

# WHITE LIT(N)ES





Dutch artist Bart Lodewijks (b. 1972) uses urban environments around the world as a canvas for his chalk abstract drawings – from residential buildings in quiet suburban neighbourhoods to street surfaces in bustling metropolitan city centres. He is interested in how drawing can be a social process built on relationships and conversations with individuals or communities. While the drawings often disappear, the stories and encounters are captured through writing, and brought together in books and other printed materials made in collaboration with Roma publications. As part of this new commission for the Whitechapel Gallery, Lodewijks worked with two groups of young people from across London.

A series of assignments were used as the basis for the workshops and developed into creative interventions inside and outside of the Gallery. The title 'White Li(n)es' functioned as a conceptual framework for the project and challenged participants to expand their idea of drawing to consider how a line on a wall can be 'made out of chalk and trust'. Bart also introduced a new term for the group to work with: the 'B-side effect', which was defined as an unexpected but positive outcome. Details of the group's explorations into the public and private spaces around the local area are presented in this publication through writing, drawing and photographs.

Bart Lodewijks' exhibition includes a series of chalk drawings made in response to the Gallery space, presented alongside images and writings on the working process in London, and archival material from past projects.



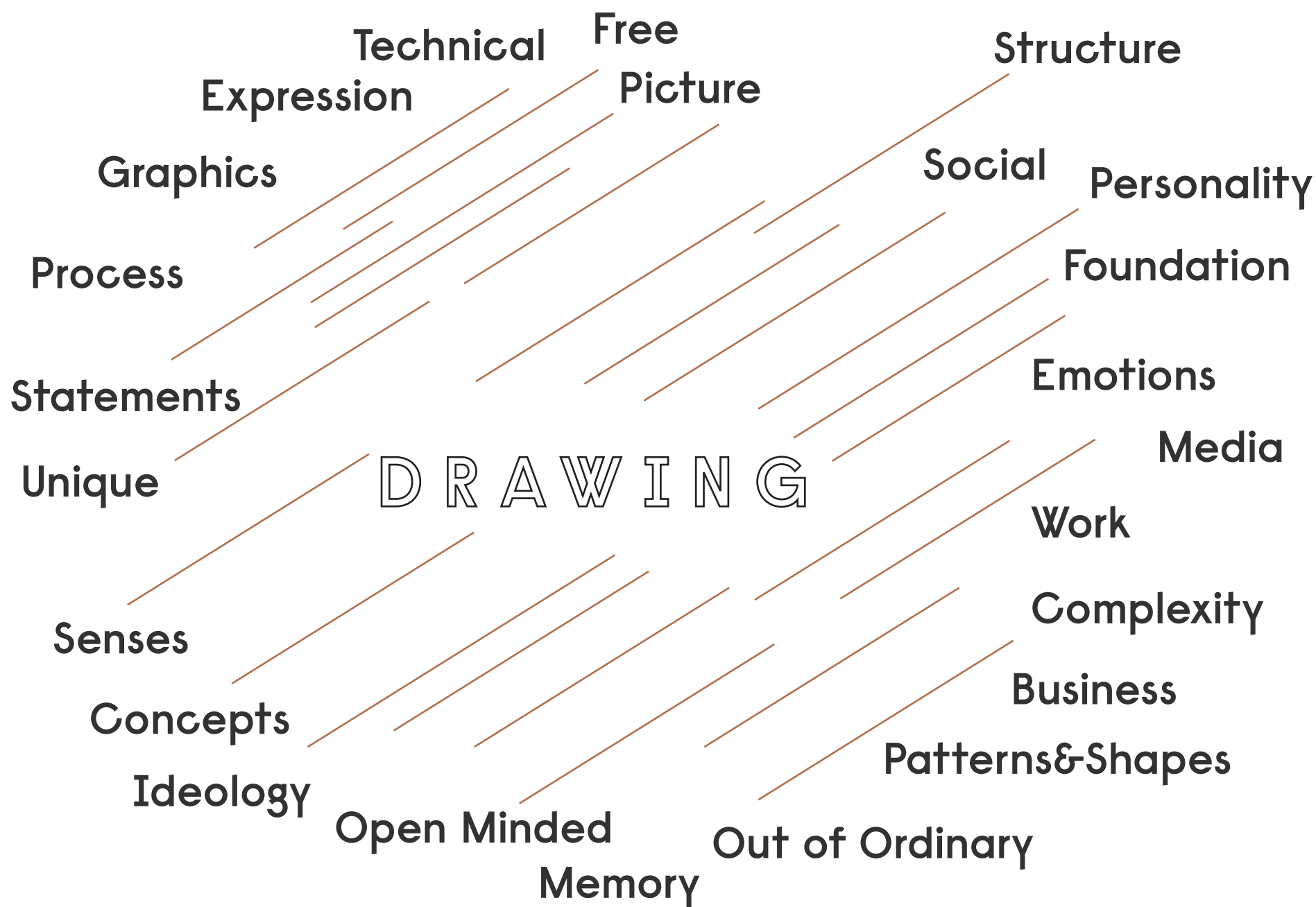
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#### **Why start with a mind-map?**

