

Andrew Brown: Annual Review

Artist and ... : a practice-based exploration of plurality in collaborative art and multi-disciplinary enquiry

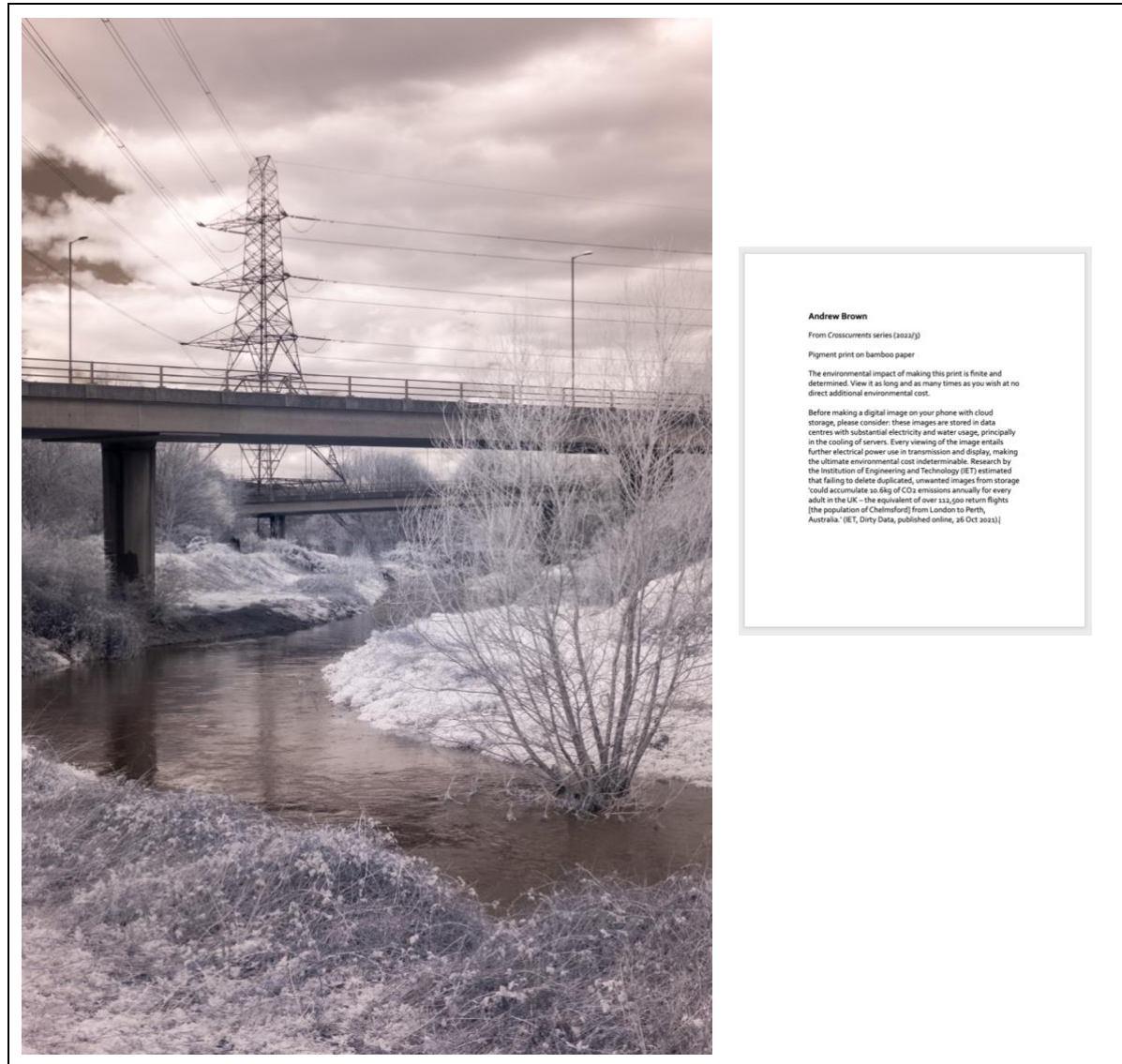


Figure 1: Andrew Brown, from *Crosscurrents* series, with caption from States of Exchange exhibition, 2023

Third year Professional Doctorate in Fine Art: Part time

Director of Studies: Dr Michael Pinsky

Supervisor: Dr Debra Shaw

5966 words (excluding references, figures, lists and appendix)

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1. Introduction

I am an artist and educator based at SPACE Studios, Ilford. I use digital, analogue, historic and alternative photographic processes alongside soundscapes, texts and artefacts to explore the impact on communities of rapid changes in the built and natural environment in east London. This has mostly entailed working as a member of, or alongside, community and activist groups and has to date involved three forms of photographic image making: participant image-making as the basis for discussion and mutual understanding, collaborative image-making to build repositories of images for advocacy and my own artistic work. My work has predominantly been exhibited in the places that it has been produced, for instance in and around community centres, in maker spaces, at community events and in the street. Workshops involving the exchange of skills and knowledge are an important part of the work. Recently, I have become particularly interested in the history of photography and colonialism, artist collaboration in research and the environmental impact of digital production and distribution.

As a child, I was a remedial reader who became obsessed with books and comics as refuge from difficult home-life and went on to be the first in my family to stay in education beyond the compulsory school leaving age. My engagement with photography began as a child model at the age of four, and whilst it has remained an important part of my life, due to financial precarity I chose to pursue a career in education. I taught in schools in east London before joining the Institute of Education (now a faculty of UCL) as a temporary contract teacher educator. I have an MSc and PhD in the Sociology of Education, and academic and practical interests in lifelong learning, countering social inequality and building community research capability. Whilst I have used photography in my work as an educator, academic and researcher, it was not until studying for an MA in Photography in 2018 that art became my principal focus. The movement between multiple domains of practice across different phases of life has shaped the focus for my DFA research, which I described in my second-year review as follows:

This practice-based research explores plurality in contemporary art, through the design and implementation of a series of collaborative multi-disciplinary

projects and the dissemination and analysis of the artistic work produced. Artists commonly lead double or multiple lives, often as a response to economic precariousness. At a time of disruption and transformation of established practice provoked by a succession of global challenges (for instance, the Covid19 pandemic, persistent social injustice and accelerating climate crisis), this study explores the creative potential of the ability to move between multiple and diverse contexts and forms of activity, and the benefits of the critical dialogues this facilitates. (Brown, 2022, p.1)

The notion of plurality I am using derives from the work of sociologist Bernard Lahire (2011). Lahire develops an understanding of social action that is 'both dispositional and contextual' (2011, p. xi), that considers our embodied past and the present contexts in which activity takes place. In his study of writers (Lahire, 2006, Richman, 2010), who, often through economic necessity, combine literary activity with at least one 'second trade', Lahire explores how this multiple, plural, life shapes the rhythm and form of literary creation. This movement across fields enlarges and enriches the pool of resources and perspectives on which we can draw in all areas of life and work. My research seeks to understand how this plurality operates in practice, through production and analysis of and reflection on my own work and speculating on the consequences for us as artists engaging in multi-, inter- and cross-disciplinary work. In the past year, opportunities have arisen to refine the focus of the research, which I aim to explore in this review.

2. Critical evaluation of creative practice

My aim this year has been to reflect on feedback and to experiment with the ways in which I produce and present my work. In this section I will focus on a selection of projects and explore how these have both helped me to develop my artistic work and reframe my DFA project. A fifth strand of work, currently being exhibited but not directly relevant to the projects in this section, is discussed in the Appendix.

