

ENGINEERS AND CONVERSATIONS

Koichama and Richard

Both Koichama and I had noticed an extraordinary little hand-made structure a few doors down from the school. We went to talk to Richard - his name - about how and why he made it.

Questions and photos by Koichama, answers from Richard.

How did you begin your project?
I've always been a builder and an artist, but I wouldn't have done anything here except that of the making to be excited because our landlord wants to sell the house. It's taking so long that I thought, 'Well, in the meantime, I'll just build a little house' so I started three weeks ago. The whole house cost us £10. We bought some old scaffold boards and made the platform and then we thought for a few days because we weren't sure what kind of house we were going to build. We thought we might do a traditional Japanese house, but then we thought we'd probably go more ottoman which is a lot more relaxed and because damn we're so specially, I had to put a dome in there.

Could you tell us how you gathered the things that you've used to make the building?

It's all recycled, everything. That dome there is made of plastic and rubbish wood that nobody wants but of course once you do something and put the magic on it, it's really good. All of the things that you see are either reclaimed or I've made it that makes people happy in the most important thing to me.

Can you tell us about the dome structure?
The system of this dome is thousands of years old. What distinguishes it is that you don't need a shape or a core to put it over. It's built like an egg is built. You have a piece of string in the middle and observe the end of that piece of string goes that's where you put your seat brick. It's really simple - you don't have to think about it and means that you can use all this rubbish wood and you end up with good geometry and a nice pattern.

Are you interested in religion?
I embrace all religions - including atheism. See that quote outside - that's sort of how we feel. 'Oh Marvel! A garden amidst the flames! My heart has become capable of every

Toni and Alamy

Toni has shopped at her local bakery almost every day since she can remember. She was curious about what Alamy - the bakery's owner - was of the neighbourhood through his shop window and what he might have about co-existing with her.

Questions and photos by Toni, answers from Alamy.

How did you begin?
I learnt the trade of being a baker by working for somebody else, long time ago and I was pretty young.

What is your favourite cake to make?
I don't have a particular one - maybe birthday cakes. Do you want to be a cake maker?

Yes, well, I'm good at making cakes. You can go to college - there are some nice colleges in London - there's one in Islington which is quite good and also South Bank College.

One thing I've always wanted to know is how to make scones.

Egg whites and sugar, basically. You have to think it really hard. If you don't do a machine you have to whisk it by hand, but if you go to Tesco, you can see how they do it. It makes it easy for you nowadays if you want to learn.

How did you come up with the name for your bakery?
It's my grandma's name. I can't tell you much

about my grandma because I only met her once. The very first thing I do at the beginning of the year is to get up on the oven because it takes an hour to get warm - and then we can have that's at about 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the morning - it depends how much work we have. We make about twenty-five loaves of bread - not so many. That's because of the supermarket, we mainly sell cakes and savouries because my customers can't find them in Tesco.

Do you remember your customers' favourite cakes?
You like cream cakes. But everyone is different. Cakes, savouries and doughnuts sell the best. Doughnuts are - people like those sometimes I introduce new cakes and I put them in the window. Some people like a white cake. It's the best thing to do to remain neutral - that's what I've learnt. Otherwise I can get it wrong and people don't like the taste and then people think I'm recommending it because I can't sell it! I know one old lady - she was my first customer when I opened - Margaret is her name. She was my first customer and also one of my best. She buys all sorts of things - cream cakes, bread, everything. I think I have around a hundred customers - but I do go to Tesco. The most unusual thing people ask for? Well, sometimes people ask for their birthday cakes right now, and I say 'you can't have it' - it's not French cakes it's a minimum of one day for a birthday cake.

What are your plans for the future?
This building has been designed as a prototype because there's more that's going to happen. We're going to design a little bathroom, bedroom and a kitchen - each one six square metres. It'll be a very cheap house to build and very, very beautiful and it'll have everything that you need so it'll be very practical. As well as that, if we got it right they could solve the housing crisis. Instead of building ugly things that no one wants to live in, we may well build something they do want to live in. There was one time - it was early morning and I was looking out of the top window of the house - and he was just staring at my building and then suddenly he burst into laughter - he couldn't stop laughing. It's cheesy really, it's very cheesy, we said to the planning officer that came round, 'We don't want to cause any trouble, we know it's a bit unusual.' 'Unusual?' he said, 'I've never seen anything like it!'