Our first task for the project was to discuss 'drawing' and create a mind map of everyone's thoughts. It was interesting to see the amount of different ideas that came from just one word. Looking back, we

felt that starting the week off with this conversation led us to approach the project with a broader mind. When Bart gave us the assignments to do we collaborated as a group, which made us come up with more

original and exciting results. One of the many things we learnt was how important seeing other people's perspective is. Everyone is unique and has their own way of thinking. Once you see that, you can't deny it.

# Assignments

Find a place with a view. Use a large sheet of paper and a pencil to draw the skyline. Do it in a single line, without lifting your pencil for 15 minutes.

Take pictures of people's smiles and then draw a person's face on a shop window.

Chart the colours in the area. What colours are people wearing? What colour do you hardly see?

Draw as many buildings as you can in 10 minutes.

Assemble a series of objects and draw on their surface. Make a composition on a wall or on the floor with the objects.

Climb up somewhere you find amusing and take a photograph of the world from above. Look for colours.

Use chalk to make a drawing on a wall or on the pavement.

Visit the market down the road

from the Gallery. Pick one item and make a work of it.

With stuff given away for free in shops or cafés (zines, napkins, sugar bags etc). Make a cabinet of curiosities where 'worthless' objects are shown as valuable.

Draw/Photograph patterns outside (brickwork, windows etc).

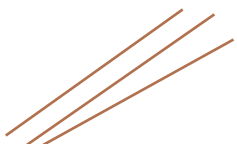
Visit a bookshop and look for a book you like. Buy or borrow the book and display it in a way that reveals why you felt drawn to it.

Use post-it notes to draw or write something. Stick them on shop windows.

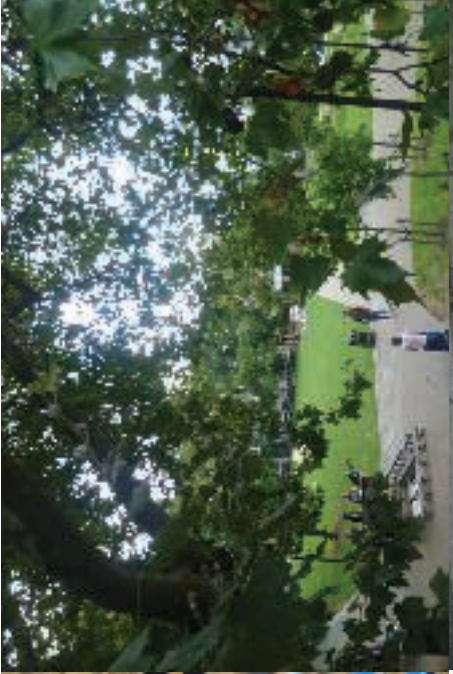
Redesign the pavements on the Whitechapel road using chalk.

Draw a skyline anywhere on the streets (bins, pavement, walls etc).

Find a way to write a message about the Whitechapel Gallery that is unique.





