



Memorability as Image

The contested aesthetic politics of Robin Hood Gardens

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Declaration

I Edward Brookes, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 06/05/2021

Acknowledgements

It's been BRUTAL. But here it is.

Without several crucial individuals I don't think this research project would have existed. I therefore wish to thank all the residents at RHG for being so accommodating and supportive. Similar thanks to Simon Smithson, C20 Society, muf Architecture, Historic England, and the V&A museum for letting me badger them with questions. Special thanks to Oli Mould, David Gilbert, and James Dixon, for their endless support and guidance from beginning to end. The NHS also deserves a special mention, as more than once they have scraped me off the floor to ensure that I would be around to finish this project. Lastly, huge thanks go to all my family, friends and partner who encouraged me to leave the house from time to time.

Abstract

This thesis looks to explore the aesthetic politics of the Robin Hood Gardens (RHG) estate in East London and its recent regeneration, problematising the debates that have emerged around its demolition and perceived ugliness/beauty. It challenges both the political revival of strategies that seek to blame supposedly 'ugly' architectural forms for wider social problems, as well as the narratives of those who seek to sanitise urban spaces through 'heritage-washing'. Instead, it advocates a position that reasserts the function of the estate as a site of home, and the social and material complexity that surrounds it. In order to do so it utilises a system of methods derived from both archaeological and geographic disciplines, as it pieces together the material, textual, artistic, and more-than-representational processes behind how the estate has become a symbol for discussions around gentrification within the city. Specifically, it engages with how 'images' of the estate have been produced and reproduced; including artwork of numerous 'RHG artists'; the audio-visual materials produced by the estate's developers (Blackwall Reach); as well as interviews with key heritage stakeholders and tenants of the estate, in order to present a discussion around how symbolic and representational practices continue to shape the material realities of the site. As a result, it concludes by challenging the various aesthetic and audio-visual strategies that promote forms of gentrification, instead advocating for perspectives which consider the estate in all of its intricacy.

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Chapter I

THE UGLY/BEAUTY DEBATE

Introduction

'The overwhelming majority of public architecture built during my lifetime is aesthetically worthless, simply because it is ugly...'

(John Hayes – UK Minister of State for Transport – Journey to beauty speech, October 31st, 2016)

August 2017 saw the first bulldozers move into Robin Hood Gardens (RHG), a Brutalist social housing estate in Tower Hamlets, East London, and begin work to demolish the first of its two multi-storey blocks. Currently, at the time of writing (July 2021) only the east block remains and is perhaps only months away from a similar fate. The estate was originally built as part of a radical redesign of the previous Victorian tenements (Grosvenor Buildings) in the late 1960s, by the British architectural duo Alison and Peter Smithson (Power, 2010), its construction completed in 1972. RHG represented the first and only of the Smithsons' major housing schemes to be constructed. Arriving at the tail end of much of the Modernist and Brutalist movements, its critics labelled the project as 'out of date' before it had even been completed (Crinson, 2018; Glancy, 2009). Visually speaking, it is often remembered for its 'harsh' exterior (Brennan, 2015; Sandes, 2015), as its two sinuous blocks snake round a central green mound, while raised walkways punctuate its outward facades and a concrete palisade surrounds its border. This rather inward-looking design, was a purposeful attempt by the Smithsons to screen out the noise of the nearby Blackwall Tunnel and the surrounding city, creating a 'calm pool' in the centre of East London (Crinson, 2017). However, like many estates of its era, its social problems were exacerbated early on by local authority neglect, this has fuelled its recent social and material decline (Crinson, 2017; Powers, 2010; Brennan 2015). Combined with a mixed critical reception and a documented history of vandalism, this has led some to present the site as a 'failure' and a 'monstrosity' (Thoburn, 2018).

As a result, Tower Hamlet's Council has pushed for the site to be redeveloped, and over the last few years it has been at the heart of many debates around gentrification, heritage, preservation, and regeneration, as it continues to be demolished and replaced with luxury flats under the Blackwall Reach Development Scheme. The £300m regeneration project markets itself as a 'vibrant collection' of 1,575 homes, 679 of which will be 'affordable'. The marketing blurb trumpets the arrival of 'one brand new community' and is led by the Swan Housing Association (and backed by national and local political discourses) who present the old site as a hub of anti-social behaviour, blaming this in large part on the Post-War/Brutalist architecture of the old estate. Like many state-led regeneration

schemes, the land was acquired via a compulsory purchase order, forcing tenants to choose between a cash settlement or to be rehoused within the new flats/other housing within the borough depending on their existing tenancy agreements (Sandes, 2015). Meanwhile the council has used the vacant blocks to provide emergency accommodation to a handful of temporary residents while the regeneration has been underway, as one of the many short-term 'sticking-plaster' solutions to London's housing crisis (Harris et al, 2019; Minton, 2017). In many ways the estate's regeneration bears all the hallmarks of a broader pattern of neoliberal urban governance, which sees the state shed previous housing and welfare assets with support from the private sector and largely at the expense of the urban poor (Porter & Shaw, 2009; Lindner et al 2021).

This process was met with substantial resistance. There were several campaigns against the demolition, as architectural preservationists have tried to get the building listed, largely off the back of the Smithons' renown within the architectural community. The fight was led by the 20th Century Society (C20 Society) and Building Design (BD) magazine, who were backed by notable architects such as Richard Rogers and Zaha Hadid, as well as many other campaign groups across Twitter and Facebook (Powers, 2010). However, RHG's fate was eventually settled in 2009 (and again in 2015), by the then Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) who upheld Historic England's (HE) advice not to list the building. This gave the go ahead for developers and signalled the start of the estate's demolition, which began in 2017.

This was not an end to the controversy, as the following November, after demolition work had begun, The Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) decided that they would acquire a two-storey section of the estate, which would go on to become the focal point of a contentious exhibition at the 2018 Architecture Biennale in Venice. This was met with a number of protests, many calling for a return of the salvaged fragments back to East London, critiquing the museum and its role in 'sanitising' the politics of its redevelopment and 'gentrification' (Pritchard, 2021). This period of fierce discussion around the estate's future has been combined with a renewed interest in Brutalist forms of architecture (Lindner, 2019), which has seen many artists, photographers, academics, and architectural enthusiasts rally round the site to both celebrate, protect, denigrate, document, and exploit its unique aesthetic. Consequently, RHG has become more than just a 'bit-player' in yet another inner-city regeneration scheme, in many ways it has become emblematic of the struggle over how the built environment is managed, represented, 'regenerated' and ultimately regulated, with different groups vying to decide its fate.

It is amidst this backdrop that this thesis analyses the contemporary archaeologies/geographies of the estate as it undergoes redevelopment. It provides a critical intervention into the politics and practices that have surrounded the redevelopment of the estate in recent years. Understandably, this is a broad point of enquiry, especially given the estate's notoriety throughout the latter stages of its life. Therefore, it is my intention to attend to a specific aspect of its contemporary history, as the site has increasingly become embroiled in debates concerning its 'aesthetics' (and I will outline the definitional specifics of this term later in Chapter II). Much of the discussion has often been framed around whether the old estate was intrinsically 'ugly' or 'beautiful'. This has often surfaced at RHG as a binary discussion between two rival narratives, which have fixated on the characteristics of the estate's Brutalist architecture. This is a dialogue I introduce as the 'Ugly/Beauty debate', which on one side encompasses those who wished for RHG to be protected or preserved, supposedly presenting the estate as a 'class-cleansed Brutalist masterpiece', worthy of aesthetic appreciation and cultural revival (Thoburn, 2018). In contrast those on the other side attempted to present the estate as ugly, a 'concrete monstrosity', a 'sink estate', that needs demolition, and that can only be saved through 'regeneration'. Whilst the debate itself is more complex and nuanced than this binary opposition would suggest, its mobilisation within the media and by political groups has often reduced any discussion of the estate's regeneration to simplistic arguments concerning the aesthetic qualities of its architecture.

In many ways this signals the growing prevalence of the 'aesthetic' within politics, where discussions that focus on 'beauty' or 'ugliness' are increasingly used to justify policy decisions that concern what form the city can take. This is exemplified by the quote by John Hayes which opened this thesis, where he challenges a so-called 'cult of ugliness', decrying its advocates and their capacity to only produce bland functional designs. At the same time, similar messages are perpetuated by the media who continue to stoke division between the two positions. For instance, some recent newspaper headlines call out Brutalist buildings for being 'the ugliest in the world' (Rentoul, 2014; Grant, 2019), while others advocate for their utility and wholesale protection (Merrick, 2010).

The emergence of these kinds of cultural and aesthetic discussions are not new, (Victorian architecture was treated in a largely similar way during its day - Meades, 2014), in this instance it has continued to perpetuate a political rhetoric that largely blames the Modernist architecture of the Post-War welfare state for the decline of many housing estates and antisocial behaviour that blights many cities (Mould, 2016; Hanley, 2007; Tucker, 2014). This anti Brutalist/Modernist politics reflects a return to many of the arguments put forward several decades earlier by academics such as Oscar Newman (1972) and Alice Coleman (1985) who suggested that building design was the root cause of

social problems, overlooking many of the underlying and systemic causes of poverty and inequality (Till, 1998). In many ways it illustrates how the visual qualities of the built environment continue to be a political tool for reshaping the urban landscape in ways that benefit specific groups and individuals rather than the residents of the estates that are being targeted.

As a result, **the main objective of this thesis is to analyse the contested aesthetic politics of Robin Hood Gardens and its recent regeneration**, problematising the many 'images' and 'representations' of the estate and how they are mobilised by different actors to suit their own agendas.

I therefore wish to take the 'Ugly/Beauty' debate as a central focus within this text, critiquing each sides perspective as they entangle different elements of the site. At the same time, I seek to broaden the debate, by incorporating viewpoints that have been overlooked by the mainstream discussion. Specifically, I wish to direct attention to the ways in which various representations/images of the estate have been mobilised by numerous actors; including the developers, artists, museums, politicians, the media, and other institutions, in order to understand how they are used to construct a particular view of the estate.

By focusing on the image, I refer back to the title of this thesis 'Memorability as Image', which relates to one of Reyner Banham's (1955) three characteristics of Brutalism: for him, the memory of an 'Image' is what affects the 'emotions', which has an impact on how we engage with architectural space. In the same capacity I wish to examine how images have shaped RHG and continue to be mobilised around creating different responses within the landscape. As a result, I unpick the many material, digital, and sonic layers that have accumulated around the site and its recent history, and how they intersect with a wider aesthetic politics of urban renewal. Ultimately, I aim to illustrate how each side of the aesthetic discussion has failed to address the complexity of the estate's recent history, ignoring the site as a space of home largely in favour of neoliberal agendas.

From a methodological standpoint I intend to investigate these different strands of enquiry by employing an interdisciplinary approach; one which blends a combination of archaeological and cultural geographical techniques to engage with the complex socio-material aspects of the estate as they intersect with the numerous aesthetic and political discourses that surround the site.

Empirically speaking this will take the form of a range of data collection methods familiar to both human geography and contemporary archaeology. I therefore draw upon archival, photographic, ethnographic and interview techniques to support my line of argument. The intention is that by taking an archaeo-geographical focus I will be better able to weave together the material and forensic approaches of archaeology, with cultural geographic forms of enquiry, which are more

sympathetic to affective and representational registers. In this capacity I can consider and sort through the material and textual resources that surround the estate's demolition. Textually, I augment this approach by framing my discussion around the archaeological tropes of 'layer' and 'sediment', which contend that the numerous discussions/representations around the estate's Ugliness/Beauty have continued to 'sediment' around the site since its construction (whether that be rhetorically or physically through political, artistic, and social intervention) which in turn has had rippling effects on the present-day politics and material reality of its urban landscape. My analysis adds complexity to these archaeological categorisations, as they organise the disparate material and rhetorical traces of RHG's regeneration and present them as a discrete body of evidence that can 'make visible' the complex power geometries behind how the urban environment is managed and narrated. Therefore, by combining each discipline's focus, and reframing discussion through an archaeological lens, I hope to answer the numerous calls by urban scholars (Slater, 2011;2006; Billingham, 2015; Elliot-Cooper, 2020) who seek a better understanding of the effects of dispossession and gentrification and how they are symbolically embedded within the landscape.

From these points of discussion, I have developed four research questions (**RQ**):

- **RQ 1:** How can we deconstruct RHG as a particular image in order to explore its social, affective, and aesthetic politics?
- **RQ 2:** To what extent can we problematise and politicise the existing debates and literature that intersect Brutalism, art, and gentrification?
- **RQ 3:** How has 'Heritage' and the 'listing process' contributed to specific narratives of RHG and how has this affected its future preservation?
- **RQ 4:** How can interdisciplinary methods which combine cultural geography and contemporary archaeology be used to apprehend new knowledge of urban space?

Compositionally, these research questions will be addressed through eight chapters, of which four represent separate segments of analysis. Each chapter will explore how the different 'images' and 'representations' of RHG engage with existing political and social debates that surround the site's regeneration. Hence, following this first introductory section (Chapter I), which sets out the aims, Chapter II will move on to address the academic contexts of my discussion, defining the central theories that underpin my analysis, including a brief history of the Smithsons and their connection to Brutalism. Chapter III will set out the methodology of the thesis and its use of interdisciplinary approaches, engaging heavily with **RQ4** as it discusses how we can use archaeological and

geographical traditions to apprehend new knowledge of the built and symbolic landscape. Chapter IV *'The Brutalist Image'*, is the first chapter of analysis and will address **RQ 1** and **RQ 2**, as it seeks to outline the relevance of the 'photographic image' to Brutalism in the present, deconstructing how different representational and compositional techniques continue to mediate how RHG is interpreted and understood by different actors.

Chapter V *'The Politics of Ugliness'*, discusses the first part of the Ugly/Beauty debate, and explores **RQ 1**, **RQ 2** and parts of **RQ 4**. It utilises field photography and discourse analysis in order to understand how 'ugliness' is constructed and symbolically imposed upon the estate. This is split across two parts, the first of which attends to how the use of marketing media artificially constructs a false narrative of the 'future' which is contrasted to the worn and outdated 'past' of the old estate. The second section focuses on how language has been used to stigmatise RHG and its residents, presenting it as a 'sink estate' and 'concrete monstrosity', which has made it easier for developers to justify the site's demolition. Consequently, Chapter VI *'The Politics of Beauty'*, directly addresses **RQ 3**, as it presents the other half of the Ugly/Beauty debate, examining the role of preservation groups in the failed campaigns to list the estate. Again, split into two, the first section engages with the heated debate between English Heritage/Historic England (EH/HE) and the C20 Society, examining the many documents and processes behind the final decision not to list the site. The second section attends to the V&A's involvement in acquiring fragments of the estate, unpicking how the museum chose to represent RHG, and its failure in providing a platform for further discussion around the politics of the estate's redevelopment.

Chapter VII, *'Artistic Interventions and Robin Hood Gardens'* moves to broaden the perspective of the Ugly/Beauty debate, challenging its binary focus by incorporating a range of artistic voices that reassert how RHG is a site of home. As a result, it responds to **RQ 4** and **RQ 1**, as it discusses the images and artwork of several artists and how they have chosen to represent the estate. This will include a mixture of my own ethnographic encounters, alongside the deconstruction of various artworks, including work by Do Ho Suh, Jessie Brennan and A. J. Holmes. Part of this section is focused on *'Place Listening'* which presents how practices of recording and listening are able to reconnect people with the estate as a lived site of home in order to dissolve simplistic understandings of the building as simply ugly or beautiful.

Finally, Chapter VIII contains the concluding arguments of this thesis, summarising each of the research questions and how it has addressed them. It stresses the continued need to document and problematise aesthetic discussions as they relate to the built environment, especially as they come to structure the unequal power relations behind how the city is represented. This is particularly

important when we consider how the Ugly/Beauty debate has disconnected the estate from its function as a home, ignoring its community in favour of fuelling a politics that is intent on erasing architectural and individual freedoms in the service of financial and political power. However, before developing my argument further, I wish to set out the key theoretical and conceptual strands that underpin my discussion.

Chapter II

RESEARCH CONTEXTS

Introduction

Understandably this thesis has the potential to be impossibly large, especially as it seeks to make contributions towards two different disciplines. Therefore, in each of the following sub-sections, the general modes of thought will be briefly discussed before a more in-depth consideration of the specific aspects of the literature as it concerns my research. This will be split into six key areas of discussion: *'Regeneration'*, *'Gentrification'*, *'Displacement'*, *'Territorial Stigma'*, *'Brutalism, The Smithsons and Robin Hood Gardens'* and *'Aesthetic Politics'*. Structurally speaking these sub-sections will be organised according to increasing specificity to my site of study, starting with the broader overarching themes, narrowing to consider precise arguments and strands of research.

Regeneration

The first two of this thesis' core questions concern the images and politics of RHG's recent regeneration. It is therefore important that we consider how the estate's redevelopment fits within the wider literature of urban renewal. Consequently, this first section will explore how existing academic research has discussed sites earmarked for demolition and 'regeneration' and how they relate to concepts of 'gentrification'. This is particularly pertinent when considering RHG within cycles of urban redevelopment, the estate itself born out of a late 1960s project of 'urban renewal', as the Greater London Council looked to replace the poorly maintained 19th century flats (Grosvenor Buildings) that previously occupied the site (Powers, 2010). In contrast the recent efforts to redevelop the site follow a similar narrative of urban improvement, this time driven by the private sector. Tower Hamlets Council therefore sold the land to developers 'Swan Housing', who see Blackwall Reach as a new wave of urban 'regeneration'. In this case the use of the word 'regeneration' by the developers, is largely uncritical, it attempts to signal a benign process of investment and uplift for the local area. In reality this process is far more complex. 'Regeneration' at its broadest is seen as the reinvestment in a place after a period of disinvestment (Porter & Shaw, 2009) typically undertaken via a range of strategies, often initiated by the state or larger corporate entities (Shaw, 2008). Roberts (2000: 17) provides a slightly more specific definition:

'Comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems, and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement to the economic, physical, social, and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change'.

Even then presenting it as a 'comprehensive' practice that brings 'lasting improvement' is overstating its potential, as 'regeneration' is rarely 'comprehensive' or free from issues (Turok, 2005). In this respect, we can see how regeneration is often characterised as a process that is intended to change the nature of place, often working within communities, and involving a range of actors and stakeholders to (at least on the surface) address an area's perceived social, economic, and environmental problems (Tallon, 2013).

However, as a concept within planning policy its appearance is relatively recent. Leary & McCarthy (2013) point to its varied use as a term by the UK's Thatcher government and its neoliberal drive to audit and assess the effectiveness of 'Urban Development Corporations' (UDC) in the early 1980s. Its application was coupled with trying to understand 'successful regeneration' as it applied to specific redevelopment projects and whether they represented value for taxpayer's money. At the same time 'regeneration strategy' was a central pillar to UDC doctrine, which was focused on economic growth and property development, using public funds to lever in largely undirected market investment into supposedly 'run down areas' as exemplified by the redevelopment of London's Docklands (Tallon, 2013; Brownill, 1990; 1999). This represented a change in approach from the urban renewal of the 1960s which was public sector driven and concerned with the large-scale redevelopment of overcrowded inner-city slums (Couch, 1990). The term 'regeneration' therefore epitomises the shift from managerial forms of regulation to entrepreneurial logics, which has been characterized by the pre-eminence of local economic development and the search for alliances with the private sector (Harvey, 1989a).

The term was then picked up by the Blair government in the late '90s and early '00s, who were equally emphatic about the need for 'regeneration strategy', as evidenced in their comprehensive evaluation of the large scale 'New-Deal for Communities Programme' (Leary & McCarthy, 2013). This era also saw the rise of the 'urban renaissance' metaphor, as the term 'regeneration' became diluted to encompass new ways of describing processes of urban investment. The metaphor again shifted in the mid '00s towards the 'Sustainable Communities Agenda' (Lees, 2003a; ODPM, 2003; Raco, 2005; Raco & Henderson, 2006) only returning to 'regeneration' rhetoric under the 2010 coalition government, which once again aligned the concept with economic growth. Many of these terms were used interchangeably by both the media and the government and were often tied to the same notions of rebirth, revival, or reconstitution (Lees, 2003b). Current regeneration policy seeks to combine both the public and private sectors in partnership to achieve 'urban regeneration' with a more heightened environmental awareness than ever before (Hall & Barrett, 2012). Thus, the regeneration of RHG fits within this broader narrative, as the local Tower Hamlets Council has scaled

back its involvement with the site and partnered with the private sector in order to support the demolition and construction of newer, higher density flats. 'Regeneration' has therefore become a mainstay of recent neoliberal urban policy and is widely recognised and replicated not just across the UK but throughout much of the world (Leary & McCarthy, 2013).

Yet regeneration literature is contested, as many academics question whether it contributes to a net benefit or cost to cities and their various users (Billingham, 2015). Certainly, there are numerous studies which attempt to present how regeneration can be used to ameliorate social and economic issues, as Martinovic & Ifko (2018) point to the benefits of industrial heritage as a catalyst for urban regeneration in post-conflict cities. While Tyler et al (2014) use statistical analysis to assess the success of regeneration schemes across England, highlighting that regeneration contributes to a net increase in average earnings, land value and environmental quality. Longitudinal studies of Irish regeneration policy by Norris & Gkartzios, (2011) and Norris et al (2014) also present how state incentives for redevelopment are an effective tool for drawing private investment into declining areas which reduces the number of derelict buildings and improves employment opportunities.

However, though these may represent some of the positive arguments for regeneration, especially in areas that have experienced sustained disinvestment (Porter & Shaw, 2009), there is a problematic side to these forms of urban intervention. For instance, any improvements to the built and natural environment stand to increase land values, or trigger displacement and exclusion of those that are deemed incompatible with the desired changes of place (Billingham, 2015; Porter & Shaw, 2009). As a result, many urban regeneration policies are based on a logic in which a lack of middle-class presence is a 'problem' (Porter & Shaw, 2009). This is evident in the UK government's *'Estate Regeneration National Strategy'* (2016) which specifically targets housing estates that it sees as 'in decline' or 'unattractive', disproportionately targeting the urban poor, and creating a framework through which successful regeneration can supposedly be achieved. This process is ultimately focused on enhancing land value and job opportunities rather than retaining and improving the quality of life for residents already inhabiting the targeted estates. Urban decline and poverty are presented as inappropriate to urban life, usually requiring some form of state-led intervention in order to eradicate them from the city and its 'image' (Baeten, 2004), especially if it is looking to compete on the global city stage (Shaw, 2008).

In this respect, we see how the logic of state and private sector led regeneration fits neatly into the 'global cities' discourse, which stresses the innate need for urban centres to be in competition with each other as centres of economic, cultural, and political power (Sassen, 2001). Thus, like regeneration, global city theory has infiltrated much of social science and the humanities literature

and has become a buzzword in urban policy realms primarily because of its etymological link with economic globalisation, in which cities are competing to be part of and to benefit from (Smith, 2013). Therefore, like the spaces that regeneration policy sees as in decline, so too are cities ranked according to a similar logic (alpha, beta, and gamma cities; Taylor, 2004) - those at the top are seen as the lynch pins in the global economy. Regeneration therefore encompasses a similar regime of competition, as different urban areas compete for investment, signalling which areas are winners and redeveloping those who are losers. It reflects what Mould (2015) refers to as a 'zero-sum game', in that as one location may gain another loses. The classification of different locations according to the presence or absence of certain economic and cultural characteristics therefore illustrates the interwoven nature of urban regeneration and wider competitive neoliberal politics (Harvey 1989a). Regeneration therefore becomes a strategy through which cities are able to eradicate the perceived barriers to capital and its investors (often at the expense of the poor) and subsequently change their standing in the global rankings, signalling that they are progressive centres of economic might, cultural dissemination, and political power (Sassen, 2001; Shaw, 2008; Tallon, 2013; Mould 2015). Therefore, by redeveloping and 'regenerating' parts of the city which do not fit the sleek, commodified, and mobile image of capital, cities are supposedly better able to attract the people and institutions that it perceives as making them more competitive within the global market (Mould, 2015, Sassen, 2001).

Regeneration as a mechanism for 'improving' urban areas is also intricately embroiled with local and global forms of place/city branding (Klingmann, 2007). Large-scale urban development projects typically try and present themselves as 'urban icons' through which to attract further investment (Castillo-Villar, 2016; Klingmann, 2007). While culture or heritage led regeneration schemes attempt to rebrand urban spaces to cater for specific creative practices through the formation of cultural/heritage quarters in order to stimulate economic activity (Mould, 2015; Sterling, 2020; Fouseki & Nicolau, 2018). Hence, different forms of regeneration present governments with different opportunities to 'rebrand' particular spaces as they attempt to secure greater global status. This is typically at the expense of those who no longer fit the desired 'image' that capital demands (Mould, 2015). Many argue that these forms of public-private regeneration represent the increasing influence that private investors and real estate companies are able to exercise in the formulation of cities, as urban space becomes another commodity in which profit can be made (Mould, 2015; Slater, 2011; Minton, 2017a; Madden & Marcuse, 2016).

The literature around 'regeneration' therefore highlights its relationship to neoliberal urban politics, which often utilise it as a mechanism to achieve more marketable and profitable forms of urban

growth. The language of regeneration couched within entrepreneurially friendly governance structures thus represents a catalyst for the displacement and demolition of inner-city urban areas. However, these criticisms are not new, and whilst 'regeneration' is presented as a relatively recent concept within urban policy there is a wide body of critical research that takes 'regeneration' along with its numerous related terms and sees them as depoliticised euphemisms for gentrification (Porter & Shaw, 2009). All of these phrases as Smith (1996, 2002) points out, omit any connotation of class restructure and displacement. As a result, the term 'regeneration' is often criticised for attempting to 'sanitise' a process characterised by the displacement and disenfranchisement of the poor. As Slater (2011: 573) identifies:

'To label as anything other than gentrification the construction of upmarket housing aimed at young professionals in or on formerly working-class industrial spaces (for example, vacant dockyards or warehouses), and to use a term like "revitalization" or "regeneration" to characterize the implosion of low-income public housing projects in favour of mixed-income developments, is analytically erroneous and politically conservative.'

Therefore, while regeneration is often presented as separate from gentrification, there are many that see it as one and the same thing. This leads me to my next point of discussion, as I explore gentrification scholarship and how it weaves together concepts of regeneration, displacement, and social change.

Gentrification

Gentrification is often defined from the ideas of Ruth Glass (1964) as she observed the tenurial transformation of inner-city London from renting to owning, and the accompanying social transition, displacement, and property price increases in the early 1960s. This definition positioned gentrification as the movement of the middle classes into lower class neighbourhoods causing the displacement of all or many of the pre-existing low-income residents. At the time this was distinguished from regeneration practices, which were seen to focus on new build properties rather than the uplift of existing inner-city areas (Smith, 1982; Shaw 2008). However, over the last few decades there has been considerable disagreement over how to define gentrification and whether it should refer only to the residential rehabilitation described by Ruth Glass or whether it relates to the larger scale production of urban space for middle-class consumers, involving 'newbuild' developments on vacant land (Slater, 2011; Davidson & Lees 2005). Sassen (2001), charts the

evolution of this discussion, highlighting that by the late 1970s a broader conceptualization of the process began to emerge and that by the early 1980s new scholarship had developed a broader meaning of gentrification, linking it with processes of spatial, economic, and social restructuring rather than simply the class displacement of inner-city housing (Sassen, 2001). These debates have continued to evolve, as Smith (1996) documented the futility of distinguishing between the similar consequences of inner-city social change and the displacement brought about by the construction of new retail and residential complexes. Ley (1996), Zukin (1995), and Rose (1996) have all previously called for an understanding of gentrification that includes the renovation and redevelopment of residential and non-residential sites. Although the term 'gentrification' started as a specific process, applying largely to inner city housing tenure changes, it has since become a nebulous descriptor which attempts to capture the class inequalities and often racial injustices created by capitalist urban land markets (Slater, 2011).

In regard to why gentrification occurs, existing accounts have tended to focus on explanations that encompass production and consumption perspectives (Shaw, 2008), a point which Slater (2006) has criticised for too often being positioned in binary terms (Hamnett, 2003), rather than interrelated and contingent processes (Slater, 2011). However, despite the constructed opposition of both theories, each arose in reaction to the obfuscation's of 1970s neoclassical economists take on gentrification as a supposedly natural, inevitable and market adjustment process. These 'natural' economic changes were positioned as a positive process that were to be celebrated as part of a middle-class return to city (Slater, 2011; Kern, 1981; LeRoy & Sonstelie, 1983; Schill & Nathan, 1983). Production theories of gentrification looked to challenge this 'inevitable' outlook by emphasising the role of capital and the wider public and private sector in creating 'gentrifiable' spaces (Smith, 1979; Engels, 1994; Hammel, 1999). Therefore, the uneven investment of capital across different parts of society, alongside practices of systematic disinvestment helped to cultivate opportunities for profitable reinvestment (Lees et al, 2016; Harvey, 1989b). This is most notably defined by Neil Smith's 'rent gap' theory which builds upon Harvey's (1989b) analysis of the 'crises of capital', and asserts that gentrification occurs when the gap between the ground rent capitalised with a given land use and the ground rent that could potentially be appropriated under a higher and 'better' land use is sufficient enough that it enables a developer to purchase it, 'rehabilitate' the old structure, and still make a return on the investment (Smith & LeFaivre 1984; Shaw, 2008). This positions gentrification as an inherent part of how capitalist societies are structured, which is geared towards generating periodic cycles of investment and decline as areas are systematically left to depreciate so that excess value can be extracted later.

On the other side of the discussion, consumption perspectives looked to move away from simplistic notions of gentrification as the result of demographic and lifestyle changes, instead presenting how changes in the industrial and occupational structure of advanced capitalist cities, occurring as they did at a time of significant social and cultural upheaval (deindustrialisation etc), produced an expanding population of gentrifiers with a disposition towards inner city living (Ley, 1996; Ley, 1986; Hamnett, 1991; Butler, 1997). The role of artists in contemporary urban redevelopment is one particular group that has been widely studied as being caught up in the strategies of urban renewal and replacement. Zukin (1982) examined the ways in which real-estate capital and the art sector transformed urban neighbourhoods in the 1960s and 1970s, and the subsequent displacement, rent increases and changes to the community that followed. More recent work on the consumption side has explored the role of art, architecture, and historic preservation within gentrification practices, examining how consumers of urban culture - generally young, fashionable singles move in and populate urban areas (notably 'Yuppie' and 'Hipster' subcultures), making them 'more appealing' for financial investment (Hill, 2015; Douglas 2012; Lloyd 2006; Shaw & Sullivan 2011, Smith, 1987). These perspectives frame the gentrification process around changing cultural and class perspectives as certain sections of society 'seek out' (intentionally or not) spaces which they could invest in.

Whilst these two theories represent the most dominant perspectives within gentrification scholarship, the reality is more complex. In a contemporary context the causes of gentrification are often presented as a combination of economic and cultural factors (Slater, 2011; Lees, 2019; Billingham, 2015). Modern theorists have challenged urban theory for not being critical enough of the gentrification process and focusing too heavily on unhelpful distinctions between what is and is not considered gentrification (Slater, 2011; 2009; 2006; Billingham, 2015). A prime example of this lack of critical perspective is evidenced in Slater's (2009) critique of Hamnett's (2008) Guardian article, '*The Regeneration Game*', which suggests that as a society we should choose between inevitable gentrification or urban ruin and decay. As a result, Slater (2009) challenges Hamnett, citing his lack of attention to existing scholarship and erroneously treating the middle class as the only agents of urban restructuring, incorrectly presenting gentrification as the only remedy for urban forms of decline.

Similar frictions can be found when looking at the work of Richard Florida and his seminal text '*Rise of the Creative Class*' (2002), which builds on 'creative' and 'world city' rhetoric, utilising production, and consumption theories of gentrification in order to suggest that cities should attract 'young, creative, and highly mobile workers' in order to facilitate 'urban renewal'. This new 'Creative Class' would 'supposedly' stimulate the economy through developing the 'Creative Economy' - a nebulous

collection of cultural and high-tech institutions that Florida presented as being attractive for investors (Florida, 2002). His ideas have become a key driver of urban regeneration strategy (O'Callaghan, 2010; Peck, 2005), in many ways championing gentrification (whilst avoiding the term and its negative effects entirely) as a beneficial approach through which global cities could achieve greater growth. However, Florida has been widely criticised, his early work 'debunked' by critics who present how his approach has actively encouraged many of the already documented negative effects of gentrification, with any potential benefits going only to those who were already in positions of power to begin with (Mould, 2015; Barnes et al, 2006; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Banks, 2009; Evans, 2009; Mathews, 2010; O'Callaghan, 2010). Hamnett and Florida's ideas therefore represent a key intersection between the language and rhetoric of regeneration and the mechanisms of gentrification. Thus, when these processes are mobilised uncritically by academic or political elites for the purposes of generating greater financial return, they only act to deepen existing levels of inequality and dispossession.

These are frustrations that have been emphasised by Slater (2011; 2009; 2006) in his criticism of contemporary urban scholarship, as he highlights how gentrification is often presented as an indicator of a healthy economy (Billingham, 2015; Davidson 2008; Shaw & Hagemans 2015; Slater 2009). Instead, Slater (2006) calls for a greater focus on the effects and victims of gentrification and how we should call out practices that encourage inequality rather than distinguishing between different kinds of 'gentrification' or 'regeneration'. This is also echoed by Billingham (2015), who highlights that research into rent hikes, affordable housing, class conflict, displacement, and community upheavals, still remains understudied within mainstream social science research.

Although not everyone accepts Slater's (2006) comments. Freeman (2008) suggests that Slater's stance ignores the complex and multifaceted nature of gentrification and its associated concepts. While Porter & Shaw (2009) highlight that Slater's critique does not allow for 'regeneration' to occur in any other way. They discuss how current gentrification literature neither allows for different and competing objectives among the producers of urban regeneration, nor does it consider that the various injustices brought about by social change might sometimes be unintended (Porter & Shaw, 2009). In this sense it curtails any possibility of governments/organisations acting beyond the interests of the producers of gentrification. Instead, Porter & Shaw (2009) highlight that the state and other gentrifying institutions are not always and already repressive, they can represent a point of resistance against urban inequality, and that their role is not always given (Porter & Shaw, 2009).

While these comments capture some of the frustrations within gentrification literature, current scholarship has already begun to respond to calls for greater attention to the victims and complexity

of gentrification. For example, Lees et al (2016) attempt to shift discussions towards 'planetary gentrification', in order to present viewpoints outside of primarily white western approaches, highlighting how gentrification is a central ingredient in the reproduction of capitalism worldwide (Lees, 2019; Lees et al, 2016). Gentrification is presented as no longer being (if it ever was) a small-scale process of urban transformation but instead practiced as large-scale urban redevelopment, which is now predominantly state led or state induced (Lees, 2019; Lindner & Sandoval, 2021). Thus, gentrification is linked to variegated 'Neoliberalisms' operating around the world, often characterised by its destruction of state redistribution and welfare provision, in the name of creating new forms of elite policy which promote capital mobility and consumption (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Gentrification like the earlier discussion on the global character of regeneration, is inherently embroiled within the network global cities (Smith, 2002; Butler, 2007), as different regions compete to secure investment (Smith, 2002). Meanwhile those cities and spaces that do not 'make the grade' are cast aside as 'ordinary' or 'losers' (Robinson, 2006), systematically stigmatised, creating what Atkinson & Bridge (2005) refer to as a new urban 'other' that would be ripe for future investment and exploitation in later phases of capitalist expansion.