How do you grand because I only met her once. The very first thing I do at the beginning of the year is to get up on the oven because it takes an hour to get warm - and then we can have that's at about 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the morning - it depends how much work we have. We make about twenty-five loaves of bread - not so many. That's because of the supermarket, we mainly sell cakes and savouries because my customers can't find them in Tesco.

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LETTER (EXTRACT)

I thought I'd turn some of my notes from the residence into a letter to give to you, Lucy.

Dear Fahmina, Deyi, Isma, Farhana, Anita, Azeela, Louhana, Tahmina, Sarah, Toni, Billie, Paris, Naqiyah, Eveva, Ubayr, Shajida, Aniah and Sanjida.

Thank you for making my year extraordinary, and for being willing to explore the unknown. Not many people take that risk! You were inspired by the 'collaborative' and we decided to make my body itself like a map as a collaborative project. I trust everyone in the 9702 Art and Design group and myself, Miss Stevens and Miss Green. Twenty different individuals together, or perhaps a new individual - a body with twenty sets of eyes! The complete work is installed on boardings in the playground of your school. It will stay up as long as the boardings are busy, or until it fades and disintegrates with rain and wind.

How often do we really look at something - at our classmates or peers? Does that often, because we think we know what they look like, when we do look at another's face it is full of movement - constantly changing expressions and gestures. In the photographs the stillness of your - our - looking is provocative. It has a clarity and a directness. How often do we see any public image of faces that haven't been cropped, or beautified in some way? But that you've submitted those eyes I see curiosity, strength, pride and many different worlds.

Our culture has many rules around looking and it's not too much or too long. It's almost as if seeing is too full, too powerful to undertake without rules and regulations. By submitting a place before the classroom and turning a building site heading into a gallery, you've opened the space of your school for yourselves and others. By performing a simple, clear act and standing in a collective, you've created a different way of thinking about what it is to be bold and to take your place in the world. You don't look like without giving any more, you look like all kinds of people with all kinds of stories to tell. Your 'looks' are full of your thoughts - whatever it was that was in your mind, you looked into the camera for that split second.

LUCY & ELIE (EMAIL EXCHANGE)

Lucy: My current practice considers choreography in relation to moving image as well as social and political structures in everyday life. As part of that, I'm interested in contexts that are genuinely participatory and contain the possibility of different kinds of collaborative relationships. A one-time-only collaborative relationship, like that of our participants, where this is occurring on particular rhythms and tone of exchange - ways in which they've generated, have an energy and low particular to the coming together of the individuals involved. This is very different to the kind of structures our relationships that schools and institutions are often required to impose or maintain - structures that are generative of certain kinds of thinking and action, but not others. You've talked a little about your own experience as a teacher-artist educator. It's not clear (I continue) how do you navigate these structures in your daily life as a teacher and does this sometimes feel like a kind of choreography?

Elie: Well as you know, I certainly feel that teaching is a performance and that there is a bit of a dance in it! I'm fascinated by the way in which we interact and navigate each other within different social settings. There's a certain heterarchy in schools - a chain of command - that can leave teachers feeling much like they did when they were at school themselves. I remember during my teaching wanting having a permanent eye visible. This developed in response to returning to the school structure and the professional codes which apply to both staff and students alike. It felt like a very rigid environment. The way we 'perform' in these environments as strictly 'top-down' with the 'let's call everyone 'him' and 'her'. I suppose codes apply to any professional setting, but it's being context - academic, teaching, or else being context, having a career... Can you not be a success in life if you live in a cottage in Dorset and read about famous success?

