

**The Edgware
Road Project**

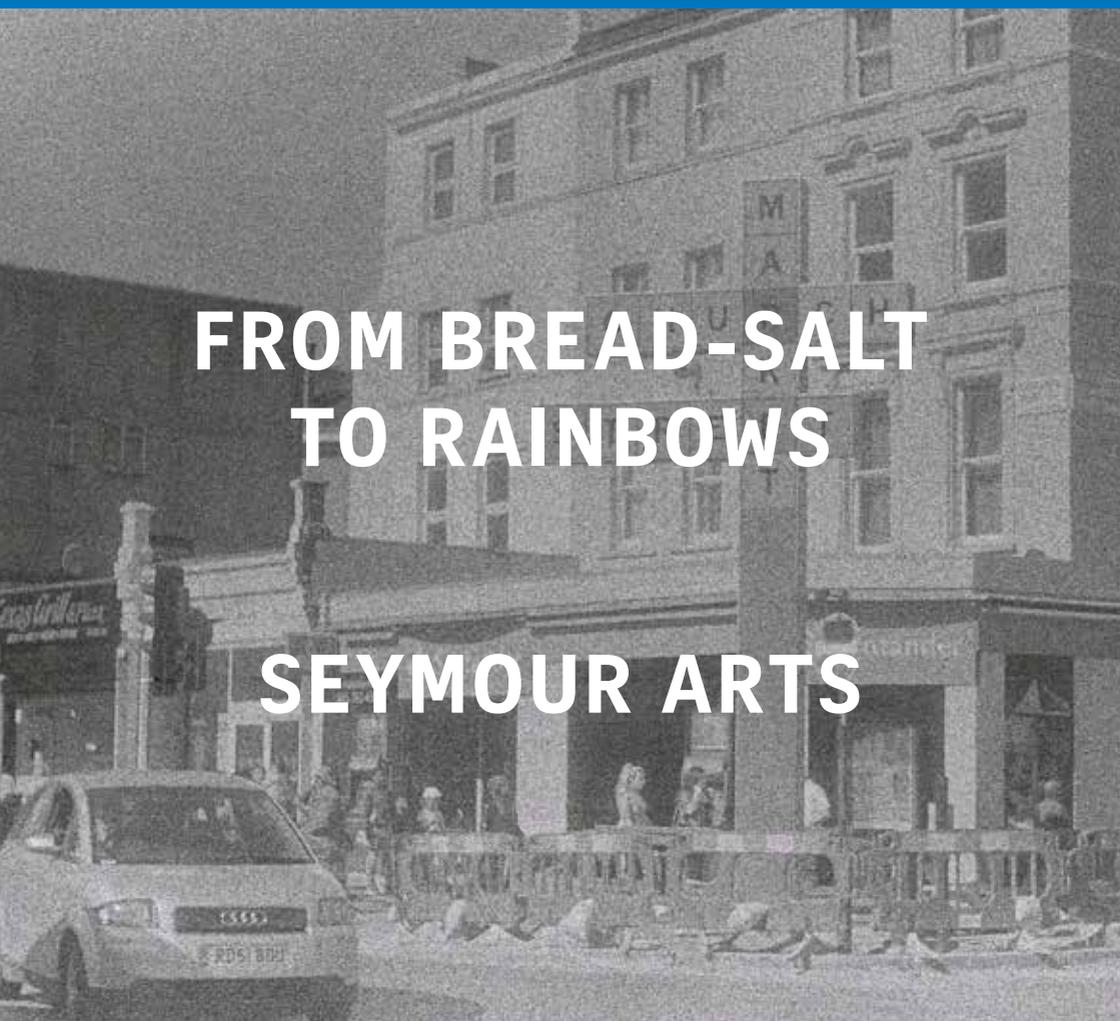
Possible Studies
Pamphlets

Studies on a Road

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**FROM BREAD-SALT
TO RAINBOWS
SEYMOUR ARTS**

Edited, published and designed using edgwareroad.org

Comissioned by the Edgware Road Project

This pamphlet was produced using the online archive and publishing tool edgwareroad.org, created by Bombay based media collective CAMP while in residence on the Edgware Road.

It is part of the series, *Studies on a Road*, in which groups who took part in the Edgware Road Project from 2008–2016, have shared their studies of the area and reflections on the stakes of the project.

The Edgware Road Project was developed in 2008 to support local and international artists and community groups to develop 'possible studies' responding to issues faced by those living, working and visiting the area. Over these 8 years a widening gap of inequality has opened in the area at the hands of local processes of development and the national climate of forced austerity. In response to these conditions, groups that included artists and non-artists were supported in their development of analyses and actions that would address the various dimensions of the development process. Four main thematics have opened up in response to these inequalities outlined in this series. They include Policing, Education, Housing and Care.

