

mat.zine # 10

Brick

And if you think of Brick, for instance,  
and you say to Brick, "What do you want Brick?"  
And Brick says to you  
"I like an Arch."  
And if you say to Brick  
"Look, arches are expensive,  
and I can use a concrete lintel over you.  
What do you think of that?"  
"Brick?"  
Brick says:  
"... I like an Arch"

*Louis Kahn's conversation with a brick*

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## Brick

The challenge for this edition was one of finding honesty in the physical intimacy of the everyday, in the building blocks of our environment. The contributors have explored this theme by emptying their pockets, poeticizing and dancing in the streets.

*Dance score for understanding brick* shall be found on the mat.zine blog.

Special thanks to all who contributed.

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mat.zine is a collaborative zine which dwells in the peripheries of architecture - and traverses art, archaeology, literature and more. The editorship changes with each new issue

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## Close

Dundee's historic centre has many closes, each with their own identity, form and features. Unlike the well known closes of Edinburgh, Dundee's closes have a more gritty, neglected feel, a complexity and layering almost unmatched by many of the historic touristic closes in the capital. This image attempts to bring to light a relatively unknown side to the historic centre of Dundee.



## The everynight

They are the standard-issue contents of my pockets on a night out. They are the cheap, disposable items that make it so.



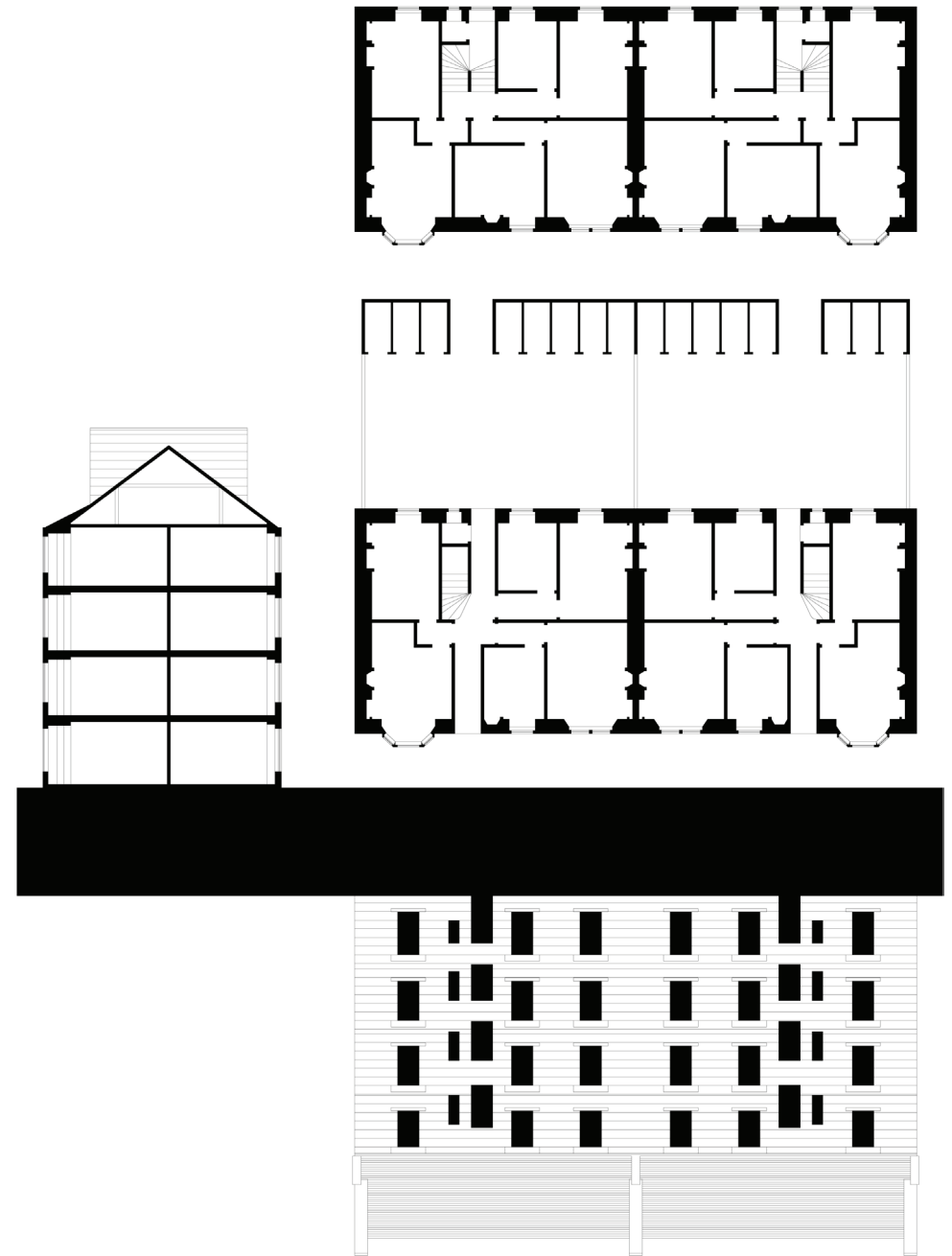
## André Ford





### The city is like a large House

Ordinary housing largely forms what we call the built environment, the city. Italian architect Aldo Rossi said that the city is built around fixed points, "monuments." These are large collective elements surrounded by ordinary housing. In the 1966 *The Architecture of the City* Rossi developed a theoretical framework for the typology of buildings and their relationship to the city writing, "the study of the individual dwelling offers one of the best means of studying the city and vice versa." The dwelling is thus both individual and collective. It refers to both itself; and analogically to the wider city, like Alberti's analogy.



There is a long brick wall that is very reassuringly dirty and venerable on my walk to work. About three metres high and where it tilts, at two metres, very slightly, to face the sky and the plane trees overhead, a band of yellow lichen of constant width stretches end to end. The lichen has no depth at all: it is more of a colour wash living off a certain level of humidity in the brick and light under the big trees. Brick keeps its own counsel, there are secrets in its making and in what it endures that have plenty of tricks for our idle, semi subconscious moments.

