

ambient.vista

artist residencies 2008

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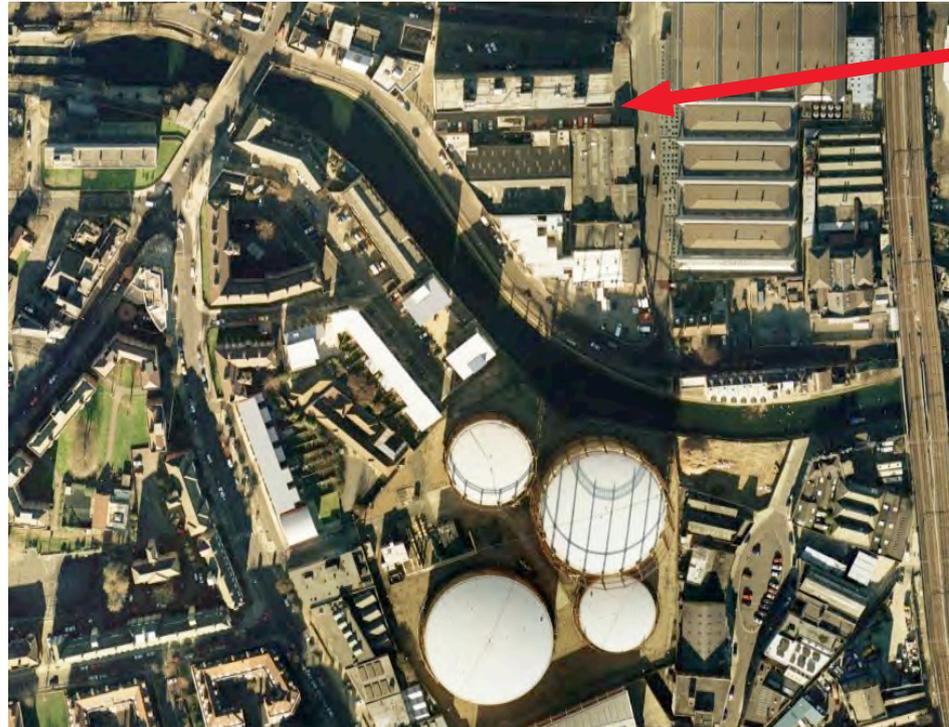
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ambient.space:
51° 32.125' N
0° 3.605' W.



austrian cultural forum^{lon}

The *ambient.vista* residency series invited international artists to reframe the city by addressing the vista over it afforded by ambient.space, the East End studio/workshop/salon of artists Manu Luksch & Mukul Patel. The creation of an artist residency was a natural development of the informal networking and hosting that their organisation, Ambient Information Systems (AIS), has been engaged in since inception. The resident artists critically addressed urban space and employed a diverse range of practices and media, particularly intermedia.

The 2012 Olympics brings with it promise, controversy, and indisputably, change to London. The East End is being rapidly torn down and rebuilt, but to the commuter hemmed in by fellow Tube passengers, rushing between ranks of chain stores ducked under an overcast sky, the magnitude of these changes are not always apparent.

ambient.space is located on the 7th (top) floor of an industrial building in South Hackney. The space has a continuous 12 m stretch of window facing due south, overlooking Regent's Canal and a gasworks. The view encompasses the City and Docklands, but also the grime of Bethnal Green, the Kingsland Road Mosque, church steeples, the Royal London Hospital's helipad, Tower Bridge, the Barbican, Centre Point, The Millenium Dome, and Blackheath.

A single glance takes in extremes of wealth and poverty, the old and the new, social deprivation and regeneration, symbols of the religious and the heathen, and numerous means of escape – the canal, roads, trains, and planes.

The window reveals the city's dynamic: the rise and fall of the gasometers, cranes bobbing on the skyline; columns of smoke rising from disused properties, violet explosions of fireworks celebrating Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year, or Bonfire night; a flock of geese leaving Victoria Park and the stream of aircraft on final approach to Heathrow and City Airport; the sounds of police sirens racing towards Walthamstow and an hour's advance forecast of the weather rolling in from the West.

ambient.vista 2008 invited artists:
Wolfgang Staehle (New York/Berlin),
Tuomas Toivonen (Helsinki)
Fahim Amir (Vienna)
Shiho Fukuhara (Tokyo).

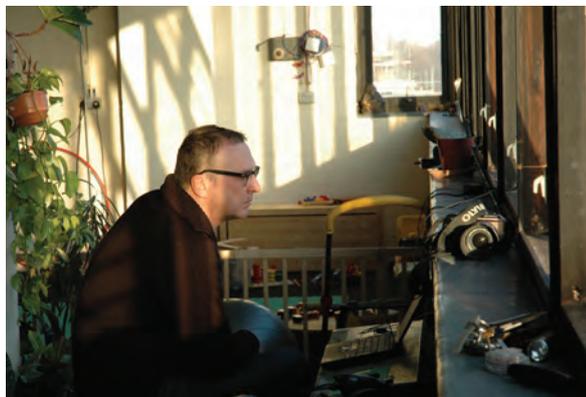
Priorities of the shortlisting and selection process were to have artists who engage critically, particularly with urban space, and who employ a diverse range of practices and media – especially intermedia. The artists' brief was very straightforward: to make work in any medium that addresses the aspect through the windows.

The idea of a photographic work that encompassed the view from ambient.space had been discussed with Wolfgang Staehle years earlier. It is ironical (or fortuitous?) that, by the time it was possible to realise such a work, there was a major construction site directly in front of the studio.