Other research has built on this global narrative, documenting the complexity of the process across a variety of scales. For instance, Linder & Sandoval's (2021) recent work on the 'aesthetics of gentrification' explores how visual/aesthetic strategies are increasingly employed in similar ways across the globe in order to facilitate and attract investment in 'gentrifiable' areas. This produces what they see as the 'seductive' conditions and desires needed for creating exclusionary urban transformations, predicated on disempowering vulnerable populations (Linder & Sandoval, 2021). Similarly, Pritchard attends to the role of 'art washing' and its role in structuring and smoothing over the controversial aspects of gentrification, again identifying the global and local connections between inner city housing and global flows of capital. While Hill et al (2021) point to the symbiotic relationship between gentrification and the dispersal of asylum seekers, arguing that alongside other racialised and classed minorities, asylum seekers are also vulnerable to spatial strategies associated with gentrification such as containment and 'territorial stigmatisation'.

Each of these perspectives provide a brief insight into the debates surrounding how gentrification has been conceptualised. It highlights how it remains a broad often contested term, inseparable from the forces and rhetoric of 'regeneration'. In this respect, gentrification is best described by what Lees (2003c) refers to as a 'chaotic concept', its apparent complexity making it harder to define without attending to specific contexts or set of circumstances. However, Davidson & Lees (2005: 1187) are keen to assert that there is still a value in retaining the term and that it should not be

allowed to 'collapse under the weight of the mutation of the process itself'. Instead, they argue that 'keeping hold' of gentrification retains its politics, which is an important tool in critiquing not only the process but the wider global neoliberal discourse of 'regeneration and renaissance' (Lees et al. 2008). Gentrification therefore operates as a critical term, that whilst politically loaded, is able to strike at the heart of urban inequality and challenge rhetoric which looks to disguise unequal power relations as they manifest in the form of urban renewal and exploitative forms of investment. Thus, debates within gentrification literature have similarly followed the rise in popularity of 'regeneration politics' and its increasing use throughout the late 20th and early 21st century. Therefore, as regeneration has become a more prevalent feature within the neoliberal city and as a strategy within urban forms of governance, so too has the term become inseparable from the literature surrounding gentrification and its effects. The critical focus by gentrification scholars on understanding and labelling 'regeneration' as a form of gentrification is therefore seen as an important distinction to make - precisely because of the term's ability to challenge systemic forms of inequality (Glass, 1964; Smith, 2002).

Of course, this is not to conclude by saying that regeneration and gentrification are always the same, as there will always be those that resist, challenge and work against gentrifying practices in order to improve communities. However, for the purposes of this thesis I am largely in agreement with Slater (2011) in that dedicating analytical time to distinguish between gentrification and regeneration only serves to obfuscate the inherent inequality, injustice and dispossession that is masked by regeneration rhetoric. It is therefore within this critical strand of gentrification research in which I wish to build, answering the calls by Slater (2011; 2006) and Billingham (2015) which seek greater examination of the complexity and effects of gentrification, in order to further problematise the role of regeneration and its impacts on how images of RHG are produced.

Displacement

To understand the effects of gentrification I wish to first talk about Grenfell. On the 14th of June 2017, a fire erupted in a flat on the Grenfell Tower estate in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The cause was attributed to a refrigerator which had caught alight on the fourth floor, the flames from which spread rapidly, enclosing the outside of the building, trapping those inside and killing 72 people. It has been widely acknowledged that this was one of the worst fires in UK peacetime history, leaving a community physically and emotionally scarred whilst the country looked on in horror (Macleod, 2018). One year previously, the concrete tower had been given a

'facelift' that would supposedly fit in with the aesthetic of the surrounding area (Rydon, 2014), with colourful panels added to hide the tower's 'concrete' exterior. Yet, this aesthetic addition to the block created a cavity which acted as chimney, which channelled flames upwards and prevented burning materials from falling away from the building (Burgum, 2019). The situation was made worse when it emerged that the building's owners had decided to downgrade insulation to a less fire-resistant material, in order to cut £293,000 off an original £9.7m budget (Forster, 2017). Such cost cutting went in the face of the numerous requests by residents, who since 2013, had raised serious concerns about fire safety with the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (GAG, 2013; 2016). From these set of tragic events, Grenfell Tower has become emblematic of the spatialised inequalities of global cities like London, and a beacon for the violent effects of neoliberal housing policy, gentrification, and the housing crisis.

Grenfell is a salient reminder of the extreme effects of a system which is less concerned with people and their rights to live in safe and comfortable homes, than the money that can be extracted from the value of the property they inhabit. In many ways it speaks to the reasons why housing is such an emotive and important point of consideration. Although this project is not seeking to attend to the wider policy implications or structural aspects of the broader housing crisis, it does wish to highlight the inequality inherent within which RHG has been represented and redeveloped. This is particularly poignant when we consider that the demolition of the RHG estate was to begin almost five months after the fire at Grenfell. Similarities also arise in how both estates have been altered/redeveloped primarily based on how they 'looked', the image of urban decline providing a justification for owners/developers to seek out new forms of profit (whether through cheap cladding or demolition). The catastrophic death toll of Grenfell will forever remain a violent scar on the history of London's housing systems, but those same systems have not changed in response. While it hasn't resulted in the utterly shameful and catastrophic loss of life, the violence of that housing system is evident at RHG. It is therefore important that we consider how violence in its many forms (including harmful representations), is enacted upon people and their homes and how this is often obfuscated through complex bureaucratic and insidious policies at a variety of levels. This section therefore builds upon the previous discussion of gentrification to explore its effects more explicitly, and how its contingent processes of 'displacement' and 'territorial stigma' actively constitute the housing crisis.

I therefore begin by discussing the concept of displacement. Specifically, I locate my work alongside a growing subdiscipline that focuses on the various forms of 'displaced experience' which includes 'unhoming', 'domicide' and 'unmaking'. Hopefully in attending to these forms of displacement and

their theoretical debates, I will be able to strengthen discussions within my thesis which concern the images and effects of state led regeneration at RHG.

Displacement is a broad concept, most frequently being used to document the impacts of natural disaster, wars, or state terrorism (Adey et al, 2020; Graif, 2016). Within human geography the term has become increasingly ubiquitous, often being employed to describe forms of enforced mobility in both urban and rural environments, at a variety of different spatial scales (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020; Brickell et al, 2017). Ever since Glass' (1964) original coinage of the term gentrification, displacement has long been considered one of its defining characteristics (Smith, 1996). In many ways this speaks to the versatility of displacement as a critical lens, which is able to tie together notions of social and spatial justice (Elliot-Cooper et al 2020). This point is emphasised by Delaney (2004), who positions it as a concept which can critique the supposed benevolence of mobility, challenging movements which are against the wishes of the subject.

Within an urban context, early definitions of displacement stem from the seminal work of Marcuse (1985) and his examination of displaced households in New York. Most notably, he defines the process according to five related categories, combining economic, social, and cultural processes, stressing the distinction between different types of displacement such as 'last resident' and 'chain' displacement (Marcuse, 1985). This approach considers the last occupier of a property and their possible reasons for their movement in and out of a neighbourhood. This was examined alongside patterns or 'chains' of displacement, which introduced the idea that the displacement of populations can happen gradually and amidst longer term development practices, rather than tied to specific or singular events (Marcuse, 1985). In later research Marcuse (1986) expanded on this approach, fleshing out his previous definition by suggesting that it is not just responsible for the direct removal of low-income households via forced evictions but also forms of 'indirect displacement' and 'displacement pressure' where existing residents no longer feel at home, or are encouraged to move from a neighbourhood undergoing class or cultural changes. In many ways Marcuse's approach set the groundwork for a whole host of studies that attempted to measure urban forms of displacement.

Recent research has therefore sought to apply these understandings of displacement as they relate to the inner-city regeneration of housing estates, as Lees & White (2020) document that around 130,000 households in the London have been or will be displaced by the recent surges in redevelopment, with an overall net loss of social rented housing provision across London (Wallace, 2020). Elmer & Denning (2016) declared that 'the London clearances have arrived', as welfare restructuring and increases in precarious forms of work have reduced incomes, raised evictions, and

subjected council estate residents to forms of 'accumulative dispossession' (Lees & White, 2020; Wallace, 2020, Hamnett, 2014).

However, the body of evidence to support displacement has not always been clear, as numerous studies argue that the gradual upgrading of housing and urban areas does not necessarily create 'displacement'. For instance, Freeman & Braconi (2004) and Freeman (2006) use New York City Survey data to compare exit rates of poor households in gentrifying and non-gentrifying boroughs between 1991 and 1999. They find that poor households in gentrifying areas were less likely to move than poorer households elsewhere, whilst criticising earlier studies for failing to adequately quantify displacement due to gentrification in a convincing fashion (Freeman 2005). Likewise, Hamnett (2003) challenged the evidence of earlier displacement studies in London, instead proposing that it illustrated a process of 'replacement' where one occupational class structure had been gradually replaced rather than large scale direct displacement (Hamnett, 2003). Although Slater (2009) hits back at these critiques of gentrification induced displacement, and their failure to acknowledge the reasons behind the lack of data available to document such processes. The state in many instances adopts forms of gentrification as housing policy, and therefore has little self interest in collecting the kinds of data which would document levels of displacement and the fate of the displaced (García-Herrera et al 2007).

These tensions highlight the difficulty in capturing displacement within urban and gentrification research (Zuk et al 2018; Lees, 2012; Wyly et al., 2010; Slater, 2009). Atkinson (2000) even goes so far as to refer to it as 'measuring the invisible' since researchers frequently arrive at a site where displacement has already occurred (Pull & Richard, 2019). This makes the process much harder to analyse, particularly in terms of considering the fluctuations of different populations within supposedly 'gentrifiable zones'. Zuk et al (2018) concur, arguing that we desperately need 'advanced tools to define and measure these analytically distinct phenomena', whilst Slater's previous calls for greater attention to the effects of gentrification, acknowledges the difficulty and contested nature of displacement, citing it as a 'frequent battleground' or 'conceptual hurdle' within the discipline, (Pull & Richard, 2019; Atkinson, 2000; Vigdor 2002).

These points of critical reflection have pushed recent research to approach displacement in different ways, often drawing upon phenomenological perspectives which attempt to reframe the discussion away from measuring flows of in and out migration, instead understanding displacement as a violation of the right to (make) place/the right to dwell (Davidson, 2009; Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020). In doing so, these approaches seek to understand enforced mobility through the deployment of more sophisticated spatial, temporal and place-sensitive analysis, which present how it can take place

before, during and after neighbourhood change, and without actual tenant relocation (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020). Even now qualitative studies exploring the precise lived effects of this displacement are only just emerging, frequently attempting to capture and broaden experiences of violence and dispossession which are inclusive of the more embodied, affective, and emotional registers associated with losing the ability to 'dwell' (Wallace, 2020; Harris et al, 2020; 2019; Pull & Richard, 2019; Arrigoitia, 2014a; 2014b; Lees and White, 2019; Minton, 2017; Watt, 2018; 2020). This has resulted in a range of studies which attend to different aspects of displacement such as domicide, unmaking and unhoming (Nowicki, 2014).

For example, Porteous & Smith, (2001) coin the term domicide in order to document the planned, intentional destruction of someone's home, which is able to give a voice to the trauma that victims of the process have been unable to articulate. More recently domicide has become a valuable critical lens within geography, as Nowicki (2014) advocates a wider examination of the term, expanding on how the concept can be utilised to consider more than just the physical and material destruction of the spaces in which people live. In this regard, domicide also represents the socio-symbolic erasure of the home, and how it can take place through the often complex and multifaceted micro-politics of the everyday (Nowicki, 2014).

These ideas continue to be explored by academics who attempt to document the multi-temporal forms of violence targeted at the home. For instance, Pull & Richard (2019) turn to consider domicide in Sweden, expanding upon the concept by considering a wide range of social and spatial practices that progressively erode people's relationship to place. In particular, they examine the effects of domicide on the populations of two adjacent neighbourhoods undergoing regeneration and refurbishment; Gränby and Kvarngärdet in the Swedish city of Uppsala (Pull & Richard, 2019). Drawing upon interview data they present how residents felt that their 'lives were on hold' amidst large scale renovation plans and rent increases. They discuss how residents felt history was being 'erased' as many had to downsize and sell off family heirlooms in order to pay increased rents and property prices, robbing them of the right to produce and make their own socio-spatial memories (Pull & Richard 2019). They situate these processes alongside other spatial practices associated with 'displacement pressure' and the 'contraction of home', which were typified by the loss of individual rights and numerous constraints on their ability to live in their old neighbourhoods. From these perspectives they argue that what residents were experiencing was a drawn-out process of domicide through dispossession. Thus, domicide in this instance is presented as an ongoing process, playing out in both time and space, morphing, expanding, and contracting throughout the different stages of the neighbourhood's regeneration (Pull & Richard, 2019). With such a reading, Pull & Richard (2019)

highlight how the disruption and destruction of the home is gradual and not always tied to immediate material and physical loss, instead asserting that displacement and domicide is defined by the individual violation of the ability to dwell within a specific location.

In a similar capacity Arrigoitia (2014a) draws on practices of 'unmaking' to capture acts of displacement, demolition, and dispossession in 'Las Gladiolas', a tower block in Puerto Rico. In this context unmaking is used to attend to the longer, sustained, and deliberate acts of wilful deterioration as they manifest at specific material elements of the home. Whilst similar to domicide, it attempts to capture the slow violence (Kern, 2016) of disrepair as they relate to specific aspects of the home/building. In particular, she documents how the stairs and elevators in the block became constituent parts and key sites where physical, political, and personal engagements were enacted. The subsequent neglect and unmaking of these spaces by the landlords of the block, who chose not to repair broken lifts, meant that residents were forced to use deteriorating stairwells, leaving some unable to move adequately between their apartments and the outside world (Arrigoitia, 2014a). This became deeply isolating for residents who were less physically able to negotiate the stairs, while reducing all residents' ability to exercise autonomy over their own living space. These conscious acts of disrepair are presented as a conscious act of unmaking, where the ability of residents to feel 'at home' is deliberately and purposefully taken away. As a result, Arrigoitia (2014a) looks to reframe technical definitions of demolition as a process of unmaking, which is better able to capture the grounded, lived experiences and long-term processes of deterioration. Unmaking as a form of displacement is therefore able to politicise the legacy of enforced urban mobility by incorporating the emotional and embodied dimensions of the conscious material breakdown of home. In this instance, domicide and unmaking are particularly pertinent when considering the ongoing regeneration of the RHG estate, especially given its long-documented history of neglect and lack of investment from the local council. Therefore, it is easy to see how expanded notions of displacement are able to explore how specific material features become important focal points in the way buildings are contested.

However, experiences of unmaking are not always characterised by practices of destruction or 'disrepair' but can be embedded within material experiences of precarity. For instance, Harris et al (2020) examine displaced and homeless families living at PLACE/Ladywell in London, a form of temporary accommodation which was designed to house people in areas awaiting redevelopment. They discuss how individual house fixtures and fittings came to mediate the politics of home-making and unmaking, suggesting that the inability of residents to control what went on the walls, or which doors within their own home could be locked had a detrimental impact on their ability to 'dwell in

place' (Harris et al, 2020). This strict regulation meant that the housing providers could dictate what aesthetic and security choices residents were allowed to make within the homes they had been allocated. Some chose to resist these restrictions, whereby rules against putting up larger decorative features were ignored, forming an important part of being able to assert their own agency over their home environment. For others, this form of regulation took away their individual freedom and control, denying them the ability to dwell how they wanted (Harris et al, 2020). It illuminates how already vulnerable populations encounter experiences of displacement in an everyday setting, the imposition of different bureaucratic rules and regulations adding yet further restrictions to their ability to produce their own space. The emotional consequences of these forms of unmaking only deepen feelings of displacement and precariousness (Harris et al, 2019).

Similarly, the concept of 'unhoming' attempts to unite many of these disparate and nuanced aspects of displacement, which is inclusive of domicide, demolition and unmaking. As Elliot-Cooper et al (2020) attempt to shift understandings of gentrification induced displacement to consider it as a process of unhoming, both distinct from but related to other instances of involuntary mobility. Consequently, they present unhoming as a form of violence which removes the sense of belonging to a particular community or home space, characterised by various forms of social, economic, and cultural transition which alienate established populations (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020). They are keen to assert that this approach to displacement can entail both acts of slow violence (Kern, 2016), which render particular neighbourhoods less hospitable and accommodating to established residents, as well as direct and forceful acts of expropriation, which the vulnerable and precarious seem least able to cope with (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020). As a result, unhoming goes beyond singular measures of gentrification-induced displacement (often characterised by census indicators or changes in the social-economic or tenure mix in a neighbourhood), instead advocating an approach that uses data in order to establish the lived experiences of urban displacement, which in turn can reveal the processes of un-homing that impact violently on some of the most vulnerable populations (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020).

Each of these recent studies illustrates how contemporary research has attempted to capture and explore the different aspects of gentrification induced displacement. Particularly pertinent are the research examples which explore many of the more embodied, and more-than-representational aspects of gentrification and displacement in everyday life, as these are areas in which my discussion looks to compliment. Notably domicide, unmaking and unhoming are all key themes that I wish to discuss within my analysis as I consider the effects of regeneration upon RHG. However, displacement is not the only 'lived' aspect of gentrification on which I seek to build, as I turn to

consider territorial stigma and how it is also understood as a feature of gentrification and urban redevelopment.

Territorial Stigma

Similar to displacement, territorial stigma can be regarded as another underlying consequence of neoliberal urban governance (Slater, 2018). Often used to disguise socio-economic inequality, it contributes to the 'zero sum game' (Mould, 2015) built into global regeneration strategies which involve creating, curating, and marking out those areas that are 'run down' and 'Other' (Sisson, 2020). This is also reflected in the growing body of literature that surrounds urban stigma and its connections to social scientific interests in gentrification and dispossession (Horgan, 2018). This is particularly relevant when considering that 'stigma' underpins how RHG has been understood by prevailing political and media discourse, which often presents the site as a 'sink estate' (Thoburn, 2018). Therefore, understanding how 'territorial stigma' is actively produced through visual and symbolic forms of representation will hopefully aid my discussions of the estate as a site of advanced marginality.

In terms of the concept's definition, 'territorial stigma' is typically associated with the work of Loïc Wacquant (1996; 2007; 2008a; 2015) who utilises Goffman's (1963) interactionist theory of stigma and Bourdieu's (1991) theory of 'symbolic power' to suggest that dominant classes and groups in society are able to impose their own 'representations' or 'logics' upon the social world so that it broadly aligns with their interests (Sisson, 2020). Of particular importance, and a point which I would like to stress in relation to the forms of representation analysed in this thesis, is the role of 'symbolic power' which is defined by Bourdieu (1991: 170):

'The ability to constitute the given through utterances, to make people see and believe, to confirm or to transform the vision of the world and, thereby, action upon the world and thus the world itself...'

This is helpfully unpacked by Wacquant (2017: 57) who presents symbolic power as:

'...the capacity for consequential categorization, the ability to make the world, to preserve or change it, by fashioning and diffusing symbolic frames, collective instruments of cognitive construction of reality.'

By utilising this framework, Wacquant attempts to identify the 'power' component imbedded within stigma, focusing on the institutional structures of 'relegation' and 'stigmatisation', rather than

Goffman's original emphasis on the interactions between individuals (Goffman, 1963; Sisson, 2020). This approach is broadened to include a spatial component, suggesting that the 'categorisation' and 'cognitive construction of reality' involves a 'spatial concentration', typically seen in how undesirable groups in society are often associated with sites of urban decline. Territorial stigma therefore mobilises unequal forms of power and incorporates processes of socio-spatial group making in order to delimit or mark out those which do not fit the desired image of the powerful (Wacquant, 2008b). For Wacquant, it is a core feature of the regime of 'advanced marginality', and a distinctive phenomenon that has emerged through late-20th-century neoliberal restructuring in the Global North (Wacquant et al., 2014). Therefore, as a process, territorial stigma facilitates the production of urban poverty, ethno-racial division, and public violence, often forcing it to accumulate in isolated and bounded territories (Sisson, 2020). These spaces of acute persecution are then perceived by outsiders and insiders as 'social purgatories', where only the 'refuse of society would accept to dwell' (Wacquant, 2007: 67; Wacquant, 1996, 2008a, Sisson, 2020; Tyler, 2020).

Others have since built on Wacquant's (1996; 2007; 2008b; 2015) initial ideas, for instance Tyler & Slater (2018) explore how stigma is used by individuals, communities, and the state to produce social inequality. In particular, they address how it is part of a wider political economy of (de)valuation, where marking out that which is 'Other' presents profitable opportunities for various forms of enterprise - from eviction agencies to social impact bonds and news media (Tyler, 2013; Sisson, 2020). At the same time, the 'representational' strategies inherent within spatialised forms of stigma also heavily intersect with Geography's long-standing interest in the construction of socio-spatial imaginaries and how these are also mobilised by processes of othering (Gregory, 1995; Watkins, 2015).

Ever since Edward Said's (1978) study of imaginative geographies of the Orient, scholars have questioned how stereotypical narratives about place - ranging from historical representations of the 'uncivilised' colonies to contemporary representations of 'deviant' urban neighbourhoods, constitute forms of stigma and otherness (Pinkster et al, 2020; Jazeel, 2009). At the same time, and perhaps most relevant to the RHG estate, is how forms of territorial stigma can be deployed as a shorthand to obfuscate or misdiagnose various policy decisions or interventions, causing people to overlook the structural causes and conditions of poverty and inequality. This puts the responsibility or 'blame' of the different forms of marginality back onto those affected by it. Thus, 'territorial taint' supposedly 'rubs off' on inhabitants at the same time that the stigma attaches to residents by virtue of their marginal social status (Horgan, 2018; Tyler, 2018). In this regard, it is often deployed to gain tacit consent for dispossession, displacement and other punitive measures which only serve to

further stigmatise inhabitations whilst producing value for the owners and agents of capital (Sisson, 2020, Tyler, 2013; Wacquant, 2008b, 2015).

In this regard, there have been numerous studies that document how stigmatising discourses have been used to exploit public uncertainty to promote particular policy agendas. For example, Slater (2014) discusses how stigmatising rhetoric like 'Broken Britain' exploits public insecurity and scepticism by simplifying complex political and economic processes into behavioural explanations of 'irresponsibility', thereby diverting public scrutiny away from many of the more structural and institutional failures that lie behind poverty (Sisson, 2020, Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Slater & Anderson, 2012). Whilst a second study by Slater (2018) examines the relationship between symbolic power, territorial stigma, agnotology and the origin of the term 'sink estate'. In particular, he describes how the highly influential right wing think tank 'Policy Exchange' was at the heart of a report entitled '*Making Housing Affordable*' (2010) which argued that social housing of any form is a terrible disaster because it makes tenants unhappy, poor, unemployed and welfare dependant (Slater, 2018). Slater unpicks the report, and its environmental determinism, suggesting that it ignores a vast body of research that has already documented how social housing is needed because people cannot afford private housing, rather than the specific cause of poverty. He highlights how the report became the gateway for a whole host of future publications by Policy Exchange that were subsequently mobilised by elements of the government to support its anti-welfare and anti-social housing agenda (Slater, 2018). The term 'sink estate' was therefore used to justify the bulldozing of 'problem' estates and a rationale for reincorporating previously run-down areas back into the real estate circuit of the city. Thus, for Slater (2018) the term 'sink estate' is an exemplar of what Wacquant (2012: 17) calls a *catagoreme*:

'a term of accusation and alarm, pertaining not to social science but public polemic, that serves to fuel the spiral of stigmatization enmeshing the impoverished districts of the urban periphery'

Slater (2018) links these ideas with the concept of agnotology (the study and manufacture of different forms of ignorance), in order to present how think tanks (like Policy Exchange) are able to exploit public uncertainty by intentionally misleading or avoiding key pieces of information in order to promote a specific political or economic regime. Territorial stigma therefore becomes increasingly embroiled within how networks of power construct and build their own forms of knowledge in order to present a reality that can be mobilised to underpin ideological forms of policy.

This has also been supported by other studies which also present the 'sink estate' as a political pretext for justifying gentrification-led displacement (Kallin & Slater, 2014; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014). Much of this literature focuses on the representation and experience of public housing and how it has been weaponised against those that live within it (Hancock and Mooney, 2013; Arthurson et al, 2014). Many of these studies look to expose how territorial stigma is an effect of spatial appropriation emboldened by the dovetailing of state-facilitated material deprivation and gentrification (Horgan, 2018). This is then situated within the context of the residualisation of public and social housing systems (Sisson, 2020), whereby the decline of the welfare state in many western countries has seen the poorest and most precarious individuals pushed into, and concentrated within specific ghettos or estates (Arthurson, 2013; Slater, 2018; Waquant, 2008b; Hastings, 2004).

Examples of this kind of research include the work of Arthurson et al (2014) who explore the issues associated with the negative stereotyping and representation of social housing tenants within Australian media. Likewise, Pinkster et al (2020) examine how residents in Bijlmer, Amsterdam, a Post-War peripheral social housing estate, experienced forms of symbolic denigration. Both highlight how people living in areas regarded as social housing, were continuously confronted with stigmatising narratives, particularly in the media, which often presented it as scary, dangerous, and crime ridden. Most notably, they identify the ways in which experiences of stigma were dependant on other social factors, such as race, place, and class (Pinkster et al, 2020). As a result, many of the wealthier white residents felt unaffected by the negative stereotypes and were insulated from the more deleterious effects of territorial stigma. In contrast those from different ethnic minority backgrounds were less able to shrug off negative cultural and racial stereotypes, which often manifest through a need to perform a supposedly middle-class identity in order to deflect stigma onto other 'poorer' residents (Pinkster et al, 2020). In this respect both Arthurson (2014) and Pinkster et al (2020) highlight the inequality and complexity embedded within how territorial stigma is experienced, as different groups encounter and experience it in a variety of ways. Often individual factors serve to compound how stigma is mobilised and who is better able to avoid its effects.

While these examples represent some of the experiences of territorial stigmatisation and how they are reproduced on an everyday basis, not all scholars agree to the totalising effects of Wacquant's (1996; 2007; 2008b; 2015) original interpretation. In many ways Pinkster et al's (2020) research already highlights aspects of the unequal experience of stigma, it supposedly 'sticks' to some residents more than others. As a result, other academics question the degree to which residents and outsiders internalise the negative views attached to place, examining just how much they are truly affected. Watt (2020) takes this critical approach when analysing the Aylesbury Estate in London, as

he discusses the role of territorial stigma and its effect on residents' day to day lives. Like RHG the site has long been a feature of numerous negative media campaigns which present it as a 'sink estate' (Watt, 2020; Campkin, 2013). However rather than the residents internalising these extensive and intensive media fuelled messages about the 'notoriety' of the estate, Watt (2020) describes how they disregarded, rejected, or actively resisted the notions that they were living in an 'estate from hell'. Instead, he identifies how the breakdown of the material fabric of the estate, in the form of leaks, poor heating and lack of repairs was a greater contributor to feelings of stress and frustration. Even though Watt acknowledges that territorial stigma was still a reality for the estate tenants, the academic prioritisation of territorial stigmatisation represents an analytical over-emphasis relative to resident's actual experience (Watt, 2020). This presents a need to be critical of the concept, as applying it in a totalising manner is likely to add to the levels of obfuscation that surround experiences of inequality and poverty.

In reviewing the 'territorial stigma' literature I have tried to foreground many of the major discussions and avenues within the subdiscipline. It is clear that as a concept it provides a valuable tool in being able to challenge naturalising discourses that surround poverty and marginality. Like the terms: *Gentrification* and *Displacement*, territorial stigma also seeks to dissolve the obfuscating layers that surround urban forms of dispossession and intervene in the uncritical domination of space by the powerful in society. My review has also pushed to the centre stage the elements of research that capture the role of symbolic and representational strategies in the production and legitimisation of different forms of stigma. This is in large part because these are the discussions that I wish to draw upon in my analysis of the various images and marketing materials that have circulated around RHG, and how as Brutalist housing estate it continues to be the target of stigmatising discourses. This also neatly leads me on to my next point of discussion, as Brutalism has long been the focus of negative media representation. Only now is it beginning to see some form of revival as people attempt to distinguish between its inbuilt ethical considerations and its supposedly 'harsh' aesthetic.

The 'New' Brutalism, The Smithsons, and Robin Hood Gardens

The discussions that have surrounded RHG in recent years have focused on the design of its Brutalist architecture. This is frequently framed in binary terms, either celebrating its architectural legacy or decrying its ugliness. The objective of this thesis attempts to pull apart these debates and explore why Brutalism has become a focal point for such aesthetic and political discussions. This kind of

critical engagement with Brutalism follows in the footsteps of a growing body of literature within the geographies of architecture that have sought to trace and conceptualise the embodied (Jacobs & Merriman, 2011; Llewellyn, 2003), affective (Adey, 2008; Kraftl & Adey, 2008; Rose et al, 2010) and material registers of architectural form (Jacobs, 2006). These intersections have increasingly been applied to the study of modernist forms of housing, including experiences of fear on a central London council estate (Lees & Baxter 2011), the social and material networks of the 'window' on a soon to be demolished housing block in Glasgow (Jacobs et al, 2008) and the legacy of Post-War development in Manchester (While & Short 2011). Similarly, such approaches have also coincided with a recurrent interest in Brutalism and its social and political dimensions (Mould, 2016, Thoburn, 2018; Lindner, 2019), as scholars look to critique the narrative of architectural determinism that plagued urban planning discourses in the 1970s and 1980s (Mould, 2016; Till, 1998). In this respect, RHG and Brutalism are both well placed as case studies warranting further critical academic attention. Each presents a locus of enquiry through which a more nuanced and critical understanding of the urban environment can be ascertained.

However, while I situate my argument alongside traditions within architectural geography, my focus here is to explore the history and legacy of Brutalism as style and its continued influence on the built environment. I therefore wish to provide greater context around the RHG estate and how it fits within wider social and political narratives. In particular, I explore the unique set of circumstances in which Brutalism emerged, alongside the events leading up to the construction of RHG and the subsequent decline of the style's popularity. This involves a consideration of the relationship between Brutalism and notions of ugliness and beauty, and how as a style it has been presented as anti-aesthetic. Given the volume of material that surrounds the Smithsons and Brutalism I will primarily stick to sketching out the social and political circumstances in which the Smithsons developed their oeuvre, alongside more recent academic interest in present day Brutalist design. While I am not able to cover every aspect of the Smithsons' architectural past, I do address some of the more specific debates as they relate to their work in subsequent chapters; for instance in Chapter IV, I go on to discuss Brutalism's connection to the 'photographic image' and in Chapter VII, I briefly examine the use of images in Do Ho Suh's film at the Venice Biennale, comparing it to the Smithsons' exhibition (Parallel of Life and Art) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). Hence this section provides a frame through which later discussions can then be developed. For now, though, I return to the origins of Brutalism and the key events and actors that have surrounded its construction.

I begin by highlighting the historical context in which Brutalism was conceived and in which the Smithsons were working, turning first to a statement by Highmore (2017: 247) – as he states that ‘*Brutalism is an aftermath art*’, a reference to the fact that Brutalism developed as a response to a number of social and political issues that society faced during its inception. The style arose during the aftermath of the Second World War, where in the UK an Attlee Labour government was fighting for a ‘National Health Service’ with a manifesto for a ‘Great Society’, promising the arrival of a new ‘welfare state’, one which demanded more than the bare necessities for those in need (Highmore, 2017). Housing was made a top governmental priority in post war rebuilding efforts, this included the New Towns Act of 1946 and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which were enacted in order to provide much needed housing to the British people - especially in London where great swathes of housing had been destroyed (Bullock, 2010). At the same time, Post-War art and architectural disciplines were experiencing a period of change, the frivolity of prior art and architectural practice no longer fitted with the war-torn landscape of much of Western Europe. This came alongside a dissatisfaction with the present-day Modernism and ‘International Style’ which seemingly ignored both the materiality of buildings and the lively sociality of the people that inhabited them (Highmore, 2017; Mould, 2016). It was in the *aftermath* of these national and global political events, epitomised by both an optimism for the future, yet simultaneously haunted by the past, that a new wave of artists and architects began experimenting with new ways of practicing art and architecture, as they attempted to face up to the challenges of a post-war society (Highmore, 2017). The emergence of Brutalism can therefore be seen as a response to a society undergoing rapid physical and social changes, no longer satisfied with the previous status quo, and seeking to rebuild after the war.

The matter of when ‘Brutalism’ first appeared during this period of post-war reconstruction is perhaps up for debate, especially given the speculation surrounding the origins of the term. Some associate it with Hans Asplund, a Swedish architect who in 1949 used it to describe the Villa Göth housing project in Uppsala, referring to the bloody mindedness of its design as ‘Nybrutalism’ (Mould, 2016). Other accounts point to its association with Peter Smithson’s nickname – Brutus (Curl, 2006). While the most convincing accounts point back to the earlier work of Le Corbusier and his use of ‘beton brut’ or ‘poured concrete’ (Grindrod, 2018). The Smithsons (1973) even suggest that they first came across the term in a badly translated article which related to Corbusier’s Unité building in Marseille. However, the first officially documented use of the term ‘New Brutalism’ to describe an architectural design is seen in a 1953 article by British architectural couple Alison and Peter Smithson, where they use it to describe a house they were designing in Soho, London, which

incorporated concrete, exposed brick and rough wood to create an industrial aesthetic (Kitnick, 2011). In essence, the 'Soho House' could be described as a 'domestic warehouse', as it was to have no internal finishes wherever practicable, giving it a seemingly simplistic design that was in many ways reminiscent of the earlier 'Arts and Craft' movement (Van den Heuvel, 2015). However, the Smithsons do not really unpack the term 'New Brutalism' in this context, it was not until a later article (Baker, 1966) that they highlight how for them, it embodied a 'directness', and a reverence for materials, which sought to illuminate the connections between building and man (Van den Heuvel, 2015).

Similarly, these relationships between the material environment and the social world were something that the Smithsons continued to explore throughout the 50s, often through collaborations with other architects and artists. This is epitomised by their involvement within the Independent Group (IG), an eclectic mix of painters, sculptors, architects, writers and critics who wanted to challenge prevailing modernist approaches to arts and culture which they felt were too limiting and totalising (Kitnick, 2011). The group itself was formed in 1952 (petering out in 1956) and although informal, often met at the ICA in order to host presentations and discussions around numerous topics stretching across architectural, photographic, and visual design disciplines (Crinson, 2017). The key figures are often identified as architectural critic Reyner Banham, the Smithsons, Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton, and Lawrence Alloway, although the group had many other formal and informal members/contributors, the first five of those mentioned are often presented as constituting a 'New Brutalist' faction within the larger group (Crinson, 2017).

