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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH AN OVERWHELMED PRESENT: PERFORMING AN EXPANDED SENSE OF PLACE

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy details the practice-based investigation undertaken and articulated across the series of located interventional public art works realised through the development and completion of the long-term public art project *Just a little bit of history repeating* – as a research-led artistic contribution to current explorations and debates within the field of located live art and context-specific public art practices. This research begins by critically assessing and reconsidering the approaches and questions arising from the two publicly commissioned interventional artworks that initiated the *Just a little bit of history* project; namely *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) and *Eukalduna Shipyards* (2011). It then expands and builds upon these approaches through an exploration of three distinct yet symbiotic lines of inquiry. The first of these considers how the concurrent performance of multiple and alternative uses of a specific place in the present might generate new event-specific critical social situations in situ. The second explores to what extent currently absent uses of a place might be seen to define it, and how such actively absent agents might be engaged and revealed in the present. The third then further expands on the understandings and approaches developed through this practice-based research, to consider and test performative strategies through which the nature and scale of our performed use of a place might be expanded to inhabit and consider wider landscapes and environments. These research questions are ultimately articulated and manifested through the subsequent four publicly commissioned art works that then expand and complete the *Just a little bit of history repeating* series – namely *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013), *Historic Parking Lots of Providence / Introduced Birdsong* (2013), *Providence Cove Walk (2013) and Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged, either directly within the body of the text of this submission, or by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography, plus details of all included images and non-textual accompanying material, are appended.

INTRODUCTION

The research that I have undertaken, and that I have titled *Close encounters with an overwhelmed present: Performing an expanded sense of place*, sets out to explore how located performance practices might suggest and support new ways of being in and responding to social space – proposing new artistic approaches to the activation of a critical attentiveness to the present, that might then in turn inform our imaginings and possible performance of the future. The term 'close encounters' that I use within my title here is selected to highlight an attentiveness to and critical engagement with place, beyond the perhaps more transient and often disregarded meetings that inform our daily navigation of social space. My use of the term 'overwhelmed' here, similarly, seeks to acknowledge how such an attentiveness may inevitably result in an awareness of the scale and multiplicity of place that increasingly exceeds our grasp of the perceivable present. According to economist Kenneth Boulding, the modern human dilemma might arise from the fact that all our experience deals with the past, while all our problems are challenges of the future (Boulding, 1974, cited in Vitek and Jackson, 2008, p.62). This inquiry proposes research-led artistic practice as a direct contribution to current explorations and debates into the dynamic relationships between past, present and future, within the spatial field – that is, within those milieus where our constructs of space, place and history combine and inform our sense of ourselves, and of the wider environments we live in.[1]

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[1] Throughout this text I use the first person plural primarily in relation to my collaborator Mike Brookes and I specifically. I will also expand this use of 'we', and indeed 'our' and 'us', to sometimes include all those individuals engaged or consciously participating within a particular situation of the work being described. There is also occasionally a third use, through which I attempt to include the unknown reader, and to acknowledge that I am offering personal thoughts and interjections into an area also being occupied and considered by many others. I appreciate that this extended use can be considered problematic, but have chosen to use it consciously, as the most succinct way to perhaps open up a space within these considerations that others might feel invited to occupy or appropriate as they choose.

Through a focused exploration of how located live art might propose or reactivate alternative configurations and uses of a place in the present, I aim to explore the relevance and potential of place within our visioning and understanding of the future.[2] The project proposes new approaches within the form and function of live public art in social space, and responds to recent considerations of how we might best 'care for the future' – using performance as a practice-based methodology for enabling critical reconsiderations of the present, and for revealing new and alternative futures as tangible and possible.[3] This research begins with a critical assessment and reconsideration of approaches and questions, arising from aspects of my artistic practice, that I have identified as both the impetus and root of this inquiry; it then expands and builds upon these approaches through my structured exploration of three research questions:

- How might the concurrent performance of multiple and alternative uses of a specific place in the present generate new event-specific critical social situations in situ?

- To what extent might currently absent uses of a place be seen to define it, and how might such actively absent agents be engaged and revealed in the present?

- How might the nature and scale of our performed use of a place be expanded to inhabit and consider wider landscapes and environments relating to that place?

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[2] My use of the term 'located' here, and throughout the text of this submission, draws on the definition proposed by Mike Brookes (2014); it acknowledges an attentiveness to the form, placement and functioning of an artwork within both the physical and social landscape of its context. My use of the term highlights approaches and practices rooted in that attentiveness, as explored and developed throughout this inquiry, and which I further detail and contextualise within Chapter One section 'Spatial Frames', p. 64-66.

[3] My use of the phrase 'care for the future' alludes to the Arts and Humanities Research Council's project 'Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past' which '[explores] the relationship between past, present and future and [investigates] the significance of continuity and change' (University of Exeter, n.d.).

As a whole, this submission unfolds across the details and progression of a series of located public art works, which embody and delineate the arc of this research.[4] Together these works develop and conclude the long-term *Just a little bit of history repeating* artistic project that underpins my inquiry as they expand and build on the approaches and concerns through which my artistic collaborator Mike Brookes and I initiated that project in 2010. These initial approaches and concerns will be shown to be rooted in mine and Brookes' extensive and ongoing work together, a body of collaborative interventional and located public art work developed since 2001, that has in turn drawn on decades of our own individual artistic intentions and practices.[5] Through our collaboration, Brookes and I have laid the aesthetic foundations for much of the art work that we now undertake, both as solo artists and together. In many respects, the resulting works are, therefore, inextricable from that collaboration. My writing here, however, is intentionally and exclusively focused on an articulation and delineation of my own distinct conceptualisations and inquiry, across the particular practices that drive and support my personal research within this submission. To that end, while I fully acknowledge his creative role, and what Brookes has himself expressed and articulated about aspects of these works, I will make only periodic reference to his personal considerations and intentions here, focusing instead on my own understandings and self-reflective critical practices across this research.

Since its inception, for both Brookes and I, the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, and the wider propositions of our collaborative artistic practice as a whole, have been intentionally developed within an international and professional public art context. From the outset of this research, I have sought to further open the propositions and outcomes of this practice to both industry and public engagement. Moreover, I have considered the expectations and responsibilities that inevitably inform a public, and publicly accountable, professional art commission, to be an essential component of the frame within

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4 See footnote 2.

5 My use of the term 'interventional' to qualify the artistic approaches and practices explored and developed throughout this inquiry acknowledges the distinction, highlighted by scholars such as Rosalyn Deutsche, between interventionist and integrationist approaches to public art and spatial practices (1998, pp. 49-107). This use and distinction are further detailed and contextualised within Chapter One section 'Spatial Frames', pp. 67-69.

which my approaches here would need to operate and function. I have therefore made the securing of such commissions, for each of the works undertaken across the arc of this inquiry, part of my process and methodology. Consequentially, the practice and research undertaken here is developed and realised in response to the contexts, aspirations and practical realities of fully funded and professionally awarded public art commissions specifically within the wider public contexts offered by the distinct curatorial imperatives and programme of each commissioning organisation or institution in particular.

Beyond the accountability and visibility perhaps implicit within the series of artistic residencies and commissions awarded to support and further the public project works of this inquiry, I have also actively sought to root and expand this practice-based research within an increasingly broadening professional engagement of my approaches. This expanding industry visibility and context for my research is perhaps most usefully apparent in three areas. Firstly, over the years of this inquiry, my invited and developing contribution as tutor and mentor within the Máster en Prácticas Escénicas y Cultura Visual (MA in Performing Arts Practices and Visual Culture) in Madrid – a new practice-based post-graduate programme being developed by the University of Castilla-La Mancha in collaboration with the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía – has focused on pedagogical applications of my approaches to research-led and context-specific public art work specifically. Secondly, my ongoing appointment as curator to *Prototipoak* (Prototype) – a new large-scale international contemporary art biennial being developed by the cultural institution Azkuna Zentroa in Bilbao – has aimed to establish a critical and exploratory focus on site-oriented and located contemporary art in the city, through my curatorial direction and commissioned production work within the programming policy and public initiatives of the biennial as a whole. Thirdly, an expanding visibility and awareness of my approaches and outcomes, across the public work of this submission, has also supported an increased academic engagement with the wider body and propositions of my professional practice as a whole, opening up the possibilities for further and additional lines of discussion within the approaches and conceptualisations that I propose and expand here. Most notable amongst these has perhaps been my developing dialogue with Spanish theorist and researcher Óscar Cornago, who first invited me to contribute to the

Imaginarios Sociales II (Social Imaginaries II) research project in 2014; and with whom I am currently participating in the ongoing research project *Prácticas escénicas como forma social del conocimiento* (Scenic practices as a social form of knowledge).[6]

I have considered and developed the writing of the text of this submission as an integral part of my research and practice across this inquiry, and not as a theorisation of that practice. The text of this submission, then, offers a reflective and critical description of my development and articulation of this research through practice. Here I will aim to contextualise and detail the intentions and outcomes explored, tested and evaluated across the progression of research-led public art works that manifest this inquiry. The necessarily sequenced sections of this text will be structured to support and reflect that progression; and I will allow my writings on specific aspects and ideas within this series of works to be restated, reconsidered and expanded, across subsequent sections of this text, as my considerations of them expand and develop through the progression of these works themselves. To this end, I will shape this writing across two distinct halves: the first of which will focus on the origins, context and conceptual frames of this research; while the second will consider and evaluate the unfolding practice-based articulations of the research itself.

The second half of this text, and the descriptive and self-reflective evaluations it unfolds, is then further supported by selected items of supplementary digital documentation. Accompanying material, contained within an individual data CD, is included for each of the research-led public art works through which I further articulate the research of this submission. This accompanying material will include selected fragments and documentational traces of the works, and is included to provide clarifying examples and additional contextual information for each. Wherever possible, this material is included as it was originally generated or presented within the public realisation of the work, and is included as a fragment of the work and its process, and not as an illustration or approximation of the event or performance of that work. As such, while the

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[6] The research projects *Imaginarios Sociales II* and *Prácticas escénicas como forma social del conocimiento* were both initiated and directed by Cornago, undertaken within the humanities research programme of the Spanish National Research Council, and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

resulting material will inevitably retain and display aesthetic choices and qualities consistent to its wider process, this audio and visual data should not be seen as an attempt to represent the work, neither are the resulting discs intended to constitute or mirror the intentions or approaches of the work itself. Similarly, while I may from time to time reference specific items within these accompanying discs of documentation, this text will at no point take the details or functioning of this supplementary documentation as its focus. Nor will I discuss the broader role or function of artistic or performance documentation, which remains outside the reach and focus of this inquiry. At all times, instead, the text of this submission will remain focused on the concepts and critical practices embodied and articulated through the work of this practice-based research itself.

Chapter One of the text of this submission, which will constitute the opening half of my writings, as described above, I have titled 'Framework'. This chapter will unfold across four distinct subsections – that I have, in turn, titled: 'Aesthetic Roots', 'Origins', 'Spatial Frames' and finally 'Lines of Inquiry' – and which together will aim to establish the foundations, practical and theoretical context, aims and research questions of this inquiry. In 'Aesthetic Roots' I explain the aesthetic principles that drive my long-standing research-led artistic collaboration with UK artist Mike Brookes, and begin my initial critical assessment and articulation of those principles; as well as offering a wider artistic context for the resulting practices. This initial section aims to provide the first step to an articulation of the approaches that inform and shape this inquiry, while also clarifying my area of study. To this end, I expand a set of core artistic intentions and approaches, with reference to a selection of examples of live and public art works. Importantly, my focus here remains very much on practice, and on an address to practice as critical practitioner rather than spectator. Where possible, my references and discussions remain anchored in specific instances of work, and in my considerations of aspects of that work through the particulars of its material functioning. My aim is to outline the set of artistic attitudes and principles that support this practice-based research, to further clarify its operation within a broad arena of located, live and public art, and to root my inquiry within a field of practices that underpin my approaches to located and interventional live and public art specifically. These approaches,

and the research and contribution of this inquiry as a whole, can be seen to unfold within a landscape of live art practices – a landscape I delineate, for example, to include works as diverse in form and intention as the actions of artists such as Francis Alÿs and Valcárcel Medina, installed broadcast works by Graeme Miller and Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, the participatory performance works of Lone Twin, and Jeremy Deller's commissioned reenactment of The Battle of Orgreave (2001). Similarly, I intentionally do not here assert the myriad sub-genre distinctions that might parcel out the terrain of site-based performance and public art, but instead focus on the common ground of core practices that might shape the wider environment of this research and help articulate my broader designation of my practices here as 'located'. My intention, through these identifications, and in offering the resulting set of artistic principles and practices as a field of operations within which this research and its contribution unfolds, is to acknowledge located and context-specific live art practice as an approach to and attentive engagement of action and place. An engagement that might operate within and through a broad set of daily social and spatial practices in public space – spatial practices perhaps already and readily available and performed within such space, beyond and indifferent to their designation through art.

In 'Origins' I then discuss the beginnings of a number of the key questions that have initiated my PhD inquiry in more detail, and describe the two distinct public art commissions that allowed me to activate and test some of the original propositions and intentions within the wider artistic project *Just a little bit of history repeating* at the heart of this research. Here I will begin to more fully detail the critical assessment and reconsiderations, of my intentions and practices in initiating the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, that constitute the first phase of this research. The two public art works realised as a result of the initial commissions detailed here – namely *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) in Weymouth, UK, and *Eukalduna Shipyards* (2011) in Bilbao, Spain – are specifically discussed, highlighting the approaches through which they proposed and shaped two distinct context-specific realisations of the same intentions, and in doing so laid the groundwork for this inquiry.

Through the third section of this opening chapter, 'Spatial Frames', I outline the larger theoretical context and discourses within which this inquiry operates. The engagement of place through performance is pivotal to this research; and here I further define my understanding and considerations of place, and of public and social space, through references from spatial theory, contemporary cultural and political geography, and selected writings on public art and spatial practices. Here I detail my focused and critical address to place specifically – as undertaken through the development of artistic critical interventions in social space – as a contribution to the broadening field of art practice that Miwon Kwon (2004) has designated 'site-orientated', within the field of approaches that have been notably categorised by Jane Rendell (2006) as 'critical spatial practices'. Finally, I will highlight my broadening practical considerations of the wider landscape, ecology, and indeed scale, of place. I will further contextualise my explorations of how located live art might critically activate and locate alternative or absent uses and understandings of a place in the present, in ways that could reveal the relevance and potential of place – and of our shared and negotiated performance of social space, in our visioning of possible collective futures.[7]

I conclude this first chapter with a fourth and final section, 'Lines of Inquiry', in which I clarify the questions that drive and structure this research. This closing section, of the first contextual phase of this text, outlines the three distinct yet symbiotic lines of inquiry on which my investigation here is built. The first of these considers how the performance of additional or alternative configurations of a place, in juxtaposition with current uses and understandings of that place in the present, might itself be place-making, and generate new event-specific critical situations in situ. The second considers my approaches to, and the functioning of, such superimpositions in more detail; and focuses on how we might engage currently absent elements and uses of a place specifically, as active constituents in our understanding and shaping of the here and now – as absences that inform and operate in, and are in that sense made 'present' in,

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[7] The 'absent' elements of a place I am considering here, and to which my use of the term throughout this text refers, are those material, possible, and perhaps even proposed or remembered things, that are not currently apparent or perceivable in that place.

the present.[8] The third and final thread of this inquiry then reconsiders and expands the limits of my address to site itself – reevaluating the possible constituents and limits of a locale, as addressed and performed through my approaches here – and explores the roles of scale and proximity within our performance and navigation of place across a wider landscape of environmental and performative interactions.

The subsequent and remaining three chapters of my writing here – which together make up the second and concluding phase of this text – will detail the propositions, approaches and outcomes of each of the three commissioned public art projects through which I have undertaken and articulated this research; and will highlight how each of these commissioned projects expands and furthers my approaches and understandings through a focused address to one of the three progressive lines of this inquiry in turn. Each of these three chapters will identify and introduce the data disc of selected accompanying material relating to the particular work it details, and will provide any necessary outline instructions for the navigation of the documentational fragments and traces it contains.

To open this second phase of my writing, Chapter Two, which I have titled 'Greetings from Salina', records aspects of my six-week residency in Salina, Kansas, USA, and discusses my first practical project work of this inquiry, as manifest through the resulting participatory public art work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013). This project work, and chapter, will focus on my root considerations of how the approaches to interventional live art proposed here might not only engage the performed nature of place and social space, but might themselves be seen to constitute performance *as* place – exploring how such approaches, and the specific superimpositions of use and understanding they configure, might activate and sustain new and reflective social situations through their performance.

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[8] At its simplest, my use of 'present' here can be seen as the antithesis of 'absent', as I expand it in footnote 7. I am considering those things that are perceivably active or co-present within our current use and lived experience of a place specifically. This consideration does not seek, for example, to engage or critique discourses on performative presence and intermedial liveness, such as those perhaps offered by theatre and performance scholars such as Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander, which intentionally remain outside the focus and boundaries of this inquiry.

Chapter Three, 'Providence', then details the developments of this research across my commissioned residency period in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and through the subsequently realised pair of located public art works within the city: *Historic Parking Lots of Providence / Introduced Birdsong* (2013) – a sculptural sound intervention into the streets of the city centre; and *Providence Cove Walk* (2013) – a participatory walk around a now absent shoreline of the saltwater cove around which the city of Providence was originally founded. These works will be considered primarily through their explorations of how specific absences within the current configurations of a place might be highlighted and activated, amongst the familiar and day-to-day functioning of that place, to refresh our attentiveness to the choices and behaviours that currently shape it. This chapter will also consider how these works might then be seen to reconsider and expand their own location, reassessing the limits of their site and locale – to more fully engage and perform across the wider topographical and behavioural landscape of the city centre they address, and to initiate my explorations of the possibilities and shifts of perspective that could be allowed by an increased attentiveness to the wider environment of our social space, at increasing scales, and over increasing distances.

Finally, in Chapter Four, titled 'A Grey Line', I consider the concluding phase of the arc of research submitted here, and its development and ultimate articulation through our performance of the interventional public broadcast work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016). This culminating work, shaped over the preceding year in response to a commission by public art producers Consonni, realises a propositional intervention into a fifteen-hour public radio symposium, and the resulting continuous live international radio and web broadcast. The public symposium itself brought together selected practitioners and theorists in an exploration of the role of contemporary art in current understandings and configurations of 'the public'. This closing chapter will aim to further delineate the progressive developments of my approaches, across the preceding phases of this research as a whole, and detail their consolidation and expansion through my attempts to enable the further possibilities and propositions offered by *Grey Line [Twilight]*. This evaluation will focus on the expanded understandings and attentiveness to the broader environment of our 'here' and 'now' that might be facilitated by my engagement of the context and broadcast infrastructure of

radio, in conjunction with the connectivity provided by worldwide telecommunications networks, as both the site and public space of this work. And it will further consider how the social interactions and attentiveness, that are perhaps more familiarly supported by physical proximity, might be activated across an international landscape, through the performance of connectivity itself – in an attempt to reveal and perform a topographical and social situation at a planetary scale.

CHAPTER 1: FRAMEWORK

1.1: AESTHETIC ROOTS

The practices I will engage in this research draw from and build upon questions, concerns and strategies that have been developed through my professional artistic projects and activities over the past seventeen years – a body of work conceived and realised in close collaboration with artist Mike Brookes.[9] These accumulated concerns and approaches, which have been shaped across a considerable and varied range of professional public art projects, as well as in response to a variety of intentions and contexts, provide the roots from which the research and practices detailed within this submission are then expanded. There are, therefore, a number of established attitudes and intentions within this root practice that might be usefully outlined from the outset.

I have now come to recognise, for example, although it was not always overtly articulated within each individual process, that a fundamental concern of our work across the full period of my collaborative work with Brookes has been the attempt to find forms, structures and procedures for the work that are perhaps, in and of themselves, 'meaningful' – in that the structure of the work is not merely a container for poetic material, narratives or subject matter, but also a performative articulation of the proposition of the work itself. That is to say, the form of each individual work across this professional collaboration has been consciously and overtly defined by its act and proposition. We have attempted to find project-specific forms that might themselves become what each work is intending to propose or consider. This focus has arisen from a desire to shape forms and interventions that might be apposite enough within a given context to

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[9] Mike Brookes is an award winning artist, director and designer; co-founder of the performance collective Pearson/Brookes (1997-present), and is currently Research Fellow at Aberystwyth University (2007-present).

appear, at least with hindsight, to be self-evident. That is, where their mechanisms in context might become both apparent and recognisably coherent when realised and met. These forms and interventions have attempted to operate through agreed behaviours within the present specifically, and yet seek to counter-actualise the situations that they activate.

These intentions were already evident within our early performance and durational object work *Some things happen all at once* (2007–09). This piece was performed within the open interior spaces of a range of public buildings, from galleries to town halls, internationally. And it was defined by the construction, placing, and decay of a model forest – of one hundred and fifty individual ice trees, a model village of sixty ice houses and a single ice church – and by the use of bicycles, by audience and performers, to generate power. Here we used melting ice as a real time example of a phase transition, to focus and sustain discursive public reflections on paradigms of human behaviour and change. The work drew on social physics – in particular on the writings of popular British science writer Phillip Ball and American inventor and visionary Buckminster Fuller - and considered ideas of entropy, diffusion and phase transitional shifts in the structure and behaviour of materials. Highlighting this root approach to the work – in his discussion of *Some things happen all at once* within his essay 'Thinking with the Ecological Image: Towards an Ethics of Matter' (forthcoming) – theatre academic and theorist Carl Lavery writes:

> Crucially, there is no desire on Brookes' and Casado's part to argue for an ecological ethics, to communicate it in any direct sense. Rather ethics emerge from the audience's confrontation with the materiality of the stage pictures that they compose for us. This offers a very different conception of environmental pedagogy than the ones currently promulgated by policy makers and activist artists. In *Some things happen all at once*, pedagogy is not predicated on discourse, statistics or apocalyptical rhetoric, but is bound up with images which appear and disappear as the performance unfolds. There is, in other words, no desire to represent entropy as an image in the performance; rather, the images we witness already are entropic. They participate in a process that is essentially irreversible. Something has taken place that cannot be reconstituted or saved. In this

way, Brookes and Casado offer us a decidedly materialist way of thinking about theatre as an ecological medium rooted in entropy, an art form where loss and expenditure are affirmed rather than denied.

Image 1.1 Detail of the central object of the performance event *Somethings happen all at once*. Centro de Arte Torrente Ballester, Ferrol, Spain. Photo by: Ovidio Alegunde, 2008.

While contrastingly different in form, these intentions, as stated above, are also perhaps equally apparent in our early interventional broadcast work *Dark FM* (2008) – in which a microphone and FM radio transmitter were located deep within an isolated forest, and left to broadcast live and uninterrupted ambient sounds from their location out into an adjacent village, over a twelve hour period, from dusk till dawn, across a single night. The resulting audio broadcast was accessible to anyone within the village via their domestic or car radio, while remaining otherwise 'invisible' to others. Here we used the direct mechanisms of live radio to give access to the otherwise inaccessible actuality of the forest. We opened a live aural connection out on to the shifting interplay of materialities and events that constitute the existing conditions of that particular forest in the present – as an engagement with the forest that might operate in

ways perhaps overtly distinct from our poetic expectations and interpretations of either 'forest' in the abstract, or of this forest in the particular.

Our primary intention through the intervention of *Dark FM* (2008) was to open a portal between two places, using a familiar and analogue technology. This intention might usefully acknowledge the similar strategies employed in works such as *Hole-in-Space* (1980), one of the most emblematic pieces of satellite-art of the 1980s. As a telematic intervention in to public space *Hole-in-Space*, by artists Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, opened a live satellite connection between public spaces in Los Angeles and New York over three evenings – allowing people in one city to encounter live projections of people in the other city, and *vice versa*. On a November evening in 1980 people walking past the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City, and 'The Broadway' department store located in the open air shopping centre in Century City (LA), unexpectedly encountered life-sized live images of each other, on the opposite coasts of the USA, through camera and projection links set up in street-level windows of both sites. This connection allowed people to interact as 'if having a sidewalk encounter in real time' (Galloway and Rabinowitz, 1980). In both *Dark FM* and *Hole-in-Space* the chosen technology is employed and shaped to enable, in the most direct way, a meeting – as a specifically and succinctly structured proximity, between two physically distant places. Here the resonance of the work might again be seen to emerge from the actualisation and performance of that 'connecting' specifically, rather than through any discussion or representation of its possibility. At its simplest, the reflective space being opened and offered, for engagement and occupation by any who may choose to enter it, brings together and includes what is connected through the act of connecting them. With the resulting situation being enabled and offered only through the performance of that connection, and its nature being defined simply by how, and by what, that connection is then acknowledged and used.

Our ongoing attempts to shape apt interventions has led us to develop a multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach, in which the form of each individual work is determined by its intentions and context – resulting in forms as diverse as performance, action work, sculpture, public interventions, sound works, participatory events and digital images. Yet it is important to clarify that,

whatever its ultimate form, we understand that the work is always manifest in the act and moment of its realisation, and not in the objects or products that might result from it. I might trace this understanding back through early attitudes and intentions of movements such as the Situationist International, as articulated within statements such as 'There can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means' (Internationale Situationniste, 1958).[10] This understanding is perhaps more clearly articulated by visual artists such as the Spanish conceptual artist Isidoro Valcárcel Medina – when he says that 'all works of art are the outcome of an action [...] and the action in question is the fundamental part of all of them' (Valcárcel Medina, 2013).

Valcárcel Medina's aesthetic, within aspects of his action and installation work specifically, might be recognised as a broadly useful reference and context for attitudes within my practice here. Relevant works by the artist might include, for example, his engagement of and straightforward intervention into the daily functioning of money circulation in 1979. In his performance of this untitled work Valcárcel Medina gradually introduced appropriated one hundred and one thousand peseta notes – on which he had written the words 'Mobile art', 'Art in movement' or 'Money as art' – into circulation, stopping only when one of the inscribed notes returned to his possession through use (Pujals Gesalí, 2011, pp. 63-64). Similarly, if contrastingly in form, I could also usefully highlight Valcárcel Medina's intentionally open-ended organisation and presentation of reflective personal material as a public archive in his gallery installation work *Ir y venir* (2002) – in which approximately 17,000 files, relating to five different categories of the artist's practice and memories, organised either alphabetically or chronologically, were placed in three 5.5m long filing cabinets, suspended from the gallery's ceiling, for the public to explore. As well as its engagement of the familiar form and functioning of a cross-referenced file archive, notably, this installation also overtly required users to move spatially around the archive in order to engage and activate its contents for themselves. As in the navigation of related items of information within a traditional filing system, this spatial configuration and displacement led each individual user to follow a series of

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10 Translated by Ken Knabb from the original text in French: 'Dans ce sens il ne peut y avoir de peinture ou de musique situationniste, mais un usage situationniste de ces moyens.' From the definition of 'détournement' in the *Internationale Situationniste* #1, June 1958.

links and connections unfolding across an unpredictable multitude of possible progressions and sequences, both through and over time (Guasch, 2011, pp. 238-243). Usefully here, these works might be seen to have been structured, and set in motion, primarily to perform and articulate their own considerations and operations. The activation of such a structure perhaps then manifesting both the form and intention of the work directly, allowing its resonances and possibilities to emerge and unfold through however it is then performed or engaged with – be that through the specific choices of its users, or the consequences of chance encounters.

These foundational attitudes and approaches within our work have also provoked our consistent attempts to actively engage and operate within the literal; in the sense that the work does not represent or argue, but rather attempts to become what it proposes and considers. To be more specific: the action, the image, and the event of these works seek to become the placement and event of an actual idea, not a reference to or statement about that idea. In the famous essay *Art and Objecthood* (1967) art critic Michael Fried discusses and critiques minimalist art as being 'literal' – and argues that literalist art, rather than creating or allowing us a metaphorical interpretation of our world, foregrounds its status as merely object and simply redirects us to reencounter the world directly. He writes:

> Literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects, if not, indeed, as a kind of object in its own right. It aspires, not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood, but on the contrary to discover and project objecthood as such […] Literalist sensibility […] is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work […] Whereas in previous art "what is to be had from the work is located strictly within [it]", the experience of literalist art is of an object in a situation – one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder.
> (Fried, 1967, pp. 151-153)

It might be useful here to recognise the extent to which our work might aspire to be intentionally and overtly 'literalist', for the very reasons that Fried criticises such an approach. For us, the form of each work is proposed and used primarily

for what it is within our everyday understanding and experience, favouring meetings and readings that engage it as any other daily practice or encounter. These proposals recognise the artwork as an event or object similar in status and functioning to any other event or object, where its physical or literal presence affirms its existence in the viewer's spatial and experiential environment, rather than aspiring to an internal coherence that might be seen to exist as autonomous from 'ordinary space'.[11] For examples from within our collaborative work as a whole, this attitude within the work might perhaps be most directly evident in our use of drawing within studio performance works such as *Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree)* (2005–10), and *What if everything we know is wrong?* (2011–ongoing).

Image 1.2 Detail of the map of the Earth drawn with chalk on the floor of the space during the performance *Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree)*. Teatro Pradillo, Madrid, Spain. Photo by: Rafael Gavalle, 2007.

Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree) is a performance work, reflecting on tourism and migration, and is defined by the placing of a model of a tropical island cast entirely in chocolate, and three main performative actions.

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[11] 'Ordinary space' here references Massey's definition of 'the space and places through which, in the negotiations of relations within multiplicities, the social is constructed' (2005a, p. 13).

These actions are: [1] to define, in a pseudo scientific way, some simple concepts relating to trade and human displacement; [2] to draw the solar system on the floor of the room in order to contextualise the journeys and locations being described; [3] to eat all the trees on the island. In this work, we constructed a room-sized drawing of the solar system around a developing diagram of the earth in order to contextualise the journeys and locations articulated within the performance.