The invited artists produced a wide range of works, from Staehle's contemplative photography and Tumoas Toivonen's architectural-optical experiments that activated discussions about the property market, to the highly theoretical and overtly political, yet immensely entertaining, performances by Fahim Amir. Finally, Shiho Fukuhara managed to glimpse the garbage floating in Regent's Canal before it was occluded by the new building being constructed in front of ambient.space, and linked the local circulation of plastic objects to the global ecosystem.

During each artist's residency, works were exhibited or performed at ambient.space (during the Whitechapel Gallery and Parasol Unit's 'First Thursdays' late-night openings), and at the partner gallery, E:vent in Bethnal Green; Fahim Amir also performed at the Austrian Cultural Forum, London. All four artists' works were collected and shown at E:vent's October show at V22's Wharf Road project 'The Beautiful Children', and in 2009 all the works will travel to exhibitions in the artists' respective countries of residence.

Wolfgang Staehle



Imperial Gas Works

*Digital photographs of 24 h periods, interval c. 10s, taken between March and July.
Artist's talk at E:vent, 3 April.*

Born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1950. Wolfgang Staehle moved to New York in 1976 to study at the School of Visual Arts, with, among others, Joseph Kosuth (Conceptual Art), Marshall Blonsky (Semiotics), Robert Mangold (Painting), and Jackie Winsor (Sculpture).

After a gallery career in New York and Europe in the 1980s, Staehle decided to work collectively, and in 1991 he founded THE THING, an innovative online forum for artists and cultural workers. THE THING began as a Bulletin Board System (BBS), a form of online community dialogue used before the advent of the World Wide Web. By the late 1990s. it had grown into a diverse online

community of dozens of members' Web sites, mailing lists, a Web hosting service, a community studio in Chelsea, and the first Web site devoted to Net Art, bbs.thing.net.

In 1996, Staehle began to produce an ongoing series of live online video streams. The first of these works was *Empire 24/7*, a continuous recording of the top one-third of the Empire State Building broadcast live over the Internet. Staehle has followed *Empire 24/7* with online streams of other buildings, landscapes and cityscapes such as Berlin's Fernsehturm, the Comburg Monastery in Germany, lower Manhattan before and after 9/11, and a Yanomami village in the Brazilian Amazon.

He is represented by Postmasters Gallery, New York.

Interview: September 11, 2008

MP = Mukul Patel WS = Wolfgang Staehle

MP – You've made several 24 hour (or longer), live broadcast or recorded time-lapse photographic panoramas. How does Imperial Gas Works fit into this series?

WS – Imperial Gas Works is a recent piece in what one could call a series of 'vedute', which is a genre of landscape painting that's been around since the early 17th century. Technically speaking it's not painting, of course; it's rather some sort of chronophotography. A static camera takes a picture every couple of seconds with intervals usually in the 5 to 10 seconds range.

Because they looked so much like today's post cards, vedute paintings were sometimes considered a minor genre, but I think there is something quite metaphysical about showing the world just like it is. For me the most exciting thing is everyday reality, the fact that it occurs at all.

I always liked realist painters, such as Vermeer or the painters and photographers of Neue Sachlichkeit ('new objectivity') in the early 20th century. This cool, objective and distanced style suits me quite well – it's in itself a statement against the prevailing trends in contemporary art, which increasingly favour big spectacular productions. My work is not very entertaining and only few critics grasp the phenomenological underpinnings. It stays pretty much on the periphery of the



Imperial Gas Works, 26 April, 05:18.46

major trends, although recently there were some discussions in a few art journals about 'slowness' as a phenomenon in the works of certain artists.

MP – The work was made with one SLR camera with a wide angle lens. I thought you'd use two (or more) compact cameras with normal lenses, then stitch the panorama together. Would that have accorded more closely with what you perceive when you look out of the windows? (The piece would then have been more 'City and Docklands'.)

WS – I could have used two cameras as I did in New York in 2001. The SLR camera however produces an image with a much higher resolution, so we can always crop and cut it in post-production and change the aspect ratio. It can even be cut into two images and stitched together as a panorama which then could be projected using two projectors.

MP – But what about the perspectival distortion of the wide angle lens (as opposed to that in a panorama that encompasses the same view, but is stitched from two or more longer lenses). With the wide angle, the City and Docklands at the edges of the frame are diminished relative to the gas works, in the centre. Looking out from ambient.space with the naked eye, Docklands, the gas works and the City appear approximately equally significant in the visual field. In its objectivity, every artificial lens fails to represent what the subjective, scanning eye sees...

WS – Whether the image comes from a wide angle lens or is stitched together with multiple close-ups doesn't really matter that much to me. One method is as valid or as useless as the other. In the past I have used both approaches. I kind of like the gas works taking center stage in the London piece.

MP – Interestingly, the time-lapse aspect of your work also diminishes Docklands and the City relative to other parts of the image, because it mutes the strobing lights on top of the city buildings which normally draw the eye. When you talk about the 'phenomenological underpinnings' of your work, are you pointing to the temporal aspect of perception? What of the warping of space, relative to that perceived by the human eye, in your representation? The visual flux passes through space as well as time... ('flux' as a transport phenomenon is defined in physics as a flow through unit area per unit time).

WS – Time is certainly an important aspect of the work. By using stills that are refreshed at certain short intervals, I feel I can affect a slight shift in perception. It's very different from looking at a continuous film or video of the same scene. To me it's almost hypnotic to watch the slight changes from one image to the next. The almost imperceptible changes in the light, a cloud moves a tiny bit or a crane in the distance shifts its position. Time moves, but it also quite literally stands still.