Researchers

Åbäke, Khalid Abdalla and Cressida Trew, Larry Achiampong, Etel Adnan, Tammy Arjona Wheeler, Bidoun, Polly Brannan, CAMP, Gill Clarke, Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, Sam Curtis, students from Westminster Academy, Alia Farid, Susan Hefuna, Lamia Joreige, Townhouse Gallery (Cairo), Hiwa K, Chicago Boys: while they were singing we were dreaming, Implicated Theatre, Hato, no.w.here, Karen Mirza, Brad Butler and James Holcombe, Frances Rifkin, Anton Kats, Marwan Rechmaoui, Wael Shawky, Rania Stephan, Ultra-red with St. Marylebone CE School, Chris Jones, Mathaf (Doha), Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre: Project 5, Goldsmiths MA in Aural and Visual Cultures, Migrants Resource Centre, People's Research Seminars, Public Space Seminars/E.V.S.A, ODV and Public10, moi, Seymour Arts, the x:talk project, Justice For Domestic Workers, UnitetheUnion Hotel Workers Branch, Phyllis Etukudo, and the residents and care workers of the Carlton Dene and Westmead Elderly Resource Centres

SEYMOUR ARTS

July 2015

Seymour Arts is a collaboration of community spirit, a meeting of minds of likeminded people. It gives me a strong motivation. Instead of sitting at home, it is possible to come in and to meet and be creative. I come to the Centre to be expressive with my art.

Ekaterini

Seymour Arts exists to give people the opportunity to express themselves and to also bring together the thoughts of other people in the community. It helps to make sense of a senseless existence. By senseless existence I mean that of homelessness. Homelessness can be very debilitating. You need to believe in your ideals, you need to believe that there is a way out, a road to the rainbow. Art helps to divert from a bread-salt mentality that you can get from being in a situation on the street. Seymour Arts gives you a chance to get to an artistic and non-materialistic defining level of existence. Maybe you see more when you're not in the middle-class. The middle classes are enslaved to work for physical comfort. They are working too hard to die. Seymour Arts is a lighthouse in the dark, a sanctuary and a security in a sea full of sharks.

Richard

SEYMOUR ARTS

July 2015

Seymour Arts – and the activities around it – gives a platform and an outlet for raw talent to practice and to show.

Edgware Road is the main artery that connects many of our activities. We are constantly moving up and down the Edgware Road in our daily lives. I live a couple blocks away, close to Church Street. We offer alternative viewpoints to local residents on topics such as Tony Blair, the elite crowd and high spending tourists. The wealthy rub shoulders with the poor on Edgware Road. You are very aware of that. On paper we appear unemployed but we are actually fully employed in the daily business of survival.

The project triggered a crisis for me. But it has brought new transmutations of thought too. It has pushed me into new perceptions and reflections.

Ismail

I'm a photographer and I've never done any writing like this before. The project pulled me out of my comfort zone and inspired me to venture into writing. I feel I explored my creativity in writing. We should always explore new skills.

Ray

FROM BREAD-SALT TO RAINBOWS

Introduction

Seymour Arts
Page 1

Basic Income

Robert Mitchell
Page 4

Ephemerality

Robert Mitchell
Page 9

Why is there Infinite Empty Space?

Richard Lamb
Page 16

A Brief Guide to Gentrification

Ray-of-Light
Page 20

Everyday People

Ekaterini Koliakou
Page 27

Cumberland Gate

Frederick Heymann
Page 34

Please, Please, Police Me

Ismail Ali
Page 36

BASIC INCOME

By Robert Mitchell
May 2015

Basic income is a straightforward thing. The government gives money to its residents whether they are old or young, rich or poor, short or tall, female or male. They only have to be residents of the land. The basic income would be a right, like the right to free speech or freedom of religion. For the rich it will not mean much, but for the poor it could open up new hope for their ambitions.

How much would it be? In Alaska, USA, I believe \$1,000 is given to those living in the state. The inequality between rich and poor is lower in Alaska than other states in the USA. Less inequality is one of the strengths of basic income. Less inequality also leads to higher rates of GDP - when all gain, rich and poor.

In the USA, \$125 billion each year, has been quoted as the price for paying a basic income. And, sure, that's a lot of money, but it's about a quarter of what the USA currently spends on defence. Tom Paine put the idea of a basic income forward around 200 years ago when Britain had less wealth than it does today. Today we are living in the aftermath of the industrial revolution; we are now a consumer society; and one that can think about paying everyone a basic income. The money is there.

One way of choosing how much the basic income should be is to say that the basic income should be 60 percent of the average income. If the average income in the UK is around £25,000 each

year, then the basic income would be around £15,000.

What would we do with this money? Would we stop working? Even set at the fairly high level of 60 percent of average income, the basic income would not be enough to make anyone wealthy. 99 percent of people would say - no, we would carry on working. We have too many things to pay for - childcare; new phones; double-glazing; bigger car. Some people might spend more time in the pub, but most would spend their basic income on their family or their children's learning.

These are the findings Evelyn Forget, a Canadian sociologist. In 2011, she did a statistical analysis of the Mincome trial in Dauphin, Manitoba. For about five years, from 1974 to 1979, the citizens of Dauphin were given a basic income. With the help of a control group and records from censuses, Forget teased out the effects of the Mincome trial. Her findings highlight that with a basic income every measure of welfare showed a significant shift towards a better life.

The Basic income experiment in the City of London: a small group of thirteen long-term homeless people were each given £3000 and the help of a key worker if they wished. After a year, seven participants in the experiment had a roof over their heads and only about £800 had been spent. The cost of the experiment was £50,000, compared to an estimated £350,000 that

is currently spent on homelessness. The Economist said that perhaps the best way to spend money on the homeless is in fact to give it to them.

But is this not merely Utopia? Will the government ever give a basic income to its citizens? There is hope that governments around the world will. Over hundreds of years, some Utopia's do come true. Democracy, freedom of speech, the welfare state, freedom of religion – these were all Utopias once upon a time. If the Utopia of the basic income comes true, poverty could be eradicated and inequalities lessened, leading to higher living standards for those that need it most.