Similarly, if for differing purposes, our action and performed sound work *What if everything we know is wrong?* also engages drawn elements as direct acts of non-verbal description. As an event, *What if everything we know is wrong?* aims to propose new forms of public performance and social forums, combining strategies of studio performance with the immediacy of public intervention. This work is realised amongst unseated spectators, using only thirty pocket dictaphones, a selection of polaroids and a piece of chalk, all of which are carried into the otherwise empty space by the performers as they enter with the audience. The resulting event is defined and structured by our located attempt to reconstruct one place, from collected fragments and details, within another place, where it would not otherwise be present. Within this work a number of required yet absent objects are referenced at scale, and placed spatially within the room, through simple line drawings. In both of these works, *Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree)* and *What if everything we know is wrong?*, drawing is employed as a familiar and overt act of representation, not as a dramatic or choreographic action – nor as a fiction or metaphor that might be vicariously believed in. These drawings might be seen then as the traces of a daily and familiar act of description and communication, rather than as the performance of an artistic skill. When visibly employed primarily to allow an understanding, offered through spatially structured diagrammatic notation, our use of such drawings in performance might be seen to establish a daily tone of operation – perhaps defining qualities of behaviour and operation within the situation of the work that in turn might be seen to propose conventions and parameters for any resulting conversations or reflections.
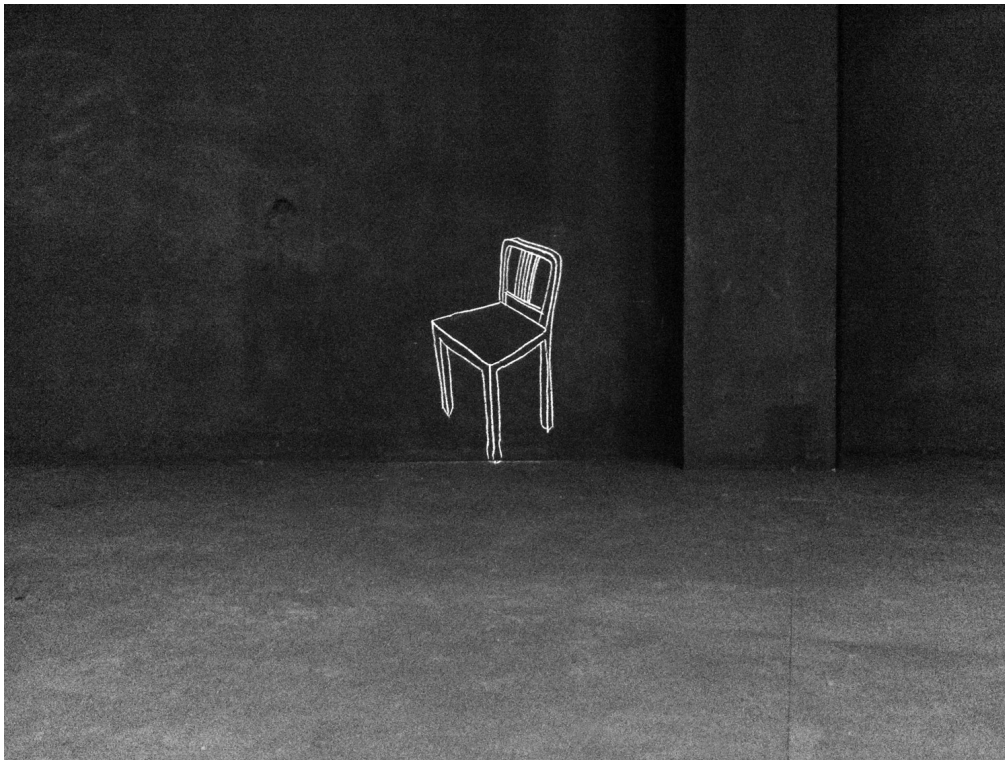
Image 1.3 Chair drawn with chalk on the wall of the space during the performance *What if everything we know is wrong?* Teatro Pradillo, Madrid, Spain. Photo by: Mike Brookes, 2013.

As Valcárcel Medina expressed it, 'Action, not the product of it, is what is important in art. Not the interpretation of an idea, but the commitment in it' (2013). This is an understanding perhaps paralleled by Sol Lewitt, in his *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (1967), when he writes: 'What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It has to look like something if it has a physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea' (Lewitt, 1967). The work then is perhaps shaped as an appropriate materialisation of the conceptual proposition that motivated it, seeking to become a physical manifestation of that proposition – rather than a response, reflection or representation of it. In this regard, I have found particular inspiration in works such as *Shoot* (1971) by Chris Burden; *Looking up* (2001) by Francis Alÿs, or *Something burning [but it will turn out wrong]* (2000) by Mike Brookes. All of these works are titled literally, naming the action of the work itself; and, in their discussions of these works, these three artists define them through only a literal description of what actually happened. In a video that Electronic Arts Intermix made to present *Shoot* at F Space on November 1971, Burden himself introduces the piece by saying 'In *Shoot* I am shot in the upper left hand arm by a friend of mine with a .22 rifle' (*Chris Burden: Shoot*, 2008).

While Alÿs starts his video *Looking up* with a text that states 'Standing in the middle of Plaza Santo Domingo I look up wide-eyed as if observing something. Once a group of passers-by intrigued by my gazing has gathered around me, I leave the scene' (Alÿs, 2001). And Brookes, in his website, defines *Something burning [but it will turn out wrong]* as '[a] durational object and action work, comprising of the controlled burning of a family saloon car, and the visual and aural documentation of that event' (Brookes, 2000). In this way, these works can be seen to define themselves through the act of their operation specifically, rather than as a representation or poetic response to defined external concerns or references. And in doing so, for my own personal encounter and experience of them, they offer an invitation and engagement left open to me – within which all readings and responses are perhaps still possible, and indeed welcome.

Similarly, our work has also attempted to engage the obvious – considering the 'obvious' as the simple but fundamental reality of things, as they may be easily observed and understood, and as they are rarely doubted or questioned when met. In this sense, our work has consistently sought to render visible what is already there: to reveal our 'common sense' of our reality. A sense and understanding philosopher Graham Harman defines as 'the usefully mediocre sum of everyday lore amassed by the human race up to [now]' (Harman in Kimbell, 2013, p. 111). We have done this, firstly, by simply and playfully stating the obvious – as seen in the use of dictionary definitions and direct description within the performed text of *Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree)*, in which I say things such as: 'The Earth is the planet of the solar system on whose surface animals and plants live' (Casado, 2004); and: 'To create my performances I exchange a certain amount of money for things. Once they are created I go from place to place exchanging performances for another amount of money. The difference between those two amounts of money is called profit…' (Casado, 2004). In her article on *Paradise 2 (the incessant sound of a falling tree)*, 'Ingesting the world' (2006), Australian writer and editor Cynthia Troup argues that my use of these 'reductive, irrefutable terms' reveals my desire 'to practise the possibility of being undisguised and, more broadly, of unmasking that which may seem self-evident' (p. 47).
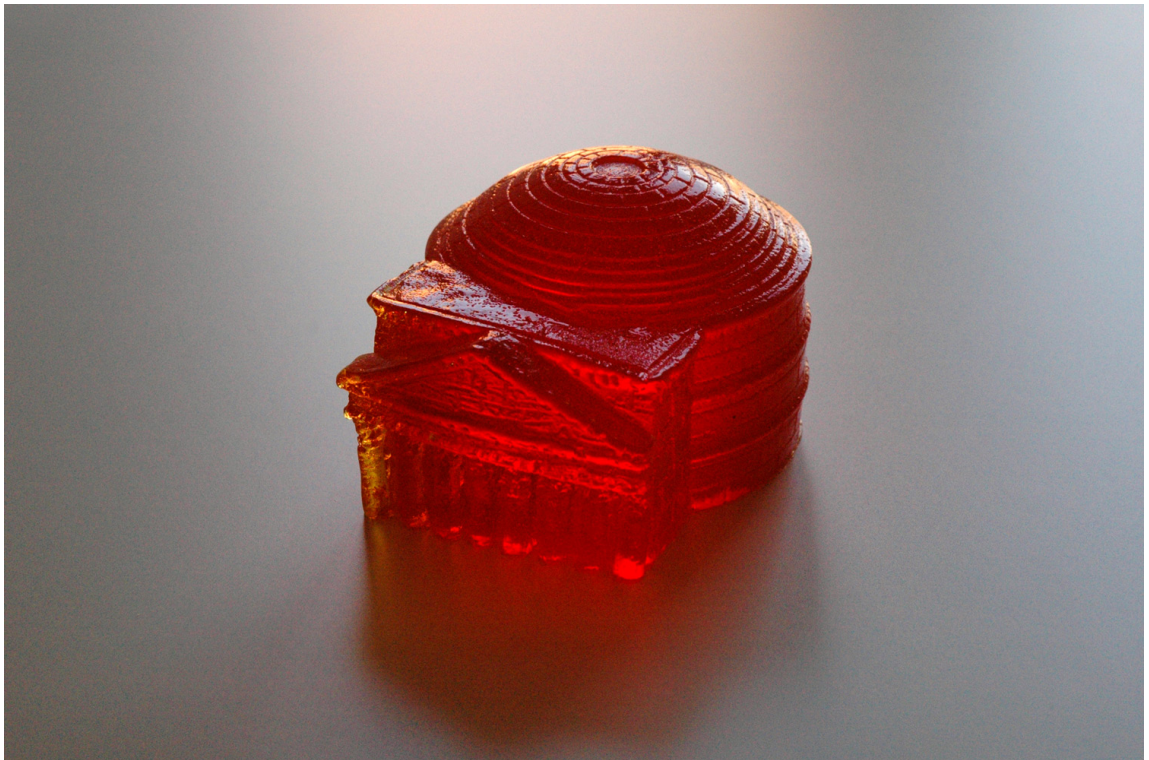
Image 1.4 *Historic Miniatures*. Orange jelly Pantheon: 8cm x 6cm x 6.5 cm. Photo by: Mike Brookes, 2008.

Additionally, as previously suggested, we seek to operate from within the commonplace and the daily. This is perhaps most notably apparent in our use of familiar domestic materials and processes, such as our reproduction of cheap novelty souvenirs within the sculptural project *Historic Miniatures* (2008). This work formed part of our project *One thing leads to another* (2007–ongoing) – a series of context-specific actions reflecting on human progress and our construction of history,[12] in which we used ordinary household fruit jelly to recast replicas of tourist souvenir miniatures of historical architectural attractions in Rome, such as the Colosseum and the Pantheon. Here I might draw a useful parallel with Martin Creed's specifically reframed activation of familiar daily objects within installation works such as *Work No. 132* (1995), which consists of 'a door opening and closing and a light going on and off'; *Work No. 200* (1998), a collection of twelve inch diameter balloons, containing half the air of the space in which they are exhibited; as well as his purposeful statement of the obvious within sculptural text works such as *Work No. 232* (2000), a text spelt out in white neon stating 'the whole world + the work = the whole world'.

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[12] My choice and use of the term 'context-specific' within this submission is expanded in 'Spatial Frames', pp. 64-67.

Here again, Creed can be seen to offer an engagement of the work as defined through its material act and form, perhaps inviting a more matter-of-fact and openly ambivalent encounter within which reconfigurations of familiar and daily elements and functions might be counter-actualised to open a space for refreshed perspectives.

Another core concern, increasingly fundamental to and structural within Brookes' and my work, has been the proposition and development of pieces that result from our commitment to do something – in the sense that a key compositional principle of the work becomes the actioning of its intentions in context. To be more precise, the work becomes manifest in the doing of it, in whatever way it then unfolds, and in the open and often undirected consequences of that doing. Such work is not devised or rehearsed, but rather, is created only in being done, in context, in reality. The intention of such actions, then – as José Díaz Cuyás articulates in his writings on the work of Valcárcel Medina – is not to develop critical discourses on reality, but rather to actualise critical situations (2011, p 75). In other words, to act in ways that materialise circumstances in which every element, including the artist themselves, remain in crisis – disrupting the coherence of the present, and suspending our dominant understanding of it, allowing alternative logics and concepts to become active (Díaz Cuyás, 2011, p. 75). As Díaz Cuyás proposes, 'This ongoing exercise of self-exposure and ''adventure'' demands an internal logic [...] that inevitably results in works of radical diversity' (2011, p 75). In Valcárcel Medina's own words: 'The artwork has to be so faithful to its moment so as to become the moment itself' (Díaz Cuyás, 2011, p. 75). This intention is perhaps most clearly manifest in works such as *Conversaciones telefónicas* (1973) in which, after getting his first telephone landline installed in 1973, Valcárcel Medina called eighty unknown people – all resident in the city where he lived, Madrid – to simply give them his new telephone number:

> Woman (W): Hello?
> Varcácel Medina (VM): Hello? Please, look, I am Valcárcel Medina. I wanted to tell you my telephone number, that I have just got... If you don't mind...
> W: One moment... (Bring me a pen from there!)... Tell me.
> VM: 200

W: It is... 200...

VM: 42...

W: 42...

VM: 47...

W: 47. You are the accountant, aren't you?

VM: No, no, no. No, I am not an accountant.

W: Who are you?

VM: I am an artist... And I have this telephone number that is new...

W: Yes?

VM: I don't know... And I am telling it to you... But...

W: But... An artist of what?

VM: Well, I don't know, I do many different things.

W: Yes?

VM: Yes.

W: Is it Fernando Medina?

VM: Valcárcel Medina.

W: Marcárcel Medina?

VM: Valcárcel, yes.

W: OK, thank you.

VM: Well... Thank you very much, then.

W: You are welcome... Thank you.[13]

The only predetermined element of this work was the artist's decision to call a particular telephone number. How the individual conversations developed after that was fortuitous, and specific outcomes or reactions were neither assumed or required for the work to realise its action and intentions. Perhaps, within my own practice, this simple actioning of the social choices and behaviours catalysed by the work becomes most directly apparent in works such as those performed within the series *Something happening / Snapshots* (2008–ongoing), that we describe as 'a series of actions and durational image works, each conceived to create a situation-specific event in public space, and to reveal and engage those present directly in the development of that event through their

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[13] My own translated transcription of one of the conversations recorded by the artist within his work *Conversaciones telefónicas* (1973) – from the performance video archive of the independent online platform Teatron (2010).

attempt to generate personal traces and mementos of it' (Brookes and Casado, 2008). This project has produced four distinct works to date, realised within four different contexts: *Something burning / Snapshots* (2008), Rome, Italy; *300 people and a bear / Snapshots* (2008), Pontós, Spain; *Something burning / Snapshots* (2008), Girona, Spain, 2008; and *19 academics and a bear / Snapshots* (2009) Aberystwyth, UK. Most specifically, within this project series, I will highlight the work *19 academics and a bear / Snapshots* – which we performed with an audience of nineteen academics, in a completely blacked-out large-scale studio space – and which began when I said, as an introduction voiced from the dark:

> Good evening, and welcome to *Something happening / Snapshots*. The thing that is happening here tonight is 19 academics and a bear. This is the very first time that I find myself in a room, in the dark, with 19 academics. Perhaps this moment is the only thing we will ever all have in common. And I would like to try to create a memento of it. There are two people here in this room with you, one is carrying a camera, and the other is dressed as a bear. So, as we are a small group, I suggest that we all try to meet the bear in the middle of the room, and go for a single group photo...[14]

The completion of this work took ten minutes, and generated a single flash-lit photograph, which was subsequently printed as an edition of nineteen identical postcards, one for each of the audience members it captured. Importantly, the work was titled in the moment of my spoken introduction of it, reflecting the exact nature and size of the audience that had just entered the room. Similarly, the decision to attempt a single group photograph – rather than the series of individually photographed personal encounters that had been recorded across previous versions of the work, with larger audience numbers – was a decision made in response to the specific size and behaviour of the gathering. This decision, and introduction, resulted in a single photograph in which,

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[14] *19 academics and a bear / Snapshots* was performed as part of the AHRC Landscape and Environment Programme Conference 2009 hosted by the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University. Under the title '*Living Landscapes – An International Conference on Performance, Landscape and Environment* the conference brought together multi-disciplinary approaches to the myriad ways in which performance shapes and is shaped by landscape and environment' (University of Nottingham, n.d.).

unexpectedly, all nineteen members of the audience decided, and managed, to appear.

Image 1.5 Group photograph generated within the event *19 academics and a bear / Snapshots*. Living Landscapes conference, Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK. Photo by: Mike Brookes, 2009.

As we conceive and understand them, all these works can only be realised in their meeting with those who choose to encounter them, no matter how that encounter unfolds or comes to be defined. In other words, the work is a construct produced by that meeting – between the act of the work and the spectator – and by the social reflections and negotiations that such meetings provoke and require. The work directly engages with the things that we, individually and collectively, choose to do and not do, make and not make, and with the consequences and physical traces of those choices. In this sense, our work seeks to propose forms in which it becomes apparent that what is happening is 'us', 'me', 'here' and 'now'. These forms attempt to render visible both the 'throwntogetheness' and the event of place: the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now within heterogenous and ambivalent relationships (Massey, 2005a, pp. 137-140). These works acknowledge, and attempt to allow, diverse, multiple and open-ended modes of engagement; and in doing so they

also presuppose critically autonomous spectators, who operate as 'subjects of independent thought' (Bishop, 2005, p.35).

Images 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 Three of the sixty photographs generated within the event *Something burning / Snapshots*. Short Theatre Festival, Rome, Italy. A work of the series *Something happening / Snapshots*. Photos by: Mike Brookes, 2008.

These relational approaches can be clearly related to the ideas and practices of participation apparent in the contemporaneous work of artists such as, for example, Lone Twin. But the differences in bias and intention in our approaches, however subtle, may be more revealing than the obvious similarities. Lone Twin create work that is dialogic, conversational and collaborative. Their projects have ranged from theatrical productions such as *Alice Bell* (2006), *Daniel Hit By A Train* (2008) and *The Festival* (2010) that together make up *The Catastrophe Trilogy*; to durational performances such as *Untitled Joke* (1999); and participatory public events such as *Speeches* (2008) – a series of everyday orations in which public volunteers craft a speech about a personal passion and deliver it within a place of personal importance for them, be that their office, a café queue, or living room (Lone Twin, 2014). Whereas Lone Twin describe and highlight how their work is constructed around a prompt to a third party – whether that work is a theatre piece or a participatory public event (Lavery and Williams, 2011, pp. 9-10) – Brookes' and my work here might more usefully be seen as a construct built to reveal that third party to itself. I might also recognise our own inclusion as part of that third party within such work – if only

in the sense that the resulting works are often overtly manifest and performed through the choices and negotiated involvement of everyone present within the particular and shared situation it facilitates. In this sense, where Lone Twin might be seen to assert an intrinsic distinction between themselves and their audience – a distinction that here identifies both the 'prompt' and the 'prompted' within the work – Brookes and I might seek to reveal all those involved as equal agents within a self-reflective situation generated through their cohabitation of the work.

Similarly, the mediated approaches and provisional technical infrastructures Brookes and I have employed across our work together – such as, for example, our specifically structured use of radio to enable *Dark FM* (2008) – might be seen to reflect, yet remain distinct from, aspects of the increasingly interactive and technology-led participatory works of contemporaries such as Blast Theory. Through the employment of their audience's own personal mobile phones to enable works such as *Ulrike And Eamon Compliant* (2009) and *A Machine To See With* (2010), Blast Theory makes use of a familiar and available personal technology to engage their audience in participatory and site-specific theatrical experiences that unfold across extended locales. Yet, Blast Theory might here be seen to develop the use of these technologies as a mechanism to allow their participants to be individually both directed and engaged, as 'actors' in the unfolding fiction and drama of the work, enabling the work's narrative to then be activated and written out across a site, as stage - or, in the specific case of *A Machine To See With*, as a notional film location. While Brookes and I have actively limited our use of such technologies to an engagement of the connections they might readily facilitate between otherwise isolated locations or agents. Our performance of these connections, and the contact and interactions they might allow between what is then connected, rather than the transmission of artistic material, has always driven our use of such broadcast technologies – and this distinction might further highlight our particular focus on the creation of relational and self-reflective live performative situations in context.

Our practical development and articulation of all these interwoven concerns has led us to, and has also necessitated, an increasingly overt commitment and attentiveness to place – through an engagement with the co-existing multiple

uses, behaviours and understandings, presences and absences, that shape the actuality of the place in which each individual piece of our work is developed. Here, I understand place as an open-ended process – as a spatio-temporal event, and as a collection of particular and momentary configurations of the ongoing processes that bring together 'distinct temporalities into new configurations [that set off] new social processes' within the wider topographies of space (Massey, 2005a, pp. 71-130). As a result of this engagement with place, our works have, in turn, become increasingly and deliberately interventionist – yet our intention is not to provoke.[15] Rather, our aim is to propose and invite ways in which the particular physical and social constituents of a place – be it a theatre, city, or locale – might be used or conceived to shape new understandings, relationships and possibilities. In this sense, importantly, the project of our work is not utopian, but seeks to operate within the possibilities of the extant present, in an attempt to overwhelm it.[16] The root aims of the work might most usefully be recognised in the situations that it proposes and performs. Situations that, through their performance, might reveal other possible forms and behaviours that are already available to us, but which perhaps are not yet familiar or apparent – and within which we might consider the future simply as 'a counterfactual version of the present', questioning how the uses and behaviours that currently shape it might operate beyond 'the accidental set of physical and social relations in which they are now entangled' (Harman in Kimbell, 2013, p. 17).

These intentions and attitudes, particularly with respect to our engagement with place specifically, are fundamental to my research here, and to the artistic project of *Just a little bit of history repeating* (2010–ongoing) that provoked it. This long-term artistic project – as a series of context-specific artistic interventions in social space – is itself rooted in the proposition that, by directly layering an alternative or now absent reality of a place onto the actuality of that place in the present, we might attempt to re-engage additional understandings

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[15] My use of the term 'interventionist' within this submission, and my broader use of 'interventional' as outlined in footnote 5, are detailed in 'Spatial Frames', pp. 67-69.

[16] My use of 'overwhelm' here again draws on my choice and use of the word within this submission's title, as previously outlined in the opening paragraph of my introduction.

of that place, and reveal and refresh our views of the present and possible futures.

Our work here clearly acknowledges the performative proposals of participatory and interventional public art projects such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), while again marking the distinctions arising within our own approaches. At the root of *The Battle of Orgreave*, Deller was seen to engage established and formalised procedures of heritage battle re-enactment, as the driving act and proposition of the work – as a strategy to open refreshed perspectives onto the historic status and significance of events at Orgreave, as a single task around which all the project's agents could collect, and as a contextual frame within which the social and personal narratives of Orgreave might be collectively revealed and reconsidered in situ. These intentions clearly resonate with many of the formal and conceptual aspirations at the core of mine and Brookes' located and interventional public art work. Yet, again, here Deller is focused on an exploration of the contested meanings and narratives of past events, as a poetic and political artistic address to those past events specifically – and ultimately, as a possible aid to conflict resolution between the multiple and perhaps contradictory historical and personal understandings of those past events. While Brookes and I have engaged the merely remembered, and now absent aspects of a place, within a number of our specifically located *Just a little bit of history repeating* works, that engagement has always been driven by the intention to reconsider and more fully reveal aspects of our performance of that place in the present. And perhaps most importantly here, the approaches and proposals we have developed through that address to the 'now absent', have always and explicitly not been rooted in processes of narration and re-enactment.

Our interrogation and re-articulation of place, and the resulting strategies of our initial located sound works within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* series specifically, might also be understood within the context informed by works such as *The first five miles* (1998): a located performance and radio work in which Mike Brookes and Mike Pearson walked a specific five-mile journey across the landscape and hilltop of Mynydd Bach, above the village of Trefenter in West Wales, carrying portable two-way radio equipment. Notably, this work engaged a

combination of short-range and satellite radio technologies to enable Brookes' and Pearson's exploratory attempts to activate and perform 'culturally resonant material in situ, thereby allowing the work's content to be developed within and amongst the landscape and community for whom that material might have most resonant significance' (Brookes, 2015). The resulting performance and audio work combined texts voiced live by Pearson as the pair walked, via a live satellite radio link, with additional pre-recorded material simultaneously broadcast by local radio station Radio Ceredigion; and was made available over a fifty-mile radius around the performers and Mynydd Bach.

Another useful reference might also be the urban sound works of Graeme Miller, such as *Linked* (2003): a semi-permanent sound installation that invisibly occupies the area between Hackney Marshes and Redbridge, where the M11 Link Road now stands – a road completed in 1999 after the demolition of four hundred homes, including Miller's own, amid dramatic and passionate protest. 'Concealed along the three-mile route, twenty new transmitters continually broadcast hidden voices, recorded testimonies and rekindled memories of those who once lived and worked where the motorway now runs evoking a cross-section of East London life. Day and night' (Artsadmin, 2014).

In both *Linked* and *The First Five Miles*, the artists are seen to reactivate now absent historic events or places through the use of structured audio recordings, broadcasting and layering these aural compositions onto the actuality of that place in the present. Importantly here, however, our initial works within *Just a little bit of history repeating* have aimed to engage only existing archival sound recordings or live first-hand descriptions of the absent places and events that they consider, re-broadcasting and re-locating these unaltered and uninterpreted aural elements directly within the location that they address or that generated them. Perhaps most importantly, these aural elements are then considered and reactivated as, in and of themselves, complete – and are simply placed and allowed to 'play out' in the present. We have at no time considered these archival and descriptive traces as source material – to be adapted, edited or reconfigured in the creation of a subsequent and discrete compositional sound

work. In the work *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010),[17] for example – the first realised manifestation of our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project – Brookes and I reconstructed, within a garden on the seafront of Weymouth, the concert programme delivered there by the town's municipal band a century earlier. Music listed within the programme was rebroadcast in situ, amongst the amusement arcade that now occupies the site of the original bandstand, and made available via FM transmitter to anyone visiting the site with a radio. And here also, as Mike Brookes and I discussed during the initial development of *Just a little bit of history repeating*, we might see the traces of a personal adaption of the creative strategies, if not the Marxian objectives, of what Guy Debord called *détournement* – a reshaping and re-contextualising of a familiar and existing daily construct through addition or subtle alteration. The existing construct, in these cases, may be a building, a seaside town, or perhaps the entire landscape of a city. While both *Linked* and *The First Five Miles* may be seen to highlight the multiplicity of place through the reframed activation of understandings and narratives arising from their site's contested and shifting identities, our focus here, in our engagement of the inevitably evolving shifts and reconfigurations of a place over time, marks simply an engagement with change itself. Our hope here, at its simplest, is to highlight the fact, and therefore also the possibility, of change. Our juxtapositions of present and previously known uses of a place seeks primarily to bring the present, and its momentary transience, into focus.

From the inception of my research within this submission, and of the long-term public art project of *Just a little bit of history repeating*, I have proposed an engagement with the social and artistic resonance of absence, within our common understandings and uses of public space in the present. This engagement acknowledges an understanding of both space and place as the 'sphere of relations, negotiations and practices of engagement […] The dimension which poses the question of the social, and thus of the political' (Massey, 2005a, p. 98-99). It is framed within a focused address to social space, as a negotiated, and negotiable, 'social product' – a relational construct that, as Henri Lefebvre suggests, emerges through active material

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[17] *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* was commissioned by and performed in B-side Multimedia Arts Festival 2010, Weymouth, UK; and is more fully discussed in the following 'Origins' section of this chapter, pp. 48-51.

practices in the present (2009, pp.186-195).[18] It gives particular consideration to the understandings and behaviours that might arise from our recollection and description of things now not 'here'. And it perhaps highlights my then emerging considerations of what might be revealed and renegotiated in our attempts to navigate and understand the places where we live through the presence of their 'diverse absences', and of 'the fragmented strata that form [places] and that plays on these moving layers' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 119).
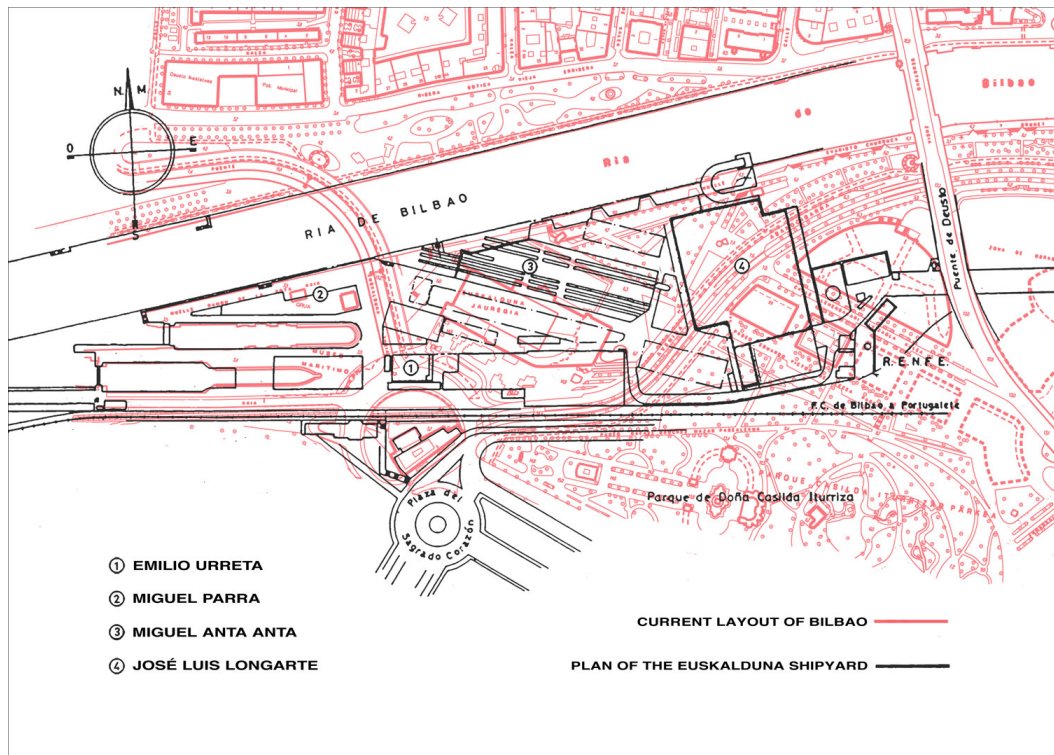
Image 1.9 A postcard image which, when printed, was titled on its reverse as 'A map to find meetings in places that are no longer there', and used within our located work *Euskalduna Shipyards*. A work from our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project. Image by: Mike Brookes, 2011.

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[18] My use of 'social space' within this submission is further discussed within 'Spatial Frames', pp. 60-64.

