

Andrew Brown: Annual Review

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



Figure 1: Andrew Brown, 2022, *The Value of Higher Learning: Wrap, Trap, Draw, Plane, Vent, Hide, Chock, Stop, Step.*

Second year Professional Doctorate in Fine Art: Part time

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Introduction

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. This includes consideration of the form that multi-disciplinary enquiry and community focussed art might take in a post/perpetual pandemic world.

In framing this research, I am adopting the notion of plurality proposed by the sociologist Bernard Lahire (2011). Lahire develops an understanding of social action that is 'both dispositional and contextual' (2011, p. xi), that takes into account our embodied past and the present contexts in which activity takes place. In his study of writers (Lahire, 2006; see also Richman, 2010), who, often through economic necessity, combine literary activity with at least one 'second trade', he explores how this multiple, plural, life shapes the rhythm and form of literary creation. My interest in 'the plural artist' stems from the observation that few artists have the luxury to even consider living the singular 'art life' (Lynch, 2016). It is also informed by tracing my own academic trajectory from mathematics and natural science to social science and education to art and the (post) humanities, and observing the manner in which each move supplements my subjectivity, rather than over-writing or reconfiguring who I am, what I can say, do and think and who I might become. This movement across fields enlarges and enriches the pool of resources on which I can draw in all areas of my work and, more broadly, life. The challenge to be addressed by this practice-based research is understanding how this plurality operates in practice, through production and analysis of and reflection on my own work (which uses analogue, digital and alternative forms of photography alongside text, maps, documents, artefacts, soundscapes and other media), and speculating on the consequences for us as artists engaging in multi-, inter- and cross-disciplinary work.

Critical evaluation of creative practice

My practice is fundamentally social, involving the creation of contexts in which to work alongside others with a shared set of interests and concerns, but frequently with very different backgrounds, competences and dispositions, in creating new work. Commonly this combines workshops with the collaborative creation of repositories of images and the production of my own work. The covid pandemic has clearly made this kind of work difficult over the past year, with some projects falling into abeyance and others broken into fragments as the pandemic control measures come into and out of play. In relation to the DFA, I have seen the second year of the programme as an opportunity to experiment, not only with the type of work that I produce and the form of practice, but also with how this work is funded and how audiences are engaged.

Matter out of Place



Figure 2: Andrew Brown, from *Single-use* series, 2020

The first year of the DFA programme was entirely online. The first time the group came together on campus was to set up the June 2021 showcase. For this, I presented selected work from two series of photographs created during my residency with the River Roding Trust: *Single-use* (six photographs of shredded plastic bags blown up into trees along the river, lit in different ways to explore their materiality and printed on bamboo paper, together with a ten-minute animation and

soundscape) and *Habitation* (twelve photographs of the traces of an encampment and murder scene between the river and the North Circular Road). Neither series was complete and I exhibited the work under the over-arching title of *Matter Out of Place*, a literal and ironic reference to Mary Douglas's aphorism that 'dirt is matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966: 36).



Figure 3: Andrew Brown, *Matter Out of Place*, installation shot, DFA Summer Showcase, UEL, 2021

This was the first time that I had exhibited work in a gallery setting (previous exhibitions have been in or close to where the work has been made: community centres, a shopping arcade, a community maker-space, railings along a riverside path). I had not at this point given any deep thought to how the work might be presented in a gallery setting. I made an early commitment to mounting the work directly on the wall (using Wolfgang Tillmans style tape hinges for the prints up to

A3+ size and bulldog clips for the larger prints), which relieved me from the pressure, and expense, of mounting and framing. I also took the opportunity to experiment with digital upscaling for the larger prints, and using different papers for the Single-use series (settling on a light-weight but rigid bamboo paper by Awagami). I also had to take into account the relatively short time available to install and take down the exhibition, and the (disappointing) fact that university covid measures restricted us to only three guests to view the exhibition. The overall sense was one of relief at reaching the end of the year, rather than a celebration of achievements and artistic progress.

In reviewing the work, Lewis Paul (a film-maker based at Leeds Beckett University, and a graduate of the DFA programme) observed that whilst diverse methods of making are clearly central to my practice, I need to give greater thought to the staging of the work and how this relates to what I am attempting to communicate or invoke. He also raised the related issue of the relationship between evidence and aesthetics and, in particular how evidence can be transformed into the poetic (or rendered as poetic). His key point was to think more carefully about widening accessibility of the work and consideration of how the work is staged and accessed, important to consider in relation to my experience to date of presenting work in non-gallery spaces. He suggested looking again at Eisenstein montage theory (which harks back to my early channel mixing work and the influence of Moi Ver and Peter Kennard in the juxtaposition of images), and also to think through the relationship between the soundscapes and the visual work (citing work by Chris Watson). In discussion, he also raised the issue of the titling of work as a way of provoking interest and engagement (citing the YBAs use of titles that intrigue). In his more general comments he positioned the contribution of DFA research in interesting ways, for instance the strategy of identifying research 'cul de sacs' that other forms of theory and disciplinary research have been unable to address, but which can be addressed, in practice, through our own artistic work. These are all good points and will inform the development of my work, whilst remaining mindful of avoiding 'the gimmick' (see Ngai, 2020).

Gallery exhibition is not likely to become a major part of my practice, which will continue to focus more on placing the work in unconventional exhibition spaces and

keeping public engagement with the work close to its site of production. Discussion with my supervisors about future showcase exhibitions focused on working out how the gallery can be of value and relevance to my work. At this point in time, my sense is that for me the gallery is most productively seen as a laboratory or workshop for experiment and active public engagement. A place of puzzlement and enquiry, rather than resolution.

Studio



Figure 4: Andrew Brown, *Studio* (bitumen reflection), 2021



Figure 5: Andrew Brown, *View from studio window* (camera obscura image), 2022

It was fortunate that my work for the River Roding Trust could be made alone outdoors, and whilst it was not possible to hold workshops and exhibit indoors until restrictions were lifted, I was able to exhibit the work outside. Unable to come into the University, I decided to rent studio space and was lucky to be able to get a low-cost studio close to home at SPACE Ilford from July 2021 onwards.