By 'phenomenological underpinnings' I didn't mean any investigation into the mechanics of

human perception, but rather about achieving a temporal state of perception stripped of any intentionality. An awareness that there is something, rather than nothing. I'm perfectly aware that in contemporary culture this sound pathetic and banal at the same time, but think about it.

MP – The view from ambient.space is, at least for London, spectacular. You do not make your work as spectacle. I guess you achieve thus this transformation achieved through the durational aspect?

WS – I like the minute changes from one image to the next. I like 'boring' things, they are very exciting to me, but you need a painter's eye to appreciate them.

MP – How much of your work have you viewed in real time?

WS – It's not necessary to view it all. Just look as long as you wish and then maybe return a few hours later. I think the only time somebody watched all 24 hours was when the metropolitan museum bought Eastpoint, which is a Hudson River vista, and some poor guy had to sit and check each and every frame of it.

MP – The beating, the folding, the heat, the time: what's the secret of the scrambled eggs that you made us for breakfasts?

WS – We can talk about this after I publish my cook book.



Imperial Gas Works, 8 July

12.40.06



14.34.20



15.29.37



Imperial Gas Works, 22 April

17.42.12



17.45.47



17.51.27



Imperial Gas Works, 21 March

00.10.08



01.09.42



02.17.47



Imperial Gas Works, 22 April, 19.02.56



Imperial Gas Works, 8 July, 22.21.40



Tuomas Toivonen



New Rooms (NOW AVAILABLE)

*Mixed media site-specific installation,
postcards, posters.*

Installation at ambient.space, 5 June.

Lecture performance at E:vent, 6 June.

Tuomas Toivonen is a founder of NOW, an architecture office in Helsinki that develops solutions for the contemporary condition, from hotels and tableware to prefab houses and urban policy.

As artist, Tuomas creates works and publications that challenge perceptions of scale, place and location. He also makes music, and is member of dubrock band Giant Robot and Jori Hulkkonen's 10-piece Acid Symphony Orchestra. He has taught urban planning, spatial design and architecture at Helsinki University of Technology, University of Art and Design and Estonian Academy of Arts.



New Rooms at ambient.space, 5 June
Photos: Mukul Patel and Manu Luksch

During the residency, Tuomas created the mixed-media sculpture *New Rooms* and installed it along the public balcony adjoining ambient.space on the 7th floor of Regent's Studios, accompanied by a series of flyers and posters advertising the availability of the 'new rooms'. The sculpture tested architectural effects and ideas through an optical experiment. The flyers were distributed in neighbouring Broadway Market, a street whose modest corner shops and cafés have gradually been replaced by boutiques and real estate agents over the recent years, and directed prospective 'buyers' to the installed sculpture.

Following the view at ambient.space on one of the Whitechapel / Parason Unit's 'First Thursdays' of late night openings across the East End, Tuomas gave a talk illustrating his practice and a music performance (*Words, Chased By Sounds*) at E:vent Gallery.

New Rooms at ambient.space, 5 June
Photos: Mukul Patel





'the annihilation of SPACE through TIME'



time-space compression

collective rhythms

spatial fix

'trente glorieuse'

mass production

mass consumption



A regime of accumulation describes the stabilisation over a long period of the allocation of net product between consumption and accumulation. It implies some correspondence between the transformation of both the conditions of production and the conditions of reproduction of wage earners. [...] A particular system of accumulation can exist because its schema of reproduction is coherent. To keep the regime of accumulation functioning, all participating individuals and political, cultural and economic agents have to be in some configuration: ...norms, habits, laws, regulating networks and so on that ensure the unity of the process; i.e. the appropriate consistency of individual behaviors with the schema of reproduction. This body of interiorized rules and social processes is called the **mode of regulation**.

Figure 2. A. 'New tendencies in the international division of labour: regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation'. In A. Scott and M. Storper (eds), *Production, space, territory, the geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism*. London, 1986, p.19



Material spatial practices experience

Accessibility and distention	Appropriation and use of space	Domination and control of space	Production of space
flow of goods, money, people, labour power, information etc.; transport and communications systems; market and urban hierarchies; agglomeration	land uses and built environments; administrative divisions; social networks of communication and mutual aid	private property in land; state and administrative divisions of space; exclusive communities and neighbourhoods; exclusionary zoning and other forms of social control (policing and surveillance)	production of physical infrastructures (transport and communications); built environments; land clearance etc.; territorial organisation of social infrastructures (formal and informal)

1973

half-life of a fordist product: five to seven years

under flexible accumulation: two to four years → fragmentation, ephemerality, discontinuity

Collage though pioneered by the modernists, is a technique that postmodernism has 'very much made its own. The postposition of diverse and seemingly incongruous elements can be fun and occasionally instructive. [...]

Down the left-hand side are ranged a series of intersecting terms to describe the condition of 'Fordist modernity', while the right-hand column represents 'flexible postmodernism'. The table suggests amusing associations, but it also indicates how two rather different regimes of accumulation and their associated modes of regulation (including the materialisations of cultural habits, motivations, and styles of representation) might hang together as well as a distinctive and relatively coherent kind of social formation. Two reservations to that idea immediately come to mind: first, the oppositions highlighted for didactic purposes, are never in doubt-cut, and the 'structure of feeling' in any society is always a synthetic mosaic somewhere between the two. Second, associations are no proof of historical causation or even of necessary or integral relations. Even if the associations look plausible – and many of them do – some other way has to be found to establish that they form a meaningful configuration.