A. Entangled Ilford

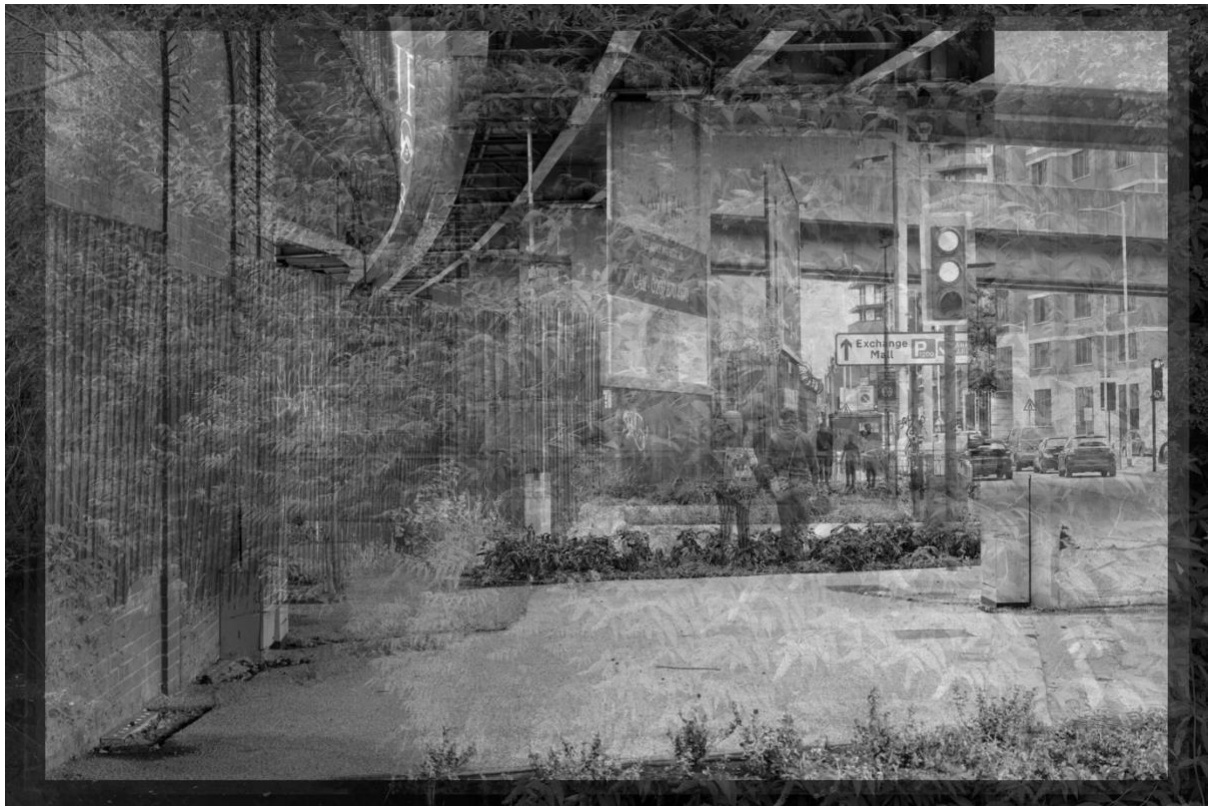


Figure 2: Andrew Brown, *Western Gateway* from *Entangled Ilford* series, 2022

This work was produced as part of a [commission by SPACE/Aetrium](#) to create artwork for hoardings (50m long, 2m high) around a former department store in Ilford. Following submission of an expression of interest, six artists were selected to submit a detailed proposal. For this, I chose to present monochrome [streetscapes from Barking](#) created in 2019 as part of the *neuropolis series* through a process of channel mixing, proposing to produce similar work for the hoarding in Ilford.



Figure 3: Andrew Brown, *neuropolis*, 2019

I was awarded the commission in June 2022, and produced the work in July. The resulting images were UV printed on aluminium with an anti-graffiti coating and installed in November. They will remain in place until the demolition of the building is completed (unlikely to be before 2024). I described the process of producing the work as follows:

For two weeks in July, I walked around Ilford photographing street scenes, the changing built environment and plants and trees growing in the area. The resulting images are intended to focus our awareness on the entwinement of our everyday activity with the urban natural and built environment, which often escapes our attention. To make each large black and white image, three photographs from the same location are combined using a process known as channel mixing. The way I have made and presented this work, with the component single colour images in a strip alongside each large composite image, reflects how Ilford is inextricably entangled with the development of and innovation in photography, dating back to 1879. (*Entangled Ilford* information panel).

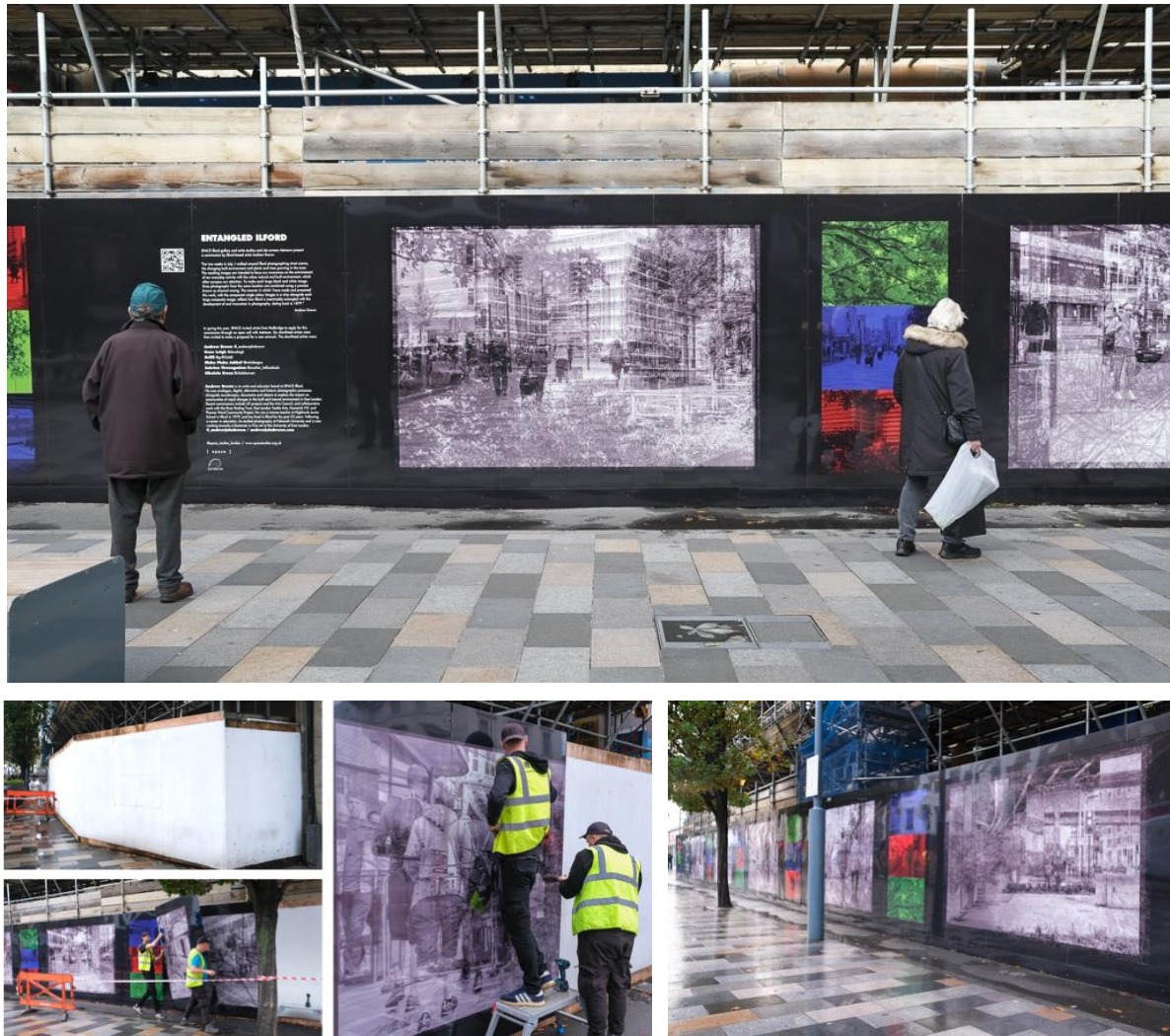


Figure 4: Andrew Brown, *Entangled Ilford*, installation shots, 2022

James Welling used the process of channel mixing to produce his 2014 series celebrating 80 years of the MoMA sculpture garden (Reed et al., 2018) and subsequent series. These combine archival with contemporary architectural images. Three monochrome images are fed into, respectively, the red, blue and green channels of image editing software to produce a composite colour image.



Figure 5: James Welling, *Ferrer*, 2014

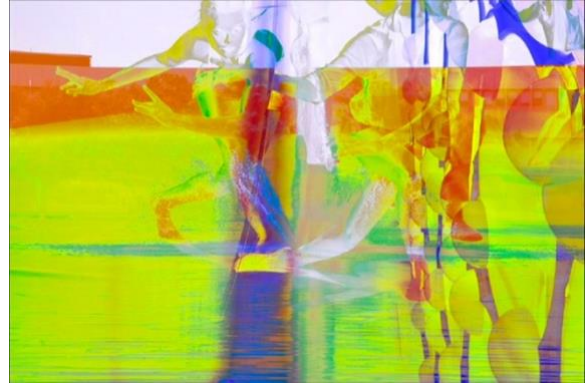


Figure 6: James Welling, *Choreograph #9472*, 2015

In mixing images for my project, I have chosen to convert the final image back into black and white, and to vary the way in which the component images interact tonally with each other to give an image that from a distance looks like a sketched monochrome streetscape. Moving closer, elements of the component images, and the different scales of these images, can be seen.



Figure 7: Andrew Brown, *Cranbrook Road* from *Entangled Ilford* series, 2022. Composite with constituent images.

This was my first experience of producing images of this size, and with this print technology. I chose to present the red, blue and green component images alongside each of the final images to give some sense of how they were produced and, I hope, provoke question about photographic processes, and to add some colour to the final piece. The work builds on a [series of workshops](#) I conducted for UP Projects,

exploring how public art could raise public awareness of Ilford's photographic heritage in a way that engages and is relevant to the contemporary diverse community in the area. I was influenced by Moi Ver's photobook *Paris* (1931) which uses photomontage to explore the dynamism of the city, bringing natural, industrial and human elements of urban life together in the same frame, and by Eisenstein's proposition that:

montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another ...each sequential element is arrayed, not *next to the one it follows, but on top of it*. (Eisenstein, 1988: 163-164).

I have attempted to juxtapose and entangle elements in an unfamiliar and engaging way. The response to the work has been positive, and passers-by do attend to the work. I was surprised to be selected for the commission, expecting the Local Authority/developer panel to select more colourful and decorative work. Also, I had not expected to return to this form of image making. It has, though, enabled me to combine the technique with exploration of the movement between analogue and digital forms of image making and presentation and development of the idea of images as data in the exploration of place as a product of interaction between human activity and the natural and built environment at a particular point in time.