1.2: ORIGINS

This research is rooted in questions arising from my exploratory and propositional artistic approaches across the long-term public art project *Just a little bit of history repeating,* which takes its working title, with a playful lack of irony, from the 1997 pop release by the Propellerheads, featuring Shirley Bassey – while consciously appropriating the phrase for its literal resonances, rather than as any reference to the form or content of that musical collaboration directly. Our use of the title seeks to offer a playful frame for our attempts to reconfigure the present by relocating fragments of the now absent or past: a frame within which we might reactivate alternative uses and understandings of a locale – initially by returning tangible remnants of recent and now absent events or buildings back to the sites of the activities or architectures that generated them. My inquiry here begins with a critical assessment and reconsiderations of the artistic intentions and concerns that initiated the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, and of the two publicly commissioned art works through which the project series began – namely *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) and *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011), both of which I detail within this chapter.

I can trace the impetus for a number of the key questions that have initiated this inquiry, and the practices on which it stands, back to considerations resulting from my recent experiences of reviewing the now iconic original TV footage of the Spanish coup d'etat in 1981; and to my subsequent imaginings of the refreshed perspectives that might become possible for me, were I able to sit within the Parliament chamber – where the events of the coup took place – and listen to the audio of that original TV footage unfold in situ. I was ten years old at the time of the coup, and still remember the television coverage vividly. In the afternoon of February 23rd 1981, in the chamber of the Congress of Deputies – the lower house of the Spanish parliament – members were voting on the investiture of the new Prime Minister, the currently acting Prime Minister having resigned twenty-five days earlier. The resigning minister was Adolfo Suárez, the first Prime Minister of the democratic period following dictator Francisco

Franco's death in 1975. At 6:23pm, while the vote was still underway, a group of Civil Guards – a national public security force of military nature – broke into, and took control of the chamber. As was often the case during key parliamentary sessions of the period, the country's only television station, and various radio stations, were recording and broadcasting from within the room of the congress itself. The television footage was broadcast for the first time the following day, immediately after the release of the hostages and the surrender of the Civil Guards, on February 24th 1981. The resulting footage, which is still rebroadcast every year on the anniversary of the coup, has acquired an extraordinary symbolic power. Its direct and detailed images, unfolding in real-time, have become synonymous with my understandings and memories of the moment.

Mike Brookes and I have never actively sought the permissions necessary to perform the juxtaposition of this archival material within the site of the Spanish parliament in the present. But, through our considerations of what such a juxtaposition might allow, it has become clear that our interest in such archival traces lies in their properties as concrete material in the present – rather than as fragments or signifiers of the narratives and understandings that may have become subsequently assigned to the events of which they were originally part. Perhaps our interest in this particular footage is rooted in its pragmatic and incidental nature; in the extent to which it simply records what was happening in front of the camera, before those events had revealed or acquired their subsequent significance. The cameras and technicians present within the Parliament that day were there to allow daily news access to a largely procedural parliamentary session. And, although the resulting footage has come to epitomise a defining moment in the national narrative of the Spanish transition to democracy, our questions centred specifically on what might become possible if we were able to engage this footage as an enduring trace of the real-time attempt to follow and document the moment – shaped without knowledge of its outcomes, or of which details would later prove to be important.

From the questions that arose from our imaginings of how such a reactivation of recordings of the coup in situ might operate, we chose to focus initially – in the initiation of our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series – on how we might

relocate recorded and remembered pasts specific to the daily fabric of a locale, without representation or interpretation, in an attempt to allow a refreshed and new encounter with the actual possibilities of alternative realities in the present.[19] We aimed to do this through direct in situ meetings with remaining aural fragments of those alternative realities, intentionally choosing to exclude any processes of narrative or abstracted composition, dramatisation or re-enactment to avoid our engagement with those now absent events being refracted through their received narratives, discourses or cultural meanings. That is to say, our intention was to use those fragments as directly and overtly as possible, in their actual form, without alteration or manipulation, replacing them within the location where they were originally generated, simply as remnants of other occurrences there. Our primary aim was to propose meetings with the existing and tangible traces of now absent events and to position those traces as actual objects, as things that are present in the present, in an attempt to reveal place as a multi-temporal constellation constituted by existing elements within overlapping temporalities. Our aspiration was to shape a work that would become manifest in the act of that relocation, in the social spaces and meetings it proposed, and in the refreshed perspectives of the present and possible futures that might be revealed through it. We hoped to realise work that could enable direct public participation in structured acts of localised and collective self-reflection, and in the constructs and understandings that the actioning of a critical attentiveness to personal location and localised social use might reassert or bring into being. In other words, we hoped to propose work that, by connecting us to place as a multi-temporal event, might render the future as a performable reconfiguration of the present. Meanwhile our focussed engagement with sound hoped to challenge the often dominant and assumed logics and processes of the visual, to consider place beyond its physical solidity and question the apparent fixity of the visible present. As Toop (2010, p. 24) suggests in his writings about the act of listening:

> The aerial (or ariel) nature of sound always implies a certain degree of insubstantiality and uncertainty, some potential for illusion or deception, some ambiguity of absence and presence, full or empty, enchantment or

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[19] Understanding 'locale' as 'the place of operation of collectives' (Brey, 1998, p. 2).

transgression. Through sound the boundaries of the physical world are questioned, even threatened or undone by instability.

At the outset of this project work, we sought to restructure the present by weaving the aural remnants of previous occurrences into its acoustic space – overlapping sounds within different temporal frames, as 'history reaching forward in the intangible form of sound to reconfigure the present and future' (Toop, 2010, Prelude). Our intention was that the addition of these fragments, within the active and accumulating aural flow of the locale, might activate and perform a new present – generating place through the 'temporality of the auditory'.[20] That is to say, through the spatio-temporal event of sound, a field of interaction might be generated – inviting the listener to momentarily establish relationships with their surroundings through the act of listening and hearing (Labelle, 2010, pp. xvi-xviii). Importantly, we also recognised the inherent potential of sound to occupy large volumes and areas of space, while remaining physically invisible – and the potential possibilities that would allow us to work at scale while imposing a minimal material impact on any addressed locale. The diffuse nature of sound offered us the possibility to shift and reshape expanded geographical areas through small and subtle interventions and its physical intangibility could allow us to occupy spaces, through the intervention of sound, that might be otherwise inaccessible to us. We anticipated that both the physics and phenomenological behaviour of sound would give us the opportunity to challenge the assumed 'coherence of place', and therefore of the present.[21] From the beginning, this work sought to reveal space as 'the sphere of open multiplicity' that allows the co-existence of difference and multiple trajectories, and challenges analyses of the world as singular, linear and inevitable (Massey, 2001, p. 259).

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[20] See Labelle's *Acoustic Territories. Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010), p. xvii.

[21] 'Coherence of place' here refers to perceptions and understandings of place as a seamless entity that operates as a complete interconnected closed system of synchronic structures (Laclau, 1990, p. 60, cited in Massey, 2005a, p. 41); as internally uniform and well organised constructs that define a community or collective identity (Massey, 2005a, pp. 141); as 'sites where a host of different social processes are gathered up into an intelligible whole' (Low and Barnett, 2000, p. 58, cited in Massey, 2005a, p. 140).

In the public initiation of our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, we began our development of these ideas across two distinct yet simultaneously launched public art commissions: one in the English coastal town of Weymouth, during the summer of 2010, commissioned as part of the programme of the first edition of the *B-side Multimedia Arts Festival*; and the other in Bilbao, northern Spain, which we began in the summer of 2010 and then publicly presented in the autumn of 2011 within the programme of the *BAD Festival de Teatro y Danza Contemporáneo de Bilbao*. Both these commissions were supported by funded residency periods that allowed us to adequately locate and test our initial ideas. Both processes involved extensive research and fieldwork, and were developed in and through dialogue with local residents, social groups, historians, and so on. Importantly, these two commissions were initiated on a shared premise and proposed context-specific realisations of the same root intentions.[22] In the proposals we made to the competitive open calls through which these two commissions were awarded, Mike Brookes and I outlined these initial intentions as:

> The work proposes an active engagement and animation of social space. Its primary medium is found audio material, its primary strategy is public broadcast, its poetic engages both personal memory and social identity. The work returns a real time audio recording, from archived contemporary reportage, to the site of a recent historic event [...] The work is manifest in the act of that relocation, in the gatherings it proposes, and in the refreshed and personal perspectives of a place that might be revealed through direct meetings with the history and community that shape it [...] The work explores our understanding of 'place' – as space that, through use, has acquired meaning – and draws directly on an examination of how events and individuals become shared points of reference in the processes of social description and understanding [...] Our intention is to relocate events that resonate within the daily fabric of a locale, without interpretation. To allow a personal meeting with the possibility of past events, beyond their narrative or received significance. Simply as a catalyst for personal and social reflection.

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[22] Again, see 'Spatial Frames', pp. 64-67, for details of my use of the term 'context-specific'.

Within these initial public proposals we wanted to engage sites and animate social spaces through the mode of listening specifically, by returning aural material resonant within those sites. We hoped to refresh our perspectives of the present through the tensions, gaps, voids and possibilities that might be generated in the overlaying of past sonorities on the current reality of those sites. This intention was not driven by a specific desire to work with sound exclusively, beyond what its mechanics might allow us to explore and test formally, but more from our interest in exploring what kinds of refreshed views or reimaginings might become possible through meetings with non-visual traces of the past in situ. Initially, we planned to research and identify original real time audio recordings generated within the recent past of a locale and to return them as unedited and uninterpreted material traces of that past, in an attempt to allow first hand encounters with the material reality of those traces in the present. Ultimately, the commission in Weymouth crystallised into an intervention and sound work called *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010); and the work in Bilbao resulted in a participatory intervention in public space titled *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011).

1.2.1: ALEXANDRA GARDENS BANDSTAND (Weymouth, UK, 2010)

During the summer of 2010, *B-side Multimedia Arts Festival* commissioned a number of artists to develop works 'in response to sites along two routes in Weymouth and Portland [to create] a number of interventions in which the public [could] engage' (B-side, 2010). Amongst its stated aims the festival hoped to offer artists and audiences the opportunity to 'explore the less commercial aspects of South West coastal resorts' (B-side, 2010). Mike Brookes and I were among those artists selected, and early in July 2010 the festival facilitated a week-long preparatory research residency to help us initiate our project work within the area. From this initial residency, we focused our fieldwork on the Dorset seaside town of Weymouth – a town situated on a sheltered bay at the estuary mouth of the River Wey on the English Channel coast – and more particularly on the town's seafront promenade. The town of Weymouth has been

a tourist resort since the mid eighteenth century and is focussed around its harbour – home to cross-channel ferries, pleasure boats and private yachts – and on the long curving bay and promenade of its seafront, that still retains much of its late nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural character.

During the festival period itself, between the 17th and 25th of September 2010, Brookes and I realised an interventional sound work within the commercial amusement arcade building that now stands in Alexandra Gardens – a small triangular area of open ground at the southern end of Weymouth's seafront promenade. From information gathered from period newspaper articles and descriptions, we reconstructed the concert programme delivered at the site by the town's municipal band that same week a century earlier – on the bandstand that had stood in the gardens between 1891 and 1924. Music from this programme was rebroadcast in situ, amongst the amusements and arcade games that now occupy the site. The music allowed access to the selection of pieces that had comprised the closing concert of the summer season of 1910, within the amusement arcade building that currently occupies the site, and which echoes both the architecture and location of the original bandstand. In its description of this closing concert, a local newspaper report of the time wrote:

> In the pleasant coolness of a fine September night nearly a thousand philharmonists sought the charms of music in the open air at Alexandra Gardens. The municipal band under the direction of Mr J S Howgill rendered a select programme with characteristic excellence.
> (Weymouth Telegraph, 1910)

As no contemporaneous recordings existed, and acknowledging our desire to test how these initial approaches might be supported by the aural qualities of the intervening audio being distinctly anachronistic, we combined the oldest readily available band renditions of the individual pieces performed there in 1910 into a rolling musical programme that followed both the content and running order of the original concert. The sound was made available via short-range FM radio broadcast, hanging in the air of Weymouth's promenade where it could be accessed by anyone choosing to visit the site with a radio, or radio enabled mobile – while remaining 'invisible' to all others. In this way, we hoped to allow

the work's participants, walking amongst the amusements with small radios pressed against their ears, to hear the music of the concert juxtaposed against the sounds of the slot-machines and arcade games being played around them.

The Alexandra Gardens amusements, now called the Electric Palace, is a prominent feature of Weymouth's promenade. The site functions as a social hub for touristic leisure and entertainment activities, and provides a focus and space for social gathering. Its noisy and colourful indoor and outdoor amusements are a prominent part of the seasonal character and appearance of the town's seafront. In this sense, the social function of the gardens still echoes those of the original bandstand, and of events such as those of that 'fine September night' in 1910 when a thousand people 'sought the charms of music in the open air at Alexandra Gardens' (Weymouth Telegraph, 1910). Yet the potential contrasts, between a site perhaps now more overtly activated by individual engagement and personal consumption, within the disparate and chaotic accumulation of arcade gaming it supports, and a social space intended to allow locals and visitors to gather together in shared moments of public activities facilitated by the now absent bandstand, are perhaps usefully self-evident.

The music that we broadcast amongst the amusements functioned as a remnant of the concert, and through its activation we hoped to highlight previous cultural practices performed on that site. The juxtaposition of this broadcast with the actuality of the amusement arcade in the present – meshing band music with the noisy, repetitive, fragmentary and disorientating environment of the arcade – attempted to open up an additional dimension, and to provide the listener with access to other views and understandings by revealing a different possible set of ideological and cultural relationships. Through their individual and intimate engagement with the music in situ, and the additional understandings that might be revealed by its juxtaposition with other aspects of the site, we aimed to explore the possibility of moving participants into a reconfigured arcade that might operate through the friction between its past and present. One of the project's key intentions was to consider the extent to which such juxtapositions might themselves become place-making, and allow the creation of new places from where refreshed perspectives and reflections on our uses and performance of social space in the present might become possible.

Through my encounter with the reality of the resulting intervention work – as I entered the arcade with a small radio held to my ear, and walked amongst the coin pusher and fruit machines, grab cranes and video games, while listening to the broadcast concert programme – I became aware of the alternative and event-specific place that emerged through my active encounter with these concrete traces of previous uses and practices in situ.[23] This experience initially foregrounded my own performed act of listening, followed by an increasingly heightened awareness of the environment that I moved through – and of the choices and practices currently shaping the arcade around me. Within the place that emerged through this juxtaposition of past and present – a place catalysed by the tensions generated through their proximity – I began to recognise how new imaginings and additional possibilities might become apparent there. In this sense, our intervention attempted to offer access to a vantage point from which understandings and perspectives of the site – and of the choices and practices that we have currently chosen and operate within – could be considered, questioned and refreshed.

1.2.2: EUSKALDUNA SHIPYARDS (Bilbao, Spain, 2011)

In 2010, Mike Brookes and I were awarded a residency by the Culture Department of Bilbao City Council, to develop a second new context-specific artwork within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project. During the summer of that year, we spent a month and a half undertaking research and fieldwork within the city of Bilbao. This residency resulted in the proposition of an intervention within the open public spaces on the bank of the Nervión River – between Bilbao's Maritime Museum and the Guggenheim – that now occupy much of the site of the vast former Euskalduna shipyard complex, a site which had been the industrial heart of the city of Bilbao until the shipyards' closure in the 1980s. Our work proposed to revisit fragments of the now absent shipyard

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[23] I use the term 'event-specific' here in a literal sense, to acknowledge a construct or consequence resulting from the event of the work specifically. And here, as well as in my wider use of the term 'context-specific', I also acknowledge Claire Doherty's recent designation of 'situation-specific' (Doherty, 2009, p. 13) – which I reference directly in 'Spatial Frames', p. 65.

buildings through the in situ personal descriptions of four ex-workers. The realisation and public presentation of this work was subsequently commissioned by *BAD Festival de Teatro y Danza Contemporáneo de Bilbao*, and performed at the site in November 2011.

For eighty-eight years – between 1900 and its final closure in 1988 – the Euskalduna shipyard built and launched millions of tons of iron and steel ships in to the waters of the estuary of the Nervión river. Across the period Euskalduna became one of the most emblematic shipyards in the region, and its closure was a deeply traumatic and symbolic process – which the shipyard's workers fiercely resisted. For many of those who witnessed and still recall the turmoil that Spanish society went through during the 1980s, Euskalduna is remembered primarily for the ferocious and tragic confrontations between workers and the police, and for the relentless resistance and conviction that the workers demonstrated throughout the lengthy process of its closure. These final events in the eighty-eight-year history of the shipyards have come to epitomise the meaning of Euskalduna in mine and other people's memories and understandings – becoming a reference point within the narratives of the struggle for worker's rights, and of the tensions between the people and the establishment in Spain during the country's transition to democracy following the end of Franco's dictatorship. In recent years the estuary of Bilbao has undergone spectacular changes, and the parks and public spaces that now occupy its banks have increasingly become sites of leisure and entertainment. The only traces of the once active shipyard that still remain are a number of its dry docks, the 'Casa de Bombas' pump-house, and one of the original shipbuilding cranes.

On the evening of Saturday November 5th 2011, four former Euskalduna employees, Mike Brookes and I met a crowd of spectators who had gathered outside the entrance of Bilbao's Maritime Museum – at the site where one of the entrances to the former shipyards used to stand. For and with this informal crowd, we attempted to replace and revisit fragments of the now absent shipyard buildings that had been central to the working days of the four ex-workers with whom we collaborated – 'rebuilding' specific aspects of the shipyards' architecture simply through their live in situ personal descriptions of the details and buildings they had moved through, in the course of a normal

working day, during their training and employment within Euskalduna. Their intimate descriptions, captured by hand held and boom microphones, were delivered to the gathered crowd and passersby through portable amplifiers, worn by Mike Brookes and I – allowing the performed event of the work to be established and moved freely around the large city centre site without the need for any installed technical support infrastructure, and leaving no physical traces on the areas of public space it moved through.

Images 1.10 and 1.11 Two performance stills of *Euskalduna Shipyards*. Festival BAD, Bilbao, Spain. A work within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project. Photos by: Luis Fernández, 2011.

The intervention and social gathering of this work, into the public spaces that have now opened up through the regeneration and development of this stretch of the riverbank, aimed to explore how we might render the familiar spaces where we live more visible – as configurations that constantly shift, adapt and change. It considered how we might begin to reveal such configurations as the product of heterogeneous and daily behaviours, uses, relationships and understandings. And through it we began to explore how, in turn – if our choices and attentiveness within the immediate social spaces that we habitually inhabit and move through could be refreshed – our understandings of those spaces might then perhaps be reconsidered or renegotiated. James Donald argues that we systematically forget that places are contingent and, consequentially, tend to experience them as objective entities, 'as simply the way things are' (cited in

Massey, 2005a, p. 151). Through our 're-performance' of past architectures of the former Euskalduna site, we hoped to reactivate this contingency of place, and to refresh participants' awareness of the multiplicity of relationships and understandings that configured the site in the present. We attempted to do this by allowing access to aspects of the daily functioning of the now absent shipyard in situ, while focusing exclusively on the reactivation of only those fragments that could perhaps be met outside the specific narratives of conflict and confrontation now perhaps more familiarly associated with Euskalduna. In this instance, as no archived audio material recording the working days of the shipyards was available, we had decided to explore how the verbal descriptions of people with a first-hand experience of the shipyards might produce material and spatial records of its architecture – where the act of their oral descriptions of the now absent physical and spatial details of the site might function as a physical remnant of the shipyard, in the present.

1.2.3: INITIAL REFLECTIONS AND GROUNDWORK

In our fieldwork for both these works – *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) and *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011) – we explored notable events and sites from the recent past that still informed the present understandings and character of the urban environments addressed. We found ourselves drawn to aspects of those events and sites that, at the same time, seemed to be generally overlooked within the personal accounts narrated to us within the locale itself. In Weymouth, we had been asked to consider sites and interventions that might invite audiences to explore less commercial aspects of the town, perhaps exploring backstreets or repurposing empty shops, and even the festival's own list of potential sites disregarded places as integral to the town's touristic seaside character as its seafront amusements (Rogers, 2010). Similarly, the narratives of Euskalduna in Bilbao, as described to us, might be seen to function in terms of what French historian Pierre Nora terms '*un lieu de memoire*' – in that understandings of the place and its history have, for some, become conflated and reduced to the site and single moment of the confrontations and

protests of the shipyards' closure.[24] In this sense, the site of Euskalduna itself might be seen to become a fixed and unidimensional place in many of the descriptions and accounts narrated to us – a place often, for some indeed, considered perhaps simply too obvious to be mentioned. Across our parallel development of these two initial located public works of this project, and of the approaches that would subsequently feed my future work within the wider inquiry of this submission, both Weymouth's amusement arcade and the Euskalduna site in Bilbao seemed paradoxical places to us. We were struck, when reflecting on our choice and activation of them, by how they might be simultaneously considered as particularly meaningful within the social spaces and histories of their locales, while remaining 'invisible' and disregarded as potential sites for exploration and reconsideration – as sites that, perhaps precisely because of their symbolic or associative significance, have become inconspicuous.

In his book *Species of Spaces and other Pieces* (1997), French writer Georges Perec coins the term 'infraordinary' to describe aspects of everyday life that are so familiar and habitual that we tend to overlook them. For Perec the term describes those daily aspects 'which we generally don't notice, which [don't] call attention to [themselves], which [are] of no importance', that detail 'what happens when nothing happens, what passes when nothing passes', and that require our special attention if we are to recognise or reconsider their role in our behaviour and daily functioning (1997, pp. 205-207). In our address to the daily occupation of these initial two sites, in Weymouth and Bilbao, we had recognised how the specific sites that we had chosen to look at were perhaps similarly overlooked. In the case of Euskalduna specifically however, and differently from our understanding of the 'infraordinary' as described by Perec, the current apparent disregard of the shipyards seemed to result from the fact that the site was too significant – I would perhaps say 'ultra-ordinary' – within the constructs of place and history that inform the social identity of their locale. Such sites, that have become tied to a particular historic moment or social narrative – and that might here be seen to include both the Euskalduna shipyards

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[24] *Lieu de memoire* – or place of memory – refers to 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community' (Nora, 1996, p. xvii).

in Bilbao and the Alexandra Gardens amusements of Weymouth – might usefully be recognised to have acquired the status of representational reference points within specific social understandings. We might then consider how these understandings are now maintained and sustained through an engagement with representational 'snapshots' of the site, rather than through any continued engagement with the daily developments and multiple uses of the site itself. And in furthering this research, and expanding its potential and possibilities across my wider inquiry and practice-based research within this submission, I might also recognise the extent to which such sites could also require special attention, in order to open opportunities for their reconsideration in the present.

In this sense, in our attempt to create a work that could invite refreshed engagements and performances of these places in the present, we directly engaged the 'ultra-ordinary' – if only through its most ordinary and familiar elements. We attempted to avoid reactivations or discussions of these sites as moments or exemplars within the specific historical narratives or individual memories that might have come to shape our current shared social understanding of them. Instead, we favoured the reactivation of aspects of their use that might possibly be encountered in ways not reliant on a particular 'telling' of the site – through the engagement of fragments that could equally be considered and positioned within many, or indeed any, of the multiple possible 'tellings' of these sites in the present. That is to say, we focused on remnants of the past that might be reactivated without reliance on values assigned to them through a particular record of the site's past; and, in doing so, we found ourselves most concerned with exploring the details that were rarely mentioned or considered within the accounts that we were told or gathered. Importantly here, our exploration of those gaps – those overlooked and untold details – was not driven by a desire to highlight what was hidden or forgotten in the history and memories that had become attached to these events and places, but rather by our attempts to identify what was overlooked, missed and perhaps considered to be too obvious to mention. Consequently, it became apparent to us, that it was perhaps precisely in those gaps – within what might not be made explicit, or be considered as significant – where a refreshed awareness of the multiplicity of the site might again begin to open up.

These two works – conceived and developed in parallel from a shared supposition and proposition – manifest our initial attempt to re-perform aspects of a place in time, through the reactivation of particular remnants, that might allow us to call back and actualise the practices and relations that constituted that place in a previous moment. In doing so, we focused on identifying traces of the past that still existed within the present; that is, fragments of another time that could also be considered and met as active fragments of the 'here and now'. Importantly, we realised that these fragments could be allowed to resonate across multiple temporalities precisely because they did not say anything fundamental about their origins. That is, we favoured elements that seemed neither essential nor symbolic within any specific social or individual account of these sites, but that could rather be positioned and understood within multiple accounts, of multiple moments – and that might therefore highlight multiple shifts in configurations and uses of the site, rather than simply juxtaposing one with a single other, setting this 'now' against a single and specific 'then'. Within the work *Euskalduna Shipyards*, for example, this focus is perhaps most apparent in our concentration on the physical descriptions and positions of architectural elements of the now absent working shipyard buildings exclusively – rather than on any remembered or narrated event, explained opinion, or inferred consequence of the events and changes through which the site has evolved. We recognised that this multiplicity, when made visible, might allow a reactivation of the place as a process – as an event requiring the negotiation of a shifting constellation of practices, relationships and understandings. Furthermore, we saw how this reactivation could challenge perceptions of place as something known, fixed or intrinsically coherent. In this sense, these works sought to actualise these sites in terms of space-time. That is to say, the works aimed to propose and operate within an understanding of those places as genuinely open and internally multiple, that could not be captured 'as a slice through time in the sense of an essential section', and that – then and now – demanded a politics of negotiation (Massey, 2005a, pp. 140-141).

In my experience, in these two initial works of the project, the juxtaposition of the past – reactivated through the placement of its remnants – within the practices, relationships and physical elements that constituted the site in the present, allowed a new place to emerge and to be performed. Within this place,

where past and present operated simultaneously, new meanings and practices could perhaps be recognised and enacted within these sites. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly here, this new place existed only through the performance of that juxtaposition – in the tensions operating between its various temporalities and spatialities. It seemed to me, to be only perceptible and accessible for those directly participating in the work; and equally, it was only sustained by their individual choices and engagement within the apparently shared and publicly inhabitable structures of use it offered.

1.3: SPATIAL FRAMES

The engagement of place through performance is pivotal to this inquiry – with a particular focus on my activation of place as the performed integration of space and time, and more specifically in terms of what Massey (2005a) has referred to as 'the event of place'. My understandings of place draw on a field of critical debate advanced by contemporary cultural and political geographers such as Tim Cresswell (1996, 2004), David Harvey (2012), Nigel Thrift (2008) and Edward Soja (1996), and have been informed by the work of Doreen Massey (1994, 1995, 2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) in particular. Their work has, in turn, drawn on spatial and social theorists such as Michel de Certeau (1984), Michel Foucault (1997) and Henri Lefebvre (1991, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2009). The conceptual framework provided by these theorists might perhaps be most apparent here in my engagement with Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' – in my understanding of performance as a place where different or even contradictory practices could take place simultaneously without conflict or hierarchical categorisation (1997, pp. 332-334) – and in my consideration of Lefebvre's propositions on social space.

The propositions inherent to this research arise directly from an address to place 'as open, as woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within the power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business' (Massey, 2005a, p. 130); that is, as an array of processes rather than a thing or a fixed construct. In contrast to an understanding of place as something already established, operating within a pre-given logic, 'with a coherence only to be disturbed by 'external' forces' (2005a, p. 141), Massey proposes place as the ever-shifting process of 'the general condition of our being together' (2005a, p.154). In that it engages diverse elements, that cross categories and operate within different temporal frames and scales, that for a moment come together to foster a particular here-and-now (Massey, 2005b, p. 356). That is what Massey calls the 'throwntogetherness' of place, 'the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a

negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman' (Massey, 2005a, p. 140). In this sense, 'the event of place' is 'the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing' (Massey, 2005a, p. 141); processes in which the multiplicity and chance of space 'provide (an element of) that inevitable contingency which underlies the necessity for the institution of the social and which, at the moment of antagonism, is revealed in particular fractures which pose the question of the political' (Massey, 2005a, p. 151). And this contingency of place 'demands the ethics and the responsibility of facing up to the event; where the situation is unprecedented and the future is open. Place is an event in that sense too' (Massey, 2005a, p.141).

My engagement with Lefebvre's work – and my subsequent engagement with anthropologist Manuel Delgado's reflections on aspects of Lefebvre's work – has been particularly useful in my considerations of social and public space within urban environments. Lefebvre's proposed triadic conceptualisation of space, and the distinctions it offers – between the roles of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces in *The Production of Space* (1991) – has provided a foundational understanding of the fluid ways in which these three functions, while always interconnected, might inevitably combine in complex and changeable modulations of their relationships, and so might not necessarily constitute a coherent whole (1991, pp. 37-46). Here spatial practice is recognised as referring to our daily activities, as well as to the places and spatial networks that are particular to a society – and that provide 'the practical basis of the perception of the outside world' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). Representational space alludes to the complex symbolic systems and meanings that people overlay on physical spaces (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 39-46), identifying it as 'the qualitative space of subordination to dominant representations of space, but also where defections and disobedience are inspired' (Delgado, 2013).[25] Meanwhile representations of space, which Lefebvre positions between spatial practice and representational spaces, acknowledge the dominant space in any society which

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[25] All translations of extracts from original texts in Spanish are my own. From the original text in Spanish: 'Es el espacio cualitativo de los sometimientos a las representaciones dominantes del espacio, pero también en el que beben y se inspiran las deserciones y desobediencias' (Delgado, 2013).

tries to impose a particular order over the daily uses and symbolic understandings of place (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-46).

