



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES²⁰¹²

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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Telling the Truth through False Teeth

By Rossana Tich



Over the past few months, a mid-20th-century factory, earmarked for demolition, on Tudor Road, E9 has slowly and painstakingly been transformed into a work of art by Alex Chinneck in association with Sumarria Lunn Gallery. People passing by have been doing a double take, realising that the original broken windows had been replaced with ... broken windows, albeit 312 identically smashed panes.

The site was once a shoe factory and most recently a cannabis factory! Chinneck spent a gruelling four months removing the remnants: piles of soil, wires, grow bags, water tanks, plant pots and heat lamps. Planning permission has been sought over the years to demolish the factory and replace it with a hotel (part of a larger scheme) but the latest plans are for a residential block. The Central and South Hackney Conservation Areas Advisory Committee has been commenting on the various applications and did make representations to retain the industrial building as a reminder of Tudor Road's heritage. The Planning Inspectorate, however, whilst being sympathetic to this plea, said that it was not a good enough example design-wise to warrant retention.

Alex Chinneck believes, 'These factories may be industrially redundant, but I think it is important to preserve them and recognise the architectural contribution they make to London's eclectic skyline and streets. It seems odd that we tear down structures that have been built to last.'

In total 312 panes from 13 windows have been replaced with 1,248 pieces of glass – four pieces form the perfect break in every pane. The familiar is made unfamiliar by the repetition and exactness of the work – the combination of engineering and accident completes the illusion. 'This brilliant use of broken glass is a witty way of both underlining the building's being allowed to get run down – the broken windows - and highlighting how good it could look if it had been well looked after.' (Nichola Schild, local resident)

Alex Chinneck, who lives in Hackney, was born in 1984 and is a graduate of the Chelsea College of Art and Design. Most recently, he was nominated for the Royal British Society of Sculptors' Bursary Award. By making work that is unconcerned with creative disciplines, his sculptures and installations co-exist across the realms of art, design and architecture. 'Throughout the

installation period I have heard many different interpretations of what the work means and why I have done it. Everyone is welcome to interpret the intervention in their own way; I just hope they enjoy it.'

Telling the Truth Through False Teeth

Artist: Alex Chinneck (<http://www.alexchinneck.com/>) in association with Sumarria Lunn Gallery. **Location:** corner of Mare Street and Tudor Road, Hackney, E9 7FE. **Installation on view:** until at least September 2012.

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Building Watch

Leyton Marsh – Green Space For Whom?

By Celia Coram

The subject matter of Spaces is more usually concerned with the built environment of Hackney. Leyton Marsh is technically in the borough of Waltham Forest. However, regardless of political boundaries, all the marshes are accessed regularly by local people and are of both local and national significance. Open space and the built environment are equally subject to planning legislation and processes, and what I am about to describe is relevant to all who have an interest in and passion for preserving the best and championing good new design in the areas in which we live.

On a chilly, snow-laden evening on 3 February, many Hackney and Waltham Forest residents made a precarious journey to Waltham Forest Town Hall to find out the fate of a proposal to build a temporary basketball facility on Porter's Field, Leyton Marsh. As we sat, squashed, in the public gallery, speakers opposed to the development made some convincing and coherent arguments as to why the 'temporary basketball facility' should not be built on Leyton Marsh, backed up by a petition of over 1,000 signatures gathered in a very short time. Those pro the plan did not, as I recall, make much of their argument, mostly relying on the mantra that 'The Olympics were an exceptional circumstance' for development on protected Metropolitan Open Land (MOL).

As the vote taken by a mere seven councillors went three-three with the Chair's casting vote sealing the fate of the Porter's Field part of the Marsh, I had that 'been here before' feeling as exactly the same outcome a few months earlier had befallen the Essex Wharf site with agreement for a housing development.

One might speculate that the 'temporary' aspect of this building helped to justify agreement on the basketball training facility being built – but this was not to be a mere tent but a construction which required concrete foundations and other infrastructure not generally considered to be of a temporary nature.

Later in the lobby, horrified and disgruntled people drew together, contacts were exchanged and a meeting was organised the following week resulting in the Save Leyton Marshes (SLM) campaign.