Robert Mitchell, *Snail*, Photograph, 2015

Bregman, Rutger (2013) *Why we should give free money to everyone*, <https://decorrespondent.nl/541/Why-we-should-give-free-money-to-everyone/20798745-cb9fbb39> Accessed July 2015

Bregman, Rutger (2014) *Why we should give everyone a basic income*, TEDx, Maastricht, Netherlands, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIL_Y9g7Tg0 Accessed July 2015

EPHEMERALITY

By Robert Mitchell
May 2015



Robert Mitchell, *Ants eating a worm*, Photograph, 2015

The sketch postcard is 'ephemerality' made solid. The thing sketched is anything found, chosen at random so that I can't choose an easy way out – such as bottle top, apple, water dish. The card is heavyweight paper: 300gsm. On one side is a sketch and a dodgy doggerel, and on the other, stamp, address, and a happy tale. The card is then lost between the jaws of a pillar-box – for most, I never see them again. The sketch card is as ephemeral as the proverbial mayfly.



Robert Mitchell, Lipton Iced Tea, Watercolour postcard, 2013



Robert Mitchell, Apple on Table, Watercolour postcard, 2015

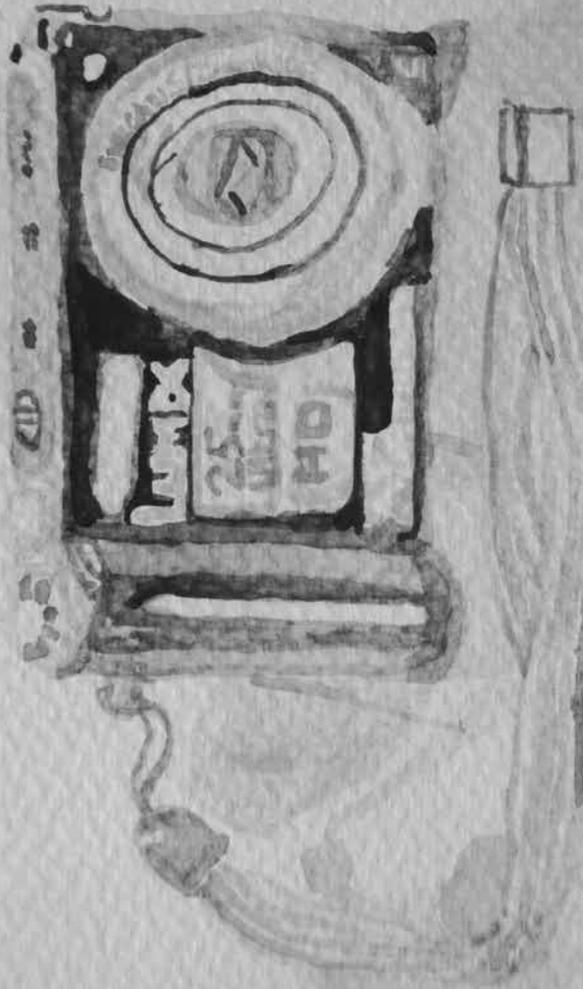


Robert Mitchell, *Unii Pack of Cards*, Watercolour postcard, 2015



Robert Mitchell, *Blue bottle top*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

(1101) F 30 Jan 2015 | M 23 Mar 2015 Art Fitzrovia, Jake, Izzy



Robert Mitchell, Camera, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Friday 17th April 2015 - 13.30 bet! I'm sitting in the sun behind a silver birch on grass sprinkled with daisies and dandelion flowers. It's still too early for dandelion "clocks". The first leaves are sprouting on the birch with the short stiff dark brown catkins. A cool wind blows from the E with cirrus + thin alto stratocumulus high over head, seemingly blowing in from NNE. A few aeroplane contrails show that it is a little damp up there. Yesterday I dropped in to Tate Britain. I made the mistake of taking the Jubilee to Westminster and had to get thro' the crowds round the abbey. Next time I think I'll try crossing the river + walking back over Vauxhall Bridge. I wandered in to the archive gallery downstairs with many life drags + photos, + the odd painting. Also showing on a small TV they had "masterclasses" with about 20 students with a live model - well worth watching. Quentin Crisp modelled + once lifted a bicycle above his head - a hard + tiring pose! "Thank you, Mr Crisp. That will do!" Hello Art Group (STM) hope you are well. Greetings to the volunteers + artists. I would like to put this card for word for the exhibition (exposition) in August, the third of four, 3/4. Please feel free to put or not put this card and/or a photocopy of the ^{in the box} written side. I hope you like the card + that it goes to people from which I had taken a bite. I was not sure about it since the boundaries of the exhibition are not 8.5.15 as they should be. But some have said they will like it. A bit of exhibition + likes are a plea! Best wishes to all Robert Mitchell

Postcard St Mary's Square, 17/4
 ART GROUP STM
 WVN, ANNA, MARK, volunteers + artists
 12 ADELAIDE STREET
 LONDON WC2N 4HW

Robert Mitchell, Postcard, Watercolour postcard, 2015

WHY IS THERE INFINITE EMPTY SPACE?

By Richard Lamb
July 2015

A local Italian businessman I interviewed comments:

"The cost of rental properties has gone up to such a extent it had become difficult to make ends meet. The price of properties has escalated so much that normal people on basic salaries have no chance to pursue a comfortable life any more. Things have changed forever. The itinerant worker is losing ground. It has been a process of chipping away. People have to look hard to see it happening. Why is the question also the answer? What is the end of the end of the end my friend?"