In his *Right to the City* (1996) and *The Urban Revolution* (2003), Lefebvre addresses questions about the reality, problems and possibilities of the city and urban phenomenon specifically. Usefully, Lefebvre makes 'a distinction between the *city*, a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and architectural fact, and the *urban*, a social reality made up of relations which are to be conceived of, constructed or reconstructed by thought' (1996, p. 103). He proposes the 'urban' as a particular way of organising space and time: '[it] is a mental and social form, that of simultaneity, of gathering, of convergence, of encounter (or rather, encounters)' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 131). In this sense, the 'urban' can exist as mere potentiality, as a set of possibilities. Nevertheless, he argues, this social 'urban' reality 'cannot be defined either as attached to a material morphology (on the ground, in the practico-material), or as being able to detach itself from it' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 131). Thus, although the 'urban' might have initially taken form within the city, and be expressed most fully in it, it is not exclusively of it. The 'urban' then is 'a place of encounters, focus of communication and information [...] place of desire, permanent disequilibrium, seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and of the unpredictable' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 129) – that is, 'a center of attraction and life' (Lefebvre, 2003, loc 1897). More importantly, the 'urban' here tends to subvert 'the messages, orders and constraints coming from above. It attempts to appropriate time and space by foiling dominations, by diverting them from their goal, by deceit' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 117). This 'urban' is a transforming form that 'destructures and restructures its elements' (Lefebvre, 2003, loc 2643); and which persists and intensifies when the conditions of life degrade and deteriorate (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 129). For Lefebvre, the city and 'the urban' are creative processes, and operations, that are simultaneously product of and context for people's everyday life. In this sense, importantly, 'city and urban reality are related to use value' (1996, p. 67) – that is, to the appropriation of urban space by its inhabitants which involves their 'right to work, to training and education, to health, housing, leisure, to life' (1996, p. 179). This definition of the 'urban' is very similar to what Lefebvre then later proposes as social space – perhaps highlighting his perception of a society that is being completely

urbanised. Again, Lefebvre defines social space as an 'encounter, assembly, simultaneity' (1991, p. 101) of 'everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols' (1991, p. 101). Social space here 'implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.101); 'embracing as it does individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flow, and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict, and so on' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 88). And this identification of how 'social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 86), again highlights the extent to which each fragment or section of space might be understood as constituted by a multiplicity of different social relationships (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 88).

Similarly – while I have at no point sought to position this inquiry within an address to discourses of urbanisation or urban planning, which intentionally fall outside the aims and scope of this research – aspects of the ideas arising from Jane Jacobs' observations of North American city streets have also been useful here. Lefebvre's definition of urban and social space, as authentic hyper social and hyper complex spaces, is clearly paralleled in the space described by Jacobs in her writings on the society of the sidewalks. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jacobs identifies '[the] point of cities' as 'the multiplicity of choice' (p. 340); and describes its functioning as 'a complex order' (p. 65), rooted in the 'intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city [...] The ballet of the city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations' (1961, p. 64-65). This focus on the generation and understanding of social space both as and through use – as a performed and observable collective actioning of the social – has provided further references within my delineation of the progressively expanding considerations of site, and of the performance of place, articulated across my research.

It is interesting to remark that neither Lefebvre or Jacobs use the term 'public space' within their work. And it is here that I have found myself drawn to the writings of anthropologist Manuel Delgado, and specifically to his investigations

of when and under which theoretical conditions the concept of 'public space' irrupts and becomes central in spatial and political discourses related to ideas of citizenship and democracy. Delgado (2015) argues that, in taking definitions of 'public space' beyond the realm of the social or collective, these discourses have adopted 'public space' to increasingly refer to the material manifestation of ideas such as democracy, consensus, conviviality, etc, in ways that have become loaded with both strong moral and political values – and which have, in turn, then become central to the driving processes of outsourcing, gentrification and theming apparent within the development of many modern European cities. In this context, he argues, 'public space' has come to refer to the material extension of a particular ideological assertion that 'what allows us to constitute the social is the agreement on a set of programmatic principles in which, without being completely forgotten or denied, differences are overcome, and defined separately, within the scenario of the private' (Delgado, 2015, p.30).[26] Defined in this sense, 'public space' might be seen to operate as a mechanism through which power structures and dominant groups can attempt to mask the intrinsic contradictions that sustain 'public space' itself – making it appear as a neutral construct, which can then be accepted by the dominated class (Delgado, 2015, p.34). The assertion of this 'public space', Delgado proposes, 'is therefore a question of dissuading and persuading any dissent, any capacity for contestation or resistance [...] any appropriation considered inappropriate in the street or in the square' (2015, p. 36).[27] An assertion furthered through the disqualification or dis-authorisation of what might previously have been understood as subversive, by reassigning such acts the 'much more subtle denomination of the *antisocial* – that is, what contravenes the abstract principles of 'good citizen coexistence'' (Delgado, 2015, p. 36-37).[28] Ultimately, this idealised construct of 'public space' merely manifests a tendency and

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[26] From the original text in Spanish: '[...] lo que nos permite hacer sociedad es que nos ponemos de acuerdo en un conjunto de postulados programáticos en el seno de las cuales las diferencias se ven superadas, sin quedar olvidadas ni negadas del todo, sino definidas aparte, en ese otro escenario al que llamamos privado' (Delgado, 2015, p. 30).

[27] From the original text in Spanish: 'Se trata, pues, de disuadir y de persuadir cualquier disidencia, cualquier capacidad de contestación o resistencia y [...] cualquier apropiación considerada inapropiada de la calle o de la plaza' (Delgado, 2015, pp. 36).

[28] From the original text in Spanish: 'sino de la mano de la mucho más sutil de *incívico*, o sea, contraventor de los principios abstractos de la "buena convivencia ciudadana"' (Delgado, 2015, pp. 36-37).

aspiration, Delgado points out, that will collapse and succumb to the reality of a society – where 'poverty, marginalisation, discontent, often rage, continue to be part of the public, but understood now as what is there, in full sight, refusing to obey the slogans that condemned it to clandestinity' (2015, p. 50).[29]

Delgado argues that this current use of the term 'public space' within political and urban discourses, while perhaps increasingly prevalent, is antithetical to Lefebvre's proposition of social space and Jacobs' description of the society of the sidewalks (2013, p. 5). Drawing on the earlier works of social scientists Erwin Goffman, Lyn H. Lofland and John Lofland, Delgado suggests that the urban spaces described by Lefebvre and Jacobs find an equivalent in an understanding of 'public space' defined as both the setting and product of relations in public, where the capacity of the social acquires its maximum intensity in order to generate realities made of communication and exchange; and which, importantly, actively include those situations in which these exchanges may take on a contentious and even controversial dimension (2013, p. 3). Public space, in this sense, is then the epitome of social space (Delgado, 2013, p. 3). And, while recognising a contextual tendency for the ranges of encouraged and familiar behaviour to perhaps become increasingly homogenised within the public spaces of our contemporary cities, it is this more fluid and negotiated space of exchange – articulated in the 'social' of Lefebvre and Jacobs – that I refer to through my use of the term 'public space' within this submission.

My focused and critical address to place within this research is undertaken through the development of artistic forms that might themselves be place-making in that they attempt to shape art as a 'state of encounter', as a 'social interstice', that 'models more than represents, and fits into the social fabric more than it draws inspiration therefrom' (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 18) – engaging place, and social space specifically, as a relational construct.[30] Its aim is to contribute to a broadening field of art practice that Miwon Kwon has designated

[29] From the original text in Spanish: 'La pobreza, la marginación, el descontento, no pocas veces la rabia continúan formando parte de lo público, pero entendido ahora como lo que está ahí, a la vista de todos, negándose a obedecer las consignas que lo condenaban a la clandestinidad' (Delgado, 2015, p. 50).

[30] My use of 'place-making' here expands on Mike Pearson's use of the term in his writings on site-specific performance (Pearson, 2010, p. 109).

'site-orientated', to describe approaches and methodologies within the production of public art that employ an expanded engagement of site – in that they include diverse social, cultural, institutional or economic elements within their address to a given locale (2004, p. 24). The practices I will employ engage an understanding of site that extends beyond its role as a host and container for the development and location of art work, and seek instead to propose a focus on the performed nature of place itself. This approach manifests tendencies in located art that have been increasingly recognised in relation to cultural and spatial practices, by scholars such as Nick Kaye (2000) and Alex Coles (2000), and that acknowledge shifts 'from fixity to mobility; from architectonic to peripatetic manifestations; from expositional to relational modes' (Pearson, 2010, pp. 7-8); and from 'the spectacular re-enactment to the quiet intervention, from remedial collaboration to dialogic, open-ended process' (Doherty, 2004, p. 11).

Here I also acknowledge curator and writer Claire Doherty's recent designation of 'situation-specific' public art practices. I do not recognise an intrinsic opposition between situation-specific work and site-specific work, as Doherty seems to imply in her introductory identification of works that '[...] we might term situation specific, rather than site-specific projects' (2009, p. 13). Yet I do appreciate, in her use of the term, the identification of a range of contemporary public art works that may be 'often temporary and interventionist, invariably now performed by individuals other than the artist, mobilising and demanding different kinds of public engagement, [which] often result from a commission, as part of a broader, place-based, scattered-site exhibition' (Doherty, 2009, p. 13); and of how such 'situation-producing works contest a literal reading of the specifics of place as fixed and stable' (Doherty, 2009, p. 13).

In my address to these site-orientated performance practices, I have designated my works within this submission as 'context-specific': to distinguish my intentions and approaches from any engagement of site-specific performance, or for that matter of situation-specific performance, as a genre built on site-responsive devising practices, site-generic staging practice and community involvement; and also to highlight my focus on the broader place and 'taskscape' of their locale, and on the relationships and constructs that define them

(Brookes, 2014). My use of 'taskscape' references anthropologist Tim Ingold's proposition of the term to evoke the array of related activities that people undertake in interaction with their environment – that is, the integration of the spatial and temporal dimensions of landscape with human experience, as a social construct perpetually in process (1993, pp. 152-174). This term is also used by theatre maker and performance theorist Mike Pearson to propose performance as 'a place of work or special moment within landscape' (2010, p. 16), where '[both] "being" and environment are mutually emergent, continuously brought into existence together' (2010, p.16). Furthermore, I define my practices here as 'located', to highlight my 'predominant concern and engagement with context, as both a physical and social landscape' (Brookes, 2014), and to '[draw] attention to the importance of the act of location to the form and function of these performance works, indicating an address to both place and performance within their engagement of site' (Brookes, 2014). In this sense, the works developed within this research consider performance as social inquiry and action, as well as an artistic proposition – attempting to activate new or reconfigured possibilities within the form, function and placement of located performance and live art.

As I have already outlined within the initial section 'Aesthetic Roots' of this chapter, the relationships and constructs engaged by Brookes' and my located work, in situ, as configurations of the place being addressed, are seen as fundamental to the form and functioning of those works themselves. These relationships provide the matter rather than a theme for the work, and the performance of these relationships in context – perhaps reconfigured through the uses and repurposed interactions proposed and enacted by the work – can then be seen to embody rather than simply describe the expanded or additional practices being considered and offered. Importantly, this engagement with use, and with the performed nature of place itself, is also clearly not a representational act – and this is especially apparent within my consistent focus on the identification of forms of located artistic intervention that might actualise and enact the spatial practices they propose. Across the full arc of their development, the works of this submission have not sought to signify or symbolically evoke their intentions, but rather they have aimed to manifest and perform them. And in that performance, the hope has always been that –

through their embodiment in context – other perspectives and configurations of the work's locale might become both apparent and possible.

Here, a useful conceptual frame is provided by the propositions of Jordi Claramonte, within his research on Modal Aesthetics: 'a research about the necessity, the possibility and the effectiveness of artistic production, aesthetic sensitivity and the political articulation of both' (n.d.). Claramonte defines Modal Aesthetics as a collection of 'conceptual tools that may enable us to think [about] both artistic production and aesthetic perception in relational, pragmatic and generative terms, as performative ways of organising both our most extraordinary experiences and our everyday ones' (2009). He proposes that all artistic production and all aesthetic experience can be seen to emerge from the various relationships and tensions between an existing 'repertoire' and the innovative, new and unknown. And here 'repertoire' refers to the already established and recognisable set of forms, practices and relationships within the context addressed. In this sense, art is conceived as a purely contextual practice, in which the main operating units of aesthetic thought and action are the 'modes of relation' that are enabled by each specific work of art in context; where such 'modes of relation' are understood as 'modulations of the different relationships between artists, audience and the milieu in which all of them are situated' (Claramonte, 2009).

The propositional approaches to my public art work within this research aim to shape critical interventions in social space 'in which the viewer is required to act as critic and to engage in [...] a different thinking' (Rendell, 2006, p. 150). Acknowledging Rosalyn Deutsche's writings on public art and spatial practices, the body of work I develop here, in my address to the conceptualisations of place and public space discussed above, aims to develop interventionist rather than integrationist approaches to located art practice. Deutsche proposes that an integrationist approach seeks to erase the contradictions or conflict present in a particular place, promoting an ideology of coherent unity; while interventionist approaches might rather seek to expose and disrupt that coherence (1998, pp. 49-107). The artworks realised within this inquiry, attempt to disrupt and challenge the sense of totality and coherence that the places they address may seem to have acquired; seeking to interrupt and question the

assumed or dominant perspectives and practices from and through which place might be generally considered, imagined or experienced – and to expose the incoherences and fragmentations of place itself. Such attitudes can be seen to fall within the field of approaches that have been notably categorised by Jane Rendell, within her writings on art and architecture specifically, as 'critical spatial practices' – a term that she uses to refer to work that transgresses the limits of its form and 'engages with both the social and the aesthetic, the public and the private' (2006, p.6), and that '[indicates] the interest in exploring [critically] the specifically spatial aspects of interdisciplinary processes or practices that operate between art and architecture' (2006, p.6). Importantly here, these critical and interventionist approaches can be seen to engage an understanding of public space – again echoing Massey, Lefebvre, Jacobs and indeed Delgado – as 'a site of contest, which is to say, fully political' (Deutsche, 2012); and that, 'far from a pregiven entity created for users, is, rather, a space that only emerges from practices by users' (Deutsche, 2012). Deutsche (2012) writes:

> Advocates of public art often seek to resolve confrontations between artists and other users of space through procedures that are routinely described as "democratic". Examples of such procedures are "community involvement" in the selection of works of art or the so-called "integration" of artworks with the spaces they occupy. Leaving aside the question of the necessity for, and desirability of, these procedures, note that to take for granted that they are democratic is to presume that the task of democracy is to settle, rather than sustain, conflict.

Deutsche's theoretical framing of public space can be seen to question understandings of a public art developed through considerations of site and object, as a call for such work to be reconsidered through an engagement with its social functioning – and as asserting a 'concept of public space that is based not on location but on the performance of an operation' (Deutsche, 2012). For Deutsche (2012), public space in this sense:

> [...] can also be defined as a set of institutions where citizens – and, given the unprecedented mixing of foreigners in today's international cities,

hopefully noncitizens – engage in debate; as the space where rights are declared, thereby limiting power; or as the space where social group identities and the identity of society are both constituted and questioned.

Drawing on the work of Claude Lefort, and his positioning of public space at the heart of democracy, Deutsche reasserts the operations of public space as the foundation of public art (1998, pp. 273-274). And in this sphere, she argues, 'public art is an instrument that constitutes a public by engaging people in political discussion or by entering a political struggle. Any site has the potential to be transformed into a public space' (Deutsche, 2012); and adds 'public art is itself a political site – a site, that is, of contests over the meaning of democracy and, importantly, the meaning of the political' (Deutsche, 2012).

In my attempts to further expand my approaches to the activation and performance of social space, I have inevitably been driven to develop increasingly expanded understandings of place and social space itself – understandings that might perhaps engage the wider topography and environment of a locale more overtly and fully. This expanding address to social space, and to the structures and processes of connectivity that might enable it, over perhaps multiple and shifting scales of view and operation, recognises Bruno Latour's assertions that 'society' – or more specifically, what we might consider to constitute 'the social' – could itself be more usefully understood as a performative act. The generation and evolution of the social, in this sense, emerges through the performance of connections; moreover, this social space is not configured as a simple combination of the points or things being connected, but rather through the actioning of connections, and through the act of that connectivity, in and of itself (2005, pp. 34-38). Furthermore, what this connectivity assembles is not merely the heterogeneous collection of those things already involved in 'local interaction', but rather 'the assemblage of all the other local interactions distributed elsewhere in time and space, which have been brought to bear on the scene through the relays of various non-human actors' (Latour, 2005, p. 194):

> [...] once you realize that any human course of action might weave together in a matter of minutes, for instance, a shouted order to lay a

brick, the chemical connection of cement with water, the force of a pulley unto a rope with a movement of the hand, the strike of a match to light a cigarette offered by a co-worker, etc. Here, the apparently reasonable division between material and social becomes just what is obfuscating any enquiry on how a collective action is possible. Provided of course that by collective we don't mean an action carried over by homogeneous social forces, but, on the contrary, an action that collects different types of forces woven together because they are different. This is why, from now on, the word 'collective' will take the place of 'society'.

(Latour, 2005, p. 74)

The 'collective' Latour proposes problematises the idea of the 'social' as constituted by specific elements circumscribed to that category in advanced, challenging understandings of sociology as a discrete field of study, but more importantly of society as a predetermined sphere of activity. In this sense, Latour's collective '[designates] the project of assembling new entities not yet gathered together [...] Any course of action will thread a trajectory through completely foreign modes of existence that have been brought together by such heterogeneity' (2005, p. 74).

Here I might also usefully acknowledge the distinction between 'collective' and 'community' offered by Manual Delgado. Himself drawing on the work of sociologists Durkheim and Halbwachs, Delgado delineates community as a social unit that gathers its members around a particular world view – as an organisational order based on a shared tradition or history, founded on communion, and which promotes both coherence and the production of cohesion (Delgado, 2008). The collective, on the other hand, '[gathers] individuals who are aware of the appropriateness of their co-presence and assume it as a means to an end, which may be simply to survive' (Delgado, 2008).[31] Usefully Delgado highlights the extent to which members of a collective might be seen to share a future more than a past (Delgado, 2008). A collective, he argues, is based on communication, and can organise itself in various forms, at various times, and to

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[31] From the original text in Spanish: 'Lo colectivo, por contra, se asocia con la idea de reunión de individuos que toman consciencia de lo conveniente de su copresencia y la asumen como medio para obtener un fin, que puede ser el de simplemente sobrevivir' (Delgado, 2008).

various ends – although may not assume or be driven by any need to generate a 'crystallised social form and can be satisfied […] with the mere pleasure of existing and with the contemplation of its own existence' (Delgado, 2008).[32]

Faced with a series of ecological challenges, it is becoming increasingly necessary to recognise the broader connections and interactions between human and non-human agents within our lived environment, as well as the influences and interplays active between the immediate and extended landscapes we inhabit. Through the critical spatial practices I develop here, and their focus on the performative nature of place and social space, I have sought to explore how located live art might activate a connective and expanded sense of place, in ways that may ultimately reveal the relevance and potential of the contingency of place for our visioning and understanding of perhaps more ecologically progressive practices. As Verena Andermatt Conley writes, in the introduction of her book *Spatial Ecologies. Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory* (2012, p. 1):

> The spatial turn now curves towards an ethic of living and working collectively on a planet whose habitability seems to be problematic and whose resources are today less abundant than they were three decades ago.

My developing engagement of performance and live art across this inquiry has been further informed by the work of cultural and political theorist, philosophers and ecologists such as Mike Davis (2007), Wes Jackson (2008), as well as Verena Andermatt Conley (2012); and more importantly by Jane Bennett (2010), Felix Guattari (2000), Timothy Morton (2013, 2016, 2017) and also Bruno Latour (2004, 2005). The ecological thinking advanced by these latter authors rejects any discrete definition of the social and the natural, as well as of the human and the nonhuman. The world, they propose, is continually becoming through multiple, diverse, contingent and often unpredictable socio-ecological interactions and relationships with no distinct and foundational 'nature' that

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[32] From the original text in Spanish: '[…] pero que no tiene porqué acabar produciendo ninguna forma social cristalizada y puede conformarse […] por el mero placer de existir y contemplarse existiendo' (Delgado, 2008).

requires or needs to be sustained, and where individual agents and their environments are both perpetually being co-produced and co-evolved (Swyngedouw, 2011). My critical address to place and social space through located context-specific art work focuses specifically on how located live art might palpably connect us to the event of place by performing an expanded sense of that place, and increasingly seeks to understand the specificity of a locale within such an expanded global environment and ecological context. Importantly here, while acknowledging critical discourse on globalisation, I am not seeking to position my approaches within an address to the 'globalisation' of economic and cultural capital, but to highlight my attempts to operate within an expanded address to place, that engages the global, first and foremost, in a literal and planetary sense.

In her own attempts to reimagine place in a more progressive way, Massey (1994, 2005) proposes the development of 'a global sense of place'. On one hand, she tries to challenge conceptualisations of place as 'closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home', as secure retreat' (Massey, 2005a, p. 6); and on the other hand, to question understandings of localities simply as '*produced through globalisation*' (Massey, 2005a, p. 101). Massey (1994, p. 156) suggests that:

> Globalization (in the economy, or in culture, or in anything else) does not entail simply homogenization. On the contrary, the globalization of social relations is yet another source of (the reproduction of) geographical uneven development, and thus of the uniqueness of place. There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations. There is the fact that this very mixture together in one place may produce effects which would not have happened otherwise. And finally, all these relations interact with and take a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of a place, with that history itself imagined as the product of layer upon layer of different sets of linkages, both local and to the wider world.

What Massey argues for here is 'a global sense of the local, a global sense of place' (1994, p. 156) – as an understanding of the nature and 'character' of a place that can only be constructed by actively linking that place to places

beyond (Massey, 1994, p. 156). In this 'linking', and in the resulting attentiveness to a broader interconnectedness, our sense of our own position, and location, perhaps shifts. As perhaps – with an awareness of the geological scale of human agency, 'when we have reached numbers and invented technologies that are on a scale large enough to have an impact on the planet itself' (Chakrabarty, 2009, pp. 206-207) – our understanding of the interplay of our own actions might also change, and therefore our sense of our own agency and responsibility. Judith Butler suggests – challenging presumptions about proximity and distance perhaps present 'in most of the accounts of ethics that we know' (2012, p. 134)) – that cohabitation fosters 'ethical obligations that are global in character and that emerge both at a distance and within relations of proximity' (2012, p. 134); and which depend on the 'limited but necessary reversibility of proximity and distance' (2012, p. 137). In a mediated world, she argues, and despite the intrinsic locatedness of the body, which makes events 'emphatically local' (Butler, 2012, p. 138), 'what is happening "there" also happens in some sense "here", and if what is happening "there" depends on the event being registered in several "elsewheres", then it would seem that the ethical claim of the event takes place always in a "here" and "there" that are in some ways reversible' (Butler, 2012, p. 138). A global recognition and connection may lead to a situation of 'being at once there and here, and in different ways, accepting and negotiating the multilocality and cross-temporality of ethical connections we might rightly call global' (Butler, 2012, p. 138).

Within this expanded view, as I look out and begin to see the wider landscape and environment I stand in, I might also acknowledge an increasing awareness of my own broader ecology and the extent to which:

> Humanity and nonhumanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other. There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore.
> (Bennett, 2010, p. 30)

Helpfully here, philosopher Timothy Morton suggests that this shift of perspective – this shifting of the frame and limits of our environmental

attentiveness – is 'about scale and how humans now find themselves outscaled, caught in and concerned for all kinds of nonhuman place' (2016, p. 27). Morton highlights how this altering of viewpoint, of and from an altered sense of our own position in place, might mark the beginning of a thinking at 'Earth magnitude' (2016, p. 32). At this magnitude of view, he argues, anthropocentric distinctions – including binaries such as 'here versus there, person versus thing, individual versus group, conscious versus unconscious, sentient versus nonsentient, life versus nonlife, part versus whole, and even existing versus nonexistence' (Morton, 2016, p. 32) – no longer matter or at least 'cease to be thin and rigid' (Morton, 2016, p. 32), and as a consequence 'matter amazingly differently' (Morton, 2016, p. 32). 'Ideas like world and here', he adds, 'begin to look not like big abstract concepts but rather small, localized, human flavored' (Morton, 2016, p. 32):

> [...] place has emerged in its truly monstrous uncanny dimension, which is to say its nonhuman dimension. How? Now that the globalization dust has settled and the global warming data is in, we humans find ourselves on a very specific planet with a specific biosphere. It's not Mars. It is planet Earth. Our sense of planet is not a cosmopolitan rush but rather the uncanny feeling that there are all kinds of places at all kinds of scale: dinner table, house, street, neighborhood, Earth, biosphere, ecosystem, city, bioregion, country, tectonic plate [...] So many intersecting places, so many scales, so many nonhumans.
> (Morton, 2016, p. 10)

This consciously planetary, and more broadly ecological, sense of place, can be increasingly seen to inform my approaches to site, and to the performance and performativity of social space inherent to this research. And here I consider the scale of a place, as Latour asserts, not as a fixed hierarchy of operational spheres, but rather as emerging through the operations of acting agents themselves, as they engage and inhabit multiple scales of that place simultaneously (2005, p. 173-204). If, indeed, an 'ecological awareness forces us to think and feel at multiple scales, scales that disorient normative concepts such as "present", "life", "human", "nature", "thing", "thought", and "logic"' (Morton, 2016, p. 159) – such an awareness might also foster approaches

and expectations that begin to unfold and operate across the fuller extent of their locale in ways that could begin to both acknowledge and engage the broader reach and multiplicity of the 'local', and of the 'here', and of what constitutes 'us'. As my understandings and aspirations expand across this inquiry – about how, and ultimately where, my approaches to interventional public art work might more fully operate and locate themselves – my practical considerations of the multiple scales and constituents of place, and of the performative acts and structures of connectivity that might allow an attentiveness and proximity between constituents at distance, might usefully be seen to become similarly expanded.

1.4: LINES OF INQUIRY

The performative strategies developed and articulated through this inquiry, which I have titled *Close encounters with an overwhelmed present: Performing an expanded sense of place*, investigate how artistic interventions into public space might not only highlight and reframe aspects of the set of social and physical circumstances operating within a site in the present, but how such interventions might themselves perform and come to constitute a social space. A critical and self-reflective social space, where the contingency of place, and its inherent processes of change and adaptation, might become apparent. As previously detailed, this investigation critically reconsiders and expands a set of artistic intentions and concerns, that I have identified as the origins and impetus for this research. It is then undertaken through my focus exploration of three distinct yet symbiotic lines of inquiry.

In building directly on the evaluations and reassessments that constitute the opening face of this submission, the initial thread of my research here considers how the activation of previous or possible alternative configurations of a place, brought together in juxtaposition with uses and understandings of that place in the present, might itself generate event-specific critical situations, and asks:

- How might the concurrent performance of multiple and alternative uses of a specific place in the present generate new event-specific critical social situations in situ?

The second line of my inquiry considers the mechanisms of such a juxtaposition in more detail, and explores how we might engage absent elements and occurrences as active and defining components in our construction of place – that is, as active constituents in our shaping of the here and now, as absences that exist and operate in the present, asking:

- To what extent might currently absent uses of a place be seen to define it, and how might such actively absent agents be engaged and revealed in the present?

The third and final thread of this inquiry then reconsiders and expands the limits of my address to site itself, exploring the roles of scale and proximity within our performance and navigation of place across a wider landscape of topographical and environmental interactions, and posits the question:

- How might the nature and scale of our performed use of a place be expanded to inhabit and consider wider landscapes and environments of that place?

At its foundations, the inquiry of this submission is rooted in an engagement with artistic action and with the performance of place. This engagement was initiated and provoked through questions arising from the initial public art works realised within mine and Brookes' long-term *Just a little bit of history repeating* artistic project. It is expanded here, and across the subsequent series of located artworks realised within the arc of this research, to propose artistic action as the focal point and catalyst for social meetings or personal encounters in public space. From its origins, the series of public works through which I articulate this research have aimed to shape and facilitate such social encounters as situations within an active and succinct artistic engagement with the present. This aim has been rooted in a recognition of how the spaces that we live and work within are defined and understood through our use of them – engaging the choices and assumptions that might currently shape those understandings, and exploring how a critical awareness of those assumptions might refresh our views of the present and inform our possible futures. The public and participatory events that have resulted from this research examine ways in which we might use the activation of previous and alternative uses of a given site as a 'lens' to refresh our vision of that place as it is performed in the present. These works – as they are expanded across the consecutive developments of this inquiry – are manifested in the activation of those now absent alternatives, in the social gatherings their activation provokes, and in the refreshed perspectives of a place that are revealed through the resulting in situ meetings with traces and consequences of the choices that have helped to shape that place.

These works explicitly seek to engage those things that we might choose, individually and collectively, to do and not do, to acknowledge and disregard, within our performance of the sites of our daily lives. In doing this, my practical research work across the inquiry of this submission asks how previous or absent events and architectures might be brought into juxtaposition with the present to highlight our current choices and behaviours. Importantly, this practice seeks to propose and develop ways in which such now absent elements of a place might be reactivated in situ without simulation or enactment – seeking forms for the activation of these alternative uses that might allow them to be simply performed, rather than interpreted and represented. This research seeks to more fully explore and articulate my artistic engagement of the performed nature of place, to develop new practices and strategies for live art intervention into public space – practices through which such interventional artworks might evolve as critical and self-reflective social situations within the present and daily functioning of a place, and within which we might both reveal and reconsider our individual and collective performance of place.

1.4.1: PERFORMANCE OF AND AS PLACE

The initial exploratory thread within my inquiry asks:

- How might the concurrent performance of multiple and alternative uses of a specific place in the present generate new event-specific critical social situations in situ?

In my address to this question I engage artistic performance as an event-specific situation, and consider the ways in which the act of that performance might itself be place-making. The forms and procedures of artistic intervention developed through this specific inquiry are perhaps most usefully recognised as the performed embodiments of a network or constellation of choices and behaviours, proposed through the act of the work. Considered as place, the situation of the performed work might simultaneously establish and engage a

multiplicity of possible relationships, through the reflections and negotiations that the activation of such relationships may provoke and require. In this sense – rather than being engaged simply as a mechanism to explore or discuss a set of alternative possibilities – the performance of these artistic interventions seeks to open up, and temporarily sustain, those possibilities within the context of a defined locale in the present. Through these performed interventions – and again acknowledging notions of 'heterotopia' previously referenced within the 'Spatial Frames' of this chapter – the work then attempts to simultaneously bring into being, within a single real place, different or even contradictory practices and understandings. These diverse practices might then be brought together without conflict or hierarchy; and in ways that might necessitate an active navigation of the multiplicity of both their human and non-human components, within our understandings of the 'here' and 'there', and of the 'now' and 'then'.