We were once going to make a magpie nest of contrasting bright and dun materials - corten, zinc, painted timber and stucco - to clothe a building currently known as the Hothouse on London Fields. The idea was to fragment all the volumes and make a properly confusing mess on the park. Then by chance at just that moment we re-fell in love with brick, looking at the baroque facades of the Carignano Palace in Turin by Guarini. You have to be there in person to appreciate its wild and restless surfaces on a monumental scale. It is all done in small pink bricks. The strength comes from the continuity of that material as it advances and retreats. After that it seemed obvious that our weird skinny building wanted to be brick, brick that did everything. It could sweep round a boomerang shaped perimeter, be punched with cookie cutter windows, and it could hold its own against the sky. The brick we used which we struggle to now escape from is a water cast red brick with a delicate, pale pink skin. It looks like playdough more than a serious brick. We think the name Olde English Buff is too musty for this fresh brick.

It is difficult now to be genuine and wholesome with brick: its structural role is so demeaned. But once you see it has jumped a quadrant in Semper's categorization of materials from hearth to enclosure and weaving, so becoming a dress and cladding system, the

freedom for brick to play different roles in different projects is clear.

In a quarter of deep red brick in Leicestershire we brought out the Olde English Buff pink dress again to hang over a hated, white tiled, ninety seventies concrete bus depot and thereby saved the building from demolition. A certain quantity of stainless steel jewellery was required to create the hanging and cantilever new window openings but it made perfect sense as a warm winter coat and new acceptable image for LCB Depot, a media centre in the up and coming 'cultural quarter' there.

In Southwold, a specially sensitive and charming seaside town in Suffolk where older people go to find their childhood and young people a hip and kitsch nostalgia, we built thirty four new brick houses. They replaced a seventies warehouse used by Adnams, whose brewery in town is almost as loved as the luminous twelfth century church. The houses, like most residential construction these days, could have chosen from any number of different constructional means ranging from timber frame to precast concrete: in this case, though, they ended up being built with a conventional cavity wall, though with such oddities too as glass reinforced plastic chimney formers. But again the pink dress fitted the bill to clothe the outer cavity skin and, as brick slips, to dress the chimneys. It worked because you could find similar aged brick tones in the village all around.