Perhaps one of the most influential concepts that the Smithsons developed during this period, which can be seen in their design of the Soho House, and later went on to inform their interpretation of Brutalism, was the notion of the 'as found' (Highmore, 2017). This idea meant looking to materials and forms in their immediate surroundings as a stimulus for creation (Lichensten & Schregenberger, 2001). The 'as found' involved reengaging with the 'ordinary', which in architectural terms meant not only taking in the adjacent buildings of a location, but also incorporating the materiality of everyday life, or as the Smithsons put it *'the items in the detritus on bombed sites, such as the old boot, heaps of nails, fragments of sack or mesh and so on'* (Smithson & Smithson, 1990: 201). In many ways this approach was a direct consequence of a world left financially and materially exhausted by the war, as it drew upon a 'make do and mend' mentality that was structured around using what was available and extracting its 'raw quality' (Van den Heuvel, 2015). It was an approach that was already visible in their earlier competition proposal for Golden Lane (1952), a housing estate in East London, where their use of collage and photomontage epitomised the coming

together of everyday materials with built forms and structures (Furse, 1982). This interest in perceiving the contemporary world, and how to come to terms with new forms of experience at the scale of the everyday was shared by other members of the Independent Group. Perhaps most influential to the Smithsons, and to the formulation of the Brutalist aesthetic, were the Scottish artist and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi and the photographer Nigel Henderson. In particular, Henderson's work is most often cited as directly informing the Smithsons' approach, with his interests in pre-war high modernism, alongside his famous images of 'life in streets' in London's East End, which are frequently seen replicated in their designs (Crinson, 2017). While Paolozzi's early collages combined various popular magazines and pulp literature in order to broaden artistic sensibilities to include the material realities of a modern consumer lifestyle (Van den Heuvel, 2002). These approaches came to epitomise the 'as found' aesthetic, many of which are evident in the Smithsons' designs, their use of collage and fascination with the 'life on the streets' frequently reoccurring in both their writings and built projects (Lichensten & Schregenberger, 2001).

For the Smithsons, this collaboration culminated in their famous exhibition at the ICA, *'Parallel of life and Art'* (1953), which consisted of 122 photographic images hung from various angles around the ICA's Dover Street gallery (Van den Heuvel, 2002). The types of images presented were particularly broad, from a 'gull's egg' to paintings by Jackson Pollock, which were displayed without any kind of order or category in an effort to enhance the visitor's immersion within them (Higgot & Wray, 2012). The intention was to present an array of images that made it difficult to focus on any one in particular as another image would often come into view (Kitnick, 2011). In this respect, the images lost their status as solitary units, instead emerging as points in a three-dimensional matrix, creating a kind of 'architecture of images' or 'image ecology', where taken together they were able to draw out the various relationships and differences between the subjects or concepts they presented (Colomina, 2004). Architectural critic and member of the independent group, Reyner Banham referred to it as an exercise in the creation of a *'coherent visual image by non-formal means'* (1955: 27), as viewers were provoked into drawing out imaginative connections between each of the materials (Higgot & Wray, 2012). Thus, a juxtaposition of disparate representations of the 'everyday' cemented the logic of the 'as found' and how it was mobilised aesthetically, its eclectic yet honest structure eventually going on to become a defining element of the Brutalist style (Van den Heuvel, 2002).

It was also at this time, and shortly after their publication on the Soho house, that the Smithsons were involved in the infamous presentation of their 'Urban Re-Identification' Grid at the 9th *Congres International d'Architecture Moderne*. Known as CIAM, the organisation was originally set up by Le

Corbusier, with the objective of spreading and sharing the principles of modern architecture between prominent architects at the time (Steiner, 2011). This took the form of annual conferences which frequently pushed to define key terms and concepts within architectural disciplines (Steiner, 2011). This is perhaps epitomised by the Athens Charter (1943) which visualised the city as a series of functions; housing, working, recreating, circulating, which architecture must seek to address and separate in order to create efficient forms of living (Crinson, 2017). This approach drew a lot of criticism from younger members of the organisation, including the Smithsons, who wanted to replace this abstract rationality with a view of architecture and the city as inseparable from existing social structures (already evident in their work on the principles of the 'as found'; Crinson, 2017).

It was at the 9th conference, during the Smithsons' presentation of their 'grid', where much of this came to head (Steiner, 2011). Instead of the well-known categories of 'Dwelling, Work, Recreation and Transportation' from the Athens Charter, they had replaced them with 'House, Street, District and City', using Henderson's images of the East End to illustrate their ideas, in an attempt to emphasise the interconnectedness between the urban environment and the individual, without placing limitations on what types of activities might be done in each place (Crinson, 2017; Steiner, 2011; Karp, 2015). In this attack on CIAM orthodoxies, the Smithsons were joined by other like-minded architects, such as Aldo van Eyck, Jaap Bakema, George Candilis and Shadrach Woods.

It was from this influential group of young predominantly white male architects (the only exception being Alison) that Team 10 was formed; an architectural collective which sought to challenge Le Corbusier's functionalist city planning which had dominated CIAM since its inception in 1928 (Steiner, 2011; Crinson, 2017). The group subsequently seized the attention of the organisation at the next annual conference (CIAM 10), as they continued to shift modernist understandings away from historicised notions of architectural form in order to consider how architecture could evolve from the fabric of life itself (Steiner, 2011). Although influential, Team 10 did not manage to agree upon a coherent manifesto and were often divided between its English and Dutch members (Crinson, 2017). While they sought to critique the established structures of architectural thought at the time, the group itself did little to challenge the progressive nature of the discipline, any new ideas still being couched within traditionally white western middle class architectural pedagogy. However, their continued critique of the discipline forced the dismantling of CIAM in 1959, and the Smithsons' involvement represented an important touchstone in the formulation of the Brutalist style, firmly positioning them as agitators within modernism (rather than anti-modernists), which would later situate Brutalism as its own unique off-shoot of modernist principles (Crinson, 2017; Steiner, 2011).

However, after the Smithsons' controversial presentation at CIAM 9, there was still yet to be a defining moment for the 'New Brutalism'. But the seeds had been sown, and the Smithsons' continued development of a material ethic that was sensitive to the relationships between people and built forms was something that they sustained throughout much of the 50s, eventually culminating in their first major built design - the Smithdon High School in Hunstanton (1954). Built with bare concrete walls and exposed plumbing, the building displayed the Smithsons' 'as found' approach, utilising a range of materials in raw and un-finished ways (Steiner, 2006). The building was a nod to the Illinois Institute of Technology designed by earlier modernist architect, Mies Van Der Rohe, embodying the same sleek, sombre use of straight lines and exposed materials (Brennan, 2015). For many, the Smithsons included, the design of the school came to epitomise the Brutalist aesthetic (Robbins, 1990). Like the *'Parallel of Life and Art'* exhibition, the school became one of the referential moments in the definition of the style, utilising raw materials and objects which were structured in a seemingly honest and open way.

The school and the exhibition became key events in Reyner Banham's revisionist essay, *'The New Brutalism'* (1955) which championed the arrival of the movement, drawing upon them as examples of 'true Brutalist design'. This essay is often cited by design historians as the defining moment for Brutalism, as it represented the first real text in which anyone had tried to truly capture its features and characteristics (Van den Heuvel, 2015). Thus, for Banham, Brutalism came down to three core criteria which he summarised as; *Memorability as an image*; *Clear exhibition of Structure*; and *Valuation of Materials 'As Found'* (Banham, 1955). While these criteria were the most specific account of Brutalism to date, they were still purposely vague, Banham refusing to refer to it as a 'style'. However, to put it simply, the three criteria present both a form of practice and a 'material relationship' by which the principles of honesty, and integrity are maintained through the use of raw and unrefined materials, in conjunction with images and structures that were memorable for their almost blunt depictions of what they aimed to present (Stalder, 2008; Clement, 2011). For instance, if it looked like a concrete block, then it most likely was. Thus, Banham's essay championed the 'New Brutalism' as a built form that could supposedly save the architectural discipline from the perceived follies of modernist practice (Mould, 2016).

However, whilst Banham and the Smithsons may have been reluctant to label Brutalism as a style, the central role that the 'image' plays in Banham's (1955) initial writings align it very closely with ideas of beauty and art. In this respect Brutalism arguably attempted to develop its own understanding of 'beauty', which was tied to equally subjective notions of honesty and integrity. This is especially evident in Banham's use of the word 'image' which he uses in a very particular sense,

not as representation, but to describe a material configuration that is immediately striking for its 'raw' visual qualities that are not reducible to a formal logic (Potts, 2012). Banham uses these notions to present how the quality of a Brutalist building is such that it appears to be a single thing, not an ensemble or collection, its formal unity resting upon one's ability to have an image of it (Macarthur, 2000). He proposes that for a building to be Brutalist the shape of the building must be whole at a topological level (Stalder, 2008). Therefore, the building's fabric is topologically the same as its programme, 'just as a gramophone record is the same as a teacup if defined as a continuous surface with one hole' (Macarthur, 2000: 261). This 'shape relation' underlies the building's imageability, just as in the past geometry was the foundation for beauty. Image thus supplants beauty as the aesthetic approbation of modernity (Macarthur, 2000). This approach enabled Banham and the Independent Group to define their relationship to the visual world in terms of something other than geometry. These ideas reinforced Brutalist ideology as radically anti-art, or at any rate anti-beauty in the classical aesthetic sense of the term (Potts, 2012; Mould, 2016; Murphy, 2012; Van Den Heuvel, 2004).

This opposition to the beautiful is also evident throughout the use of the 'as found' philosophy, and its assertion of the beauty that can be found in the everyday - wherein art was not exterior to everyday life. A point exemplified by the Smithsons in their 'as found' statement from 1990 in which they highlight how they were concerned with the seeing of materials for what they were: 'the woodness of wood'; 'the sandness of sand' (Van den Heuvel, 2015: 301). As such the Smithsons' aggressive translation of this material expression, which had been absent in the smooth whiteness of modernism, produced unforgiving expanses of glass, brick, and concrete as seen in projects like the school at Hunstanton (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). In utilising these approaches Brutalism claimed to replace art, with Banham and the Smithsons' rhetoric arguably pushing for an avant-garde movement that was against traditional western precepts of aesthetics and beauty, which they felt could be used as an agent for social change (Macarthur, 2005). This meant that they believed each person was entitled to beauty, and that art was not reserved for the wealthy or the 'upper classes' in society; that beauty could be derived from the mass produced and unrefined elements of society. The Smithsons connected this material attitude with a British sensibility harking back to the warehouses and factories of the industrial revolution, the result was an aesthetic that was shocking to the architectural world and, even more so, to the British public (O'Donnell 2011).

Banham and the Independent Group looked to utilise Brutalism as a means of introducing a new sense of rationality to art and design, counterbalancing it with an 'interpretative freedom' that could account for the complexities of everyday life. This was something that the Smithsons were

particularly focused on, as they were far less preoccupied with the role of the 'image' than perhaps Banham was in his writings (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Instead, in their own essays the Smithsons reflect on trying to achieve a balance between order and complexity. Robbins (1990) presents how Peter Smithson discussed two major inspirations for their 'style' and how it came to shape their architecture. Firstly, that much of their approach was in reaction to the excesses of the Festival of Britain. Instead, they called for a 'retreat to order', largely inspired by Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949) and Le Corbusier's 'Unite D'habitation' in Marseille (Robbins, 1990). Secondly their encounter with work by Jackson Pollock helped to inspire a more random or 'scatter' aesthetic, which they called their 'aesthetic of change' (Robbins, 1990). This gave them the confidence that a freer more complex, yet quite comprehensible idea of order might be developed and be incorporated within their own practice. They therefore wished to transform the chaotic emergent patterns brought about by the structured design that Pollock inspired in his work and incorporate these ideas into architectural patterns responsive to forms of human association (Robbins, 1990). For instance, their idea for the 'streets in the sky' first designed for the competition entry at Golden Lane (1952) and only put into practice at Robin Hood Gardens, carried the notion of the 'modernist line', with its broad straight aerial walkways combined with the chaotic and emergent patterning of the street (Steiner, 2011). Each of these influences show how Brutalism and the various aesthetic, and visual choices made by the Smithsons were shaped by changing notions of style, beauty and aesthetics within art and architecture. The move away from geometric distinctions of visibility, the incorporation of an 'as found aesthetic', the rejection of the architecture of the Festival of Britain and the balance between rationality and complexity ultimately resulted in an architecture that sought to be ordered and to some extent avant garde, shunning established norms within the discipline.

However, I do not wish to overstate the coherence of the Independent Group and their direction for the 'aesthetics' of Brutalism, as the frictions between Banham and the Smithsons have been well documented (Van den Heuvel, 2015). Additionally, Banham's work has often been criticised for failing to be clear in what precisely he was aiming to present, instead it is clearer in what Brutalism was not; it was not academic art, and it did not suppose some stable idea of what art was for or what it contained (Macarthur, 2000). Tensions between Banham and the Smithsons also meant that they were less inclined to associate themselves with a rigid set of criteria or the set of images that Banham was trying to present (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Nevertheless, the by and large rejection of established notions of art and architecture and the construction of an aesthetic of anti-beauty by the members of the Independent Group had an effect on notions of 'ugliness' and 'beauty' within art

and design more broadly. It presented how what was once considered 'not art' could in fact replace 'art' and therefore achieve an aesthetic value. While this does not necessarily relate to an object's intrinsic beauty, it undermined traditional notions of the 'beautiful', instead opening it up to consider notions of truth and honesty as constructed by Banham and the Smithsons. The qualities of ugliness associated with art and architecture could therefore achieve a different kind of beauty, wherein the value of a building or 'image' was in its raw quality and its intrinsic openness and integrity (O'Donnell, 2011). Instead, Brutalism embodied a subjective beauty for those that valued the honest and emancipatory qualities of the materials and structure as set out by Banham and the Smithsons. A point exemplified by the Smithsons' well-known statement of 1957 as;

'Any discussion of Brutalism will miss the point if it does not take into account Brutalism's attempt to be objective about 'reality' – the cultural objectives of society, its urges, its techniques and so on. Brutalism tries to face up to a mass-producing society and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work' (Smithson, 1957: 113).

Brutalism's fascination with the 'raw' qualities of materials, its association with the 'as found' and its rejection of frivolity reinforced this interest in an aesthetic of 'honesty'. It presented a mode of thinking that promoted 'ethic' before 'aesthetic' – a point that Banham would return to in his later work. It suggested that part of what the Brutalists valued when it came to ideas of 'image' and 'aesthetic' was 'truth'; in that they preferred images of ugliness and truth, as opposed to those that mindlessly sought the 'beautiful' (Macarthur, 2000). Honesty and truth could therefore replace notions of 'beauty'.

Once Brutalism became an established architectural movement, its image was too self-evident, certainly for Banham, who in 1966 thought it had lost the original ethic of technological social avant-gardism which had interested him in the beginning (Macarthur, 2000). As a result, image was dropped from the discussion in Banham's 1966 book *'The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic'*. However, this is not to detract from what Banham and the Smithsons were trying to achieve, as pushing for a more open and arguably democratic form of design is certainly a respectable goal. Brutalism's emancipatory approach to aesthetics and beauty therefore expanded art and architectural disciplines to those that had previously been excluded from such arenas. In trying to do something that was outside established canons of beauty they were able to create the possibility for thinking democratically about the built environment, even if the logic in which Brutalism operated within was circumscribed by the very institutions they sought to critique. It is also important to acknowledge that while I present the development of Brutalism as a chronological and seemingly

slow process, in reality this change was complex, at times rapid and certainly unpredictable, as is evident in Banham's rapid change of tone between his two defining texts (Highmore, 2017). Yet, the emergence of Brutalism, with its distinct 'anti-beauty' aesthetic and socially minded ethic had a powerful and pervasive impact on twentieth-century British architecture (Highmore, 2017). As this overview has illustrated it was a program which ultimately grew out of post war initiatives encouraging the reconstruction of urban areas and nationwide house building (Highmore, 2017). The effect has been that Brutalism throughout the late 50s and right up to the early 80s was a popular choice for public buildings. This includes social housing: The Alexandra Road estate by Neave Brown; The Balfron and Trelick Towers by Erno Goldfinger; The Barbican by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon; and the Park Hill Estate, by the Smithsons' contemporaries Ivor Smith and Jack Lynn, are just a few of the major names which are both celebrated (not always at the time) and archetypal of Brutalist design.

Of course, these Brutalist projects were eventually joined by the Robin Hood Gardens Estate in 1972, the only one of the Smithsons' major housing schemes to be built. The development of the estate initially started as a commission by the Greater London Council, who faced with growing demands for more council housing decided to clear the 19th century tenement blocks (Grosvenor Buildings) between Robin Hood Lane and Cotton Street (Powers, 2010). RHG therefore arrived as a council led urban renewal scheme that was part of a wider phase of so-called slum clearance (Yelling, 2000). The completed estate would go on to provide a total of 213 council flats at a density of 142 persons per acre and each built to Parker Morris standards (Powers, 2010). Its design embodies the numerous ideological developments explored by the Smithsons throughout the 50s and 60s, which borrows many of the characteristics present in their unbuilt 1952 Golden Lane competition entry (Furse, 1982). Most characteristic is the use of similar raised street decks (streets in the sky) and its similar emphasis on the pedestrian in structuring community space (Karp, 2015). They did however choose to incorporate the car within their plans, with the lower levels of the estate containing garages and parking for individual access and storage. Similarly, noise reduction was another key consideration and is particularly evident in RHG's appearance (Crimson, 2017). The exposure of the site to heavy traffic on three sides, with the noisy Blackwall Tunnel to the east, meant that the Smithsons chose to incorporate a ten-foot-high acoustic wall, as well as raised vertical fins on the estate's exterior to 'baffle' the sound (Powers, 2010). This has given the estate a particularly blockish aesthetic, with some referring to its appearance as 'prison like' (Brennan, 2015), although others praise the noise cancelling effects, as creating a 'calm pool' within a busy city (Crimson, 2017; Powers 2010).

Yet the completion of the estate came at the tail end of Brutalism's popularity within architectural disciplines (Van den Heuvel, 2001). The early 1970s saw a shift in the way modern architecture was perceived (Highmore, 2017). This arguably took its impetus from tragic incidents of poor building on other modernist estates, such as the Ronan Point disaster in East London, which saw a gas explosion cause part of the housing block's structure to collapse, resulting in the deaths of four residents (Highmore, 2017). RHG's completion was consequently met with trepidation, with a general lack of coverage in the architectural press (Power, 2010). While popularity from its residents has also been a point of contention, especially given that the building was vandalised almost immediately after it was completed, leading to the closure of the estate's community centre (Highmore, 2017).

Certainly, from the latter half of the 20th century the estate has widely been regarded as a complete failure within the media (Van den Heuvel, 2001). In many ways it represented the end of the Smithsons' international status as top architects (Van den Heuvel, 2001). All the while academics like Charles Jencks (1977) and Alice Coleman (1985) were writing about the social failure of projects like RHG, denigrating modern forms of architecture, and the use of blockish concrete forms as an indicator of 'social deprivation' (Thoburn, 2018; Jencks, 1977). Other critics of the estate also felt that the Smithsons' design did not deliver on the previous promises of their earlier work, and that they capitulated to the demands of a middle-class ethos based around car ownership and individualism (Highmore, 2017). This can be seen in the amount of space dedicated to garages and car access at RHG. For some, this is also seen within the context of a continued ambivalence towards public housing by the Smithsons, which had been evident in their Team 10 meetings, and certainly comes out in a BBC documentary entitled *'The Smithsons on Housing'* (1970) in which they contrast the utopian idyls of 'Corbusian' modernism, with the ubiquitous vandalism of inner-city London (Thoburn, 2018). In the documentary, they suggest that architects should not simply repair what is likely to be smashed up and abandoned by an underserving public. In this respect we see the utopian, and socialist ideals of the Brutalist ethic slowly unravel; the 'supposed' fall of modernism, coupled with a growing critique of the Smithsons as middle-class architects undermine the 'honest' and emancipatory qualities of its architecture (Thoburn, 2018). In the decades that followed, RHG would be left to deteriorate by a local government that was routinely underfunded (Brennan, 2015), this was accompanied by the continued vilification of Brutalism, which became a key descriptor to malign any form of high-rise concrete architecture (Grindrod, 2014).

However, despite this downward trajectory in popularity for Brutalism, academic and public interest has since seen a revival in recent years. Certainly, the rise of Cultural Studies in the late 1980s and 1990s represented a continuation of the critique and scrutiny of mass communicated culture that

was being done by the IG and the Smithsons (Highmore, 2017). More recently there has been a shift by architectural historians and urban theorists to reclaim architectural Brutalism as an important critical, aesthetic, and political movement (Mould, 2016, Thoburn, 2018, Lindner, 2019, Brennan, 2015, Hatherley, 2009). In many ways these resurgent voices take umbrage with an 'uncritical' post-Modernism, which is too eager to celebrate kitsch and spectacular commercial forms, instead turning to Brutalism in order to re-ignite architectural 'rigour' and its attention to both structure and materials (Highmore, 2017). Similarly, they also seek to counter the powerful range of voices that denounced Brutalism and championed traditional values, instead questioning how a return to tradition has done little to consider the actual social, economic, and cultural needs of the working class (Highmore, 2017). In a similar capacity, these critical voices have also been galvanised by the recent Grenfell Tower fire (2017), where the concrete aesthetic of the block was a contributory factor in the disaster, as poor-quality cladding had been selected to 'beautify' its exterior instead of the much needed and requested fire safety improvements (Hyde, 2019). These forms of neoliberal neglect and mismanagement have brought to the fore the inequality and injustices of housing policies which continue to exploit individuals for financial gain, often using aesthetic arguments to justify deadly policy decisions.

Examples of these critical perspectives can be found in the work of Mould (2016) who turns to the ethical dimensions of Brutalism as a means to critique the failings of neoliberalism. The Brutalist movement's democratic ethic is therefore positioned as mechanism through which to reignite radical forms of activism and resistance against the forces of gentrification, dispossession, and inequality (Mould, 2016). Similarly, Thoburn (2018) engages with RHG in an attempt to 'reclaim' Brutalism and the estate as a form of 'working class architecture'. He heavily critiques the work of the Smithsons and other forms of 'middle class voyeurism' which appreciate Brutalism from purely aesthetic points of view. Thoburn (2018) instead looks to return to the social relations embedded within the estate's architecture and how these can be deployed to grasp class-based experience and inequality. Although not all are as optimistic about the emancipatory potential of Brutalist forms of design; Lindner (2019) is heavily critical of Brutalism's resurgence, equating its return in popularity as yet another architectural/visual form co-opted by contemporary capitalism. In this sense he is pessimistic about its emancipatory qualities. Highmore's (2017) position sits somewhere between these; reflecting on the contrasts between the austerity politics of the late 1940s which saw Brutalism emerge as a hopeful architecture that could aid in the reconstruction of post war Britain, and the austerity politics post-2008 which was associated with reducing national debt and dismantling a host of welfare conditions seen as too expensive and unsustainable (Highmore, 2017).

These different political contexts have tended to produce a 'left wing nostalgia' that is in danger of being historicist, as they seek only to superficially engage with the Brutalist aesthetic as it emerged in the post-war era. Yet at the same time Highmore (2017) presents how it is the 'stubbornness' of Brutalism and its capacity to face up to incalculable odds and still offer creative and hopeful solutions that continues to make it relevant in the present day.

What emerges from this brief overview is the historical context in which Brutalism and the RHG estate are situated. As a result, this section has attempted to draw attention to the social and political dynamics that have surrounded the style, as society transitioned from post-war rebuilding efforts to post-modern forms of critique. It has also attempted to introduce the Smithsons and their involvement with various influential art/architectural groups, each of which has shaped the directions of the Brutalist movement. The intentions of Banham and others within the Independent Group meant that Brutalism presented a challenge to established notions of beauty and aesthetics within art and architecture. Brutalism is therefore constructed around an aesthetic associated with the moral concepts of truth and order which eschewed frivolity. While Brutalism is often presented in aesthetic terms, a central part of its formation was contingent upon a particular ethic that championed the experiences of people and the everyday.

Aesthetic Politics

What is evident from the previous section's discussion around the emergence of Brutalism is how as a society we are culturally conditioned to view buildings as aesthetic objects (Verschaffel, 2020). A point which architectural critics like Reyner Banham are likely to attest, as there is an expectation that buildings should be good, comfortable, and that they should possess a minimum degree of aesthetic quality. For Banham, Brutalism at one point, would have epitomised this coming together of form and function. However, when the attractiveness that is expected of a particular building is found wanting it becomes 'banal' and disappointing (Verschaffel, 2020). Often this disappointment takes the form of exaggerated disapproval from architectural critics, politicians and members of the public, as buildings that do not make the aesthetic grade are lambasted as 'ugly', 'unsightly' or 'monstrous'. What is considered to be an aesthetic object, and what is seen as aesthetically appropriate in a given time or culture, is constantly shifting and subject to social and political debate. This is particularly clear from Brutalism's changing reception throughout the decades, and the disputes that have erupted around the suitability of its distinct aesthetic.

The debate that surrounds the Brutalist style is typical of a broader philosophical arena of aesthetic politics, which concerns the socially constructed meanings we ascribe to different forms of sensible experience. In this regard, the Smithsons' curation of Brutalism, reflects their own political assertions about the direction architecture should take. Likewise, the Ugly/Beauty debate that surrounds RHG represents a dispute over what kind of 'architectural experience' is considered valid in society. However, the concept of 'aesthetics' (while often undefined in these discussions) is much more complex than just the formal description of specific kinds of representation. Stemming from *Aisthisis*, the ancient Greek for the sensory experience of perception, the original field of aesthetics attended to sensuous experience, as it served as a form of cognition achieved through taste, touch, hearing, seeing, smell (Buck-Morss, 1992). Each of these senses can be conditioned to particular notions of taste, prescribing specific moral sensibilities or cultural norms, often justified through notions of 'beauty' (Buck-Morss, 1992). This is where much of the philosophical debate around aesthetic politics takes place, as theorists have attempted to understand how bodily experience intersects with political thought (Buck-Morss, 1992; Benjamin, [1935] 1968; Rancière, 2004). The intersection of aesthetics and politics is a central theme throughout this thesis, especially as I examine the Ugly/Beauty debate and how particular aesthetic judgements about RHG have been mobilised by different political agendas. Understandably these ideas feed into a bigger discussion about how we can consider aesthetic politics in different ways, and the impact this has on our experience of urban space. However, in order to situate my engagement with RHG's 'aesthetic politics', I first wish to examine how existing literature has considered it as a concept.

In terms of the relationship between politics and aesthetics within contemporary theory, what we might term 'modernist aesthetics' develops from Kant's writings on taste and judgement which established artistic and aesthetic autonomy ([1790] 1914). Kant separated the 'mind' and aesthetics from direct action, as aesthetic and ethical judgements were both seen as universal truths to be grasped by an idealized elite who had the capacity for disinterested evaluation of form itself (Crisman, 2021). Many of these ideas were developed further by 20th Century theorists, with key texts such as Adorno & Horkheimer's *The Culture Industry* ([1944] 2002), and Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* ([1935] 1968), seeking to revise Kant's pure autonomy of art and aesthetics in order to integrate political economic contexts (Crisman, 2021).

Benjamin's work in particular links aesthetics to the politics of production ([1935] 1968), for instance, he identifies two ways in which the reproducibility of artwork has changed through technological advancement. First, the arrival of the camera lens introduced new possibilities for perception. This produced a new perceived space, which technologically extended and fragmented

the body and its ability to experience the world around it (Davies, 2012; Benjamin ([1935] 1968). Second, the abundance and mobility of copies or reproductions (e.g., reprinted books, copied films, artwork, mass produced materials), which permitted an object to be perceived where the perceivers are rather than where the object resides, changed the relation between the object and its objectivity (Davies, 2012). This had the effect of destabilising an objects initial meaning. This was also related to an object's 'aura' or what Benjamin referred to as a process of distancing between object and subject which was concerned with ritual practises of tradition and fetishization (Benjamin et al, 2008). Thus, if a work of art remains a distanced/distancing object that exerts an irrational and incontrovertible power over the viewer, it attains a cultural position that lends it a sacrosanct inviolability (Benjamin et al, 2008). For Benjamin, 'auratic objects' exert claims to power that parallel and reinforce the larger claims to political power of the class for whom such objects are most meaningful (Benjamin, [1935] 1968). However, the technological ability to produce and disseminate reproductions, serves to reorder an objects 'aura' and shatter its connection to tradition (Benjamin et al, 2008; Benjamin [1935] 1968). In removing the object from its set of traditional contexts, it could be disconnected from its original networks of power.

Similarly, Benjamin's prospect of reordering can also act to challenge notions of expertise as it relates to the construction of meaning, as it exposes the embodied and habitual engagement with reality (Benjamin [1935] 1968). In using architecture as an example, instead of the authoritarian fixing of a building and its meaning through forms of tradition and contemplation, it can be subverted through an expertise that relies upon the embodied experience of space (Davies, 2012). This also reflects the work of Lefebvre (1984), as the everyday, the banal and the habitual is also opposed by expertise, which attempts to program it. This implies that the changes occasioned by the proliferation of technology stands to provoke struggles within art and architecture (Davies, 2012). The politics of art and architectural expertise therefore stood to be challenged by the emergence of new forms of technology and production which could undermine previously established norms.

However, embedded within Benjamin's understanding of aesthetics is a broader concern for how they are used to underpin authoritarian regimes – particularly Fascism. 'The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of the aesthetic into political life' (Benjamin, [1935] 1968: 241). In this regard, he positions Fascism as the violation of the technical apparatus of society which are pressed into the production of ritual values in order to organise the newly proletarianised masses (Buck-Morss, 1992). This is brought about by the simultaneous denial of freedom of expression, while providing a singular outlet for that expression. Fascism thus seeks to give society a prescribed outlet while preserving its own internal logics (Benjamin, [1935]1968). For Benjamin it was imperative that

aesthetics was not subsumed by politics and remained an arena for democratic forms of experience. It is precisely through the shattering of the 'aura' attached to the images and objects of authoritarian regimes, brought about by the copy that Benjamin felt a 'simultaneous collective reception' could emerge, which could unite society against Fascism.

Benjamin's understanding of aesthetics and politics helps to clarify the ways in which the social functions of objects attempt to organise perception while simultaneously allowing fragments of 'reality' to be reordered through different interactions of body, politics, and technology (Davies, 2012). His work also introduces how relations of power are constructed and reinforced through different kinds of objects/media and how fetishistic practices reinforce authoritarian regimes. These ideas are particularly pertinent when considering the role of digital media and its role in shaping the aesthetic politics of RHG. From a modern perspective, social media has produced a different engagement with architectural space that mediates our experience of the built environment that is simultaneously authoritarian and liberating. The role of technology, and the photographic image therefore become important mediums through which different articulations of power are enacted. It illustrates the importance of examining how the status quo is maintained through different kinds of aesthetic politics. These are concepts that I continue to explore in Chapter IV, where I unpick the relationship between photographic media and the Brutalist image.

More recently, Jacques Rancière has refined the critical theories of aesthetics and politics, to argue for the political potential of art to bring about new frames of reference for the world (Crisman, 2021; Rancière 2004, 2009a). Rancière's approach challenges Benjamin and Bourdieu, who he claims repeat the 'Platonic disparagement of the mimetic image' (Rancière, 2007: 274) as they set up visibility, spectacle and the 'symbolic' as an inherent source of deception, superficiality, and alienation (Papastergiadis, 2014). Rancière also dissolves the boundary that Benjamin imposes between aesthetics and politics. Instead, his view assumes that such representations impose an ideological distance between reality and interpretation which separate the viewing subject from their humanity (Papastergiadis, 2014). For Rancière, aesthetics represents our sensory awareness of the world through which the identity of people and objects is formed (Rancière, 2009b: 57). This is connected to the 'realm of the sensible' or that which can be seen, said, and understood, which is then structured by a 'distribution of the sensible' which 'reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and when/ where that activity is performed' (Rancière, 2004: 12). A given distribution therefore delimits forms of participation and subjectivity, by first defining what is visible or invisible, audible, or inaudible (Tanke, 2010).

Politics for Rancière, therefore represents a configuration of space (rather than a matter of institutional relations of power), and how the framing of experience is negotiated according to a common decision (Rancière, 2009a). In this regard, aesthetics and politics are not discernible in isolation from each other but as two forms that are created within their independent 'regimes of identification' (Rancière, 2009a: 26). They share a common space, and both have their respective capacity to suspend the normal coordinates of sensory experience and imagine new forms of life (Papastergiadis, 2014). As a result, the intervention of aesthetics is always political because the 'principle behind an art's formal revolution is at the same time the principle behind the political redistribution of shared experience' (Rancière, 2004: 17). The function of the image is therefore not only to mimic that which it seeks to capture or to reflect the present voices within a community, but also the means by which a new understanding of things or the identity of the community articulates its emergence. (Papastergiadis, 2014). Thus, aesthetics *are* politics, and vice versa, in the process of shaping urban space and determining who has a place and a voice and who hasn't (Wesselman, 2021)

The application of Rancière's understanding of aesthetic politics to urban forms of experience has already produced some fruitful applications. For instance, Dikec (2013) draws upon Rancière in his discussion of ideology and the demonisation of French banlieues. Dikec (2013) discusses how recent banlieue riots are delegitimised by French politicians and the media, while other (similarly destructive) forms of public protest are presented as valid. This process was perpetuated by an aesthetic politics which employed punitive legal measures and stigmatising rhetoric to disproportionately present poorer banlieue communities as the problem, while simultaneously signalling the success and efficiency of the French government in addressing criminal activity (Dikec, 2013). This was despite longstanding social issues inherent within banlieue communities, and statistical evidence which suggested the ineffectiveness of national policy to alleviate crime (Dikec, 2013). For Dikec, this represented a 'Securitarian Ideology', which actively constructed a 'world' of increased security through producing and reproducing its own 'sensible' forms of evidence. It aptly illustrates how using a Rancierian understanding of aesthetic politics can illuminate the ways in which dominant groups within society are able to make certain things available, or common to the senses and make them make sense – even when they do not (Dikec, 2013). On the other hand, it simultaneously demonstrates how subaltern and disenfranchised communities are positioned as 'not making sense' as they are denied the agency to take part in 'sensible' forms of engagement.

The same is true for work by Wesselman (2021) who similarly uses Rancière's work to discuss how part of the Bos en Lommer neighbourhood in Amsterdam was condemned for being 'ugly', primarily

due to the presence of satellite dishes fixed to the outside of residential/social housing properties. Wesselmann highlights how those with satellite dishes were often Turkish or Moroccan migrants, who used them to access Arabic or Turkish television channels. The presence of the dishes therefore constituted a symbolic shaping of urban space in which the otherness of residents was made visible (Wesselmann, 2021). Yet local media and policy had come to regard the presence of the dishes as 'ugly' and an indicator of decay. By branding the houses with satellite dishes as 'ugly', Wesselman (2021) presents how this served to mute the voices of migrant residents and their capacity to shape the urban environment. Hence, the aesthetic judgement assigned to the houses with dishes is political as it 'allocates which objects -and thereby which people - belong in public space and which should not be visible' (Wesselman, 2021: 185). The dispute over the supposedly 'unsightly' dishes is therefore interwoven with a racialised body politics, as poorer migrant neighbourhoods become synonymous with urban decay. Opposition to the dishes amounts to a distribution of the sensible that oppresses otherness.