Richard Lamb, *Billboard*, Photograph, 2015



Richard Lamb, *Pavement*, Photograph, 2015



Richard Lamb, *Through the Bus Window*, Photograph, 2015

A BRIEF GUIDE TO GENTRIFICATION

By Ray-of-Light
July 2015

Edgware Road is one of the most ethnically varied areas of London. Just as vibrant as the demography, are the opinions and effects of gentrification on this ancient Roman thoroughfare.

According to a market trader on Church Street, gentrification is when the taxpayer has to shell out £10 to watch the New Year's firework display, even though the display was bought with taxpayers' money in the first place. Not entirely true, but humorous and nonetheless a valid point.

Gentrification is often perceived as involving housing. The sociologist, Ruth Glass used the term 'gentrification' to describe the process in which the housing opportunities of working class people were restricted, whilst those of middle class competitors were expanded. However, gentrification involves a lot more than housing.

The Church Street Market Station is the proposed name for the Bakerloo exit to Edgware Road Station. The proposed name change is in line with the 'rebranding' of Church Street Market, which had its signage put up two weeks before the general election in 2015. Many of the traders were not consulted about the changes. More importantly, no one was told about the six-figure cost of the signage. Edgware Road tube station is vital in serving the local community. Yet despite the year-on-year



Ray-of-Light, *Church Street Market*, Photograph, 2015

increase in passenger footfall, the station has been subject to reduced staffing and ticket office closure while the management get a pay rise.

Every Little Helps

The Homes-for-Votes scandal in the 1980s involved the selling off of council housing to potential Conservative voters by Westminster City Council. Part of the secret policy 'Building Stable Communities' implemented by Shelley Porter, was the removal of homeless voters and those who lived in hostels, along with others in Westminster who were perceived as less likely to vote Conservative, such as students and nurses. An important part of this policy was the designation of much of Westminster's council housing for commercial sale, rather than re-letting when the properties became vacant. The House of Lords brought this to light in 2001 (see *Porter v Magill* (2001 House of Lords 67; 2002 2 Appeal Court 357)). The question is whether this disgraceful practice of gerrymandering amounts to social cleansing.

While the financial loss was estimated to be around £30 - £50 million, the 'irreparable' social loss, in terms of breaking up communities and displacing individuals and families, is incalculable.

Some 40 percent of local council houses in Westminster have been sold on to buy-to-let landlords, many of the 'landlords' are in fact companies who then rent the flats back to the council at inflated rates. A council owned property might cost £150 to rent, but the next door ex-council flat rented out by a landlord will go for £450 a week. David Cameron promised before the 2010 general election that any future council property that were sold off would be replaced one for one. However since 2012, when New Labour's programme for pre-financed social housing finally



Ray-of-Light, *Window Cleaner*, Photograph, 2015

ran out, more council houses have been sold than built. Cameron has also increased the discount for tenants to 70 percent, making council flats even cheaper to buy.

Improving neighbourhoods is good but profiteering should not be put ahead of communities. There should be more working class MPs than millionaire metropolitan elite Etonians. Most Etonian elites have no clue of what a litre of milk costs. Perhaps, a working class Mayor of London could make a difference in delivering social housing promises.

When an area of London finds itself the neighbour to a newly gentrified district the wave of change spreads. It starts with landlords and property owners being tempted to sell up due to the increased property values. The new owners then, due to the inflated purchase prices, increase the rents to recoup their investment. Long term and loyal tenants then find themselves priced out of the area. New businesses and tenants move into the said area, mainly because they are unable to live in the already gentrified neighbouring district due to even higher prices. They see that being the pioneers to this new up and coming area will be a good investment. Shops, restaurants, bars and cafés open to cater for this new influx of inhabitants eager to spend money. Local characters that once lived in the area struggle to fit in to what was once their home. Gone are the familiarities of their life. Some remain in the areas as testaments to a bygone era. They often stick out like a sore thumb, almost as if they are for the amusement of the new locals, who find it edgy and cool to have such people around.

Mind the Gap

The Church Street Drop-in, a community resource is shutting down after years of service. The local seniors, who have



Ray-Of-Light, *Chihuahua*, Photograph, 2015

depended on it, have been asked to try the local food banks. One long term resident war veteran is quite disappointed with the environmental impact as well as the social impact of gentrification in the Edgware Road area. He comments on the bailing-out of the bankers on the one hand, and the cutbacks on social welfare on the other: "Why shouldn't the criminal banking elites who caused the crash be asked to join the food banks too?" He also says: "Before we had gentrification, people from the underclass used to be executed here. Now we have gentrification to remove them from the borough."

How can the Government hope to create a fairer society when they are cutting £12 billion from the welfare budget - cuts that will hit the poorest? When government policies and practices don't take into account the needs, rights and abilities of low-income groups, housing deficits increase. The official bureaucratic approach to providing shelter has been proved to be inadequate time and time again. With an increasing number of homeless families in the area and the vacant sitexed properties, one wonders why the economic theories of supply and demand have failed. But free-market economic theories of supply and demand are applied selectively. There should be 'rent-caps' instead of caps on housing benefits.

A 16-year-old teenager who was arrested by the police for drunken and disorderly conduct at Leicester Square may have his finger prints and DNA retained indefinitely by the police, depending on if he lives in a council flat or a £3.5 million house in Connaught Square. Teenagers from underprivileged families have almost no prospects of employment after they receive a caution or a criminal record for petty offences. Conversely, law and order seems to not apply to the privileged class. As one famous writer said, "You have to choose your parents wisely".