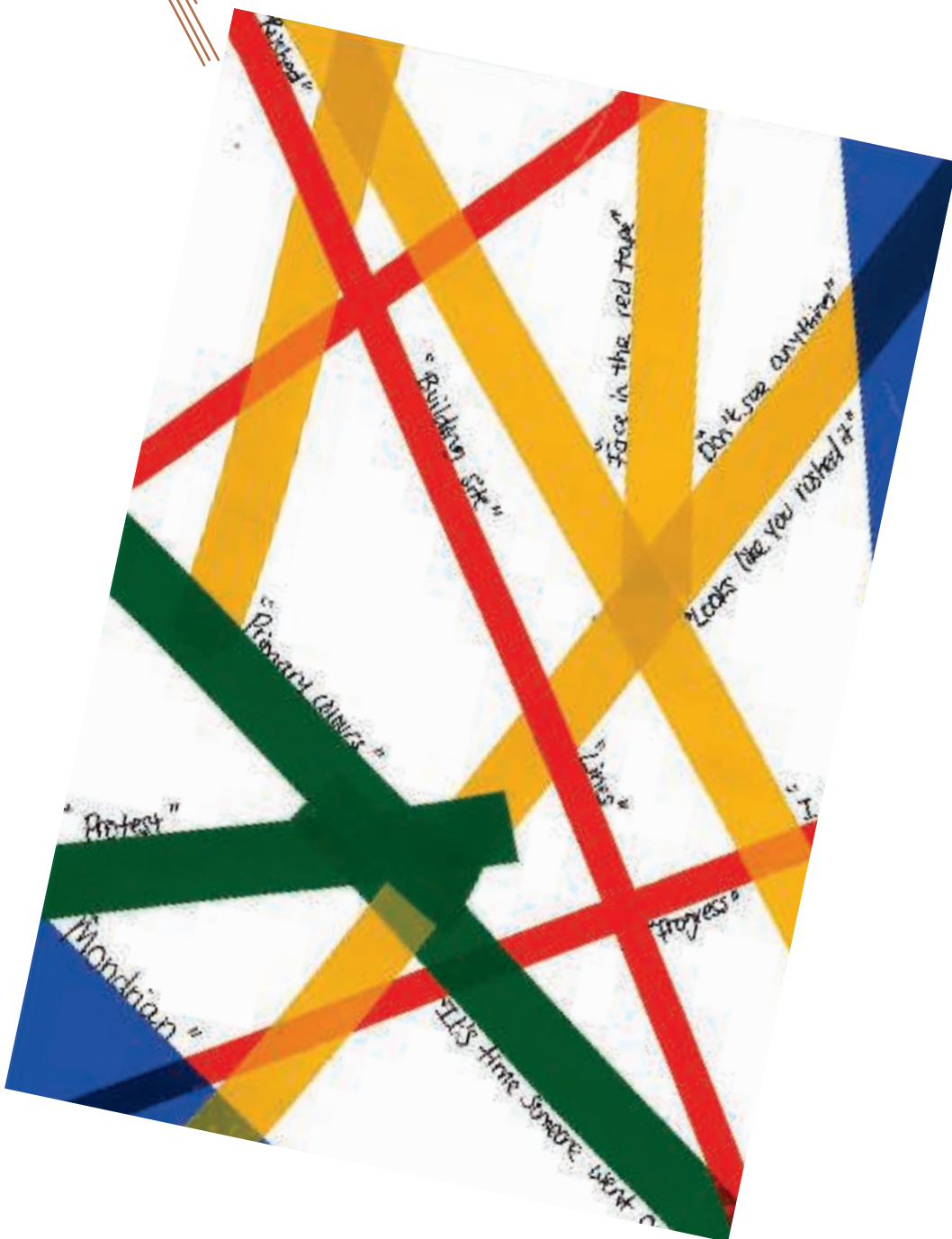




# Tape Drawings

Creating abstract drawings out of tape was a unique experience that challenged us to make an artwork out in public space. As a group we decided to head to Brick Lane, at first we struggled to find a wall that we thought was right for our piece just because there is so much artwork on

the walls of the street already. But then we decided we should interact with the local graffiti scene. Inspired by Bart's lines we drew our own to reflect our expressions and emotions. We also tried to display our views of city life and how the city is created with many lines and connections.