Figure 8: Andrew Brown, sample pages from *Access* journal, forthcoming.

A selection of the images, alongside text, is being published in a special edition of the international academic journal *Access*, which explores the issue of precarity in relation to widening participation in higher education.

B. Crosscurrents/Changing Currents



Figure 9: Andrew Brown, from *Crosscurrents* series, 2022/3

In exploring the development of photographic materials at Ilford Ltd in the nineteenth century, I experimented with the way in which the sensitivity of emulsions to different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum (visible and invisible to humans) renders the landscape in different ways. I was using C19th Century cameras with glass plates coated with photosensitive emulsions based on formulae from the 1870s and 1890s. These are sensitive to only ultraviolet or ultraviolet and blue light respectively. Subsequently, I worked with orthochromatic and infra-red sensitive films, and with full-spectrum digital sensors with filters to shape response curves.

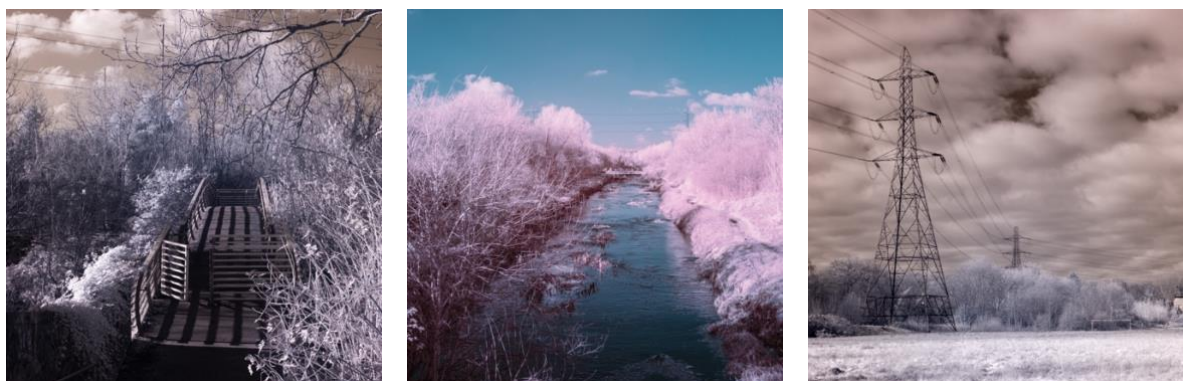


Figure 10: Andrew Brown, from *Crosscurrents* series, 2022/3

My *Parched* series used near-infrared photography to explore impact on the landscape of the summer 2022 drought. The 2022/3 *Crosscurrents* series built on this work and provided a context for preparation for and extension of a collaborative project with Arup, SPACE, super/collider, the River Roding Trust and Beal High School sixth form art and design students, which led to the *Changing Currents* exhibition at SPACE Gallery (February–June 2023).



Figure 11: *Changing Currents* opening, February 2023. Poster and Beal High School group.

The Arup funded project ran from November 2022 to February 2023. The focus was on a stretch of the River Roding close to Beal School, as a context for the exploration of the impact of climate change on the local environment and the actions we might take to address this. My role was as Arts Associate for the River Roding Trust, which involved leading field trips to the river, running workshops for students and working with students to explore media, produce images, collect data, make field recordings and plan the exhibition.





Figure 12: *Changing Currents* fieldwork and workshops, 2022-3

Workshops included engagement with experts from Arup (on topics including light quality, water management, horizon scanning, ecology, climate control), fast prototyping, exploration of alternative and full-spectrum photography, and speculation on human impact on the river and wider eco-system. The *Changing Currents* exhibition features visual, text and sound work by the students and was curated by super/collider (Mel King and Louise Beer), a collective specialising in projects that bring together art and science.



Figure 13: Andrew Brown, images (UV left, IR right) from *Crosscurrents* series, 2022/3

I initially produced a series of images and animations which explored the way the landscape is rendered differently by materials and sensors that respond to different section of the electromagnetic spectrum. This enabled the look of nineteenth century photography (which shaped the colonial disposition to the 'emptiness' of the 'new world' – see discussion below) to be juxtaposed with, for instance, near infra-red images more akin to the perceptions of some non-human species.



Figure 14: Andrew Brown, UV image from *Crosscurrents* series, 2022/3

I extended this to produce near-IR and full spectrum images that drew out the distinction between infrastructure, the river and urban vegetation. This work laid the foundation for the tree pictures that became the core of the *Ilford Roots and Branches* project.

C. Ilford Roots and Branches

In September 2022, I was awarded the commission to produce an image for a billboard (5.2m by 2.2m, illuminated) by SPACE Gallery at the rear of Redbridge Town Hall in Ilford (formerly a town in Essex, now part of Greater London). My initial research for this project involved an exploration of places and products named Ilford. These included an isolated first nations community (of around 45 dwellings) in Manitoba and a hamlet in New South Wales (a settler farming community of around 100 people, named by settlers after their original home in Essex), in addition to the

renowned photographic materials company founded in Ilford in the late nineteenth century, and based in Ilford until 1976. I chose to focus on three Ilfords: Ilford, Greater London, Ilford Ltd, and Ilford, New South Wales (NSW). In preparation, I worked through the Ilford Ltd archive in the Redbridge Heritage Centre and through records held of links between the various Ilfords.



Figure 15: Andrew Brown, *Ilford NSW on Ilford FP4*, 2022



Figure 16: Andrew Brown, *Ilford NSW*, 2022

My work in Australia enabled me to spend some time in Ilford NSW. To get a sense of the place, I made a range of forms of images, including lens-based and pinhole camera images on Ilford film and digital photographs including near-IR and UV images. From these, I put together two series of near-IR monochrome photographs of trees in two Ilfords on opposite sides of the world, bound together by colonialism, migration and human environmental exploitation.



Figure 17: Andrew Brown,
untitled, 2022



Figure 18: Andrew Brown,
untitled, 2022



Figure 19: Andrew Brown,
untitled, 2022



Figure 20: Andrew Brown,
untitled, 2022

A challenge in producing a large-scale visual work on this theme is to pay due respect to the traditional custodians of the land in New South Wales (the Wiradjuri people) which is in tension with the romanticised settler-focussed histories in local archives. Through my work at the University of Newcastle (UON) in NSW, I have close links with the Wollatuka Institute and was able to participate in workshops and talk with members of the community whilst there. I was also inspired by the Songspirals exhibition at the UON Gallery (work by the Gay'wu Group of Women

from Arnhem Land) and working alongside indigenous artist, academic and educator, and friend, Simon Munro (Munro et al, 2019).

Taking inspiration from hand-coloured magic lantern slides of Epping Forest from the 1890s, I used AI based neural filters to digitally colourise the IR photographs. Nineteenth century colourists would not have seen the scenes they were colouring, so would be drawing on their experience of similar scenes to guess colours. The colouring would not be precise, varying in quality in areas of the images with differing complexity.



Figure 21: *Epping Forest*, Magic Lantern slides, 1890s

Likewise, AI draws on immense visual databases to identify elements of an image and probabilistically select colours. Both forms of colourising produce images based on data and probability, and both produce a sense of the entities depicted with clear flaws, produced by erratic and idiosyncratic selection of colour and incomplete and inaccurate application, particularly in complex areas of the image (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Flaws in AI (left) and hand (right) colouring



Figure 23: Andrew Brown, untitled (colourised), 2023



Figure 24: Andrew Brown, untitled (colourised), 2023

Lantern slides are circular to avoid the corner dimming effects of vignetting. I chose to adopt the circular form also to give the sense of a porthole or peephole, not just to and from the past, but also into the building on which the billboard is mounted, which houses local authority offices, a gallery and artists' studios. Andrea Nelson (2015), in discussing Deborah Lester's adoption of a circular format for her photographs of areas of New Orleans where murders have taken place, observes that:

Luster's photographs are circular in format, reminiscent of the earliest Kodak snapshots but on a much larger scale. This format emphasizes a purposeful type of looking, as through a microscope or binoculars. Yet the circular photographs are also unsettling: like peepholes or views from a gun scope, they make viewers conscious of the act of looking while forcefully disrupting the normal rectangular format of the camera view. (Nelson, 2015, p.94).



Figure 25: Deborah Luster, *Tooth for an Eye: A Choreography of Violence in Orleans Parish #01-16*, 2008-2011

The two outer billboard images are contemporary colourised photographs of trees (both over 200 years old) which bear witness to the impact of human domestication of the environment in their respective landscapes.