Here in Southwold we learnt how to paint brick with black tar against wet east winds and how to lift some faces with white paint, so that some houses had a particularly strong impact on the stage sets of the village. Our houses on their twisted plots are so cheek by jowl, the ground so full of tricky walls to swallow cars, that the brick here is in your face. The brickwork is well done: traditional lime mortar mixed with areas of intense gluing around concrete lintels and chimney formers.

The glue continued at the UK Centre for Carnival Arts the compound wrapped with a sort of Ikat cloth, a taut skin of bricks with two millimetre mechanically glued joints. The long curves of the outer wall are in a deep black brick. Where the wrap breaks with recessed shop front windows a white brick in acute angled specials maintains the illusion of a thin skin finishing at each reveal with knife-sharp edges.



*Restless grain with squares and slashes from burnt stacking*

This year we having been working on a digital media centre in Cardiff, an isolated, fairly gaunt slab on a windy dockside promontory which will, one day, be swallowed into the urban grid of an emerging 'masterplan'. Here the brick we chose dodges the surrounding near-ubiquitous Ruabon Red. The long faces of this building are painted white, while both the window reveals in this façade and the end elevations of the building are in staggered brickwork headers, fair faced like raw meat, a building with a grain.

This weekend we have been haunting Tyne-side looking for the perfect local brick for seventy one houses we are building on a derelict former industrial site on the banks of the Ouseburn. We need something that is simultaneously at one with the anonymous nineteenth century sheds and mills of the valley, while announcing a new beginning. We think we've found it.

Megan Kelley

### Kentucky homily

My parents set out their yard sales religiously:  
it was a form of mass,  
a play-on-words for communion.

My father in his robe,  
the cardboard signs swinging from fists  
as if the smell of permanent marker  
could entice rows of cars to make attendance.

My mother as a clipped voice,  
the backs of hands as a sermon to giving away,  
the nickel-and-dime tithing of our belongings;  
my sister and I giving ten percent  
without consent, with silenced argument.

They were usher and preacher both,  
choir and sinner all,  
a homily of generosity  
with the curious undertone of currency:  
that, somehow, by selling,

we would gift our way to heaven.



Balkan soviet architecture always strived to make the mundane grand and heroic, from public art to towerblocks, whether it was appropriate or not. Most people find it hideous but I've always had a soft spot for it, where I was born in Sarajevo we could see the ali-pashine polje housing estates from our flat, they were built in parallel phases with the buildings in different heights so there was a layered effect, parts of some phases visible behind the others, I think they were supposed to give the impression of a mountain range or rolling hills. It's more like crooked teeth when the sun hits it right you can see what they were aiming for under the crumbling facades and peeling paint.



## Scaffolding

What fucking chance did ye have?  
Answer: zero there was just no fucking chance. It wasn't going well, nothing ever fucking went well. A tactic, some sort of tactic was required. Some sort of strategy, something that would just kick in and reverse the situation. The silence was definitely lingering now, to an uncomfortable extent, and he was finding it difficult to maintain eye contact. His eyes were watery; he felt like he might burst out greeting. Mibby he could use that. Imply some sort of vulnerability or some damn thing. Yeh, woman liked that. Wasn't that true? That was potentially true.

She had finished her drink.

"You wanting another drink or...?"

"Yeh, okay."

He ordered the same again, a pint of Guinness and a glass of orangeade. There were a couple of auld cunts leaning against the bar talking, one involved in what seemed to be a deeply probing and insightful monologue:

"Ye huv to gie cunts the benefit ai the doubt like, no question. Otherwise ye jist end up a bitter bastard, distrustful and generally gloomy. But it wis difficult sometimes. And some cunts ye just couldnae trust them, ye could trust them about as far as ye could fucking throw them. Cuz some cunts were just bad cunts like, ye could just sense it."

He glanced up at a TV set on a shelf fixture in the corner of the room. A film was showing, the volume low, the dialogue indiscernible over the murmur of the bar's patrons. He took the drinks over to where

she was sitting, passed her the orangeade. She took a sip and set the glass down. He took a long drag on his Guinness.

"No a bad wee place, eh?"

She murmured in consent, unconvincingly.

"You wantin' a plate of soup or that?"

She shook her head no.

"Yer awright the now?"

She nodded and smiled sadly.