Wesselman (2021) and Dikec (2013) illustrate the ways in which engaging with aesthetic politics can be deployed to understand how different kinds of sensible experience contribute to particular regimes of oppression. The works of Rancière and Benjamin are important for understanding how we encounter and negotiate the politics of representation, art and space in contemporary society. They present how political debate is not only increasingly aestheticized but is also aesthetic in the sense that its character has been profoundly transformed by its staging through different kinds of technology and media experience (Vihalem, 2018). The same can be applied to the concepts that I have already explored within this literature review (Regeneration, Gentrification Displacement etc), as while inherently political, they also contain a distinct aesthetic component. Thus, the rebranding of global cities according to a particular financialised image of urban space, the stigmatisation of those living in social housing, and the displacement of residents in gentrifying areas, all involve an aesthetic politics which dictates what groups/individuals in society are able to engage (or not) in shared forms of sensible (aesthetic) experience. Hence the politics that surrounds the redevelopment of RHG is not just conceptualised, it is visualised, experienced, and made sensible through television, adverts, print, digital journalism, and other corporeal formats (Vihalem, 2018).

It is from these perspectives that this thesis wishes to situate its line of argument, as it coheres around a broad understanding of aesthetics as a sensual regime. It adheres to the same construction that Rancière gives to the concept: aesthetics as politics and comprising 'forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, the place they occupy, what they 'do' and 'make' from the standpoint of what is common to the community' (Rancière, 2004: 13). I use these theoretical understandings as a

conceptual tool kit through which to access how politics and aesthetics work together in the specific context of RHG's redevelopment. An important part of this discussion involves unravelling the social and political construction of ugliness and beauty and how it has emerged in the demolition of RHG. Thus, by drawing upon Rancierian and Benjaminian discussions of aesthetic politics, my analysis of the estate will develop a greater understanding of the social-spatial politics of urban redevelopment and how they are aesthetically mobilised to inform different distributions of urban power.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to answer each of the research questions set out within Chapter I of this thesis, I adopt a methodology that blends approaches from Contemporary Archaeology and Cultural Geography. In doing so it builds upon existing connections between Geography and Archaeology in order to add further depth to how scholars can explore recent periods of urban change and political contestation (Hill, 2015). My approach centres around a material and metaphorical perspective that aims to document the physical and digital traces of the estate's regeneration as it is manifest through different media and representation. In applying this framework, I hope to compliment 'geographical sensibilities' with an 'archaeological imagination' that will hopefully enliven understandings of the urban environment. In order to adequately justify the decisions behind taking this approach I will first set out the context for why Archaeology and Cultural Geography are well positioned to respond to sites of urban political change. As such, this methodology will be split into two parts: The first explores the sub discipline of Contemporary Archaeology, defining it in relation to more traditional forms of archaeological practice and setting out its relationship with Cultural Geography. In doing so, it shows why Archaeology is particularly suited to engaging with different forms of architectural space, and the politics associated with communities undergoing social changes. The second section sets out the methods used in this research and the ethical and practical considerations of carrying out the fieldwork. As a result, this Chapter addresses **RQ4**, as it illustrates the value of an interdisciplinary approach to urban forms of research.

Contemporary Archaeology and Cultural Geography

Archaeology and Geography are as Hill suggests 'strange bedfellows' (2015: 412). Their theoretical approaches have converged on numerous occasions, from empiricist traditions in the 1960s, that focused on regionalism and territory, to the 'New' Geography and 'New' or 'Processual' Archaeology, which emphasized objective, scientific perspectives, quantification and modelling (Hill, 2015). More recent similarities also emerge from Human Geography's recent engagement in matters archaeological: In temporality (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013), materiality (DeSilvey, 2006, 2007), urban decay (Edensor, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) and heritage (Riley & Harvey, 2005). Furthermore, Contemporary Archaeology is significant in this context for its shared methodology with Human Geography and its temporal proximity to matters of geographical concern, with studies exploring landscape (Johnson, 2012; Tilley, 1994), place (Bowser, 2004), urbanism (Dixon, 2010; M. Smith, 2009) and social justice (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009; Crossland, 2000; Kiddey & Schofield, 2011).

However, despite these similar theoretical ambitions, dialogue between Archaeology and Geography have remained limited. Archaeologists frequently turn to anthropology for contemporary theoretical debate (Buchli, 2013), while geographers have approached material culture studies to engage with the physical world. This lack of discussion, combined with a continued intellectual overlap signals a greater need for dialogue between the two disciplines. It is such a dialogue that this thesis in part seeks to address, presenting how Geography and Archaeology would benefit from greater interdisciplinary collaboration, each bringing its own unique set of research traditions and methodological philosophies to the study of the spatial and material worlds in which we live.

This is not to say that there have not been efforts to address this lack of conversation, particularly between the subdisciplines of Cultural Geography and Contemporary Archaeology. For instance Jenkins et al (2012) call for greater collaboration between urban scholars and classical archaeologists, highlighting the potential of comparative approaches between cities of the past and present. While Dixon (2010) employs a combination of cultural geographic, artistic, and archaeological methods to explore the regeneration of urban space in Bristol. Perhaps most poignant is Hill's (2015) recent call for dialogue as she lays the groundwork to consider the intellectual similarities and potential areas of intersection between Cultural Geography and Contemporary Archaeology as she discusses Archaeology's relationship to time, exploring how archaeologists have developed a long-standing interest in temporality that typically goes further than traditional geographical understanding (Hill, 2015; Merriman, 2012). In her conclusion Hill (2015) also presents how processes of archaeological 'interpretation' are inherently creative, often operating in the absence of human witness, whether by design or necessity, as archaeologists draw together material evidence to tell 'stories' about the past (Hill, 2015). At the same time, they present how Archaeology's fascination with the traces of human activity, from ritual sites to the humble beer can, offers a rich ground for cultural and historical geographers interested in affect to explore. This creates greater opportunities for dialogue between the two disciplines, allowing geographers to consider the always already affective nature of matter and 'the material' from an entirely novel archaeological perspective. This is particularly poignant for Cultural Geography, considering its recent interests in artistic collaboration, literary experimentation and creative methodologies (Hawkins, 2013). These ideas therefore expose clear opportunities for discussion between contemporary archaeologists and cultural geographers as archaeological methodologies open up exciting opportunities for Cultural Geography to reflect upon experiences and encounters in the world. Thus, for cultural geographers interested in new ways of doing, in knowledge-as-practice,

Archaeology and perhaps Contemporary Archaeology in particular, offer a rich ground for further collaboration and research (Graves-Brown et al. 2013).

But what is Contemporary Archaeology? And how does it differ from more traditional forms of archaeological practice? In this respect Contemporary Archaeology or Archaeology of the Contemporary Past (Graves-Brown et al., 2013) can be viewed as a subdiscipline that extends traditional methods of archaeological enquiry by applying it to modern material (King, 2011). Typically, it explores the archaeology of places and events that relate to a period of recent or living memory, although chronologically this is not fixed to a particular time frame (Harrison & Schofield, 2009). The use of the term 'contemporary' within Contemporary Archaeology is not simply to reference its disciplinary newness, but rather to highlight a disciplinary approach that engages with a temporality that is open to interpretation and emotional influence rather than simply closed off or limited by specific chronologies. The contemporary past is therefore positioned as an arena that includes lived experience and human life, rather than the collection and preservation of ancient artefacts. It overlaps closely with notions of heritage, and how it is created and understood by wider society (Harrison & Schofield, 2009).

Methodologically it differs from traditional Archaeology as it is less reliant on traditional processes of artefact retrieval, cataloguing, excavation, surveying, and analysis, instead utilising a wide range of sources and techniques familiar to much of the social sciences. For instance, Contemporary Archaeology is no stranger to: Ethnography (Yaneva, 2013), interviews (Kiddey & Schofield, 2011), artistic intervention (Dixon, 2010; McAtackney, 2016), archival records, (Dwyer, 2014) and photography (Dixon, 2018). Typically, these approaches are not used in isolation, with various approaches implemented as befitting the site of study (Harrison & Schofield, 2010). While material evidence remains the starting point and focus of much archaeological research (Holtorf & Piccini, 2009), for Contemporary Archaeology this material is mobilized in various approaches to help understand the past, present and future (Harrison & Schofield, 2010). Contemporary Archaeology therefore becomes more than a means to understand the past but a lens through which to explore the 'everyday'; the archaeologist's perspective providing a way of understanding the relationships between people and things that can consider how we think and act in the present (Dixon, 2010).

In recent years contemporary archaeologists have gone to great efforts to move beyond the trope of Archaeology as reliant on the idea of a past that is buried which can only be exposed through material excavation. Instead, Archaeology is positioned as a process of working from the present and its surface assemblages longitudinally across all of the pasts and potential futures which it contains (Harrison & Schofield, 2011). In this way, Contemporary Archaeology pushes at the boundaries of

other disciplines opening a new space for dialogue on matter, material, the past, and the role of the past in the present (Hill, 2015). It is Contemporary Archaeology's unique history as a materially informed discipline, with a strong interest in community action, as well as its distinctive approach to temporality, that make it particularly suited to engagements with materially dense, politically charged urban environments. From uncovering the fine details of individual artefacts to engaging with broader, political issues on a global scale, it is this particular set of tools, unique to archaeology, that is of specific interest to geographers and to the aims of this thesis. They offer exciting new potential to explore sites of rapid urban change, locations of contested heritage, or sites of gentrification and the disenfranchised precisely because it can utilise present day conflicts to enliven the past.

Therefore, the value that a contemporary archaeological approach is able to offer in answering the research questions of this thesis can be found in its legacy of engagement with various sites of architectural and political significance, especially when we consider that archaeologists have long been preoccupied with recording and analysing architectural spaces and the politics inherent within them. This again reflects parallel traditions within Geography and its interest in architectural spaces (Adey & Kraftl, 2010), as each attempt to unravel the connections between social and material worlds. Although Archaeology's interest arguably stems from the specific material conditions constituting the archaeological record, as the remains and footprints of buildings are some of the most enduring artefacts (Buchli, 2013). This has perhaps been most acute since the immediate Post-War period, with archaeologists documenting historic sites under threat from large scale demolitions of urban centres and the redevelopment of sites damaged by bombing. The involvement of archaeologists in urban redevelopment is currently maintained by local legislation; as archaeological excavation by universities, local authority units or some private companies are now a regular part of development processes (Dixon, 2010). For these reasons, Archaeology as a discipline has developed some sophisticated attempts to address the issues surrounding architectural form, from describing the primary material contexts of human social evolution through time, to constituting the debates surrounding heritage and the production of communities and nation-states in the present (Buchli, 2013). In this way Archaeology presents Cultural Geography with a unique set of methodological tools to explore architectural space – tools that are led by material remains and the landscapes in which they are located.

Examples of some of the approaches used by contemporary archaeologists to explore urban architectural space is evident in Dwyer's (2014) research into social housing between the 1870 and 1930. She uses archaeological building recording techniques, documentary research and oral history

to explore how concepts of the 'modern' and 'new' shaped the urban environment at the time and continue to do so today. Utilising photographic surveys of the interior and exterior of the buildings, alongside building plans and written descriptions, she produced a record of the present-day appearance, condition and use of the buildings and wider landscapes they were situated in. This enabled Dwyer to highlight the physical interactions that residents had with the houses on their estates and how they have been able to make the buildings in which they lived their own. It shows how the built environment has affected those living in it and how it has constrained or enabled individual actions. These techniques begin to present how the making of a building is an on-going process, one that does not follow a pre-formed plan (apart from that which relates to a building's original conception, a single intention, that existed at one point in time), and does not end with a 'finished' artefact (Dwyer, 2014). In this way the archaeological approach provides a deep temporal perspective of architectural space.

Similarly, the collection of material evidence to create an archaeological record or archive is also explored by Dixon (2018) as he highlights the use of photography in the archival process. In particular, he discusses the creation of his own photographic archive of a building in the London borough of Southwark. His approach builds on empirical traditions within archaeology of photo-documentation but uses contemporary ethnographic processes to expand understandings of architectural space. What is of particular value for Cultural Geography is the incorporation and creation of a dispersed archive, and the consideration of the stories and ethnographic processes attached to images as a means of engaging with architectural space. Thus by creating a varied visual record of architectural space, Dixon was able to appreciate how the building operates and produces multiple perspectives of place as well as how different meanings of the site overlap multiple periods of its life which are mediated through people (Dixon, 2018). From this, Dixon presents a process of working from the present and its surface assemblages longitudinally across all the pasts which it contains through the use of a photo archive.

Equally, the connections between the built environment and more politically engaged forms of archaeological practice are explored by Kiddey & Schofield's (2011) study into the archaeologies of homelessness. Their approach presents a way of developing a socially active form of Archaeology, as they position themselves as archaeologists working alongside the homeless to develop a better understanding of homelessness in contemporary cities. They focus on Stokes Croft in Bristol, an area known for its service dependent population and large numbers of homeless people. Their methodology involved gradually embedding themselves within the homeless community, after which they mapped the routines of the homeless people they encountered over a number of years.

This included their daily journeys, the people they met, the items they used, and the conversations they had (Kiddey & Schofield, 2011). Using this evidence, they highlight how they were able to uncover the hidden spaces and rituals of the homeless community that were previously overlooked by the rest of the city. Part of this research involved the organisation of a community 'excavation' in tandem with the homeless population. This granted the homeless residents of the city a voice in how the research was carried out, as they chose which sites were excavated. The finds from the dig ranged from contemporary traces of the past such as: bottle glass; blue plastic tops; 'White Ace' cider bottles; money; pharmaceutical drug packaging; hay-fever tablets as well as older 17th century clay pipes; mug handles; and ceramic fragments (Kiddey & Schofield 2011). What emerged from the project were the ways in which material evidence was able to provide a voice for the socially excluded. It highlighted the spaces, objects, and behaviours of those who are often ignored by wider society. Additionally, the research illustrates how readily archaeological and geographic practices could be combined in order to develop community focused research.

Likewise, Chidester & Gadsby's (2009) Hampden Community Archaeology Project, is another example of community led research that engages with urban social issues. Specifically, their project explored two working class neighbourhoods in Baltimore, Maryland, that had been undergoing gentrification for the past fifteen years. It highlighted itself as an explicitly activist project, in that it was focused on including descendant communities in all stages of historical and archaeological research in order to generate a public discussion around important social issues. In this case, they wished to study the inequality of the past to help raise local resident's consciousness of inequality in the present. Like Kiddey & Schofield (2011) their approach was multi-faceted: including the archaeological excavation of a number of domestic sites in Hampden-Woodbury; archival research into the town's history; and ethnographic research among the community's contemporary residents. This process also involved the development of community education programs, outreach programs, historical and archaeological workshops, publications, exhibitions, and the formation of a local heritage museum in collaboration with the local council. Each of these approaches were all in an effort to equip the community with the tools to make more equitable decisions in relation to future regeneration projects, as well as address existing social problems around class and race. In many ways this reinforces the value of material evidence in its capacity to foster lasting and meaningful engagements with contested and marginalised communities that can provide greater social cohesion and political autonomy. What is particularly interesting, especially in relation to Urban Geography, is the study's particular approach to gentrification, in that it actively sought to intervene and generate some form of social action (however local) that could mitigate against its negative impacts. Typically,

urban scholars are quick to offer theoretical or policy solutions but do little themselves to bring about such change through direct and sustained research (Allen, 2008). This approach therefore presents a methodology that can do both, and instead of imposing an agenda onto a community, it helped them to use their own agency to bring about change. However, Chidester & Gadsby's (2009) research does raise questions around the politics of academic work, and whether academics should speak for vulnerable communities, particularly when they may not want to be researched. There is also a certain amount of bias and power that academics may impose on the research they conduct, so engaging in such community action should not be done without considering the consequences.

Each of these examples present Contemporary Archaeology as a discipline that is able to use material traces as a catalyst to give voice to the subaltern and the forgotten (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009; Kiddey & Schofield, 2011) or to illuminate the emergent and embodied aspects of architecture, space, and time (Dwyer, 2014; Dixon, 2018; Hill, 2013). This also highlights the inherent emancipatory potential that an archaeological sensibility can bring, in that it can unify people over a shared history and advocate for social change (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009). It illustrates its ability to give 'presence' to those people, places and objects that may have been purposefully excluded or made absent. These case studies therefore present a number of methods and approaches that I draw upon in my own research in order to further understand the gentrification of the RHG estate.

Researching Robin Hood Gardens

While the previous section has sought to justify the application of an interdisciplinary approach, I now wish to engage directly with the methods that this research utilises and how they have been applied to the study of RHG. In this respect, my approach holds together an overlapping series of archaeological and geographical research techniques in order to draw out the complexity surrounding the geographies of RHG's regeneration. This interdisciplinary approach embodies the notion of the 'method assemblage' (Law, 2004) and is arguably more flexible and open to documenting the complexity of social worlds than traditional geographic encounters (Hill, 2015). As such, my choice of methods represents a form of Archaeo-Geography as it weaves together material and spatial traditions in order to ascertain new knowledge surrounding the RHG estate. At the same time, it is also important to consider that any deployment of methods from different disciplines within 'the field' is often eclectic, and unbalanced, as they do not always 'add up' to a harmonic whole, often exceeding and challenging one another in their situated articulations and applications (Baerwald, 2010). In putting such an approach into practice this thesis brings together ethnographic

observation, archival enquiry, archaeological metaphor, interviews, photographic methods, and the textual and contextual reading of various images and artistic works. This section will therefore explore how each method has been applied to the examination of the estate and the challenges and ethical considerations inherent within them.

Compositionally this section is split into six themes: *Archaeological (Anti)Metaphor*, *Audio-Visual Representations*, *Archival Approaches*, *Ethnographic Approaches*, *Interviews*, and *Challenges*; the first engages with the overall tone and use of metaphor throughout the thesis and project as whole, utilising an ‘archaeological imagination’ in order to foreground its agenda. Whereas *Audio-Visual Representations* explores the collection of different photographic, audio, and artistic materials, discussing their role as a form of representation that can be situated in relation to how we experience the RHG estate. Subsequently, *Archival Approaches* turns to the process of accessing the various documents and archival sources that have been used to support my numerous lines of argument, and the issues attached to retrieving them. While *Ethnographic Approaches* discusses the use of ethnography, and how this has been able to supplement and enliven the other aspects of my research. *Interviews* considers my discussions with the many actors and stakeholders throughout the project, as well as the ethical considerations of doing so. Lastly, *Challenges* reflects upon the process of writing the thesis and the global and personal challenges that have shaped my research and which will hopefully provide some additional context around the development of the project. What emerges from this chapter is an understanding of how Archaeo-Geographical methods can be enrolled to explore sites of urban regeneration.

Archaeological (Anti)Metaphor

I begin with the use of archaeological metaphor as the starting point for my discussion, primarily as it embodies the tone and style of the thesis as a whole. In many ways this is the mode of enquiry that has been central to the interdisciplinary framework that I adopt. Incidentally, I utilise the unique archaeological imagination inherent within Contemporary Archaeology and position it as a lens through which more nuanced and complex interdisciplinary engagements with contemporary society can emerge (Hill, 2015). In this regard I draw upon archaeology’s unique lexicon, which has a rich tradition in being able to describe an ever-changing material world, utilising the notions of ‘sediment’, ‘layer’, ‘artefact’ and ‘fragment’ as metaphorical forms through which to frame my analytical encounters with the estate. I therefore refer to the many representations of RHG as ‘sediment’ that make up the many ‘layers’ of the Ugly/Beauty debate, whilst the material remains of the estate become ‘fragments’ and ‘artefacts’ to be analysed and exhibited by different actors for different agendas. In so doing, I wish to foreground the material sensibility taken by my examination,

and the malleability of archaeology as a symbolic exercise, an internal voyage, an affordance of our self-awareness as it relates to the material world (Smith, 2016).

However, by using archaeological metaphor as a point of enquiry I am conscious of reducing an entire discipline to a symbolic set of readings and gestures. Therefore, I position my use of the archaeological imaginary as simultaneously metaphorical and anti-metaphorical. As from an initial standpoint it provides a useful point of interdisciplinary recognition, as the many identifiable tropes of archaeology (layer, sediment, fragment) become points of engagement through which to develop more subtle discussion. The use of metaphor therefore begins as a materially focused encounter with urban space and subsequently concludes by blowing these tropes open, presenting how the complex and weighted terms of 'layer' and 'sediment' become more nuanced through archaeological and geographical forms of enquiry. Archaeology is therefore presented as more than the simple examination of fragments, but the considered analysis of numerous social, material, and political encounters. At the same time, my use of (anti)metaphor is incomplete, where Geography and Archaeology do not neatly interconnect it is not always neatly applied.

Consequently, each aspect of the project has always begun with attempting to apply an 'archaeological' sensibility to geographic modes of inquiry. In many ways this speaks to the numerous examples in which archaeology has already been used as a metaphor (Smith, 2016), as it is not uncommon for people to refer to 'archaeologies of emotion', 'archaeologies of sentiment' or 'archaeologies of knowledge'; all implying that archaeology as a method has relevance far beyond the site being excavated (Thomas, 2004). As a cultural geographer this has been a slight break with habit, given that typically my focus has primarily been attendant to 'place' or the people within them. This is where I discuss in my own set of biases and acknowledge that my position up until this project has been rooted in largely white, middle class, western traditions, often situating my knowledge within cultural geographic and 'spatial' contexts. However, this approach, as I interpreted it, was to begin with the materials first and subsequently follow their connections and relationships to the various objects and worlds around them. This did not mean neglecting the spatial or social, but rather to use 'matter' and the materiality of the estate to connect them together. In many ways it reflects archaeological turns which has seen it engage with 'Actor Network Theory' (Yaneva, 2013), through which the discipline is reconfigured to explore the dynamic deployment of flat networks i.e., surfaces – rather than simply excavation. My engagement reflects a similar process, becoming both a creative and immediate encounter with the present which attempts to reassemble all human and non-human ingredients that RHG (as a building) is made of.

This approach also follows in the footsteps of Foucault's (1970) use of the archaeological metaphor, as for him it was a way of defining a methodology which was distinct from history and especially the history of ideas, which in his view prioritised continuity, or a structuralism which promoted fixed realities in tension with each other eternally (Smith, 2016). Instead, Foucault wanted a method which was interested in distinct layers, and which identified systems or epistemes (Smith, 2016). Likewise, I wish to align my use of archaeological techniques and metaphor in a similar respect, one which is attendant to the systems of aesthetics as they are encountered at RHG and the 'epistemes' that emerge in how images/representations of the estate have been encountered at the level of the everyday. However, such an approach does not consist of the simple identification of materially discrete 'layers', instead it aims to make explicit the performative and pragmatic dimensions that connect objects with the practices of their making, and the streams of experiences with their makers and users (Yaneva, 2013). Hence, by positioning RHG as a series of layers comprised of sediment, I am able to expose the practices that allow the site to be interpreted in different ways, uncovering the networks of material connection that extend far beyond the relevance of the estate itself. It is also worth noting that there is also a great deal of overlap with this form of archaeological imaginary and the Smithsons' performative and practical use of the 'as found'. As they sought a similar material and imaginative engagement with the objects of everyday life, through which they felt a more socially aware understanding of architecture and society could emerge (Lichensten & Schregenberger, 2001). Thus, my enquiry was as much archaeological as it was a process of engaging with the Brutalist sensibility of the 'as found'. My attention to RHG therefore became a process of reimagining the ordinary and engaging with its 'materiality' through metaphor in order to tell different stories about how people came to encounter the estate.

The process of telling stories is also inherently archaeological, as the discipline has always been engaged in constructing narratives about the past. Such stories are constantly referenced in the media, by politicians, word of mouth and through what society considers 'heritage' (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009). However, only in the last ten to fifteen years have archaeologists on a broader scale begun to have serious conversations with and about their effect on the descendant communities and social groups that they study (Kiddey & Schofield, 2011). I want to be equally sensitive to how I construct my own 'story', and the similarly situated and constructed narratives that emerge within my own analysis. Therefore, my examination and use of metaphor attempts to hold together how different narratives present different versions of the same place using the same set of materials and rhetorical devices. What becomes clear is how certain 'layers' are more defined than others, especially where there was more 'material evidence' to be followed regarding certain parts of the

estate, while others are notable for the lack of any material at all. These gaps in the 'archaeological record' are just as important as those where there is a wealth of material (Graves-Brown et al, 2013). Where material evidence is lacking, I intertwine the cultural geographic traditions of deconstruction (Mitchell, 2000) with archaeological modes of interpretation (Graves-Brown et al 2013), in order to tease out many of the 'more than representational' and embodied understandings of place. This process of storytelling and interpretation is also apparent in Archaeology's real and metaphorical attention to the recovery of 'fragments', rather than the whole picture. Thus, Archaeology is often positioned as 'recovering what remains', a partial glimpse at a previous reality; so, the role of the 'fragment' as a metaphor, a clue, a sign, and a symbol of loss as much as survival, becomes a powerful rhetorical device (Smith, 2016). Likewise, the 'fragments' of RHG present within this thesis embody the same sense of loss and partiality, most keenly felt in the removal of the façade by the V&A, as its limited reconstruction of the estate became an emotionally charged point of contention. In this regard, my reading of the estate and its various 'images' is equally fragmentary, it represents one of the many possible interpretations. While it is one of many, I wish to assert that my reading is an important one, as it emphasises where the gaps in the 'archaeological record' appear and makes visible aspects of the estate which have been purposefully overlooked.

By utilising archaeological (anti)metaphor as an analytical and methodological frame through which to ground my discussion, this research attempts to move beyond the metaphorical in order to demonstrate how archaeology embodies a more nuanced way of understanding space that can convey the intricacy of a material world that is multi sensual, transient, and more-than-representational. Archaeology is therefore a lot more than a set of symbolic practices and layers, and through starting with these tropes I intend to demonstrate the depth within archaeological and interdisciplinary forms of inquiry. This situates the ontological thrust of this thesis and is used to draw together the archaeological with the geographical in order to develop more complex discussions of the RHG estate.

Audio-Visual Representations

Given that the aims and objectives of this thesis are to explore the visual and aesthetic politics of the RHG estate, it is unsurprising that one of my primary methods of data collection has involved analysing images and audio-visual representations. In this respect, I draw upon Cultural Geography's and Archaeology's increased interest in engaging with various visual methods and forms (Rose et al 2016; Hawkins, 2018; Rose, 2003): from artworks of various kinds (Hawkins, 2013; Dixon, 2010,

Corbey et al 2004); to the use of film (Ernwein, 2020; Strauven, 2013; Pink 2012); and sonic approaches (Paiva, 2018; Schofield, 2014; Gallagher, 2014; 2015). As a result, I explore different audio-visual 'matter' in order to examine the ways RHG has been represented. In total these different iterations make up the **88 Figures and 7 sound files** that are interspersed throughout my analysis, each presents a different example of how RHG has been encountered, narrated, and experienced. As an eclectic mix of different representational choices and devices, I wish to spend the remainder of this section discussing my use/analysis of these audio-visual forms and how and why they were included within my argument. I have broken this into three layers:

The first layer refers to a set of images that I have taken, which document and display the estate and its regeneration. These were primarily obtained through numerous site visits between 2017 to the early part of 2020 (with a break in 2019), which includes a trip to the Venice Biennale in June 2018. The images were captured using my phone and, on a few occasions, using a Canon EOS 3000D Digital SLR camera. Unfortunately, due to the nature of recent global events and the COVID-19 pandemic I have been unable to take any more recent images, having to shield throughout much of 2020 and 2021, relying instead on photos posted online. As such these images were principally taken as a convenient memory device where it was not always suitable to take notes (Latham & McCormack, 2009). They comprise a form of photo essay which is able to display 'the taken-for-granted moments that communicated ethnographic meaning' (Harper, 2006: 158). They often captured moments of rapid change – where hoarding was being erected or where demolition had started. Therefore, as a visual method, I use them to display my own 'real-world' encounters with the estate (Pink, 2007). As such, I have taken many hundreds of this kind of image throughout the entirety of the project, recording the estate through its transitions from 'housing estate' to 'demolition site'. From this wider collection, only 20 have been included within this thesis, appearing in Chapters V and VI, where I discuss my experience of the marketing materials at Blackwall Reach or the installation at the *Ruins in Reverse* exhibition. Hence this set of images primarily functions to document my engagement with the various representations of RHG as they were situated within the landscape, capturing the rhetorical and visual strategies of the developers and the V&A museum as they were juxtaposed against the backdrop of the estate at various moments in time. However, it is important to consider that while I position this layer as a form of documentation they are still constructed (Rose, 2016), and that in order to be reflexive I must acknowledge that what I have presented as examples of particular gentrification processes may not hold the same significance for others (Mason, 2002; Pink, 2007). Likewise, my image choices are also influenced by my position as a researcher and by my understanding of what I felt to be 'important' at the time (Pink, 2007). Hence,

they are a set of subjective representations that can only be used to illustrate my experience, and which have been purposefully curated for the purposes of this research.

The second set of audio-visual texts is a range of artwork produced by a variety of RHG artists and photographers. Compositionally, this layer appears within this thesis as a series of 7 links to audio files and 35 still images, which document each artist's work. These materials are discussed in Chapters IV and VII, which address the role of art and photography in how RHG has been represented. This layer includes the drawings of Jessie Brennan, the collages of Eduardo Paolozzi, the photography of Kois Miah, Nigel Henderson, John Maltby and Ioana Marinescu, a film installation by Do Ho Suh and the audio recordings of A.J. Holmes. I have selected these artists specifically for their relationship to the RHG estate, whether that be in their historical connections to the Smithsons (Paolozzi, Maltby and Henderson) or because they have produced work that speaks to the estate's recent demolition (Miah, Marinescu, Suh, Brennan, and A.J. Holmes). Whereas none would label themselves as artists that solely produce work about RHG, each has produced art or installations that attempt to capture and explore the broader context of the estate including its Brutalist architecture. The intention behind analysing these artistic encounters is to use them as a lens through which to explore the socio-spatial relations of the estate and unpick how they respond to ideas associated with place, space, body, materiality, and affect. They therefore represent points of provocation which can interrogate how others have sought to represent the estate and its broader context. The artworks which I discuss are all published or available to access online – in the most part freely available (although not free from copyright). How they appear in this thesis is either as 'scans' of where they appear in other texts, or as downloaded images/links from the internet. The only exception to this was Suh's film at the Biennale, which while publicly on display, involved the purchasing of a ticket to the 2018 Biennale and a flight to Venice, therefore its public availability is debateable. Hence the images of the film that I include are ones that I took of the installation using my phone camera during my visit in 2018. This also raises issues around trying to present and convey artworks in 'more than visual formats' within a written document. Both the film by Suh and the audio recordings by A.J. Holmes are harder to present textually, often eschewing description, losing many of the atmospheric qualities that separate them from strictly visual and textual mediums (Duffy, 2005). However, where possible I have attempted to make it easier for the reader to follow by using still images of Suh's video, or providing hyperlinks to Holmes' sound recordings, so that the audience can get a sense of the original source material.

Lastly, the third layer, which amounts to 33 of the figures, relates to the digitised forms of contemporary visual culture or media, primarily comprised of screen captures of websites, social

media, online newspapers, documents, computer generated images and magazines which use their own visual and textural formats to present the estate in a particular way. For instance, much of my analysis draws upon numerous newspaper articles or social media posts which refer to RHG as a 'sink estate' or as a site of architectural beauty. Most of these have been sourced from the internet directly or through online repositories. Many of the images in this layer could therefore be understood as additional modes of communication which compliment written or spoken text, often helping the viewer to understand a given message more clearly (Russmann & Svensson, 2017). While these differ from the forms of representation in layers one and two, they provide a valuable insight into how images are disseminated, encountered, and performed (Rose, 2014). This layer is also the broadest, and is spread out across the whole thesis, often used to exemplify how representations of the estate appear in digital contexts – whether that be on Facebook or in national newspapers. However, like layer one, they are also contingent on my own curatorial practice, as I have decided what images to include and what parts of the website or online newspaper to 'screenshot', crop and keep (Pink, 2012). As such, they have been selected for their engagement with issues relating to RHG, including images, or directly addressing the estate somewhere within its subject matter. Therefore, this layer serves both a documentary function, in documenting examples of events and encounters concerning the estate, whilst also incorporating a consideration of how images are consumed in an everyday context (Russmann & Svensson. 2017).

While the ontological turn within geography and its focus on material cultures and performance has meant that studying forms of 'representation' in this way has become less popular (Roberts, 2012; Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000), more recently there has been concerted efforts to reengage with how images and representational strategies are utilised in methods that enliven our understandings of the social-spatial world (Robert, 2012; Rose, 2014; 2015; 2016; Jacobs, 2013; Russmann & Svensson, 2017). They identify a need to go beyond accounts that primarily attended to static and 'still image' or 'classical artworks' (Rose, 2014; Rose 2003; Roberts 2014). These arguments also contend that as more communication is happening through visual media, then academic research also needs to reconnect with visual forms of communication (Rose, 2016; Jacobs, 2013). This is especially the case when the influence of the internet/digital media continues to disrupt the hegemony of the printed word (Jacobs, 2013: 714). It is therefore essential that geographers persist in making and interpreting films/images in order to better communicate research findings and to understand how particular kinds of media influence our lives (Rose, 2016; Jacobs, 2013).

In building upon this context, I approach each layer of representation as material and cultural products to be deconstructed, exploring how they have been put together and mobilised by

particular actors for different agendas. In this respect they are 'material traces' of the estate, forming 'readable' accounts of the site throughout its history. My examination of each of these formats takes the form of a critical discourse analysis (Rose, 2016; Foucault, 1979). By critical, I mean an approach that thinks about the visual and the aural in terms of its cultural significance, and the social practices and the power relations in which they are embedded, unpicking how such relations are produced, articulated, and challenged by the various ways of seeing, listening, and imaging (Rose, 2016; Pink 2012; Foucault, 1979). Discourse analysis thus depends on reading an image with a great care for detail. It assumes that the 'efficacy of discourse often resides in the assumptions it makes about what is true, real, or natural, in the contradictions that allow it interpretative flexibility, and in what is iterated and absent' (Rose, 2016: 214). This form of deconstruction therefore holds that the numerous artistic and architectural representations of the estate articulate various discourses of cultural and social subjectivity. These can be analysed both for the 'preferred readings' that the producer 'supposedly' intended, and the 'decoded readings' made by spectators (Ali 2004). How I analysed each of these categories depended on the image itself and the context in which it was situated. Again, I have broken this process down according to the three 'layers' of representation that I collected.

For the first layer of images, which relates to my own illustrative images of the RHG estate, my analysis began with compositional interpretation, describing the content of the images, and how I had curated them to show particular objects or moments in time to fit my argument (Rose, 2016). This was followed by an interrogation of the ways in which different kinds of representation and knowledge are produced/circulated by the developers/organisation in their use of marketing images and rhetoric within the landscape (Foucault, 1979). So, for my images of the estate's demolition or the V&A's exhibition, I describe what practices are taking place, what 'signs' are generated and how they affect what the audience is being 'persuaded' to see (Rose, 2016; Gill, 1996). This often involved discussing the institutional choices and semiotic conventions behind what was being displayed, including the use of hoarding, computer-generated images, and persuasive text. This process is intertextual as I draw upon other media, including census data, and historical materials in order to interrogate particular regimes of representation and how they present knowledge of RHG in particular ways – most often to persuade the viewer that the estate is a site of ugliness that needs renovation.