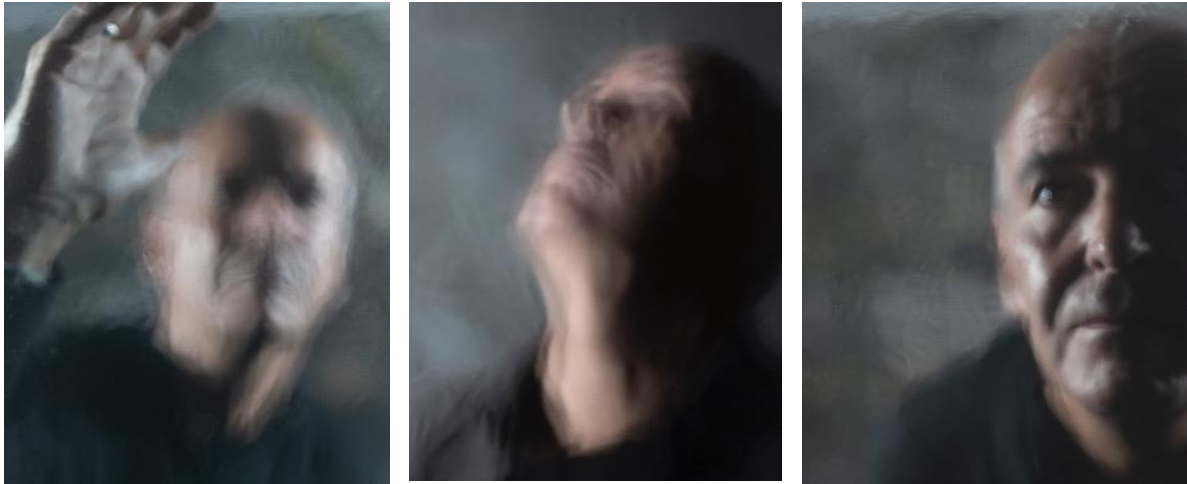


Figure 6: Andrew Brown, *Self-portraits 1* (bitumen reflection), 2021

This was a new departure for me, having previously done all my work 'in the field' (reflected in my critical engagement with artists whose work was very much rooted in the community, for instance Wendy Ewald, and place-based, for instance Mark Dion). Working in the studio enabled me to experiment with and refine techniques developed in the field in a more controlled setting. For instance, I developed the use of melamine coated in black gloss bitumen paint in making images when exploring invasive species and environmental damage along the River Roding. I was able to experiment in the studio with the use of this technique, and with different forms of lighting, in making self-portraits (see images above and below).

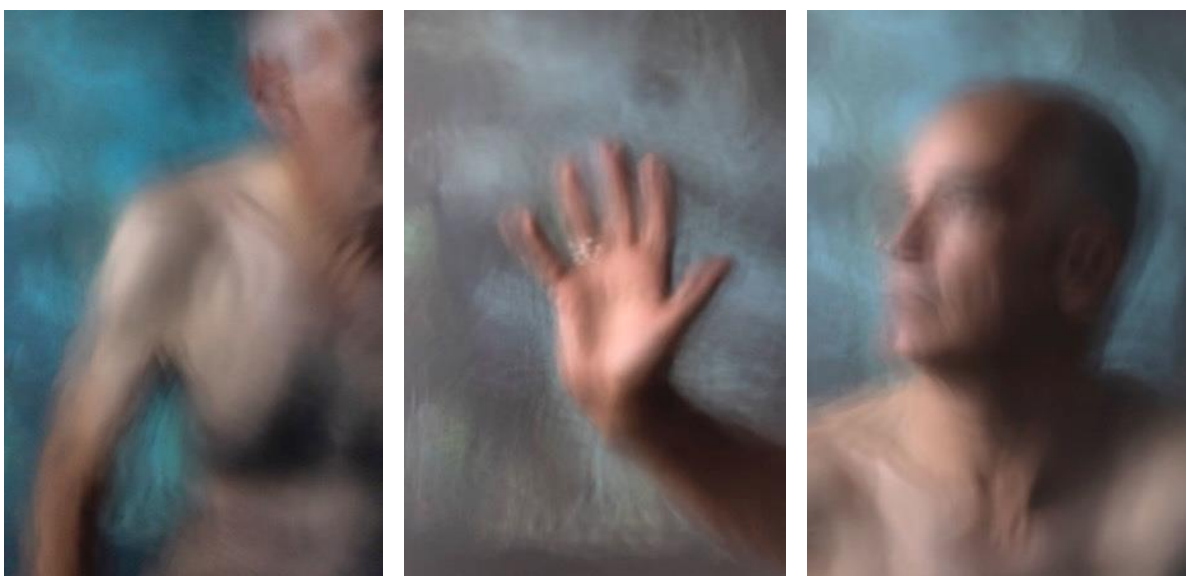


Figure 7: Andrew Brown, *Self-portraits 2* (bitumen reflection), 2021

I was also able to experiment with alternative and historic photographic processes (such as UV printing and using nineteenth century cameras with dry plates) which I have subsequently used in other projects. In relation to my DFA project, this has enabled me to explore the relationship between the studio as (work)place, disposition and performance (also interesting in relation to the way in which the home has increasingly become a workplace during the pandemic).

Portraits, activity and artefacts

From August to October 2021, I was a participant in Cecilia Charlton's *Mammoth Loop* project at SPACE gallery. This involved making bargello and fabric works alongside other local residents, in both face to face and online workshops over a period of three months. The work was incorporated into Cecilia's exhibition at SPACE (from October 2021 to February 2022, with over 2000 visitors). In the later workshops, I photographed fellow participants at work, concentrating on their absorption in what they were doing. A selection of these images was exhibited alongside Cecilia's work, providing insight for visitors into community participation and the process of production. I also participated in the 'Who Cares' international symposium with European partners involved in fostering community engagement in the arts.

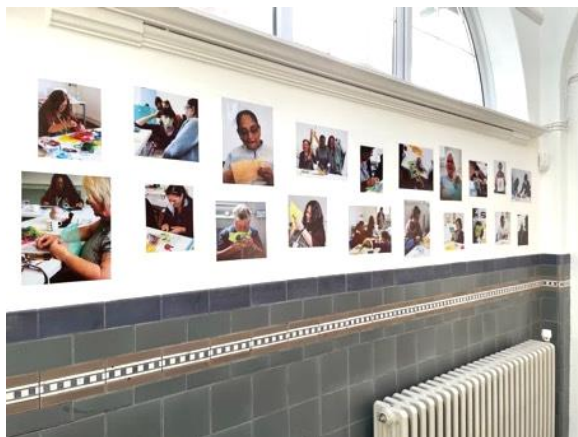


Figure 8: Andrew Brown, *Mammoth Loop* workshops, installation shot, SPACE Gallery, 2021-2



Figure 9: *Who Cares?* seminar, SPACE Gallery, 2021

This interest carried over into work, as a citizen scientist, for the Gants Hill Community Hub project, making images of participants in Redbridge Music Lounge sessions, the context in which they meet and interact, and the activity related artefacts that facilitate and shape this interaction.