It was around 3pm in the afternoon, an overcast, still afternoon. This place had a deadening atmosphere, he suddenly decided. He swallowed more Guinness.

She had a faraway look in her eyes. Her reluctance was completely palpable now. It was shite, it was just fucking hopeless. He wanted to move beyond, move ahead to some future juncture absolved of all this tedium, all this quiet agony.

She suddenly stared at him with an expression that demanded a response. What did he do? He smiled meekly and laughed nervously, as he was wont to do in those days.

Megan Kelley

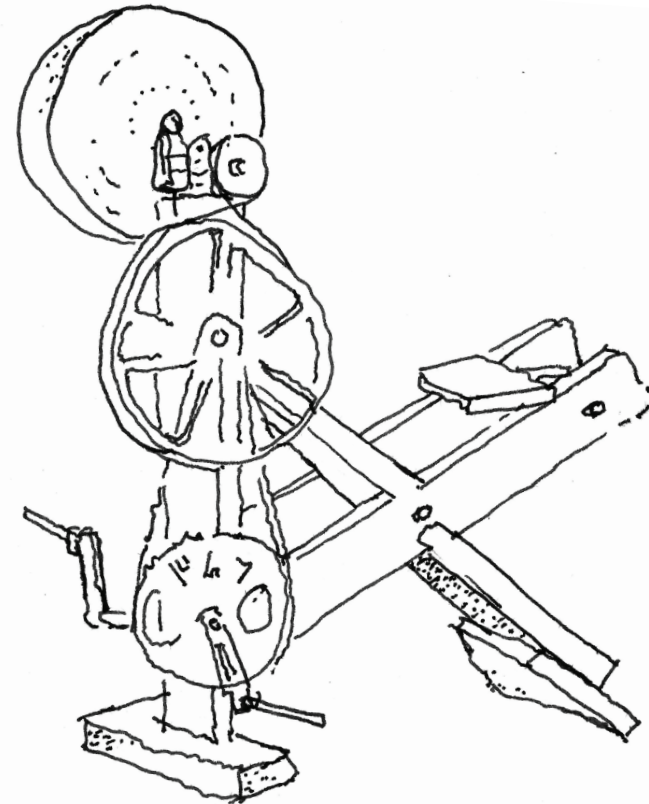
South/Alabama

When she was very young, a snake crept beneath her heel  
and she ground it into grass smears and red text  
against the shiny sides of a momma's church shoes.  
Wasps burrowed into her hair, sought the warm places behind ears,  
and small sallow fingers crushed their honeysuckle bodies  
and sucked out the juices and tears. Venoms who had  
all the medical names of science could have no name for her,  
this child priestess, this unforgiven nature, the tatter of skirts  
over the binding of knees, and they gave her no latin letters,  
and barely the guttural grunts of a lover's tongue.

He had wire for a forehead, dented metal shovels for the swells  
of a cranium. His hands cleaned things, made them whole again.  
Small river pebbles sprung clear and fresh and wet while they grew  
full again from the mounds of his thumbs. Given half a chance,  
he slumbered against the sides of stones, eyes bright with the unseeing.  
Other times dust motes attached themselves to the sharp  
planes of a young boy, settled into crevices too slow to move, too limber  
to hush. He doesn't wear her down with the sounds of his breathing.

Ryan McLoughlin

The grindstone



a tool sharpener employed on the streets of Mumbai



borges<sup>1</sup> No, no. You fix the gadgets. They are a hindrance, but I will try to talk as if they're not there. Now where are you from?

albers<sup>1</sup> Bottrop, yes. That is in the Ruhr district. Do you know what the Ruhr is?

borges<sup>2</sup> Yes. I rambled about the streets—Fifth Avenue—and got lost, but the people were always kind. I remember answering many questions about my work from tall, shy young men. In Texas they had told me to be afraid of New York, but I liked it. Well, are you ready?

albers<sup>2</sup> No, that is always stated incorrectly. I never was at the Academy. I was at the Royal Art School. That was a preparatory school specially for art teachers. You see, it was not so much for the development of artists. But we had there terribly stiff training. We really had to learn to draw. Boy. You see like Menzel, you know who Menzel is?

borges<sup>3</sup> Now, before we start, what kind of questions are they?

albers<sup>3</sup> No, everything. Reading, writing, arithmetic; you see, everything. No, you see I was really trained as a teacher for all the things. And this training again was also quite Prussian; you know what that is - Prussian?