The oppositions within each profile are noteworthy. Fordist modernity is far from homogeneous. There is much here that is about relative stability and permanence – fixed capital in mass production, stable, standardized, and homogeneous markets, a fixed configuration of political-economic authority and meta-theories, secure grounding in materiality and technological-scientific rationality, and the like. But all of this is ranged around a social and economic project of becoming, of growth and transformation of social relations, of artistic art and originality, of renewal and avant-gardism. Postmodernist flexibility, on the other hand, is dominated by fiction, fantasy, the immaterial (particularly of money), fictitious capital, images, epistemology, choice, and flexibility in production techniques, labour markets and consumption niches, yet it also embodies strong commitments to being and place, a penchant for charismatic politics, concern for ontology, and the stable institutions favoured by neo-conservatism. Habermas's judgement that the value placed on the transitory and

the ephemeral 'dislikes a longing for an undelimited, immaculate and stable present' is everywhere in evidence. It seems as if postmodernist flexibility merely reverses the dominant order to be found in Fordist modernity. The latter achieved relative stability in its political-economic apparatus in order to produce strong social and material change, whereas the former has been diagnosed for disintegrative instability in political-economic apparatus, but sought compensation in stable places of being and in chaotic geographies.

But what if the table as a whole itself constitutes a structural description of the totality of political-economic and cultural-ideological relations within capitalism? To view it that way requires that we see the oppositions across as well as within the profiles as internal relations within a structured whole. That idea, nurtured by postmodernism's non-standards (because it renews the ghost of Marxist thinkers like Lukács and appeals to a theory of internal relations of the sort that Bertellotti and Chisman advances) makes more than a little sense. It helps explain how it is that Marx's Capital is so rich in insights into what the current status of thinking is all about. It also helps us understand how the cultural forces at work in, say, the Berlin Wall's demolition constituted such a complex mix that it is almost impossible to tell where the mainstream impulse begins or ends. It helps us dissolve the categories of both modernism and postmodernism into a complex of oppositions/exposures of the cultural contradictions of capitalism. We then get to see the categories of both modernism and postmodernism as static reifications imposed upon the fluid interpenetration of dynamic oppositions. Within this matrix of internal relations, there is never one fixed configuration, but a waying-back-and-forth between centralization and decentralization, between authority and deauthorization, between hierarchy and anarchy, between permanence and fluidity, between the detail and the social division of labour (to list but a few of the many oppositions that can be identified). The sharp categorical distinction between modernism and postmodernism disappears, to be replaced by an examination of the flux of internal relations within capitalism as a whole.

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp.138-142.

FORDIST MODERNISM VERSUS FLEXIBLE POSTMODERNISM, OR THE INTERPENETRATION OF OPPOSED TENDENCIES IN CAPITALISM AS A WHOLE

Fahim Amir



Drinking Theory – Grammar of the Metropolis – The End of Time and Space (As We Know It) – Against the Dictatorship of ‘There’s a Time and Place for Everything’

*Posters, performance, sound work.
Speaking installation at ambient.space, 3 July.
Lecture performance at Austrian Cultural Forum London, 10 July.*

Fahim Amir was born in 1978 in Tehran and lives in Vienna, where he works as a dramaturge at spiel:platz (dietheater konzerthaus) and teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts. Cofounder and director of the fringer-than-fringe gallery Schnapsloch, Fahim describes himself as a ‘reality organizer’ and ‘professional floating kidney’ (nephrotosis). He also writes, and likes to talk.

*Photos (ambient.space, 3 July; following pages:
Austrian Cultural Forum, 10 July) : Mukul Patel*

artistic research paper 2.5: The End of Space and Time (As We Know It)

Thick speaking: speaking in hypertext modality.

In a Europe destroyed after WWII, a world of without place, a world without any spaces whatsoever, ‘a new race of characters was stirring, a kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted; they were seers.’

Modest witness question:

*Why did I decide to move to the Cyborg Market area?
This is a very artistic and lively community to be part of. You meet a lot of talented and inspiring people when you go out and about. It’s not very inspiring, though, that my friend was knocked off his bike with an iron bar. Some teenager now has the two teeth that he’s missing.*

Urban poor usually pay the highest rents relative to their living conditions. London’s East End, the Victorian world’s greatest slum: a vicious circle of housing demolition, rising rents, overcrowding, and disease. ‘The really high profits were not made from investment in the housing boom in the suburbs, but the rack-renting boom in the inner area.’ Slums like St. Giles, Whitechapel, and Bethnal Green attracted aristocratic investors whose ‘expectation of high returns on foreign investment had been disappointed’ as well as the frugal middle class for whom inner-city housing was ‘the most popular and the most accessible means of capital gain.’ Mega-slumlords like Thomas Flight (reputed to extract rent from more than 18,000 dwellings) had a lucrative stake in the immiseration of the East End. The same is true for Flight’s counterparts in fin-de-siècle Naples, or rural

landowning elites in the Third world transforming themselves into urban slumlords. In India, an estimated three-quarters of urban space is owned by six percent of urban households, and just 91 people control the majority of all vacant land in Mumbai/Bombay. In the inflationary environment of the 1980s, real estate became the highest-profit-sector. Smart money flowed into the booming market for converting slums into upscale apartment neighbourhoods in Istanbul.

What about trickster market?

I think it’s tough for most creative people who want to stay independent and make what they believe in. I’ve been working seven days a week for almost three years, just to get to where I am now. It’s especially tough at the moment because of the recession, and I don’t want to look back and say what if? or, did I try hard enough?

