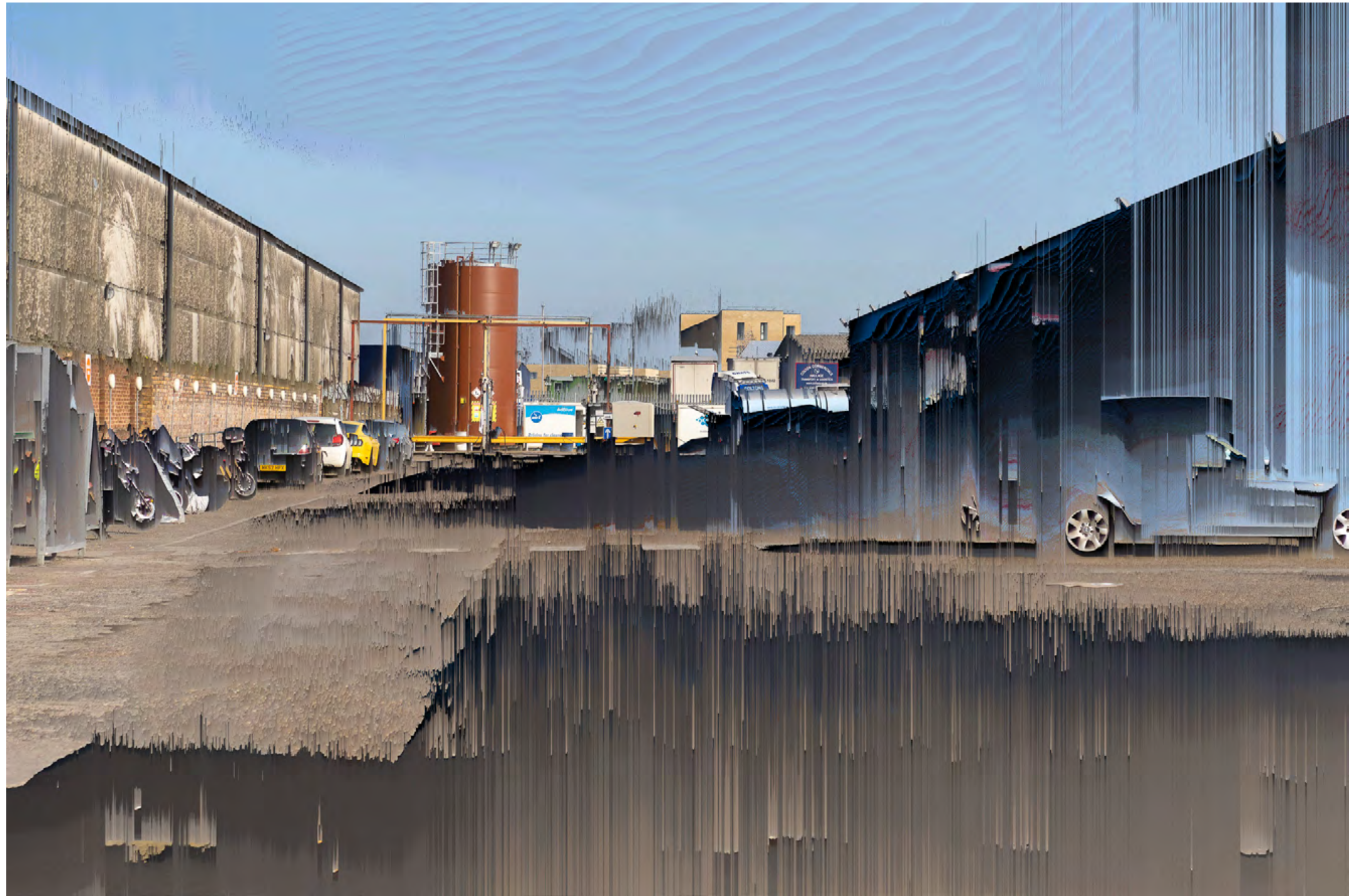


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

Archive Boxes

Sort through the contents of the box, handle and look carefully at the prints, read the texts, listen to the soundscapes. Select three images, put them in a sequence, create a story that links them together. Change the order, change the images, change the story. What else should be in the collection, what can you add, what's missing, what appears to be out of place?