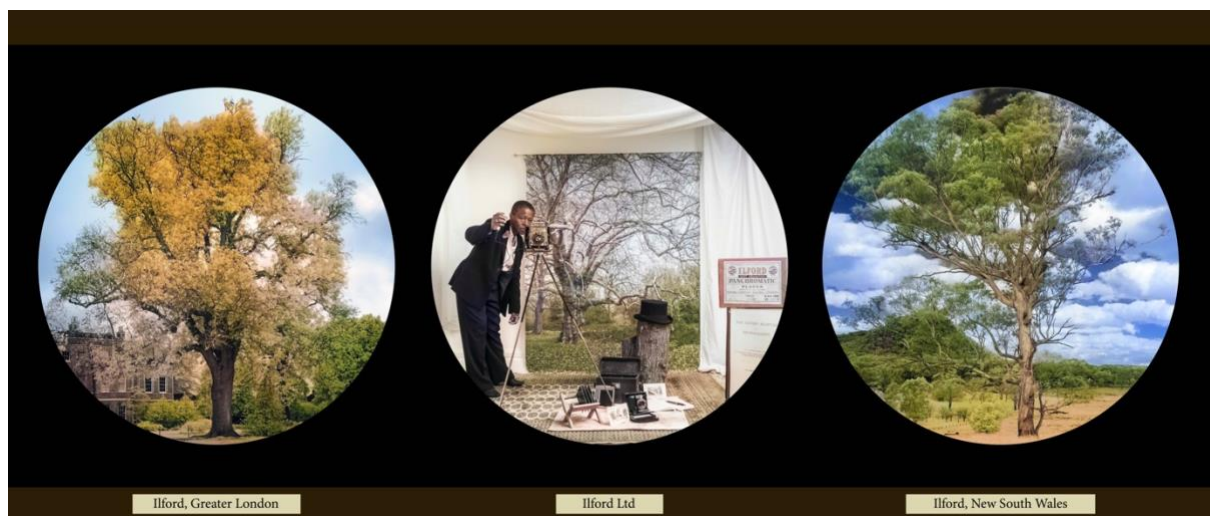


Figure 26: Andrew Brown, *Ilford Roots and Branches*, 2023

My intention with these images is to explore resonances between the destruction of Hainault Forest to create farmland for the growth of east London in the mid C19th and, in the same period, colonial migration in search of opportunities to appropriate land for farming, for instance in Australia. Jarrod Hore (2022, 2021) explores the role of colonial photography in shaping relationships to place, though six 'geo-

biographies' of late nineteenth century photographers in Australia and North America.

[Colonial photographers] took up the camera to encourage settlers to feel at home in Australian environments. This perspective disguised the ancestral ownership and continuing presence of First Nations peoples, turning their homelands into a wilderness through a photographic sleight of hand ...

Romanticism, through photography, came to influence how environments were envisioned and how histories of dispossession were remembered. The high wilderness imagery of settler photography came to support a fantasy of spatial control, delivering reproducible, enduring symbols of the natural world. (Hore, 2021, online).

The dry photosensitive glass plates produced by companies such as Ilford Ltd, which had global marketing and distribution aspirations (Figure 26), played an essential part of this process.

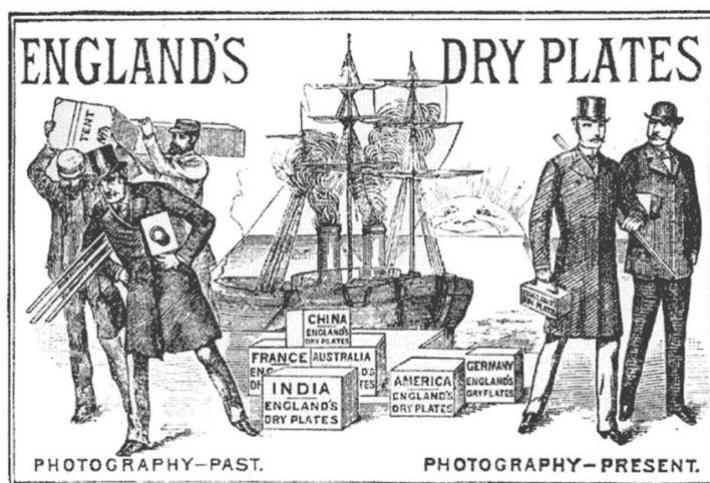


Figure 27: Advertisement for *J. Désiré England's dry plates*, 1884



Figure 28: *Atelier d'Amédée Fleury*, 1905

For the central image, I initially intended to produce a constructed photographic artwork in the style of Calum Colvin (see Normand, 2019) which would have allowed me to juxtapose elements of the development of Ilford Ltd and its relationship with the locality and its history. Ultimately, I took inspiration from photographs of late nineteenth and early twentieth century photographic studios (Figure 27), which I

could subvert to critically invoke, in a contemporary work, the colonial history of this period of photography (Ades, 2022) and into which I could place period cameras and materials, making specific reference to the dry-plate technology developed in Ilford, which enabled photographers and their studios to become mobile, and for landscape photography to become accessible to a wider public. I set up the mock studio in my own studio in the building on which the billboard is mounted.

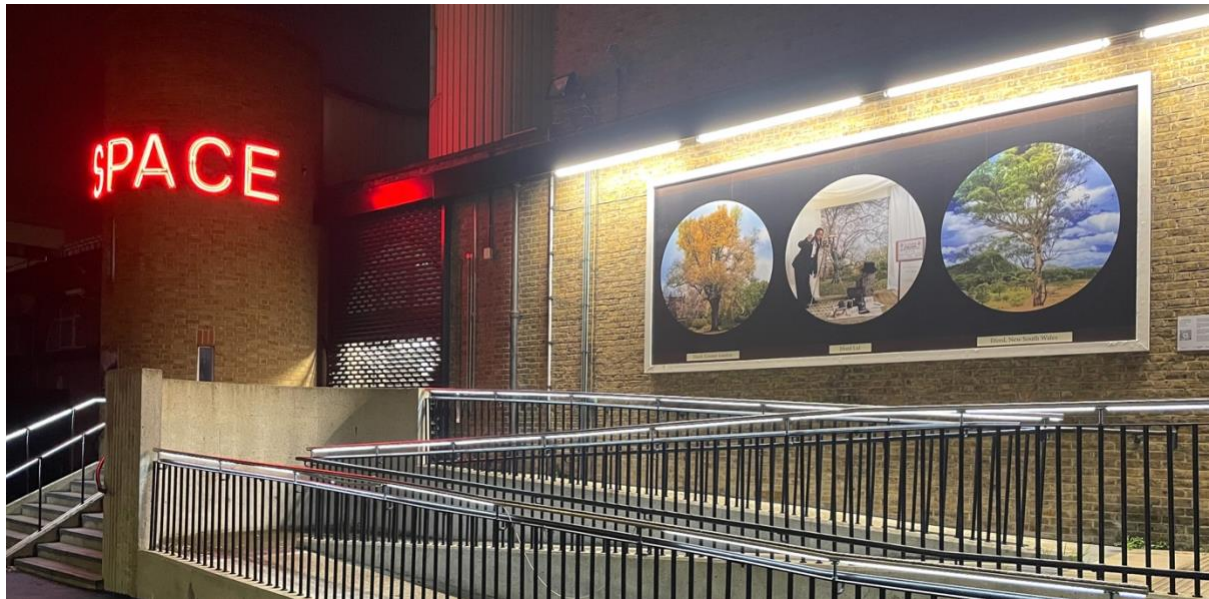


Figure 29: Andrew Brown, *Ilford Roots and Branches*, night installation shot, 2023

A panel with information about the work is mounted next to the billboard with a link to a webpage with a [more detailed account](#), links to workshops and an interview. The billboard was installed in April and will be in place for 6 months.

D. Song and Dance

In October 2022 I was selected to join the *SPACE Sound Arts Peer Group*. Members of the group use sound in their art in a variety of ways, from environmental sound works through to technology enhanced musical performance. Over a period of 6 months, we met and received mentoring to produce work for a performance together. Whilst working in Singapore in December 2022, I made field recordings of the interaction of the sounds of human activity and the gathering of birds at dusk. At the same time and place, I made series of long-exposure near-IR photographs of human street life and the tree canopies above, from which I made animations to accompany

the field-recordings by morphing successive street scenes into each other and progressively blending in images of the canopy as the volume of bird sounds increased and overwhelmed the noises of human activity.



Figure 30: Andrew Brown, *Song and Dance*, still frames, 2023

[*Song and Dance*](#) is a fifteen-minute piece made at a junction in Orchard Road, the busiest shopping area in Singapore. The work is inspired by two observations from the work of neuroscientist Alexandra Horowitz. The quotes below are from walking around the same New York block, in the first case with an expert in urban animal behaviour and the second with an expert in human interaction in public spaces.

We are rather noisy ... in an urban environment the ambient din is regularly 50 to 70 decibels, with spikes to 100 ... [some species of bird] sing at higher

frequencies in cities, as most human produced sound is at relatively low frequencies. (Horowitz, 2013, pp.116-7).

Urban pedestrian behaviour is quick and fluid ... together we are doing a cooperative dance, a kind of pedestrian jig, without even knowing we are dancing. (Horowitz, 2013, p.145).



Figure 31: Andrew Brown, *Song and Dance*, SPACE Art and Sound Night, Iklectik, London, 2023

The piece was presented to an audience as part of an evening of sound art pieces at *Iklectik*, a performance space in Lambeth focusing on experimentation in arts, sound art, installation and cross disciplinary work. Whilst I have produced animations with field-recordings before, these have been presented either online or as part of a collection of materials for workshops. I have used performance in the process of production of work in the past (for instance, work based on walking around perimeters of areas) but not in the presentation of work. Doing this work has prompted me to think about the use of sound and film in the production of environments for the engagement of audiences, and the incorporation of durational

work in my art practice(s). I plan to submit *Song and Dance* to the Slow Film Festival, which will be based in Waltham Forest this year.

