

TAKE ME THERE

Hosted by Power and Vision: The Camera as Political Technology
A CRASSH Graduate Research Group
Heong Gallery, Downing College, University of Cambridge

'Travel is the only context in which some people ever look around. If we spent half the energy looking at our own neighborhoods, we'd probably learn twice as much.'

— Lucy R. Lippard, On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS: Wesam Al Asali, Alkisti Alevropoulou-Malli, Jane Boyer, Ellie, Emily Fitzell, Angel Georgina, Hande Güzel, Pavlina Kasparova, Hiromi Kawaji, Moses, Meria Palin, Ben Phillips, James Rogers, Pina Santoro, Sofia Singler, Kate Towsey, Marina Velez, Hayley Wells, Jac Williams, and Lauren Wilson.

As their culminating event, the CRASSH Graduate Research Group 'Power and Vision: The Camera as Political Technology' has organised 'TAKE ME THERE', a pop-up exhibition centered on the theme of belonging. Throughout the current academic year, its members have organised a series of reading groups, seminars, film screenings, master classes, and practice-based events that sought to address the disconnect between popular and academic critique of the way contemporary political crisis is covered in mainstream media. They asked the question, 'Can academics, artists, and visual practitioners help us all better understand how political issues are imagined and imaged?' Through notions of migration, nationalism, identity, and collectivity, 'TAKE ME THERE' addresses this challenging question in a multidimensional way. By highlighting the diverse aesthetic and narrative tones of Cambridge-based practitioners, this pop-up exhibition showcases the complexities of place and the power of seeing.



Sofia Singler and Wesam Al Asali

It Washes Away (Aleppo/Cambridge, 2018)

الحنين هو اختصاص الذاكرة في تجميل ما احتجب من المشهد، وترميم شباك سقط دون أن يصل سقوطه إلى الشارع.

"Longing is the specialty of memory in beautifying what was hidden in the scene, fixing a window that had fallen off without ever having hit the street. Longing is exile punishing the exiled and the exile's shame of admiring the music and gardens of exile."

Mahmoud Darwish

"This is a window from Khan al-Wazir in Aleppo, Syria. But rather than ashlar and quarry stones it is built out of another local material: Aleppo soap.

Masonry architecture is attached to connotations of endurance, resilience and strength. The heaviness and solidity of stone implies timelessness, and a sense of rooted belonging. Soap, however, disintegrates unlike traditional masonry; it appears solid, but is vulnerable and fragile, for it chips and washes away. The constant threat of melting away speaks of the fragility of built heritage, cultural riches and human life itself in times of crisis."

Marina Velez

Lot

The concept of belonging can be used to address socio, economic and political boundaries: in a globalised economy, the idea of belonging seems to remain unquestioned when it comes to the free movement of capital and goods, but it is problematic when it is applied to free movement and settlement of people.

Belonging is a word that seems to speak about walls and boundaries, of being included or being left out. It is a concept full of cultural meaning, which intertwines with one's identity in profound and multi-layered ways. Ultimately, belonging is a concept that might have less to do with place and more with affinity. Without showing specifically discernible visual elements, *Lots* speaks of belonging as a state of being, which could mean the links that unite a diaspora around the world as well as the self-reflection of intimacy and memories, which weave one's sense of belonging.

Alkisti Alevropoulou-Malli

Waiting for Home (Idomeni Refugee Camp, Greece, 2016)

1-10, top to bottom.

1- Morning: A boy walks back to his tent in the early morning, through the muddy camp of Idomeni along the Greek-FYROM border.

2- Welcome to Europe: A young girl, Shaharзад Hassan, shows a drawing she made of her journey from war-torn Syria, across the Aegean Sea to Greece. The text reads: "The journey of death to death. From death to a big prison." Her family finally reached the camp of Idomeni only to become stuck at the closed border between Greece and FYROM.

3- Transport: An empty wheelchair sits outside a row of tents in the camp of Idomeni, by the Greece-FYROM border. Many of those staying in the camp bore physical signs of the violence and devastation they were fleeing from. The awful living conditions made life even more difficult, especially for those with mobility issues and severe physical trauma.

4- Business as Usual: A man has turned his tent into a convenience store. After having to remain in Idomeni for weeks, people started to turn to their skills and entrepreneurial abilities to get by. Some travelled to the nearby towns to get supplies to sell at a profit. These included anything from fresh produce (meat, vegetables, yogurt) to cupboard items (rice, coffee, crisps, canned food) or other miscellaneous supplies (shoes, chargers, cigarettes).