This initial root thread of my inquiry aims to expand performative understandings of how the overt superimposition of previous or alternative configurations of a place, onto current manifestations of that place in the present, might bring into being alternative sets of choices and behaviours. It considers how the juxtaposition of different temporalities and modes of social behaviour, and the frictions and tensions at play within the gap that opens up between different components within such a dialectical superimposition, might itself come to constitute a place. These considerations explore how artistic acts might be purposefully constructed to both open and then occupy that gap in order to perform new event-specific situations, as a social space and site of critical artistic operation. The aesthetic events resulting from this research have sought to invite a reorientation of our received and experiential understandings of place, to reorganise our relationships with our surroundings, and to reconsider our behaviour. Importantly here, the practices developed through this first and fundamental line of my inquiry specifically question how the activation of other uses or architectures, within the practices and physical constituents of a site in the present, might allow a new place to emerge and be performed. This question explores how, within the performance of such an emergent and event-specific place – where the absent and present are brought into focus and made to operate explicitly simultaneously – new meanings and practices might be both recognised and enacted.

These initial approaches and considerations are further discussed and referenced throughout the text of this submission, but are most specifically and fully expanded in Chapter Two 'Greetings from Salina' in relation to the first practical phase of this inquiry, undertaken in Salina USA, and within my descriptions and assessment of the resulting public art work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013) in particular.

1.4.2: THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE

The second line of my inquiry explores the mechanisms engaged within my superimposition of absent and present constituents of a place in more detail, and considers how we might engage absent elements and occurrences as active and defining components in our construction of place. Here I ask:

- To what extent might currently absent uses of a place be seen to define it, and how might such actively absent agents be engaged and revealed in the present?

This perhaps pivotal thread of my research considers how particular absent elements of our locale might be recognised as active constituents in our shaping of the here and now, as absences that exist and operate in the present. My investigation here focuses on how we might highlight and work with those absences directly as agents that might actively influence and shape our experience and use of a place, as much as any other element perhaps more obviously present there.

It is important to clarify that my considerations here explore how we might shape context-specific interventions and social meetings that engage such absences as active agents in our experience of a place, in the present specifically. This approach is intentionally focused on the present absence of a particular element or occurrence, and not on that element's possible or

apparent occupation of a given site at another time. The intention of the work is not to find ways to evoke or bring back now lost or missing things. My aim is not to consider what this work might reveal about the past; neither is it my intention to consider how that past might be contested, rewritten, retold, or renegotiated. This research, instead, considers how we might shape artistic interventions that highlight and bring into focus the current configuration of choices and possibilities that shape a place – acknowledging how our performance of that place might be defined as much by 'what is not happening here' as by 'what is'. This approach intentionally foregrounds the transient and inevitably changing nature of our performance of the 'now', and does so by overtly re-emphasising one of the now absent possibilities that currently inform the way our 'now' is understood and lived – making the absence of that particular constituent apparent and visibly active within the current configuration of uses and choices at play there.

This second key thread of my inquiry is perhaps then most usefully understood as an engagement of our performance and understanding of the present in the present. As such, the works of artistic intervention developed here aim to visibly avoid strategies and procedures of dramatisation or re-enactment, and intentionally do not seek to position themselves within discourses concerning heritage or nostalgia. These works do not seek to engage absent or past narratives in order to activate contested histories or understandings within a site but rather attempt to work with the multiplicity of a place, spatially and temporarily, to bring the current configuration of possibilities that shape it into focus, through a non-hierarchical interplay between alternatives that the site currently embodies. Through an engagement of selected absent aspects of a site, I aim to reactivate the contingency of place, and to refresh an awareness of the multiplicity of performed relationships and understandings that configured that site in the present. At their root, the concerns and approaches arising from this second thread of my inquiry aim to reveal the ever-shifting nature of place itself, and the extent to which its processes of evolution – through the interplay of perpetual shifts and variants within our collective performance of it – can become disregarded and invisible within our daily navigation and lived experience of the present.

These considerations and approaches are most fully discussed in Chapter Three 'Providence', where they are expanded in relation to the residency and project work in Providence USA – and where they are detailed within my descriptions and assessments of the public art works *Historic Parking Lots / Introduced Birdsong* (2013), and then *Providence Cove Walk* (2013), most specifically.

1.4.3: PROXIMITY AT SCALE

Through my development of this research, across the two key lines of exploration outlined above, a third question emerges:

- How might the nature and scale of our performed use of a place be expanded to inhabit and consider wider landscapes and environments of that place?

This final thread of my research further expands and consolidates my considerations of how interventional public art work might itself be constituted as a critical situation and event-specific place, and of our artistic activation of significantly and currently absent elements within our constitution and performance of that place. This leads me to a further and more focused consideration of the wider operational limits and reach of such an event and place. Across the research and public art works realised within the initial two practical phases of this inquiry, in Salina and Providence, USA, and across my subsequent assessment and reconsiderations of that work, issues of scale become increasingly significant in my further development of the propositions and functioning of these approaches.

This third line of exploration has sought to expand my approaches and address to site itself, within the interventions proposed and performed through this research, and to further consider the possible scale and boundaries – and also form – of their operation. Here I consider the scale of place engaged and also performed by the work, and ask how – rather than focusing its proposition through the reconfiguration of a single specific geographical position or

architectural host, as a possible exemplar of the uses and understandings being considered – the work might more fully occupy and perform the wider landscape and environment it addresses. This question provides a focus for the final phase of this research, and for the resulting developments and further expansion of my approaches, as they are ultimately manifested and tested through our realisation of the public art work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016).

Through this address to scale I ask how we might expand the perspective and viewpoint provided within the situation of the work, as well as directly expanding the scale of place that the work performs. These issues and intentions not only raise considerations of how we might shape an artistic intervention to operate across the wider landscape of its context, but also raise questions about how such a work might itself expand and re-delineate the limits of that context – through the apparent reach of its expanded performance, across the full site of its wider operations. Across the third and final practical phase of this research specifically, I further interrogate the fundamental functioning of the critical situations our work here aims to perform in order to shape new forms for their performance that might allow us to configure succinct and self-reflective social situations over increased distances, and at multiple scales. And ultimately here, I further consider the role of proximity in our performance of these situations, and ask how the work might allow and encourage the necessary experiential attentiveness, perhaps more usually assumed to rely on physical co-presence and spatial closeness, at increasing distances, over multiple sites, and across connections where the necessary interactions are in some way mediated.

My engagement and assessment of these considerations of scale and proximity are expanded in Chapter Three 'Providence', where they are initially detailed in relation to our performance of the participatory public art work *Providence Cove Walk*. The resulting approaches are then further discussed in Chapter Four 'A Grey Line', in relation to their articulation across the final phase of this research, and across our development and performance of the interventional broadcast work *Grey Line [Twilight]*.

CHAPTER 2: GREETINGS FROM SALINA

A data CD of accompanying material is included to provide clarifying examples and additional contextual support for my descriptions and discussions of the public work detailed within this chapter.

This disc is provided within the disc box: ***Accompanying material for Chapter 2: Greetings from Salina*** – and is itself labelled: ***Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)***

The disc contains selected fragments and documentational traces of the work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013), and includes the initial file: ***00 disc contents.pdf*** – which provides a full list of the disc's contents, as well as a descriptive outline of each included item.

Please open the file: ***00 disc contents.pdf*** contained on disc: ***Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*** – and familiarise yourself with the range of materials made available on the disc.

Please then feel free to access and further explore the individual items of this accompanying material as they become relevant within your reading of the following text of this chapter.

In 2013 I was awarded a residency by Salina Art Center in Salina, Kansas, USA, to develop – in collaboration with Mike Brookes – a new context-specific artwork

within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project. During the autumn of that year, we spent six weeks undertaking research and fieldwork within the city of Salina, which resulted in the realisation of a participatory artwork that we called: *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013). The work focused on the area around the principal central intersection of Santa Fe and Iron Avenues, the crossroads where the city originated in 1858, and from where all addresses within the city are numbered (Douglass, 2013, p.14). As with previous incarnations of the project, the work proposed an engagement with aspects of the city's past and present – in this case, as both a playful exploration of the shifting character of downtown Salina, and an attempt to generate a tangible trace and record of the people we met there (Brookes and Casado, 2013).[33]

Salina has a population of nearly 50,000 people and is situated in the centre of the state of Kansas, at the junction of two major interstates (City of Salina, 2015). It is the administrative centre of Saline County – a semi-urban community, located in the geologic Smoky Hills region of North Central Kansas, in the Great Plains; and has traditionally been a regional manufacturing and trade centre for the great middle-west. Salina was founded west of the Sixth principal meridian,[34] which then represented the border between Euro-American settlements and the Native American peoples living on the Great Plains. Significantly, Salina was located near to the Santa Fe Trail,[35] and on a proposed route of the transcontinental Pacific Railroad (Douglass, M. C., 2013, p.7).

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[33] See the full descriptions of the previous incarnations of this project work already detailed in Chapter One section 'Origins', pp. 43-58.

[34] 'The Sixth Principal Meridian [...] is a north/south line used to survey several states [...] The meridian was established in 1855 in order to survey the newly created territories of Nebraska and Kansas. Surveyors started where the 40th degree of latitude met the Missouri River, and headed west to establish the baseline [...] So the Initial Point was set there, and the meridian established north and south. The baseline was eventually extended west, and became the state line between Nebraska and Kansas' (The Center For Land Use Interpretation, n.d.).

[35] The Santa Fe Trail was a transportation route that connected the Great Plains with New Mexico. Opened by the Spanish settlers at the end of the 18th century – who tapped into an already existing interdependent trade route between the people of the Texas panhandle and the Great Plains (Santa Fe Trail Association, 2017). This route was later used by the Americans in the 19th century (Santa Fe Trail Association, 2017). The route crossed the southwest of North America connecting Franklin, Missouri with Santa Fe, New Mexico; and, at the end of the century, was supplanted by a railroad train built by the Union Pacific Railroad (Santa Fe Trail Association, 2017).

Although it was barely established when the American Civil War started, Salina grew rapidly once the war finished. In April 1867, the Kansas Pacific Railroad arrived at Salina, connecting the town with eastern markets in the state; and between the end of the nineteenth century and WWI, Salina quickly became a manufacturing, retail, wholesale and milling industries centre (Douglass, 2013, p.8-9). In 1908, the Salina Commercial Club wrote:

> During the evening our streets are truly metropolitan, with countless electric lights radiantly spelling the names of enterprising citizens [...] Salina is the market town of the middle west, the natural jobbing center for distributing merchandise of all kinds, and is already recognised as the logical point for serving the enterprising middle-west territory [...] Salina occupies the most important position as a jobbing center, and the years to come will unquestionably develop it to a magnitude second to none.

Through my preparatory research into Salina and its surroundings I had hoped to build an initial understanding of the context in which we were going to be living and working across the six week period of our commissioned research residency there. The city itself would be the youngest urban landscape that I had attempted to engage within my artistic intervention work, and also the furthest west that I had ever traveled within the US. While the images and descriptions I came across within my planning were at least partially recognisable – from narrative and representational images of similar places in films and news coverage from the US and Australia – I was conscious of the extent to which the reality they represented remained tangibly beyond my experiential knowledge. Throughout my initial research I was aware of how little real sense I had of what living within such a town might be like in its daily actuality, or of how its social spaces and rules of social behaviour might function. And ultimately, prior to my arrival in Salina, this research had not resulted in any concrete personal understanding of how Salina might function or feel as either a social environment or residency context.

As is usually the case when embarking on a located process, my imaginings and expectations of precisely how the work that Mike Brookes and I would make within this context might take shape were limited. Although it was clear to me

that – to further the root intentions of the wider *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, and to appropriately maintain and develop the approaches that we were attempting to propose through it – we might usefully acknowledge, and overtly operate within, our uncertainty and unfamiliarity with this particular social context from the outset.[36] Within our working practices, as we had developed them across the previous decade of our collaboration, we have always tried to recognise and challenge our own assumptions, seeking to shape each instance of the work from our particular intentions within each locale, and not through any formal or procedural preconceptions. Our development of work within Salina, and of the propositional developments of the project as a whole, was clearly going to be helped by a further reevaluation of the working methods that we had previously used. The work could not rely on our existing knowledge of any particular strategy, technique or methodology, but rather would need to allow for the development of new approaches and strategies. The work, then, might most usefully embrace our initial sense of unfamiliarity, and seek to actively encourage an ongoing and interactive process of learning and adapting in context. Ultimately, the balance between the working strategies that we had previously developed across the project, and this new and unknown context, was to provide us with a new set of creative and productive tensions. The development within my understandings of the root strategies and functions of the work, as we expand them across our work in Salina, would result from our navigation of these tensions.

On arriving in Salina, and beginning the initial exploratory research of our residency period there, we found that it was the unfamiliar functioning and character of the streets and exterior urban spaces of the city centre that most directly and tangibly challenged the methods and strategies that we had previously developed across the initial faces of this project work.[37] Pedestrian and social use of these exterior spaces within the centre of Salina seemed largely absent. There was no active network of shops, bars and restaurants that sustained and animated social use of the city centre on a daily basis. These

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[36] See Chapter One section 'Origins' pp. 44-48, for my previous descriptions of our root intentions and approaches within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project.

[37] Again, see Chapter One section 'Origins', pp. 48-58, for my previous descriptions of the strategies employed within *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* and *Euskalduna Shipyards,* the two initial works within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project.

differences were particularly apparent to us within the downtown central area of the city where we were living and working, and where the commissioning gallery was also located.

The architecture of the city's central downtown streets did not encourage their use by pedestrians: there were no trees, shades or shelters within the central streets; there were no public squares or pedestrian areas. Salina's downtown region still includes most of the traditional functions of urban central areas such as cultural, government, health and corporate centres. Yet, the increasing decentralisation of the town's commercial activity through the construction of suburban shopping centres since the 1950s, coupled with the progressive disappearance of the city's flour milling industry, has resulted in a conspicuous lack of pedestrian presence and activity there, even within working hours. A trend perhaps inseparable from that of the increasingly intensive and systemic car use, with not only food outlets but also banks within the area now being 'drive through'.

This apparent lack of social activity and engagement most usefully problematised the intentions of our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, challenging both the formal assertions and artistic strategies of its previous manifestations. In the artistic interventions *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) in Weymouth and *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011) in Bilbao, we had consciously proposed artistic action as the focal point and catalyst for social meetings or personal encounters in public space. Importantly here, I had come to recognise the extent to which we were considering public space as both the sphere and material location for the potential gathering proposed and sustained by such works. I recognised the extent to which these works had intentionally operated within the daily pedestrian activities of their locale, and had been overtly placed and activated within the street-level public spaces of their urban context. Our work in Weymouth and Bilbao had favoured, and intervened directly into, pedestrian views and uses of their chosen sites. These works had sought, at least primarily, to engage and be engaged by individuals standing and walking within familiar street-level public environments, allowing for the casual encounters of passers-by to occur amongst those of more targeted participants,

while also allowing those encounters to recognise the event of the work as simply one more layer of transient use within its public site.

These interventions into the pedestrian view and use of a locale had clearly led us to favour particular types of places for the work – such as public streets, squares and parks. Yet I had come to recognise that these choices were not necessarily to do with specific features of the chosen places in and of themselves, but rather had arisen from an understanding of how these places, and the uses and behaviours they already supported, could readily allow the social spaces activated through our intervention. Within the public streets and parks of a locale, and amongst the pedestrians that used them, the social spaces and propositions of the work could be directly performed and contextualised as another possible layer of public use. While the daily situations and activities into which they intervened might also predispose other users of the locale to meet such additional layers as simply another event or element of the place.

In this sense, the interventions into public space proposed by *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* in Weymouth and *Euskalduna Shipyards* in Bilbao considered and sought to engage their public spaces as hyper social contexts, where highly efficiently coordinated micro-processes, most of them casual and trivial as Jane Jacobs suggests, happen simultaneously – ignoring, supporting or contesting each other, integrating or interfering with each other. These works engaged the streets, parks and squares that they operated within as spaces where 'large and microscopic events, established and marginalised behaviours, monotonies and surprises, the mundane and the exceptional, the vulgar and the mysterious, continuities and mutations, the indispensable and the superfluous, certainties and adventures still mix' (Delgado, 2013).[38] With both *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* and *Euskalduna Shipyards* Mike Brookes and I had sought to re-frame already existing and active social spaces, perhaps unbalancing and intensifying our recognition and understanding of those spaces through the activation of additional layers of use within them. While, in Salina – and in contrast with the past images and narratives that we had found through our research, which

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[38] From the original text in Spanish: 'Allí, en ellas, siguen mezclándose acontecimientos grandes o microscópicos, conductas pautadas y comportamientos marginales, monotonías y sorpresas, lo anodino y lo excepcional, lo vulgar o lo misterioso, permanencias y mutaciones, lo indispensable y lo superfluo, las certezas y la aventura' (Delgado, 2013).

documented the activity and thriving businesses of the area in previous periods – such social space, as Delgado describes it, did not currently seem to exist within the streets of the city centre.

The functioning and social character of downtown Salina would clearly require us to explore the project's intentions in a different way, in that we recognised the need to relax and reassess some of the previous formal assertions of the work, in order to explore its intentions within the social reality of this new context. We understood that adapting our approaches would require compromises within both the conceptual and formal strategies that we had developed across previous manifestations of the project; and that the tensions between our intentions and those compromises would be key to the realisation of the work in Salina. We had quickly recognised that the context provided by this residency commission would not readily support a further discursive and propositional exploration of the established form of the work – as an intervention into public space built on a reshaping and re-purposing of an already active and existing social space through addition or subtle alteration. But, importantly, it would clearly allow – and even necessitate – us to focus on an exploratory reassessment and development of aspects of the fundamental functioning of such an intervention, as a social situation in its own right.

Mike Brookes and I had begun our work in Salina from the same conceptual intentions and formal premises as the works in Weymouth and Bilbao. We had sought to shape an aural intervention into an existing social space within the public spaces of Salina, with the intention of creating a critical situation that activated the tensions between the past and present understandings of a significant local site within the city – significant, that is, for those who used and inhabited the chosen locale. In our archival research, and through the conversations we engaged in with various city residents, the central downtown area was recurrently referenced – and more precisely, the crossroads between Santa Fe and Iron avenues, where the first Euro-American settlers had established Salina – as a key site within the identity and cultural narrative of the city. When asked to suggest or highlight places of personal relevance or meaning, residents would often point to this crossroads, as symbolic of the origins of Salina. Some referred to a commemorative plaque that had been

placed on one of the intersection's buildings, marking it as the first and original settlement of the city. Their descriptions and memories of the area appeared often then related to ideas of authenticity, belonging, identity and aspiration. Notably, the settlement and initial buildings that established this crossroads seemed to have come to represent a beginning point for both the personal and wider historical narrative of many residents.

Interestingly for us, however loaded this site may have become within the historical narratives and identity of Salina, it seemed to conspicuously lack any active social role within the daily social functioning of the city in the present. As the intersection of two of the city's main arterial road routes, it functioned primarily as a familiar street junction, that people simply drove through. We were immediately struck by the notable lack of pedestrian presence and use of the area, and by the almost complete disregard of the place as an everyday social space. Consequentially, these tensions, between received ideas and understandings of the area and the reality of its daily use, became the focus of our residency. By focusing on the intersection of Santa Fe and Iron avenues specifically, as the site of our work within the city, we hoped to engage both these relationships to the area simultaneously – to create a critical situation in which both the symbolic meaning and its daily reality might become simultaneously apparent. By expanding and adapting our previous approaches we hoped to engage the tensions between this place's two contrasting realities, and to generate a new event-specific place from which we might then begin to problematise, imagine and question the performance of this site in the present.

Until this point, we had always developed and performed our considerations of a place in situ, activating the work directly within the site and social spaces that it addressed. In this particular instance, we had chosen to work with a site that lacked the usual preexisting levels of social activity and engagement. In this case, rather than reframing an already active social space, we understood that the work we were to perform within Salina would also need to create and sustain its own social space. That is to say, the work would first need to propose and perform a context within which locals could choose to gather and engage, while then focusing that gathering in such a way that an existing other place

within Salina – in this case the crossroads of Santa Fe and Iron avenues – could be reframed and re-considered by those present.

The key questions for me, within this specific new phase of the work, had become about how to engage and activate a place that lacks existing social engagement within its site, and how we might then shape and perform a separate reflective social space from within which we could directly consider another site or wider locale at distance. More specifically still, my questions here became focused on how an artistic intervention might itself come to constitute a social space.

During our residency in Salina, we based ourselves within a large warehouse studio space a block away from the Santa Fe and Iron intersection. Over the development period of our work there we operated with, as much as possible, an open door policy – inviting people to pass by and visit the studio, and to spend time with us to question or contribute to the project. This allowed us to begin to establish the studio as a meeting place from the outset; where experiences, stories and memories of Salina could be informally shared and discussed. In this way the studio became not only our working space, but also a social and focal space for those engaging with the project.

One of the local residents who visited the open studio, after an initial conversation about the development and changing architecture of the city centre, decided to return with his extensive personal collection of historic postcards of Salina – and to leave the collection with us within the studio, for the remainder of our residency work there. As a result of that and subsequent conversations, arising directly from the images and information provided by that source material, we began to shape a work built on an engagement with period postcard images of the centre of the city. And, in response to the lack of daily social engagement with public spaces within the surrounding city centre streets, we decided to further develop our studio space as the site and social hub of the event of that work. Our host, Salina Art Center, had already established a convention of scheduled open studio gatherings as part of their ongoing Artist-in-Residence programme, as well as a monthly series of fundraising socials and tours by local arts and educational institutions. We expanded and inserted our

own public interactions into these existing activities, and used their existing conventions and social structure to frame and schedule the public moments of our ongoing project work.

Image 2.1 One of twenty digitised historic postcard images engaged within the work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013). The image shows a view north on Santa Fe Avenue, from between Iron and Walnut Street, circa 1970; and was used as the press and publicity image for the work. A higher resolution copy of this image is included as file: *01 press image [colour version].jpg* – on disc: *Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*.

The work Mike Brookes and I finally proposed engaged postcard images of the downtown streets of Salina, and drew elements of its initial formal strategies from our previous participatory *Something happening / Snapshots* works.[39] The proposed work selected and presented twenty postcards, dating between 1905 and 1975, that recorded street views from within a one block radius of the intersection between Santa Fe and Iron avenues; and was titled *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* – a phrase taken directly from the text of one of those original postcards. These twenty historic street scene images were digitised and enhanced to allow for their large-scale projection, and a single

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[39] See Chapter One 'Aesthetic Roots', pp. 33-36, for a description and further details of this project.

human figure-shaped void was placed and opened up within each individual image. In addition, a new version of each scene was photographed – recreating the camera position and angle of the original – to provide a contrasting image set that detailed the street views captured by these twenty historic postcard images as they now appeared in the present.

Further to our explorations across this project as a whole, our primary intention within this iteration of the work was to facilitate a reflection on the choices and changes that had come to shape current uses and understandings of the area. Here, we chose to structure an event around the generation of a new series of personalised postcards of the area. We sought to simultaneously foreground the changes within the city centre, while also highlighting the collective of individual participants who engaged in our consideration of those changes. The defining strategy of the work would be the accumulation of these individual contributions, and the collective process of realising the resulting collection of new personal postcards generated through that engagement. We understood that we would need to gather a critical mass of public engagement in order for the event of the work to function; and so, an open public call for participants made through a series of local radio and newspaper features – specifically inviting people currently within the city to come to the studio and help us to produce a new series of one hundred personalised postcards of Salina – became part of the process and structure of the work.
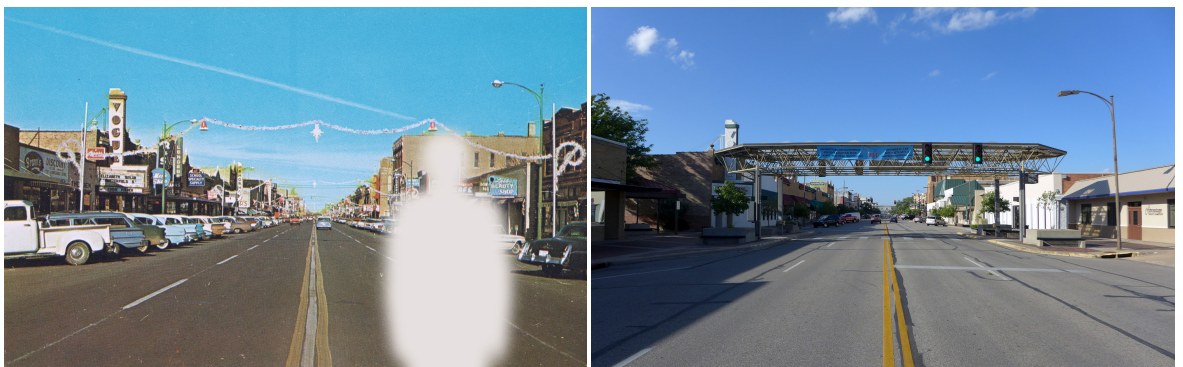
Images 2.2 and 2.3 One of the series of image pairs projected within the work, here showing a view of Santa Fe Avenue recorded in a 1960s postcard against the same view shot in 2013. Salina, Kansas, USA. Image and photo by: Mike Brookes, 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image sets from which they are taken, are included in folders: ***03 period postcard street views [projected image series 01]*** and ***04 contemporary street views [projected image series 02]*** respectively – on disc: ***Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013).***

Ultimately, over a four-day period from October 1st to 4th 2013, the responding one hundred local residents entered our large, and now largely empty, ground floor warehouse studio space in central downtown Salina. These visits were timed between early evening and dusk, as the late summer sunlight that flooded the studio throughout the day began to fade. Visitors entered to find the interior space now lit by only the remaining ambient light from outside – that filtered into the space through the street level windows that stretched the full width of its facade – and two large photographic image projections, being thrown directly up onto opposing walls of the studio. These image projections sat directly opposite each other within the space, were identical in size and format, and were produced by a matching pair of projectors positioned informally on either side of a large circular table that stood in the centre of the studio floor. This table also supported two laptop computers, that were visibly the source of the projected images, and an array of other personal items – including notes and source material, bottles of water, and a digital stills camera.

Image 2.4 and 2.5 Performance stills recording views within the event of the work: the first showing a resident selecting one of the historic postcard images, and the second capturing their attempt to place themselves within that image. Salina Art Center, Salina Kansas, USA. Photos by: Glory Benacka (Salina Art Center), 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *05 performance event images* – on disc: *Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*.

The mirroring pair of large projections that now defined the informal studio space both provided a cycling set of twenty photographic images – one displaying twenty familiar views of the nearby city centre streets in the present, the second displaying those same street views as detailed in the selected postcard

images from the past – each of these past postcard scenes containing a single blank white figure-shaped void, that now implied an absent or removed person within their image. This figure-shaped void provided a blank 'hole' within each image, creating an area left free of image detail, where participants could insert themselves into the projected scene – while also being lit by the same light source as the rest of the projection, further unifying them visually into the image.

Images 2.6 and 2.7 Performance stills recording views within the event of the work: the first showing a resident selecting one of the historic postcard images, and the second capturing their attempt to place themselves within that image. Salina Art Center, Salina Kansas, USA. Photos by: Glory Benacka (Salina Art Center), 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *05 performance event images* – on disc: *Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*.

Across the course of these informal evening gatherings, people were individually invited to select a historic view of their choice, and then to attempt to complete the scene by placing themselves within that image – moving and being directed around the floor space in front of the projected image, until they had positioned themselves as accurately within the void left by the image's apparently absent figure as possible. As we had anticipated and intended, this positioning process provided the defining character and point of engagement with the work. Individuals, engaged in their attempt to position themselves within their chosen image, were unable to assess their exact position from within the image itself – and would call upon those observing their attempt to guide them. The resulting event was then defined by these interactions with and within the gathered crowd of fellow locals, as they playfully directed and advised each other in turn,

through each individual's navigation and completion of the task. As each individual participant found their position – to the satisfaction of the observing crowd – they, and the projected backdrop that they had chosen to occupy, were rephotographed, to create a new and personalised version of that postcard image. The image was then reprinted as a new postcard – ultimately, for its maker and subject to have as a souvenir. As new postcards were realised and printed they were added to the growing collection that visibly accumulated along one wall of the work space – providing both a direct visual trace of the task around which the work was developing and a clear demonstration of the functioning of that task for new visitors. Once completed, the resulting set of one hundred and five new postcards was moved and exhibited within the art centre gallery – remaining on display there for the subsequent two months, after which time each postcard could be claimed by the people recorded in it.

Image 2.8 Performance still recording a view within the event of the work, and which details the already realised and printed new personal postcards accumulating, and being viewed, on the wall of the space. Salina Art Center, Salina Kansas, USA. Photo by: Glory Benacka (Salina Art Center), 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, are included in folder: *05 performance event images* – on disc: *Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*.

Importantly here, and as I explain in Chapter One, in the section 'Aesthetic Roots', as Mike Brookes and I conceive and understand this proposition, the work is the situation generated by the gathering and engagement of the people present in the event – however they engage and in whatever way the event unfolds. That is to say, the work is the constellation of objects, behaviours, material and immaterial relationships that emerge and become possible through the act of the work. In this sense, the work becomes manifest in the doing of it, in how the people gathered navigate and perform that situation; and 'directly engages with the things that we, individually and collectively, choose to do and not do, make and not make, and with the consequences and physical traces of those choices' (p. 35). More specifically, in understanding the reality of this particular instance of the work, it is important to reiterate that the series of images and postcards that resulted from its performance should not be considered as the purpose, or sole object, of the work. Ultimately, these photos are a trace of the act of the work, and not the work itself – the resulting postcards manifesting merely a physical trace of the situation of the work, and of the strategies structured to evoke and sustain that situation. It is that social situation itself, as it emerges from the different ways in which those present choose to navigate and function within its invitation, that consciously constitutes both the purpose and object of the work.

These informal open-studio sessions, over the four consecutive days of the public generation of this image series, saw our studio space become increasingly inhabited – with repeated visitors often simply dropping in to enquire about the ongoing process, or to offer refreshments, or to meet with others they had heard would be participating. The place and event of the work then being defined as much by these social groupings and interactions, which arose around its edges, as by the task and invitation at its centre. A place constituted as much by those who had come only to spectate on our activities, or to talk, or to explore the rolling image projections that fixed and juxtaposed specific views onto the nearby and familiar streets outside, as by those accompanying friends in their attempt to more overtly participate within the invitation of the work.