The images and materials presented in the archive boxes can be configured and used in different ways, for instance, as an exhibition, as the basis for a group activity or for individual handling, reflection and story-telling. There is no predefined order to the images or expectations about how viewing of the images should be combined with the contextual materials. The work is non-didactic, though not without an inevitable voice, or bias, though the initial selection of material. The collections place my own images and handmade books alongside archive images and texts, developer CGIs, maps, planning and other documents, press reports and a range of other materials. Rather than present a single pre-defined story, they are designed to offer the user the opportunity to construct their own narratives and sense of place from their engagement with the work, and, indeed, to reconfigure and add to and subtract from the collections. At a time of uncertainty, when closure and resolution are both troublesome and unwise, the collections, like the places themselves, will be perpetually work in progress.





Fig. 26



Fig. 27

Commerce Archive



Click to play a video walkthrough of the Commerce archive box contents with soundscape (opens in browser).

A list of the initial contents of the Commerce archive can be downloaded by clicking here.

To view NEUROPOLIS book video walkthrough click here.

Soundscape

Click here to play the full Commerce soundscape in your browser or scan the QR code to play on your phone.





Fig. 28



Fig. 29

Wharf Archive



Click to play a video walkthrough of the Wharf archive box contents with soundscape (opens in browser).

A list of the initial contents of the Wharf archive can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

Soundscape

Click [here](#) to play the full Wharf soundscape in your browser or scan the QR code to play on your phone.





Fig. 30



Fig. 31

Industry Archive



Click to play a video walkthrough of the Industry archive box contents with soundscape (opens in browser).

A list of the initial contents of the Industry archive can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

Soundscape

Click [here](#) to play the full Industry soundscape in your browser or scan the QR code to play on your phone.



Exhibitions, Workshops and Presentations

The three series of images and related work have been presented in a number of local pop-up exhibitions (in a community centre, a shopping centre targeted for redevelopment and a maker space on an industrial estate) and used in presentations and workshops for community groups and schools.

These include:

Exhibitions

- IG11 Art Trail (Studio Three Arts, Vicarage Field Shopping Centre, Barking, 16th September-10th November 2019)
- Creekmouth Film and Exhibition (Sue Bramley Centre, Thames View, Barking, 2nd November 2019)
- 4th Thames Ward Resident Growth Summit Exhibition (Participatory City Warehouse, Barking, 3rd February 2020)
- Open Project Night Exhibition (Participatory City Warehouse, Barking, 5th March 2020)

Workshops and Presentations

- ‘Living Well in Thames Ward’, Thames Ward Community Project Citizen Action Group, (Sue Bramley Centre, Thames View, Barking, 28th August 2019)
- Thrive Thames View Community Day, Mental Health Foundation (Sue Bramley Centre, Thames View, Barking, 27th September 2019)
- ‘Changing Barking’ presentation, followed by workshops using photography to explore how the area is changing, Greatfields School, Barking (October 2019-March 2020)
- These Are Our Stories: Photography walk with local residents and follow up: (Everyone Everyday, Barking, 5th and 10th March 2020)

Two exhibitions scheduled for April 2020, two workshops on community archiving and a presentation to the London Prosperity Board have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown.