5- "We Are Going To Germany!": A small baby holds up a sign "We are going to Germany!" in her father's arms, during a peaceful protest. Such protests became increasingly regular parts of camp life. People were frustrated by the closure of borders along the Balkan route at the end of February, resulting in 10-15 000 getting stuck at the camp in Idomeni. Hopes of an idealised destination, such as Germany, became mantras that people turned to as a source of resilience to survive the hardship.

6- Closed Borders: Two boys playing/ protesting by the railway crossing point

of the Greek-FYROM border, while Macedonian guards look on across the fence. Shouting slogans they had heard adults use during protests before, throwing pebbles and waving sticks around - the games of children often mimicked their reality, re-enacting what was happening around them while they played.

7- Breakfast: A Yazidi family from Iraq gather to eat breakfast. The Yazidi community has faced widespread persecution for their religious beliefs. For those staying in Idomeni, cultural differences and preconceptions from home continued to make life difficult and even dangerous. As a result, Yazidi refugees often camped together and kept to themselves for safety.

8- Sequins!: A group of siblings, from Syria, pose together for a photo in the camp of Idomeni, along the Greek-FYROM border. They were very insistent on including their shiny sequin-covered dress, clearly one of their favourite possessions.

9- Tambour Player: A tambor/bouzouk player sings traditional songs during Newroz (Kurdish New Year) celebrations in Idomeni. Some musicians had managed to bring their instruments with them on their journey. Their music offered a source of comfort and their impromptu performances often drew small crowds in the camp, with people sitting together to sing and drink chai or arrak.

10- Waiting: A young boy sits with a group of men at the Port of Piraeus in Athens. Following the closure of the Balkan route, and subsequent overcrowding on the Greek islands, many because stuck on the Greek mainland. With military camps being poorly managed and often far from shops and amenities, many chose to settle in the Port. At its peak there were an estimated 4500 people living in the port in makeshift tents and shelters. Volunteer teams worked round the clock to provide for basic needs, while there were no services provided by official authorities.

Hiromi Kawaji

Home of Passion (Omori, Tokyo, Japan, 2018)

"Home" is uncomfortable for me, because I had a uncomfortable relationship with my father, so instead, I seem to find the place of my companions as home.

When I was working as a travel writer, I was always taking pictures of places with my iPhone. One day, a friend of mine strongly encouraged me to buy a digital camera. He thought I had a talent for taking photographs.

This is the town where he was brought up and cultivated his creativity and sensitivity. When I first arrived here, I thought to myself, 'This is the place where my photography life begins.' because without him, I would have never thought about photography. I would have never realized how wonderful it is taking photographs.

Jac Williams

Gwaith (North Wales, 2017)

As part of the series "Honest Agriculture" I wanted to share my own background and culture to those who have little or no experience in farming and rural living. After studying in Cambridge for 2 years I started focusing on my documentary project which allowed me to explore my home with a new way of seeing through a camera.

Being able to go from the city of Cambridge and travel deeper into the valleys of North Wales, I was able to feel the relaxing sensation of relief as I came home, where I grew up and worked as a young boy alongside my father and grandfather

in the great outdoors.

This place is one where I have no boundaries, no social limits to my actions. But there is work to be done, a necessity of the culture where the lifestyle is under appreciated out of its working class perception.

Instagram : [mountainmanofwales](#)

Ben Phillips

Quiet

In my photos I aim to explore the surprising sense of loneliness many of us feel living in the heart of crowded cities and urban environments. As more and more of the world's population grow up in urban environments, I'm interested in portraying the contrast between loud, bustling metropolitan life and the personal isolation of the individual. In my photos I search for moments of calm and emptiness in the midst of otherwise busy cities.

Emily Fitzell and James Rogers

Ambulithics (New York, 2017)

the ambulithics project brings together our respective practices as writer and architect to explore the possibilities of ritual and myth in contemporary place making. in 2017 we constructed the first physical element of ambulithics. using our bodies as a tool of measurement, we cast twelve concrete cubes along the line of a paced circle in a clearing near the burden lakes in new york. inside each of these cubes we buried an object associated with daily ritual. the sculptural presence of these ruins on our landscape draws thoughts of their enigmatic history (possible communal and ritualistic uses) into the space of a contemporary imagination. just as stone circles formally suggest a space for communal gathering and ceremony, ambulithics offers itself as a site for congregation and exchange. it is a space activated by presence and play, contingent on the opening up and sustaining of a subject-object dialogue. this necessary interaction with the material object takes it beyond the threshold of traditional sculpture - towards an architecture. but unlike architectures which impose spatial narratives on their inhabitants, ambulithics presents itself as an irresolvable structure. by making it impossible to delimit the space according to a singular, specified function, by handing interpretative agency over to those who approach its uncertain form with curiosity, the act of dwelling is transformed into a creative act.