EVERYDAY PEOPLE

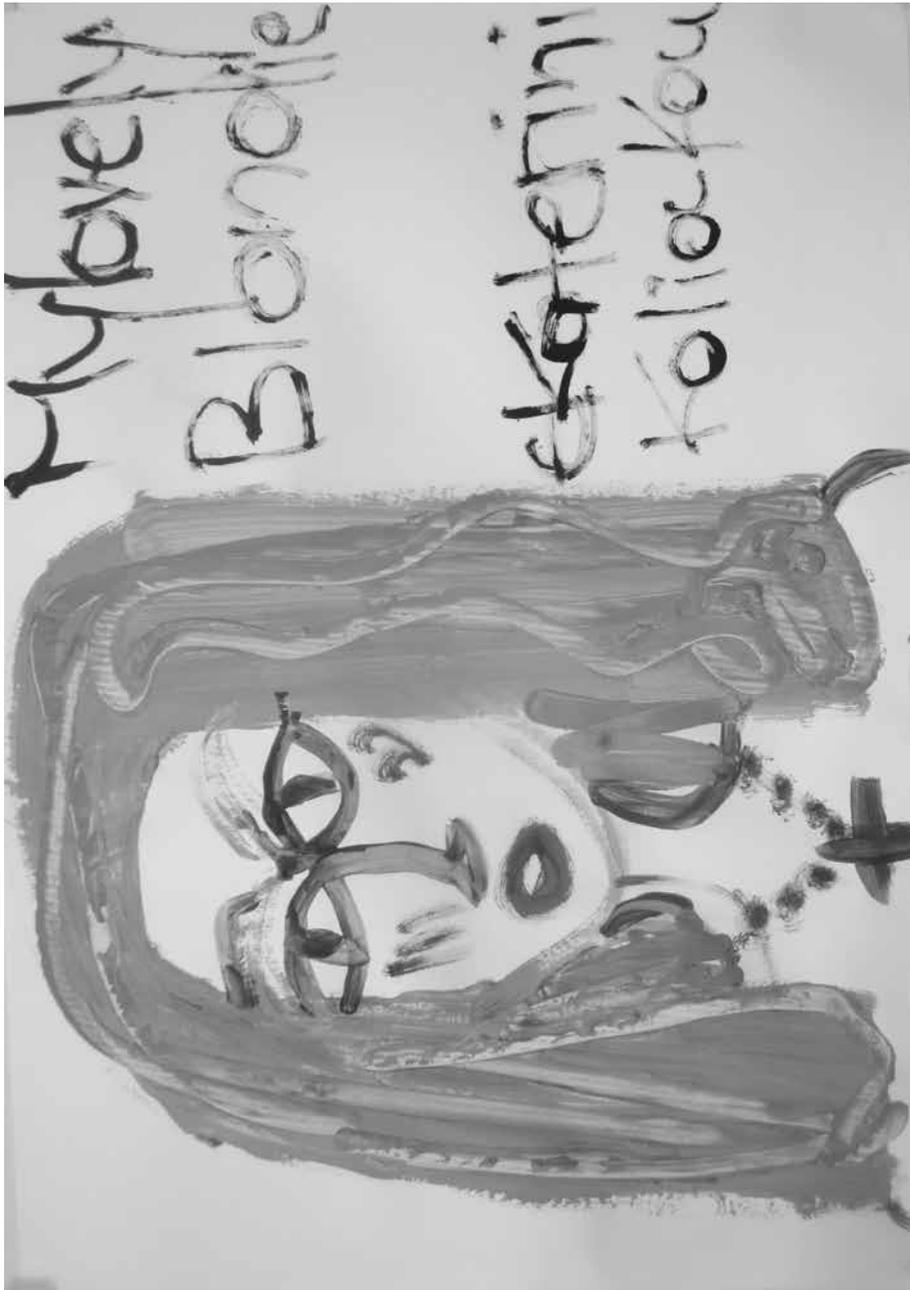
By Ekaterini Koliakou
April 2015



Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Enthusiastic Mediterranean, bipolar disorder, mixed up feelings, talented, bubbly, and honest*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015



Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Expressive brunette from the Middle East, sentimental, loving, caring, and trendy*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015



Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Self-conscious East European Christian Blondie, disciplined, good housewife, hard-working and tidy*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015



Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Easy-going Algerian person, smoking shisha, watching the passers-by*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015



Ekaterini Koliakou, *Devoted Muslim lady, religious, clean and purified, rational, well-organised, spiritually dogmatic bubbly, and honest*, acrylic on paper, 2015

CUMBERLAND GATE

By Frederick Heymann
April 2015

Cumberland Gate - not sausage,
the drawbridge to Edgware Road
turned into exotic shisha land
scented aromas of spices, glowing embers are spun
to raise the temperature for chemistry to run
long skewers heavy with searing flesh
onion, paprika, green, amber and red
signal 'stop' and fill a pita bread.



Frederick Heymann, *Edgware Road Flyover*, Watercolour, 2015

PLEASE, PLEASE, POLICE ME

By Ismail Ali
November 2015

Tell me your life can't be counted by the number of police encounters you've experienced. You'd be the lucky or reclusive type. Scenarios where you must account for your misdemeanors or report crimes. Well, I confess to a personal stash of these police stories. From close to fifty years' experience of this city – many lived by the Edgware Road. Policing, consequently, feels like a super-charged and complex topic.