# The B-Side Effect

On Wednesday we experienced what Bart refers to as the B-side effect. This is when setting out to perform a task triggers an unexpected and unplanned but positive outcome. We first spotted a man wearing a curious hat whilst creating large chalk drawings on the pavement opposite London Metropolitan University. We were inspired by this eccentric hat choice to make

a poster begging the question "Where is the man who owns this hat?" We decided to stick our poster in a nearby café and by coincidence the hat in question happened to be in that very café! Someone recognised that our hat-wearing man was actually the artist Bob and Roberta Smith (Patrick Brill). Thinking that an unexpected encounter with a high profile

artist was too good a chance to miss we nervously advanced towards him and explained the situation. He was lovely enough to have a nice chat with us and explain that his hat was called an Oldenburg. We are still uncertain if this is the name of the hat or a reference to the American sculptor Claes Oldenburg who produced a sculpture based on a hat.













# The Bell Foundry Report

One of the assignments set by Bart was to visit the Whitechapel Bell Foundry just down the road from the Gallery. The Bell Foundry is an amazing part of Whitechapel's history and the church bells which have been created there are impressive and enduring. However the most fascinating display for us was the collection of small doorbells which use a series of pulleys to give that familiar bell

ringing that we all recognise. Inspired by our visit we decided to make a bell that was our own take on the traditional. We had fun creating it with vibrantly coloured paper and string which was all sourced from Aldgate press (the printers behind the Gallery). We tried to mimic the traditional mechanisms, so it is of a large scale, has a ringer, and the rope reaches three floors down the stairwell from the

creative studio. After we finished, we invited the staff at the foundry who were so welcoming and helpful in the project to come and see it. Though the foundry was established in 1470, and will probably be here for much longer, our bell is impermanent and quite fragile. The project was mostly about playing with the history and roots of the foundry and having fun making our own response.