Figure 10: Andrew Brown, from *Absorption* series, 2022

I am also a participant in the creation of a sound work (which opens at SPACE in May) by Lithuanian artist Lina Lapelytė. Together, this work raises interesting questions about the distinction between participant and artist in participatory and community-oriented art, in terms of competences, interests, status and attribution in the production and distribution of artistic work.

Facetious/Factional Pieces



Figure 11: Andrew Brown, *Old Lightwell* exhibition, 2022.



Figure 12: Andrew Brown, *Old Lightwell* exhibition, 2022.

For the second Work in Progress presentation, I booked the old Lightwell space and set myself the challenge to produce five new pieces of work in five days, to print, mount and install the work in two days and then discuss these at the seminar. I shared the gallery with Dan Polak and enjoyed working in the same space, using very different media but exploring related issues, including the production of process-based work, the place of the gallery in engagement with art and modes of representation. Each piece addresses an aspect of ongoing work. In terms of the DFA programme, the making, exhibiting and discussion of this work was the most productive experience of the year.

The Value of Higher Learning

Nine photographs depicting the functional use of my PhD thesis in various contexts (see Figure 1), vaguely in the style of Richard Wentworth's (2015) *Making Do and Getting By*. The use of magnets to fix the images to the wall invokes the way in which parents attach valued pieces of their children's work to the refrigerator. The grid structure subverts the casual nature of that display of pride. As the first in my family to stay in education beyond the compulsory school leaving age, the meaning and value of what I do, as an academic, is little understood. A big theme that cannot be discussed in any detail here, but resonates with the theme of plurality, and the importance in Lahire's work of reading (and writing) in enabling working class children to imagine the world differently.

Contribution to Knowledge



Figure 13: Andrew Brown, from *Contribution to Knowledge* series, 2022



Figure 14: Gustav Metzger,
Remember Nature, 2015



Figure 15: Martin Creed, *Work No.88: a sheet of A4 paper crumpled into a ball*, 1995

I took a Magnum course on selling fine art photography which covered aspects such as print size, pricing and the editioning of prints. I have taken Martin Creed's (1995) *Work No. 88* ('a deliberate, finished and perfected art object' according to the V&A holding notes) and worked backwards through Metzger's *Remember Nature* to produce five photoworks (each in an edition of 6 with two artists prints) from each page of my 423-page PhD thesis. Taking advice from the Magnum seminar, as a new artist I am going to price each set of five prints at £500, giving a total initial notional value to this work (and thus the thesis) of £1.269 million (423 series of five prints, six editions of each series). This plays with the idea of the different forms of knowledge and value in different disciplines and exchange systems.

Plate Errors



Figure 16: Andrew Brown from *Plate Errors* series, 2022

I have been experimenting with antique cameras using dry plates coated according to a nineteenth century formula. This series is based on errors made in the processing of the plates, commercial advice on selling fine art photography and growing interest in NFTs in the art world, with subsequent confusion about ownership, use and value. In each case a spoiled plate is scanned and 10x8 editioned prints made on acetate and mounted between two sheets of glass for display. A gas free NFT is made of the scan of each plate and offered for sale on the OpenSea platform. Prints are exhibited with a copyright notice alongside the original glass plates, which can be given to or taken by anyone who wants them. Different forms of work are required to create value as a material object (the spoiled plate), reproduction (the framed editioned prints on acetate) and the NFT, and potential value fluctuates in the movement between these forms, in a paradoxical relationship with legal rights relating to the use and reproduction of the image.

Body Condition Report



Figure 17: Andrew Brown, *Body Condition Report*, 2022

Setting up the studio-based self-portraits led to a number of graphic and frightening (to me anyway) photographs of my ageing body. This led me to produce a 'body condition report' of the kind completed when hiring a car, with Polaroid style images. This work starts to explore aspects of the body as archive, in part a response to reading work by Julietta Singh (2021, 2018) and Gramsci's assertion that:

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.... Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory (Antonio Gramsci, 1973, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324).

ER/Beaton Mock Up



Figure 18: Andrew Brown, *Jubilee Piece: ER/Beaton Mock Up*, 2022



Figure 19: Cecil Beaton, *Queen Elizabeth II*, 2nd June 1953. V&A Museum, London

I am preparing for an Arts Council funded project to produce portraits of women from an estate in Barking built in 1953, in the style of Cecil Beaton's coronation photographs of the same year, but with a backdrop and artefacts appropriate to the

sitter and the setting (my godfather was Beaton's assistant for these photographs). This image was made as an initial prototype using objects found lying around my studio or locally purchased.

Ilford Ltd, glass plates, archives and public art



Figure 20: Andrew Brown, *Site of Alfred Harman's House* (glass plate and print), 2022

A commission for UP Projects to support the development of a public art strategy for the Chapel Hill area of Ilford (formerly the site of the Ilford Ltd photo plant and headquarters) has given me an opportunity to revisit and develop my use of archives, walks, artefacts and soundscapes in exploring the past, present and speculative futures of a specific site. It also allowed me to develop my use of historical photographic techniques. This project is current at the time of writing, so I will just briefly signal the direction the work is taking and pick up the detail in next year's annual review (completion of the project opens the possibility of future commissions).

I put together archive boxes of material relating to the former Ilford Ltd site and the current community around the site, books, a photo walk around the site with soundscape, a video-walk and collections of artefacts (cameras, camera obscuras, films, prints, analogue photography paraphernalia etc). I designed activities around these to explore how the history of the site can be linked to the interests and experiences of the current community and help to form the future in ways that will benefit that community. An emerging theme is to foster forms of public art and participation that link the success of the area in shaping the second industrial

revolution (though imaging technologies, electronics and pharmaceuticals) and laying the foundations for knowledge driven symbolic production with potential to thrive in the fourth industrial revolution in a socially, culturally and environmentally responsible and sustainable way. Meanwhile rentals during the build will provide gallery and workshop space as base for citizen-led art, which the groups engaged with to date want to be functional and challenging, enriching the space and drawing local people into the area. At the time of writing this review, this work is still in progress.