Lucy: Oh...success...it's really great to talk about success in the context of young people trying to find their way to be 'him' it's true that the foundation of 'success' as we generally know it and used by institutions is a competitive one. In order to decide whether I'm successful or not in this system, I'll need to pick some other people to compare myself to and as I do that, I create a problem for myself. Another problem is that this model of success is inevitably, in some way, a measure of value - particularly financial value. Perhaps the only way to really be successful is to be uninvolved with success - outside of a system of comparison. Once I stop comparing myself to others, I can be present in the moment and in that case I can judge whether or not what I'm doing is as 'excellent' as I can be. Whether that's applying myself or anything that I don't know the answer to something or following my intuition. Within this model, I think it's not possible to be truly successful, on my own terms, involve break-through moments of exchange between myself and others. Moments that can't necessarily be quantified and evaluated.

Elie: Well as you know, I certainly feel that teaching is a performance and that there is a bit of a dance in it! I'm fascinated by the way in which we interact and navigate each other within different social settings. There's a certain heterarchy in schools - a chain of command - that can leave teachers feeling much like they did when they were at school themselves. I remember during my teaching wanting having a permanent eye visible. This developed in response to returning to the school structure and the professional codes which apply to both staff and students alike. It felt like a very rigid environment. The way we 'perform' in these environments as strictly 'top-down' with the 'let's call everyone 'him' and 'her'. I suppose codes apply to any professional setting, but it's being context - academic, teaching, or else being context, having a career... Can you not be a success in life if you live in a cottage in Dorset and read about famous success?

Lucy: That's a great response. Just as you say, I don't believe the pursuit of art or the life of an artist is for everyone and neither do I believe that art is only about self-expression. On the other hand, I absolutely believe that imagination is an intrinsic human ability. Like remembering or drawing, and maybe some people have bigger imaginations than others, just as some people have better memories, and whilst it can't be taught, maybe it can be recognised, or discovered and not just for something to apply to any kind of art, but more as a part of every day life and empathy with others. Let's imagine that this conversation is continuing somewhere else, so that we can bring it to a close here. Elie Green is an art teacher at Central Foundation Girls' School.

The experience of making a work can be complex and unexpected. As an artist, as much as you plan and think about a work, when it's done and finished it often triggers thoughts and reactions from others that you might never have imagined. It takes courage to let something of yourself be in the world in a way which is beyond your control.

Through my practice, I'm interested in experiencing the world not as a place outside of me, but as a place which is boundless, but as a pattern of connections that reveal things. A writer called Jungo between once said: 'That is the pattern that connects the crab to the lobster and the prince to the ogress, and all of them to me, and me to you.' Between so many different disciplines and he thought it was important to find the patterns that connect us to one another and to the world around us, because if we can do this, then we might find other solutions to dealing with different situations that might result in a more peaceful world.

Over the last year, we've looked at the patterns in arrangements of objects and photographs. We've mapped all the places in common that we've been to, and we've imagined a map of the house where we've also begun making connections between ourselves and the neighbourhood by creating another kind of map through showing to have conversations with particular people. I thought to Richard about his handmade house and Toni went to speak to her neighbourhood bakery, Alamy, Isma and Sarah chose to speak to a taxi driver, a shop owner, a policeman, the students and Paul who is the school receptionist, to find out what led them to the jobs they do. If we carried on mapping the neighbourhood in this way, we'd eventually know all of us and the people and places around us. We'd be surprised at the ways in which we're connected and at the ways in which we might even begin to wonder why we thought there was any difference between us.

Thank you for everything you brought to the map.

Elie: Can I come back quickly to what you say about success? I also believe that eliminating competition from notions of success is paramount to building confidence and self-esteem. Education is more so focused on levels, league tables, progress in terms of academic achievement and competition. It's not the individual - is that it must be hard for our young people to think outside of this box. The students we've worked with for the Whitechapel's school residency, someone who has managed to find success and confidence which is a performance and targets. There is no box to tick for this kind of achievement. No data we can enter.

Lucy: Going back to imagination - I don't think it's something that can be taught. It can however be nurtured, encouraged, developed, spaces. I don't think imagination is an inherent human quality and as artists - as imaginative and visual creatures - we forget this sometimes. If you remember this workshop we undertook around creative visualisation, very few students found they could access their 'mind's eye'.