3. Critical evaluation of artists and theory

In this section I am going to focus specifically on artists and theory that relate to the work I have produced over the past year, and which will inform subsequent work. There are two related factors that have shaped my engagement with artists and theory this year. Firstly, my arts related practices have been driven by a succession of funded projects. This has the positive effect of providing challenging contexts in which to develop and show my work. It also brings the danger of fragmentation and incoherence in attempting to meet the expectations of funders and partners. The second factor is a degree of convergence, or increasing consonance, of my different areas of activity/practice. I have previously attempted to keep apart the development of my art practices and my other areas of work, for instance as a sociologist and educator. This is in part an attempt to give my work as an artist space to develop, and to allow me to focus my artistic work on areas that have not been core elements of my sociological or educational work (for instance, the relationship between human activity/communities and the changing built and natural environment). Over the past year there have been several activities that have brought artistic work into a dialogue with my interest as an educator in, for instance, learning across the life course and widening participation, and as a sociologist in social class, inequality and research methods and methodology. These include conference presentations, gallery events, workshops and academic publication (Section 4).

Three years into the DFA programme, my initial interest in plurality is still alive. The challenge, however, is how best to explore this in a tangible and artistically coherent way. The development of my work has been driven by the opportunities presented to work in a variety of contexts. A strong emphasis has developed on the exploration of the way technologies, in particular photographic technologies, can shape (and challenge and subvert) our relationship with the natural and built environment. This has led me to explore, for instance, the movement back and forth between different analogue and digital forms of recording and manipulation, including historical and

alternative techniques, and what is gained, lost and transformed in the process. Feedback from work in progress seminars has prompted me to explore the work as the production and transformation of data, which has in turn created a space in which to engage with people working in other disciplines (for instance, through the UCL Trellis scheme, which brings together researchers and artists to collaborate on the production of artwork that engages the local community).

Throughout the DFA programme, I've drawn on Stephen Wright's *Towards a Lexicon of Usership* to frame my practice. Wright observes that in the past fifty or so years, all sectors of society have seen a 'usological' turn in which the opposition between production and consumption breaks down under pressure from the foregrounding of usership. He argues that the rise of the user in the arts lies in tension with formerly dominant principles of expert culture, spectatorship and ownership. Wright states that

Turning away from pursuing art's aesthetic function, many practitioners are redefining their engagement with art, less in terms of authorship than as users of artistic competence, insisting that art foster more robust use values and gain more bite in the real. (Wright, 2018, p.2)

He suggests that competence, and corresponding incompetence,

is of fundamental importance in situations of collaboration, where art engages in skill sharing and competence crossing with other modes of activity whose domains of competence, and hence of incompetence, are very different. By mutualising (in)competence, this difference is made fruitful and productive (p.16)

Wright asks us to consider 'what art per se brings to the table ... once its aesthetic function has been deactivated' (p.16), but he gives little sense of what this might be. For me, it is not that the aesthetic function has been de-activated, but that it has been reframed and distributed across domains of activity, knowledge and expertise.

Alexandra Horowitz offers one way of rethinking specialist knowledge and practice in the era of usership. In 'On Looking: A walker's guide to the art of observation', Horowitz (2013) walks around the same New York block with a succession of experts, including a physician, a typographer, a social worker, a geologist and a researcher in animal behaviour. Each specialist reads the terrain, and the events that are played out across it, differently, led by their expertise to notice different features and relationships and draw different inferences. In sharing these insights with Horowitz, they transform her experience of a familiar place, re-animate the seemingly mundane and extend her own possible future readings. The title of the book emphasises looking, but, of course, the city block offers up a full range of sensory data to be interpreted, including sounds, smells, tastes, textures and vibrations. This recasting of expertise in relation to our engagement with and movement through the landscape resonates with the expanded definition of aesthetics offered by Fuller and Weizman (2021).

Aesthetics ... concerns the experience of the world. It involves sensing – the capacity to register or to be affected, and sense-making – the capacity for such sensing to become knowledge of some kind. The finding or invention of means to achieve such effects is to aestheticise. (p.33)

This opens the way for new forms of investigation, exemplified by the work of *Forensic Architecture* in which art clearly does have a seat at the table, and in which all forms of expertise, knowledge and knowing have a direct interest in the aesthetic. As Fuller and Weizman (2021) state:

Aesthetic investigations have a double aim: they are at the same time investigations of the world and enquiries into the means of knowing it. This means that they seek accountability both for events and for the devices with which we perceive them. (p.15).

Re-framing expertise and aesthetics in this way, in the era of usership, creates the conditions for artists to be equal, non-exceptionalist participants in multi-disciplinary dialogue and enquiry. In thinking about how we might do this, it is important to acknowledge that empirical studies of what scientists do, such as Latour and

Woolgar (1986) and, in medicine, Mol (2002), show that scientific practice commonly departs from the rhetoric of scientific method, and this includes the influence of aesthetic judgements and of the materials and devices with which scientists are working.

A major strand in my work this year has been exploration of the use of materials and camera sensors that respond to electromagnetic waves outside the human visual range (though they may be felt in other ways). To an extent we are seeing the unseeable by translating data (in the form of chemical transformation of photosensitive emulsions or electrical excitation of sensors) from one form to another. Artist Sheung Yiu works alongside a team of scientists in Finland, who are attempting to overcome the resolution limits of satellite imagery. Their work involves the collection of 'ground truth' data by which to develop and test models that allow them to extrapolate from pixels in satellite imagery to the production of detailed on the ground images. They document what cannot be sensed by satellites to extrapolate its details from what can be sensed. They make precise measurements of the physical and spectral properties of trees, from which they can develop algorithms that enable them to exceed the optical capabilities of satellite images.



Figure 32: Sheung Yiu, from *Ground Truth* series, 2021

Through a combination of advanced imaging technologies, copious data, algorithms and computing power, they strive to produce a forest, and, within this, individual trees, from a cluster of pixels. Whilst Sheung Yiu's interest as an artist is in the embodied experience of the landscape and the activity and lived experiences of the researchers, he shares with the researchers a concern with what we know about the

trees and the devices we use to perceive and enhance our knowledge. In both cases, Fuller and Weizman's (2021) criteria for 'aesthetic investigation' are met.



Figure 33: Sheung Yiu, spread from *Ground Truth*, 2021

Each enhances and illuminates the other, through distribution of aesthetic and analytic interests and expertise. In *Ground Truth* (2021), Sheung Yiu presents his images of the human work of measurement, engagement with the landscape and the use of devices alongside diagrammatic evidence of the technical measurements and categorisation of the scientists.



Figure 34: Sheung Yiu, *Ground Truth*, Circulation(s) Festival, Paris, 2022



Figure 35: Sheung Yiu, *How to See Something Where There Is Nothing*, Titanik Gallery, Turku, 2022

The inclusion of a reduced facsimile of a book, 'The Art of Scenic Photography', juxtaposes very different forms of engagement with the landscape. The work draws out common concerns with devices, detail, representation, inference and experience which draw artistic and scientific image making close together and highlight the ideological dimensions of the distinction between art and science (his 2016-8 work, *The Poetics of Science*, explored how the photographs used in science textbooks are far from 'scientific', and are influence by science communication aesthetic cliches and assumptions about what makes something intelligible). Differences in scale are brought to the fore, in the sense explored by the Charles and Ray Eames (1977) in the film *Powers of Ten*, which zooms out from two people on a picnic mat to the edges of the universe and then back into a single proton in a carbon atom. Sheung states that 'there is always something where there is nothing to see in an image. That something is invisible because we are looking at the wrong scale' (Sheung, 2022). As Zachary Horton (2021) observes, the scale of objects can only be measured or conceptualised through the lens of disciplined knowledge structures - we need to have some notion of what we are looking at, but we can also ask questions about how we are seeing, or sensing.

Sheung Yiu (2021) entitled the essay on his project 'How to Resurrect a Tree'. The remotely undiscernible tree is brought to life through algorithmic extraction from high

level data. In contrast, Singapore born artist Simryn Gill in her work *Clearing* is 'resurrecting' a tree in a different sense. Gill's tree is a 110-year-old Canary Island date palm which was removed to make space for the extension of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, too badly infested by coconut weevils to be replanted.