My use of discourse analysis is slightly different for layers two and three, although beginning with the same descriptive, semiotic, and interpretive elements as layer one, the variations in image and media type require slightly tailored approaches. Thus, my examination of Layer two (RHG artwork)

places greater emphasis on exploring different kinds of visibility/aurality, as I discuss how each artist attempts to produce specific forms of knowledge regarding the estate. My approach is more sensitive to the non-representational and symbolic aspects of the artist's intention, and how this impacts what the audience may see/hear/feel (Rose, 2016). This is also tied to traditions within art and architectural disciplines and how notions of discourse may be structured through different stylistic conventions (Rose, 2016). My line of questioning therefore developed around understanding what the audience is encouraged to feel, what system of symbols or signs does the artwork draw upon and how do these structure particular interpretations of the estate. An explicit example of this approach is evident in my examination of the Brutalist image (Chapter IV), and how different artists have used monochrome and motifs of 'ruin' to produce different experiences of nostalgia.

Likewise, layers two and three are also characterised by the use of digital technology or digital media (social media, websites, digitised archival documents – including emails and online newspapers). My use of discourse analysis therefore incorporates analytic elements from digital methods literature in order to remain sensitive to the ways in which different digital technologies mediate and circulate specific images (Rogers, 2013). Hence, my analysis attends to how particular technologies may privilege particular sensible experiences or attempt to construct more 'objective' realities through recreating virtual environments (photogrammetry, digital audio recording, computer generated images; Rogers, 2013). This includes an examination of how audiences/institutions utilise digital technologies in order to generate different understandings of the built environment and how 'ubiquitous' forms of photography (Hand, 2012) continue to shape our engagement with architectural spaces.

By illustrating the different steps of my discourse analysis, I have provided a specific account of the methods I have used to interpret the many audio/visual materials that comprise my argument. I want to emphasise that this analytical framework was not necessarily rigid or exhaustive but was often an emergent process that involved applying multiple approaches to different media (depending on the context) in order to present different understandings of the images/materials with which I was engaged. This set of approaches is also not without its limitations, as discourse analysis is only really able to provide a very specific reading of the audio/visual materials I have gathered (Rose, 2016). Therefore, my intention is not to provide an exhaustive account of all possible readings of RHG but instead use my interpretation to open up statements which challenge, interrogate and take for granted the meanings and claims to objectivity that circulate around the aesthetic narratives of the estate.

Non-representational theory also suggests representational studies such as this supposedly deaden the 'liveliness' of the world (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000), and asks what more can be considered (Roberts, 2012). Likewise treating the audio-visual solely as a representational and cultural product implies a separation between the practices of consuming images and the practices of producing images (Crang, 2010). Additionally, focusing on representation constructs an unhelpful opposition between the visual and other sensual/affective experiences (Crang 2003b, 2010). Where possible I have tried to account for these drawbacks, incorporating other sensory articulations of knowledge and engaging with forms of representation beyond the 'static image'. My use of discourse analysis is therefore not to imply that there is a symbolic layer of deception that attempts to rob the viewer of their sense or agency but rather to illuminate some of the practices which utilise discourse to construct particular audiences and mediate specific sensible experiences. For instance, by including sonic and filmic forms of arts practice I draw out many of the embodied understandings of the estate and how they are encountered in everyday practices of listening and seeing (Crang, 2005). Additionally, my analysis has been sympathetic to the connections between different forms of representation and affect, and the power imbedded within symbolic depictions of the estate to move the audiences that they are engaged with (Bartram, 2010). This is something I have sought to express in my own images of the estate, as they reflect a form of 'visual ethnography', which balances individual experience with the documentation of in-situ forms of representation (Pink, 2007). Similarly, by recording the structures and forms of contemporary visual culture as they manifest in the context of the 'everyday', whether that be through newspapers, social media, or other online material, I have attempted to be inclusive of where and how various images and representations are disseminated and produced. As a result, I have tried not to separate the realms of representation from the more-than-representational, whilst attending to how their meaning is constructed and consumed across both physical and digital platforms (Rose, 2016, 2014).

From an ethical standpoint, the use of visual and representational methods can be particularly problematic (Pink, 2012). I have therefore avoided the inclusion of images which display people without their consent (Pink, 2012). Similarly, I avoid any obvious identifying information of the individuals, although this is only partially possible given that the study clearly attends to the RHG Estate. Likewise, each image or artwork where individuals are displayed have been those that are already in the public domain and consent has already been obtained (Pink, 2012). Equally, the images I have personally taken were all within publicly accessible locations, where consent would not have been needed (Pink, 2007; 2012). In considering copyright restrictions, the reproduction of different artists' work would fall under 'fair use' policy, where my intention is to use them for the

purposes of research and to provide criticism and review. This is outlined by Sections 29 and 30 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents act 1988. One possible exception to this could be the photographs I have taken on Suh's video, although they are my own images and would still fall under fair use policy, they were taken without explicit permission from the gallery in which the exhibition took place. However, the V&A website does state that film and photography are allowed to be taken of its exhibits (V&A, 2021). While the Venice Biennale does not seem to have a freely available public policy on the matter, I would argue that given the use of my images, and that they are of a lower quality and represent a very small sample of the original work (far less than 10%) that I am within my rights to use them within an academic context. I should also add that I did reach out to all of the 'living' artists whose artwork I have included within this research, including Suh, however only A.J. Holmes provided any form of permission to do so. It should therefore be acknowledged that the majority have chosen not to comment or to give permission to use them in this way. This does mean that the argument throughout my analysis is unable to give a direct account of the artists own intentions, or any comment as to how they have been used (Pink, 2012).

Hopefully, what emerges from considering the various forms of audio-visual representation within this thesis is how they have been enrolled as a set of primary and secondary materials within my research – from my own 'documentary' photography to the work of various artists, and online media. At the same time, it has also tried to address some of the shortcomings of the research design and how it sits alongside broader ethical concerns. I also wish to note that this only encompasses one of the methods used, and where limitations have not necessarily been addressed other methods have been employed to compliment or supplement my approach. I therefore wish to move on to my next mode of enquiry and the '*Textual Approaches*' I have utilised throughout the project.

Archival approaches

Alongside the audio-visual methods, a central aspect of my approach has been to look across the spectrum of documents that have come to encompass RHG's recent past. While they also amount to 'forms of representation' and could be regarded as a 'fourth layer', I have kept them separate from the previous section and instead discuss them in relation to archival methods. As such, a large part of my research has involved the compilation and analysis of a large collection of textual materials which is inclusive of my own note making. Much of this focused on a large body of government and institutional documents relating to the estate's immunity from listing and the council's planning

applications. I therefore begin by discussing the process of acquiring, engaging, and presenting these historical sources as they relate to the RHG estate. This builds on both geographical and archaeological concerns with the 'historical' and the use of archival materials in order to construct narratives of the past (Graves-Brown et al, 2013, Craggs, 2016; Chidester & Gadsby, 2009). The ongoing nature of the estate's demolition has made parts of this process slightly different from studies that engage with periods farther back in the historical record, as it has not been catalogued within a series of central archives (Graves-Brown et al 2013). As a result, my use of the term archive does not refer to a singular fixed location but rather several sites through which memories of the estate have been produced and reproduced through relations of power (Craggs, 2016). Similarly, RHG is also notable for the sheer quantity of materials that surround it, ranging from the Smithsons' writings on Brutalism to the more mundane paperwork documenting maintenance and repairs. In many ways it reflects the estate's continued existence and relevance in the present, which has meant it has not been subject to the material loss associated with the passage of time (Graves-Brown et al 2013). Therefore, a central difficulty in my research process has been finding where this information was stored, and the subsequent process of sorting through what was relevant, often with no archivist or catalogue to refer to (Cameron, 2001). While geographical and archaeological accounts suggest that the 'systematic quarrying' of archival materials is the best and most rewarding approach to take when engaging in historical forms of enquiry (Foster & Lorimer, 2007), I was more often than not having to follow hunches and take a 'freer', more associational approach, as materials were harder to access and more often widely dispersed.

Consequently, my search for archival sources followed the footprints left by the major institutions that had become interested in the estate, notably; Historic England, Tower Hamlets Council, Blackwall Reach, the V&A Museum, and the C20 Society. For the state institutions (V&A, Council, HE) this meant that they legally had to keep official records in relation to their dealings with RHG. However, this also presented a number of issues, in that these documents were not always freely accessible. My dealings with Blackwall Reach were shut down very early on in the research process, as after speaking to one of the site managers I was advised that they did not want me to be involved. This was very much in contrast to the C20 Society who were more than happy for me to come in and take whatever documents they had about the estate. While the V&A, Historic England, and the Council, who all had 'procedures to follow', pushed me towards making FOI requests in order to obtain the documents I wanted. Again, this made things more difficult as I had to request items that I did not necessarily know they had or that I wanted. These forms of gatekeeping made it much more difficult to access and piece together the series of events that took place. It also meant that I

would spend a lot of time waiting for responses, receiving documents sporadically and often in large 'dumps', which I would have to sort through.

The largest and most relevant source discussed within this thesis was a 400-page FOI document supplied by Historic England, which detailed the listing applications surrounding the estate. However, there is no given order to the documents in the file, while loosely chronological I had to organise and piece together what I felt was important. In many ways this epitomised the archaeological frame in which I worked, assembling a narrative from the disparate fragments I was able to access (Graves-Brown et al 2013). This comprises much of the discussion in Chapter VI and comes to reflect what I felt was worthy of discussion from the materials that Historic England were able to provide.

This raises issues around the narrative I am able to piece together as it is likely to favour those who provided me with materials. This is especially the case when considering that official documents construct partial histories often reflecting institutional concerns (Craggs, 2008). This is apparent in the use of redactions and gaps in the chronological line of materials, evident in Historic England's removal of the minutes from their advisory board committee meeting (EHAC), and in the disjointed series of emails relating to their assessment of the estate. This stands in contrast to the unfiltered access to the C20 repository, while equally partial provided a more detailed selection of their 'side of the story'. However, this has meant that the C20 Society materials have likely shaped my own analysis much more than the complete lack of Blackwall Reach materials, and perhaps might explain why my report comes across as more sympathetic to the preservation of the estate. It is therefore imperative to remember that such texts represent sites of power and selective memory rather than as places for the retrieval of some already formed objective past (Craggs, 2016). I have tried to address these points of bias by highlighting where gaps in the record exist and in backing up my interpretations with the evidence that was available.

Despite the difficulties in accessing documents from the institutions involved with the estate, I was also able to access a limited number of more traditional archival sources – including the National Sound Archive, Tower Hamlets Archive, and the London Metropolitan Archive. Yet their usefulness has been limited, often having the opposite problem of the major institutions above. Although they were easy to access, they were often characterised by a lack of any materials regarding the estate, and what was present was often not directly related to the project's aims. Again, this emphasises the patchwork of information that was available about the estate and the many institutional and temporal boundaries, silences and forms of containment that were encountered in this kind of historical work (Till, 2001). While I was able to access a lot of unsorted documents

relating to the listing of the estate, there was less available concerning RHG after it was originally built. Again, this is partly explained by my choice of 'archive', as the central repository for information that the Smithsons collected is in the '*Alison and Peter Smithson Archive*' at Harvard University. Sadly, I was unable to visit this collection due to the timing of the COVID 19 pandemic and my own health issues. This is certainly worth acknowledging as it has no doubt shaped the direction of my research and is perhaps most evident in my strong focus on the legality of the listing process, which is heavily documented in the files of the other institutions, as opposed to the designs and drawings collected by the Smithsons. Although, I would argue that much of the Smithson Archive has already been discussed in well-known and major texts, (Crimson, 2018; Risselada 2011), and therefore by not being able to access the Harvard repository, I was able to construct a narrative that addressed aspects of the estate which had not been fully explored. In this regard, I return to the fact that my archival work is always a contemporary reconstruction, which is apparent in my adjustment to the unevenness of the historical record as I was able to access it at the time of researching (Hanlon, 2001). As a result, I have done my best to provide an account that is politically valuable and raises awareness of the gaps and muted discussions inherent within the official documented versions of the estate.

I also want to use this as an opportunity to discuss how many of these documents and archival resources feature within this thesis. While a handful are used as figures within the analysis chapters, for instance **Figure 55**, which I directly refer to in order to illustrate the end of the estate's listing process, the remaining are presented within the appendices. The reason for this is in part an issue of structure and clarity, as I felt inserting images and excerpts from the numerous organisational assessments of the estate would make it harder to follow the central argument of the text. I have, where possible tried to summarise important documents so the general meaning of them is not lost, although this is not an entirely perfect solution, as it still produces an awkward back and forth between text and appendix. However, structuring it this way does mean that the main body of text and the appendices can retain their coherence as separate documents or function together as one conjoined thesis.

The appendix could also be seen to represent an example of an informal archive, defined by Auerbach (2018) as unmapped, non-systematized collections of materials kept by individuals and groups in the areas under study. My use of the appendices therefore presents a site in which the disassembled fragments of the estate and its recent history are reassembled in an unofficial and semi-permanent way. As I have mentioned above, many of these documents were freely available, yet not necessarily easily accessible. Thus, having them collated within the appendix as a series of

supporting 'artefacts' I have tried to create a valuable resource that is able to draw out several narratives from the estate's recent social and material politics. It tries to present data and images about the estate in a way which captures a civic imagination, acting as a repository of public knowledge that can aid interpretation and political forms of action (Withers, 2002). In doing so, it attempts to recover the history of a marginalised estate and provides a micro-history of the site as both a home and architectural object (Auerbach, 2018). Arranging the appendices as a form of archive in this way has also been somewhat ethnographic, in that compiling the documents went beyond simply 'mining for treasures' but to a careful and critical immersion in archival resources, with attention paid to the seemingly mundane and the smallest of details (Stoler, 2010). This is particularly the case when considering the listing documents as I have tried to create my own narrative of events as seemed apparent from the documents available to me, choosing which ones to include within the thesis. Therefore, compilation and curation of these materials through my own practices of accessing, cataloguing, contextualizing, and conserving is a valuable part of my research process. The fact that archival documents sit alongside my own data collection, interview transcripts and risk assessment (**Appendix, A, B and C**) helps to situate my entanglements with the estate alongside the site's material history. In many respects the appendix as an archival resource, documents the very personal, yet meaningful and generative encounters that took place between my role as a scholar and each of the documents as material traces of the estate.

However, this is an extremely subjective and power laden process, by curating and positioning the appendices in this way I am creating a system which turns a series of unorganised or disconnected documents into a discrete set of events through which I ascribe my own set of meanings (Withers, 2002; Foucault, 1970). This is also tied to the construction of credibility and authority that I attach to the arguments within this thesis, the appendix as an archive therefore functions as 'evidence' for my claims (Withers, 2002). It is therefore important to acknowledge that while I position it as a valuable public data resource, it is a partial one, and linked to my position as a researcher. The knowledge and narratives it aims to construct should be considered alongside that which is absent (Auerbach, 2018), which in this case is a great deal, as it really only captures a very specific aspect of the estate's past; one which focuses upon its listing and demolition. Similarly, its curation is situated within my interests as an individual and researcher and therefore only contains what I found to be relevant to the project at that particular time. Despite this, I would still argue it provides the most comprehensive and detailed account of the listing, demolition, and exhibition of the estate currently available; one which weaves together the different discussions between different government and heritage bodies. Consequently, the appendices are perhaps best read as an archival assemblage

(Tamboukou, 2017) which is both a useful public history resource and a subjective record of my own creative engagement with the estate and its recent history. Its role is therefore to add weight to the arguments that I address in my work, but simultaneously represent a method and a repository which documents how I sought to apprehend and create new knowledge of the estate.

Ethnographic Approaches

While archival research represents one aspect of my textual engagement with RHG, I now wish to discuss ethnography, and how it provided a supplementary set of data that was able to articulate the experiences behind the representations discussed in the previous sections. Though ethnography encompasses a whole range of different approaches beyond the textual, including the visual (Herbert, 2000), I include it here as this is the format in which it largely presents itself within this thesis. My approach sits somewhere between more traditional ethnographic methods as an exploration of 'lived experience in all its richness and complexity' (Herbert, 2000: 551), and deeper forms of 'observant participation' (Moeran, 2009), which recognises some of the more-than-representational forms of encounter. In utilising ethnography in this way, I was able to attend to the details of everyday experience and simultaneously draw out the complexity that might escape the eye of a purely 'observation-based' approach (Tsing, 2005). It therefore became a way to document my experience of events as they unfolded at RHG, providing additional context to my engagement with residents and other visitors to the estate throughout the years of research. In practice, this meant that I took on the role of a more detached observer (Herbert, 2000), whilst in others I became actively implicated in the events of the estate (Delyser et al, 2009). This process involved visiting the RHG estate once a week for several hours at a time between 2017 and early 2020 – with an interruption in 2019. During these periods I would write notes of my observations in 'field diaries', including the sounds of the estate, noting any changes to the site and my experience of them. This strategy also informed my trip to the 2018 Venice Biennale and my interactions with the other institutions that were involved with the redevelopment, albeit these represented shorter, 'one off' exchanges, and did not always provide a similar sustained set of engagements compared to my prolonged relationship with the estate. It was throughout this process that I would take the photographs that I mentioned earlier, and which now form part of my audio-visual data. This meant that there was a strong visual component to my ethnographic approach, in that I often used my writings to discuss and explore moments of encounter that I was able to experience and visualise (Pink, 2007).

It was throughout these trips to the estate that I gradually met with residents and several other enthusiasts, over time developing a rapport – three of which went on to become interview participants. In this respect my frequent trips to the site became an opportunity to forge networks between myself and the community and gain a deeper understanding of how people experienced the gradual demolition of RHG (DeLyser et al 2009). This included a participatory workshop, organised with archaeologist James Dixon, as part of the London Festival of Architecture (June 2018), which explored the contemporary archaeologies of the estate. From these experiences I was able to create a descriptive account of the everyday interactions as the site underwent regeneration (Herbert, 2000). These experiences typify my gradual slide into ‘observant’ forms of participation, as I was actively involved in community life and the events that surrounded them. As residents shared information with me, so too was I able to share information and stories with them about my research and what I had learned about the estate.

In terms of analysing this body of descriptive ‘text’, I employed a process of ‘open coding’, in which I revisited my recorded materials throughout the project, in order to identify areas of interest (Charmaz, 2006). As a reflexive process (Watson & Till, 2010), it was also informed by my other methods, as the interviews and visual materials I had gathered would often steer my line of thinking. Consequently, my ethnographic writing represents a supplementary data form, and is used to enrich my analysis where individual and more-than-representational experience is able to add depth to how RHG can be understood (Rose, 2016). This is evident in my account of the Venice Biennale in Chapter VI, where I use my personal experience to explore many of the intimate aspects of the V&A’s display. It is also important to acknowledge that any form of writing is always a political act (Watson & Till, 2009). Just as with my discussion of audio-visual representation, my role in producing ethnographic forms of description is equally shaped by my position as a researcher (Watson & Till, 2010). The meaning that I derive from the events surrounding RHG are therefore contingent on a specific context, and on my interpretation of those events as I encountered them.

It is also important to acknowledge that ethically, this kind of ‘observant participation’ can be deeply problematic, especially in its articulation of colonial power dynamics (Watson & Till, 2009). Thus, my position as a white middle class researcher going into a working-class housing estate in order to ‘write about it’ is beset with issues of ‘academic voyeurism’ (Herbert, 2000). Therefore, there is a concern that I am imposing my voice upon the estate, making the research less about the site and people being studied and more about an individual desire to benefit from the research itself (Herbert, 2000). In this respect, I have tried to ensure that my research is sympathetic to this power dynamic, which is hopefully evident by the aims of my project, and where I have positioned my

ethnographic writing within this thesis, describing my own encounters rather than attempting to document the accounts of others. Similarly, I do not wish to position my own writing as something that is immediately relevant or authoritative in relation to the experiences of those living on the estate and have tried where possible, to use my platform to give residents an opportunity to speak about their own experience (Watson & Till, 2009). As a result, the ethnography which I present is only able to account for my experiences throughout the project.

Interviews

In adding another set of approaches to the eclectic assemblage of archaeo-geographical methods, I wish to present a dual articulation of interviewing strategies. The first consists of a number of 'expert' interviews conducted with specialists or social actors (including artists) who have had a professional or political role in the area's development. Participants were selected for their engagement with the estate's regeneration, which was often able to shape the direction of the project. Many were also gatekeepers to other important individuals or key pieces of information, and therefore reaching out to them was vital to the progression of the research. In this regard, the overarching principle used to select participants was a loose form of snowballing, whereby experts would mention '*I should speak to so and so...*', therefore revealing a trail of connections to explore further (McDowell, 2010). All of these interviews were pre-arranged and semi structured, all taking place within workspaces or public locations and tailored to the person in question. For example, I interviewed Simon Smithson – son of architects Alison and Peter, at his office in London, and my questions were suited to the historical legacy of his parents' work, this is in contrast to my discussions with the V&A which were framed around their role in exhibiting the estate. In total five interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, each ranging between 45mins and 1 and half hours. Alongside these more formal interviews there were also a range of what could be regarded as 'foundational discussions' or 'unstructured interviews' (Bissell, 2014), which were points of improvised encounter where conversations about the estate were had 'off the record'. This was in large part because many of the experts I approached did not wish to take part or be connected with the aims of the project. Likewise, some commented on frictions between colleagues or departments and therefore did not want them to be recorded. This partly explains the relatively low numbers of participants. This was also something that shaped how I described my research, particularly when approaching potential participants in local government or institutions like the V&A. As by simply mentioning gentrification, often led to visible discomfort and an unwillingness to take part. Similarly, some of the lack of uptake could also be attributed to experts' time constraints, restricting their

availability for interview (Flick 2009). Additionally, there was general fatigue for many who had been involved with RHG, as those at the museum mentioned the negative feedback they had received and were therefore reluctant to engage with the project at first. In response, I adapted my approach to suit the person I wished to engage, at times holding back on disclosing parts of my research straight away, often emphasising the broader interests of the research rather than discussing gentrification directly in order to 'get my foot in the door'. In many ways it reflects the work of Routledge (2002) who argues that keeping some information back whilst interacting with those in (relatively) powerful positions is sometimes necessary in certain cases. Although once an interview was agreed to, I often brought topics like gentrification back into the discussion, to ensure that they did not in any way feel deceived. Likewise, the entire interview process was preceded by the signing of consent forms (**Appendix A**) or verbal confirmation that they were happy to take part. In this respect, if any participant had misgivings about the project, I made sure to give ample opportunity for each expert to remove themselves from the study.

The second strand of interviews was focused on the residents of the estate. These interviews were longer taking anywhere between forty-five minutes and two hours. In total only three formal interviews were obtained. These also followed the same ethical procedures and processes of informed consent as highlighted above, the documents of which can be found in the Appendix, along with sample transcripts, participant information sheets and questions (**Appendix A**). Again, the uptake was relatively low, which was due to a combination of factors, the first being that data collection was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore I was unable to approach more of the residents for face-to-face discussions. Secondly, like the expert interviews, there was a reluctance to take part, although people were happy to chat if I saw them outside the estate, many did not want to go 'on the record' or sign consent forms. This likely stemmed from a distrust and fatigue with outsiders, as many mentioned that other researchers, including those from the council and the V&A had already asked them questions about their experiences. For those willing to participate I highlighted that all identifying details would be changed; mindful of the ethical guidelines set out in Bryman (2004) – not to harm or deceive participants, invade their privacy, and obtain consent. To ensure the anonymity of each respondent pseudonyms have been used, thus any discussion of the residents' perspectives will focus on the dialogue of Stephanie, David, and Syed as they recount their experience of living on the estate. Again, Interviews were conducted at pre-arranged times, and all took place in locations specified by the participant in an effort to encourage a more relaxed and less formal atmosphere (King & Horrocks, 2010). The questions asked were semi structured and focused on what each participant had to say about how they understood the

aesthetic discussion that circulated the estate. Their responses differed from the 'expert' interviews as they were much more focused on their 'day to day' lives rather than the more process driven and political discussions of the estate's recent past. Given the low uptake and impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic the use of resident interviews within my analysis features as a supplementary data form. While I would have liked them to have taken a more central role, having very limited data meant that I did not wish to present them in a tokenistic or insincere fashion (although transcribed interviews can still be found in **Appendix A**).

In this regard the residents' voices feature as a layer of auditory data that is woven throughout the chapters of analysis (rather than a distinct or separate chapter) so as to add depth to how we can understand and interpret the multiple and competing images that have surrounded RHG. Therefore, while the primary focus of this thesis is on the representation of the estate, the interviews that I did manage to conduct still form part of the 'method assemblage' (Law, 2004) that I mentioned at the beginning of this section. The interdisciplinary approach that I employ combines each of these forms of interview in order to draw out a different perspective of the estate. Hopefully by interspersing the accounts of those with direct experience of the estate throughout my discussion I can gain a better understanding of how the aesthetics of the estate are produced, mobilised, and interpreted.

Challenges

I also wish to use this chapter to reflect upon the PhD process. My objective is to provide some additional context around the development of the project and how I have responded to the various challenges which have shaped my research. I begin by stating my initial expectations at the beginning of the process, which centred around producing a direct piece of community research that sought to analyse RHG's problematic redevelopment – with a strong focus on interviews and the materiality of demolition. The intention was to work alongside the developers and residents of the estate in order to generate a more complex discussion around the site's regeneration in relation to London's housing crisis. The notions of aesthetics and representation at this point were largely absent. Methodologically it would still use Geography and Archaeology methods but focus on collecting primary interview and material data which could then be analysed to provide a socially engaged perspective of displacement as the destruction of the estate progressed. For a number of reasons this initial plan had to be adapted as circumstances changed.

Firstly, the project has been hampered by a general lack of engagement from both a public and institutional perspective. I have already mentioned the level of community fatigue in relation to

taking part in Interviews, with only a small number agreeing. My responses from the RHG artists were equally limited, many choosing to ignore my requests to discuss their work. This was also the case for the developers (Swan Housing) who made it clear that they did not want to be involved and denied my requests to access both demolition and construction sites. A similar process occurred with the V&A Museum, and while they were happy to be interviewed about the exhibition, any requests for additional participation or collaboration were ignored (although they were more than happy to request that should I find any architectural drawings I should let them know). This was despite the relevance of my work to their own publicly stated intentions to engage in a dialogue about the issues concerning the RHG estate. Understandably this lack of engagement influenced the kinds of data I would be able to access and shifted my focus away from more direct encounters with the demolition and exhibition to secondary sources which tended to document the aesthetic aspects of the estate throughout its recent history.

Reflecting on this, I am not surprised by the lack of engagement. In many ways the timing of the PhD came a little late, with much of the public debate around RHG ending in 2015 after the COI was reissued. On the other hand, to have two major institutions – one a private housing association and the other a national museum - both of whom were deeply involved with the estate in very controversial ways, brush off the project at nearly every opportunity, seems to encapsulate the issues that I attempt to address in this PhD. Namely that a select few have been able to control the aesthetic narratives that surround the estate and that are also unwilling to engage in any meaningful discussion around the issues brought about by their involvement. I feel it is a point worth reflecting upon, as I'm sure if either Swan or the V&A should read this they will rally against my criticism (the V&A did run a limited number of public events on the future of social housing) – yet both were given opportunities to work with the aims and objectives of this research and more often than not declined to do so. Fundamentally it has meant that instead of being able to gather primary interview and ethnographic data as intended I have instead relied upon secondary resources and documents that these organisations have produced.

Another challenge has been my health, which unfortunately has been a major issue since I started the PhD in 2017. Already this start date was delayed by a year due to having to interrupt my MA degree for health reasons. To put this into perspective, over the past five years I have been diagnosed with: brain haemorrhage; encephalitis; ITP; hyposplenism, Crohn's disease, abdominal abscesses, abdominal fistula, Posner-Schlossman Syndrome and bilateral papilledema. This has been accompanied by no end of exploratory and diagnostic procedures, as well as two rounds of surgery. My intention in being so candid is not to garner sympathy but rather an appreciation of the quite

frankly absurd medical circumstances in which I have had to carry out my research. Similarly seeing it written on the page like this is the first time I have taken stock of my own stubbornness and determination to stay healthy sufficiently long enough to finish this piece of work. I have since recovered remarkably well all things considered, but it has meant interruptions to my work and to what I have been able to achieve. The most significant of these was a nine-month interruption between 2019 and 2020 for Crohn's related surgery and recovery. This was then followed by the COVID 19 pandemic, through which I have had to shield, remaining in isolation for over 12 months. Each of these on their own has been devastating, often being unable to write or work for weeks at a time. The toll on my mental health has also been significant, but the PhD has also saved my life. Without structure, a goal to work towards and the funding to do so I would be in a far worse position.

Each of these factors has had a profound impact on the kinds of data and the directions of my study, especially towards the end of the project. It has curtailed the number of interviews I would have liked to have drawn upon within my analysis and has also meant that access to the site over the final year of the project was impossible. The scope of the project therefore shifted to account for each of these challenges, moving away from its more positivistic roots to focus on a creative process of working with different sources and how they have affected the material politics of the estate. This meant I could continue to carry out research in isolation/recovery as documents and sources were available online or by request. I have (as much as possible) kept the central commitment to interdisciplinary Cultural Geography/Contemporary Archaeology methods, using them to interrogate the archival and representational materials that I was able to collect. This also accounts for the projects focus upon the aesthetic, which is a discussion that features more prominently in the archival and media record.

Despite these challenges, I have still achieved what I set out to do. The thesis represents a valuable critique of RHG's regeneration and the politics that have surrounded its immunity from listing. While the direction of the project has changed, this in no way represents a less rigorous analysis of the estate. In providing this account, I hope this gives a greater overview of the external factors which have shaped my research, offering additional justification for some of the decisions I have made.

Summary

Chapter III has discussed the different methodological considerations that have formed this body of research. In doing so it presents a framework through which Archaeology and Geography can work together in order to study different forms of representation as they manifest within the landscape. It illustrates how archaeological interests intersect with geographical concerns, including the apprehension of politically charged architectural/urban spaces. In many ways it shows how the material focus of Archaeology is able to combine with the affective and more-than-representational forms of enquiry built into cultural geographic modes of engagement. As a result, Chapter III directly addresses elements of **RQ4** and how we can utilise cultural geographic and archaeological forms of enquiry to draw out new knowledge of urban space. While it only offers one side of the discussion, and how such methods can be applied (the rest will be explored in the subsequent chapters), it illustrates how various approaches can be held together in assemblage within an archaeological-geographical imaginary which can in turn be applied to a specific site of political and urban contestation. In utilising such an interdisciplinary approach what will hopefully be revealed in the remainder of this thesis, is precisely what kinds of knowledge can be extracted, alongside the types of conclusions that can be drawn and how they can augment our understanding of urban space. Thus, whilst it can be regarded as just another 'archaeological/geographical story', I present it as one which is able to make the politics of those that have been affected by the estate's redevelopment visible and audible; highlighting how it has played into a wider set of aesthetic discussions. It is with this in mind that I turn to the first chapter of analysis and consider the role of the 'Brutalist Image' and how RHG continues to be mediated through photographic practices in the present day.

Chapter IV

THE BRUTALIST IMAGE

Introduction

'We tend to forget that every photograph is an artefact...the photograph being an artefact applies its own laws of artefaction to the material it documents, and discovers similarities and parallels between the documentation, even where none exist between the objects and events recorded...' (Reyner Banham – In his review of 'Parallel of Life and Art' 1953: 259-260)

In Banham's comments regarding the Independent Group's exhibition at the 'Parallel of Life and Art', his reference to the photograph as an artefact becomes a way of envisioning different connections between different images, objects, and places. A means to discover the similarities and parallels between seemingly disparate entities, reflected in the exhibition's eclectic display of unrelated images. His use of a distinctly archaeological and historical term also positions images as something that can be 'found', studied and interpreted. In the same vein I wish to continue his use of archaeological metaphor to consider that the 'image' can also take on the metaphor of sediment, as collections of images and photographs can circulate around different sites of meaning, becoming deposited or redeposited, taking on new representations or forming different connotations. At the same time, the 'image' as a conceptual 'layer' was important to how Brutalism was understood and defined by Banham and the Smithsons. These interpretations of the image as sediment (groups of images) and layers (the more abstract accumulation of sediment – groups of images of time) can then be explored and expanded upon, providing greater detail into how and why they circulate around particular sites and the subsequent narratives that the layer of sediment attempts to construct. For instance, by engaging with the many material, social, and digital representations of RHG's past, present, and future I look to uncover the sediment that has built up around the notion of the Brutalist image at Robin Hood Gardens, and how the aesthetics of Brutalism continue to be reinvented and appropriated for new audiences in the present day.

Therefore, this chapter utilises a range of photographic resources in order to generate a dialogue around how the 'image' has been mobilised by the Smithsons and around RHG. As such, it returns to focus on the Independent Group and how the street photography of Nigel Henderson and the collages of Eduardo Paolozzi were important in influencing the Smithsons' use of 'Brutalist images'. From this it moves to consider how the representational strategies used by the Independent Group and contemporary forms of photography present specific narratives of Brutalist architecture. In particular, it examines the work of Ioana Marinescu and Kois Miah, in order to explore the use of 'grids', 'monochrome', 'the interruption' and 'the ruin' and how they structure multiple iterations of

RHG. In many ways the more recent photographic representations of the estate present a shift away from the ethical discussions that the Smithsons were trying to have in their own work, instead expressing a more simplistic concern with its aesthetics. From these encounters with the 'Brutalist image', what this section hopes to illustrate is how important the notion of the 'image' is to Brutalism's continual definition and experience as a form of architecture in the present. In this respect RHG continues to be shaped and understood by different uses and representations of the 'image', which impacts how it is mobilised by particular political forces. At the same time, it also looks to conclude by presenting how viewing 'images' as a form of sediment which can 'build up' over time enables an analysis that can weave together different aspects of the RHG's history with an aesthetic politics that is still relevant to the present day. Thus, the image in both conceptual and material terms continues to dictate how we engage and encounter the estate. But first, I now wish to begin my discussion by returning to how Brutalism as a style is inherently connected to practices of photography.

Photography and Robin Hood Gardens

The photograph has always been central to the construction of the Brutalist image. As previously highlighted (Chapter II: 51), the aesthetics of Brutalism during its conception was heavily influenced by the works of Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi and their involvement within the Independent Group. Their use of photographic images has long been influential in understanding the distinct ethical and aesthetic dimensions of Brutalism and how those ideas were represented to the wider world. For instance, the Smithsons drew a great deal of inspiration from Henderson's work in Bethnal Green (1953, **Figures 1-5**). His images conveyed a material world which embodied the working lives of those in the East End, creating a historical narrative that was shaped by the lives of people. Henderson placed a great deal of emphasis on capturing the 'life' of the street, focusing on the everyday lives of those at work or play, from the overcrowded window display of a tobacconist (**Figure 1**) to boys loitering outside a newsagent (**Figure 3**), or the many stall owners going about their lives (**Figures 2 & 4**). The many subtleties that his work conveys have come to be regarded as capturing a Brutalist sensibility or an aesthetic that looked at the overlooked, that discarded the values of an established high culture (Higgot & Wray, 2012). It is in some of these early images where we get a sense of how the Smithsons' practice came to incorporate the approach and style of Henderson's photography, informing many of the stylistic elements which went on to be known as Brutalism.