Highlights and lowlights from my specially curated life story:

Recycled Theft

Age 15

Lifting a local newspaper from recycle bundle by a closed shop. Policeman cries: "Theft!" – striking terror. Still, I argue, this can't be theft. Squinting at my olive skin, he mumbles: "number 2" for his report. I spot a possible escape route. Press for definition of police code: black skin (number three) tan/dark skin (number two) white skin (number one, top of the tree?) We hotly debate the ethics of racial profiling. His patience or energy finally expires. Quits and disappears. Case closed.

Driven to Illegality

Age 27

Driving my battered Golf GTi on Marylebone Rd and turn the wrong way up one-way street. Police stop and identify vehicle as a 'cut-and-shut-job', welded from two stolen cars. Confiscate car instantly. Previous owner dies of a cocaine-induced heart-attack soon afterwards. I write off the loss.

Long Dark Night

Age 37

Partied all weekend. Skint now. Midnight tryst in Brick Lane - penniless needn't equal loveless - but I must walk there from Paddington. Lashed by wind and rain, barely thinking, outside off-licence by London Bridge, beg a cigarette from a woman. Waves her unopened fag packet, hissing: "Fuck off! Haven't got any!" I say: "Chill out lady, just asking!" Shop door bursts open and a stocky man, rugby rushing, hair and face aflame with fury appears. Roars in raw Afrikaans accent, "Oi! You're talking to my girlfriend!" Knocks and kicks me down. His friend appears and tries restraining him. Girlfriend yells, urging him on. I scramble up and into a shop, but he's giving chase. Panic and scream: "Help! Call the police, man's mad!" The staff shrug and shake their heads: "Take it out to the street - nothing to do with us!" Fear. Adrenaline. Action. Hands scoop at full shelves. Bottled and canned products spray like hard rain at demon. Unsettled him now. Advantage gained. Whirlwind tour ends by door. I seize a wire magazine rack and empty contents. To universal horror, raise it high and spit: "Fuck off or I'll smash your pretty fucking face in!" Bluff works. Night gloom swallows them up.

Police officers, about ten of them, shortly attend the scene. I'm a sore sight. Bruised, bleeding, shabby, shirt torn, feet twisted from falling. Feel shattered and unstable. Two officers jump in a car to scout area. The others listen as I explain. One is taking notes. Two smirk and giggle. Stung by hurt, I question their professionalism, at which they all withdraw at once, "Want help? Get to the station!" Hobble painfully to Southwark Police Station. Kind and patient duty officer apologises for colleagues' lapse of conduct. He starts to take my statement. Sanity is restored at last. Doors swing open. Uniformed gaggle tumble in and file past. Air spiked with machismo. PC Friendly falls silent. Head mobster, big, burly, all boorish swagger, eyes and mouth set to malevolent sneer. Our eyes lock and dance a dangerous tango, through reinforced glass. Long, loud relay of verbal abuse is sparked. He orders me out. I claim citizen rights. Point out they're 'public servants'. Red rag to a bull. A single nod. They charge as one. Placed in a deadlock grip. Held at my feet, legs, waist, shoulders and head. Struggle neutered in a slickly choreographed sequence. Flip and stretch. Meat carcass in butchers' hands. Marched into cold air. Nobody to witness them drop, kick and punch my body to the pavement. All done in seconds. Discarded like waste product. Rage floods my system like a tsunami. Limply lob a stream of word bombs, promise to expose their corrupt rot by any means possible.

They take me down. Locked in police cell for hours. No food or water. This overnight role reversal, from victim to criminal! Total mindfuck! Manically pace tiny cell. Voice hoarse from crying out. For a snack and water. For some proper attention. For a good cop, the bad cop quota long exceeded. Peephole shutter snaps open and shut. Requests taken. Nothing. Quiet lull. Thoughts racing. Back to thumping door incessantly – improvising tribal rhythms for the hell of it. Holler until the walls swell. Inside my skull. Finally. Fresh-face, just clocked on, standing at door. "Watch

this", I say, drop to my knees. Cat-slurp a puddle of my own piss. He's visibly shocked. Job done. Shutter's slammed shut. Cheese sandwich and water pushed through on a tray. Soon led from cell, to interview room, where my father waits. His worn face, blank, as I retell the night. Police officer attends in silence. Released. Anger dissolves, to frustration, to depression. I am done in for months. Nightmare revives. Now altered (re-imagined), the police report describes my behaviour: acutely aggressive, unprovoked; disturbs (fictional) group of people into fleeing bus stop by police station, quit waiting for a night bus. I am charged with 'disturbing the peace'. My lawyer warns, "Police case is strong, plead guilty, it's your only real option." Bitter justice from the Boys in Blue.

Trust Me I'm a Doctor

Age 37

Meet a Greek doctor in a Bayswater pub. Wild sense of humour, egotistical, but engaging company nonetheless. We end up at his private members club, the swanky Home House. He hails us a mini-cab. Driver seats us, then signals we wait, hops out to chat with mate. Keys in ignition and motor still running. Doctor shifts over and grabs wheel, speeding off, ignoring my protests. Arriving at his place, he inserts the keys into the exhaust pipe, and coolly invites me up for a nightcap. The car is abandoned to fate. Evidently, the doctor has given his moral compass bypass surgery. We argue pointlessly and I leave, driving car to the West End Central police station. When questioned I refuse to reveal the doctor's identity: "The poor driver, lost his cab and night's takings, so I'm just trying to do the right thing". Police arrest, fingerprint and detain me. Track down the cab driver hours later, verify story and release me.