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38

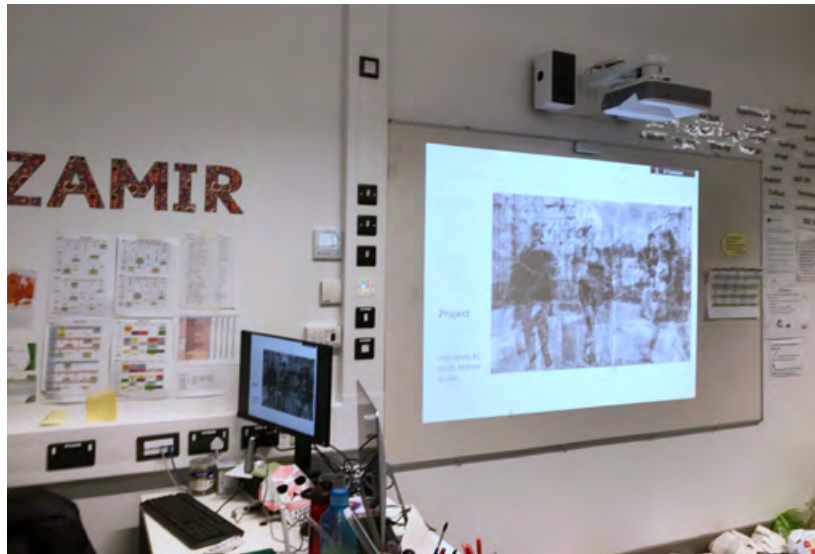


Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43

Feedback

I have been fortunate to benefit from feedback from community groups and residents through workshops, pop-up exhibitions and other events, which has been, without exception, constructive and positive. The photographs from the community dimension of my work have been used in funding applications, campaigns, press reports, promotion of activities, community advocacy and activism. Commenting on this work, Matt Scott, Director of Community Engagement for the Thames Ward Community Project, has written:

‘Working with Andrew has been a real asset for our project and our mission to enable resident control and voice. Andrew has brought issues alive through his creativity and thoughtful representation of the community as it comes to terms with the bewildering rate of change underway, driven by housing development, densification and affordability amidst some of the highest rates of poverty in the capital. Through his work we see the people and the place that exists beyond the statistics and housing units.’

Doing this work has played a vital role in learning about the developments on which I have focused and making strong relationships with the communities. I have also been able to share the work presented in my FMP submission as it has evolved over the past year. The positive response of the communities has strengthened my commitment to the intertwining of forms of photographic work around which this project was designed.

In lieu of the formal feedback on the final iteration of my FMP work that would have been received from the workshops, exhibitions and presentations cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, I sent my draft FMP submission to photographers doing related work for review. The extracts below give a sense of the reception of the work, the extent to which I have achieved the aims of the project and the potential for further development and collaboration.

TAMARA STOLL

London based photographer exploring community, archives, history and place in Hackney

<https://www.tamarastoll.com/Info-Contact>

Archives: ‘I very much like that your work puts archives forward as active and inclusive spaces inviting exchange and participation. The archival boxes will be part of an ongoing, ever-changing process that would be interesting to document. What is added, who adds to the archive, groups and individuals using/adapting it, for which purposes by different people, where do the the boxes ‘travel’ to, what conversations and activities do they inspire/ facilitate?’

Images: ‘I found it really interesting how your three series of photographs are a poetic counterpart/juxtaposition/addition to the archival and documentary materials. My associations were: Commerce - presence/ absence, ideas around the simultaneous/moment, which layers/ places are brought together? Wharf - reflections/water, associations of memory/transience, does that somehow relate to the history element of the area? Industry- fragmentation/abyss. Could be interesting to add some writing about these questions to the work/the archival boxes.’

LEVIN HAEGELE

London based photographer and London Creative Network mentor

<https://spacestudios.org.uk/artist-development/lcn-mentors-kathrin-bohm-levin-haegele/>

Narrative: 'It is important that Andrew's photographs are not meant to be a 'story' of the regeneration, but rather a response to it. What is particularly important is the contribution of, and collaboration with, locals through workshops and pop-up exhibitions. The narrative is, in essence, completed by the addition of personal viewer experience.'

Wharf: 'The importance of waterways in London to industry is part of the reading of the images. They present the development of the area by letting nature reveal and distort aspects of the frame ... The images manage to present the future and past of the area in one frame.'

Industry: 'The parallels between degradation of land through industry and the degradation of pixels through processing works very well in the series. The images are equally beautiful and repulsive. This series ... ties together *Commerce* and *Wharf* in topic and technique.'