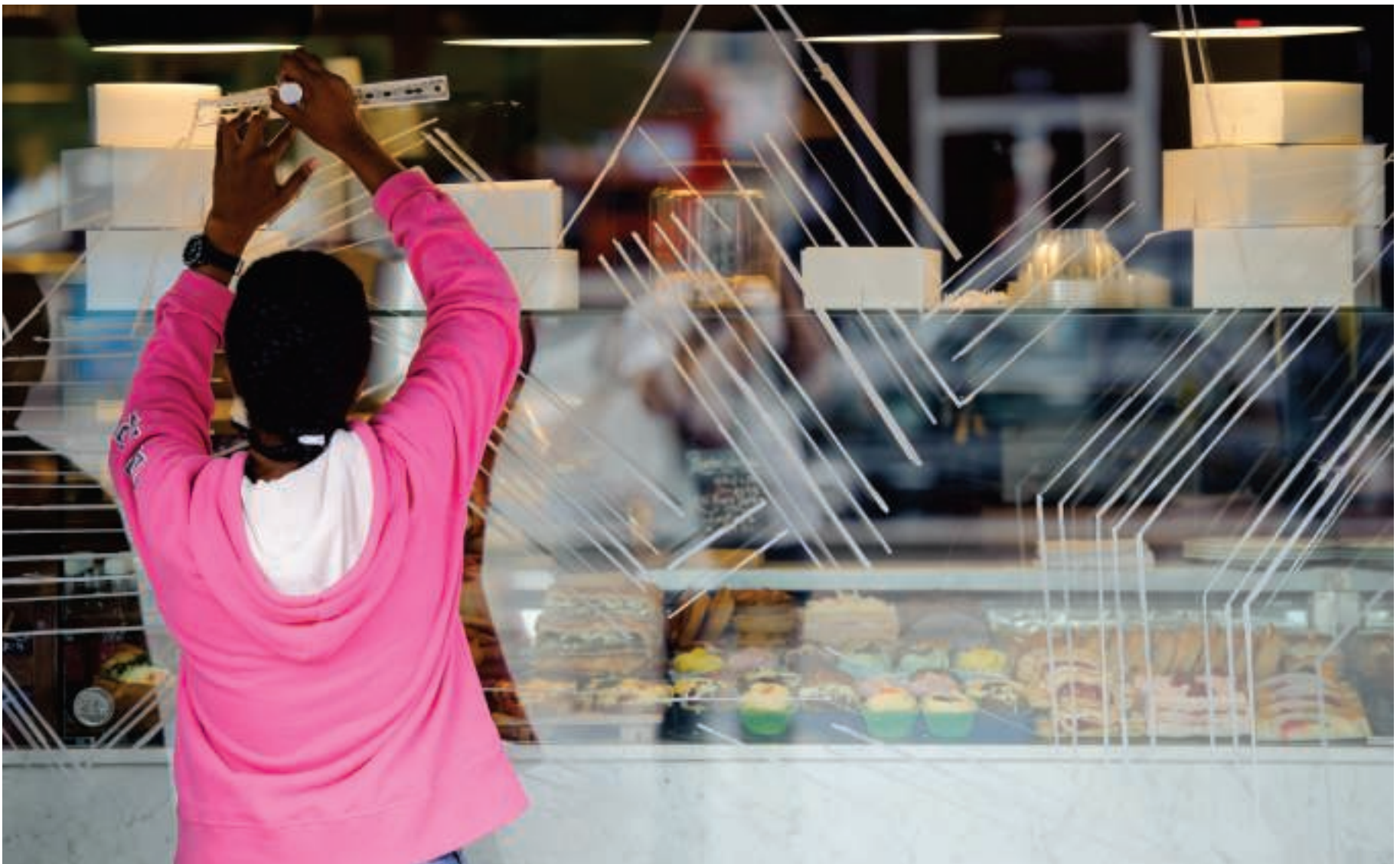


# Drawing on the Windows

Over the course of the week we experimented with creating large scale window drawings. These drawings were an interesting and original response to Bart's experimentation of linear mark making on urban surfaces. Christina, who made a drawing on the window of a local café, explained her process of drawing as allowing the lines to tell a story, an abstract but symbolic representation of the way the

area surrounding Whitechapel has evolved into a dynamic creative community. Christina described how she intuitively chose when the lines began and ended as an expression of the sense of movement and play associated with the open ended and fluid nature of drawing itself. As a contrast, Amabel made a drawing on the large windows inside the Gallery's creative studio which

showed her fascination with pattern and movement in nature, particularly in the insect world.





360°

# Drawing



Our assignment said "Draw as many buildings as you can in 10 minutes" So we decided on a few locations to go around Whitechapel. First was Altab Ali Park near the Gallery where we had been going together for lunch that week. We found a nice, green, sunny spot in the middle and sat in a circle facing each other. It was a beautiful warm day and everything appeared so peaceful.

Time just started flying away and each of us got so involved in the drawing and the landscapes that those 10 minutes slowly became an hour.