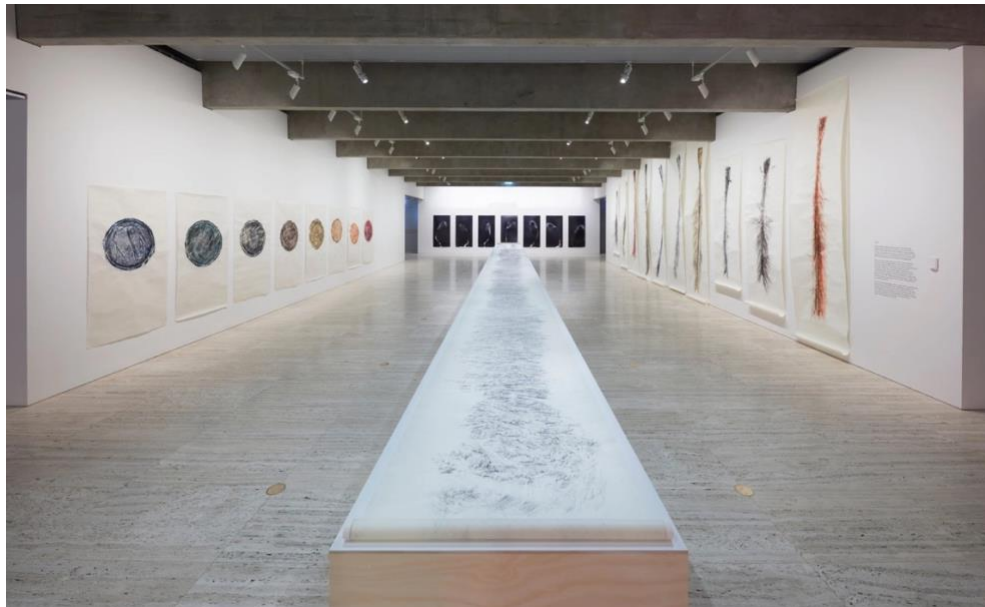


Figure 36: Simryn Gill, *Clearing*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2022

Gill took sections of trunk, bundles of fronds and seed heads, from which she made relief prints, rubbings and photograms, which are exhibited in the gallery. It is an attempt to capture, preserve and present the tree in visceral terms. An accompanying book (Gill, 2022) juxtaposes these images with text and photographs, designed as an unwrapping or unfolding of the tree, not an erasure, and making the work more than the sum of the tree's parts (Sprague, 2023). This is 'ground truth' which transmutes into remote sensing as the memory of the tree in situ fades. Gill's

collaborators in this work are not scientists, but skilled printmakers and photographic printers with whom Gill has worked on other projects.

Mark Dion brings a 150-year-old dead ash tree into a gallery in his *Life of a Dead Tree* (2019). Segments of the huge tree are arranged on metal stands in the gallery, which is set up as a workplace for researchers to examine the tree, with posters, photographs and diagrams documenting the insects that live within the tree.

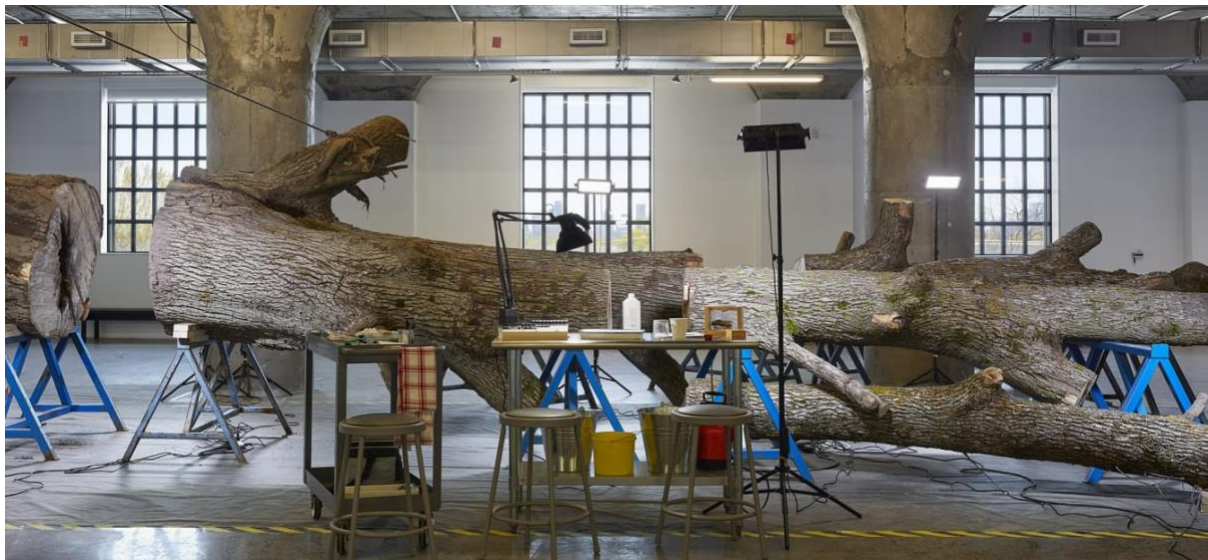


Figure 37: Mark Dion, *Life of a Dead Tree*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, 2019

There is also a classroom-like area for visitors to take part in a programme of activities and a looping film of the process of bringing the tree from the field to the gallery. Whereas earlier work has been more clearly a parody of scientific method, the collaboration with the University of Toronto, and the day-to-day presence of researchers, brings this closer a critical dialogue and collaboration between artistic and scientific interests and expertise. The focus on invasive species and the fate of the tree also creates a space for critical consideration of social and cultural issues and contemporary political discourse.

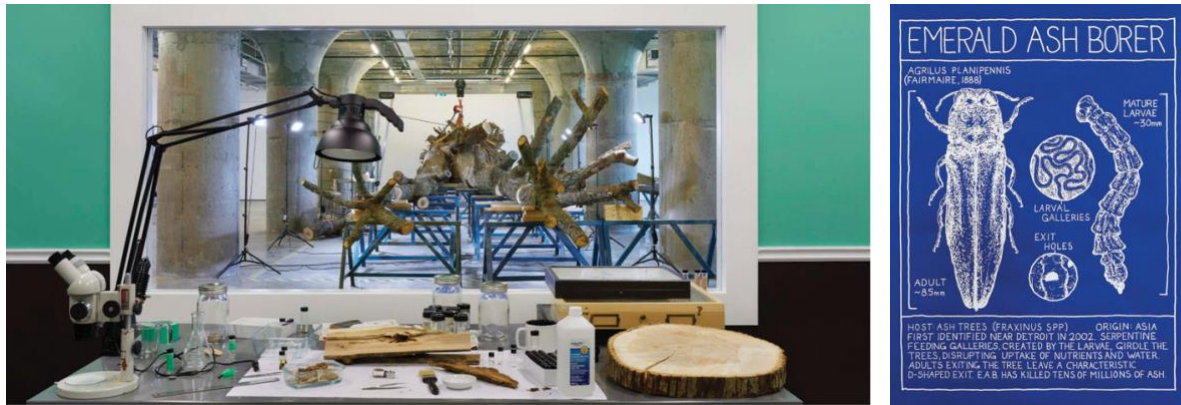


Figure 38: Mark Dion, *Life of a Dead Tree*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, 2019

As Lutsch (2019) observes this work 'explores the potential of disrupting the scientific process with the non-linear curiosity of a creative mind. Dion thus straddles the line between artist/amateur and scientist/specialist, enlisting a crew of collaborators whose individual expertise shine light on the project in unexpected ways' (p.376). A review in the *Toronto Star* notes that the form of Dion's exhibition is 'more typical of the natural history museum (his effort is messier, though, both practically and conceptually), Dion hopes to activate an emotion less present in the scientific vocabulary: loss' (Hampton, 2019: online), reinforcing the conclusion by Lutsch (2019) that ultimately 'Dion prompts the audience to ask questions, remain critical, and embed their analysis with the childlike curiosity of an amateur hobbyist' (p.376).

Whilst the work discussed here by Sheung, Gill and Dion share a common focus, they represent different types of relationship with forms of specialist discourse and practice, and how artistic practices and sensibilities are positioned with respect to multi-disciplinary enquiry. Richard Mosse has adopted a more overtly political stance in his *Broken Spectre* project, exploring the devastation of the Amazon rainforest, and its consequences.



Figure 39: Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre*, video installation, 180 The Strand, 2023

His two-channel, 74-minute film, with throbbing soundtrack, uses multi-spectral imaging at a variety of scales, from the microscopic to remote sensing, through which he makes the invisible visible on numerous levels. He uses both digital and analogue image making, exploring the fragility of the latter by producing prints from heat damaged negatives. Mosse has used infra-red imaging since using Kodak Aerochrome film for his 2011 *Infra* project in the DRC, and for his *Incoming* film (2014-17).



Figure 40: Richard Mosse, *Hunches in Bunches*, 2011



Figure 41: Richard Mosse, still image from *Incoming* #293, 2014-2017

In June 2022, Mosse started a residency with CERN, in which he will ‘communicate and start to use CERN's network of experts and their extraordinary level of experiences, understandings of very obscure scientific phenomena’ (Mosse, 2022). The form of collaboration envisaged here is predominantly technical, with CERN scientists offering their expertise in multispectral imaging.