Engagement: 'Andrew has presented a cohesive, intelligent, and interesting body of work that takes a subject that has been addressed in thousands of images, but breathed into it an honesty that I do not see very often. They are documents of an area in flux, but present themselves, like the area's transformation, to critique and discourse. These images, alongside the archive boxes, provide access to the people directly affected by regeneration.'

SCHMOO THEUNE

Berlin based photographer exploring borders, place and identity

<https://www.schmoo.co/about-bio>

Multi-modality: 'I really love so many aspects of this project, particularly because it's so multi-sensory ... I think in particular the soundscapes are so important, especially as someone who is not from the UK and has never been to the areas on which you're focusing. I still get a sense of internationality, of desolation, of industry as well as nature ... how much the area has changed, and what's at risk. I also love this project for addressing a philosophical issue of the changes that happen to a place over time and really emphasises the ebb and flow of identity. I think this transcends borders, has a broad appeal beyond London, and is very well done.'

Commerce: 'At first glance it's a bit overwhelming, the amount of data that's in each frame. The small digital versions (and also the smaller prints in the box) don't do them justice. But seen on a big wall with the soundscapes playing, I think I would really enjoy that experience.'

Industry: 'The pixelation effect pairs so perfectly with the industrial scenes you photographed, and I think there is a simplicity about each image that really resonates and is immediately understandable in the context of the project ... because *Wharf* ends with the poster on the wall, I first thought the *Industry* images were, similarly, posters slowly eroding.'

Archives: 'I think this is a great project and one that you've clearly spent a lot of time with researching and embedding yourself in these areas. I am interested in the archive box aspect and what's possible with interaction -- what can happen with the different configurations that people choose? Will those be recorded in some way?'

NOEL MOKA

London based photographer and film maker exploring scientific accounts of human impact on the environment

<https://www.theparksociety.org.uk/funding>

Process: 'It makes the work a performance, rather than an exercise in objectively documenting space. It's a great way of emphasising the subjectivity inherent in the medium, which is often forgotten and sometimes actively obscured.'

Commerce: 'The multiple exposures you have created ... act to emphasise the transience of people and things in space, which again is a more accurate reproduction of changing realities, or the constantly changing performances within spaces.'

Multi-modality: 'By handing images, adding, and removing them, listening to soundscapes etc, it makes interaction with your work more akin to our interaction with every day space, and of course is reflective of how spaces are not static, but change and evolve as actants pass through them, leaving footprints as they do so. In particular, being able to remove items from the boxes seems reflective of how memories can be lost, which is interesting when the medium is typically used as an attempt to remember.'

Archives: 'It's all too easy to make an exhibition passive, and your archive boxes are, in my mind, a welcome critique of traditional methods of presenting and sharing experience.'

SIMON MUNRO

New South Wales based artist and photographer exploring artefacts, place and ways of knowing across cultures

<http://www.theuniversitygallerynewcastle.com.au/blog/yearning-to-yarn-artefact-in-research>

Wharf: 'has captured a feeling that suggests the river itself has been observing the comings and goings of human existence on its banks through a rippled distorted lens. For me, it is as though the river takes priority as it cuts through the landscape as a custodial observer of human existence, wonderful series of photos.'

Industry: 'I found the *Industry* images a reminder of the ugly permanence of human industrial dominance and productivity over the natural environment. Coming from a culture (Australian Aboriginal) where metaphysical synergy with the natural environment is important to ways of knowing and learning, the *Industry* series is confronting ... The techniques used by Andrew to produce this series have amplified the harshness of human industry and the enormous work ahead to, once again, respect the natural environment and bring back a sense of synergy.'

My thanks are due to the community groups and initiatives with whom I have had the privilege to do photographic work over the course of the project: Thames Ward Community Project, Thames Reach Residents Association, Thames View Residents Association, Everyone Everyday, Participatory City, NewView Arts, Shed Life, Thrive Thames View, Sue Bramley Community Centre, Eastside Community Heritage, Greatfields School, Riverside School, Creekmouth Preservation Society, Barking and Dagenham Heritage Conservation Group. And thanks, of course, to the residents and others who have given so generously of their time, support, advice and feedback.

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