Figure 21: Resources for Ilford Ltd project, 2022



Figure 22: Public workshop for Ilford Ltd project, 2022

Critical evaluation of artists and theory

The three artists I chose to focus on in my proposal were Wendy Ewald, Janet Laurence and Mark Dion. In each case there were elements of their work and practice that were of direct relevance to my emerging project, and this remains the case. Rather than reprise and revise my engagement with these artists, for this annual review I will focus on themes that have emerged in my work, research and reading over the year and refer to these artists where relevant and introduce engagement with other artists where appropriate.

De- and re-contextualisation: field, studio, gallery

My own engagement with photography began in the studio, as a child model for my godfather, fashion photographer Ray Harwood, at the age of four. It was a place for the construction of narratives and associations, where the distracting details and busyness of everyday life could be removed and lighting, props, positioning and bodily dispositions manipulated. Behind the scenes darkroom technicians and freelance re-touchers worked to construct the final image. In contrast, my own use of photography has, until this year, been entirely in the field. Like Ewald, I have worked with community groups to explore the relationship between lived experience and changing urban environments. Ewald's project in Margate remains an inspiration (not least because I grew up in a neighbouring east Kent town) for the subtle way in which she is able to explore the entanglement of the complex lives of recently arrived migrant children with a particular place, to take the outcomes of this work visibly into the wider community and create a context for mutual learning.

Over the past decade, Ewald has been working on an ongoing research project on collaboration with Ariella Azoulay, Susan Meiselas, Leigh Raiford, Laura Wexler and others, as well as students of four North American universities. This is founded on Azoulay's (2016) assertion that:

Collaboration is the photographic event's degree zero, as photography always involves an encounter between several protagonists in which the photographer

cannot a priori claim a monopoly over knowledge, authorship, ownership, and rights. (p.189)

Rather than study photographic work that claims to be collaborative, they have looked at different ways of being together and how people come together in particular circumstances. This has led to an exhibition and experimental laboratory exploring the dynamics of collaboration through photography spanning over a hundred projects. This critical engagement with the social, cultural, economic and political dynamics of collaboration forms a potentially powerful link with Azoulay's (2019) work on unlearning imperialism.

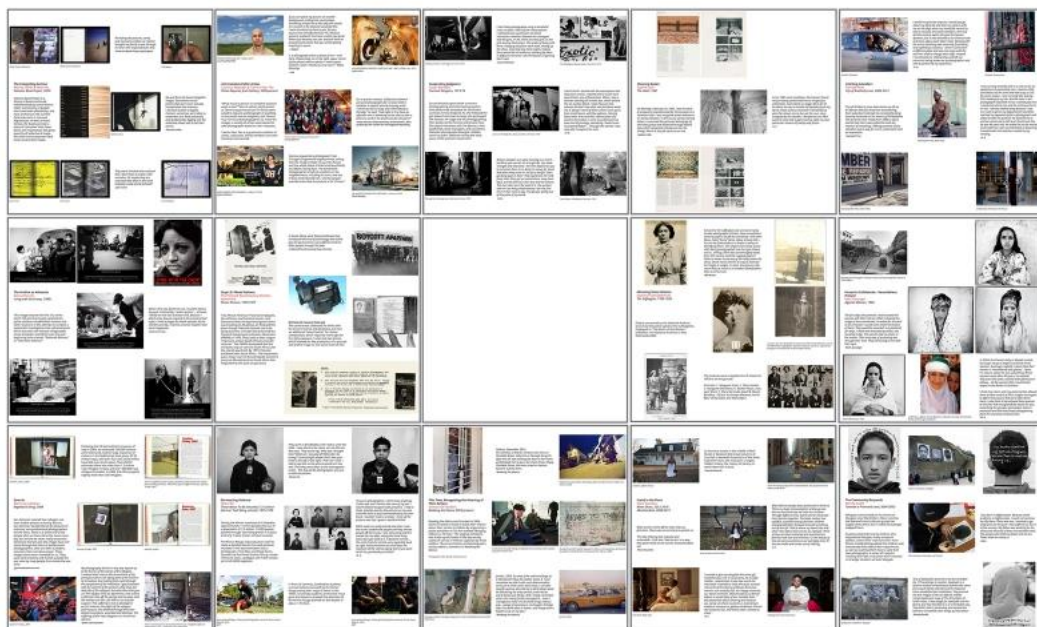


Figure 23: Azoulay et al, *Potentializing Violence from Collaboration: A potential history of photography*, 2017

Mark Dion also does not have a studio, choosing to work in the field, for instance in *The Thames Dig*, in the manner of an archaeologist. Dion does not attempt to adopt or reproduce the depth and detail of these practices and their associated academic discourses. Rather he assumes the appearance of these practices, for instance in having his citizen archaeologists wear white coats while they classify and clean the objects they have found. The categories and criteria they use in classifying objects are not the highly specialised categories of the archaeologist, but, rather, everyday, ready at hand categorisations, for instance according to apparent material, colour or

shape. This is a performance designed and directed by Dion, not a trans- or multi-disciplinary engagement with the specialised discourses of other disciplines. The resulting exhibitions have a consistent aesthetic, drawing on the conventions and colonial roots of the western museum, with beautifully crafted cabinets, arrays of artefacts and clearly drawn didactic posters.



Figure 24: Mark Dion, from *The Perilous Texas Adventures of Mark Dion*, 2020

Dion frequently draws attention to the mechanics and social basis of classification by including perplexing artefacts that subvert the dominant organisational logic of the space, weakening the boundaries between the esoteric museum and everyday activity and knowledge. The work provokes questions about the foundations of scientific knowledge, and frequently 'shows the working' of the pieces as art (for instance, by including the tools used as exhibits).