I recognised that these informal gatherings functioned as a social and socialising space; where individuals came together, and were invited to consider their own

locale. This collective space appeared to embrace and invite different ways of being and engaging, as a mechanism through which we could be together and consider, individually and collectively, who we are and what we do – shifting our attention, in a playful way, from received meanings to visible uses of those streets. Conversations that arose within the room of the event, and which I was personally part of, included discussions about how much more colourful the streets appeared within the postcard images dating from 1960s and 1970s – catalysing a conversation about how past urban policies, in a local attempt to unify the look of the city centre, had removed all the commercial signage from the streets. While others remembered how busy the area had been in the weekend evenings prior to that period, with young people 'cruising' these central streets, both on foot and in their cars – commenting also on the current lack of restaurants within the city, and on the extent to which their air-conditioned cars were now the only comfortable way to move around the shadeless downtown streets in the summer heat.

Images 2.9 and 2.10 Two of the one hundred and five new personalised postcards generated within the work: the first including a view north on Santa Fe Avenue from Walnut Street circa 1940, the second a view south on Santa Fe Avenue postmarked 1908. Salina Art Center, Salina Kansas, USA. Photos by: Mike Brookes, 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *06 resulting personal postcard series* – on disc: *Disc 1 Greetings from Salina (2013)*.

Through this work I aimed to proposed performance as place, as a space for making and embodying the social; that is, as a socio-spatial configuration where relationships, exchanges and communication could be activated and intensified. The place generated by this work – as described in the previous paragraphs – sought to be public, not only in the sense of being social as Delgado discusses in

relation to the work of Lefebvre and Jacobs, but also in the sense that Deutsche defines it: 'as a set of institutions where citizens – and [...] non-citizens – engage in debate [...]; or the space where social groups identities and the identity of society are both constituted and questioned [...] a way of dealing with the concept of public space that is based not on location but on the performance of an operation' (2012).[40] The work, in this sense, sought to directly explore how public performance might constitute such an 'operation' – setting in motion a mechanism through which those engaged within it might then perhaps find a space to begin to reconsider and renegotiate who they, collectively, might be.

In our initial two works within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project I had specifically focused my attention on a juxtaposition of the past – reactivated through the placement of its remnants – within the practices and physical elements that constituted the site in the present; and on the creative tensions that the overt superimposition of different temporalities and modes of social behaviours would provide for the consideration of a particular place. Yet in this new instance of the work, and through my reassessment of the fundamental functioning of the approaches previously proposed by both *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* and *Euskalduna Shipyards*, I realised that this juxtaposition of past and present realities of a particular place was simply the strategy we had chosen to enable a wider problematisation of the relationship between symbolic and representational understandings of a place and its actual use, in the present. A strategy that primarily aimed to highlight a distinction between the meanings attached or overlaid onto a site and its actual use – a distinction that might again here bring to my mind Lefebvre's separate consideration of representational spaces and spatial practice, as previously referenced within the 'Spatial Frames' I detail in Chapter One of this text.[41]

Through its performance, *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* specifically aimed to engage the tensions between symbolic meanings and actual uses of the crossroads of Santa Fe and Iron avenues in the present. These tensions were made manifest within the room of the work through the

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[40] As previously cited in the 'Spatial Frames' of Chapter One, pp. 68-69.

[41] See Chapter One pp. 60-61.

juxtaposition of period postcard images – depicting 'representational' and received narrative understandings of the surrounding streets – with current photographic images recording those same streets in the present. The details of these two juxtaposed image sets, contrasting momentary snapshots of the area across different decades, sought to highlight the relative presence and absence of daily human activity within their selected street views. The key variable I recognised across the progressive cycle of these projected images, and the things that quickly became most visible when viewing them, were the signs and traces they recorded of pedestrian social engagement within the views they captured.

Delgado suggests that it is the user who 'assigns a value to [the] streets, insofar as they recognise them as an adequate tool for specific functions and ends that can be social, economic, ludic, cultural or, in a wider sense, vital; that is, relative to human experience in all its variety' (in Jacobs, 2011, pp. 16-17).[42] The contrasting presence and absence of apparent pedestrian use within the different images visible within the work of *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* had, in turn, raised questions about the current social value and relevance of the area's public spaces in actuality. Ultimately, through their simple and focused reframing of the streets outside, these images allowed me to recognise the extent to which the current value of these downtown streets to Salina's residents – echoing Delgado's use of 'value' above – might be considered as inseparable from, and also be most clearly evidenced in, their practiced daily uses and engagement of the area. A consideration of the uses of this particular site, placing attention onto the mundane activities that might currently form the baseline of its daily functioning, could perhaps allow us to begin to consider the value of a place beyond the narratives of authenticity and belonging associated to it.

It is this focus on use, and on a visible shift within the daily use of a particular area of the city's streets, that might then most clearly underpin the functioning

[42] From the original text in Spanish: 'el usuario [...] que asigna a esas aceras un valor en tanto reconoce en ellas un instrumento adecuado para determinadas funciones y fines que pueden ser sociales, económicos, lúdicos, culturales o, simplemente y en el sentido más amplio, vitales, es decir relativos a la experiencia humana en toda su variedad' (Delgado in Jacobs, 2011, pp. 16-17).

and proposition of this instance of the work. In highlighting contrasting visual records of social use within these streets at different times, we can be seen to offer a comparison of a 'now' and 'as was'. A juxtaposition activated to allow a comparison of current lived uses of a place in the present, not simply with past uses, but rather with the meanings and memories being used to describe that place in the present – to perhaps allow a consideration of the 'spatial practices' and 'representational spaces' at play there, in the present, in juxtaposition (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 39-46). A primary motivation here, within this particular step of my inquiry, might then be seen as an attempt to find ways to highlight current choices and behaviours that could simultaneously unsettle any sense of these streets as either fixed or congruent, and that might reveal their current use and configuration as continuously and inevitably in process, as 'unfinished business' (Massey, 2005a, p. 130). The work then, through the invitation it offered participants, to consider and engage their perceptions and understandings of these streets through the proxy of familiar photographic snapshots, might be seen to both enact and problematise these evolving 'spatial practices' and 'representational spaces'. In this sense, an engagement with its two active image series, of current street and period postcard views, might be seen to offer both a reflection of and a 'mirror' for considerations of current spatial and representational practices respectively. It is in this uncoupling of present understandings and uses of these streets, in this proposed disconnection and juxtaposition of how a place is being narrated and how it is being lived, where the space for new perspectives might open up. It may be precisely in that gap and tensions – between what Claramonte might consider as the established and recognisable 'repertoire' of these streets (2009) and their improvised actuality in the present – where other possibilities might be revealed and brought into play.

CHAPTER 3: PROVIDENCE

A pair of data CDs, of accompanying material, is included to provide clarifying examples and additional contextual support for my descriptions and discussions of the two public works detailed within this chapter.

These discs are provided within the disc box: *Accompanying material for Chapter 3: Providence* – and are themselves individually labelled: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)* and: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)*

This disc pair contain selected fragments and documentational traces of the works *Historic Parking Lots of Providence / Introduced Birdsong* (2013) and *Providence Cove Walk* (2013) respectively, and both include an initial file: *00 disc contents.pdf* – which provides a full list of the individual disc's contents, as well as a descriptive outline of each included item.

Please open the file: *00 disc contents.pdf* contained on both disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)* and: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)* – and familiarise yourself with the range of materials made available.

Please then feel free to access and further explore the individual items of this accompanying material as they become relevant within your reading of the following text of this chapter.

In August of 2013 Mike Brookes and I travelled to Providence, Rhode Island, USA, where – over the subsequent two months – we were to initiate and develop a new work within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series. The invitation that had led to this residency in Providence, along with the commission to make a new public work within the city, had come from Professor Erik Ehn – who at that time was the Chair of Theatre Arts at Brown University in Providence, and who had already facilitated and supported a previous research residency for us at Brown in 2011. This time, the commission and residency were co-sponsored by Brown University's Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and the University's Creative Arts Council. Between August and October of that year, our work on the project was developed in three distinct periods: research and fieldwork within the city of Providence; design and production; and finally, our realisation and public presentation of the resulting work late that October. This process ultimately resulted in two public interventions within the city's downtown area: *Historic Parking Lots Of Providence / Introduced Birdsong* (2013) – a sculptural sound intervention into the streets of the city centre, which I will subsequently refer to within this text by its abbreviated title *Introduced Birdsong* – and *Providence Cove Walk* (2013), a participatory walk around a now absent shoreline of the saltwater cove around which the city of Providence had been originally founded.

On our arrival, we began our work within the city through an initial period of fieldwork – inviting and responding to a number of local contacts, who had offered to introduce us to aspects of their city, as they chose to guide us, and then following up on any initial questions arising from those introductions through internet and archive research. These local 'guides' where largely self-selecting, from amongst the friends and colleagues of our existing acquaintances in the city who had expressed an interest in our project work within Providence. In our approaches to these contacts we had not requested assistance in relation to any particular constituency or region of the city, but had instead invited informal visits and conversations, focused on events and places chosen from the perspective of the guide's own individual experience and interests, as an open opportunity to meet aspects of the city that an individual resident may personally consider significant. Quickly, within our first days of work in the city, our attention was drawn to three aspects of the central downtown area of

Providence. The first, and perhaps most immediately striking of these three features of the city's centre, was the quantity of surface-level parking lots within the area, which constituted a considerable proportion of downtown Providence – resulting in large areas of central Providence being scattered with empty and undeveloped lots. The second of these features was a clear contrast between the constant presence of wildlife apparent within the city's suburbs – where we were living – and an equally striking absence of wildlife within the downtown city centre area itself. And the third, was the realisation that much of downtown Providence now stands on an area of open water and wetland once known as the Great Salt Cove, prior to its reclamation and conversion to uplands.

As a wider context, Rhode Island is a small state on the east coast of the United States, crossed by numerous rivers, and dotted with lakes, marshes and estuary wetlands and beaches. The region's coastal landscape has undergone extreme manipulations to suit the needs of the developing and expanding population over the past 200 years. A large part of downtown Providence was once open estuary and salt marsh – a transitional landscape between the area's land and marine environments, and a fertile and productive habitat for plants, fish, birds, bacteria, and other lifeforms – but increased population densities and suburban sprawl has resulted in the conversion of substantial areas of natural land within and around the city to urban and industrial use (Habitat Restoration, n.d.). Throughout this development the cove in downtown Providence has undergone three phases of transformation: the first two within the 19th century, when it was filled and developed, partly as a result of having become an open sewer due to previous industrialisation, and ultimately to facilitate the construction of the city's railroad system (Holleran, 1990, p.65); and a third conversion during the second half of the 20th century, when a small part of the original cove basin was re-excavated, and its waters cleaned, as part of an urban regeneration project (Holleran, 1990, p.65).

Downtown Providence – including those areas reclaimed and developed from the wetlands of the original cove – is now the central economic, political, cultural and administrative district of the city. The area includes very little residential property, a scarcity of green areas, and more than half of the district's ground

area is now covered by surface-level parking lots. In contrast, just beyond the limits of its centre, Providence is largely constructed as a network of broad and open streets of detached timber houses with gardens, and many of these streets are lined with mature trees. In the neighbourhood where we were staying, in Mount Hope – a residential neighbourhood, walking distance from the city centre, in northern Providence – we experienced a constant presence of wildlife. The streets and gardens around us were regularly visited by skunks, racoons, possums, woodchucks, and even the occasional coyote; while the mature gardens and avenues of this neighbourhood also supported a constant presence of birds. But as soon as we crossed into the central downtown area, there was an immediate and striking absence of this rich wildlife; and perhaps most striking of all, there was a noticeable and sudden absence of birdsong.

Image 3.1 Most of the areas shown here coloured in 'dark orange' – which mark both surface level parking lots and 'parking decks' - are surface level parking lots. The parking areas marked in this map are privately owned and managed; and the 'Parking Crisis' here refers to a debate about the lack of free parking space, and about access hours and pricing of the private lots (Nickerson, 2008). Image by: Great City Providence, 2008.

In our interactions with residents, when we asked about the downtown parking lots, we were struck by an apparent local perception that Providence's centre

was covered by an unusually high number of them. Many people seemed uncomfortable about the quantity of the lots; and talked about them as being sites of transition, that had resulted from neglect, or from failed or corrupt development projects – associating them with a decline of the city, specially since the 1980s, while also recognising them as spaces where other things could, and perhaps might usefully, happen.[43] Through the resulting conversations I began to build a tangible sense of the extent to which the city's parking lots had come, for some, to embody an idea of the city no longer being what it was, while also having not become what it could potentially be.

Images 3.2 One of the 'historic parking lots' within Downtown Providence, at Pine Street and Delta Street. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photo by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *07 parking lot images* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)*.

For us, the most striking feature of these numerous lots was not only the amount of the city centre that consequently sat empty and undeveloped beyond its

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[43] In Providence, there is a public debate not only about parking and transport issues, but also about possible alternative uses for the numerous surface level parking lots within the city centre. For example, following the initiative by The Putting Lot in Bushwick, Brooklyn – where a mini golf course was built in a vacant lot in 2009 (Chen, 2009) – discussions began about the possibility of doing something similar in the Historic Parking District of Providence (Coolidge, 2009). Another example is the proposition by Providence locals to organise a 'Park(ing) Day, when we take a day to turn our parking into something other than a space for cars' (Playe and Kennedy, 2010).

use for parking, but also the fact that these areas were not simply open spaces or plots of wasteland between the buildings and developed blocks of the city, but were purposefully sealed and formalised with tarmac – where not even weeds or grass could easily self-seed and grow, even temporarily. These lots were notably sites of seemingly limited variety or texture, in their apparent lack of potential to support and sustain other types of occupation or inhabitation.

Images 3.3 One of the 'historic parking lots' within Downtown Providence, at Pine Street between Chestnut Street and Claverick Street. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photo by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *07 parking lot images* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013).*

Interestingly, in exploring the history and records of these empty lots within the city archives, we found that more than half of the surface-level parking lots within Providence's city centre had in fact been in use and officially designated as parking lots since at least the city surveys of the 1950s (Sanborn Map Company, 1956). Contrary to assumptions that these lots were sites of transition, resulting from neglect or mismanagement, they did in fact represent a constant and key architectural feature within the development and functioning of the area. This finding led us to define an initial discursive frame for our wider consideration and proposals within our work in Providence – reasserting the collective area of these lots as a constant and defining architectural and

structural component of the city, not simply in the present, but also across its post-war history and development.[44] With reference to the US National Register's initial age criteria for the identification of 'Historic Places', as including building works of 50 years and older (National Park Service, n.d.), we explored and discussed the proposition that a specific selection of thirty of these 'historic' parking lots might be collectively nominated for listing. We proposed a consideration of their collective impact and character against the National Register's listed eligibility criteria of 'age', 'integrity', and 'significance' (National Park Service, n.d.). We begun to consider the lots as a single large-scale element of the city's architecture, that had remained largely intact and unchanged since its construction more than 50 years earlier – suggesting that the significance of this network of lots within Providence's post-war development, social functioning and identity, was fundamental (Casado and Brookes, 2013).

The discursive frame provided by this proposition, and the narrative shift it enabled within our further explorations of the lots – reframing our address to them, away from narratives of transitional urban wasteland, to an exploration of urban architecture – allowed us to engage the parking lots structurally, as a single architectural and behavioural feature of the city centre as a whole. The lots could then be considered as a structural element within the district's behaviour, which existed and operated at the scale of the city's centre, and as one of the active and city-wide layers of its daily functioning. Within our work, from this point on, these sites ceased to be a number of isolated and dislocated transitional spaces within the city, but instead were recognised as a single, and singular, component of its functioning.

In all the previous works within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series, we had chosen to focus on individual buildings or events within specific localised sites – as places that had become exemplars or reference points within aspects of the locale's social functioning and identity. We had approached these places

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[44] As in previous chapters, references to aspects of the city's architecture and developments are included here to provide contextual background information only. These references are intended to help delineate my progressively expanding considerations of site and the performance of place specifically, and do not seek to position this inquiry within any addresses to discourses of urbanisation and urban development.

as focal points, or as hubs within the construction of local narratives and understandings, which had become synonymous with some particular element of the shared or contested identities narrated by the locale's inhabitants. We had then sought to shape works that either intervened directly into the performance of that circumscribed location in the present, as in *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) and *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011), or that directly considered present understandings of their particular location, as in *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013). These works had sought to locate themselves, and to intervene within and reveal selected aspects of the wider context of their locale, through a focused engagement and consideration of a single and selected place within that context.
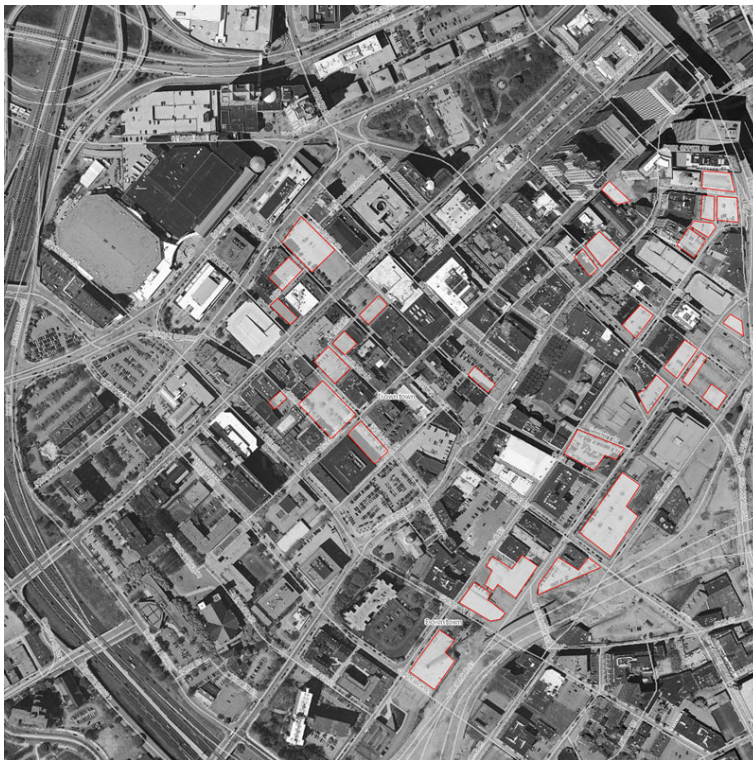
Image 3.4 A map of Downtown Providence. The lots marked in red are the thirty surface level parking lots that we identified as being 'historic' – that is, lots already marked and designated as parking in city surveys of the 1950s. Image by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image is included as file: *05 parking lots sketch map.pdf* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013).*

In Providence, through understanding the city's network of surface-level parking lots as a single physical element of the city, we found ourselves also able to consider and engage other aspects of the performance of the city in similarly

expanded ways. In that, importantly, we then understood the collective lots as the physical foundation of a transversal layer of behaviour and activity within the city centre, which might then be considered as other networked and city-wide aspects of physical infrastructure, such as the area's roads or sidewalks. This possibility of an expanded address to the wider landscape of the city, in turn, opened other considerations within the development of our project work and my inquiry from this point.

This time, we began to explore how to shape a work that could intervene within a place constituted by multiple locations. More importantly still, we now aimed to shape a work that could both operate within and reconfigure transversal layers of behaviour and activity, across a large and discontinuous urban area. To be precise, within our project work in Providence, we were imagining an artwork that would operate at the scale of the city centre, and that could tangibly shift the character of Providence's downtown centre for the duration of a working day, by intervening into the material uses of this fragmented and multi-located site – as well as into the flows, dynamics, trajectories, relationships and occupations that it encouraged and supported. In these imaginings, informed by the approaches and understandings developed across our realisation of the previous works within this project, we began to then recognise other transversal aspects of the landscape of central Providence as layers of behaviour within the area's current daily performance. The most notable of these layers, as we had come to consider them, would prove to be our parallel consideration of the city's wildlife, the disappeared salt marsh and open water of Providence Cove, and the network of otherwise empty and featureless plots of land that now constituted the parking lots themselves. Our interconnected considerations of these three aspects of the city's centre, as interrelated components within the wider functioning of this urban landscape in the present, not only shaped but also expanded the scope and dimensions of our project work in Providence. From this point onwards, the work became both increasingly located within and increasingly conscious of the wider physical landscape of this city's centre, as an active interplay of geographical, human and non-human agents.

In this particular instance, and through our integrated considerations of these three components of the city's centre, aspects of the area's habitability,

diversity and ecology became more and more relevant. In researching Providence's saltwater cove specifically, I learnt that the environmental conditions provided by areas of salt marsh are recognised as a unique and exceptional habitat, and can be found within many of the world's protected coastlines. These intertidal habitats are described as being highly productive; and as essential to the health of fisheries, coastlines, and coastal communities. Salt marshes 'produce more basic food energy per acre than any other known ecosystem, including tropical rain forests and freshwater wetlands' (Save The Bay, 2017); they 'provide essential food, refuge, or nursery habitat for more than 75 percent of fisheries species' (National Ocean Service, 2014); and act as refuge, breeding and feeding sites for both indigenous wading and visiting migratory birds (Save The Bay, 2017). They also shield and protect coastal areas from storm surge and erosion (National Ocean Service, 2014, and Save The Bay, 2017); and sustain water quality 'by filtering sediments, nutrients, heavy metals, and other toxins from upland runoff' (Save The Bay, 2017). My imaginings of such a diversely productive and valuable ecosystem – once central to the area, and around which Providence had originally been settled – further heightened the apparent sterility and homogeneity of the parking lots. These lots, collectively, appeared to me as an extreme example of what Marc Augé (1995) defined as 'non-place' – ephemeral places linked to transport networks, exclusively designed for human use and where social use and identity are primarily reduced to functionality and contractual relations.

In our imagined superimposition and mutual consideration of these distinct habitats – namely the city's parking lots and now absent cove – biodiversity appeared as an immediate and significant factor in their differentiation and singularisation. More importantly, biodiversity, and the expansion of possible ways of being within a site, also offered a possible artistic tactic; a tactic perhaps similar to that of the French artistic collective the UX (Urban eXperiment), who have understood and employed biodiversity as a mechanism to help establish relationships between, and draw plurality from, spaces that seem to be in opposition (LaBelle, 2010, pp. 39-40).[45] The group La Mexicaine

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[45] The Paris based clandestine organisation the UX (Urban eXperiment) is a coalition of groups – The Untergunther, The Mouse House, and La Mexicaine De Perforation – specialising in the infiltration, restoration, appropriation and occupation of hidden, abandoned or unmaintained parts of Paris (Trepz, 2008).

De Perforation, for example – one of the clandestine teams that comprise UX – notably constructed and operated an underground cinema directly underneath the Cinématheque Française. As Brandon LaBelle discusses the project in his book *Acoustic Territories. Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010), this construct established a mirroring relation between the aboveground and the underground – interlocking below with above, provoking a cross-fertilisation between the seemingly polarised spaces, and multiplying how the ways in which we live are manifest (pp. 38-40). In our own case, in Providence, our intention was to establish a simple yet productive dialogue between the ecologically rich and highly diverse environment supported by the area's salt marshes, and the more sterile and homogenising urban ecology exemplified and exacerbated by the tarmac-sealed lots. By activating the tensions between these states of place, and perhaps activating additional aspects of one within the other, we might expand the area's performance and diversity beyond the apparent oppositions that might keep the human and non-human polarised.

3.1: INTRODUCED BIRDSONG

At dawn on the morning of Thursday October 17th, Mike Brookes and I – accompanied by our friend, photographer and Providence resident, David Higgins – stepped out of a car into an otherwise empty city centre street. The area's streetlights were still on above us. The rising sun was only just apparent between the adjacent buildings, yet the light was already changing and lifting perceptibly around us, heralding the beginning of a bright and sunny autumn day. Between us, Mike Brookes and I carried only a single backpack – containing thirty small galvanised metal boxes, a bag of heavy-duty nylon cable ties, a pair of scissors, a list of locations and a map of downtown Providence. The streets around us were still almost deserted, animated by only the first few early arrivals of the working day, who we saw quietly stepping out of their own cars and walking away, and the occasional and isolated sound of other early cars passing intermittently through the streets around us. As we began, the surrounding parking lots were still mainly empty. We had a precise plan: we were

to work our way across the city's centre, in an attempt to install one of the small purpose-build boxes we carried at each of thirty surface-level parking lots within the area, before the work and business of the day properly began. We had selected thirty lots from amongst those we had previously identified as over fifty years old, and had built a small movement-sensitive metal-housed audio device for each. Each of these thirty identical audio devices contained the recorded song of a single Lincoln's sparrow – a bird still present, but more common in wetlands such as those that used to be part of the city – and would play their birdsong whenever triggered by the movement of a passing pedestrian or car. It was 7am local time, and we had two hours before the city centre became fully open and active.

We began at a lot on Custom House Street, between Weybosset Street and Dyer Street, and from there walked a predetermined and roughly circular route through the thirty locations marked on our map, installing one of our small metal birdsong boxes at each in turn. As we moved on, through the list of designated lots, and as the dawn shifted into day, activity levels within the city gradually intensified. By the end of our route, at a lot bordered by Washington Street and Snow Street, a short distance from our starting point two hours earlier, occupation on the parking lots was high and the streets were busy with the usual foot and street traffic of the working day.

In preparation, we had secured permission from the city for our actions, but had intentionally not informed the users or private owners of the individual parking lots in advance. In accordance with these agreed permissions, we attached one box to an existing item of municipal street furniture on the perimeter of each lot – fixing them directly to a lamp post, bollard, parking meter, sign post or pedestrian crossing. Each box was installed at body height, about a meter off the floor, and placed adjacent to a traffic or pedestrian entrance of each lot. Consequently, the first to encounter the boxes were often the parking lot attendants themselves – who we actively approached and informed about the details of the work, as we moved from lot to lot across our installation of the boxes. We later saw a number of these attendants independently engaging the devices as a game – wandering out to the perimeter of their own or adjacent lots to trigger the sound as pedestrians, or other attendants, passed nearby.

Image 3.5 Performance still recording the installation of a bird box at the entrance of one of the 'historic parking lots' of central Providence, at Memorial Boulevard and Custom House Street, at dawn. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photo by: David Higgins, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *04 installation performance stills* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)*.

The devices were active and accessible from dawn till dusk throughout the working day of October 17th – from the installation of the first box at 7am, in anticipation of the opening of the lots and the first workers arriving in the areas, and remaining in place beyond the close of office hours and the city's sunset at 6pm. The audio devices were housed within galvanised aluminium boxes of 13cm x 6cm x 3cm – similar in scale to the body of a sparrow, yet designed to mirror the functional construction and aesthetic of the rest of the city's infrastructural street furniture. Each sealed box contained an electronic sound-card, connected to an infrared motion sensor and a small mono speaker, all powered by three integral AAA batteries. Each sound-card could store only a minute of sound at its maximum quality, and was loaded with two separate thirty-second fragments of birdsong – which were triggered alternately by the device's motion sensor, allowing a variation of song rhythm within the playback of each box and each location. Similarly, the device's small integral speaker was designed to provide only a limited range of audio frequencies at peak volume, and so these two short recordings were simplified and mixed down within a specifically narrow

frequency range – to allow the birdsong, while remaining instantly recognisable, to very audibly cut through the surrounding background of urban street noise. The two separate thirty-second sound files, loaded and accessible within each of our 'bird boxes', where edited and mixed from copyright-free archival field recordings sourced and acquired as part of our earlier research into the region's wider environment and wildlife.

Images 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 Performance stills recording details of the installation of bird boxes at various 'historic parking lots' of central Providence. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photos by: David Higgins, 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *04 installation performance stills* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)*.

With this act we aimed to directly and overtly intervene within the pedestrian daily use and environment of the city centre – considering the everyday constellation of street-level human activity within the area as both the site and audience of the work. Our consideration of the collective area of the thirty parking lots as a single site, and our installation of an identical and simultaneously active audio device into each of its thirty constituent parts, allowed us to consider and perform that intervention as a unified act at the scale of the city centre itself. This spatial understanding tangibly expanded the cumulative impact of each single box, with each of these small, isolated and undramatic physical interventions becoming a visible and audible network of broadcast and contact points within the wider work as a whole. Individual pedestrians moving around or through the city's downtown area were unlikely to

meet only a single box. The scale of the district, and the distribution of the selected lots within it, meant that even short walks amongst the area's civic and business centres would invariably pass within audible range of at least two or three of them. While it was in no way our intention to solicit or gather reactions from people within our performance of this work, various impromptu conversations with passers-by, across the day, did indeed reveal a growing and accumulating awareness of the presence of the boxes across the city – with a number of individuals recounting their own multiple meetings with the birdsong, or repeating how others had told them that the boxes were 'appearing everywhere'.

Image 3.9 Triptych showing a satellite image of the selected parking lot at Mathewson Street and Lucie Way, with an image of the lot itself, and of the installed bird box within that lot. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Image by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this composite, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *09 composite installed bird box images* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)*.

Importantly, this wider spatial construction of the work also allowed us to conceive and perform it as an additional layer of activity within the daily functioning of downtown Providence. I began to understand our intervention as a parallel layer of use and habitation – amongst the other and perhaps more familiar layers of the city's workday functioning – and as operating at the same scale. Perhaps most importantly, these decisions had allowed us to shape a form and scale of intervention that might not only be performed, but also be met and understood, as an active layer and component of the wider city's daily use and environment. As a consequence, and contrary to all the previous works within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, our public realisation of this work did not require an audience to knowingly attend a particular event, at a

particular time or place. Neither did the work require its intended audience to recognise themselves as such. In positioning and activating this intervention within the infrastructure and daily functioning of pedestrian use – in ways that might simply add to, but did not disrupt or disorientate that use – we had come to recognise that the work required no additional contextual frame in order to be encountered or reveal itself. The act of *Introduced Birdsong*, within the specifics of its own form and functioning, did not require the city's other users to recognise or understand it as a poetic or artistic event. The absence of such a contextual frame – as I now understand – not only allowed the work to be met as simply a new component of the busy downtown ecology, but also facilitated the direct and pragmatic encounters and reflections that the work in fact relied on.