Little did we know then that, as local people with a deep connection to local green

space, we would become 'demonised'. Supported by members of the Occupy Movement, who set up camp next to the fenced-off building site, we bonded as a group in a very special way. Regardless of what many may perceive of Occupy, our personal experience as ordinary local residents has been that they are very brave, outstanding people, who put their principles before their own needs and comforts.

Following non-violent attempts to prevent vehicle access to the site, judicial injunctions were served to move the camp off Porter's Field and later off the verge of the Lea Bridge Road. Four people from Occupy were arrested.

In April, there was a hearing at the High Court. Summing up, the judge recognised that local people had followed the democratic process without success. He took into account that the three defendants before him (one person had opted to plead guilty at Magistrates Court) had human rights. However, the judge declared Article 1 of Property Law to trump Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act. SLM have a contrary view – that the ownership of the land is not lawful since it was granted on an erroneous basis and a judicial review has been submitted on that basis.

At a local meeting organised by the ODA (Olympic Delivery Authority) to inform and reassure the public about the restoration of Leyton Marsh (at which eight police officers were present including three in plain clothes), the residents spoke about the climate of fear generated by the apparent 'total' policing at Leyton Marsh. However, SLM continues to monitor, record and challenge the various bodies involved about the environmental impact that the building process has entailed, e.g. removing more than the 15 cm of topsoil agreed by Waltham Forest Council, and unearthing post-WW2 toxic rubble and leaving it uncovered for months.

SLM's main goal now is to ensure that the land is restored to the conditions required by local people, with the right kind of turf and plant species. Regular users of Porter's Field have knowledge of what was there and do not want to be fobbed off with 'quick fix turf'. We might prefer to wait longer and have the field returned in better condition post 15 October 2012 (the promised date when reparations should begin). We are concerned because, although the basketball facility site was not on an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), it is a buffer zone



for an adjoining site which is. It is generally accepted knowledge that wildlife does not just need a sanctuary to survive but also all the random 'corridors' that some people think we can easily give up.

In addition to wildlife of the marshes suffering disturbance, local people have had to sacrifice restrictions on their freedoms of movement, expression, assembly and the right just to roam as a result of the development of a sports facility. Today Porter's Field bears no trace of the Occupy campers, but there is a large, white 'Lightweight Event Structure', enclosed in a Stalag-style fence, with tarmac laid crudely as an access road. Why was this land sacrificed when there were, in our opinion, alternative, sporting facilities based within the required distance of the Olympic Park as well as industrial buildings that could have been converted? It is evident that the contract for the said Lightweight Event Structure was set out by the Contracting Authority to award on or before May 2011, and designated to be there.

This illustrates a particular difficulty that local people face in responding to large-scale initiatives – the requirement to build on such a scale necessitates setting up the contracting processes well in advance of proper consultation.

As locals, we need to be alert to the infringements of our human rights – this might sound dramatic when pitched against situations in other parts of the world, yet recent events have led me to see that we are far less free than we think. The right of access to common land (or land managed on our behalf) can be withdrawn with the flick of a pen.

86-100 Mare Street

By David Shaw

Earlier this year, the once fine – but now sadly rather unloved – Triangle in South Hackney received a further blow with a report from the Planning Inspectorate supporting the disputed building at 86-100 Mare Street, which is in the Central and South Hackney Conservation Area.

This undistinguished building has been subject to fierce criticism from some locals. It faced a robust response from Hackney Council's enforcement team, who argued that the building *in situ* bears no resemblance to the plans submitted, which were for a wharf-style building, and with initial planning approval subject to a number of caveats.

This decision to enforce was welcomed by many who have long despaired of Hackney's seeming unwillingness to take action in the face of apparent clear breaches of planning approvals.

Hackney's enforcement team began action whilst the unfinished building, including gaping shop fronts, was occupied by residential tenants. An initial inquiry was called and postponed with the developer submitting plans seeking to retain the building, including a new façade to the existing structure. The enforcement team

stood by the initial decision that developers must abide by the planning regulations and decisions, and that in this instance the developers had failed to do so.