Pavlina Kasparova

We cannot step into the same river twice
(South Moravia, Czech Republic/Cambridge,
2013/2018)

The theme of looking for a place where individuals truly belong asks me questions about my own identity. Going through memories and projections of places and times when I was happy and felt whole, has brought melancholia. Even if I wanted to take others to places which are close to my heart, I never can share the moment completely – it has gone.

This reminds me of Heraclitus' quote: "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." This saying has become the main inspiration for my proposed installation. Like many others, I came to Cambridge to study. But together with knowledge I have experienced multiculturalism, mixtures of faiths and new approaches for leading dialogue with people who are very different. I myself have been taken from my own culture and will return after a few years. However, I will never be the same and "my" place will be changed too. And it is why I think that the only place where we belong is the society in which we are living right now.

Hande Güzel

Silence (Istanbul, 2008)

Giuseppina Santoro

IDDA IDDU (Italian Festival, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, 2017)

IDDA IDDU (HIM/HER) is a project documented in images, sculpture and live performances.

The character was developed during my Masters Degree and is now a significant part of my long term practise. Belonging, identity, gender equality, placement and displacement are strong themes in my work.

The character is the definition of belonging and accepting that both male and female belong within us. There is no need to argue that both genders exist within our body. It is only important to allow them both to play out when necessary.

I suitably selected this pair of glazed kitchen tiles to decorative with personal images of traditional Sicilian dolls and an image of Idda/Iddu on performance at the Italian Festival Sicily. The silkscreen prints were fired back in my home studio UK and were created with the intention to be part of the ICAP Project collections.

Kate Towsey

Censored Identity (Basingstoke, 2017)

This piece explores the multiple identities within each person and the need to feel inner comfort to express them. We make conscious decisions to either reveal or censor our identities.

About a girl (Cambridge, 2017)

The words in this work are taken from contributions to the everyday sexism project. This interpretation looks at how our identities change due to abuse. However, these psychological stains, unlike those on clothes, cannot be washed off.

Invisible (Cambridge, 2018)

An exploration of the notion of finding comfort in fading into the background and being invisible. Patches of colour come from within the plaster emphasise that nobody is merely a clone of their environments.

Lauren Wilson

The Christening Gown

(Cambridge, 2018)

The Christening Gown: a garment symbolic of the start of belonging, belonging to family, belonging to religion. Much like the experience of establishing familial ties and bonds with our loved ones, the construction of the gown is delicate, intricate, laboured but beautiful. Both me and my sister wore this gown. It belongs to us, it belongs to our family and we all belong to each other and to our home.

Jane Boyer

Invisible Agitation (Cambridge, 2016)

Gilt (Cambridge, 2016)

Dusting Memories (Cambridge, 2016)

The three works of mine in this pop-up exhibition make most sense if thought of as elegies. They resonate with a longing for a loving relationship I had with my grandmother. For me, the place of belonging is not a location, but a relationship where I felt whole and truly loved. I still go back to memories of this relationship to feel that sense of belonging.

The gold leaf in these works are symbolic of childish damage I caused to my grandmother's gilt Lyon & Healy harp when I placed a bit of scotch tape on the gold crown. When I was a little older, I was embarrassed at my attempt to 'own' the harp by sticking the tape. Removing it, I was mortified to cause even worse damage!

The harp did become mine, but could not belong to my life in Europe. It belongs to someone else now.

Hayley Wells

Feline Fine (Cambridge, 2017)

Feline Fine is a semi-autobiographical book that tells the parallel stories of a woman and a cat as they seek comfort in an unforgiving world. The book was conceived of during a point in my life where I felt I didn't belong anywhere in particular - my work and home environments were both isolating and lonely. Then I adopted my cat, Pinky, who was also in need of a comforting home. Suddenly, I felt I belonged.