Neudeutsch Chef-Duzen: Kaffee ist gratis, alle sind per Du, und Überstunden werden nicht bezahlt. The creative entrepreneur is on the one hand a neoliberal role-model: working collaboratively is a necessity, lifelong learning is a matter of course;



STRATEGIC LOW-INCOME URBAN MANAGEMENT

- micro-credits
- informal petty bourgeoisie vs informal proletariat
- gambling, pyramid schemes & lotteries
- little witches
- kidney farms
- Pentecostal

POSTMODERN HAUSSMANN

- human encumberments
- transients in a perpetual state of relocation
- the horrors of 'urban BEAUTIFICATION': Olympics, Summits, Y2K
- counterinsurgency
- criminalisation
- *Bladerunner's* 'off worlds' & architectures of fear
- fundamental reorganisation of metropolitan space

BABY-KILLERS LIVING IN SHIT

- risks = hazards x assets x fragility
- 'classquake'
- hot demolition
- 'flying coffins' and 'flying toilets'
- interface of underdevelopment and industrialisation



post-Maoist guerrilla

URBAN POVERTY'S BIG BANG: IMF 1974-75

- squatters as urban pioneers
- human dump
- *Groupe CIAM Alger* and the bidonville
- NGO-imperialism & globalisation from below
- slumlords: from Bethnal Green to Dharavi

disciplined and subjected to project-based labour, the contemporary artist paves the way for cutbacks in the social system. Since she is identifying herself in her social entirety with her job, paid overtime is a foreign word for contemporary creatives. The successful artist embodies neoliberal social skills of networking, flexibility and mobility. Be creative, be be creative! – ‘Hang on! Is this a dinner or are we networking?’ My body my temple, my powernap, my retreat: fit for capitalism.

In the context of artistic and cultural work, the following conditions are most frequently mentioned as evidence of precarity:

1. project work and multiple job-holding;

2. a high level of formal education in combination with ‘learning by doing’;

3. low income and often little motivation to earn more;

4. close affective attachment to one’s work;

5. overlap of work, private life, and leisure time: passionate work;

6. uncertain expectations for the future, including inability to even imagine one’s future, deep insecurity with regard to future employment, and inability to plan reliably;

7. informality as a structural principle (network sociality, obligatory sociality), and clubs, pubs, friends and friends of friends as sources of new work opportunities;

8. new forms of self-discipline (as artistic individual, as entrepreneur) and the outsourcing of industrial control and safety mechanisms to the ‘entrepreneur of his/her own labour’;

9. long working hours associated with passionate/intensive work; extraordinarily high working time per week, no holidays;

10. a high degree of spatial, temporal, and social mobility;

11. alternating, frequently unforeseeable, phases of employment, unemployment, and permanent training.

Everything is changing so fast nowadays, but the centre can still hold. Just look at this area: city officials



*Language is a skin: I rub my language
against the other. It is as if I had words
instead of fingers, or fingers at the
tip of my words*



working with real estate developers, local landlords; rents are rising, but the wages won't. Hard to imagine my life in five, let alone 10 years.

I came to London in search of a part for my motorbike but ended up staying and getting into fashion design instead. After taking a few short courses I was accepted at the London College of Fashion and moved to Vampire Fields to be near the college.

I have lived and worked in the Cyborg Market area since moving from New Zealand. I bought a flat here eight years ago when the area was still affordable to buy in. That was a great move. The development of the area over the past five years has really helped me grow the business. Having a Cyborg Market address is really great as people know this street all over the world now.

But on the other hand, as a ideal potentiality the creative could be the transgressor per se, crossing territorial, topical and disciplinary borders:

We did some working class related politics the last years here around Cyborg Market – we even browbeat the Labour Party. If we had won seats on the Council, we would have founded an activist social centre here in the Leased End. We nearly did it.

The classical bourgeois ideology treated space as the domain of the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile – a world of passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning. Accurate packages of such geographical information continued to be of use to the state, in the West and in the East, for military intelligence, economic planning, and imperial administration.

These three arenas of intelligence, planning, and administration defined an 'applied' geography, cementing a special relationship with the state that probably arose first in an earlier age of imperial exploration. The majority of the most prominent mid-century geographers in the United States of America were tied in one way or another with intelligence-gathering activities, especially through the Office of Strategic Services, the progenitor of the CIA.

This is a project of urban geography as artistic research. The analysis of the spatiotemporal fixes focuses on processes of deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation and subjectification. Temporalities as war machines.

Bagdad and its slum Sadr City. Mind the urban gap! Future wars will take place in slums, where guerrilla tactics from dead Maoism could have a zombie-life on new urban battlefields. The price of urban warfare: after WWII, an inversion of norms. The civilian to military casualty ratio is now roughly 8:1.

Military geographers and warfare in the first century of the third millennium. The dark side is preparing. A revolution in military affairs, the cybernetic battle system for urban war, is a reaction to the 'universalization of information technology' and 'the efflorescence of capitalism'.

Walking through walls with Deleuze. Be part of the swarm talk.

MOUT: military operations in urban terrain are nomadological. In these assaults, troops eschew traditional lines of advance - the alleys and streets of refugee camps – and burrow through buildings instead. MOUTs invert figure-ground relations in



architecture. Military strategists use reversed city plans – where voids are treated as solids and solids as voids. Reverse your tactical assumptions to subvert the logic of an insurgency.

'Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tips of my words.'

Agoraphobia and claustrophobia first appear three decades before the start of the twentieth century. Agoraphobia and claustrophobia: the yin-yang of spatial thinking in the modernist period. What comes now?

The passionate intensity of the urban arcades PLUS the chancy promiscuity of the urban stranger EQUALS a poetry of the pavement.