Through our performance of *Introduced Birdsong*, and through my own pedestrian experience of the subtly shifted city centre environment resulting from its hours of activation, I have come to appreciate the developmental shifts in intention and operation enabled by this instance of the work. The mechanisms of performance and encounter it engaged – through the aural qualities and interactive nature of its intervention, coupled with the physical characteristics of the boxes themselves – allowed an activation of the absence of birdsong in the present, beyond the simple juxtaposition of alternative states of place employed by previous instances of this project work. There was no suggestion or illusion of the presence of birds here. Instead, the immediate and functional aural and physical qualities of the boxes implied a pragmatic addition to the area's municipal street infrastructure, and to the pedestrian environment specifically – an addition overtly facilitating the interactive electronic playback of prerecorded bird sounds. Rather than proposing the addition of birdsong, this addition specifically highlighted its absence – reasserting that absence as an active and present component of the city centre's current performance and environment.

From its inception, and as I have previously outlined in 'Origins', in Chapter One of this thesis, one of our key intentions within the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project has been to propose work that would connect us to place as a multi-temporal event – layering a previous and chosen reality of the place onto the actuality of that place in the present, in an attempt to re-engage alternative

understandings to reveal and refresh our views of the present and possible futures (pp. 38-39). In all previous works within this project, past and present were the operating temporal layers at play during the event's performance. We have consistently engaged personal and collective recollections of past events and places, and juxtaposed them with the actuality of those places in the present – activating considerations of the future through the consequential imaginings and re-tellings of place that might ripple out from, and after, the event and situation of the work. In this particular case however, within the performance of *Introduced Birdsong*, those imagined consequences became part of the event itself, and of the activation and accumulation of the work across the day – causing the interplay of temporal layers within the intervention to operate differently.

Image 3.10 Triptych showing a satellite image of the selected parking lot at Mathewson Street, between Westminster Street and Washington Street, with an image of the lot itself, and of the installed bird box within that lot. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Image by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this composite, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *09 composite installed bird box images* – on disc: *Disc 2A Introduced Birdsong (2013)*.

As in previous works, our choices across the process of *Introduced Birdsong* were informed by the individual understandings and recollections of downtown Providence we encountered across our fieldwork. Yet within the work's realisation and performance we had consciously chosen not to place these particular introduced audio recordings as echoes of a previous set of conditions from the area's past, but rather as a contemporary addition into the current environmental state of the lots in the present. We hoped in this case, that these additional sounds might activate and be met as an alternative, beyond an

implied or perceived process of disappearance – an alternative that might help to intensify our awareness of the present state of the place, and of what is and is not currently there. Interestingly, within the performance of this intervention, and through my observations of people's engagement with the boxes during the hours of their presence, it became apparent that these choices had perhaps opened the possibilities for a future to be considered and questioned within these moments of encounter themselves.

As we walked amongst the lots during the day of October 17th, monitoring the installation and functioning of the boxes in situ, we witnessed and became involved in a number of situations and conversations with people discussing and interacting with the work. Many of these conversations expressed speculation about the possible intentions of the boxes, and questioned if their installation might signal some projected future purpose or possibility. One couple, who clearly did not know that we were responsible for the appearance of the devices, engaged us in a conversation about how the boxes were appearing 'all over the city', and then talked amongst themselves about how they might acquire one of the devices for their home. A local shopkeeper we met in the street outside his store, similarly, wondered if the boxes might be a new initiative of the city council, and if he might be able to have one installed on the lamppost adjacent to the entrance of his shop.

The most revealing of these situations was perhaps our meeting with the local police, when two separate patrol cars, approaching from different directions, simultaneously pulled over to question us on the street corner adjacent to one of the open lots. The patrols had been dispatched following reports of the appearance of the multiple boxes, and had been following these accumulating reports around the city centre – asking for information, and looking for those responsible. Interestingly, the police officer who questioned us seemed far less interested in any permissions we may have arranged for our actions, than he was in our purpose and intentions. For him, the addition of this tangible network of activity across the city, and the practical and physical nature of the boxes themselves, had acquired a scale of presence within the area that required police investigation. His questions, which focused less on our placing of the boxes than they did on the details of their sound, asked 'why the birdsong?',

'what bird is it?', 'what is the sound doing?', and 'what are they for?'; and implied a perceived functional purpose and intended future consequence to the sound's addition within the city's streets. To me, these questions revealed the extent to which this accumulating act had become present enough, within the environment and workaday functioning of the area, for the possible benefit or threat being posed by its consequences to require being understood and assessed. I was struck not only by the urgency of this policeman's questions, but also by the contrasting and immediate disinterest he displayed on understanding the intentions of our intervention – at which point he called over to the other waiting patrol car: 'it's ok, I've got this, it's nothing to worry about, it's just an art thing'.

3.2: COVE WALK

Two days after our *Introduced Birdsong* audio devices had occupied the city, Mike Brookes and I realised the final public work of our residency in Providence – a work that we had developed in parallel with *Introduced Birdsong*, which also considered the wider geography of downtown Providence, and the absences that currently constituted it. This final work took the form of an informal participatory walk through the downtown streets, guided and structured by our attempt to follow the perimeter edge of the area's now invisible saltwater cove, as an alternative and propositional encounter with the architectures and public spaces that our attempted circumnavigation of the lost cove would require us to move through. Our intention was simply to follow an invisible line through the current city streets – experientially exploring the present geography and developments of the city centre, from the vantage point of the shoreline that had once marked the physical limits of that development. In walking its perimeter, we hoped to facilitate an additionally tangible consideration of the area, through a direct yet specifically framed and reflective encounter with what was now there. And to extend an open and public invitation to others, to share in a reflective period of exploration and increased attentiveness to this particular area of the city in the present.

Image 3.11 Illustrative composite sketch map, overlaying a nineteenth century depiction of the undeveloped Providence Cove shoreline onto a satellite image of contemporary Providence. Image by: Mike Brookes, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image is included as file: *01 cove sketch map overlay.pdf* – on disc: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)*.

At noon on Saturday October 19th – beginning from the corner of West Exchange Street and Fox Place, just out under the downtown section of highway 95 (GPS coordinates: 41° 49' 31'' N / 71° 25' 13'' W) – we set out to walk a route that followed the now absent shoreline of the natural cove that had shaped the original geography of the city. Our route had been determined by overlaying maps dated prior to the city's incorporation and expansion from the early 19th century onto those of the present, and plotting a route through the contemporary streets that followed the previous waterline of the cove – a body of water and salt marsh reclaimed and now almost completely covered by developments of the city's centre over the last 150 years.

Met and accompanied by local residents, who joined us in response to publicity circulated by the institutions and individuals already engaged in our wider project work within the city, we followed the streets and paths that now sit above the feature's edge – meeting the scale and geography of the cove's now absent open water, through a simple navigation of the developments and daily uses of its area in the present. This reflective walk and meeting, covered a

distance of approximately one and a half miles, and happened over an hour. As a group, we circumnavigated the cove's previous perimeter in an anticlockwise direction – from its southern meeting with the Woonasquatucket River's estuary mouth, around to its adjacent intersection with the river's current northern bank – keeping everything that now covers the original area of open water to the walkers' left.

Image 3.12 Performance still recording the starting point of the event of *Providence Cove Walk*. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photo by: David Higgins, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *06 cove walk images* – on disc: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)*.

Our walk proposed a refreshed perspective and attentiveness to the current city landscape, through a physical engagement with not visible aspects of that landscape's underlying and defining geography. In its intentions and public manifestation, the action of *Providence Cove Walk* drew directly on approaches shaped and explored within our previous work. The event of the walk, and the public invitation it offered, had arisen through a clarification of our approaches to the engagement of a place's active absences, as we had reconsidered those approaches across our development of *Introduced Birdsong* specifically. We did not, for example, use the route or task of our walk on October 19th to support

or contextualise additional information of any kind. This was not a guided tour, but simply the action of treading an otherwise unseen boundary line. In this sense, the work proposed an overtly physical consideration of, and meeting with, a now invisible element of the city's base geography. While we began to walk this covered shoreline, participating residents had, for example, occasionally offered questions about what may previously have stood or happened at various sites along our route – to which we had pointed out that they would probably know much more about such details than we would as visitors. This response inevitably provoked related discussions amongst the residents themselves, but also led to long periods of silence amongst the walking group. These historic details became increasingly, and increasingly obviously, irrelevant within the group conversations that subsequently developed – as comments soon focused on the wider fact and functioning of the cove area we were attempting to circumnavigate, on buildings and areas where the presence of water was still apparent, and on the impact and visible consequence of high tides and rain.

As within our previous project works, the considerations implicit in our performance of *Providence Cove Walk* remained rooted in our engagement with the generation and understanding of place through use. But again, this final work further clarified a shift in emphasis, as developed across the explorations of our work within Providence as a whole, towards a broader ecological address to occupancy and occupation within the city. More importantly still, the performance and event of our cove walk both clarified and explicitly engaged a new address to scale, and to a wider performance of our viewing and viewpoint out onto the landscape of that occupation. In walking the perimeter boundary line of the wetland area of the cove, we afforded ourselves a tangible understanding of its size and position within the city. Yet this understanding did not, in this case, rely on an evocation or imagining of the now absent cove water itself, but on the practical navigation of that perimeter boundary in the present. From the vantage point provided by our boundary walk – from where everything to our left stood on land reclaimed from the cove water, while everything to our right occupied the area's natural uplands – we could access both a physical experience of and view out onto the city, as a wider topography. A lived topography experienced and viewed at scales beyond the details of particular

fragments and instances of its architecture, social narrative, or personal daily use.


Images 3.13, 3.14, 3.15 and 3.16 Performance stills recording different views within the event of *Providence Cove Walk*. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photos by: David Higgins, 2013. Higher resolution copies of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *06 cove walk images* – on disc: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)*.

In various fields such as architecture, geography and social sciences, scale has been familiarly discussed and proposed through two main approaches. Architect and theorist El Hadi Jazairy argues that 'on one hand, scale is presented as an ontological fact that organises matter in a Russian-doll structure from the infinitely small to the infinitely large' (2011, p.1); and 'on the other hand, scale is posited as a methodological tool that manages data within a defined spatial frame to access an extracted section of reality' (2011, p.1). These two approaches presume scale as a well-defined and stable entity, as a well-ordered zoom or an a priori frame or measure, that can be applied across realities. In contrast – and again echoing Massey, Latour, and more specifically Morton, as previously referenced within the 'Spatial Frames' of Chapter One of this text –

for Jazary, 'scale is neither a given fact nor an imposed methodological frame' (2011, p. 1), but a plastic and unstable tool, for understanding relationships, negotiations and tensions amongst different actors in space (2011, p.1). Jazary proposes that 'scale is not a fixed environment within which events unfold; rather, it is the unfolding of events that produces a certain scale' (2011, p.1). Scale is, therefore, both relational and performative.

Image 3.17 Performance still recording a view within the event of *Providence Cove Walk*. Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Photo by: David Higgins, 2013. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, is included in folder: *06 cove walk images* – on disc: *Disc 2B Providence Cove Walk (2013)*.

In my own experience of our perimeter walk on October 19th, by physically positioning ourselves on the now invisible line that demarcated wet and dry land, as recorded within Providence city maps of the 1800s, a sense of a geographic scale started to emerge. In walking the perimeter boundary line of the original wetland area of the cove, I not only experienced a tangible understanding of its proportions and location within the current city environment; but I also began to develop an understanding of the surrounding dry land, constantly present and visible to my right as I walked, as continuous ground that expanded beyond the downtown area and city itself. This sense of a

continuity of ground allowed me to consider and meet downtown Providence not as simply an isolated place in the world, but also as the nearest surface detail of the world itself – connecting the city's immediate landscape to a larger geography and, perhaps, allowing us 'to think about the world as a physical scope of impact, if not of operation' (Sarkis, 2011, p. 107).

From our project work in Providence, and through this particular public artwork specifically, scale appears as a key element in our construction and performance of place. Scale here is revealed as a malleable feature that emerges from the performance of the cove walk itself. Our wider considerations of the relationships between the human and non-human within this specific performance of aspects of the city centre – as well as our active physical engagement of the cove as a larger topographical component of the area, and of its connectedness to the wider encompassing environment – allowed an experiential sense of the geographic, at varying scales, to be activated. In this work, scale manifests as a fundamental practice in our understanding of the interactions and negotiations at play between different actors in space; a practice that helps us to bridge the built environment and the geographic, the immediate and the distant, the local and the global, and – importantly in this particular instance – the present and the absent.

This expansion of perspective and engagement, within the approaches and possible reach of this inquiry, might then be seen here to have both enabled and arisen through a step change in focus. Most importantly, our work in Providence could be seen to manifest a shift of vantage point, from where our view of the city might open out to include other strata and horizons of influence and behaviour, and which in turn might suggest and necessitate expanded modes of possible occupation and use. A change of focus, then, from the complexities evident within any single contained and local site of operation, to the consideration and performance of a wider city environment, as a broader landscape, or 'taskscape', as Ingold would perhaps consider this evolving wider terrain of city space, human experience and non-human agents (1993, pp. 152-174). If, as Morton suggests, such an expanded 'ecological awareness' might force us to operate at not simply wider but multiple scales (2016, p. 159), then such an operation might also begin to more fully reveal itself as not contained

within a single fixed sphere, but rather as a sphere of operation emerging through the actioning of an operation itself, as its agents engage and inhabit multiple scales of that place simultaneously (Latour, 2005, p. 173-204). In this sense, the works performed in Providence might each be seen to be both shaped and offered as an act and invitation within such multiple views of their locale. In our treading of the now absent shoreline of the cove, for example, I recognise an attempt to activate a similarly multi-scaled engagement of the 'here' within which that particular ground, and those who chose to engage and navigate it, might be seen to operate. A 'here' that might not only reveal itself as evolving through use and time, but that may also manifest itself as part of wider landscapes and environments. This more expanded awareness of the wider ecology within which we might operate could perhaps then mark a shift, within my approaches and expectations through the work: from what I might previously have modelled through a sectional consideration of place, in which the complexities and interactions at play might be revealed by 'slicing' down through the strata of a single moment or perspective of place; to a more stratigraphic consideration of the multiple layers of influence and operation that might unfold together across its wider performance.[46] Such an awareness and consideration of a place might also then allow a conscious actioning of approaches and expectations within the work that – as I previously suggest within Chapter One 'Spatial Frames' – might begin to unfold across the fuller extent of a locale, in ways that could begin to both acknowledge and engage the broader reach and multiplicity of the 'local', and of what might constitute the 'here' (pp. 74-75).

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[46] I use the terms sectional and stratigraphic here primarily for their familiar dictionary definitions, simply to highlight a perception of place itself, as evolving through the accumulation and interplay of wider layers of social and environmental behaviour – layers that might be seen to build up and shift, across broader considerations of a locale, as do the accumulating physical strata of its geology. This use acknowledges Brookes' descriptions, as 'all tracks running', of a recognition and activation of multiple layers of use and behaviour within both his construction and understanding of the performed events and located situations of his work (2014). It also echoes Pearson's identification of how, through a 'stratigraphic model of dramaturgy, site-specific performance is envisioned and executed as distinct strata or layers' (2010, p.167).

CHAPTER 4: A GREY LINE

A data CD of accompanying material is included to provide clarifying examples and additional contextual support for my descriptions and discussions of the public work detailed within this chapter.

This disc is provided within the disc box: *Accompanying material for Chapter 4: A Grey Line* – and is itself labelled: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*

The disc contains selected fragments and documentational traces of the work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016), and includes the initial file: *00 disc contents.pdf* – which provides a full list of the disc's contents, as well as a descriptive outline of each included item.

Please open the file: *00 disc contents.pdf* contained on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)* – and familiarise yourself with the range of materials made available on the disc.

Please then feel free to access and further explore the individual items of this accompanying material as they become relevant within your reading of the following text of this chapter.

My inquiry so far has sought to investigate how performance might come to constitute a social space where the contingency of place, and its inherent processes of change and adaptation, might become apparent. In doing this, I

have sought to articulate works that invite us to consider performance as both place and operation – that is, 'as a socio-spatial configuration where relationships, exchanges and communication could be activated and intensified' (p. 99), and also as a mechanism, through which those engaged within it might enter the debate of who they, collectively, might be (p. 100). In the two initiating works of this inquiry, namely the public art works *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010) and *Euskalduna Shipyards* (2011), as discussed in 'Origins' of Chapter One of this submission,[47] the situations generated by the work emerged from our particular activation and engagement of a dialectical relationship between past and present – that is, from a consideration of place within a largely temporal frame. In the works that have manifest my subsequent developments of this research across our residencies in Salina and Providence – namely *Greetings From Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013), and then *Introduced Birdsong* (2013) and *Providence Cove Walk* (2013) – the situations proposed by the work have increasingly been seen to emerge from considerations of more specifically spatial issues. The spatial considerations of these three formally distinct public interventions – as articulated across the previous two chapters of this thesis – have included, for example, the practicing of representational space, aspects of our specific habitation and occupation of place, as well as relative considerations of the immediate and the distant within our understandings of our locale.[48] Through the development and realisation of my research and public project work in Salina and Providence, I have come to recognise the potential of scale as a critical spatial practice – that might help us to conceive and perform collective critical situations within which we might become more attentive to our interconnectedness. Consequentially, I have sought to understand the relevance and impact of scale within our construction of place. Scale, in this sense, and through our performance of these works, has revealed itself as both relational and performative, as well as malleable.

In *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* and *Euskalduna Shipyards* our interest in revealing the event of place, and its contingency, built upon an attentiveness to

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[47] See Chapter One pp. 48-51 for my previous descriptions of *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand*, and pp. 51-54 for further information on *Euskalduna Shipyards*.

[48] See Chapter Two pp. 84-102 for my previous discussions of the considerations and intentions shaping *Greetings From Salina / Crossroads of the Nation*, Chapter Three pp. 113-121 for *Introduced Birdsong*, and Chapter Three pp. 121-128 for *Providence Cove Walk*.

the evolving and negotiated nature of place itself, and to the consequential inevitability of its change. In these initial works we had reflectively considered currently active agents within a particular locale, in relation to other documented alternatives from within its previous configurations, in an attempt to heighten an awareness of the present and to trigger questions about what that locale might otherwise be or become. While in Salina and Providence, I further clarified these intentions through our focus on the uses of public space, and on the interplay between the human and non-human within the broader landscape and ecology of a site. In this shift of emphasis, I chose to focus on the relationships performed within our wider occupation of place – considering that, as Massey (2005a, p.195) argues:

> Space presents us with the social in the widest sense: the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness – and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and non-human; and the ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability is to be configured.

I have increasingly sought, across the arc of this inquiry, to propose absence as an active component within such practices of place, increasingly disassociating it from approaches that relate things absent simply to the distant or the past – approaches perhaps still inherent in our reactivation of the now absent industrial buildings once inhabited by the participating ex-workers of *Euskalduna Shipyards* in Bilbao. Across our project work in Salina and Providence I have attempted to further explore the potential of things now actively absent within a locale – that is to say, the potential of those absences that might constitute an active presence within our current understanding and experience of a place – as a lens to focus on the here and now, and on the choices and practices that shape our present. Our attempts to acknowledge the current nature of pedestrian use within the central downtown streets of Salina, rather than simply to reveal a particular shift in social uses of the area over time, for example, are perhaps key here. As are the apparent levels of diversity and non-human activity within the workday environment of central Providence engaged by our performance of *Introduced Birdsong*. In the wider development of this process, the work has

consistently aimed to highlight the performed nature of our shared and social spaces – to reveal place as a consequence of our collective choices and use specifically. In using the work to shift our focus on to a particular absence, beyond what might currently and more familiarly be there, we have hoped to open up the possibility of that place being performed and constituted differently. The absent, in this sense, has been revealed as an imaginative tool and space of engagement, within which we might find refreshed views and perspectives on to the present.

In Salina, primarily, we had sought 'to engage and activate a place that [lacked] existing social engagement within its site' (p. 92), to explore 'how we might then shape and perform a separate reflective social space from within which we could directly consider another site or wider locale at distance' (p. 92). To facilitate these intentions we had focused on the uses and material practices apparent within a particular area of the city – an area significant within the history and identity narratives of the city's founding and development – as a way to problematise the apparent coherence of prevailing representational understandings of the area.[49] More specifically, we sought to explore the relationships between such narrations of place and the uses we encountered within the daily functioning of that place, as currently practiced – and to consider the gaps, incongruities and shifts of daily use that were not included within the coherent and selectively focused narratives through which the area's significance was generally constructed and expressed.

I have come to understand, through the realisation and subsequent evaluation of our work in Salina, the extent to which these explorations were then rooted in the gaps and incongruities between the city resident's narrations and their daily uses of the streets that we explored. The juxtaposition of lived and narrated place activated by our work in central Salina, and the reflective situation constructed and sustained by that activation, not only acknowledged the extent to which these incongruities were disregarded within the narratives through which the area was described to us, they also acknowledged the extent to which such narrative constructions were largely only possible at distance. The

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[49] See Chapter Two pp. 87-92 for my previous discussions of *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* and the central intersection of the city that it engaged.

coherence of these received understandings of place, in this sense, might be seen to have been sustained by the very lack of social use and pedestrian experience that had initially provoked our explorations of Salina's central streets – the status of these representational narratives perhaps being sustainable only through not coming into conflict with the realities of use in the present. Similarly, and as we ultimately acknowledged within the final form and location of our Salina work, our work there had allowed me to recognise the extent to which these incongruities and actualities of place might only have been discussable somewhere at distance from those streets themselves – at a distance from where our simultaneous considerations of both the lived and narrated understandings of these particular streets might be allowed to inform each other, while still being held apart, at distance from the conflicts that might perhaps become inherent in their mutual navigation in situ.

The ideas and issues that these acknowledgments have come to raise for this research – in the light of my subsequent considerations of scale and viewpoint, initiated through the performance and assessment of our Providence work – have led me to more specific explorations of the role played by both proximity and connectivity within the approaches and situations of this work.[50] In acknowledging that a separation of representational and practiced understandings of a place – as we had engaged and attempted to work with them in Salina – might require a containment of the impact and influence of one upon the other, it also becomes apparent that an inverse approach may be similarly useful. In that, an experiential engagement and lived understanding of place, at whatever distance, might equally be rooted in an experiential understanding of the wider landscape of uses and connections within which that place and its user are both simultaneously present, active and mutually affective. Since the completion of our work in Salina and Providence, I have been increasingly led to considerations of how the operations of attentiveness and connectedness – within the expanded perspectives of our lived environment that might be enabled by shifts and malleable layers of scale – might also be seen to function independently of distance and measures of physical 'nearness'. More specifically, I have been increasingly led to considerations of how an

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[50] See Chapter Three pp. 124-128 for my previous writing on scale in relation to our work in Providence, as arising from considerations of the work *Providence Cove Walk* specifically.

attentiveness enabled through connectedness, rather than simply through closeness, might in turn inform my further clarification and expansion of these approaches – perhaps allowing further new forms for our expanded performance of such work, across a broader activation of its public situation, and across a wider engagement of its fuller environmental landscape and context.


Image 4.1 Press and publicity image for the broadcast intervention work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016). Image by: Mike Brookes, 2016. A higher resolution copy of this image is included as file: *01 press image [colour version].jpg* – on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016).*

In considering place – as I have consistently recognised it across the full arc of this research – as an evolving product of performed interactions and relationships, these further considerations of the role of proximity within the functioning and possibilities of a reflective and located public art practice can be seen as simply part of a further clarification of the role of performed 'relationality'. Proximity here becomes rooted in the performance of connections; and my more focused explorations of its mechanisms – following my assessments of our work in Salina and Providence – have become similarly rooted in the structuring and performance of connectivity. Perhaps most importantly here, this recognition of a proximity built through attentiveness rather than merely 'closeness', has then allowed me to more fully understand how the

performance of connectivity itself might allow such interactions and attentiveness at any distance. The practical research that I have undertaken to this point, and across the issues and explorations reiterated above, has here opened up the potential for a further line of inquiry. An inquiry across which I have focused the final phase of this doctoral research, and which has become manifest in a public art project that we call *Grey Line*. This final project work within the arc of this inquiry builds directly upon the questions that have arisen from mine and Brookes' exploration of how to consider a site or wider locale at distance; and focuses on my considerations of the potential of scale, and the performance of various scales of connectivity, as a critical spatial practice.

Ideas of specificity within located art practice tend to raise questions and considerations of locality, physical proximity, and perceptions and understandings of our immediate contexts. This focus highlights local environments – prioritising shared and contested identities, narratives and practices within local, regional and national landscapes – and often leads our gaze down and out across the land and inhabited ground around us.[51] From my own experience, this had been largely the case across the situations realised to this point within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project. In previous works within this inquiry, up to and including our *Introduced Birdsong* intervention into the central city streets of Providence, Brookes and I had focused primarily on considerations of 'what is around' – identifying sites of human use in a field defined by the pedestrian and street-level experience of the different locales we worked within. In this new instance however – as our performance of *Providence Cove Walk* had allowed us to consider a geographic and expanded sense of place, and to start to consider 'what is beyond' – the further development of these approaches and intentions that would come to shape *Grey Line*, and the possibilities opened up by our considerations of scale and proximity as unfixed, performative and relational, enabled us to shift and further extend our view, and encouraged a new gesture: to look up.

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[51] This focus, for example, is evident in works such as *The First Five Miles* (Pearson/Brookes, 1998), *The Battle of Orgreave* (Deller, 2001) and *Linked* (Miller, 2003) all of which are discussed in Chapter One pp. 39-42. Other examples might also include site-specific works discussed and referenced in Kaye's *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (2000), Kwon's *One Place After Another. Sie-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004), Doherty's *Situations* (2009) and Pearson's *Site-Specific Performance* (2010).

This small gesture – a slight backward inclination of the neck, a lifting of our gaze out and skyward – fundamentally changed my perspective, and in doing so fostered a new dimension for the work: expanding the field of its possible operation from the ground and horizontal, to include the sky and vertical. At its simplest, the gesture and action of looking up, allows us to contemplate the sky – a primitive and direct act that has inspired religions, science, art, while also feeding the naive and imaginative curiosity of childhood. If the sky 'acts as the primary condition of spaciousness itself, lending to visions of habitation, projection, and motion, as well as containing fundamental forces of nature, the cosmos, and breath itself' (LaBelle, 2010, p. 204), then our contemplation of it might invite us to consider what is 'out there', perhaps triggering broader questions of 'where are we?'. The act of looking up, and out beyond our immediate horizon, may itself begin to foster a different perspective of ourselves – perhaps then activating a new scale of self awareness, and expanding our perceived environment to include considerations of a planetary reality and its wider cosmic dynamics.

If walking the perimeter of Providence's now covered cove began to support my experience of 'a continuity of ground' – allowing me to 'consider and meet downtown Providence not as simply an isolated place in the world, but also as the nearest surface detail of the world itself' (p. 127) – then a recognition and performance of the single simple gesture of looking up might further consolidate and clarify that experience, and might allow me to more readily locate and consider my own specific locale within a yet broader environment and system of interrelations and performed connectivity. This broader perspective, with its inherently expanded scale of view, might then further broaden the resulting consideration of place as an event – and more precisely, might further engage our considerations of scale and proximity through the actioning of a wider connectivity. It is these recognitions, rooted in my experience and subsequent assessments of the approaches initiated across our project work in Salina and Providence, that led me to focus this final phase of my inquiry within a pragmatic and physical engagement of the sky – as an active part of the environment and lived landscape of place, and as a wider spatial frame.

GREY LINE [TWILIGHT]

On Friday October 28th 2016, Mike Brookes and I, with the help of a dispersed group of international collaborators, performed the public broadcast work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016). The work had been developed over the preceding year, in response to a commission by Consonni – a public art production collective based in Bilbao, northern Spain – as a propositional intervention into their day-long international symposium and radio event LaPublika, to be held in Donostia / San Sebastian.[52] The context and broadcast platform provided by LaPublika consisted of a fifteen-hour public symposium, and continuous live web and international radio broadcast, exploring 'the capacity of art to contribute to creating the public sphere […] by considering artistic projects as an example of the different possibilities in which art can be formalized to develop a critical gaze on reality' (Consonni, 2016).

Through our performance of a series of live interpersonal connections, *Grey Line [Twilight]* tracked the sunset edge of the shifting shadow of night – as it slowly moved across the surface of the planet, throughout the day of LaPublika's symposium. The work's title references the 'grey line' or 'terminator', as this line of twilight that borders the shadowed and unshadowed regions of the earth's surface is more technically known (Astronomical Applications Department of the U.S. Naval Observatory, 2016, and dx.qsl.net, n.d.). The work followed the progress of that one day's sunset, and its passage, over a scattering of disparate and diverse locations across the earth, towards and over the event site in Donostia. As this thin line of twilight slowly and relentlessly travelled around the world – from the Pacific, across Asia and the Middle East, Europe and Africa, to the Atlantic – we opened a series of sixty-second live audio connections to personal mobile phones, held in the hands of people stood out on the earth's surface. By giving us temporary access to the microphones of their mobiles, these individuals attempted to allow us to eavesdrop onto whatever may or may

[52] Consonni's LaPublika was co-produced and hosted by the newly opened international cultural centre Tabakalera, in Donostia / San Sebastian, as part of the city's European Cultural Capital 2016 developments and programme.

not be audible around them, as daytime passed into night, within their personal location and environment.

Images 4.2 and 4.3 Documentation images showing the stage and discussion table of LaPublika's public symposium and broadcast hub. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *07 broadcast event images* – on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

Across the day and programme of the LaPublika event, *Grey Line [Twilight]* periodically interrupted the broadcast schedule to connect live to a series of ten participating individuals – as they each stepped out into their own landscape to watch the shadow's edge reach them. In turn, these individuals both occupied and highlighted an accumulating series of named geographical positions across the planet's surface – places selected as delineating points along the path of the progressively advancing 'grey line', and for the time periods within which their specific sunsets occurred. These ten previously unknown and unrelated individual collaborators themselves had been approached and engaged through our activation of an expanded network of personal and professional contacts – either through a series of approaches to 'friends of friends', and 'colleagues of colleagues', or simply through our direct approach to cultural and art organisations identified within the desired locales. The resulting provisional interpersonal audio connections opened moments of access out onto the relentless journey of this one day's perpetual sunset, and onto one of our planet's inevitable rotations – intervening into the ongoing public broadcast stream of LaPublika with fragments of broken or familiar sounds from other public spaces, or by simply offering a reflective minute of somewhere else's live silence.