A similar emphasis on the ideas of the 'overlooked' and 'everyday' is explored by the *'Parallel of Life and Art'* (1953). As I mentioned in Chapter II, the exhibition consisted of numerous images, photographs, and drawings of a great variety of objects installed in the manner of earlier avant gardist rooms such as those of El Lizzisky or Kurt Schwitters (Macarthur, 2005; **Figures 6 & 7**). The installation shocked the public and the arts establishment for its refusal of the concept of finished form and for blurring the differences between nature, art, architecture, technology, and anthropology (Macarthur, 2005). It attempted to advance a new approach within Modernism that started with the everyday material qualities of life and refrained from seeking to develop universal and general applications of such ideas (Higgot & Wray, 2012). In a similar way to Henderson's images of Bethnal Green it challenged the established values of high art and replaced them with an appreciation of the everyday; where seemingly random images could come together to generate new meaning about what could be considered 'art'. This reinforced the idea of the Brutalist image as something built on a perceived raw reality, that captured the everyday qualities of life in all its beauty, while eschewing the restrictions of 'high art and culture' (Van den Heuvel, 2015). These divergent attitudes to images are also seen in the article written by the Smithsons titled; *'But Today We Collect Ads'* (1956), which focused on collecting everyday adverts so that they could be appropriated and transformed (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). In it they discuss the effectiveness of the imagery of consumerism, its use of gleaming modern products often directly relevant to people's lives. They go on to highlight the value of creating art and architecture that is able to communicate with authentic life at the level of popular culture and how advertisements fit into that logic (Higgot & Wray, 2012).



Figure 1. S Lavner, newsagent and tobacconist, 241 Bethnal Green Rd, E2- Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 2. S Mason's fresh fish stall, Bethnal Green Rd, E2 - Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 3. Boys outside W&F Riley newsagent, 76 Cleveland Way, Bethnal Green, E2 - Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 4. Kitchenware stall, Bethnal Green Rd, E2- Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 5. Boys on bicycles, Derbyshire St, Bethnal Green, E2 - Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 6. Study for Parallel of Life & Art - Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi (1952)



Figure 7. Installation of 'Parallel of Life and Art' exhibition at the ICA, London (1953)

While these examples represent snapshots of the Independent Group's preoccupation with photography, it highlights the significance of the 'image' in communicating their aesthetic and ethical choices in relation to the Brutalist style. The Independent Group's fascination with the photographic medium reflects the effect that photography and image culture more generally were having on professional practice throughout the 1950s and 60s (Walsh & Zimmerman, 2016). Images during this period rapidly increased in importance for communication and for marketing products in an array of fields, including, art, advertising, design, and architecture (Walsh & Zimmerman, 2016). The reproducibility of the photographic image reflects earlier discussions by Benjamin ([1935], 1968) and the emergence of new technology in understanding aesthetic political experience (Chapter II: 57). The proliferation of photographic media thus aids the Independent Group's critique of established Art and Architectural expertise, as it shifts attention away from classical notions of 'beauty' to consider how the same could be derived from everyday experience. As Brutalism emerges, we also find the parallel inception of Pop Art (which also originates from members of the same group), both taking the popular and the 'uncultured' and changing their meaning through context and montage (Robbins, 1990). What is evident in the work of both these movements originating in the 1950s is their creation of potent imagery (Higgot & Wray, 2012). This imagery created as Bachelard (1994) might say, 'a resonance' or a communication other than the directness of fact; communication heightened and made poetic. Images rather than words were at its core (Higgot & Wray, 2012).

A point further stipulated by Banham in 'The New Brutalism' (1955) of which 'Memorability as an Image' was the first of the three key characteristics that supposedly defined Brutalism. A point which positioned the Brutalist image as something that theoretically 'lodged' in the brain because it had something 'thing-like' about it. Banham (1956: 186 – 188) once referred to them as 'concrete images'; images that can carry the mass of tradition and association, or the energy of novelty and technology, and deliver them to the beholding subject. Which again positioned the image as something crucial to the construction of the Brutalist way of thinking. That in theory you could capture the 'thingness' of everyday life and elevate it to that which was memorable, while still retaining all its associated pasts and contexts. What these ideas begin to highlight is how historically the image and the photograph played an important role in the Independent Group's understanding of Brutalism, as well as forming a distinct part of their practice. Its focus on the 'as found' and use of the 'everyday' serving to position Brutalism as a movement that was counter cultural, anti-aesthetic but distinctly predicated on the 'image'.

As we fast forward to the present Brutalism and the Brutalist image has seen a great revival. As Lindner (2019: 77) puts it 'Brutalism is back'. On the internet, one finds blogs, Facebook groups and websites that celebrate Brutalist architecture, such as 'Fuck Yeah Brutalism', 'The Brutalism Appreciation Society' and over 500,000 posts on Instagram with the hashtag #Brutalism. Extensive coverage by lifestyle and architectural magazines such as *Dezeen*, *Wallpaper* and *Monocle*, *Buzzfeed*, reproduce a multitude of interpretations of the Brutalist image and its aesthetic (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Even a Google Trends search (**Figure 8**) points to a gradual increase in popularity of searching for Brutalist images, particularly concentrated within much of western Europe and the United States, the peak of which coincides with the acquisition of part of Robin Hood Gardens by the V&A.

But amidst this vast array of imagery there is a growing emergence of a new genre of Brutalist photography, particularly across social media. Its emergence brings about a new form of engagement with Brutalist architecture, influencing how we interpret the realities of such spaces. Particularly at sites such as RHG, where its contested history and demolition provide no end of opportunities for amateur and professional photographers to capture a Brutalist building 'in its last days'. In particular, there are a number of shared visual strategies and conventions that emerge between the work of the Independent Group and many modern-day photographers as each try to capture images of the RHG estate.

Framing and Grids

One set of visual strategies which runs across both the Smithsons' curation of the Brutalist image and modern contexts is the use of grids. Frames and grids are a means to organize ideas visually through juxtaposition. Images exhibiting these strategies are typically those in which the primary visual impression comes either from the overall framing of the image or from the operations of frames within it (Walsh & Zimmerman, 2016). As a visual motif the grid is something that has come to define modernist and Brutalist styles, as the art historian Rosalind Krauss notes in her seminal essay '*Grids*' (1979), it 'functions to declare the modernity of modern art'. Grids were a key part of the Smithsons' approach, particularly in their use of the CIAM grille (**Figure 9**, Walsh & Zimmerman, 2016). The Smithsons prepared their 'Urban Reidentification Grid', as a demonstration of how a proposal could derive its distinctive form from social patterns of association. The grid features the Smithsons' failed entry for the Golden Lane estate (1952) (Steiner, 2011) and was intended to display how the community should be built from a hierarchy of associational elements and how these could be expressed at levels such as the street, the district, and the city (Steiner, 2011).

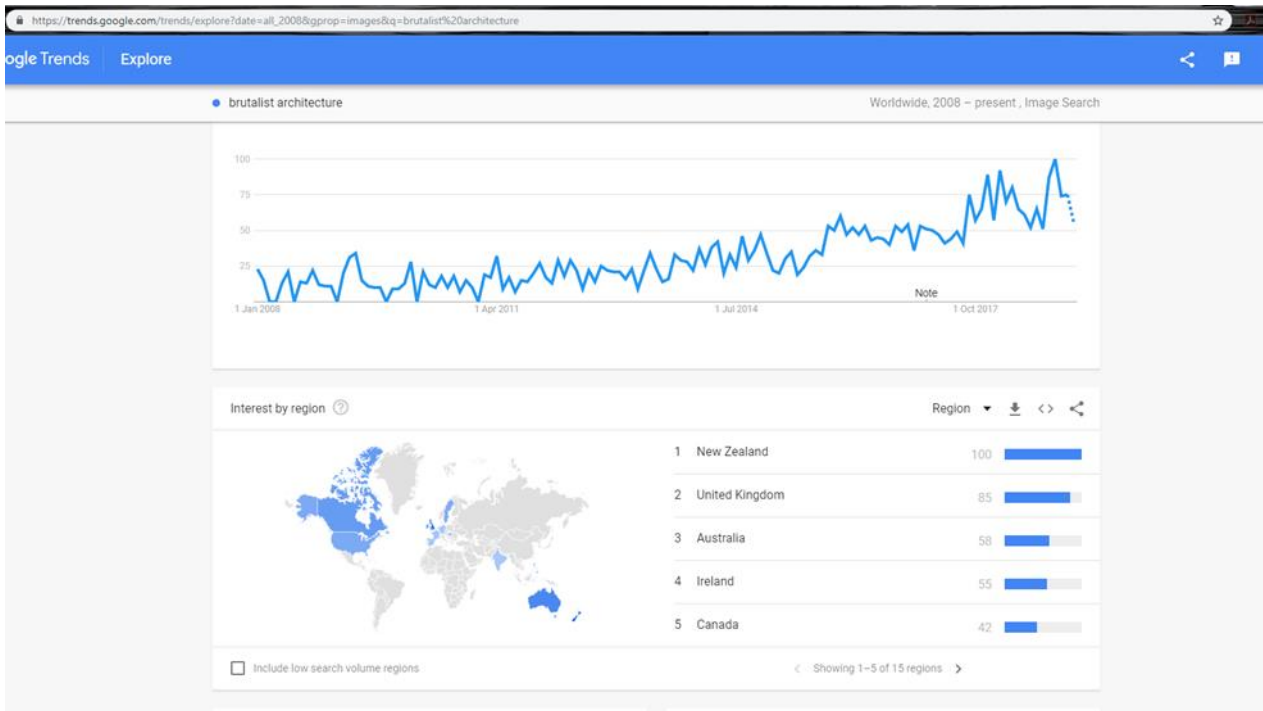


Figure 8. Google Trends image search of the terms ‘Brutalist architecture’ showing a gradual increase in popularity between 2008 and 2019



Figure 9. ‘Urban Reidentification Grid’ - Alison & Peter Smithson (1953) on display at the Venice Biennale 2018

The Smithsons' grid points to a gradual increase in scale, from house to city, using a variety of media from architectural drawings to photographs of children playing taken by Nigel Henderson (**Figure 9**). Henderson's unaltered photographs provided snapshots of an engaged city life within the more technical language of urban reform (Steiner, 2011). The notion of a genuine encounter was grounded further by the fact that the images were of children at play. In the context of the conventions of the presentation 'grille', these non-orchestrated photographs functioned in the manner of orthography, as 'measurable documents of reality' (Steiner, 2011). The images attempted to contrast the fluid nature of the urban fabric with the diagrammatic purity of the grid's divisions. The Smithsons believed that such documentary style photography conveyed the same quality of captured contingency, what they referred to as the 'as found', that needed to be reintroduced to architecture to equate a method of building with a way of life (Steiner 2006). This particular use of the grid also reflects what Borden (2007) refers to as dialectical imagery, where juxtaposition through visual montage (via the application of the grid) allows conventional periodisations and causal explanations of chronology to be destabilised. Meaning is then produced not by logical interpretation of facts and documents over regular intervals, but from a collision of politics, events, and ideas, shocked out from objects through their displacement in time and space within the grid. Particularly evident in the Smithsons' contribution to CIAM 9 (**Figure 9**) where we see abstract space of the architectural drawing, juxtaposed with the very real world inhabited by children playing alongside the somewhat abstract painting of sun and man at the centre.

Similar strategies can be seen in other work by Paolozzi and Henderson, for instance, **Figure 10** is an untitled work displayed at the *Parallel of Life and Art* (1953) which shows the conscious use of grids as a framing device to create juxtaposition between the ordered and the chaotic 'as found' elements of reality. Such ideas are also evident in **Figure 6**, another collaboration between Henderson and Paolozzi, where collage is used to create the effect of a couple looking at a series of images displayed in a grid, mirroring in a rather tongue-in-cheek style the exhibition in which it was displayed. Again, the grid is used as a device for juxtaposition but also as repetition, as images are placed one after the other in a chaotic yet ordered 'grid like' manner. This forces the viewer to make his/her/their own assumptions and connections between the images in order to derive their own meaning.

Important though, is the sense that these images have been made by a conscious intervention with a frame or a framing device. This is not the image 'as found', but rather the beginnings of a staged or constructed image or set of images. In reality the grid only provides a window structure that serves as a device to show only fragments of visual reality (Tupitsyn, 2009). This presents the very

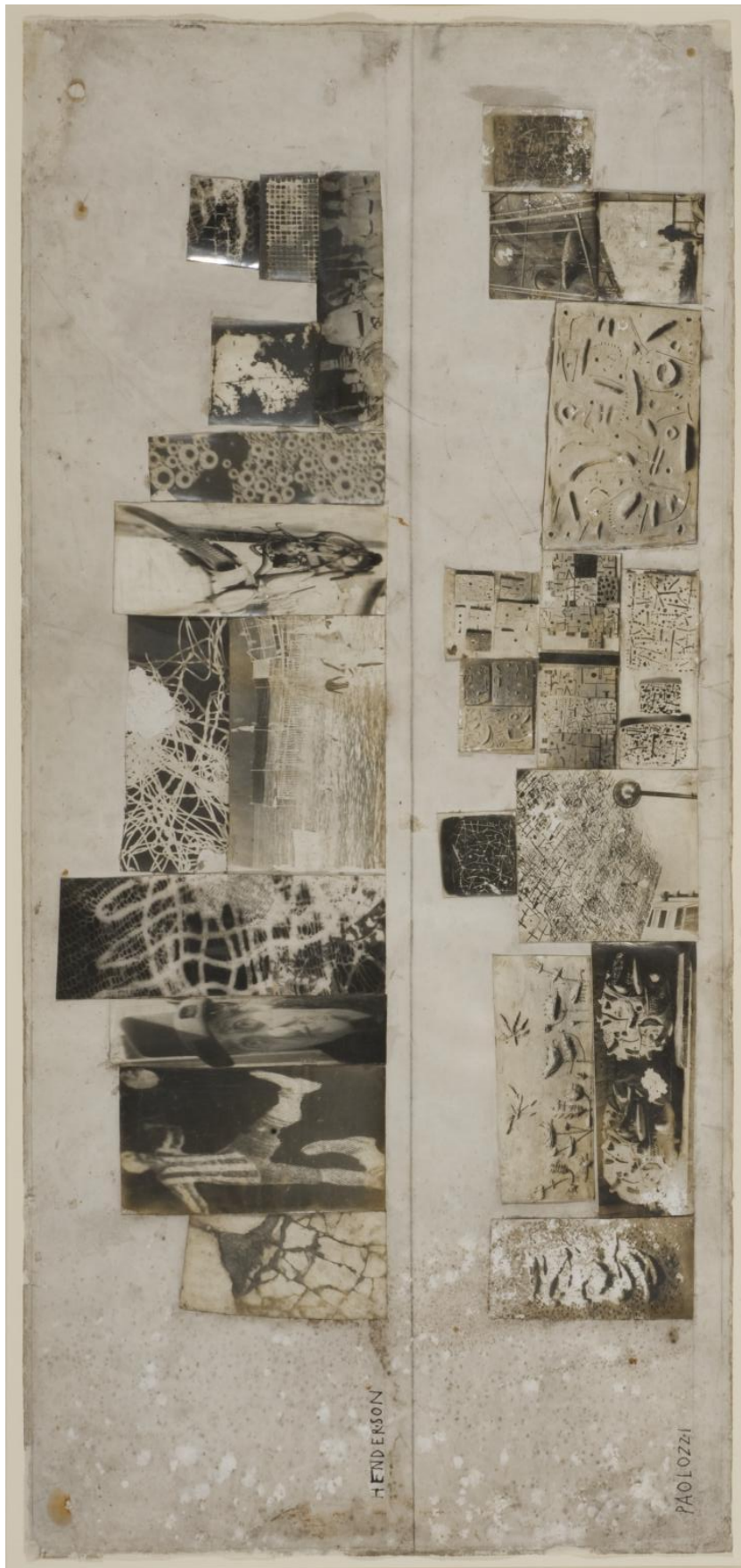


Figure 10. Untitled (Study for Parallel of Life and Art) Eduardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson (1953)

deliberate choices made by the Smithsons and the Independent Group in how they curated the Brutalist aesthetic, slightly at odds with Brutalism's supposed appreciation of materials and conditions in situ. Instead, it highlights their mediation of reality through framing and grids to cultivate a perceived aesthetic of honesty and realism.

In a similar way, when turning to encounter modern day representations of the Brutalist image at Robin Hood Gardens, we find that the grid has also become a medium through which architectural imagery is mediated, particularly in how image platforms and social media choose to group similar content together. In contrast to the Independent Group's use of the grid as a frame for juxtaposition and scale, sites such as Instagram and Facebook see the grid as method of homogenisation; where Brutalism is put in a readily transferable and recognisable format to be consumed. When searching under the term 'Robin Hood Gardens' what we are presented with is a 3x3 grid of resized images (**Figure 11**), displayed primarily because of their 'searchable metadata'. In their own manner the images in **Figure 11** represent the 'as found' realities of RHG as they are encountered on the internet. Each platform using their own algorithms to feed the user more of the same content as it is constantly changing and updating as layers and layers of images are deposited into Instagram's archive. Robin Hood Gardens is therefore reduced to carefully cropped grid squares, that echo the perceived slab like qualities of its architecture. In a similar way to the Smithsons' CIAM grille, what we are fed is a very narrow field of view that only portrays key elements of the site itself. This reduces architectural experience to that which is perceived through the lens of the grid square and the algorithm. As we can see in **Figures 11 & 12**, we only get limited snapshots that show the façade of RHG and its notable architectural features such as the 'Streets in the Sky'.

However, while the images we see in the figures below do not employ the same processes of visual juxtaposition as the Independent Group, the effect on how audiences interpret meaning is arguably the same. Referring back to the idea of the dialectical image (Borden 2007), we can see that audiences viewing the images in **Figure 11**, will be forced to draw their conclusions and connections about RHG based on what is presented in the grid. Each image is created by a different user, and each brings a different set of meanings and stylistic choices to the idea of 'Robin Hood Gardens'. For instance, we see concrete bricks at the centre of the image in the top right, much of the concrete façade is also captured by other users and several images display people making 'pilgrimages' to the site. This confronts the viewer with the building's materiality as well as its status as a site worthy of performative aesthetic appreciation. Very few images of the interior and of people living there are displayed, largely focusing on the building's use of concrete and its architectural design. It presents an entirely different politics and set of considerations that is less-

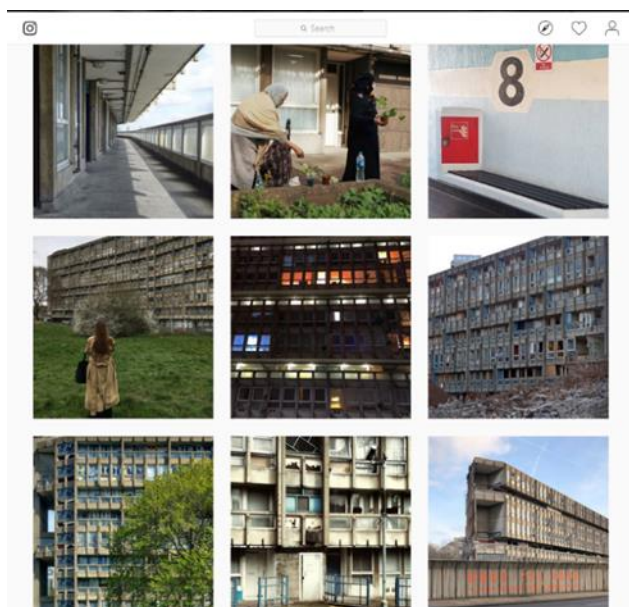
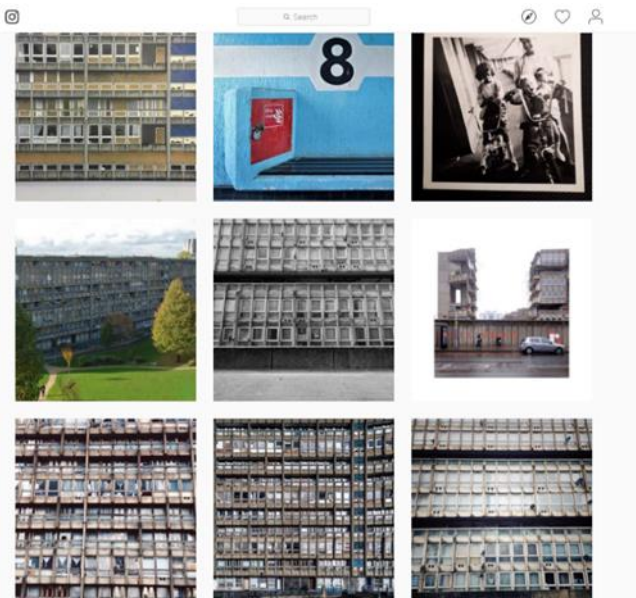
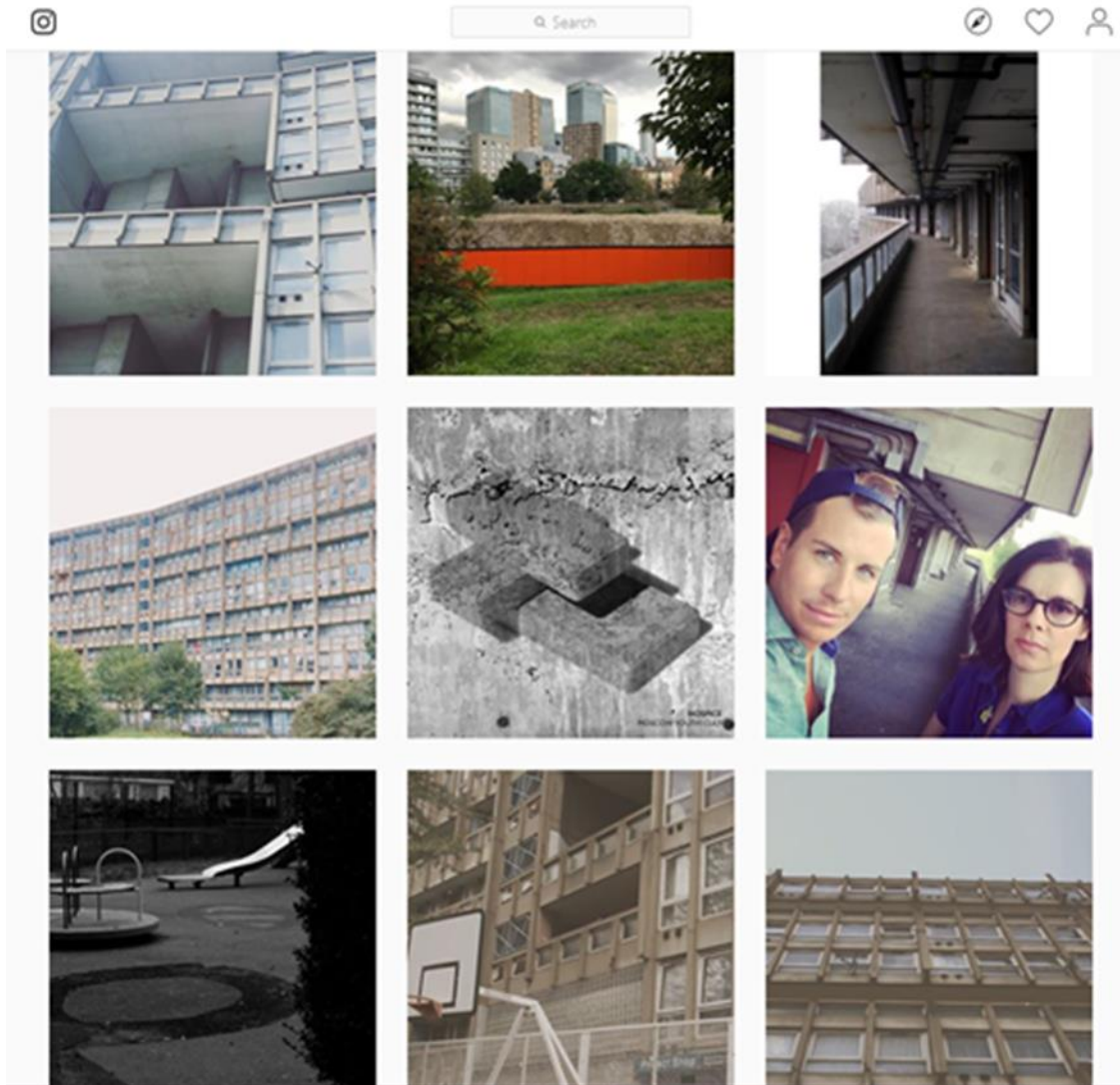


Figure 11. First three pages of user uploaded images on Instagram under the search terms 'Robin Hood Gardens' – February 2019

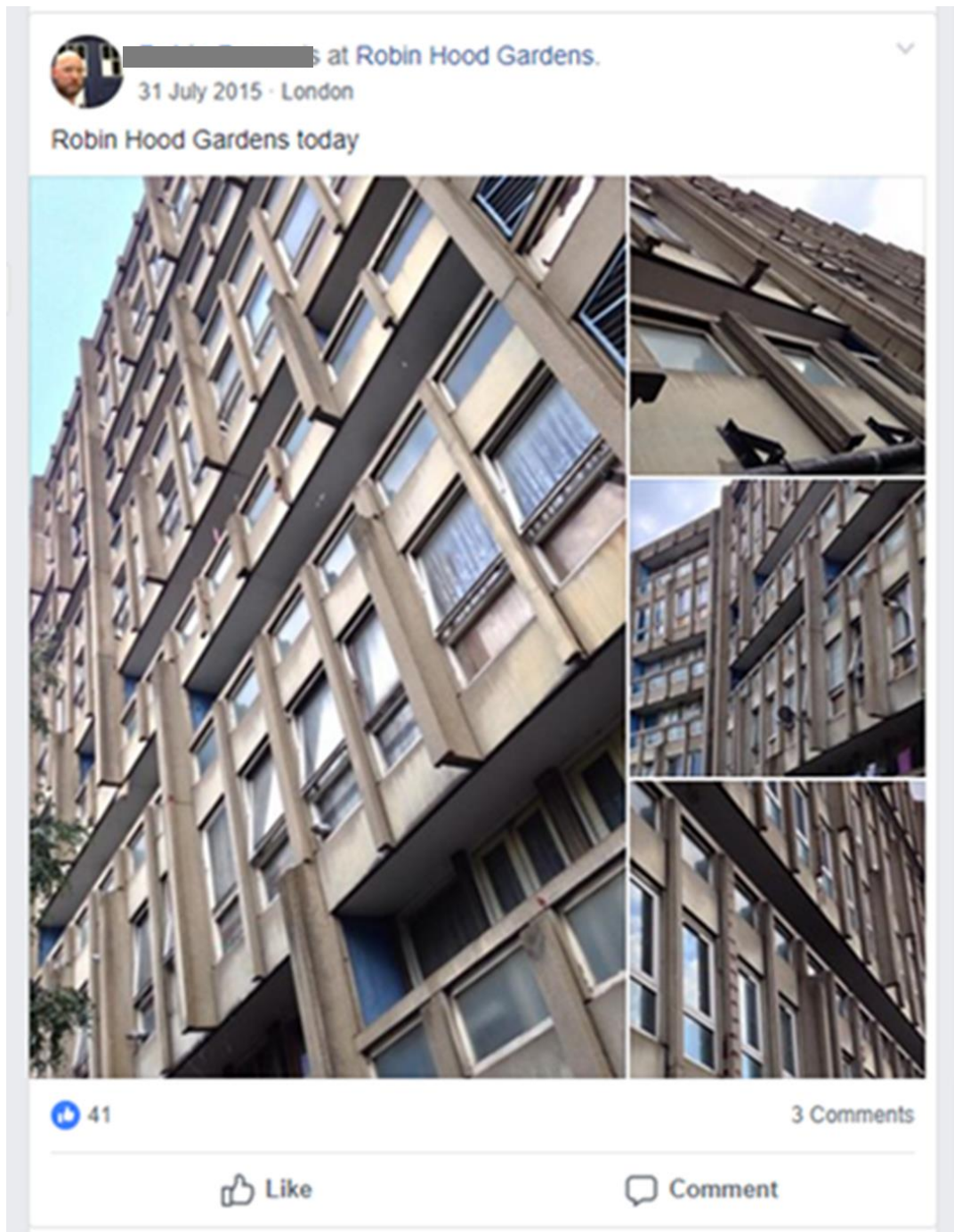


Figure 12. Facebook post of Robin Hood Gardens uploaded to the 'Brutalism Appreciation Society' in 2015

about shocking the viewer and challenging them through juxtaposition, but instead exposes them to a very singular but collective narrative of RHG; the platform inviting them to reproduce even more of the same.

What is interesting in considering the mediation of the Brutalist image through ideas of the grid is that the compositional choices made by the Independent Group and individual users of social media are fundamentally very similar. Both are arguably equally as constructed, the Independent Group use the grid to highlight and frame their own claims to reality, while the social media grid represents a means through which reality is interpreted and encountered. However, whereas historically, Brutalism and the grid were related to the Independent Group's own ethical and aesthetic choices we now see how sites such as RHG are mediated through different forms of the grid that transform its context from one associated with the moral and ethical design ideals of the Smithsons to one that is focused on an aesthetic of homogenisation, where images are grouped together, and reproduced in increasingly similar formats.

Nostalgia

The role of the grid also generates a discussion around how images of Robin Hood Gardens and Brutalism have come to reflect a particular nostalgic aesthetic. Instagram's use of the grid is very deliberate, as it imposes particular semiotic constraints on the user, only allowing images of a specific 'square' dimension. The use of 'square images' creates what may be thought of as 'neo-retro' (Chesher, 2012), in that it nostalgically positions itself in relation to past photographic practices such as Polaroid photography. This idea of collective faux-nostalgia or 'instant nostalgia' (Chesher, 2012) is also construed through the choice of digital filters that can be applied to the image. For instance, a lot of image platforms allow the user to manipulate visual dimensions of the image that invoke older media and conventions. 'Retro'- style filters of this kind evoke the physical imperfections of analogue film processing through effects mimicking phenomena such as light leaks and vignetting (Zappavigna, 2016). In a similar way we can see how images in **Figures 11, 12 & 13**, particularly those from Instagram, use filters and changes in contrast to evoke a more nostalgic and distressed look. Again, we can see similarities between Henderson's and Paolozzi's work (**Figures 6 & 10**) and modern-day depictions of RHG (**Figures 11, 12 & 13**) as both employ the use of distress, black and white and different filters to create differing senses of temporality. The use of black and white in particular reflects Henderson's own work in Bethnal Green (**Figures 1-5.**) where he cultivates a nostalgic sensibility in order to generate a sense of historical significance and authority to local communities in the East End. While any photographic effects invoking the past that we can



Figure 13. Black and white photographs of Robin Hood Gardens uploaded to the 'Brutalism Appreciation Society' on Facebook from 2017 – 19 (Clockwise)

see in **Figures 11, 12 & 13** might be employed nostalgically, the social function here appears to be more about rendering more poignant the present moment, in particular the banal, every day present moment. This kind of intensifying of interpersonal meaning is achieved through the added emotional value provided by a temporal distance that is made visible by a dated aesthetic (Lüders et al, 2010). While such images exist in the present, they bear the hallmarks of authenticity that suggest they also existed in the past, despite being manipulated to do so. These similarities highlight how many of the original design choices employed by the Independent Group are still retained and 'emulated' in modern day representations of RHG. It also suggests that there is a constructed nostalgia that surrounds Brutalism that is less about the 'as found' qualities of the everyday but more about the aestheticization of a nostalgic aesthetic.

While numerous online images of RHG attempt to evoke a sense of nostalgia, many of them also erase time altogether (Borden, 2007), in that the building is represented without any visual reference to a specific time period. This is particularly noticeable where the image does not contain any historical signifiers such as period clothes or cars (Borden, 2007). This is also something commented on by Tschumi as he presents how this is the usual condition of the architectural photograph, such that the order of architecture remains unviolated by the differing order of social activities: *'do architectural photographs ever include runners, fighters, lovers?'* (1994: 123). As Till (2000) has argued, this is no accident, but is an explicit attempt to erase those elements of time which challenge architecture's authority. In the case of Robin Hood Gardens and its representation in social media, the elements that are 'erased' are those that would undermine the raw elements of its architectural design, where more visible evidence of inhabitation would be at odds with its imposing and geometrically abstract structure. This is particularly true of black and white images, which tend to emphasise the temporal otherness of the building, even suggesting it is somewhere else as well as in a different time (Borden, 2007). This is most evident in the images from Facebook in **Figure 13**, where the lack of people and objects in the images create a sense of RHG belonging to a reality outside of time itself, belonging to a past that never really existed other than in the image.

These ideas are not limited to Facebook and Instagram. The photographic work of Ioana Marinescu also utilises black and white photography to create a nostalgic view of RHG. Her work depicted in the book *'Robin Hood Gardens Re-Visions'* (Powers, 2010), published by the 20th Century Society, also adds to the growing nostalgic aesthetic attached to Brutalism. Her photos capture the estate from numerous vantage points focusing primarily on documenting key architectural features such as the 'Streets in the Sky' (**Figure 15**), the exterior sound baffle (**Figure 16**) as well as the estate as seen from one of the east block balconies (**Figure 14**). Again, there is a lack of people in the images, with a

few passers-by in **Figure 16**, life on the estate remains very much absent. Instead, the focus remains on the more aesthetic and architectural elements of the site. This is made even more distinct by the fact that her work is preceded in the book by photographs from the Smithsons' archive which capture the building's construction, all of which are colour images and show people working and living around the site (**Figure 17 & 18**) particularly during bright and sunny days (**Figure 19**).

They seem far more playful and evoke an optimism which is absent in Ioana's photographs later in the book. It presents an interesting juxtaposition with how the modern-day RHG is represented in contrast to its construction. The initial architect's photos are full of optimism and hope, perhaps reflecting the utopian ethics that Brutalism championed (Mould, 2016). While Marinescu's photographs present the estate as devoid of life, reduced largely to its aesthetic qualities, as if its image is all the estate has left to offer. The representation of RHG offered by Marinescu perhaps reflects the book's purpose as a publication by the 20th Century Society to aid in the listing of RHG, and by positioning it as a site in need of saving, the 'nostalgic' images reinforcing RHG as a site under threat and one that is worthy of remembering. Yet the use of monochrome and the emphasis on the estate's perceived 'timelessness' (Borden, 2007) further positions her work in line with recent trends which fetishize its nostalgic aesthetic, glossing over the 'lived' representations of the estate.

The emphasis on 'nostalgia' represented in many of the photos of RHG is particularly poignant when we consider the idea of 'memorability' that Banham discusses in *'The New Brutalism'* (1955), which can be defined as 'the quality or state of being easy to remember or worth remembering'. The idea of memory therefore plays a key role in how Brutalism is being represented and remembered. When we consider the modern-day context, we see a move to represent a past or possible reality rather than to represent an 'actual' reality, a shift from the documentary to fiction. Like Henderson's photos of the East End, we see the semiotics and conventions of modern-day Brutalist photography mirror those of its predecessors, where black and white is used to capture a form of 'the past'. One is like a single image, the other like photomontage, one is documentary, the other is blockbuster – both equally scripted and equally fictional. This also denotes a shift in the idea of memorability in relation to Brutalism, where memory takes on an additional meaning as it recalls the past but marks the present; a nostalgia for a bygone era that is purely aesthetic. Memorability in relation to the Brutalist image of the present day therefore becomes something different from what Banham intended, predicated not on presence, but on absence, on images as mental projection accessed through acts of constructed remembrance, not made palpable through sight.