Unfortunately when the inquiry, chaired by the Planning Inspectorate, was eventually called, the Inspector, not for the first time in Hackney, differed in his opinion from that of the enforcement team. Rather than being critical of developers for ignoring planning rules, his report levelled a number of criticisms of process against Hackney Council, whilst arguing that since the building is occupied the disruption would prove too great and that the proposals for a facelift were sufficient, and therefore that no enforcement was required.

Given that the building bears no resemblance to what was originally submitted, questions remain. First, as to why this reached such an advanced stage before alarm bells were sounded. Secondly, why go through the time, cost and disruption of an inquiry to reach a position that would have been avoided by an adherence to the planning process?

Clearly a much better process of monitoring and understanding is required to avoid



more of these cases. With greater freedom being given to developers and an increasing number of decisions by an Inspectorate that at times seem to ignore common sense and planning law, there is a compelling need for greater community vigilance and participation in holding developers to account.

In the meantime Hackney is the poorer for the Inspectorate's decision to allow this building to remain.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Family Mosaic and Rydon are working with HTA Architects on a bid for the redevelopment of the Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital site to provide an anticipated 180 mixed tenure homes.

Although the site is in Tower Hamlets, it is in close proximity to two conservation areas which are directly adjacent to Hackney, as

well as to Hackney City Farm and several Grade II listed properties.

The Rydon/Family Mosaic proposals include the demolition of the existing buildings whilst retaining the façade of the original hospital on Hackney Road, erected in 1904. This will be followed by the construction of a basement car park, 127 homes for

private sale, 36 homes for affordable rent and 17 homes for low-cost home ownership (shared ownership), together with associated external works.

Public consultation on the proposals was launched on 18 July 2012.

Further information is at www.qech.co.uk

Hackney Society Events*

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 22 September, 7pm

The AGM will be followed by a tour of 39 Parkholme Road. This Victorian terraced house (by Macdonald Wright Architects) has been restored and remodelled to create a flexible home for the changing needs of a growing family. Insulation, passive solar heating and grey water recycling help to achieve a high level of sustainability. The rear of the house has been redesigned to incorporate a terrace, kitchen and dining space connecting the west-facing garden

to the existing house. *Booking essential.* 39 Parkholme Road, E8 3AG

Shakespeare's Shoreditch

Tuesday 16 October 2012, 7pm

Walk with Kevin Moore

The Hackney Society Chair reprises the walk that was originally conceived for the National Youth Theatre in 2004; this time with a salacious twist for adult audiences. Shoreditch was home to two theatres where Shakespeare and Burbage played. Only recently, in March 2009, the site of The Theatre (built in 1576) was found in the 'suburbs of sin'. Sex, death, fighting, duels, theatre and drink: who needs 'Eastenders'?

Oh, and transvestism thrown in for good measure. *Booking essential.* Meet 7pm at the bottom end of Hoxton Square just opposite the White Cube Gallery. FREE to members, £5 non-members.



Please check our website for up-to-date information and additional events that are organised throughout the year. Most of our events are free to Hackney Society members and £5 to non-members. For special and joint events there may be a charge for members. To avoid disappointment, please book a place as some events have a limited number of places. To book, email events@hackneysociety.org or phone 020 7175 1967.

Book Review by Ken Worpole

Acquired for Development By....A Hackney Anthology, edited by Gary Budden & Kit Caless, Influx Press, London, £11.99

There's something about Hackney that seems to attract or encourage writers. The strength of this anthology is that it doesn't start from a blank sheet but refers back to earlier influences and familiar topographies, notably via the work of Alexander Baron (one of whose novels provides the title) and Harold Pinter. J.G. Ballard, Arthur Machen, Michael Moorcock and Maureen Duffy all get name-checked, and Martin Amis is also mentioned – though only as the name of an unloved dog.

Most of the contributors are in their 20s and 30s, and grew up elsewhere in the world, but find the kaleidoscope of the borough's street cultures, dystopian politics and libertarian lifestyles rich material. Where Hackney's imaginative territory once centred on Clapton, Dalston and Victoria Park, the anthology's postcode poetics widens out to include Shoreditch, Hoxton, Stoke Newington, Homerton and Hackney Wick. In fact the book is divided up territorially which works rather well, and includes some lively narrative poems which would sound even better in live performance.

