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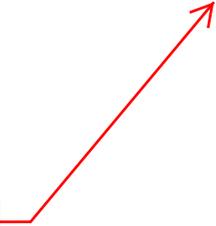
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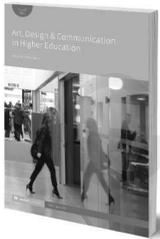
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## Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education

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**Aims and Scope**

What are the challenges of learning and teaching in art, design and communication? *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* aims to inform, stimulate and promote the development of research in the field by providing a forum for debate arising from findings as well as theory and methodologies.

**Call for Papers**

The journal welcomes contributions from a range of research approaches. Papers should address all areas of higher education and all aspects of learning and teaching, both in theory and practice, in art, design and communication. Furthermore, it invites reviews of relevant and recent publications, electronic media and software and conference reports.



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## EDITORIAL

**JASPAR JOSEPH-LESTER, NORMAN M. KLEIN, SIMON KING AND HARRIET EDWARDS**

# Parallel Urbanisms: London–Los Angeles

This *JWCP* issue, *Parallel urbanisms*, aims to understand the conditions of our urban human experience as constructed, lived, built and shared between two different megacities: London and Los Angeles. The contributors that we have brought together are associated mainly with the Royal College of Art, London and California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles. Together we propose a complex analysis of the processes and mediations of urban space, interpersonal and social communicative technologies, and modes of power, focusing on how power is planned and imagined as an architectural construct that determines the use and function of urban social space.

Today, social life is increasingly figured as a cinematic, technological and networked territory. Arguably, urban space no longer corresponds to the older orders of physical boundaries or fixed political borders. And yet, these very boundaries – and their local and ethnic identities – grow ever more precise, as the nation state fractures, and its rule of law changes. This journal issue

explores how these transformations have radically altered the way that the city is thought. Here we consider how psychic and spectral realities increasingly stand in place of physical geographies and how urban spaces, which might otherwise stand thousands of miles apart, are irreversibly joined together by the post-urban and de-centred spaces of Parallel Urbanisms.

Parallel Urbanisms considers the cultural and social identity of London and Los Angeles through psychogeographic, sociogeographic and ethnographic methods in a series of visual essays and dialogical writings. Together, this range of approaches and perspectives takes up the timely and urgent investigation as to how the cultural life of the city and our changing urban conditions can be explored and produced through art practices that deploy writing as a tool to navigate and critique what Fredric Jameson has referred to as 'the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects' (Jameson 1991: 44). While it might be argued that London and Los Angeles embody radically different developments of city life – the former occupying a geographic centre, the latter a radical sprawl of decentralized locales – our aim has been to identify new ways of representing the underlying social, political and economic forces that bind these cities together.

In 'The sound of placards', Jesse Ash ushers in an exploration of sound and its relationship to protest and to power. Ash begins by setting up the clash of consumer and protester in London, the participatory and the protesting elements, respectively. He draws our attention to Jacques Attali's advocacy of sound as a potent means of 'judging society' today and then invites us to explore other soundscapes of protest, from the London poll tax riots (1990) to the detention centre in Los Angeles (2016) through to historic moment of the Velvet revolution in Prague, Czechoslovakia (1989), Guantanamo Bay, the G20 summit in Pittsburgh (2009), and more. The writing alternates between carefully observed witnessing of protests – in both London and Los Angeles – and the insights that accumulate, through Roland Barthes on the 'rustle of language' and 'stammering', to Hegarty on how sound is converted to 'noise bombardment', and to Jean-Luc Nancy on the power of the sonority of sound, when words are lost and a collective unity is gained. Ash points to the relation of sound to the objects that make them – keys, saucepans, chains; to the relation with the body itself, our corporeal reverberations and chambers, and back to the protestors' placards, how the words work alongside sound. The whole forms an enlarged sense of the ways in which noise – e.g. a 'collective hum' or 'vast fabric' – operates in protest, in the physicality of city spaces of London and Los Angeles, and in our contemporary society.

Harriet Edwards' evocatively titled 'The forensics of the pavement' uses an episodic social anthropology to assiduously document the minutiae of a street and its denizens. The documentation here takes the form of a series of vignettes concerning the human and non-human inhabitants of a small patch of Harriet Edwards's neighbourhood in north London. While striving for objectivity, the author admits subjectivity in her small experiment. Moving between description, meditation and speculation, we are provided with a series of case notes on Smalley Close and the

adjoining Smalley estate in Stoke Newington, Hackney. This 1970s-era estate is a delineated, tight space through which its residents have criss-crossed on various quotidian or occasionally more sinister outings. While there are physical boundaries to this piece, there is an extended view, one for instance that includes the imprint of nature in the mix. Further, the crossings are not introduced in a diachronic fashion but made in the haphazard of season, memory, imagining and spectral reality.