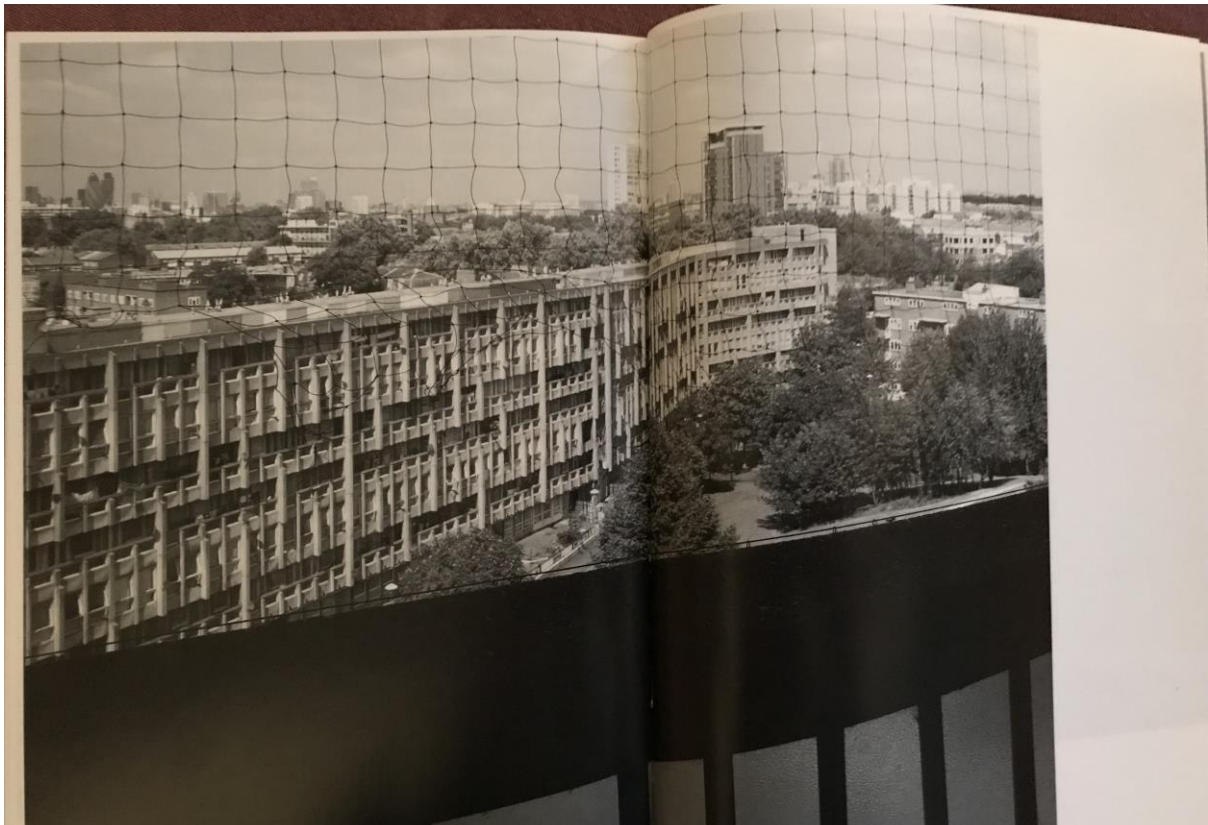


Figure 14. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, view from the east block looking over the west block - Ioana Marinescu (2009). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p150)



Figure 15. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, streets in the sky - Ioana Marinescu (2009). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p149)



Figure 16. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, west block on the corner of poplar high street - Ioana Marinescu (2009). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p138)



Figure 17. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, Alison and Peter Smithson Archive (1972). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p94)

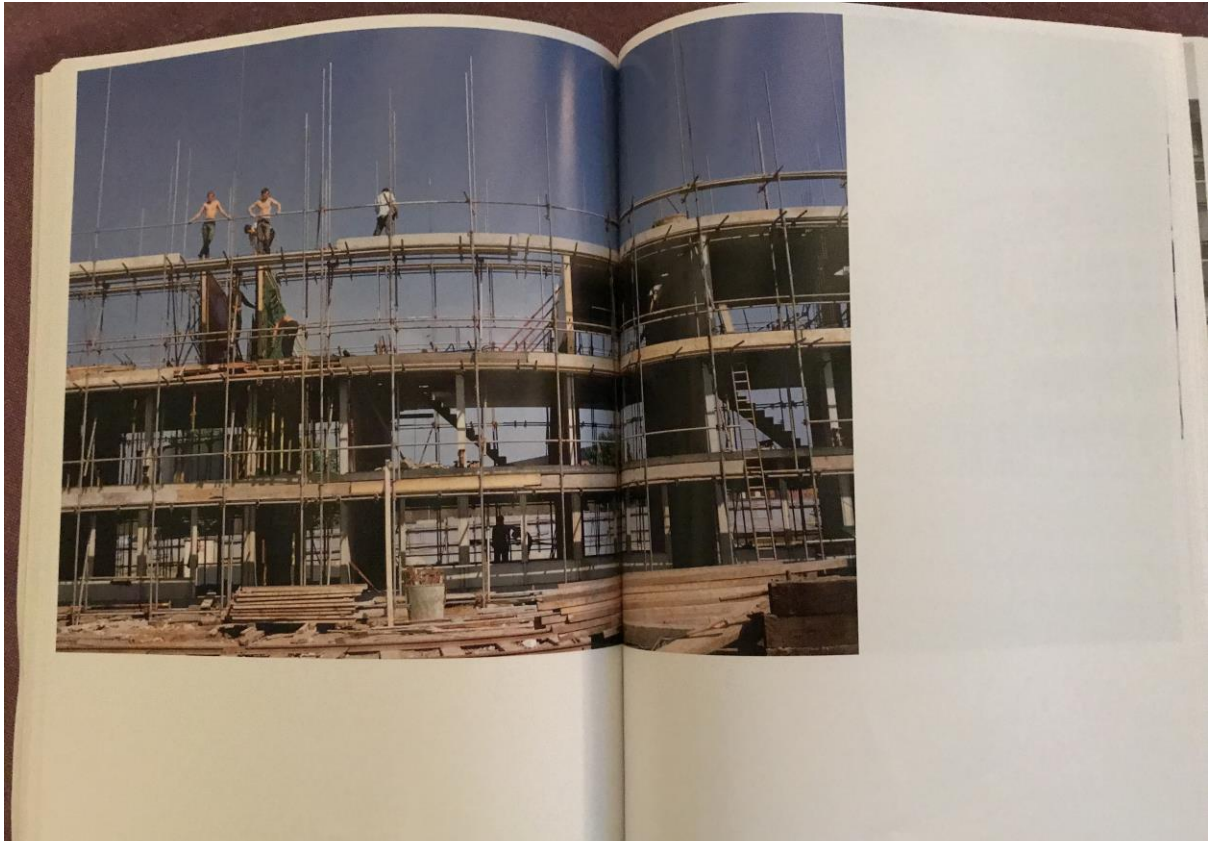


Figure 18. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, Alison and Peter Smithson Archive (1972). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p82-83)



Figure 19. 'Untitled' Robin Hood Gardens, Alison and Peter Smithson Archive (1972). Printed in 'Robin Hood Gardens Revisions' (Powers, 2010, p108-109)

The Interruption

In contrast to the visual representations of RHG that recreate a timeless aesthetic by erasing the presence of inhabitation, there are others which construct a different narrative through the presence of an interruption to generate a sense of authenticity and credibility. Specifically, this 'layer' of images involves the disruption of the intended frame of the composition by the active presence of animals, human figures, or objects within the image, so that the viewer perceives space, image, object, and/or event simultaneously. For instance, the photographer Kois Miah emphasises the contemporary lived elements of the RHG in greater detail in order to reiterate the fact that it is first and foremost a space of home. His photographs of the estate published in the Guardian (Jackson, 2016) under the title 'Lived Brutalism' attempt to reinsert the faces of residents in the discussion around the estate's impending demolition by 'interrupting' the architectural images of the estate with the many residents that live there (**Figures 20 -23**). His work provides a counter narrative to the depictions that show it as ruined, uninhabited, or vacant, as he attempts to rehumanise the site, presenting it as a space of home, capturing elements of the life that 'exists' there. It provides an interesting contrast with Ioana's images where we see similar images of the 'streets in the sky' (**Figure 20**) and of the balconies (**Figure 23**) except this time there are people there (**Figure 22**) and they are not the dark concrete places that other images attempt to convey.

However, as with any image, they are no less constructed, representing but a snapshot of a moment in time (Rose, 2016). From my own discussions with the people that currently live on the estate, many of the residents photographed by Miah no longer live there or have since been replaced with temporary council tenants. The antisocial and dilapidated elements of the estate are ignored in favour of a romanticised representation of life on the estate. There is an emphasis in the way the article is constructed that this is the 'real' depiction of what is there, somehow more real than the other images. For many the realities of living on the estate are far more complicated, with a building very much in decline and a local council unable to provide much needed maintenance as the site awaits demolition (Brennan, 2015). While the flower beds in **Figure 21** are now overgrown, and the bleak, dank spaces of the stairwells are omitted, it shifts the aesthetic of RHG and Brutalism away from its architectural and structural elements to consider the idea of people and community in relation to such spaces. Yet in its composition there is a greater sense of what Henderson's work in Bethnal Green tried to capture, moving away from RHG as an aesthetic architectural masterpiece to one that is aestheticized as a space of home.

In looking back to the online images found on Instagram (**Figure 11**) we see a completely different use of the interruption and the narrative it portrays, most notably the couple in the central image on

the right-hand side, appearing to take a 'selfie' showing them in the estate while looking down one of the 'streets in the sky'. This builds on the notion of the 'mediated portrait' (Zappavigna, 2016), where part of the photographer is presented within the image, in turn forging a form of visual co-presence where the photographer's subjectivity is foregrounded, and the 'uniqueness' of the personal experience is portrayed. At the same time, these images function to create an alignment with the ambient social media viewer positioned as 'sharing' in the experience (Zappavigna, 2016). The mediated portrait also foregrounds the activity being performed by the photographer at the time he/she/they take the image. In the context of RHG what we see is people sharing in the aesthetic experience of being 'present' at sites of Brutalist architecture. It positions part of the experience of Brutalist architecture as something that is performed and encountered through touristic practices of 'visiting' and documentary, legitimised through the act of taking a selfie (Craggs et al, 2013). The presence of the photographer adds to the perceived authenticity and raw quality of the image itself. The experience of RHG and its reality is therefore based on the performance of the photographer, as the practice of being seen in front of the camera is foregrounded as opposed to relying on the indexicality of the building (Frosh 2015).

These ideas are not limited to the selfie, the Smithsons have employed similar strategies in the way they chose to photograph the Hunstanton School. For instance, images by John Maltby show it according to the conventions of the published architectural photograph (Higgot & Wray, 2012); detached from site and use, a town school with no town (**Figure 24**), a school gymnasium with no children, washbasins pristine (**Figure 25**). Timeless images which focus purely on the aesthetics of the Smithsons' design, intended for an audience composed of the architectural elite and at odds with notions of producing work at the level of popular culture. In contrast, images of the school by Nigel Henderson demonstrate different interests: a building in process, revealing its construction and with contingent events allowed; painters at a window (**Figure 26**); on site discussions and meetings (**Figure 27**); the architects lounging in the building's entrance (**Figure 28**). What such photographs present is a building that is the product of a process, they express the specific incident, resonating with life and reifying the particular rather than the ideal (Higgot & Wray, 2012). These images are in line with the ethical dimensions of the Smithsons' notions of Brutalism, and the 'as found'. This juxtaposition is also evident above, where the archival photos displayed in '*Robin Hood Gardens Revisions*' give presence to the people, builders, and children of RHG, its depiction of the in-process act of construction becomes a deliberate strategy to construct the Smithsons' architecture as a space that was alive, emergent and inhabited. In contrast, the bleaker photos of Ioana Marinescu present a different narrative around the visual and architectural qualities of the estate.



Figure 20. 'Boy on Balcony' - Kois Miah (2016)



Figure 21. 'Abdul Rahim' - Kois Miah (2016)



Figure 22. 'Pat Murray' - Kois Miah (2016)



Figure 23. 'Del and Gabby'- Kois Miah (2016)

What emerges from these examples is how the Smithsons use the interruption to convey a sense of reality and authenticity, presenting their work as something that was 'raw' and 'as found'. While in the work of Kois Miah we see how focusing on the lived elements of RHG attempts to convey a supposedly 'more inhabited', a more present and 'more real' side to the estate which is missed by other architectural photography. Whereas the couple taking a selfie use it as a form of presence and performance that signals their own claims to the site's aesthetic. Certainly, these narratives grant a humanised tone to Brutalist buildings and estates like RHG, they also go further in conveying the ethical dimensions that the Smithsons attempted to communicate in their own work. However, it is important to remember that they are no less constructed, and that they also create an image of Brutalism that can only ever be fragmentary (Rose, 2008).



Figure 24. Hunstanton School - John Maltby (1955)



Figure 25. Hunstanton School Toilets - John Maltby (1955)



Figure 26. Hunstanton School Window Painters - Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 27. Hunstanton School - Nigel Henderson (1953)



Figure 28. Alison and Peter Smithson in Hunstanton School with Ronald Jenkins - Nigel Henderson (1953)

The Ruin

The previous sections highlight how there has been a great deal of photography that focuses on the aesthetics of RHG and of Brutalism. They also illustrate the similarities between the Smithsons' work, and modern-day architectural photography, as recent images attempt to create a nostalgic view of the estate. What is emerging is less of an emphasis on the ethical and social dimensions that the Smithsons attempted to articulate and a greater shift to focus on the design elements of Brutalist buildings like RHG. This current trend in focusing on the 'architectural qualities' of housing estates and Brutalist architecture has come to represent a growing fascination with what many have titled 'ruin lust' (Lindner, 2019). It is argued that the revival of Brutalism is part of a similar phenomenon that has led to the recent explosion of interest in post-industrial ruins (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013). What characterises this trend is its spectacularisation of decay for voyeuristic pleasure and exploitation (Millington, 2013; Lindner, 2019). This suggests that contemporary ruin lust is not so much tied to the lived, social experience of decay or deprivation, instead it revolves around the visual apprehension of ruin as aesthetic encounter (Lindner, 2019). The contemporary ruin has also become synonymous with the council estate (Beswick, 2015; Slater, 2018), wherein run down and 'grimy' aesthetic stereotypes metaphorically convey the endpoint of utopian twentieth-century social housing projects - encapsulating decline, and decay (Beswick 2015). However, the image of the 'ruin' when applied to social housing can have very damaging consequences, as Slater (2018) highlights how the imagery attached to contemporary notions of ruin and the visual characteristics associated with urban poverty can be used to stigmatise those that live in such estates. This produces reductive terms such as the 'Sink estate', where the visual and aesthetic characteristics of the estate are used to condemn the population as they are implicated in the perceived decline of the location (Slater, 2018). With this view RHG embodies the notion of the contemporary ruin, where its status as a site undergoing demolition distinguishes it as an object of cultural fascination and a source of both aesthetic pleasure and revulsion.

Already when we consider images found online there are many that focus purely on its demolition as a chance for voyeuristic pleasure. For instance, in the Instagram posts in **Figure 11**, several images depict a half demolished west block, while several others show it vacant and empty prior to its demolition. **Figure 12** and **Figure 29** also show how the demolition of the estate has become an object of fascination, glossing over the lived aspects of the estate, and displaying little interest in the forces that produce, sustain, or revive ruins (Lindner, 2019).

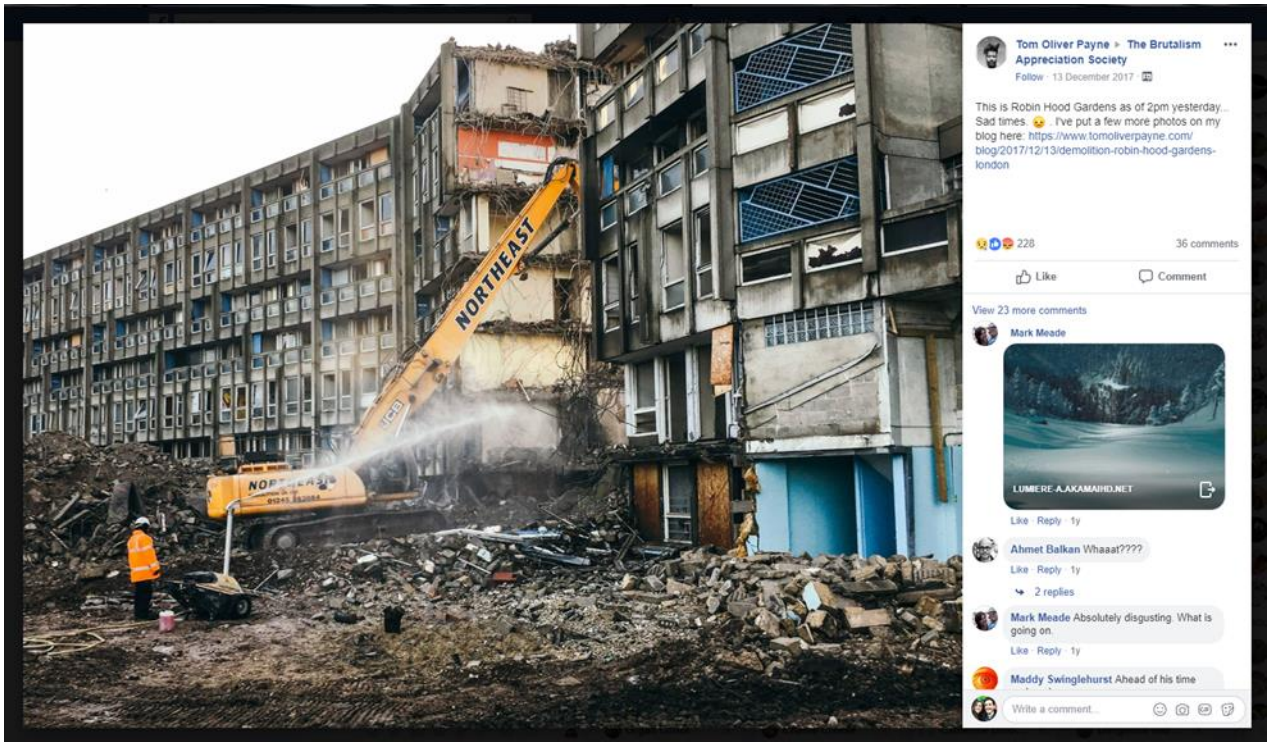


Figure 29. Demolition of Robin Hood Gardens in 2017,Uploaded to the 'Brutalism Appreciation Society' Facebook Page

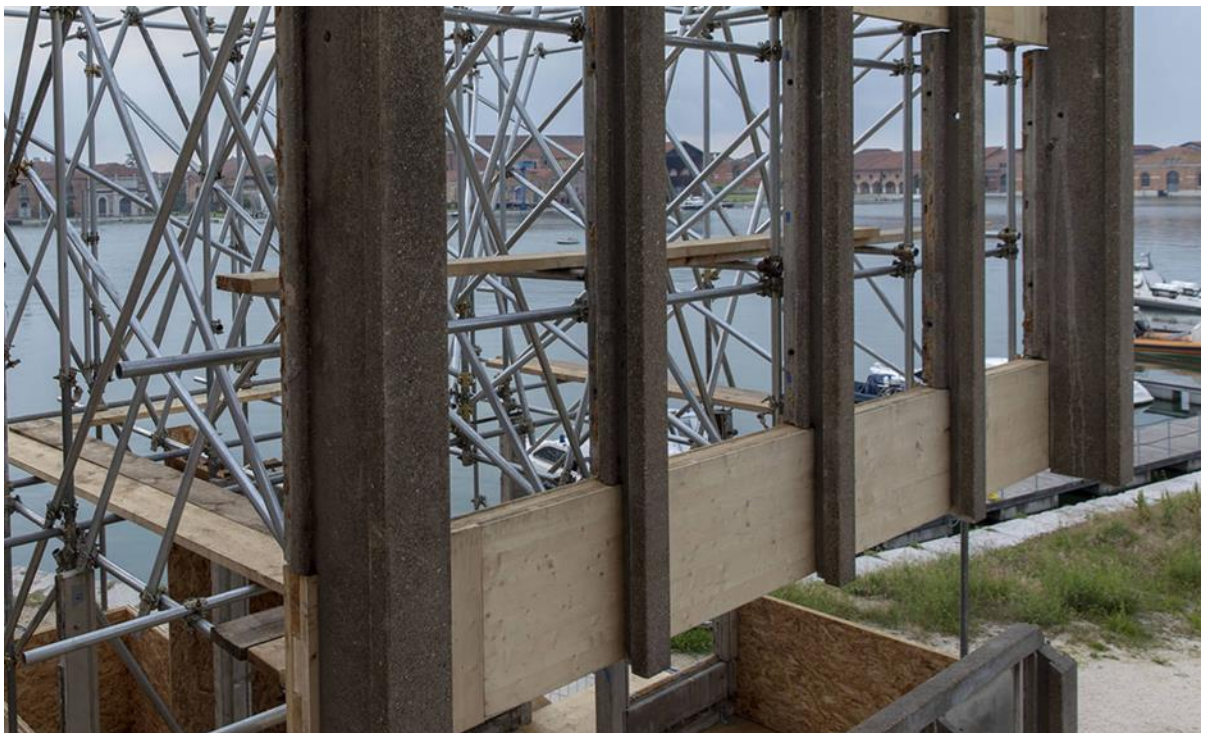


Figure 30. Reconstructed façade of Robin Hood Gardens at 2018 Venice Biennale. The Victoria & Albert Museum (2018)

The V&A's exhibition at the 2018 Venice Biennale which used fragments of the demolished west block also embodies 'Ruin Lust'. The depiction, removal, and subsequent display of numerous fragments of the estate as pictured on the V&A's website in **Figure 30**, reflect a voyeuristic fascination with the contemporary ruin. The Biennale is also far removed from the estate's original context and as a space for artistic and architectural spectacle serve to entrench the idea that the estate is being aestheticized as an object purely for display, further reducing it to its value as an image of 'curated decay'. This is reinforced by the V&A's choice of images advertising the exhibition, which focus heavily on the building's design, lacking any emphasis on the reasons for the estate's ruination. This is problematic when we consider that in their aestheticization of urban blight images of the 'ruined' estate actively contribute to the visual imagery of gentrification, normalising urban inequality and deprivation (Lindner, 2019).

However, the fascination with the 'ruin' is not limited to artistic and architectural exhibitions, it also extends to the residents, as my conversation with Stephanie describes her interest in the demolition:

Edward Brookes: Has it been difficult living next to the estate being knocked down?

Stephanie: No, it's been quite interesting. Because I take photographs of the process. How they pull that down is amazing. I've seen people taking photos of it too.

Stephanie's account provides a different perspective to the critiques of 'ruin lust', instead her interest in the destruction and ruin of the estate reflects a personal curiosity with the processes involved in the redevelopment. In capturing the fleeting moments of RHG's demolition the photographs she takes represent a personal encounter with a key moment in the estate's history. The destructive and voyeuristic forces of the 'ruin' are therefore not always immediately oppressive, certainly in this instance we see how images of the ruined estate provide important moments of learning and reflection. Thus, to entirely dismiss all depictions of the demolition as actively involved in gentrification and the capitalist politics of dispossession would prevent any opportunity to engage with the emancipatory potential of the ruin (Beswick, 2015). Therefore, the ideas of nostalgia and ruination are not necessarily reductive and could be operationalised to offer complex, oppositional depictions of working-class communities that counter dominant and dangerous political ideologies (Beswick, 2015). For instance, the work of Jessie Brennan and her piece titled 'A Fall of Ordinarity and Light' (2014) depicts Robin Hood Gardens as it slowly goes through a process of 'ruination' (**Figure 31**), in which drawn images of RHG are gradually screwed up and crumpled in an effort to symbolise the fall of social ideals of progress.

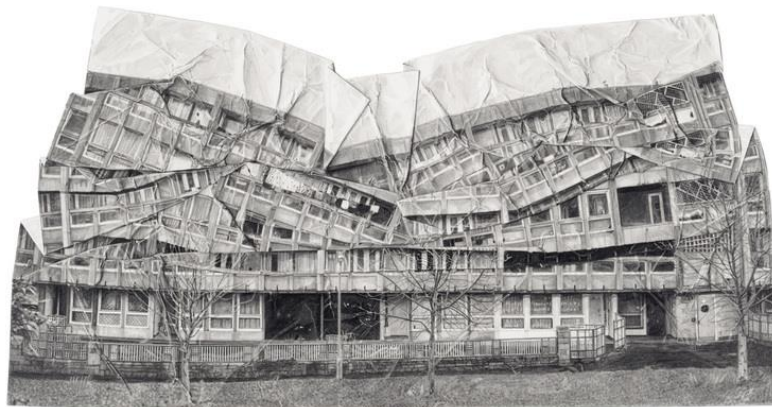


Figure 31. 'The Order land' and 'The Enabling Power' from the series 'A Fall of Ordinairiness and Light' – Jessie Brennan (2014)

As a result, her work attempts to open a discussion around the demolition of the estate and assert it as a space that has been neglected, but is still a site of home. She goes on to challenge the processes behind RHG's regeneration, highlighting *'the extraordinary greed of the London property market, an ironic reversal of RHG economics, especially as the estate sits in Tower Hamlets, one of the poorest and most unequal boroughs in the UK'* (Brennan, 2015: 40). Therefore, her work evokes the idea of the ruin and the processes behind it but without disregarding the social and political context within which it is embedded, moving beyond a 'ruin lust' which seeks only aesthetic appreciation.

Alison and Peter Smithson also had an interesting understanding of the ruin, largely inspired by American artist Robert Smithson which presents a different perspective of 'ruin lust'. In 1976, the Smithsons exhibited a large billboard-scale photograph of Robin Hood Gardens, as well as a viewing bench modelled after the facade's projecting concrete mullions at the Venice Biennale. It was part of the 'Europa–America' exhibition, which contrasted American and European approaches to urban planning. Held in one of the city's former salt warehouses, within the exhibit was the caption 'A building under assembly is a ruin in reverse,' (Bennes, 2018). This phrase, borrowed from Robert Smithson, hinted at how Alison and Peter envisaged and understood the relationship between construction and demolition and its connection to the landscape. In exploring this idea of the ruin further, Robert Smithson developed the notion of the 'dialectical landscape'. For him, such a landscape uses the 'ruined resources of the past to imagine or re-imagine the future' (Smithson, 1973: 116). Robert Smithson therefore conceptualizes landscapes as a set of 'ruins in reverse' (1967 p72), where even the unbuilt structures of an imagined city suggest the 'memory traces of an abandoned set of futures' (ibid.). Smithson proposes that topographical landscapes facilitate a dialectical conversation between the past and the future (Beswick, 2015). The dialectical landscape is 'a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region' (Smithson, 1973: 119). 'Dialectics of this type', he argues, 'are a way of seeing things in a manifold of relations, not as isolated objects' (ibid.). Thus, the contrasting images of Robin Hood Gardens' demolition and construction (**Figures 18 & 29**) offer an interesting insight into the various relations that surround the estate. We get a greater sense of how the Smithsons envisaged their own work and how they chose to construct a visual narrative that reflected a landscape that was constantly changing, particularly in the photographs of their works in progress. Aesthetically there are similarities between construction and ruin, the presence of builders and the hollow outline of the building's shell create similar motifs. Yet from the Smithsons' point of view, encountering such imagery is part of the dialectical landscape, through which we can generate a conversation about the past and present. It creates an opportunity to discuss the numerous relations between construction and demolition, that perhaps

notions of 'ruin lust' would be quick to dismiss as purely aesthetic. In this sense the ruin and its construction offer an imaginary potential to conceive of new urban futures as well as consider the wider forces involved in urban regeneration. In the case of Robin Hood Gardens what we are presented with is a building that came to represent the Smithsons' utopian optimism of the 20th century, and how through its demolition those ideas are not lost but rather reworked into future discussions into housing within the city. This grants the notion of the 'ruin' and RHG some agency to facilitate a conversation of past and future rather than purely becoming an object subsumed by capitalistic accumulation.

Summary

What emerges from this Chapter is the role that images, and photography have played in shaping the perceptions of Brutalist architecture over time. It highlights how photographic images as a form of 'sediment', can constitute different layers that form a visual record that allows for comparison across different time periods and between different contexts. It presents how using a contemporary archaeological approach which focuses on the various 'layers' of photographic representation can be used to draw out new interpretations and meaning around sites of urban change. Each layer can be read in numerous different ways as they coalesce around sites of significance. The images I have discussed only represent a small proportion of the many thousands of different images and representations that are circulating around Brutalism and Robin Hood Gardens at any given moment. In a similar way to the *Parallel of life and Art* exhibition my discussion illuminates howb seemingly disparate sets of images can be placed together, and different connections, conclusions and lines be drawn between them, offering new and different understandings as we look across the various sediments within a layer. In doing so it presents how everyday photographs re-live architecture, reproduce buildings, re-create history (Borden, 2007).

Indeed, for Colomina (1994), modern architecture only becomes modern with its engagement with the media. Therefore, if photographs and films circulated through mass media were essential to the inception of modernism, then images have heavily contributed to its downfall too. The same can be said of Brutalism as 'For all its brave talk of an ethic, not an aesthetic,' Brutalism never quite broke out of the aesthetic frame of reference, something which Banham himself concluded in his 1966 work (Colomina, 1994: 134). This is particularly evident when looking at the Brutalist image of RHG as it is largely represented today, as the increasing number of images that attempt to construct a nostalgic or 'ruin' aesthetic of the estate seek only to capture it on a voyeuristic and 'surface level'.

Stylistically there are a great number of similarities between how the Independent Group composed their work in comparison to modern day representations of the estate, whether that be to construct a sense of history and nostalgia through the use of black and white or the idea of interruption as a means of authorial credibility. What separates the Brutalist image that the Smithsons and the Independent Group cultivated from more recent iterations is aesthetically very little, but ethically a great deal. Modern representations see those messages displaced in favour of artistic appreciation. What we are encountering in relation to Brutalism is a chain of re-inventions and re-appropriations (Van Den Heuvel, 2016). In the vein of Raymond Williams, who described such a chain of re-inventions of the picturesque tradition as crucial to understanding the English sensibility regarding the processes of modernisation (in his renowned *The Country and the City* of 1973), the re-surfacing of debates over New Brutalism might be understood as symptomatic of the British absorption of modern architecture (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). The notorious split between 'ethic or aesthetic' is part of it, as is the speculation about a connection between social aspiration and architecture (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). What we see in the modern-day context of the Brutalist image is that it is devoid of much of the social and ethical dimensions that earlier debates were having. Although this does not mean that these kinds of debate are not resurfacing, as there is a strong body of work that looks to counter the pure aesthetic narrative, such as the work of Kois Miah and Jessie Brennan, who attempt to assert the lived and complicated nature of the estate. Yet the idea of Brutalism that the Smithsons and even Reyner Banham once advocated is a far cry from the images that are currently circulated.

Although it is important to remember that this ethical dimension is equally constructed, that the Independent Group's attempts to reframe discussions towards 'anti-beauty' and the 'as found' were also an arbitrary set of stylistic choices that they imposed upon their work. Whilst the ethical aspects of their work are important but overstating the distinction between 'ethic' and 'aesthetic' would also be problematic, as it is clear that a distinct aesthetic was an integral part of how Brutalism was originally curated. Similarly, it is no bad thing that Brutalism and its myriad of representations are reinvented for new audiences. However, there is a danger, that the increasing aestheticization of urban blight in the form of 'Brutalist relic' or 'ruin' actively contributes to the visual imagery of gentrification, normalizing urban inequality and deprivation (Beswick, 2015). It is therefore important to understand the context and history of sites such as RHG, especially when considering how it is represented. The construction of modern architecture therefore takes place between the camera lens and the building, as the photographic image of a sleek new building and its everydayness rarely converge. In the meantime, photographs continue to construct, perpetuate, and

later historicize modern movements like Brutalism, while the reality of buildings is that they become used, modified, and significantly altered (Rosa 1998). In building on these notions of the 'image' I now turn to Chapter V, where I consider how notions of the 'sink estate' and speculative imagery have been used to construct contrasting representations of old and new which rationalise the estate's demolition.

Chapter V

THE POLITICS OF UGLINESS: PLACEMAKING, TERRITORIAL STIGMA AND ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

Introduction

The Smithsons throughout their careers received numerous criticisms for producing architecture that was considered ugly, anti-human, repulsive and brutal (O'Donnell, 2011). The rejection of the Smithsons' style has perhaps manifested itself most acutely at Robin Hood Gardens whereby its particular aesthetic has been used to justify its demolition. Much of this reflects a wider rejection of Brutalist architecture which has arguably been a result of the failure of the Brutalist 'anti beauty' aesthetic to appeal to the public (Reidel, 2013). However, these positions have in recent years been co-opted by a political agenda that looks to sanitise and cleanse the landscape of ugly, 'dysfunctional architecture' which in many cases has led to the purposeful expulsion of the working-class communities that tend to inhabit such spaces (Thoburn, 2018). In London today 237 estates are threatened by or are undergoing/have undergone some form of regeneration, demolition, or privatization (Architects for Social Housing 2018b). 195 are in boroughs run by the Labour Party (Thoburn, 2018). In the Labour Borough of Lambeth, for example, this amounts to a net loss of some 9,500 council homes (Architects for Social Housing, 2018a; Thoburn, 2018). This has been made all the more explicit by the government's recent release of the *'Living with Beauty'* report by the *'Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission'* (2020) which creates a framework through which ugly and beautiful planning applications can be distinguished and subsequently penalised or prioritised, respectively. Its implicit rejection of modernist styles while favouring neoclassical designs (such as Poundbury in Dorset) arguably represents a more sinister motive that looks to repress aspects of architectural expression.

This has been combined with the rhetoric of numerous politicians, including David Cameron who in 2016 vowed to spend £140m to raze and redevelop what he called the worst 'sink estates' and 'brutal high-rise towers' that breed 'criminals and drug dealers' (Grindrod, 2016; Hayes, 2016). Each of these instances pinpoints how aesthetics and the role of ugliness in architecture has become a political tool for reshaping the urban landscape in ways that benefit the political and wealthier classes. It presents a troubling intrusion of the 'ugly' into the political sphere and embodies elements of Walter Benjamin's discussion on the aestheticization of politics (Jay, 1992), wherein the introduction of aesthetics into political life is a key characteristic of a Fascist society (Benjamin, [1935] 1968). Thus, by dictating what is regarded as beautiful or ugly the powerful are able to distinguish and repress the 'Other', which in this case is the poorer working-class communities that live in the estates maligned by those that seek to critique their appearance (Eagleton, 1990).