Meria Palin

'What will you do next?' (Cambridge, 2018)

I have chosen illustrations from my Diploma Project, a picturebookstory *'What will you do next?'* where a parent takes his toddler to the park, Botanical Garden, to share what the place has to give: green areas, water fountains, and small animals such as squirrels, magpies, fish, frogs and mallards. For me, the Botanical Garden has become a good friend to visit during my studies in Cambridge. It is a place where you can 'breathe in', get relaxed and get inspiration. Every time it has had something new to show, even during the winter, when the Winter Garden was in its best suit. The atmosphere in the park is enchanted. To emphasize the atmosphere and the special moment of the boy taking his first steps, I added a lion to the story. Lion symbolizes to me both strength and encouragement. I hope the boy in the story will come back to this place, also as an adult, not only to see what plants and animals the garden is able to provide but to gain strength and courage, to 'breathe in' and feel himself whole.

Moses and Ellie

Identity (Cambridge, 2018)

Some things, illusions, remembering the forgotten
Facing intrusions, overcoming modern
strains. Forging a path, not losing sight
of the way. Getting lost in this metropolis,
the contemporary foray.

Finding my distinction, a differential ID
Keeping my head above water – out the citizen sea
Anonymity calling, like a lighthouse beckoning
Will you choose to conform or finally flow free

The First Prison (Cambridge, 2018)

The first prison is the body,
at least that's what they say.
But your mind can shape
Your confines: open gates,
Windows, a doorway.

If the body is a prison,
the mind is parole.
Holding the key to your freedom
Unchaining your soul.

Moses and Ellie met through the “Learning Together” programme offered by the University of Cambridge. The programme enables Cambridge students and UK prison students to come together to learn and discuss a number of courses. The programme offers a range of courses, from literary criticism to criminology, and creates a collaborative, engaging learning environment. Moses and Ellie prepared their poems during one session of the course. They recorded the poetry and refined their works since the session. The poetry reflects some of their discussions about identity; about the difficulties we face in establishing who we are and what we stand for; and how challenging it can be to forge our own paths.

Angel Georgina

Skin // Snow (Room of someone I was falling in love with, Cambridge, 2018)

I can hear the two of you playing in the snow together
I lost my ring
I wrote to you, "I miss you"
And that I wished I was her
I wish I was her
I have kissed many men after you,
to forget the feel of your lips
I do not remember the last person I kissed

Men visit my bedroom and ask me if this is my first time
They ask me if I am into "white" guys
If desire is not a language, then likewise
I tell these men I have never seen snow in my entire life
I tell them nobody told me how it would numb my hands
I tell them I am surprised it melts
I whisper to them only as the film that covers my bones and muscles
The crevice they fill tonight -
Tomorrow It will be empty

I tell them I know how to share with strangers
To peel off the tenuous dermis
To lay bare my nerve endings
I want to lie about feelings
I want to pretend to restrain
Or try to be as bland
But It's best these men
don't decipher the nooks and corners of me
So, I let them hold a paint palette against my skin
And ask me again if I am keen

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The poem is comprised of snippets of thoughts and feelings that are written in a very personal, journal-like entry. It reflects on the process of unsuccessfully attempting to remodel oneself in the pursuit of romantic/sexual relationships. A woman's being is often externally defined by the presence of a ring on her finger, her virginity or the lack thereof, the number of men she has been with, or the kind of men she has been with. Her space of belonging is more or less identified in relation to men. The poem casts light on the human proclivity to want to please other people which leaves them with a timid voice of their own and also on the fear of casting a "deviant" image about oneself on society. It also explores how some experiences are intensified for women of colour, often her actions gets interpreted and filed under just another stereotype.

Anonymous

Rebuild (Cambridge, 2018)

I wish I belonged in a world that promoted redemption
Rather than labelling, stigmatising and facilitating rejection
I long for a world where our worst acts don't define us
Where acts of remorse and attempts at reform are not superfluous
I hope for a world without the imprisonment of 12 million souls
Where prison doesn't mean profit, and crime policy isn't dictated by polls
Where children aren't sentenced to spend their lives, without parole
in adult facilities, permeated with drugs, violence, the modern gaol.
I long for a world that leaves the death penalty behind
Where principles of forgiveness and acceptance are firmly enshrined
For a criminal justice system that espouses equality and fairness
Where the concept of justice, is not a limited rareness.
Where the rich and the poor are equal consumers
Of a criminal justice system that favours decency for end users.
Where the colour of your skin doesn't impact suspicions of guilt
And trust, reciprocity, the sense of community, can all be rebuilt.

TAKE ME THERE

A special thank you to those who made this pop-up exhibition possible.