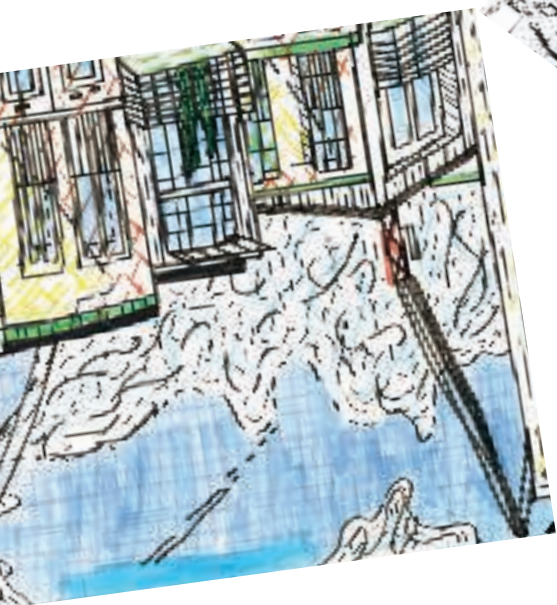
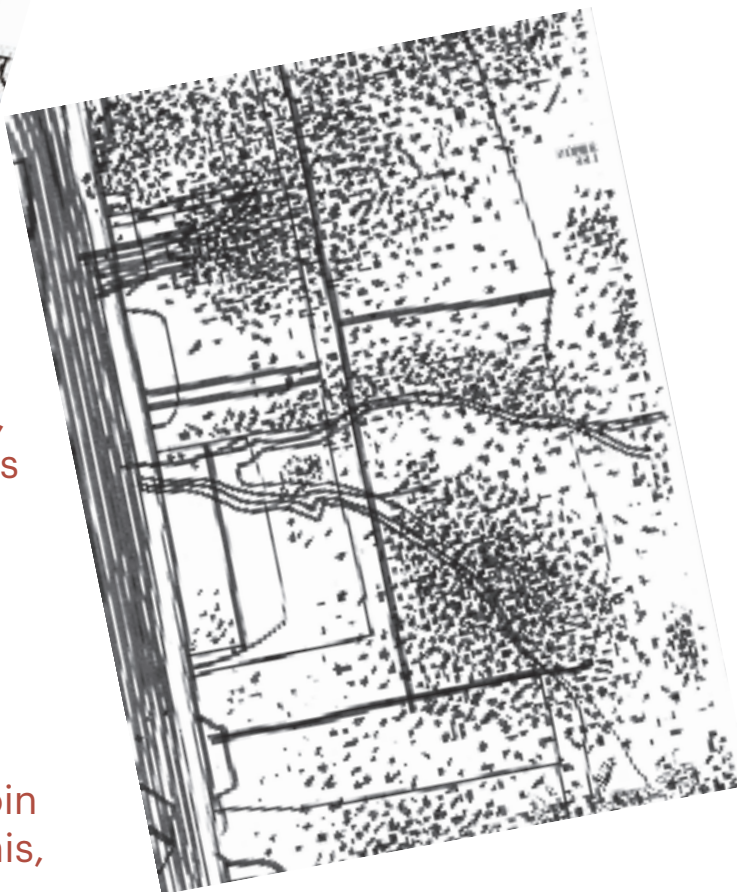






Seven human creatures sitting in a circle, on the green grass, with sun shining and thousands of things happening around us; dogs running, pigeons madly flying around, tourists eating their packed lunch and bits of buildings blending with nature everywhere.

We wanted the drawings to connect with each other as if they were one whole image so we all made them join on the sides where they touched. This, for us, was a way of touching each other, just like Bart says that with his lines he gets to touch peoples lives.







# Portrait Games

Everyday we played a portrait game. This would be a time where we could all enjoy each other's company and get active. It helped us get to know everyone a bit better as the games were enjoyable and made us more comfortable as a group.

The activities were different from just drawing the person's face as you see it and each day a person was given the chance to invent their own portrait game for the group to test out.

The drawing games we came up with were:



**Draw the person and incorporate a word that they think best describes them.**

**Draw the person's face without taking your pencil off the paper.**

**Draw one feature of the person's face and then pass on the paper.**

**Draw the person's face without looking at the paper.**

**Draw the person's face using only shapes (No lines allowed!).**

**Draw the person's face from multiple angles and layer them.**





# I n t e r v i e w

## w i t h B a r t

### **Why do you choose to draw lines rather than shapes or something else?**

That's a good question; to be honest I started with drawing. I was not really conscious about the lines, so after a while I looked back and noticed they are all lines, but why? It's because when you walk, you take a step and the connection between the two points is a straight line, it's the easiest way to connect things. Walking step by step you can go anywhere; you can walk to the other side of the world, and what I try to do is draw everywhere, so that's the reason why they are always straight lines. We can all make lines so it's easy in a way, but it becomes difficult because of the context. You have to keep it simple to do this whole exercise of exploring a place; it took me years to find this out.