4. Critical evaluation of professional practice

A. Professional activities

Exhibitions/public works

- 2023 *Ilford Roots and Branches*, SPACE Gallery Billboard Commission, Ilford. Photographic print on vinyl mounted on illuminated billboard (5.2m x 2.2m with text panel). 1st April–1st September 2023. <https://spacestudios.org.uk/events/andrew-brown-billboard-commission-ilford-roots-and-branches/>
- 2023 *States of Exchange*, Hyphastudios, East Village, Stratford. Group show. Two works: *Contribution to Knowledge* (installation including 15 framed 210mm x 297mm monochrome giclée prints on smooth pearl paper) and *Untitled* from *Crosscurrents* series (329mm x 483mm giclée print on bamboo paper with text panel). 31st March–2nd June 2023. <https://hyphastudios.com/dfa-arts-exchange-presents-states-of-exchange/>
- 2023 *Changing Currents*, SPACE Gallery, Ilford. Collaborative work with Beal High School, Arup and super/collider. Various media including photographic prints, projection, audio and 3D work. Curated by super/collider. 8th February–1st June 2023. <https://spacestudios.org.uk/events/beal-high-school-arup-super-collider-changing-currents/>
- 2022/3 *Entangled Ilford*. 50.2m x 2.2m, UV printed on aluminium with anti-graffiti coating. Nine 3mx x 2m images April 5th December 2022–date. <https://spacestudios.org.uk/projects/andrew-brown-entangled-ilford/>
- 2022/3 *Ilford Ltd: Analogue Stories*. People Powered programme, National Portrait Gallery/Redbridge Museum. Redbridge Central Library. 5th December 2022–12th March 2023. One 254mm x 203mm C-print and text. <https://www.npg.org.uk/visit/inspiring-people-across-the-uk/people-powered/ilford>
- 2022/3 *River Roding: Sacred River*, River Roding Trust Moorings, Barking, permanent installation. Eight 500mm x 750mm photographs printed on foamex boards, mounted on railings along the riverside path. April 2022–date. <https://www.andrewjohnbrown.com/artefacts>
- 2022 *Platinum Jubilee: Thames View Women*, Sue Bramley Community Centre. Fourteen 500mm x 750mm photographs plus information board printed on foamex boards, mounted on railings around the Sue Bramley Community Hub, Thames View, Barking. 22nd June 2022 - 7th November 2022. <https://www.andrewjohnbrown.com/platinumjubileethamesviewwomen>

- 2022 *Please Show Your Working*, UEL DFA Summer Showcase, University of East London, 20th-28th June. Seventeen 329mm x 483mm colour giclée prints, fifty 180mm x 130mm monochrome giclée prints, fifteen framed 210mm x 297mm monochrome giclée prints, photo studio installation.
- 2022 *Platinum Jubilee: Thames View Women*, Thames View Jubilee Street Party, Farr Avenue, Barking. Fourteen 329mm x 483mm colour giclée prints plus information board printed on foamex boards. 1st June 2022.
<https://www.andrewjohnbrown.com/streetparty>

Other outputs

- 2023 *Exploring Nature with Photography*. One day drop-in workshop, SPACE Gallery, Ilford. 100+ participants. 22nd April 2023. Workshop leader.
<https://spacestudios.org.uk/events/exploring-nature-with-photography/>
- 2023 Andrew Brown talks about his SPACE billboard commission *Ilford Roots and Branches*. Interview for SPACE by Levin Haegle.
<https://spacestudios.org.uk/events/andrew-brown-talks-about-his-space-billboard-commission-ilford-roots-and-branches/>
- 2023 *Song and Dance*. SPACE Sound and Art Night at Iklectik, Lambeth. 2nd March 2023. <https://iklectikartlab.com/space-art-sound-night/>
- 2023 UEL BA Photography, final year review. 17th February 2023.
- 2023 *Camera-less photography and nature workshop*. River Roding Trust, Barking. Workshop leader. 18th February 2023.
- 2023 *Camera-less photography and nature workshop*. Transition Town Ilford, Valentines Forest Garden. Workshop leader. 17th February 2023.
- 2023 *Irregular Commas*, UEL Centre of Creative and Cultural Practice @ The Nunnery, Bow. Facilitating reading group session with Zarah Hussain. 2nd February 2023. <https://bowarts.org/event/irregular-commas-reading-group/>
- 2022/3 *The River Roding in east London: presentation, river walk, workshop*. Beal High School, Redbridge. 13th October 2022 and 13th January 2023.
- 2022 *Developing and Sustaining Adult Learners for Continual Lifelong Learning*, SoTL Symposium, Singapore University of Social Science, 29th November–1st December 2022. Invited plenary presentation.
- 2022 *The State of Cultural Diversity in British Photography: artistic literacy, educational access and institutional policies*, DMU, 27th October 2022. Participant.
- 2022 *Frontiers in Best Practice in Research Ethics*, IAS Common Ground, UCL, 21st September 2022. Participant.

- 2022 *Portraits and (re)presenting ourselves*. One day photography workshop for Hands On Training programme, Barking. European Social Fund and Education and Skills Funding Agency funded. 16th September 2022.
- 2022 *State of the Legacy: Interrogating a Decade of 'Olympic Regeneration' in East London*, Here East, QEOP, Stratford. 12th & 13th September 2022. Plenary paper 'How it looks from here: legacy, regeneration and the redrawing of margins in east London'. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/urban-lab/publications/2022/dec/state-legacy-decade-olympic-regeneration>
- 2022 *Song of the River Roding*. Booklet by East London Textile Arts. Photographs and introductory essay (*Embroidering the River Roding*). September 2022.
- 2022 Lina Lapelyte, *Here Hear Hare Hair*, SPACE Gallery, Ilford. Voice. 28th May – 30th September 2022. <https://spacestudios.org.uk/events/lina-lapelyte-here-hear-hare-hair/>
- 2022 *On Lubaina Himid's Practice*, Lubaina Himid Seminar Series, Tate Education. 11th May 2022. Participant.

B. Exhibitions attended

- 2023 Mike Nelson, *Extinction Beckons*, Hayward Gallery, London South Bank. 17.03.23
- 2023 *Shifting Perspectives: six works by female and non-binary creators working in immersive technology*, BFI Expanded, London South Bank. 12.02.23
- 2022 Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre*, 180 The Strand, London. 20.12.22
- 2022 Universal Everything, *Lifeforms*, 180 The Strand, London. 15.12.22
- 2022 Anthony Gormley, *Horizon Field*, National Gallery of Singapore, 2.12.22
- 2022 *From Here, for Now*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. 26.11.23
- 2022 Gay'wu Group of Women, *Songspirals*, UON Gallery, 24.11.22
- 2022 Chua Mia Tee, *Directing the Real*, National Gallery of Singapore, 18.11.22
- 2022 Barbara Chase-Riboud, *Infinite Folds*, Serpentine, London. 25.10.22
- 2022 William Kentridge, RA, London, 20.10.22
- 2022 *The Garden of Privatised Delights*. Building Centre, London. 05.09.22.
- 2022 *Hockney's Eye*. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. 24.08.22.
- 2022 *Hockney's Eye: The Art and Technology of Depiction*. The Heong Gallery at Downing College, Cambridge. 24.08.22.

- 2022 *Colour: Art, Science and Power*, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. 24.08.22.
- 2022 Howardena Pindell, *A New Language*, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. 23.08.22.
- 2022 Cornelia Parker, Tate Britain, London. 16.07.22.
- 2022 Hew Locke, *The Procession*, Tate Britain, London. 16.07.22.
- 2022 *Peckham 24*, Copeland Gallery and Bussey Building, Peckham. 15.05.22
- 2022 *Photo London*, Somerset House, London. 12.05.22
- 2022 Ingrid Pollard, *Carbon Slowly Turning*, Turner Contemporary, Margate. 05.08.22
- 2022 *Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2022* (Anastasia Samoylova, Jo Ractliffe, Deana Lawson and Gilles Peress), The Photographers Gallery, London. 04.05.22.
- 2022 *Grayson's Art Club*, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. 03.05.22.
- 2022 *Me, Myself, I: Artists' Self-Portraits*, RWA Bristol. 03.05.22.
- 2022 *International Photography Exhibition 163*, RPS, Bristol. 02.05.22.
- 2022 *Cafe Royal Books: Documentary, Zines and Subversion*, Martin Parr Foundation, Bristol. 02.05.22.
- 2022 Polly Braden, *Holding the Baby*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol. 02.05.22.
- 2022 Paula Rego, *Subversive Stories*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol. 02.05.22.
- 2022 Donna Huanca, *Cueva de Copal*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol. 02.05.22.

C. Critical reflection

My creative practice has been driven by funded projects and commissions this year (discussed in Section One). To make best creative use of this work, I have been exploring Kathrin Bohm's notion of 'piles not projects' and strategy of 'composting', in which she brings all the work from her earlier projects together as a form of repository of works, competences, strategies and other resources that can be exchanged with or used by others. This resonates with the idea of usership discussed in Section Two, and my use of repositories of images and workshops in working with community groups.



Figure 42: Kathrin Bohm, *I don't want to do another project*, 2021

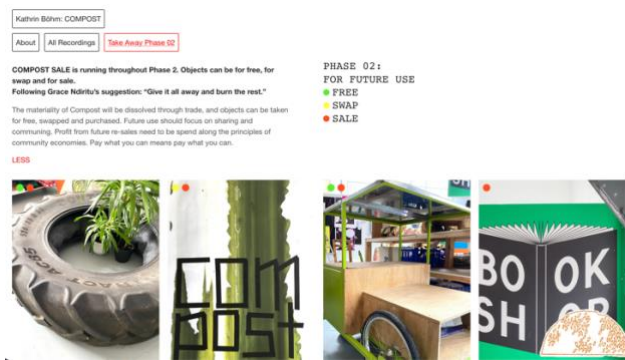


Figure 43: Kathrin Bohm, *Compost Phase 2: For Future Use*, 2021

5. Forward plan

I am currently working on two proposals which involve collaborative work with UCL researchers. Both involve the exchange of specialist competence and knowledge, joint production of work and community engagement. The first is under consideration by the UCL Trellis scheme and involves exploration of urban heat (mapping where heat is generated using data from a network of sensors, and using photography with residents, particularly vulnerable members of the community, to help them understand, mitigate, reduce and protect themselves from its effects) with a researcher at the Institute of Environmental Design and Engineering. The second project is with the *People and Nature Lab* at UCL East and involves working remotely with researchers in Nepal to create still and moving image work from a network of animal capture cameras across the National Park and surrounding areas. The project seeks to understand the impact of human presence on animal behaviour. The visual and audio data will be quantified and analysed. The artistic contribution to the project is to use the visual and audio material to produce work which enhances our understanding of the data and helps communicate the outcomes to the wider community. It is planned to do reciprocal work with art students from Nepal with visual and audio data from London.