~

#### josef, jorge & the bezold effect

jorge louis borges speaks in 1966 while josef albers speaks in 1968. but here they speak to each other today, based on a loosely arranged script machine [see opposite]

the bezold effect is an optical phenomena which albers used in his teaching. it describes how one colour appears to change lightness or hue intensity when adjacent to a contrasting colour.

i have found no evidence that these great minds ever met in person. like some sort of necro-networking nitwit i'm strangely star-struck by bringing these voices into close proximity. i mean, these dead-guys really seem to be talking, arguing and believably ignoring each other! imagine the bizarre weaves of conversation that other script machines could conjure

borges<sup>5</sup> I think there is a kind of, perhaps, of low epic in him—no?

albers<sup>5</sup> I've indicated already, you see, when he saw that I was practical-minded, that I could handle material he asked me - and that was this way: Later I was very much against Itten. And then Gropius was also particularly against Itten. Have you seen the catalogue on Fifty Years of the Bauhaus?

borges<sup>7</sup> Oh, yes. I'm awfully superstitious. I'm ashamed about it. I tell myself that after all, superstition is, I suppose, a slight form of madness, no?

albers<sup>8</sup> *[sub-concept : the actual 7<sup>th</sup> albers entry is far too long to use here, so i chose the 8<sup>th</sup>]*  
How see Van Gogh. You know his Sunflowers?

borges<sup>11</sup> [With great interest] Who said that?

albers<sup>11</sup> Is that the March issue?

borges<sup>13</sup> Don't you think so?

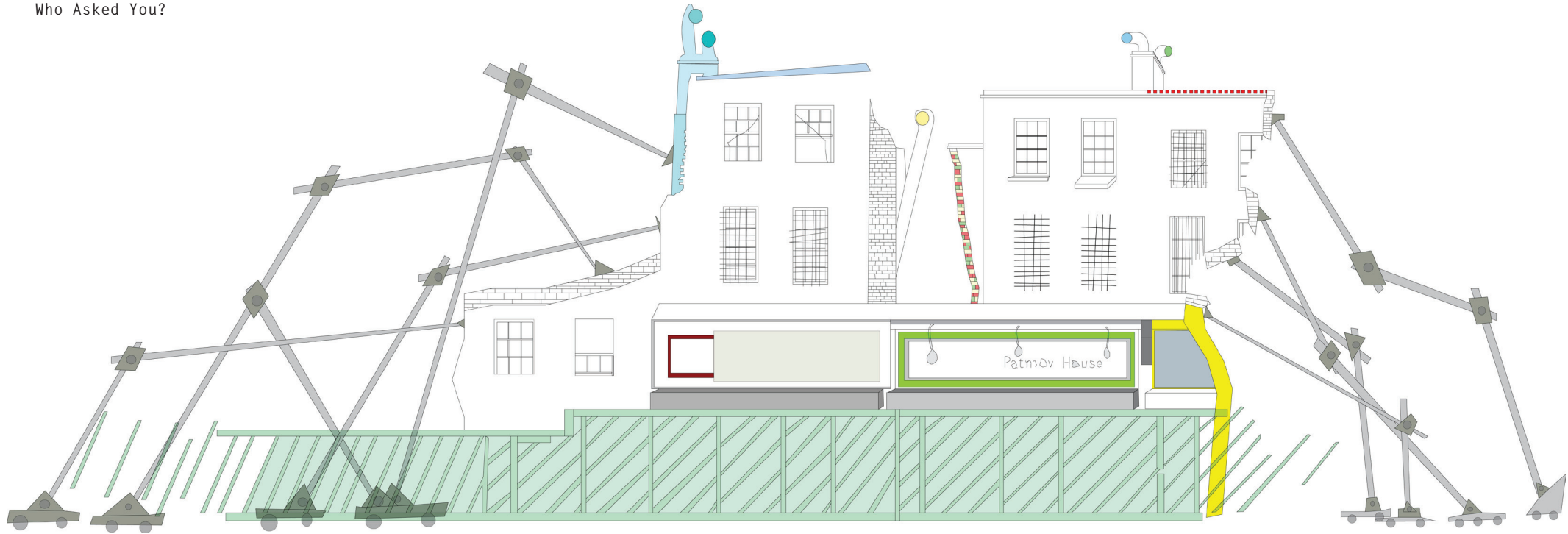
albers<sup>13</sup> Twill show you a typical one. There I discovered that when I put a white line in the right way and made the surroundings for the white line right, then the white line makes out of 1, 2, 3 colors 1, 2, 3, 4 colors. Can you see it?