Dion falls short of illuminating the practices and forces at play, and the consequences of these, in the construction of what counts as scientific knowledge, as addressed, for instance, by Bruno Latour and colleagues. Whilst Dion remains firmly within the discourse and practices of fine art, Latour has moved between the

sociology of science, anthropology, philosophy and fine art. Latour observes, for instance, that whilst we can attempt to grasp, intellectually, the interdependence of all things, the visual and experiential has a key role in enriching our understanding, citing the theory of envelopes alongside the example of Tomas Saraceno's (2009) 'Galaxies Forming along Filaments, Like Droplets along the Strands of a Spider's Web'. He states that:

If you believe that there are independent bubbles and spheres that can sustain themselves you are clearly forgetting the whole technology of envelopes. But it is one thing to say it, for instance in political philosophy - that no identity exists without relations with the rest of the world - and it is quite another to be reminded visually and experientially of the way this could be done. (p.3)



Figure 25: Tomas Saraceno *Galaxies Forming along Filaments, Like Droplets along the Strands of a Spider's Web*, 2009

More recently, Latour has co-curated the *Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics* exhibition at the Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe (23.05.2020 - 09.01.2022), a speculative exploration of new modes of co-existence between all forms of life in the light of the climate crisis. The exhibition presents the Earth as a network of 'critical zones' which visitors explore as a combination of exhibition and thought experiment. As Solnick (2020) observes, in this mode of presentation 'aesthetics render these complex co-dependencies across different scales sensible and apprehensible' (online).

The Whitechapel Gallery exhibition *The Artist's Studio* provided an opportunity to explore different conceptions of what the studio can be, both as a public and private space. It also provoked consideration of the relationship between studio and gallery by, for instance, including research and making spaces amongst studio related images and reproduction of studio settings in the gallery. Ades (2022) explores the relationship between the artist's studio and the photographic studio, and the use of photography in recording the processes of artistic production. She notes the speed at which photographic studios opened around the world, in particular as a 'revolutionary form of representation' in places emerging from colonial oppression where photography was a means 'of the recovery of identities buried under colonial aesthetics' (p.11). This is reflected in the nineteenth century newsletters produced by the precursor to Ilford Ltd (the focus of my work for UP Projects) which boast that 'The monthly issue is now over 29,000, and copies can be had from photographic stock dealers throughout the world, from China to Peru' (*Photographic Scraps*, No.47, 1st July 1893).

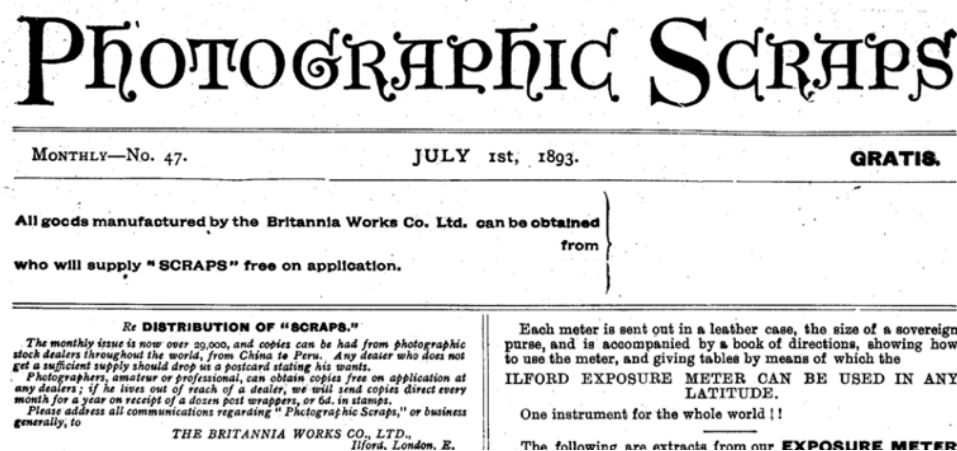


Figure 26: *Photographic Scraps*, No.47, 1st July 1893

Ades notes how the photographic studio can become a place of experiment, for instance in Shadi Ghadirian's portraits and self-portraits which subversively recreate earlier Iranian photographic practice to explore contemporary issues and identities. It is also a place of performance for feminist artists 'exorcising the ghost of the male-dominated studio with its traditional female model and reclaiming it for themselves' (p.15). The studio is ultimately, like any other place, shaped by a range of interests

and activities and with varying degrees of insulation between the public and the private.



Figure 27: Shadi Ghadirian, from *Qajar* series, 1998

Amateurs and professionals

This is an unanticipated turn in my work. I have previously explored the consequences of the collapse of the professions in the face populist politics and the growing scepticism about the value of expert knowledge, and deskilling and counter-regulation through the application of artificial intelligence in an increasing range of professional domains (see, for instance, Susskind and Susskind, 2015). This year I've been prompted to think about the relationship between so called amateur and professional practice, and the degree to which the significance of this distinction has changed in the light of challenges to professional knowledge and practice. The prompts come from (i) the study of the growth of the nineteenth and early twentieth century photographic industry and the perceived need to develop and capture the amateur user in order to grow demand; (ii) the development of the idea of 'the plural artist' in relation to changes in the economics of artistic production and distribution;

(iii) reflections in different fields on the distinction between amateur and professional practice, and the effects of this, for instance Tim Ingold's (2021) use of the idea of solid-fluids to explore the erosion of social anthropology through professionalisation and the elevation of the 'ethnography' above mere inquisitiveness. The Whitechapel exhibition drove this home even more firmly, with Rodney Graham's (2007) huge backlit photographic triptych *The Gifted Amateur, Nov. 10th, 1962* visually dominating the first section.



Figure 28: Rodney Graham, *The Gifted Amateur, Nov. 10th, 1962*, 2007

Here, Graham posing as the middle-aged amateur painter, in pyjamas with cigarette dangling from his lips, using his affluent modernist living room as a studio in casually producing a derivative Morris Louis style drip painting. He is 'trying his hand' at something that, it appears, 'anyone can do', raising questions about the myth of originality in art, and the (increasingly mythic, in the light of hugely successful bedroom you-tube and ticktock performances and networks of unpaid coders producing and refining open access applications) distinction between amateur and professional production.



Figure 29: Rodney Graham, *Inverted Drip Paintings*, 2012

Graham hammers this home further by exhibiting (and selling) these drip paintings. This practice is repeated with other works, for instance his 2016 *Artist in Artists' Bar, 1950's*, which features paintings (made by Graham and subsequently exhibited for sale) that are supposedly by lesser known and amateur artists of the 1950s that have been bartered with the restaurant for food and drink, a reflection on an aspect of the (mythologised) economics of artistic production.