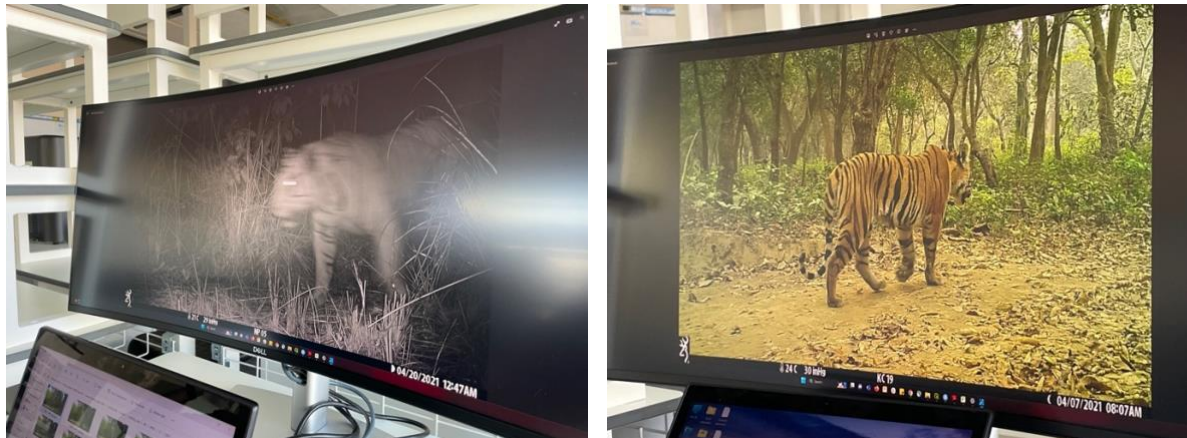


Figure 44: Motion capture shots, Nepal National Park, 2021

The exhibitions of the DFA students graduating last year exemplified two alternative approaches. Paul Greenleaf presented discrete pieces of work spanning the five years of the programme, with a commentary that linked the work to common research related themes. Ralph Overill, in contrast, created installations which built on, but did not include, the artistic work done during the programme, and which bore a direct relationship to the themes being explored in his research. I wish to take the latter approach and will begin developing this work next academic year.

Reading will include:

Antin, D. 2011. *Radical Coherency: Selected Essays on Art and Literature, 1966 to 2005*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Batchen, G. 2002. *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Economy of Things*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Coleman, K. and James, D. (eds). 2021. *Capitalism and the Camera: Essays on Photography and Extraction*. London: Verso.

Fell, M. 2021. *Structure and Synthesis: The Anatomy of Practice*. Falmouth: Urbanomic.

Flusser, V. 2000. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. New English Edition, trans. Anthony Matthews. London: Reaktion Books.

Gammage, B and Pascoe, B. 2021. *Country: Future Fire, Future Farming*, Melbourne: Thames & Hudson/National Museum of Australia.

Law, J. 2004. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wohlleben, P. 2016. *The Secret Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*. Trans. Jane Billingham, London: William Collins.

Wooldridge, D. 2021. *To Be Determined: Photography and the Future*. London: SPBH Editions.

Zylinska, J. 2017. *Nonhuman Photography*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Appendix

Contribution to knowledge



Figure 45: Andrew Brown, *Contribution to Knowledge*, mixed media, States of Exchange, installation shot, 2023

This is the only piece that I have created specifically for a gallery setting. I presented the first iteration of the work at the 2022 DFA Showcase. The positive feedback received on what essentially started as a joke encouraged me to develop the piece as an installation. Being a founding member of the organising group for the States of Exchange exhibition at the Hyphastudios site in Stratford (a two-month group exhibition in a decommissioned supermarket on the Olympic Park) gave me an opportunity to present the expanded work. Our *States of Exchange* exhibition and creative programme critically engages with the idea of social exchange and explores the interaction between place, memory and time and relations between cooperation, exchange, inequality, power and status. The main exhibition space is loosely arranged as an apartment, with my installation constituting the study, with desk, chair, rug and floor standing lamp.

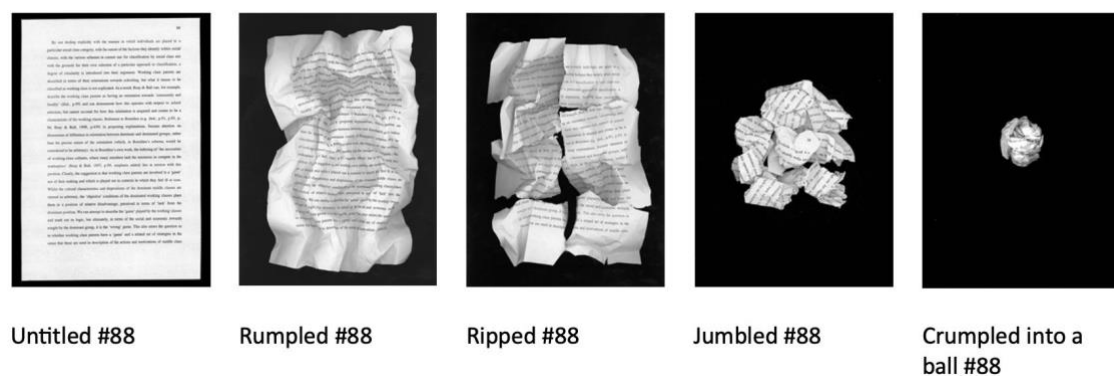


Figure 46: Andrew Brown, *#88 Series: Contribution to Knowledge*, 2022



Figure 47: Link to *Contribution to Knowledge* NFTs

Taking initial inspiration from Martin Creed's (1995) *Work No.88: a sheet of A4 paper crumpled into a ball*, the work takes my 423-page PhD thesis, and turns each page into a ball. Five stages of this process are scanned, printed and displayed in frames for each page. For the installation, framed prints for pages 87, 88 and 89 are hung

on the wall and the dismembered thesis with books relating to scientific and social science method (including my own) are placed on the desk with prints of Creed's work (and a similar piece by Gustav Metzger, *Remember Nature*, 2015) and a notebook with hand-written calculations of the potential total value of the piece. There is also a QR code which links to animated gif NFTs created from the work. On the floor is a bin full of paper balls and the blue cover which has been ripped from the thesis. In relation to the theme of the exhibition, the work explores different forms of knowledge and ways of attributing value, and exchange between these systems of value.

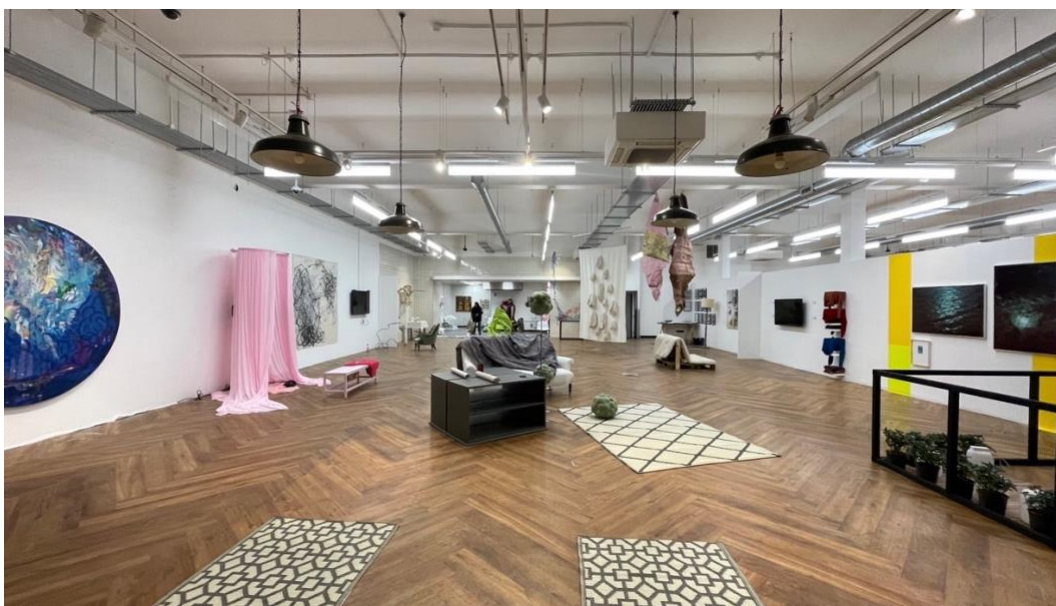


Figure 48: *States of Exchange*, Hyphastudios, East Village, Stratford, installation shot, 2023

Putting on an exhibition with 22 artists in a huge public space has been demanding. In terms of the development to my own practice, it has enabled me to assess the relative value of exhibiting in a gallery setting. The work itself has been a bit of a detour. Over the coming year, I need to think carefully about the extent to which I want to produce work specifically for the DFA exhibition, or to find ways in which my public work can be brought into a gallery setting.

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