In 'Drift report from Downtown LA', the artist and writer Laura Grace Ford conjures spectral visions of England as she starts out on foot from Los Angeles's Central Station towards an assignation with someone from her distant past. Having the quality of both interior monologue addressed to this unnamed intimate as well as readerly interpellation (the 'You remember [...]'), Grace Ford evokes a parallel, that is, a troubling sense of the past in the present, the present in the past between the Downtown Los Angeles of 2016 and London's Whitechapel of the early 90s. Combining both the personal and the political, the detailed recall, observation and description in these episodes communicate some of Ford's preoccupations with vexed temporalities, walking and memory, liminal sites, reverie and the way buildings act on human consciousness.

In 'Venice, Venice', Jaspas Joseph-Lester and Norman M. Klein undertake a circuitous exploration of 'Venice' through a series of dialogues and a site visits to Little Venice, London and Venice Beach, Los Angeles. Through these dialogues, Joseph-Lester and Klein attempt to locate the enduring images of Venice within a collective imaginary and the function and meaning the Italian city has within both the historical and contemporary context of London and Los Angeles. They propose a four-fold layering, made up from historical pinpointing (city state and industrial development), from functional purpose (coastal position and commercial transportation), from mythical dimensions (Romantic-related, idealist and movie-driven) through to the carnivalesque, with echoes of Guy Debord's society as 'spectacle' (1967) and Coney Island allusions. There are slippages in time, between the real and the imaginary, and in the status of the 'Venices' revealed. There are the imagos (collective mental pictures) and the symbolic notions of Venice here too, and finally, the tension of opposites between the grand and the ruin, appearance and disappearance, 'contemplative space' and 'energized city'. These concepts are conjured in turn through the 'to and fro' of dialogue, anecdote and memory, the tread on the canal paths, a scene observed, a character surfacing and image capture.

Simon King's 'Elephant memory' is a rich investigation into a small part of the Elephant and Castle, an area just south of the City of London. This is a site currently undergoing a turbulent redevelopment, the kind of 'regeneration' that has led to the loss of established working-class communities, and in their place, the high rises not many can afford. The author's repeated walks and research into the geographical area are paralleled by a second kind of investigation. This stems from one photograph of a family having breakfast in Sayer Street with the rubble of Second World War bombing behind them. King's exploration of Sayer Street involves semiotic analyses, etymological searches, meetings, blogs, phone calls and archives. This research is documented in intricate detail. On the one hand, we are drawn in by a series of questions inviting us to speculate about the lives of Sayer Street and environs, now a

ghostly trace. On the other, the author is led by chance – serendipitous leads – some of which take us to the author’s own family connections, back to a Second World War photograph, with personal revelations. Ultimately, the route takes us back to the present and to another form of community and family displacement: to an unsettling remaking of the site of the Elephant.

Memory is key too, in Adam Knight’s ‘LOS/LOSS/LOST’ that explores how memory and architectural conservation are embedded within the fabric of Los Angeles. Knight uses a series of thirteen photographs of buildings designated as ‘lost’ to open up questions regarding the complex relation between memory, photographic image and architectural site, and how they are bound together through our subjective wonderings and collective imaginaries that produce the city. Knight’s writing takes the motif of ‘lostness’ in biographical, artistic, literary and cinematic responses to Los Angeles.

With its opening allusion to the Los Angeles ‘leg art’ practiced by Raymond Chandler’s anti-heroic private investigator Philip Marlowe, Niall McDevitt’s ‘Espials (Xtopher Marlowe in London)’ is a text that has evolved from his and Simon King’s joint walking explorations of poet-playwright Christopher Marlowe’s life and death in London. Working from notes taken by both participants and from miscellaneous conversations, as well as his own study of Marlowe biographies and Marlowe’s poetry, McDevitt has written a sequence of epistolary prose poems in the form of letters addressed to the Privy Council by uptight ‘agents’ who seem to be stalking the renegade poet from place to place and who seem to disapprove of Marlowe’s proto-LGBT, proto-atheist, proto-occult tendencies. As the time machine moves back and forth between the two Elizabethan eras, we uncover the machinations behind Marlowe’s untimely demise as well as witnessing twenty-first-century London through a unique spyglass.

‘Espials’ is too a literary experiment that tries to supply an information-rich, but poetic guide to the Marlovian terrain. In the right-hand margin of the text, in apple chancery font, Elizabethan phrases appear as if in invisible ink becoming legible.