fin

~

- i. jorge louis borges - <http://goo.gl/2Z0Jl> & josef albers - <http://goo.gl/aq9Rw> The script machine
- ii. 7 comments from each interview, in alternating fashion
- iii. The artist to begin will be judged by a flipping of a 1p coin; heads = borges, tails = albers. [coin flipped 11:50am 5th sept 2011]
- iv. Each comment can be one or more sentences long, though the final sentence must end with a question mark [?] for it to be considered usable.
- v. prime numbers dictate the number of entry used to compile script

Who Asked You?



I'm tired.

I have seen three centuries and the years did not escape me, no, they piled on top and squeezed my spine. Age pushes my weary body downwards, stuck in limbo between upright elevation and a squelchy subterranean world.

I was wide-eyed with excitement when the first train rolled into the Junction, and exuded a showy appearance. But now my eyes are heavy, my looks embarrassingly dishevelled. Four generations of George gave me my name as London stretched its arms and rolled out into the East End.

I protectively enveloped the families that followed the fresh lines. A healthy dose of extra weight made room

for business ambitions and new futures. The energy of their experiences punched through the front door and rushed through my mortar veins. Bombs have dropped around me and old friends were swept away in tiny particles. Yet I stood resilient and proud.

I was energetic and stood tall, now my smallness wears me out.

I suffered the rash of government corruption, and played the victim in a helpless jam. The rough orangey tongue burnt my bones right after I mistook resentment for love. Secret instructions and greedy dreams caught me off-guard. My walls once felt like they could survive hurricanes, and they did, now the brick feels inky, seeping into the earth. To score some

political points, my guts were torn out and my strength was debilitated with an 'accidental' punch to the kidney. Stinging senses have exhausted me, as shifting moralities whirl around the grid.

I'm slumping, slowly leaning, and looking for somewhere to rest the weight of my fatigue. Money has been exchanged between hands on my behalf, but never reached the final transaction. There's been talk discussing my future, I'm sick of being centre of attention, the subject line in conversations branching either side of the Atlantic.

I'm tired but my eyes are stitched open by metal bars, bruises shine from playing the rope in a tug of war.

I need to rest my trembling muscles for warping limbs cause me to trip. The warm smell of bread, piercing floral colours and thudding music used to drum my heartbeat. But these loyal friends were torn away and locked out by green hoarding. Now a handful of fragile humans protect me, humiliated by the last remaining few that care. Demolish, restore, demolish, restore, I'm tired of waiting for a decision that sticks. Steel skeletons prop me up, or else they are performing a stop motion demolition.