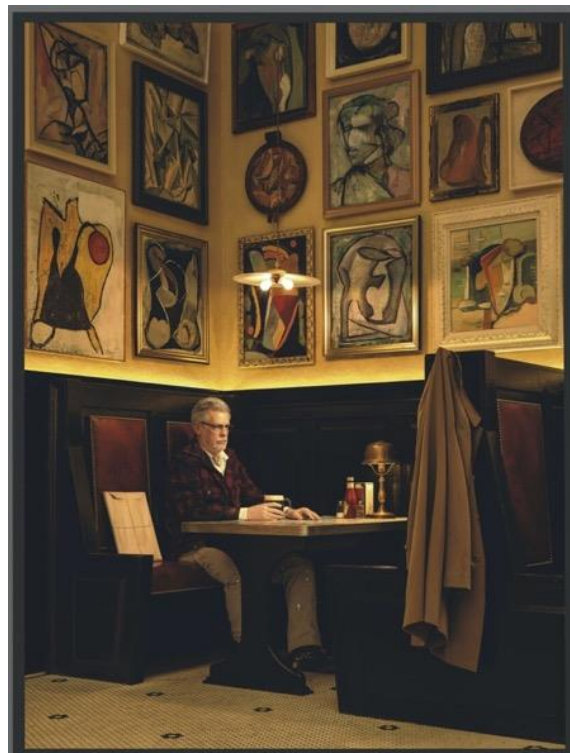


Figure 30: Rodney Graham, *Artist in Artists' Bar, 1950's*, 2016

These posed photographs (for which a professional crew is used - Graham is not the photographer) and the props created (not just the paintings, now produced by Graham's staff, but also reproductions of period newspapers and furniture) act to ironise and erode both the amateur/professional distinction and the separation of domestic and commercial spaces (see also his 2018 parody of Rodchenko *Vacuuming the Gallery* 1949).



Figure 31: Rodney Graham, *Vacuuming the Gallery* 1949, 2018

Ingold's (2021) reflection on his five decades of academic involvement in the discipline of anthropology throws an interesting light on the professional/amateur distinction in all areas of practice. Ingold's distinction is radically contextualised, in that there is no essential tension between the endeavours of the amateur and the professional but that, under contemporary managerial regimes, professional practice has peeled away from its foundations in mutual care and trust. The love of the discipline that entangles the detailed attention of the amateur with the texture of their everyday lives is incompatible with the fragmented performativity required for professional academic advancement, with its shift from 'social trusteeship to

detached expertise' (p.161). It would be a distraction to get into the detail of Ingold's argument, but sufficient to observe that a key distinction between the amateur engaged in participant observation and the professional ethnographer is that the amateur is a participant in an activity for its own sake and for the long term whereas the ethnographer is in it with the express intention of ultimately getting out of it and producing, as a product, a codification of the activity in the form of the ethnography. This is not to mythologise or denigrate specific practices or orientations, but to mark out two distinct dispositions, which can perhaps be cautiously generalised to other disciplines and domains of practice. Maybe to be effectively plural now, we need to throw off the multiple regulative discourses of the domains we cross so as not to be inter-, cross- and multi- professionals, but rather knowledgeable and engaged amateurs weaving together our multiple interests and entanglements. Ingold's amateur is a scholar who 'doesn't join things up but joins with them, watching, listening, rooting for things like a dog on the scent. And far from bringing matters to a close, she is always on the hunt for loose ends, potential threads to follow, lines of inquiry' (p.165). Research in this context 'is not about innovation. It is about renewal' (p.167).

Aesthetics

In *The Universal Photographer*, Anne Geene and Arjan de Nooy (2018) have aligned found and manipulated images with trends in photography over the lifetime (1955-2016) of the fictional universal photographer, known simply as U, who becomes the embodiment of responses to changes in photographic technology, an unfolding life-course and trends in art and photography (practice, theory and critique). The primary outcome of the project is a book (I also saw the exhibition in Den Haag in 2018), which includes extensive quotes from the work of major theorists, commentators and artists relating to the forms of photography covered, and fictional quotes about U's work alongside a biography of U. It's an impressive and entertaining project, and an exemplary exercise in post-modern irony.

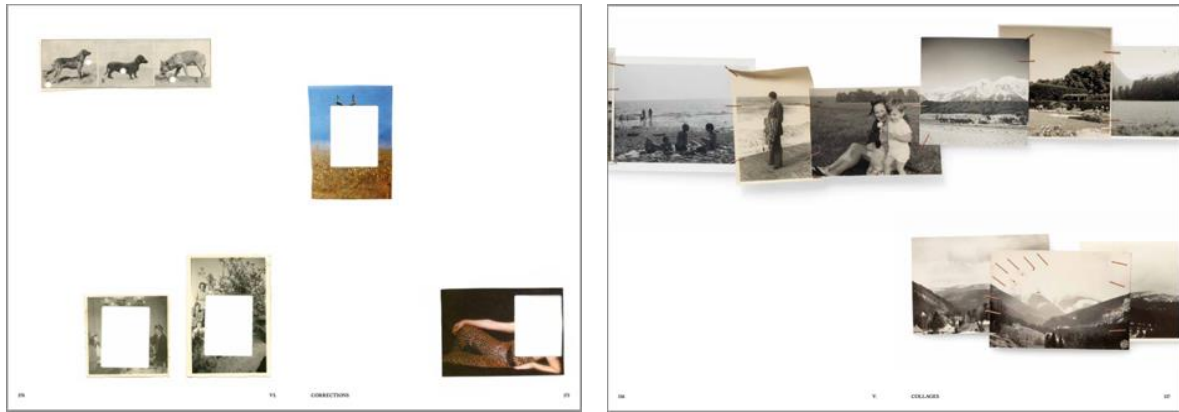


Figure 32: Anne Geene and Arjan de Nooy, spreads from *The Universal Photographer*, 2018

The project guides the viewer through the development of art photography and theory over the past half century, raising questions about the relationship between esoteric art and everyday life (the images are very much ‘everyday’ and naive, but articulated with the evolving art practices of the time) and rendering both faintly absurd, and strangely engaging, in the process. The project thus speaks both to the gallery visiting public and the art world, questioning the relationship between the visual products of both. In presenting the work of U as art, the project also pulls art into the everyday and opens it (and the associated academic and artistic commentary and analysis) to common scrutiny and assessment. In looking at the images, it is not a case of viewers exclaiming ‘we could have done that’; we actually did do it – these are our images, from our photo albums and boxes of family, event and holiday prints. Whereas Graham's work rests on a strong aesthetic style (both in the production of his photographic works, and within the work itself in representing the periods of artistic production depicted), the aesthetic style of U's work fluctuates with and is shaped by dominant discourse of the moment making U a cipher in search of a voice. In their earlier work, *Ornithology*, Geene and de Nooy (2016) challenge the scientific objectification of birds by bringing together a range of artistic aesthetic styles with everyday classifications, in a similar manner to Dion, producing their own form of investigation at the interface of art and science.