The intervention of *Grey Line [Twilight]* began at 10:05 Central European Time (CET), as the LaPublika programme in Donostia opened, when we interrupted the event's initial introductions to connect live to the mobile of Maki Nishida in Nagoya, Japan – where the sun was already setting. From this beginning, the structure and accumulation of *Grey Line [Twilight]* became progressively embedded within the conventions and discussions supported by LaPublika's continuous programme and radio stream, across a cumulative series of periodic interruptions – each requiring a pause or cut away from the present symposium proceedings to connect live to a named individual, in a named location, where the sun was currently setting. These periodic one-minute interruptions broadcast the fragmentary aural data reaching the event site as a result of our open person-to-person mobile connections, and marked the passage of twilight's 'grey line' across each of the ten participating individuals in turn. These connections continued with our call to Han Lu in Shanghai, China, at 11:09 (CET); Cauvery Chu in Hong Kong at 11:48 (CET); Alyson Simon in Singapore at 12:51 (CET); Kaori Imai in Kathmandu, Nepal, at 13:38 (CET); Fatima Shamoon in Kuwait City at 16:05 (CET); Fawaz abu Aisheh in Hebron, Palestine, at 16:54 (CET); and Ida Spagadorou in Athens, Greece at 17:30 (CET). At 19:04 (CET), as the shadow of night reached the host site in Donostia, we connected live to the mobile of Olaia Miranda – as she stood on a familiar sunset-facing stretch of the city's beach, a short distance from the LaPublika event venue itself. Our performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]* ultimately concluding with a final connection to Ana I. de Lara, walking out in the closing dusk of Bamako in Mali, as the twilight line of sunset moved on, having passed the symposium's hub in the Basque Country of Spain, and reached her in West Africa, at 20:07 (CET).

In response to this particular context, and for the first time within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series, the place of intervention entered by our work was not the pedestrian street-level environment offered by the host city but the public radio broadcast resulting from the event as a whole – a communication system and media network that in LaPublika operated through both analog radio technology and digital internet streaming. In their outline framework of their intentions for LaPublika, Consonni proposes the radio as public space. More specifically, they propose radio as a mechanism through which we might consider and manage what is common amongst us – such as

'language, rites, norms, collective aesthetic processes' (Consonni, 2016, p. 29); as a medium to make things public, and as a metaphor for the public sphere (Consonni, 2016, p. 35). Drawing from the works of Rosalyn Deutsche and Thomas Keenan, Consonni's perspective in their considerations of the public is very much linked to discourse – as a constituent and constitutive of the public – and to language, as a counter-model for the visual regime often seen as prevalent within the arts (Consonni, 2016, pp. 32-35). Within the radio broadcast context proposed by LaPublika, and drawing from Benjamin's writings on radio,[53] the voice seems to be particularly central in Consonni's articulation of the public (Consonni, 2016, p. 35).

Images 4.4 and 4.5 Documentation images of one of LaPublika's public discussions in progress; in this case a conversation between Rosalyn Deutsche and Richard Huw Morgan. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *07 broadcast event images* – on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

In this context, and holding to the interventional approaches at the root of this work, we began to shape an intervention that we hoped might contribute to and also disrupt the dominant logics of the discursive mechanism proposed by LaPublika – and of their considerations of the public sphere through language, voice, and the human. We hoped to introduce other elements of operation within this specific construction of the public and the common, and therefore of the social. More specifically, our intention was to propose and perform a work that could expand the context of an event primarily articulated discursively; and importantly, to shape a work that might propose that expansion through its

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[53] See *Radio Benjamin* (Rosenthal, 2014).

actioning – as something done, rather than something said or spoken. In this sense, we were seeking to articulate the performance of a simple action that could directly enter into the conversations, talks, interviews and presentations that constituted the radio event of LaPublika. And in doing so, we hoped that we might widen the context and considerations of the public and the common within the development of that conversation, beyond the dialogues and activities that would already be performed within the room of LaPublika's symposium, and beyond the overtly human focus at its centre.

As previously outlined within my initial descriptions of the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, we had already engaged the possibilities of radio broadcast technology within a number of our previous works.[54] In *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010), we had used radio as a mechanism to intervene, and activate an additional and unauthorised layer of use, within the private and commercially operated space of an amusement arcade; the broadcast intervention being made accessible to anyone entering the arcade with a small personal radio device, while remaining otherwise 'invisible' and inaudible to all others. And in *Dark FM* (2008), we established a live radio broadcast link to open a portal between two places using a familiar, and analog, technology – structuring our use of that technology to most directly enable a meeting, 'as a specifically and succinctly structured proximity, between two physically distant places' (p. 24). Our use of broadcast technology in *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* had enabled our intervention and alternative occupation of a space within which we had been granted no physical access to work. While in *Dark FM*, the broadcast we established, and the connectivity it performed, came to constitute the work itself – that is, the work performed and became manifest as a connection, that opened live and uninterpreted access to a place from where we were currently absent. Now, within LaPublika, the broadcast itself became the site of our intervention; as an evolving and negotiated space emerging from the performance of multiple connections and interactions – established, and made public, during the developing symposium as a whole. This context provided us with an active public broadcast environment into whose connectivity we could intervene. This, in turn, offered me an opportunity to further question and

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[54] See Chapter One 'Aesthetic Roots' for previous descriptions and considerations of our radio works *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand,* pp. 41-42 and pp. 48-51; and *Dark FM*, pp. 23-24.

develop my engagement of scale, proximity and connectivity within my considerations of the construction of social space and place. In approaching the interactions and data transmissions that constituted LaPublika's live and continuous broadcast stream as site, I could explore its inherent behaviours and conventions through a further consideration of use and shared occupation. I could then more fully explore, within our negotiated shaping of the temporary social and collective space of that broadcast environment, how an interventional art work might be conceived and function entirely through and as our performance of that environment's inherent connectivity.

Images 4.6 and 4.7 Documentation images of the technical equipment and broadcast operation centre of LaPublika's public symposium and broadcast hub. These images feature me, and show the position from where I established the international telephone calls within the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: *07 broadcast event images* – on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

The key propositions of *Grey Line [Twilight]* – as both an interventional public art work and as the concluding phase of the arc of this research – are perhaps most usefully recognised in our intended expansion of the work's public context. At its root, *Grey Line [Twilight]* considers a wider lived landscape, through a shift of perspective that allows the work to address its own performance across the full scale of that landscape. At its simplest, in performing across an expanded topography, the work then tangibly locates itself – and locates all those engaged within it – within the broader situation of that chosen topography. Through a conscious expansion of my previous considerations of scale and proximity as performative spatial practices, the work engages a shift of viewpoint, that may then reveal a wider planetary context – as a broadening

physical and social context that extends out from, and includes, the immediate gathering and physical hub of the LaPublika event. This shift of view, inherent within the work's performance, then inevitably expands to include everyone and everywhere that *Grey Line [Twilight]* then connects – from the immediate conversation and host site of the symposium, to those participating in the work at distance, the wider international listening public, and the shared geographical environment that supports the work as a whole. The pragmatic task and act of *Grey Line [Twilight]* is then seen to inhabit and operate across that wider geographical landscape – through the specific connections that it performs, and in which it becomes manifest. Through our recognition of a distant named individual, the mutual act of our shared telephone call, their specific attempt to share an aspect of their locale, and our choice to listen, these performed connections link us directly to other physical positions – not only perhaps locating us all within the wider landscape of the work, in the present, but also perhaps allowing a wider social attentiveness to each other across its inherent distances.

Image 4.8 Mobile panoramic snapshot of the view of Kathmandu, from where Kaori Imai stood to receive our call during the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo: Kaori Imai, 2016. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, are included in folder: *05 camera-phone location images* – on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

Equally key here is the liveness of these performed connections. As I have previously discussed at length, in relation to our work in Salina most specifically,[55] this work becomes manifest in and as the situation of its mutual performance. In performing a wider use and activation of that situation in the present, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might then reveal our mutual occupation of a place within which the sun is constantly setting, for some of us, here and now – within

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[55] See Chapter Two pp. 98-102 for my discussions of performance as place in relation to the work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation*.

a shared space where we are all operating simultaneously. In this sense – and enabled by the shift of perspective engaged by the action and operation of this work – we might perhaps redefine and re-delineate the social context and public situation of LaPublika through the performance of additional interpersonal connections at a global scale. Importantly, these additional individuals 'join us' in the present, and from a position within our shared planetary environment that marks the current position of twilight in its passage across the earth's surface. The resulting re-delineation of our current location progressively expands its boundaries to include those individuals who now acknowledge us, in their attempt to help facilitate the wider ongoing task of the work. Their individual contributions not only performing their own direct engagement and inclusion within the considerations and gathering of LaPublika, but also including everyone present within the hub and wider broadcast environment of the symposium, in our and our collaborators' collective attempt to mark and reveal the ongoing rotation of the planet. And here perhaps, for those spectators and participants engaged within the work, the reflective social situation both proposed and actualised by the performance of this collective act – and by this specific use and inhabitation of the planet's telecommunications and broadcast network – might then reveal its broader shared landscape, through an experiential recognition of our broader interconnectedness, and therefore of our broader social space.

Adhering to the formal attitudes and approaches shaped across this interventional project series and inquiry as a whole, *Grey Line [Twilight]* manifests a critical exploration of its context through the focused performance of existing uses and behaviours. Again, we explore the place we are considering through our performance of that place – seeking to offer a refreshed perspective, and opening a space of proposition and reflection, through our actioning of possibilities that are already available. Within *Grey Line [Twilight]* – as within all the previous works across our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series, and as an overt intervention into the discursive frame of LaPublika specifically – these approaches again propose a critical attentiveness to place through use and action. Perhaps more clearly and overtly than in any other work across this series, the proposition and critical functioning of *Grey Line [Twilight]* both rely on being manifest as and through a 'thing done' – and in that 'doing',

in the activation of the connectivity implicit in its task, the work finds a form for the performance of what it proposes and considers. In this sense, the immediacy and tangibility of the mechanisms we employed to facilitate the interpersonal connections at the heart of this act are also inherent to its functioning. While not tactile or overtly physical, these connections are real and live. There is no physical movement or 'bringing together' of the disparate and event-specific collective of individuals that gather through the attempted task of this action. Similarly, no additional discursive content is applied or communicated across these connections once they are established. It is simply the establishment and experiential recognition of the connections themselves, that brings the work and its intentions into being.

Image 4.9 Mobile panoramic snapshot of the street view in Hong Kong, from where Cauvery Chu stood to receive our call during the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Hong Kong, China. Photo by: Cauvery Chu (PARA-SITE), 2016. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, are included in folder: ***05 camera-phone location images*** – on disc: ***Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)***.

Our choice to call an individual's personal mobile phone, from our position within the room and broadcast hub of the symposium, allows us direct access to them, wherever they may choose to be within their own locale – across an existing infrastructure available via devices we already carry in our pockets. The act of that connection – and more importantly, the daily familiarity and ease of a mobile telephone call – reveals our potential connectedness and proximity, and a shared occupation of place. Our shared occupation being merely highlighted by the work, as a precondition of our choices to overtly make contact with each other or not. Ultimately, it is the self-evident ordinariness and ambivalence of the series of person-to-person telephone calls we then perform that not only enables the work to be done, within the context and network environment offered by LaPublika, but that also allows the wider task and intentions of that work to remain in focus.

If this final phase of my work across this inquiry is rooted in the actioning of connectivity, its specific approaches may then be further recognised in the attentiveness and mutual acknowledgement that our collective performance of these connections might both require and provoke. Our activation of these connections acknowledges a series of otherwise unknown individuals, as they choose to make themselves 'visible' to us, in an attempt to reveal a wider function and fact of our shared environment. These individuals each connect to us directly, and indirectly then to each other; and in the moment of each connection we expand our present situation to include these distant named individuals, and the places where they stand, in our understanding of the here and now. Our recognition of each other is facilitated by the structured act of the work – within which we knowingly performed together, and knowingly for each other. The focal points within our connectivity – selected because of their geographical location on the planet's surface, and momentarily connected by a mutual attempt to perform the task of the work – reveal and acknowledge each other within the same act. And it is as a sustained event, revealed through the accumulation of the connections we establish – and ultimately through the continuous planetary rotation that our connections follow and track – that the broadening of our situation, and our attentiveness to our mutual performance of that wider situation, might become increasingly tangible.

In a direct performance of multiple and simultaneous shifts in scale, that perhaps again brings to mind Martin Creed's *Work No. 232* (2000) – in which large neon letters spell out the statement 'the whole world + the work = the whole world' – the act of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, including the work's collective participants and audiences, and the rotating sunlit planet whose shifting surface shadow we chase, are all potentially combined. As the work intervenes into the unfolding situation of the room of LaPublika's symposium, it attempts to reveal its wider occupation of the room plus the broadcast environment, of the room plus the broadcast environment and listeners, and ultimately of the room plus the broadcast environment and revolving planet as a whole. In my personal performance and experience of the unfolding event of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, these multiple spheres of operation became momentarily active and visible within, and as, the same situation of occupation and use. Through the particular structural and performative choices that shaped *Grey Line [Twilight]* – and for

the first time within my ongoing development of these ideas and approaches across this inquiry as a whole – the work is perhaps then seen to operate, and to allow reflective views, at all these scales simultaneously. And it is the simultaneity of these scales of operation, and the resulting layered perspectives, that the work proposes and performs – and on which its intended functioning and proposition rely.

Through an acknowledgement and performance of connectivity then, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might be seen to momentarily concretise a collective of otherwise disparate individuals who in working together for the purpose and duration of the work are, and are revealed to be, simply 'aware of the appropriateness of their co-presence and assume it as a means to an end' (Delgado, 2008). In their acknowledgement and momentary attentiveness to each other this collective may then begin, geographical point of occupation by geographical point of occupation, to delineate a mode of shared inhabitation that might both reflect and also circumvent Latour's identification that 'it is now the mythical sites of local and global that are hard to locate on a map' (2005, p. 205). They consciously perform, and plot, their own positions within personal, interpersonal, local and global spheres of operation simultaneously to manifest a shared occupation of both geographical and social space. A space seen here to emerge through the performance of connections directly, and through an act of occupation that might also highlight the extent to which the resulting social space is not configured simply as a combination or accumulation of the points or things being connected, but rather, as Latour suggests, through the actioning and act of their connecting, in and of itself (2005, pp. 34-38). In our performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, at its simplest, we had hoped to consider and reveal the planet as the landscape on and in which all those engaged within the work were stood. We aimed to reveal that physical ground and landscape of operation through simply performing our mutual occupation of it, across its wider surface. Equally directly, we had hoped to explore how such a global recognition and connection of others, if achieved, may allow a fuller sense of 'being at once there and here', as Butler puts it, 'accepting and negotiating the multilocality and cross-temporality of ethical connections we might rightly call global' (2012, p. 138). Ultimately, and most importantly, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might be seen to shape an act that, in daily and self-evident ways, could at least begin to operate

with and within the physical facts of the planet to open a reflective situation, at multiple scales of engagement and interaction, where 'ideas like world and here', as Morton suggests, 'begin to look not like big abstract concepts but rather small, localized, human flavored' (2016, p. 32).

CONCLUSION

The practice-based research I have undertaken and present here has sought to propose and explore new approaches to located and interventional public art works in social space – approaches that might then, in turn, foster an increased critical attentiveness to the functioning and possibilities of both public live art and social space itself. These approaches have sought to engage the actioning of lived and social space, and to highlight not simply the inevitable evolution of such space, but also the extent to which it is both shaped and renegotiated by the daily choices and shifts of behaviour through which it is lived. At its root, I have sought to anchor this practice-based inquiry in an engagement with the fact of change, and in approaches that might activate a recognition of both the processes and possibility of change. At its simplest, I might offer that where changes of use and understanding within shared space can be tangibly identified as happening, such change is clearly possible; and wherever change is possible its continuing processes may then be recognised as ongoing, and even simply unavoidable. The public situations shaped and sustained by the approaches and practices developed here have often sought to open up reflective social spaces where such processes of change and negotiation might then perhaps become explicit. The resulting works might be seen to foster an active attentiveness to the choices and possible consequences of our personal and collective agency, as we act on such shared situations. In their origins these works have sought ways to 'unsettle any sense of [place] as either fixed or congruent' and to reveal its 'use and configuration as continuously and inevitably in process' (p. 101). Once activated, these situations have hoped to further expanded considerations of 'a "here" that might not only reveal itself as evolving through use and time, but that may also manifest itself as part of wider landscapes and environments' (p. 128) – problematising distinctions between local and global, accenting the impossibility of a place lived in isolation, and acknowledging the interplay of human and non-human agents within the operations of that 'here', to perhaps allow a more consciously coordinated cognition and sentience. Ultimately, these practices have aimed to open up a critical space, between the known and

imagined, where the agency of those present is implicit, and where we might therefore reflect on the nature and consequences of that agency, in the present, and for the future – a future then recognisable as overtly open to consideration and choice, however our myriad personal desires and imaginings may then shape it. Where that critical space is opened and performed across the wider and multiple scales of an expanded address to the nature of proximity and connectedness within its operation, these personal imaginings might become more rooted in 'a global recognition and connection of others' (p.147). A perspective or viewpoint which might in turn invite questions about the ethics of being, and of being inevitably active, both 'here' and also 'there', within such an expanded and interconnected sense of place. A sense of place, and indeed a sense of planet, that is 'not a cosmopolitan rush but rather the uncanny feeling that there are [...] so many intersecting places, so many scales, so many nonhumans' (Morton, 2016, p. 10). A perspective that, once actioned, might offer a hope and template for social and environmental considerations and understandings that are consciously attentive to the interplay and consequences of human and non-human agency, across both human and geological scales and timescales. Perhaps then, through the approaches expanded here, the resulting personal desires and imaginings for the future might be increasingly built on an attentiveness to other and diverse aspects of an ultimately shared space and system of operations – at least within the critical situations activated by the work, where we might offer, and begin to rehearse, more broadly ecological and connected ways of thinking and being together.

My explorations throughout this inquiry here have been rooted in the performed nature of place, and more importantly, in my considerations and explorations of the social functioning and situation of performance constituted *as* place – and have been seen to develop here across my address to three main research questions. Through these questions I have considered how the performance of alternative or additional configurations of a place might generate new event-specific critical situations in situ. I have then reevaluated my approaches to and intentions within such behavioural juxtapositions in increasing detail, through a focused engagement of the absences that might be seen to inform and actively operate in – and which may in that sense be considered or made 'present' in – the particular present. Finally I have reconsidered and yet further expanded the

limits of my engagement and address to site itself, through my explorations of the shifting perspectives allowed by understandings and mechanisms of scale and proximity within our performance and navigation of a locale, and within our possible recognition and expanded engagement of that locale across a wider landscape of environmental and performative interactions.

From the outset, this research has intentionally been carried out across a series of fully funded professional art commissions – its outcomes programmed for public presentation as commissioned proposals within the current field of industry concerns and practices, as public domain contributions to those practices, and for public contexts and audiences within the locale of each commission specifically. I feel that this decision has proved to be fundamental, in that the requirements and visibility implicit in those commissions has helped to further facilitate both the rigour and reach of this inquiry. The levels and clarity of conception and production called for by such commissions, and within their resulting public outcomes, have demanded that this inquiry begin beyond the perhaps more speculatively exploratory phases of personal artist process. The same can be said for the resulting expectations for outcomes shaped for local public audiences specifically – as artistic products that might achieve their imperatives within the curatorial and presentational needs and realities of both a local and wider field of professional contemporary public art practice. This research has therefore been focused and supported across the development of three distinct public art commissions, and across the public works that have resulted from those commissions specifically – works that have together expanded and concluded Brookes' and my long-term *Just a little bit of history repeating* artistic project, the initial intentions and considerations of which provided the impetus and foundations for this inquiry.

The resulting four distinct artworks – namely *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation* (2013), *Historic Parking Lots of Providence / Introduced Birdsong* (2013), *Providence Cove Walk* (2013) and *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016) – have been seen to both drive and delineate the arc of my inquiry here. The sequential development of these four works has allowed me to clarify and expand my intentions and approaches consequentially – from the initial superimpositions of past and present usage through which Brookes and I initiated the artistic

proposals of our *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, and which prompted its working title – to my increasingly focused considerations of the performed social situations fundamental to my approaches and proposals here themselves. These developments have, in turn, allowed me to further consolidate my understandings of the ways in which these practices might both favour and allow the generation of new event-specific places through their performance – places where alternative or additional perspectives and configurations of place might become apparent and possible, in ways that are perhaps not readily apparent and possible elsewhere. These works have supported my more focused explorations of how 'active absences' within our current configurations of a place might be highlighted, to reset our attentiveness to the choices and constituents currently at play within our collective performance of the present; and of how such interventional reconfigurations might be activated and performed over increased or indeed multiple scales of place, as additional layers of behaviour within the daily functioning of a locale. Ultimately, the approaches I have explored and developed here, through my research-led development of these public works, have supported my critical reassessment of the wider limits and nature of my performative address to social space – and my resulting approaches to the activation of critical social situations, through the performance of the interactions and connections that might configure them, across increasingly broader understandings of the landscape and environment of the local, and irrespective of physical distance and proximity. These works have each been shaped through my attempts to best realise their individual intentions in context, and as a result they have very visibly taken on a varied and distinct array of forms – further reaffirming my stated approach to each as a context-specific operation and social construct resulting from its particular address to place in situ. Each has been publicly presented within the international context expanded by their commissions, across the USA and Europe specifically. And collectively they are seen to manifest and articulate the inquiry I submit here.

Through this body of practice-based research I have proposed performance as place and social space. That is, 'as a negotiated, and negotiable, 'social product'' (Lefebvre, 2009, pp.186-195) – as the relational construct that emerges through the material practices carried out within the performance of the work.

To be more specific, the artwork here is the situation that evolves from our collective engagement – the resulting situation is simultaneously the object, subject and operation of that artwork itself. The work, then, *is* the constellation of things, behaviours, material and immaterial relationships that are engaged, emerge and become possible during its event – as an 'actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point', as Lefebvre articulates social space (1991, p.101). In this sense, I have sought to propose performance as 'a space for making and embodying the social; that is, as a socio-spatial configuration where relationships, exchanges and communication could be activated and intensified' (p. 99), and as a mechanism through which those engaged within it might enter the debate of who they, collectively, might be (p. 100). Implicit in this consideration of performance *as* place, is an understanding of performance as 'always in the process of being made' (Massey, 2005a, p.9); that is, as 'never finished, never closed' (Massey, 2005a, p.9). Such performance invites multiple behaviours, ways of engagement, readings, understandings, seeking to set in motion a process in which multiplicity, complexity and contradictions might become apparent, rather than being resolved or simplified. In understanding performance as place and social space, and the social as the performance of connections, I have sought to develop work that is configured 'through the actioning of connections, and through the act of that connectivity, in and of itself' (p. 69) – rather than through the combination or composition of discursive or representational elements or materials.

Similarly, in that actioning of connections, I have sought to highlight the overtly provisional collective of agents at play within the resultantly negotiated social spaces of this work – in that the material practices that constitute the work are 'carried out' not by the artists alone, but by whoever and whatever becomes engaged within it. My understanding and activation of performance *as* place here has led to an expanded sense of what that place itself might then be, as well as of its implicit connectivity to other places. My research here has allowed the work to become increasingly manifest through the performance of particular and selected connections, and as an address to the performance of those connections explicitly – proposing proximity and co-presence as simply the attentive performance of a connection. And these articulations have posed questions about who and what are *not* here; opening a field of engagement with

what we do not currently know, what we do not currently see, who we are not with – inviting further considerations of an expanded, and expanding, sense of place, and perhaps of the mechanisms and questions of our living together:

> We live together because we have no choice, and though we sometimes rail against that unchosen condition, we remain obligated to struggle to affirm the ultimate value of that unchosen social world, an affirmation that is not quite a choice, a struggle that makes itself known and felt precisely when we exercise freedom in a way that is necessarily committed to the equal value of lives [...] But it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that "here" is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that let us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics.
> (Butler, 2012, p. 150)

These approaches have engaged and advanced artistic attitudes developed across the full breadth of mine and Brookes' creative work together, to propose a critical address to place through use in which considerations and experiences of a particular place might become expanded, directly and simply, through our performance of it – and more precisely, through the direct momentary act of our simply living and inhabiting that place in specifically expanded ways. In this way, I have proposed and realised performative artistic situations in which the subject and object of those considerations and experiences of a place might become bound together, both within and as the critical social space being performed. Importantly, these situations – these emergent and event-specific social spaces, that I have recognised to be at the foundation and functional core of the works performed here – have been shown to operate primarily as *things done* and *met*. I have shown how these approaches to located and interventional live art, and how the resulting performative propositions of this work, overtly and intentionally foreground their own materiality. Similarly, and equally importantly here, I have detailed how the intentions and considerations of these works are supported by acts and functions not predicated on discourse – but rather seek to manifest and perform themselves, in ways that might then be physically occupied, explored, negotiated and experienced. As Lavery (forthcoming)

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reflects, again in his writings on our performance work *Some things happen all at once*, which I initially cite in the opening chapter of this text:

> The thinking that emerged from the performance is not *in* it per se; rather, [...] thinking emerges *from* it. Or, better still, was done in conjunction *with* it, through its unfolding. The performance is generative in that sense. It allows for thinking to be posited as a 'more than human' process; something impersonal that comes upon or strikes us, as opposed to something that we craft and control from the inside, the work of a disembodied mind, *res cogitans*. And, for me, it is in this opening to the outside, this sensitivity to matter, that the more profound ecological ethics of the performance reside; in, that is, our capacity to affirm the entropic processes of agentic matter.

My contribution through this research, as articulated and detailed within this submission, is perhaps most clearly rooted in this direct and open engagement of performance as simultaneously both the act and site of its own material and environmental location and functioning. The approaches inherent in this understanding have not only allowed me to propose practice as performed and actioned thinking, but have also allowed me to shape new practical forms of interventional public art as self-reflective performances of their own proposals and considerations. These forms are then left intentionally open and void enough of comment and content to perhaps allow those engaged within the work, myself included, to recognise and expand our own individual and interconnected ways of thinking – as we negotiate and explore the situation evolving through our own engagement. The social situations resulting from my practices here have then been seen to become tangibly manifest through our inhabitation of them, not as arguments for or illustrations of any particular set of social choices or environmental behaviours, but rather as places opened up for occupation – as sites of as yet undetermined interaction, and with as yet still undetermined potential outcomes. In them the modes of thought and interaction being considered might be directly proposed and performed, and then simply allowed to play out, shaping and reshaping the work as they meet and evolve. The physical and social connections being performed through these works are not then used to transfer material or discursive information, but are simply

established, recognised, and then allowed to remain open – perhaps allowing the individual elements and connections being engaged, and the wider landscape and environment within which those connections operate, to become apparent, and then to be inhabited and explored.

Ultimately, the explorations and understandings I have developed across this research have allowed me to shape an expanding and transferable set of approaches to interventional and participatory public art work. Approaches that, through the specific character of their focus and formal articulations, have in turn opened up reflective spaces and conceptualisations within which further uses and ways of thinking may become imaginable and possible – for myself, and hopefully also for others. Importantly, and distinctively, my approaches here have been understood as rooted not in an artistic engagement of the perhaps more familiar processes of poetic discourse, narrative, representation, metaphor, composition or choreography – but as an invitational and practically performed artistic attentiveness, to the interactions and collective negotiations that might inform the broader contexts and landscapes we occupy. My formal and procedural engagement of this artistic attentiveness, rather than seeking to define and formalise a particular methodological address to site and public art, has hoped to establish a set of open and responsive understandings and creative attitudes to the performance of place – that might in turn support the visioning and development of further, and as yet unknown, forms and intentions. In my pursuit of this aim, across the full arc of this research, I have proposed and tested new approaches and insights within both the form and functioning of located and interventional live art in public space. Through these developments I have shaped an extensive and evolving body of public art works and practices – public works and practices that have together offered a consistently rigorous and distinctive contribution to the field.

In closing, I feel that I should also highlight the extent to which my research here has continually fed and informed the wider developments of my professional practice as a whole – providing valuably transferable understandings and procedures that have directly expanded both my pedagogical and artistic work. Importantly, across the years of this inquiry, and as a further consequence of the intentionally public nature and process of this research, the propositions

and potential contributions of my ongoing considerations here have also become increasingly recognised and engaged within the broader professional contexts of my practice. The increasingly central and developmental roles being offered within my teaching and curatorial appointments can be seen as a further acknowledgement of the relevance and impact of the understandings and approaches I have shaped across this research – in their contribution to current considerations within the field of professional public art and public art programming in general, and in their continuing address to the role and possibilities of interventional and context-specific live art practices in particular. Similarly, over the latter periods of this inquiry, aspects of the attitudes and proposals I have publicly articulated through this research have been discussed in scholarly writings – a number of which I have previously cited within this text.[56] This increased academic interest has in turn opened possibilities for further research collaborations – offering opportunities that have also further acknowledged and enhanced the recognition and reach of my contribution through this inquiry.

Most importantly perhaps, these opportunities are now reciprocally supporting and feeding developments within my own artistic practices, which continue to both drive and articulate the imperatives of my work and research. These new artistic developments are currently being pursued across a range of solo and collaborative initiatives, but are still perhaps most clearly and notably manifest in my continued collaborative work with artist Mike Brookes – with whom I am now planning a number of new works and projects. These projects, inevitably, continue to build on the understandings and procedures identified throughout this inquiry – and through them I hope to initiate a new phase of exploration and proposition, across a new phase of public art works. My current intention, drawing directly on the outcomes and possibilities of our *Grey Line* project work, and on our recent performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016) specifically, is to further explore the mechanisms of social interaction and connectedness that might allow the collective performance of critical social situations across yet wider understandings of 'here' and 'us', and through a still wider range of context-specific artistic forms. This work will begin with an expanded exploration of the ways in which the structures of open access and

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[56] See, for example, Cornago (2013; 2015) and Lavery (forthcoming).

interconnection currently provided by digital broadcast and internet streaming technologies, across multiple scales and distances, might themselves be constituted as sites of intervention, reflection and social encounter.

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