Koolhaas calls it 'junk space'.
Maximum velocity. Smart bomb.

'It is not we who make cinema; it is the world which looks to us like a bad film.'

Any composition is a mixture (melange) of smooth and striated space. The major task of micropolitics: mapping different kinds of space, analyse that mix in each assemblage (social, political, geological, biological, economic, aesthetic, musical).

Politics of non-identity. Reinheit ist der schlechte Fusel der Seele. Cyborgs, parasites and symbionts: living together in the New Urban Order. If chimpanzees and dogs have politics, why can't we?

I use *Mixotricha Paradoxa* as an entity that interrogates individuality and collectivity at the same time. It is a microscopic single-celled organism that lives in the hindgut of the South Australian termite.

'What counts as "it" is complicated because it lives in obligatory symbiosis with five other kinds of entities. Each has a taxonomic name, and each is closely related to bacteria because they don't have a cell nucleus. They have nucleic acid, they have DNA, but it's not organized into a nucleus.

'Each of these five different kinds of things live in or on a different region of the cell. For example, one lives in the interdigitations on the exterior surface of the cell membrane. So you see these little things that live in these folds of the cell membrane, and others that live inside the cell. But they aren't in the full sense part of the cell. They live in obligatory symbiosis. Nobody can live independently here. This is codependency with a

vengeance! And so the question is – is it one entity or is it six? But six isn't right either because there are about a million of the five non-nucleated entities for every one nucleated cell. There are multiple copies. So when does one decide to become two? When does this whole assemblage divide so that you have, now, two? And what counts as *Mixotricha*? Is it just the nucleated cell or is it the whole assemblage?'

Mixotricha means mixed threads. This is obviously a great metaphor, that is a real thing, for interrogating our notions of one and many. Biology is an endless resource. Prefer it to psychoanalysis!

End of manuscript.



Shiho Fukuhara



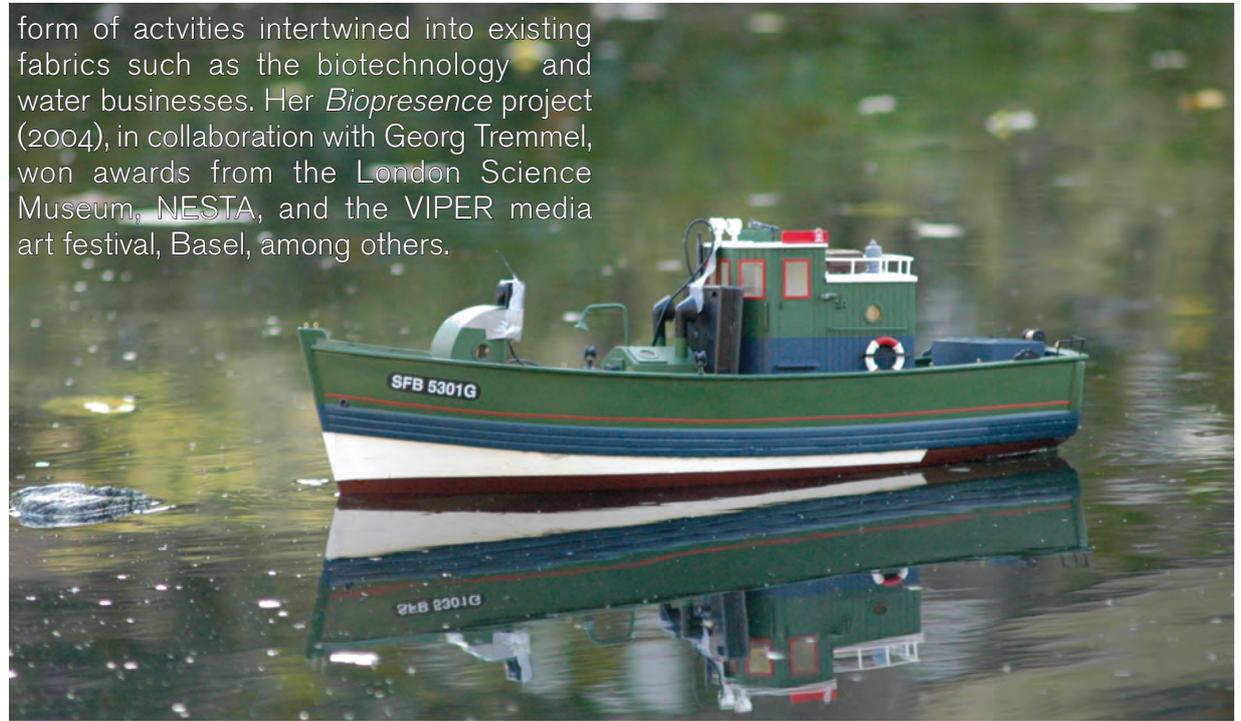
Parts Unknown

Plastic work, text, video, photographic prints.