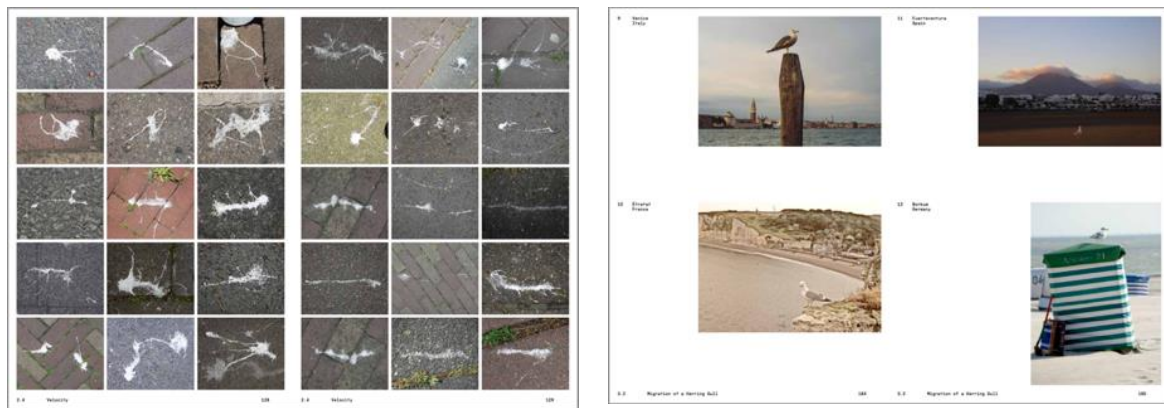


Figure 33: Anne Geene and Arjan de Nooy, spreads from *Ornithology*, 2016

I have not, in the development of my practice over the year, attempted to adopt or create a stable and distinctive aesthetic style. Rather, each project, I hope, achieves a temporary aesthetic stability, as the work is produced in relation to a particular context or community. There are clearly sets of underlying aesthetic dispositions that act to shape the work, even if they do not manifest as a distinctive cross-contextual style. Bence Nanay (2019), in exploring the possibilities and limitations of a global aesthetics, separates aesthetics as attention, engagement and experience from (conventional western notions of) aesthetic judgement, and ultimately calls for a degree of 'aesthetic humility' (p.105) in recognition of the necessary cultural pre-conceptions, and therefore limitations, we bring to any aesthetic experience. This humility entails a high degree of openness in approaching works and willingness to engage in dialogue, challenge and learning. This brings us close to Stephen Wright's (2014) notion of 'usership' which shifts our attention from spectacle and the artist as producer to the audience or participant as user and moves us towards seeing the work of the artist in terms of competences on offer to others, either collectively or as users, in the production of new work.



Figure 34: Forensic Architecture, *Terror Contagion*,
Musée d'art contemporain (MAC) Montréal, 2022

How we might think of aesthetics is stretched further by Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman's (2021) 'investigative aesthetics'. Here the notion of aesthetics is expanded to sensing and, importantly, sense-making, and extended beyond the merely human.

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)

Aesthetic investigation thus concerns both exploration of the world and the means by which we come to know the world. Aestheticisation is not about 'beautifying' but concerned with opening the world to this form of investigation. As Fuller has stated this entails 'allying the humanities, with the arts, with the sciences, with the political' (interview with Ronan, 2021). This fundamentally relational view of aesthetics increases the potential to explore the productivity of dialogue between fields and, for those practitioners who cross specialised fields, plurality. The presentation of the resulting work as an installation, as exemplified by Forensic Architecture, transforms the gallery into a laboratory for engagement with and investigation of these complexes of relations.

Critical evaluation of professional practice

(a) Professional activities

Exhibitions

- 2022 *Five Facetious/Factious Pieces*, Old Lightwell, UEL AVA Building. Five new mixed media works plus selection of giclee prints from studio-based work. 1st - 4th March.
- 2021-2 *Mammoth Loop*, Space Gallery, Ilford, London. Twenty-four photographic prints on vinyl, various sizes. 9th October to 26th February.
- 2021 *Studio 3 Art Trail*, Barking, London. Eight 50 x 75cm inkjet prints on foamex boards exhibited at Barking moorings and two A3 giclee prints on bamboo paper exhibited on a housing estate in Dagenham. September-December.
- 2021 *Faith Forum Awards*, Barking, London. Eight 50 x 75cm inkjet prints on foamex boards. 19th November.
- 2021 *A Stitch in Time*, Space Gallery, Ilford, London. Thirty giclee prints of various sizes from workshops. 4th September.
- 2021 *Matter Out of Place*. UEL DFA Summer Showcase, University of East London, 24th-29th June. Eighteen giclee prints of various sizes, video-screen animation and soundscape.
- 2021 *River Roding: Sacred River Exhibition*, River Roding Trust Moorings, Barking, 17th-25th April. Eight foamex boards now permanently installed at the moorings.

Workshops and presentations

- 2022 *From Ilford to the World and Back Again*. Commission to run three public workshops for UP Projects to raise awareness and explore ideas for public art on the Chapel Hill site in Ilford. Redbridge Central Library and SPACE Gallery. April.