Elie: I wonder about this, 'everyone is an artist' philosophy which is a current trend of thinking in art teaching. If we're honest, is everyone really an artist? It's a little like saying everyone's a doctor, everyone's an archaeologist, well so - that's not really possible, is it? As I was saying before, we can't teach imagination, but we can teach students to engage independently into the world around them, we can encourage their curiosity. They can learn how to handle the world around them from different angles, to see it through different lenses.

Lucy: Art is a formal name of equity and should be recognised as such. I strictly reject the notion that art is just an emotional subject that it's all about self-expression. I think being an artist is so much more than that what do you think?

Elie: That's a great response. Just as you say, I don't believe the pursuit of art or the life of an artist is for everyone and neither do I believe that art is only about self-expression. On the other hand, I absolutely believe that imagination is an intrinsic human ability. Like remembering or drawing, and maybe some people have bigger imaginations than others, just as some people have better memories, and whilst it can't be taught, maybe it can be recognised, or discovered and not just for something to apply to any kind of art, but more as a part of every day life and empathy with others. Let's imagine that this conversation is continuing somewhere else, so that we can bring it to a close here. Elie Green is an art teacher at Central Foundation Girls' School.



MY BODY FOLDED LIKE A MAP MY BODY FOLDED LIKE A MAP MY BODY FOLDED LIKE A MAP MY BODY FOLDED LIKE A MAP MY BODY FOLDED LIKE A MAP



ARRANGING OBJECTS

There is no right way to arrange the objects. Just follow your imagination and compose them in a way that you like. You don't think too hard - go with your first thought and follow it through at a comfortable speed. When you're finished, stop and take a look.

How did you decide to organise the objects? Did you notice anything about the relationships between them?

How did you decide to organise the objects? Did you notice anything about the relationships between them?

- Hand-drawn map suggestions
- A map of your journey to school or work.
- A map of all the people you know and how they connect.
- A map of all the places you've been to.
- A map of your kitchen cupboard.
- A map of your heart.
- A map of your favourite things.
- A map of the objects in your room.
- A map of all the songs you know.
- A map of your favourite book titles.

This poster was made as part of Lucy Cain's Commission for the Whitechapel Gallery's Artist in Residence programme 2013-2014 at Central Foundation Girls' School with 9702 Art and Design and teachers Billie Green and Anne Belle Jackson.

Poster design: David Gaines Unlimited

Whitechapel Gallery

FARJANA AHMED, SEYE AKINTEWE, ANISAH AKTAR, AMINA BEGUM, AYESHA BEGUM, KOLCHUMA BEGUM, RABINA AHMED, SHAJIDA BEGUM, SWEETY BEGUM, TAHMIDA BEGUM, TAJKIRA BEGUM, LUCY CASH

PATTERN

**ARRANGEMENT, DEVICE
FIGURE GUIDE, INSTRUCTIONS,
MARKINGS, MOTIF**

SPACE

**AMPLITUDE, BLANK, CAPACITY,
ELBOW-ROOM, EXPANSE, EXTENSION,
GAP, INTERVAL, LAGUNA, MARGIN,
OMISSION, SCOPE**

MOVEMENT

**ACT, ACTION, ADVANCE
CHANGE, DEVELOPMENT
DISPLACEMENT, DRIFT, DYNAMISM,
EVOLUTION, FLOW, MOTION, SHIFT, STIR,
TRANSFER, TRANSLATING**

MAP

**ATLAS, DELINEATION,
DIAGRAM, DRAFT, PLAN,
OUTLINE**

LOOK

**ATTENTION, BEHOLDING,
CONTEMPLATION,
GAZE, GLANCE, GLIMPSE, NOTICING,
OBSERVATION, PEEK, REGARD,
SPECULATION, STARE, VIEW**

TEACHER

**ADVISOR, COACH,
DISCIPLINARIAN, GUIDE**

ARTIST

**ARTISAN, CRAFTSPERSON,
COMPOSER, INVENTOR, PAINTER**

ZARRIN CHOUDHURY, TONI DALY, IMAN DUALEH, ANNE BELLE ESTEVES, ELLIE GREEN, PARIS HAYNES,
RUQAIYAH HUSSAIN, NAEEMA KHANUM, BILLIE PRYER, SANJIDA RAHMAN, SHUME REMA