Karina Nimmerfall, in ‘On real and imaginary spaces’, proposes a merger between would-be fact and fiction. Nimmerfall draws on Guy Debord’s argument that ‘media images create reality’ and describes how the cityscape of Los Angeles becomes transformed by night into a Hollywood set. The author also draws on Edward Soja’s ‘third space’, one where binaries (e.g. concrete and abstract) cluster together, break down and fuse. In this sense, the real and imagined are treated alike. These insights, along with Guiliana Bruno’s comments on the streetscape as a filmic construction, lead the author to delineate this expanded space and possibility for artistic practices. Nimmerfall takes on board questions of how to depict unbuilt or remembered locations, how to visualize layers of history and the possibilities of a multivalent artistic practice and outcome. Nimmerfall subsequently introduces several works, two emergent from Los Angeles and one from London, around the subject of housing. Her sources range from archive material, sculpture, architects’ records, diaries, interviews and images. The works are open to divergent

interpretations – political, social and so forth – and, she proposes, give rise to critical questions about the subject matter as well as how we interpret documentary material and history.

The final writing in *Parallel Urbanisms*, Miguel Santos's 'El Errante', is concerned with walking in Los Angeles. The city is strongly associated with the automobile, and its road layout and infrastructure are widely regarded as historically unsympathetic to a bipedal mode of navigating the city. To deliberately choose to abandon a car newly impounded by the city authorities for the alternatives of walking or riding public transport might therefore be considered transgressive or foolhardy. This, however, is the starting point for Santos's eponymous 'El Errante', the name – from the Spanish verb 'to wander' but etymologically close to the English 'errant' meaning one who errs, provides a clue. The protagonist, referred to in the third person throughout, is the first-generation Angelino son of a Chilean exile mother who experiences an epiphanic 'transformation of citizenship' when he forsakes 'Two Lane Blacktop' – his beloved VW – to negotiate the city on foot. The series of date and time-stamped observations that follow on life in the margins – for 'the carless, the poor, the illegal, the elderly and the young' – connect to some of themes in Ford's writing and combine elements of intersubjective identification with trace elements of noir.

### Reference

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### Contributor details

Jaspar Joseph-Lester's research is situated between art making, curating and writing and draws from the fields of architecture, design, urban studies, human geography, philosophy, cinema and media studies, spatial theory and economics. Here he has focused on the conflicting ideological frameworks embodied in representations of modernity, urban renewal, regeneration and social organization as a means to better understand how art practice can slow down and redefine the successive cycle of masterplans and regeneration schemes that determine the cultural life of our cities. Key to this research is the development of platforms and contexts for art that force new ways of thinking the reconfiguration of social and life experiences for the future.

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Norman M. Klein is a Los Angeles-based urban and media historian whose fictional works 'interweave fiction with social criticism, reportage and confessional memoir [...] fiction of a loose and absurdist sort, separated from fact by the blurriest of boundaries'. In 2011, the *Los Angeles Times* put Klein's 1997 book *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* on its 'Best L.A.

Books' list. Since 1974, Klein has been professor in the School of Critical Studies at California Institute of the Arts, where he is on the faculty of both the master's programme in Aesthetics and Politics and the Center for Integrated Media. As layered systems that resemble certain genres of games and other media narrative formats, Klein's novels primarily offer literary alternatives. Having coined the term 'scripted space' in 1998, Klein (with Margo Bistis) coined '*wunder roman*' in 2012 to characterize a particular kind of picaresque novel whose component parts function like a narrative engine.

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Simon King works as a tutor/lecturer in art, design and media contexts between the Royal College of Art and Central Saint Martins in London. Co-founder of the RCA's Walkative project, in which walking with others is used dialogically to trigger thinking, researching and communicating, King is currently undertaking a Ph.D. at Birkbeck College, University of London. His research focuses on the question of why and how, centrally or as an adjunct, contemporary art practitioners use walking in their work and more specifically, examine the nexus between psychogeographic/sociogeographic urban wandering and creative and critical practice.

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Harriet Edwards has worked mainly at Goldsmiths and the Royal College of Art (where she became a teaching fellow) and is currently at the University of the Arts London. She was a team member of the national Writing PAD project that investigated writing for students engaged in art and design studio practices and is still part of its current network, with a role as an editor and contributor to the *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*. Her Ph.D. investigated the 'supra-rational' elements of designing/ making and potential impacts on writing practices. Research interests include laterality of the brain hemispheres, the intelligence of drawing, phenomenology and embodied intelligence.

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