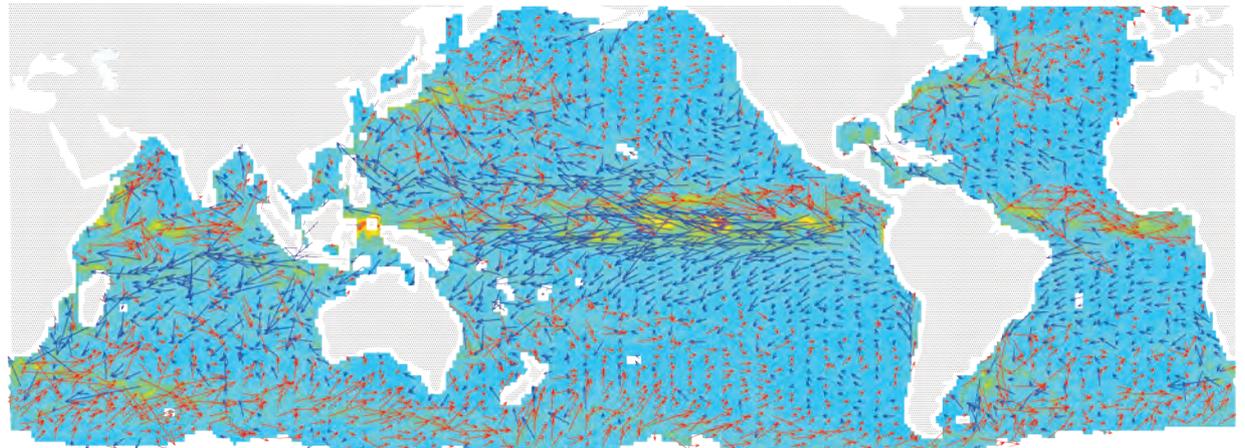
Installation and artist's talk as part of 'The Beautiful Children' (E:vent Gallery at V22 Wharf Road Project), 17 October.

Growing up in Japan, Shiho Fukuhara's main interest was in the linguistic aspects of cultural difference, which she researched while living in Europe for nearly a decade. A keen observer of the science, technologies, cultures, and politics of creative practices, her focus is on the mutual influence of everyday experience and technological development, and the formation of public perceptions of science. Shiho's current work addresses social issues surrounding science, technology and communication by creating alternative conceptual models and strategies. Her approach often takes the

Boat used to film Parts Unknown Photo: Mukul Patel



Parts Unknown current map by Shiho Fukuhara





Parts Unknown *Photo: Shiho Fukuhara*

Parts Unknown: video voiceover text
by Shiho Fukuhara

Read by Rachel Baker.

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, between Hawaii and Japan, there is a new and independent country. A country without beaches, without mountains, without rivers, without soil, without ground. A country without land.

This country is made from floating islands. Only a few humans have heard of it. Even fewer have dared to journey to the island and set foot on-shore. And no explorer has yet planted a flag to claim this country.

It is a country without a name. A new white spot on the map. A new Atlantis, rising from the waters in front of our very eyes.

But this country is not foreign to us. This is

not a strange place, floating just beneath the surface of our consciousness. It is the by-product of our global metabolism, a manifestation of our common culture, the results of our collective consumption.

It is – plastic.

Plastic – like the wrappers of your sweets.
Plastic – like the bottle you drink your water from.

Plastic – like the toys your children play with.

Plastic – like the housing of your computer.
Plastic – like the bags from your last shopping.

Plastic – like the shell of your mobile phone.

Plastic disposed over the last 50 years, since the dawn of the plastic age. A primordial plastic ocean, a perfect mixture of accumulated plastic garbage and the steady influx of new arrivals. A post-mordial soup of post-mortem consumption.

The dimensions of this plastic country are massive, and it is getting bigger every day. Every time a plastic package is bought, every time a plastic package is dumped, it contributes to the growth of the island. Now, it is already twice the size of the US, but still it is growing, still it is gaining weight, still it is gaining strength. Driven by the currents of the Pacific and trapped in its gyre, it keeps on developing, it keeps on revolving, it keeps the vortex moving.



Parts Unknown *Photo: Shiho Fukuhara*

And it is has a cloak of invisibility, it does not want to cast a shadow. It does not want to show itself yet, it prefers to stay hidden for the moment. It keeps itself just below the water surface, so that satellite images fool us into believing in a clear, blue, untouched Pacific Ocean, while the island slowly and patiently prepares to rise up.

Once it appears on the ocean surface, the heat of the sun softens the plastic and melts it down. This meltdown gives rise to fumes, to ether-like structures, to ghosts.

They will exist inside us. Each one of us will become in some part plastic. We will become plastic people. Large pieces of plastic are broken down into microscopic particles.