### **Why do you draw on buildings?**

When you start drawing on a building you find out that it's very difficult because there a lot of different surfaces and angles. But with a house, it's not only the physical conditions that are difficult but also the whole social space around and inside the house. I always end up going to the challenging areas, but it's interesting to touch these places with drawing because you get outputs that you couldn't ever predict. Things happen when you are drawing, people ask you questions and you discover things about an area which are usually hidden.

### **How long does it take to make a drawing?**

Sometimes half a day or up to a whole week. When you want the drawings big, you have to invest much more time.

### **What happens if you really really want to draw on a building but can't get the permission?**

A house where I can't get permission to draw can become very important. I am always going to places carrying only a spirit level and chalk, but often I need a ladder. So I have to ask people if I can borrow a ladder and I only ask those who won't let me draw on their house. But the thing is, when I have used the ladder and bring it back at the end of the day, they might not be at home. So I have to take it to another house and I write in chalk on their house that they need to go to number 45 to get their ladder back. I am always trying to make them part of the project.

### **Do you have a house?**

Another good question! I have an apartment with my family in Belgium, we always rent because we are moving often for projects. We have lived in all kinds of places, last year we were in Rio de Janeiro for four months. I also had a project in Ireland, and before

that in Lisbon, Munich, lots of different places. When a project is really long we might stay for a whole summer, so in Brazil my kids went to school there, which was very challenging.

### **How do you feel when your drawing washes off after you have spent time on it, whereas other artists might make a painting and it stays there?**

Well the goal is not to make permanent pieces of art, because it's not about changing an area forever. It's more related to touching what's actually there and influencing places in a subtle way. They are there for a short time and then gone, so it is about respecting how an area is, I'm not going to make it better or worse. However, the drawings are kept through the photographs and writing and I often give people who live in area the publications related to my projects.

### **Are the publications artworks themselves or are they just a way of documenting?**

They are the output. The text is very important because it is about the whole storytelling of what happened and the social navigation involved. But the photographs in the publications are made as documentation for the archive and not for blowing up to sell.

### **How do you choose the areas where you work?**

In the beginning I would choose an area myself but in the last six years city councils have commissioned me, so I can't choose the city, but I am always pressing to choose the area within the city, often working class neighbourhoods. These areas are not always the most beautiful places but people who live there are trying to make their lives beautiful. I drew on a woman's house in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, and when I returned one year later a hotel was being built on the hill opposite the house, blocking her view. But she didn't care, she said: "They are not going to change me, I'm beautiful". I have an interest in the kind of mental survival and struggles people face.

### **Why is the goal always to end up drawing in people's private spaces?**

The private is the soul of a place, it belongs to someone, it means that the drawing is really inside their lives and they can decide who is going to see it.

### **How did you find working with us?**

Being in the workshop I felt much more like a participant. The exercises and games were very important; I wrote assignments to you and at one point you wrote your own assignments. At first I didn't know how these two things would be bridged, but in the end the two sets of assignments worked together in an unexpected and challenging way.





**Lucie**  
Gospel Oak  
Art skills



**Gabriella**  
Lambeth  
Drawing



**Shola**  
Brockley  
Art skills



**Ziggy**  
Greenwich  
Photography



**Farzana**  
Tower Hamlets  
Sociable



**Marjan**  
Whitechapel  
Art



**Raf**  
East London  
Motivation



**Andrew**  
Sidcup  
Doodling



**Aysun**  
Edmonton  
Graphics and  
sculpture skills



**Kyle**  
East London  
Active Mind



**Taz**  
Bromley-by-Bow  
Drawing



**Amabel**  
Blackheath  
Painting with oil  
and watercolours



**Shaf**  
East London  
Information Technology



**Rahmat**  
East London  
Questioning



**Lyla**  
Stratford  
Art History



**Pascale**  
Croydon  
Painting



**Michile**  
Romford  
Drawing



**Christina**  
Tottenham  
Drawing



**Alice**  
Italy  
Art skills



**Raheel**  
West London  
Joker



**Sana**  
East London  
Optimism