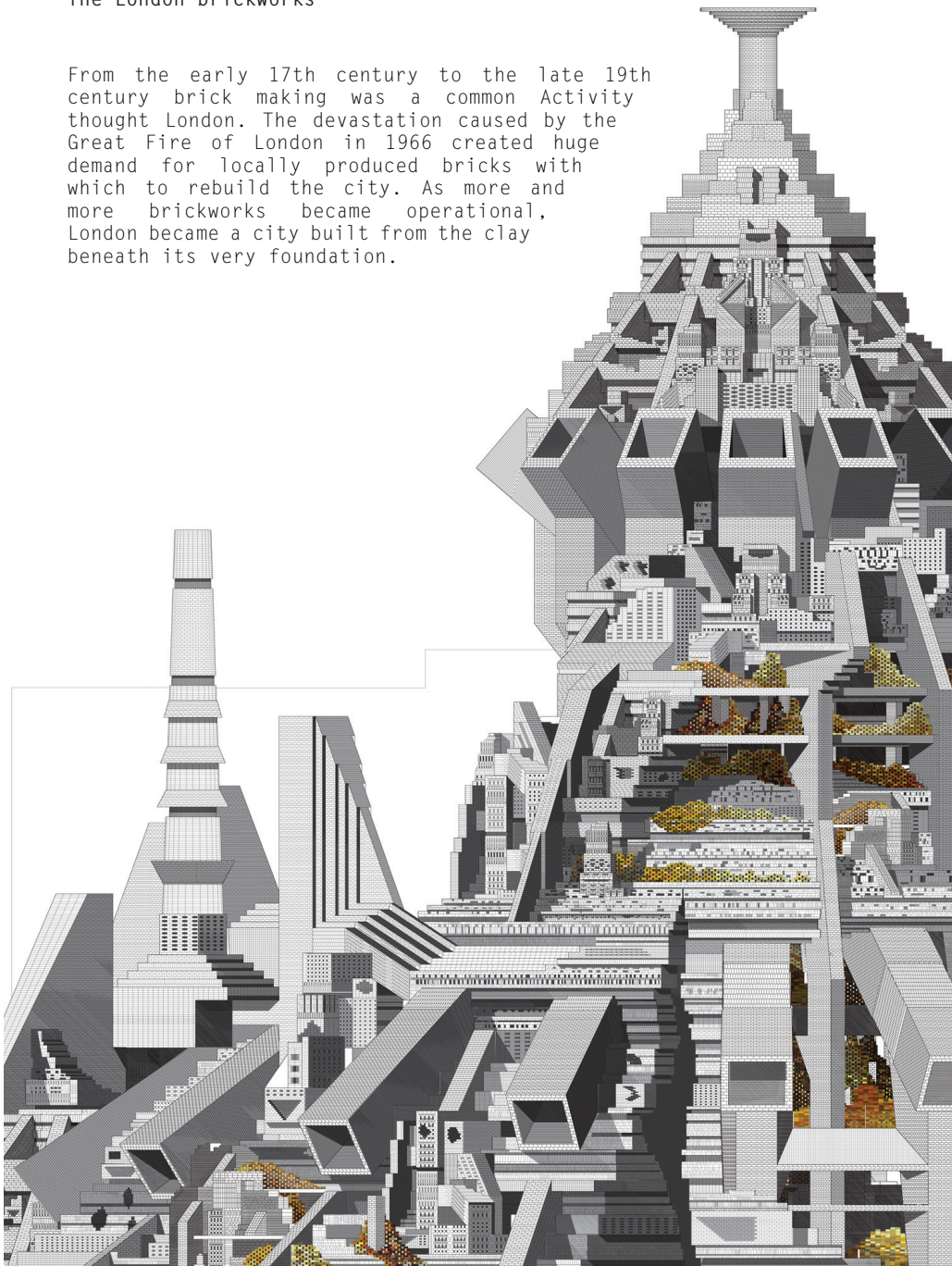
I would like to go to sleep now, if someone only thought to ask me.



Christopher Cox

### The London brickworks

From the early 17th century to the late 19th century brick making was a common Activity thought London. The devastation caused by the Great Fire of London in 1666 created huge demand for locally produced bricks with which to rebuild the city. As more and more brickworks became operational, London became a city built from the clay beneath its very foundation.



Sharm Murugiah



Brick, here, is associated, amongst other things, with on site working, the hand made, with tolerances set by the bricklayer. The accuracy and rules of the architect determining the consistency of detail and registrations of the fabric in relation to context.

The context is one of the five programs for the design. The artists studios relate to the industrial theme whilst building with a domesticated appearance.



Chris Pendrich

Building blocks for building blocks



Dance score for understanding brick

to be performed by two pedestrians

part one

move in response to what is outside of  
your field of vision

see one thing in an objectifying manner

move object

part two

position self in an intimate space  
with said object

reiterate part one while proximal to  
the object

create distance between self and the  
object

part three

re-appropriate a set of pedestrian  
gestures

perform said gestures as objects of  
curiosity

part four

identify a point in space

see the point as fixed and without the  
opportunity for redefinition

move around the point in an objectifying  
manner

part five

move in response to what is outside of  
your field of vision

in order to reconcile self, object and  
space as one body

[filmed by Satyam Shrestha and Meghna Bhalla. performed by  
Maria Teresa Houar and Eden Pereira]