Upside Down

Age 41

Leave supper with friends near Baker Street. Winter night, crisp and cold, streets eerily empty of people and traffic at 2am. Sudden sounds of car wheels screaming, ripping the silence, so close. Police car on Marylebone Rd, speeding towards Edgware Rd way, breaks hard at lights. Clips kerb, spins, flips over. A loud bang and shattering of glass as it lands upside down. I am breathlessly immersed in a surreal action sequence. Slow motion judders back to real time. Lone policeman unfolds himself from upturned car. Dazed yet unscathed. My voice feels disembodied in shock: "Are you okay? Can I help?" Staring vacantly, saying nothing, policeman recedes into inky black night.

Coffee Prime Minister

Age 43

Out walking the streets around Edgware Road and Hyde Park one summer night. Stop to admire window display of the coffee roaster and cafe, in the spot just by a certain British ex-prime minister's residence. Policeman emerges from the dark. Begins to chat about the quality of the produce and customer service: "Met the cafe manager? Knows his stuff, supplies all the hotels and cafes around here!" Voice affects warm and amiable tone. Face tells a different story. Eyes lock into mine, as he conducts systematic search and probe of my face, with clinical efficiency. Satisfied I am no coffee-bean-chewing, explosive-wired terrorist, he melts away, to re-join the 24-hour armed guard patrol posted nearby.

Tuckshop

Age 49

Local tongues wag. New shop on the block. Tuck-shop with special product lines. Drugs. Disorderly queues form opposite our estate. Hard cash for hard candy. Trading through wire fences. Police exhibit 50 shades of disinterest. One day I spot a WPC booking an incoherent old drunk behind Tesco. Her male colleague looks on impassively. I draw up softly and level with him: "A block away someone's serving up the hard stuff to a queue of people." "We have no powers to stop people selling food", comes his deadpan reply. Has he misheard? Is he playing with me? "It isn't food but drugs. People are buying crack and heroin, taking the stuff in the Ladies toilet. It's way out of control." "I understand your concern, Sir. Call the police." His tone is flat and disconnected. I walk away resigned to the futility.

Beg You

Age 45-49, ongoing

Junkie stalking Edgware Road, day and night, works a trademark begging technique: insistent, manipulative, menacing. Deploys his wasted and ghoulish appearance to full effect, flashing his grim party tricks, the underlying message: "Pay me and I'll leave you in peace." Seasoned locals spot his wonky walk, a Charlie Chaplin caricature, an early warning signal. But the Edgware Road springs an endless flow of potential victims. Intently, with relish, he targets the vulnerable and innocent – people pushing the wheelchair-bound, women with small children, tourists who are new in town. Routines performed in relentless rhythm. The observer experience is shocking yet also mesmerising. A new

boundary is pushed one day. He almost backs a man off the pavement into oncoming traffic, under the Westway Bridge, opposite the police station.

Police intervention? Try finding them at the critical moment. You face a physical and psychological assault course. I search desperately for police officers on the street beat, stop police patrol vehicles in traffic. Too busy to respond right now... Sorry! Then I strike lucky. Chaplin begs from me by Edgware Rd station. I resolve to find police, and in Sainsbury's find half a dozen buying lunch! I jumpstart a pair into instant action. Fresh from the Midlands, in London for training, hence still with enthusiasm and energy. We find Chaplin, clearly shaken, meek and mild with fear. My sense of triumph is tempered, now he's up against the wall, vulnerability personified. An older Arab gentleman, passing by, cries out: "Get him! This bastard makes our lives a misery up and down Edgware Road!" and thereby vindicates my account. They wave him on, take my name and number, as a future witness. I never hear from them again.

Successive attempts to 'get him nicked' lead to a dead end. Calls to police emergency service end with the line: "Thank you, we've logged the report and we aim to have officers on the scene within sixty minutes", by which time the culprit will have vanished into thin air.

Weeks and months go by, and I catch sight of my pathetic nemesis numerous times, increasingly close to home. Hanging out along the local market. Using drugs in the public toilets. Crashed out by my front door, legs and feet protruding from recessed guttering like weeds. Lying behind a recycling bin, half conscious, in violent chemical spasm. I am left speechless with shock.

Public Inconvenience

Age 48

The public convenience close to my council estate gates should be an essential facility to street market traders and visitors. But a long decline of conditions has made it a public hazard. First, budget cuts implemented by Westminster Council removed a full 'toilet attendant' service. Then the Roma travelers, creatively adapting their use for showers and laundry, vying with a new wave of junkies using it as a crack/heroin shooting den. Cue a slew of complaints to police. One day, two men go separately into the Ladies. They exit to strong vocal dissent from me. Both threaten me aggressively. I start up an intensive lobbying group, eventually forcing closure of toilet, to the relief of the local community.

Out of this World

Age 48

A chance encounter with a pair of police officers in my neighbourhood. Diverted from their usual patch in Queen's Park, they listen as I air issues. The one that isn't plain fidgety with boredom, or awkwardness, is unsettlingly attentive. Polite and sincere? Listens with sensitivity? Check! Agrees to follow up? Check! To round up, tells me to photograph his badge number. Calls me later that night, confirming he's logged details, recommends I phone the Safer Neighbourhoods Team to report directly. Such personal and personable service. My head is swimming – this feels like love. I call the Safer Neighbourhood Team office number. Reroutes to the mobile phone of a plain-clothes police officer operating nearby. Minutes later we're

talking intently around a café table. Pale-faced and slim, 'Peter' looks kid-like without trying, in slightly shabby shell-suit and trainers. Sharp on local issues, naturally engaging and smart, he's happy to play a speedy game of news swap shop. His candid manner is surprising. Thankfully, we cut any status bullshit and get down to serious community business.