- 2022 *East London Textile Arts*. Production of mixed media (photographic prints, rag weaving and embroidery) works and preparation for exhibition in July. April to June.
- 2022 *Lina Lapelytė soundwork*. Participation in workshops and recording of material for a soundwork to be installed in SPACE Gallery in May 2022. February to April.
- 2022 *Augmented Reality Workshops*. Developing AR enhanced posters with Ricebox Studios for Re-Imagine Newham project. March. UEL School of Education and Community. April.
- 2021 *Redbridge Covid memorial project*. Workshop and field visit advising on the design of a covid memorial for Redbridge. December.
- 2021 *Final Year Project Review*, UEL BA in Photography, 25th November.
- 2021 *Gascoigne Primary School, Barking*. Presentation on the River Roding and introduction of joint project on river conservation and development of a riverside park with parents and children. 10th November.
- 2021 *The River Roding in East London*, Re:invent, Environment workshop, Everyone Everyday Warehouse, Barking, 6th November.
- 2021 *Trade School: Taking pictures of our cherished objects*, Everyone Everyday, Barking. 27th October.
- 2021 *Mammoth Loop*. Participant in face to face and online workshops. August to October. SPACE Gallery.
- 2021 *East London Textile Arts*. Presentation of photographic work relating to the River Roding. 29th September.

Professional development

- 2022 Jonas Bendiksen, Magnum course.
- 2022 Gregory Halpern, Magnum course.
- 2022 SFMOMA + Art21 present: What is Contemporary Art - Personal Connections.
- 2021 The Complete Guide to Selling Fine-Art Prints, Magnum course.
- 2021 Tinderbox hypertext publication workshops, Eastgate Technology.
- 2021 Who Cares? about audience engagement symposium, SPACE.
- 2021 NFT seminar - Self Publish Be Happy.

2021 NFT workshop - The Photographers Gallery.

(b) Exhibitions attended

2022 Francis Bacon, Royal Academy.

The primary interest for me here is the relationship with photographic practices (past and pre-figured). In much of Bacon's work figures are radically decontextualised, lifted from background detail in the manner of a masked photoshop layer, suggesting the possibility of future re-contextualisations and re-significations. Other monochrome work pre-figures the photographic manipulations of, for example, Gerhard Richter. The influence of Muybridge on movement related pieces, particularly the triptychs, is explicit, though, for me, the most interesting thing about his use of the triptych is the evasion of narrative, in the presentation of related fragments or moments without a clear, ready at hand narrative for the viewer to connect these.

2022 A Century of the Artist's Studio: 1920 – 2020, Whitechapel Gallery.

2022 Larry Achiampong, Turner Gallery, Margate.

The films explore alternative futures, a foundation of afro-futurist work. Particularly interesting in Achiampong's work is the weaving in of alternative interpretations of a colonial past (and colonist culpability) in the production and precipitation of impending ecological crisis, and how the aftermath of this might be navigated and experienced.

2022 Alex Prager, Lehmann Maupin, London

Insight into one aspect of the economics of art photography. An opportunity to see a new body of work in a commercial gallery context and discuss with Alex how this was produced. Big prints for big money.

2022 Life Between Islands, Tate Britain, London.

2022 Lubiana Himid, Tate Modern, London.

2022 Aneka Yee, Tate Modern Generator Hall.

2022 Phillida Barlow, Tate Modern Artist room, London.

2021 Silver building and Tate and Lyle, Silvertown, London.

2021 Deutsche Bourse finalists, The Photographers Gallery, London.

2021 Photo London, Somerset House, London

- 2021 Damian Hirst, Gargosian Gallery, London
- 2021 Crystal Lebas, Wellcome Collection, London
- 2021 Frieze, London.
- 2021 Mike Pinsky, Pollution Pods, Granary Square, London

(c) Critical reflection

I have continued to explore critically different models of funding for artistic work, informed by Katherine Gibson's (2016) iceberg model and Gregory Sholette's (2017) concept of dark matter.



Figure xxx: Katherine Gibson, *Economic Meltdown, or What an Iceberg Can Tell Us About the Economy*, 2016

I took courses on NFTs with Self-Publish Be Happy (SPBH) and The Photographers Gallery (TPG) and a Magnum course on selling fine art prints. These courses critically informed the pieces I produced for the second WIP seminar.

In January, I submitted six proposals for funding. Two of these were unsuccessful (a six-week residency with Spark Labs and a joint project with the National Portrait Gallery and Redbridge Museum and Archive) and two were successful: a

commission with UP Projects to inform the development of a public art strategy for the former Ilford Ltd site and a bid to the Arts Council for a Jubilee related portraiture project in Barking. I have been shortlisted for the commission to produce artworks for a 50-metre stretch of hoardings in Ilford High Road. Success with other bids forced me to withdraw my proposal for the *SPACE Mercers/Who Cares* commission. I received positive feedback on this proposal and will resubmit in the next cycle. The short turnaround between award and project start/completion has been particularly problematic. Cross-subsidy of artistic work with other forms of income, paradoxically, provides greater flexibility in terms of scheduling, and greater autonomy in production of the work.

The *Hands-on Training Programme* project with Humourisk CIC, starting in September 2022, is an interesting development, being arts-based but focussing on building competences in marginalised communities and funded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency. I have been selected by SPACE to produce a large-scale artwork for the billboard outside the gallery in 2023.

Forward plan

This is shaped by up current and upcoming projects, and evolving strands in my research. Commissions and projects this year have focused on linking the past with the present. I have at least one public work to make in the coming year and I want to produce something more speculative which links past, present and possible futures (particularly colonial pasts and counter-colonial futures). I am also interested in exploring the obscured costs (environmental, social, cultural, economic, health and well-being) of digital production and distribution, and in embodiment and the process of ageing (particularly in relation to changes in perception, cognition and physicality).

Reading will include:

Crary, J. 2022. *Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World*. London: Verso.

Fardy, J. 2018. *Laruelle and Non-Photography*. London: Palgrave.

Feireiss, L., Schneider, T and TheGreenEyl. 2020. *Living the City: Of Cities, People and Stories*. Leipzig: Spector Books.

Lahire, B. 2019. *This is Not Just a Painting: An Inquiry into Art, Domination, Magic and the Sacred*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Latour, B. and Weibel, P.(eds). 2020. *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press and ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe.

Olufemi, L. 2022. *Experiments in Imaging Otherwise*. London: Hajar Press.

Shaw, J.K. and Reeves-Everson, T. (eds). 2017. *Fiction as Method*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Singh, J. 2017. *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Steyerl, H. 2017. *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*. London: Verso.

Artists to explore include: Larry Achiampong, Sonia Boyce, Tega Brain, Theaster Gates, Rut Blees Luxemburg, Thomas Hirschhorn, Cornelia Parker, Jonathan Monk, Christina Sealy, Zineb Sedira.

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