Unsurprisingly the women writers are more interested in their neighbours and the people they now find themselves living amongst than the men. The latter tend to focus on the politics, the pubs, the drugs and sense of danger that lies just below the surface of so many alternative lifestyles. Nell Frizell's interviews with houseboat dwellers on the River Lea, along with Natalie Hardwick's sympathetic exploration of Hackney's Turkish Alevi community, are, for me, amongst the collection's highlights. Georgia Myers – who grew up in Hackney – provides a grim picture of life for girls in a street culture that has lost any sense of a better life to come.

A number of writers, male and female, set their stories at a future date when, without exception, life in Hackney is beginning to look not entirely convincingly like a war of all against all (with strong echoes of Richard Jefferies' *After London*, or Will Self's *The Book of Dave*). Those who watched the various tower block demolitions of the 1990s will find their pulses racing a little faster after reading Kieran Duddy's tragi-comic recreation of those bizarre occasions, part celebration, part apocalypse. Elsewhere in the book, Tim Burrows' clever exploration of all the associations related to Newton Dunbar's creation of the Four Aces Club in Dalston will remind readers of how everything in Hackney seems to be related to everything else that ever happened in the world.

No single reader is likely to enjoy all of the contributions, given that the writers are a self-selecting group rather than a cross-section of

Hackney's ever-changing population. Yet the anthology exhibits a solid kernel of realism about Hackney in the first years of the 21st century, making it an invaluable document of record and reflection. The always clear-eyed Laura Oldfield Ford provides the searing cover collages.

Noticeboard

LDF Consultation

Hackney Council has published two new draft planning policy documents for consultation as part of its Local Development Framework (LDF). The draft Development Management Local Plan (DMLP) contains proposed planning policies that will be used, along with other LDF documents, mainly to guide and determine planning applications received by the Council over the next 15 years. The draft Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) identifies key strategic sites across the Borough and specific policies for those sites. The consultation period for both documents will run from 16 July 2012 to 25 September 2012. View the documents at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/site-allocations-dpd.htm> and <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Development-Management-DPD.htm>

Spacehive

Spacehive.com is a new online fundraising platform that makes it easier for people to transform their local area. Anyone can put forward a project idea – whether it's to create a new green space, to build new sports facilities, or to restore a local landmark. Anyone can then pledge funds to the project, from local residents to businesses, corporates and interest groups. To find out more, contact Maddie on maddie@spacehive.com, or visit www.spacehive.com

St Mary's Secret Garden

Mind has awarded the charity St Mary's Secret Garden £9,948 to continue its work helping people who have experienced mental health problems to get involved in green activities. The garden is in Pearson Street, E2.

Spaces is published by the Hackney Society. Views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

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St John of Jerusalem

This Grade II listed church in Lauriston Road has received a grant of £40,000 from the National Churches Trust to reslate its roof and repair its decaying stonework.

Publications

The War on Our Doorstep: London's East End and How the Blitz Changed it Forever

by Harriet Salisbury depicts what it meant to be an East Ender during the Blitz. Ebury Press, in association with the Museum of London, £6.99.

The Art of Dissent: Adventures in London's Olympic State edited by Hilary Powell and Isaac Marrero brings together a body of work that has emerged in response to the arrival of the Olympic Games in East London. Marshgate Press, £14.99. To be reviewed in the next *Spaces*.

Born out of Wenlock – William Penny Brookes and the British Origins of the Modern Olympics by Catherine Beale describes the Olympian Games held in the 19th century at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, and considers their influence on the modern Olympics. DB Publishing, £12.99.

Bring Up the Bodies by Hilary Mantel is a sequel to *Wolf Hall*. It covers the period 1535-36 when Ralph Sadler was living in Bryck Place (now known as Sutton House). Fourth Estate, £20.

A 1960s East End Childhood by Simon Webb deconstructs the myth of a golden age in East London with safer streets, healthier children and people living happily within stable and caring communities. The History Press, £7.99.

Hackney Society News

Funding

The Community Development Foundation has awarded the Hackney Society a grant to produce a pdf of a walk in the Clapton area.

Phone Number

The Hackney Society's telephone number has changed to 020 7175 1967.

Thanks to Kopykat for sponsoring this issue

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