Policing and the Edgware Road is illuminated by a curious fact. The iconic landmark, Marble Arch hid a fully working police station set deep underground from 1851 to 1968: with 100 police officers on standby, ready to rise up and put down outbreaks of public unrest or deviance. Imagine this bunker operating at the gaping mouth of the Edgware Road today. Such rapid response capability makes the current state of affairs look threadbare. Marylebone Police Station on Seymour Street was closed in 2013 and earmarked for development as luxury apartments. Up the road, rumours are swirling around Paddington Green Police Station going the same way, as its Harrow Road and St John's Wood cousins have already.

So what of the highly developed democracy we live in? In theory our democratic principles ('rule of law', 'policing by consent') regulate peace and order. Keep healthy the body politic. The mundane truth is that the everyday interactions we experience put flesh on the bone of public life. So what to do if our views on the police grow uneasy or sour? Find diversion in dramatic fiction? Hook up to a drip feed of opiate/stimulant cocktail of news? Turn to talking therapies to manage our paranoid mind chatter?

How do you see the face of law enforcement in your communities? Beyond the official uniforms and accessories, patrol car lights and sirens, grinding arrest and report

procedures? Power expressed in softly amicable and personal terms? Or is it the force that strikes hard in sharp, cold and anonymous ways?

Anatomically speaking, the Edgware Road pumps the lifeblood that energises many interests. One beneficiary is my neighbourhood, the Church Street market district with a rich density of business and community. Not so chic as Portobello, or rock 'n' roll like Camden. Still, pulsing percussive patterns are perceptible everywhere, orchestrated by the ever-changing casts of players. Our trademark mix includes the fruit/veg traders, street food vendors, counterfeit goods merchants, antique dealers; the Arab, Bengali, Brit, European, Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities, self-employed, unemployed, under-employed, local and outsider, blue and white and no collar, commuter, destination shopper, tourist, pigeons, seagulls, pampered pets and promiscuous strays. All practising the low or high hustle, wedged tightly together, for better or worse. The kind of inner-city area in need of a sensitive policing presence and strategy. Yet low or no visibility seems normal.

Living the luxe life? Flashing the high security bling? You might overlook police vanishing tricks conjured by our austerity-minded chiefs. The rest of us might suspect a grand design is unfolding. To transfer services online – virtual policing anybody?

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Robert Mitchell, *Snail*, Photograph, 2015

Image 2: Robert Mitchell, *Ants eating a worm*, Photograph, 2015

Image 3: Robert Mitchell, *Lipton Iced Tea*, Watercolour postcard, 2013

Image 4: Robert Mitchell, *Apple on Table*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Image 5: Robert Mitchell, *Blue bottle top*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Image 6: Robert Mitchell, *Unii Pack of Cards*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Image 7: Robert Mitchell, *Camera*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Image 8: Robert Mitchell, *Postcard*, Watercolour postcard, 2015

Image 9: Richard Lamb, *Billboard*, Photograph, 2015

Image 10: Richard Lamb, *Pavement*, Photograph, 2015

Image 11: Richard Lamb, *Through the Bus Window*, Photograph, 2015

Image 12: Richard Lamb, *Why is There Infinite Empty Space?*, Photograph, 2015

Image 13: Ray-of-Light, *Church Street Market*, Photograph, 2015

Image 14: Ray-of-Light, *Window Cleaner*, Photograph, 2015

Image 15: Ray-Of-Light, *Chihuahua*, Photograph, 2015

Image 16: Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Enthusiastic Mediterranean, bipolar disorder, mixed up feelings, talented, bubbly, and honest*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015

Image 17: Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Expressive brunette from the Middle East, sentimental, loving, caring, and trendy*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015

Image 18: Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Self-conscious East European Christian Blondie, disciplined, good housewife, hard-working and tidy*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015

Image 19: Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Devoted Muslim lady, religious, clean and purified, rational, well organised, spiritually dogmatic*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015

Image 20: Ekaterini, Koliakou, *Easy-going Algerian person, smoking shisha, watching the passers-by*, Acrylic on Paper, 2015

Image 21: Frederick Heymann, *Edgware Road Flyover*, Watercolour, 2015

Front: Ray-of-Light, *Church Street Market*, detail

Back: Ekaterini Koliakou, *Devoted Muslim Lady*, detail

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It is part of the Possible Studies series that are free to download and distribute for non-commercial use.

The Possible Studies imprint was developed through the Edgware Road Project. Initiated by Serpentine Galleries in 2008 the Edgware Road Project links local groups and international artists with people living and working in this area. The itinerant project base for the project is the Centre for Possible Studies, home to screenings, events, a publishing imprint and an ongoing project archive.

From 2016 the Possible Studies imprint will be housed at Church Street Library on a specially commissioned shelf dedicated to the local area. Designed by Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad.

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Studies on a Road is a series of pamphlets developed by artists, researchers and community groups in residence with the Edgware Road Project from 2008-2016. In response to growing conditions of inequality and austerity groups including both artists and non-artists were supported in their development of analyses and actions to address the various dimensions of the neighbourhood around thematic including Policing, Education, Housing and Care.