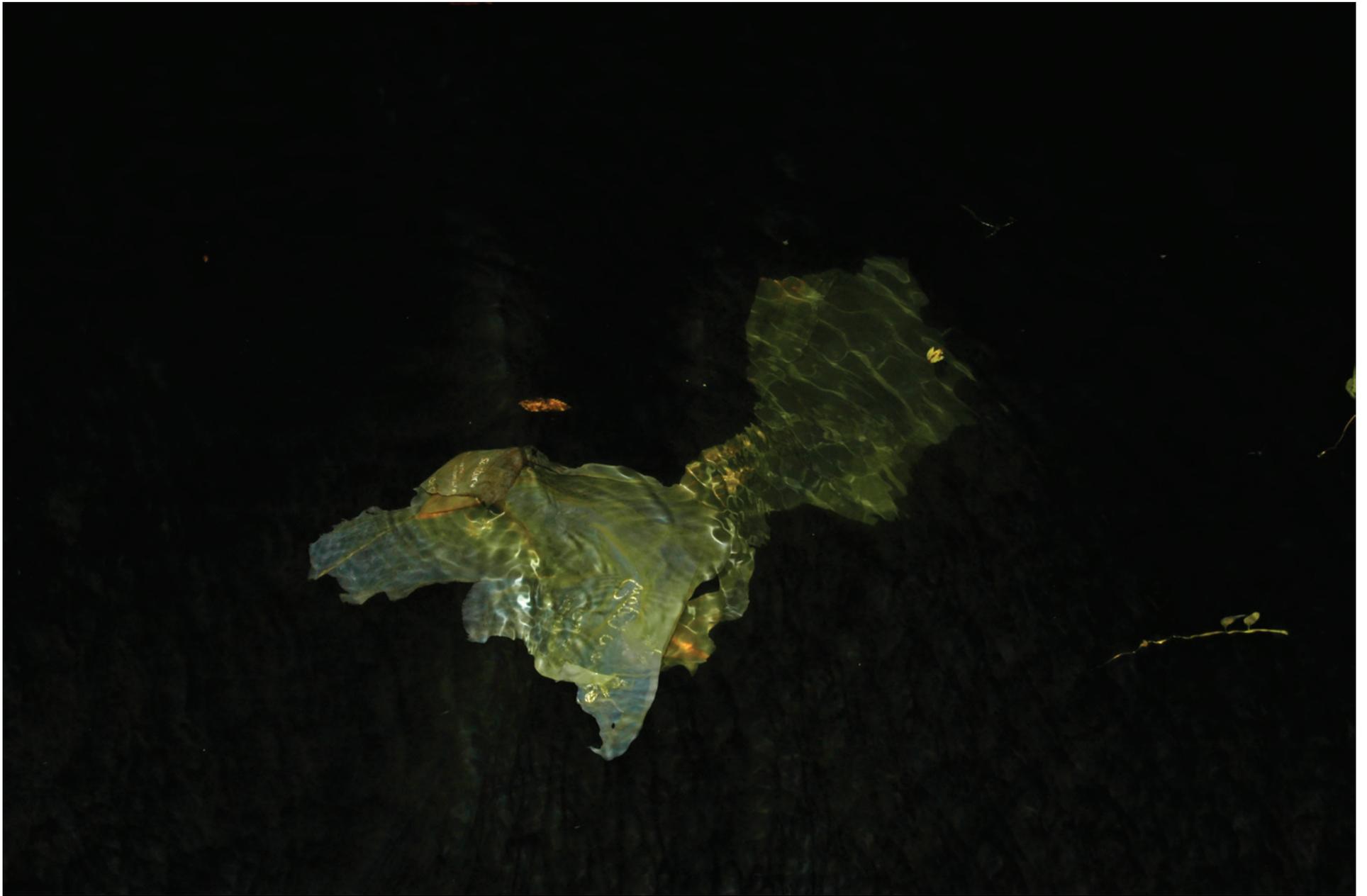
Micro-granular plastic is mistaken by fish, crustaceans and other sea creatures for food. But the consequences are dire. The plastic clogs their bloodstream and kills them in the most gruesome way. It replaces the building materials of their bodies. How long until nano-plastic particles are replacing the building materials of our bodies?

The island itself is like a living entity, 'it moves around like a big animal without a leash'. It is unleashed and Big. It is big and fearless. It bites and barks. And when it barks, 'it spits its guts over real beaches of real island, leaving a deadly confetti of shredded plastic in its wake'.

Immigrants are secretly travelling to this

unknown country. They don't need money for the ticket, they don't need passports for border control. They are expelled from their countries of origin, but they are going to find a new place to call home. They become part of this melting pot, their brands and logos slowly fading away, their memories getting bleached by the sun. Their one-way journey might be over, but their mission is only starting. They are the foundations of a new habitat, a habitat of eternal plastic, revolving only around itself. A plastic time-capsule with all the time in the world.

They carry small maritime species collected along their journey with them. Species not supposed to belong together. Bioremixing to create lifeforms yet unknown.



Parts Unknown *Photo: Shiho Fukuhara*

A new nation is being built. The process of construction is underway. New flags will be flown across its acres, new hymns will be whistled by the passing winds, new stories of origin will be heard and told. A new nature made from cultures past. A new polymer nature from the global consumer monoculture.

A long journey is coming to an end. After millions of years of transforming from organic matter into oil... After decades of being drilled and probed and pumped and refined, shipped, refined again, transformed and moulded into form... After decades of being filled, wrapped around, stacked, carried, worn, kicked, taking on logos and marks...

After years of being shipped from one place to the next, from one country to the other... ..the ghosts are freed from the burden of attention, freed from the agony of consumption. Hollowed out, emptied of the substances and goods that were made in their ideal image. Ghosts whispering of the desires and wishes and vanities they once were signs for. After-echoes, vanishing in the distance, taking with them their meaning. Leaving behind pureness. Nothing to prove, nothing to lose, everything to be.

All rivers flow into the sea. Canals, like veins, transport the used and exhausted material forward to the source, back to the origin. An arduous journey, many miles long, many seas wide, many storms deep. Blood is flowing back

to the heart and send out again, refreshed, rejuvenated, new. Plastic is flowing into a heart of darkness, no escape, no way out. Terminal. End.

Start. Beginning. Emergence as something else. No longer product, no longer object of consumption. Form without Structure, shape without meaning. Ready to be a part of a new country, a new commonwealth, a new union.

The new Atlantis.



Resident artists' group show in association with E:vent / 'The Beautiful Children' at V22 Wharf Road Project, 17 October 2008. Photo: Mukul Patel



Group show at V22 Wharf Road Project, 17 October 2008. Photo: Mukul Patel



Parts Unknown video and plastic works by Shiho Fukuhara at V22 Wharf Road Project, 17 October 2008. Photo: Mukul Patel



*Artist's presentation by Shiho Fukuhara at V22 Wharf Road Project,
17 October 2008. Photo: Mukul Patel*



Excerpts from Imperial Gas Works (8 July, 7 April, 22 March) by Wolfgang Staehle at V22 Wharf Road Project, 17 October 2008. Photo: Mukul Patel