It is easy to see how political groups use aesthetic judgements to mask social cleansing. Already the processes of regeneration are lent motive force as the government repackages them as a 'blitz' on

the putative 'concrete monstrosities' of modernist estates, of which Robin Hood Gardens has routinely featured as a preeminent example (Thoburn, 2018; Davies, 2016). The increasing emergence of 'beauty' within the politics of housing represents a worrying trend in how Brutalist and modernist buildings are being viewed by the government and elements of wider society. It is therefore through this 'narrative of ugliness' that I contend that much of the recent politics surrounding Brutalist housing has been aestheticized. That by calling out architectural styles which are supposedly 'repulsive', 'ugly' and 'hotbeds of crime' ignores a great many of the social issues that housing estates and other buildings face. Aesthetics and the 'ugliness' of architecture is being used as a Trojan horse to 'sell' estate regeneration and the social cleansing of working-class communities to the wider public. This goes beyond the strategies routinely employed by building developers and designers that involve rebranding and 'place making', going further to include national political and media efforts that denounce and seek to eradicate particular buildings, styles, and populations for largely economic or ideological reasons. This also has the knock-on effect of producing territorial stigma (Waquant, 2008; Slater, 2018), as the communities that live in 'ugly' locations are demonised and forcibly 'unhomed' (Elliott-Cooper et al, 2020). This legitimises regeneration and displacement through a narrative of the 'ugly', making it easier for local governments and developers to make further gains on the real estate market by promising to transform the 'ugly' into the 'new' or 'beautiful'.

The subsequent parts of this chapter therefore explore how a 'narrative of ugliness' has been constructed at RHG through strategies which manipulate the 'image of the estate'. It examines how the local and national government along with the media, developers, designers, and architects have all come together (knowingly or otherwise) in order to 'rebrand', and 'reshape' the image of the estate. In particular, it considers how the cultivation of new 'place making' strategies at Robin Hood Gardens have created a binary narrative of beauty/ugliness within the landscape that stigmatises the old community.

Consequently, I consider two of the processes that perpetuate notions of 'ugliness' and 'failure' around the estate: *'The Speculative Image'* and *'Derogatory Language'*. The first of these attends to how computer-generated images incorporate the iconography of the increasingly predatory 'entrepreneurial city', whereby visualisations of future architectural space are combined with curated images of consumption in order to sell the estate's 'new future' as Blackwall Reach. This creates a tension within the landscape where contrasting notions of a 'failed present' and a 'prosperous future' are presented as the estate's new narrative, overlooking much of the existing community. The second section *'Derogatory Language'* seeks to uncover the various examples of

how language is used by the media and developers to construct a negative image of the estate, from the use of 'sink estate' terminology, to marketing slogans used to 'gloss over' the failings of the old community. In this regard, different rhetorical devices represent a key medium through which the powerful exercise their symbolic power over the landscape.

Combined with the marketing images of the new estate, these textual and verbal forms of representation reduce debates about the estate's future to simplistic slogans which are easily politicised. Each of these processes attempt to juxtapose alternative images of what the new development could be, alongside a verbal rhetoric which stigmatises the current site as something that is worthy of being knocked down. By exploring both these themes I look to present how the site's 'image' is manipulated by various actors who wish to portray RHG as 'ugly' and the future Blackwall Reach development as a solution. RHG's remaining residents are therefore excluded from the estate's present and future, existing only as a stigmatised 'other' on a supposedly 'failed' estate. This interferes with the notions of 'memorability' and 'image' that Banham originally applied to Brutalism, as different strategies of 'place making' and territorial stigma (Waquant, 2008) manufacture alternative realities for the estate's past, present and future.

The Speculative Image

A key process in the regeneration of RHG is the crafting of a 'new' place-based image by the developers. This 'new image' is then deployed as a means through which the new housing will be packaged and sold (Arthurson, 2001). The formulation of this 'image' has arguably been an ongoing process since the estate's compulsory acquisition in 2012. However, over the last 8 or more years (especially as phase 1b and 2 approach completion) numerous images of future flats, landscaped gardens and retail sites have been embedded physically and digitally within the landscape (Boughton, 2014). This reflects one of the many strategies employed by an increasingly financialized real estate industry which is promoted and marketed through an ever-growing circulation of marketing images; distributed through a network of media including lifestyle magazines, on-line adverts, and on-street hoardings (O'Mahoney & Lawton, 2019).

Many of these images are highly 'speculative', in that they offer only an idealised vision of what the place might look like (Rose, 2015; **Figure 32 – 35**). This is used as a way of framing what the social life of the space 'could', if not 'should', be. This seductive urban imaginary mirrors the wider neoliberal appetite for speculative forms of profit-seeking; while its presence is equally transitory as developments quickly come and go (O'Mahoney & Lawton, 2019). From my own research the

speculative nature of these images becomes increasingly apparent as parts of the redevelopment approach completion. For example, looking at **Figure 32**, the right panel mentions rooftop gardens for the higher units, but this appears not to be the case in the final designs, as the more recent marketing material and interior images only highlight a shared lower courtyard for penthouse units and 'winter garden' interior features in the larger flats, suggesting that the exterior garden features had to be scrapped. This certainly highlights the fluid and speculative nature of both the images themselves and the redevelopment masterplan, calling into question some of the 'glossy' promises that might be used to sell schemes to developers and investors.

This circulation of 'speculative marketing imagery' is particularly visible in the more recent phases of RHG's redevelopment as the new properties are constructed (**Figure 34 & 35**). The 'new image' that the developers appear to be curating is a stark contrast to what the Smithsons originally planned and dramatically different from the community that lives/lived there, instead it reflects global trends that cater to an entrepreneurial logic that signals to investors that the new site represents a worthy investment (Davidson, 2007). The presence of these new images also extends beyond their capacity as marketing material as they attempt to legitimise the future development, signalling to the surrounding populations that this area would be better off, more affluent, and more attractive with the regeneration (Rose et al, 2014). As a result, the new images present a point of juxtaposition through which individuals are forced to make value judgements about a place solely on a set of largely aesthetic criteria. In this way the images of the new development are presented as a utopian alternative to the 'drab' and 'neglected' landscape of RHG, constructing explicit divisions between old and new and beautiful versus ugly. Just as photographs and film circulated through mass media were essential to the inception of Brutalism (Colomina, 1994), the images of new flats, retail units and unlimited wealth contribute heavily to its downfall, and now play a crucial part in the dissolution of Robin Hood Gardens' Brutalist past. Therefore, as I continue to explore how these 'speculative images' have been deployed at RHG I look to break my discussion down into three subheadings: '*Computer Generated Images and Virtual Tours*', '*The Hoarding*' and '*The Absence of the Local*'. Each will engage with different kinds of speculative imagery and how they mobilised, exploring how they relate to the Ugly/Beauty debate that surrounds RHG and what this means for the estate's future.



Figure 32. Blackwall Reach Masterplan Presentation Panels for phase 1B. Notably it talks about rooftop gardens for the higher up units – but these appear not to have not been implemented. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 33. ‘Station Square courtyard’ - Computer generated image of the future development from the Blackwall Reach project website gallery

Perhaps one of the most pervasive ways in which speculative imagery is deployed and through which visions of future urban space are expressed is through the use of computer-generated images (CGI). Rose et al. (2014) argues these are predominated by visions, or idealizations, of what a particular building or urban regeneration project will look like when finished. Many of these images are present within the material landscape of the site itself, pride of place on many of the hoardings that surround the estate, it offers glossy images of a reality that will never truly exist (**Figures 33 -35**). Critically, such renderings reduce space to a surface image, and one which is explicitly focused upon an imagined future which is appealing to investors (Rose et al, 2015). As **Figures 33, 34 & 35** illustrate, they only show what the finished development could look like, giving a glimpse of only one of the possible realities of the estate. The visualisations do not show the wider economic processes and relations of the investment in them, nor do they depict a broad range of social activities taking place in the new spaces being built. This is in stark contrast to the images used by the Smithsons or those taken by Nigel Henderson which offer more vibrant displays of life on the street (Chapter IV). This is particularly clear in many of the marketing brochures produced by Blackwall Reach for its sale of properties in phase 1b. The penthouse brochure displays many opulent interiors with stylish vacant bedrooms (**Figure 36**), whilst the slightly cheaper Perseus Court (**Figure 37**) displays similar empty interiors but with a different colour scheme. Each brochure offers a comprehensive list of all the features available to buyers, which further dictate what future activities can take place in the new properties (**Figure 37**). This also reflects more general trends in how such urban redevelopments are represented as Rose et al. (2016: 108) highlight how *'nothing much happens in these sunny spaces except the leisured and happy strolling, shopping and sipping of coffee by apparently affluent inhabitants.'*

These ideas are also reflected in the marketing images found within the brochures which blend the use of CGI with promotional photography. In them they depict a range of speculative activities that you could 'supposedly' take part in (**Figures 38 & 39**) as they focus on particular practices of travel and consumption - whether that be dining out, cycling, or having a coffee. Although seemingly mundane, each image within the brochures creates a particular atmosphere (Rose et al, 2015; Anderson, 2009); one that targets a particular class of audience and generates a particular sense of feeling. Most notably they cultivate an atmosphere of aspiration and wealth, constructing a narrative that they each represent a 'successful urban place' that represents a worthy investment to the consumer. There are some differences between the brochures in how these messages are constructed, as the images and colour palette throughout the penthouse brochure focuses on 'more

luxury' experiences, listing the distance to famous shopping locations such as 'Bond Street', 'Oxford Street' as well as the 'O2 Arena' and 'Canary Wharf'. The design of the brochure also creates a sense of luxury and exclusivity, its use of dark colours and chiaroscuro lighting, alongside images of high-end fashions, watches, jewellery, and other experiences would not look out of place in a designer magazine. This caters to a global elite who are supposedly looking for a luxury experience and lucrative investment, whereas the images used in the brochure for the cheaper shared ownership properties (**Figure 38**) are much more communal and focus on different consumption and commuting practices. The target audience is clearly younger and less affluent, displaying images of 'street food', cycling, a bike workshop and people sat eating together, perhaps attempting to foster a counter mainstream sensibility or 'hipster' chic (Hill, 2015). Although it attempts to appear more counter cultural it just provides further evidence that highlights how capitalism has co-opted such imagery to further enable its accumulation of supposedly 'run down' communities (Hubbard, 2016). What is clear is that these images are dramatically different from the community that currently remains at RHG. The level of opulence, the modern empty interiors and use of bright and vivid colours is no doubt enticing to many audiences. The atmospheres and investors the images attempt to appeal to only serve to deepen divisions within the landscape as the 'rich' looks to supplant the 'poor' and the 'old' with the 'new'. Its clean, glossy images juxtaposed against the worn and 'lived in' exterior of RHG. Ultimately it is through such juxtaposition that the old site is portrayed as something that is messy, 'value-less', and ugly.



Figure 34. 'Blackwall Reach Master Image'. Computer generated image displayed on the hoarding illustrating the completed development, its boundary marked out in white to distinguish it from the surrounding landscape. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 35. Hoarding displaying CGI of the completed flat interiors, as of 2020 many of these flats are now ready for tenants and/or occupied. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 36. CGI image of the bedroom in one of the penthouses available to purchase in phase 1b of the regeneration – Blackwall Reach, Royal Captains Court, Penthouse Brochure 2019

A STYLISH AND CONTEMPORARY SPECIFICATION



Kitchens

- Luxury handle-less matt kitchen with under-sink LED lighting
- Quartz worktops with matching upstand
- Stainless steel undermounted sink with chrome mixer tap
- Induction hob with touch controls
- Telescopic cooker hood
- Glass splashback
- Multi-function electric oven
- Integrated microwave oven
- Integrated fridge/freezer
- Integrated dishwasher
- Integrated waste bin

Bathrooms

- Contemporary white sanitaryware with semi-recessed basin and quartz vanity top and back to wall toilet
- Mirror cabinet with integral shaver socket
- Thermostatic bath/shower mixer
- Chrome mixer tap to basin
- Clear bath screen
- Large format porcelain wall tiling
- Tiled bath panel

Ensuites

- Contemporary white sanitaryware with semi-recessed basin and quartz vanity top and back to wall toilet
- Chrome mixer tap to basin
- Glass shower enclosure with low profile shower tray and chrome frame
- Large mirror
- Large format porcelain wall tiling

General Finishes

- Freestanding washer/dryer to Hall cupboard
- Aluminium double glazed windows with white internal finish
- Sliding doors to access Winter Garden***
- Flush grey painted entrance door with viewer and multipoint locking
- Smooth ceilings painted white
- White flush internal doors with brushed chrome monogrammy
- Fitted wardrobes with sliding doors to Master Bedroom

Heating & Electrical

- Under floor heating throughout including Winter Garden
- Heating and hot water supplied from centralised boiler system
- Chrome heated towel rail to Bathroom and Ensuite
- Recessed LED downlights to Hall, Kitchen/Dining Room, Lounge, Winter Garden, Bathroom and Ensuite
- Pendant light fitting to Bedrooms
- Brushed chrome sockets and switches to Kitchen
- White sockets and chrome switches with concealed fittings to remainder of the apartment
- Satellite TV, telephone and DAB points to Lounge and Master Bedroom with Sky+**
- Centralised satellite dish
- Smoke detectors
- Heat detectors

Flooring

- Engineered wood plank flooring to Hall, Kitchen and Lounge/Dining Room
- Quality carpets to all Bedrooms
- Coordinating porcelain floor tiles to Bathrooms and Ensuite
- Large format porcelain floor tiles to Winter Garden

Communal Areas

- Interior designed concierge area located in Lobby of Royal Captains Court
- Residents' lounge area in Lobby of each building
- Lift to all floors
- Carpet to corridors
- Communal post box
- Video entry system
- Cycle store
- CCTV to selected areas across the development*

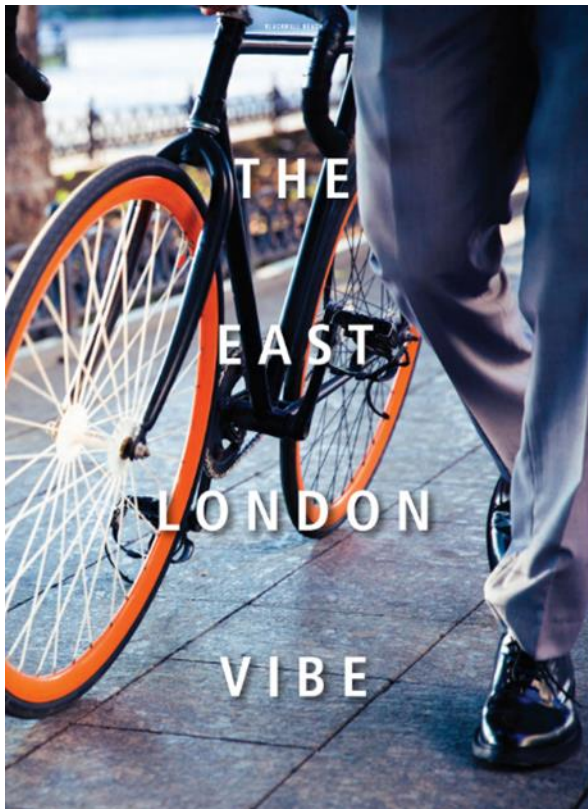
Warranty

- 10 year NHBC warranty
- 2 year NIJ warranty for internal apartment area
- A management company will be appointed to maintain communal areas – a service charge will be payable

*There are also available for specific enquiries
**Standard satellite service only for Sky TV
*** Some apartments have opening doors
**** Some apartments have opening doors
***** Some apartments have opening doors
***** Some apartments have opening doors
***** Some apartments have opening doors
***** Some apartments have opening doors



Figure 37. CGI images of the rooms available in the flats for sale at Perseus court, alongside a list of all the specifications of the properties – Blackwall Reach, Royal Captains Court, Perseus Court Brochure 2019



BLACKWALL REACH

There are so many fine bars, cafes, diners and restaurants within easy reach of Blackwall Reach that it's almost impossible to know where to begin. On your doorstep there's the innovative Quilombos at Republic, East India Dock, a pop-up restaurant or as it calls itself, a Genoese Argentinian Canten.



Restaurants at Canary Wharf include the award-winning ROKA and its contemporary Japanese Robotayaki cuisine. Another firm favourite is Gaucho, with its unusual Argentinian theme while the new Crossrail Place promises a variety of delights including Big Easy and Sticky'n'Sushi.

For that very special occasion, there's a wide selection of Michelin-starred legends in The City. Galvin La Chapelle has won multiple awards for its modern French cuisine, while St. John takes a fresh and distinctly imaginative approach to traditional British food. As you'd expect from the name, Angler is all about the best in seafood - but it's also distinctly popular for its sophisticated rooftop bar.

Shoreditch provides a thrilling alternative to the stately grandeur of City dining, with a mix of red hot gastropubs, bistros, ultra-innovative eateries and high-octane nightspots. Try The Dispensary or The Gun for the best in East London gastropubs, or Hawkmoor and the Princess of Shoreditch for quirky and innovative restaurants too.

And of course, Winfield Street/Ed City is home to over 30 different and sometimes quirky bars, cafes and restaurants offering anything from street food to an elegant champagne bar.

Figure 38. Page from the shared ownership brochure that describes the character and amenities in East London – Blackwall Reach, Station Square, Shared ownership Brochure, 2019

One Canada Square

Located at the foot of one of London's most iconic buildings, Canada Square, this stunning restaurant offers modern European food and a range of cocktails that are as remarkable as its address. Whether it's for breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner or drinks at the sumptuous bar, you'll be catered to your tastes.

Gaucho Grill

Gaucho Grill has a well-earned reputation for serving some of the finest Argentinian cuisine and its Canary Wharf restaurant is certainly no exception. In fact, when you combine the mouth-watering food with delicious cocktails while watching a spectacular city sunset, you may just have the perfect mix.

Big Easy

Big Easy is renowned for its friendly welcome, easy-going atmosphere, live music and most of all, its hearty home-style food. Only the freshest lobster and very finest cuts of the most succulent meat are thoughtfully prepared using its trademark home-baked barbecue and cherrys.

Roka

This award-winning Japanese restaurant serves exquisite contemporary robata-yaki cuisine and much more within stunning surroundings. Set around an open robata grill, you don't just dine out at Roka, you immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and smells of authentic Japan.

Markets

Some of the most interesting markets you'll ever visit can be found dotted around London and at Royal Greenwich, you have one of the best (and oldest).

Figure 39. Page from the Penthouse brochure that lists the food and dining opportunities within distance of the properties– Blackwall Reach, Station Square, Shared ownership Brochure, 2019

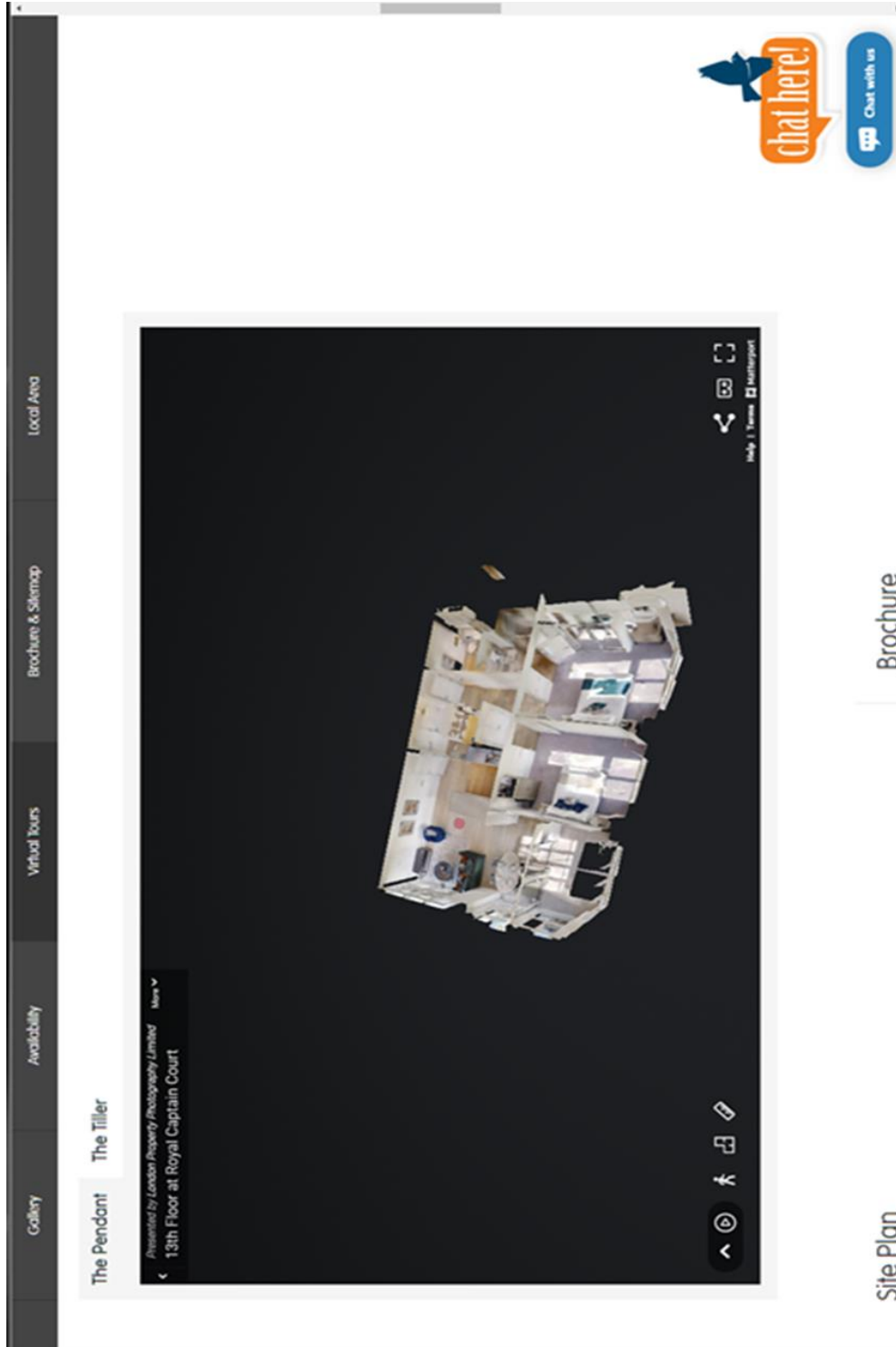


Figure 40. Royal Captains Court 'virtual tour' on the Blackwell Reach Website.

The notion of the 'speculative image' is taken further at Blackwall Reach, as its website allows you to take a 3D tour of the properties, where the furniture and views have already been scanned in (Figure 40). It reflects similar applications of technology already used in Digital Archaeology and online tourism where historic landscapes and artefacts are reconstructed for virtual tours (Wilson, 2020). Already the look and feel of the 3D rendering of the property and its many uses have been mapped out for the user in digital space. It extends ideas of the 'brandscape' (Klingman, 2007) whereby the focus of architecture has shifted to a more experiential frame, as the digital landscape is used to create new forms of interactive virtual architecture that enable a 'more tangible' experience of a 'real world' space than it supposedly represents (Rose, et al 2015; Klingman, 2007). It offers an experience of 'being there' of inhabiting the properties' digital footprint before choosing to buy it. The consumer is then allowed to speculate how they might choose to live in the space and experience how it might feel to look and walk around the apartment. However, it is still a marketing device, a carefully curated series of digital images that shows how one might/should live, cutting out all the details and mundanities of living (Rose et al, 2015). Its blank sterility and neatly placed furniture are at odds with the ever-present traces of life that remain at RHG, as washing hangs out of windows and people go outside to walk their dogs or chat with neighbours. The people, the smells, and the sounds of the estate are all removed in favour of a clean predictable space that only makes it easier for developers and consumers to ignore the realities of demolition and displacement. In comparison to the Brutalist image proposed by Banham where the focus is on the everyday aspects of living and its attention to raw material structures; here the focus is shifted to the everyday circulation of capital and its consumption. The use of CGI and speculative digital modelling also challenges notions of the 'as found' as it goes against the local specificity and the 'thingness' of raw materials originally championed by Brutalism, instead drawing upon numerous databases of stock imagery in order to create images of what 'could' be found. In a way it is a form of 'archaeology of the future' as the developers build and reconstruct what places could be like from images found in the past and present. Yet they are imagined structures and realities that obfuscate distinctions between what the estate was, is and will be.

The Hoarding

Another medium through which Blackwall Reach circulate their marketing images and messages is through the use of hoardings. These intrusive structures form an interface between the governance strategies that mark out the 'entrepreneurial city' and the continued growth of property interests (Cox, 2017). Hoardings therefore offer a unique set of insights into how image and territory making strategies are firmly embedded at different scales in the city. They represent a physical division where supposed 'failed' and 'ugly' urban spaces are separated and segregated from the surrounding community while they await redevelopment. They signal that the space is no longer fit for inhabitation and therefore must be reconfigured. The presence of hoarding around RHG and the rest of the development has continued since early construction work in 2013. Since then, there have been numerous advances of hoarding boundaries as phase 1a finished and 1b and 2 began. Since early 2017 and for the duration of this PhD project much of the hoarding has taken on the bright orange and black of Blackwall Reach's branding (which has recently changed to Turquoise and light brown), creating a particularly striking contrast against the green and grey colour palate of the local landscape (**Figure 41**). This has also involved the co-option of the sound baffle as a form of hoarding, as the Blackwall Reach lettering has been stencilled across it - the architecture of the estate is enrolled within the infrastructure of its own redevelopment (**Figure 42**). The stencil typeface and concrete giving it an almost military aesthetic and a sense of authority over the site. Ironically, the graffiti underneath has recently been cleaned, highlighting the symbolic politics at play (Bourdieu, 1991; 1997), as it is only those with the power and capital to do so who are able to embed their own images and branding within the landscape. The distinct and visually jarring hoarding represents a deliberate intrusion into the local community, the bright orange as much a spectacle to attract new investors as an indicator to residents that the landscape is under new ownership and undergoing change. The hoarding therefore conveys a sense that this is a new city quarter, a kind of gift-wrapping that invites the consumer in. Pointedly, it can also be seen as an invasion of the private world into the public sphere, giving the impression of an idealized and privately financed inside, out into public space (O'Mahoney & Lawton, 2019). Crucially, access to this private space will only be available to a select few through coded card access and other signifiers of exclusivity (Atkinson, 2018). There are plenty of gated barriers, bars, CCTV, and guard dog signs, that again indicate that this colourful boundary is one of control rather than transparency (**Figure 43**).

In order to legitimise the various levels of intrusion made by the redevelopment, including the proliferation of various speculative media, the numerous stakeholders ensure that their branding and endorsements are clearly displayed (**Figure 44**). For instance, around the demolition site we see

an endorsement by the Mayor of London, the branding of Swan Housing and their in-house developer NU Living, alongside Tower Hamlets Council. Each offer their own approval for the new properties, legitimising the regeneration, and signalling to the community that the changes are backed by what feels like a 'coherent' political and economic power. It goes further to naturalise processes of demolition and regeneration, highlighting the perceived inevitability of housing development, as the powerful 'rubber stamp' their new vision for the landscape with their own logos, images, slogans, and emblems.



Figure 41. Orange hoarding around west block taken prior to demolition – Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 42. Exterior sound baffle which has been co-opted into the architecture of demolition as it creates a natural barrier through which developers can assert their dominance over the landscape. Already graffiti has been cleaned prior to the new branding - Image taken by author (2018)

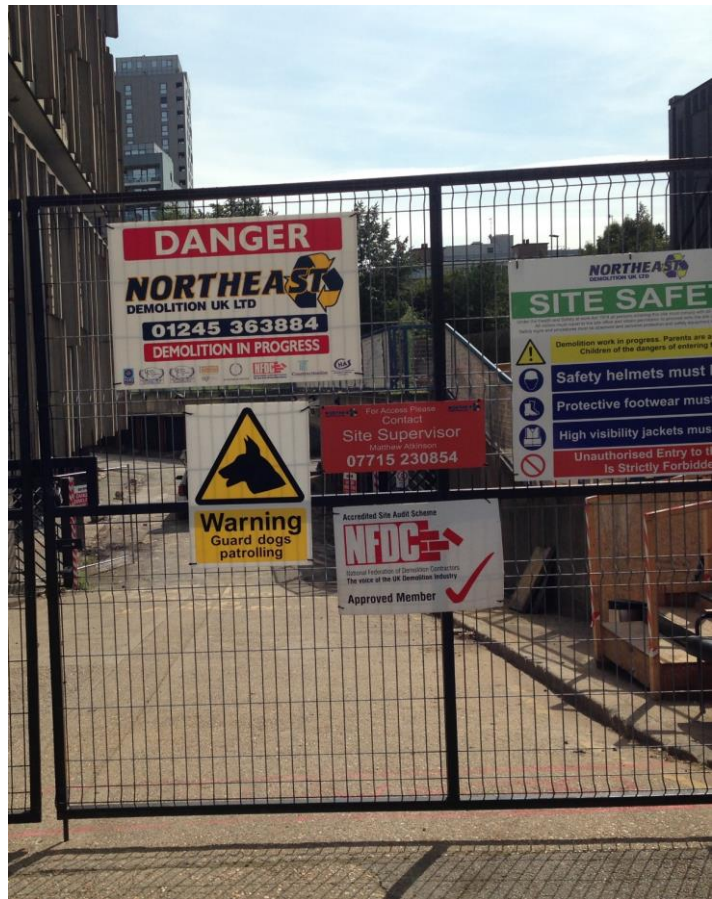


Figure 43. Gated entrances built into the hoarding, with numerous safety and security warnings to deter visitors and onlookers – Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 44. Hoarding around the edge of the central mound, backing onto Woolmore Street. Each panel depicts each of the agencies involved in redevelopment and their supporting statements for the project – Image taken by author (2018)

Crucial to how each of these marketing images feed into a narrative of 'ugliness' is the role of absence. In that by choosing what to make 'absent' or 'present' the developer is able to signal what they deem to be appropriate lifestyles, architectures, and ways of living. This relates to notions of hyper(in)visibility, where visibility is granted for the purposes of dehumanisation and denied to those who seek inclusion in political processes. Thus, RHG's community are excluded from the scopic regime of regeneration and place-making (Price, 2019). This absence represents a form of symbolic power, where the developers and the local government are able to dictate what representations of reality can exist within the landscape (Bourdieu, 1991). As a result, the development is framed as a positive intervention, while the old estate and its community represent an implicit detriment to the area. A particularly damning absence in the marketing material is any representation of the Bangladeshi community, especially when considering that the assessment carried out on behalf of Blackwall Reach by Capita Symonds indicates that the whole of Tower Hamlets has a large population of Bangladeshi and Bangladeshi British residents. In the most immediate area (**Figure 45**) 42% of the entire population classified themselves as Bangladeshi (Although this data is from 2001). A similar degree of diversity is also observable in the block itself as 2011 census data from the estate shows that around 68% of residents classified themselves as Bangladeshi (**Figure 46**). Yet there is no evidence of this within any of the marketing materials' glossy images. The community is by and large erased from existence. It is also clear from the marketing that the new properties are not aiming to target the existing residents or Bangladeshi community, instead it targets a global elite from outside the neighbourhood, evidenced in the brochure's emphasis on citywide and global transport connections.

A similar trend is observed when examining the 'social grade' of the estate where 62% fall into the D and E category, or the semi-skilled and unskilled workforce (**Figure 47**). Yet the prices for the properties are well beyond the implied incomes of the households that this data would suggest. While the source for this data is a market research company and I do not want to draw too heavily on it, the implication is clear, the images, lifestyles, promises and values of the new and future properties represented in the range of marketing materials explicitly excludes the surrounding community. It represents a form of 'symbolic defamation and exclusion' (Kallin & Slater, 2014; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014), whereby the neighbourhood is overtly erased from images of the landscape. This exclusion provides the ideological justification for class transformation, which now involves the demolition, land clearance, and the construction of new housing and services aimed at a more affluent class of resident.

Table 6: Percentages of Residents by Selected Ethnic Groupings

	LLSOA 028B	Immediate surrounds	Site & surrounds	Rest of LBTH	LBTH	London excl LBTH	England
All residents	1,508	7,425	8,931	187,175	196,106	6,975,985	49,138,831
White	36.5%	55.0%	51.9%	51.4%	51.4%	71.7%	90.9%
Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British	41.9%	25.3%	28.1%	33.7%	33.4%	1.3%	0.6%
Chinese	6.1%	3.2%	3.7%	1.7%	1.8%	1.1%	0.4%
Other Asian or Asian British	3.4%	3.5%	3.4%	3.2%	3.2%	10.1%	4.0%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	2.9%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	4.8%	1.1%
Black or Black British: African	5.4%	5.1%	5.1%	3.3%	3.4%	5.3%	1.0%
Other ethnic groups	2.2%	2.8%	2.7%	1.6%	1.6%	2.4%	0.6%
Mixed	1.7%	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	3.2%	1.3%

Source: Neighbourhood statistics - Census 2001

Figure 45. Image of Table 6 from the ‘Blackwall Reach Environmental statement Volume 2a’ which summarises the ethnic diversity of the surrounding area right up to National level – Carried out by Capita Symonds and published in 2012 p160

Ethnic Group

[Embed This](#)

Robin Hood Gardens, Woolmore Street, London can be considered more ethnically diverse than the UK average. As whole, the UK population claims itself as approximately 86% white, with residents of this area being 9% so.

As a country with a diverse population, the UK is home to other sizable ethnic groups, with mixed ethnicity (2.1%), Indian (2.4%) and Pakistani (1.9%) being the largest groups reported.

There is considerable division of ethnicities within the UK, with ethnically diverse addresses uncommon outside of urban areas.

Ethnic Group

White	33
Mixed Ethnicity	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	251
Chinese	11
Other Asian	7
Black African	23
Black Caribbean	13
Other Black/African/Caribbean	19
Other	2
Total	368

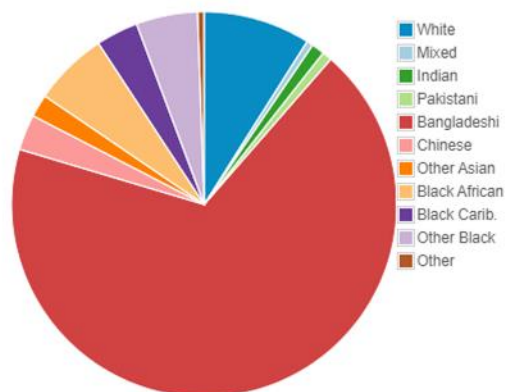


Figure 46. Image from the ‘Streetcheck’ website showing the 2011 census data for Robin Hood Gardens, Woolmore Street which shows the breakdown of different ethnic groups living at the site - Streetcheck 2020

Social Grade

[Embed This](#)

Social Grade approximations are derived from an algorithm created by the Market Research Society. The figures shown are per-household rather than individual - more specifically, the job title and employer of the "household reference person" is used, analogous to what traditionally was called the head of the household. Only household reference persons between the ages of 16-64 are included.

Social Grade	
AB - Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, or professional positions	8
C1 - Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial/administrative/professional positions	16
C2 - Skilled manual workers	10
DE - Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; those on state benefit/unemployed, & lowest grade workers	57
Total	91

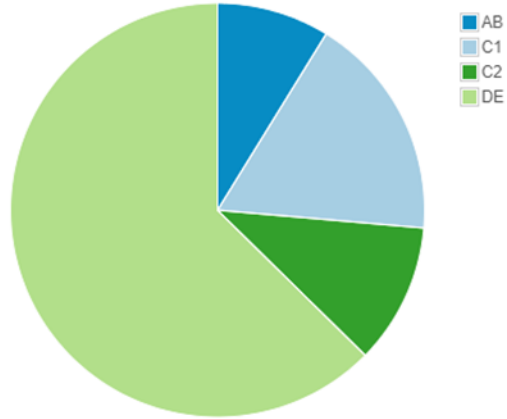


Figure 47. Image from the ‘Streetcheck’ website showing the social demographics for Robin Hood Gardens, Woolmore Street – data is based from marketing data from the Market Research society- Streetcheck 2020

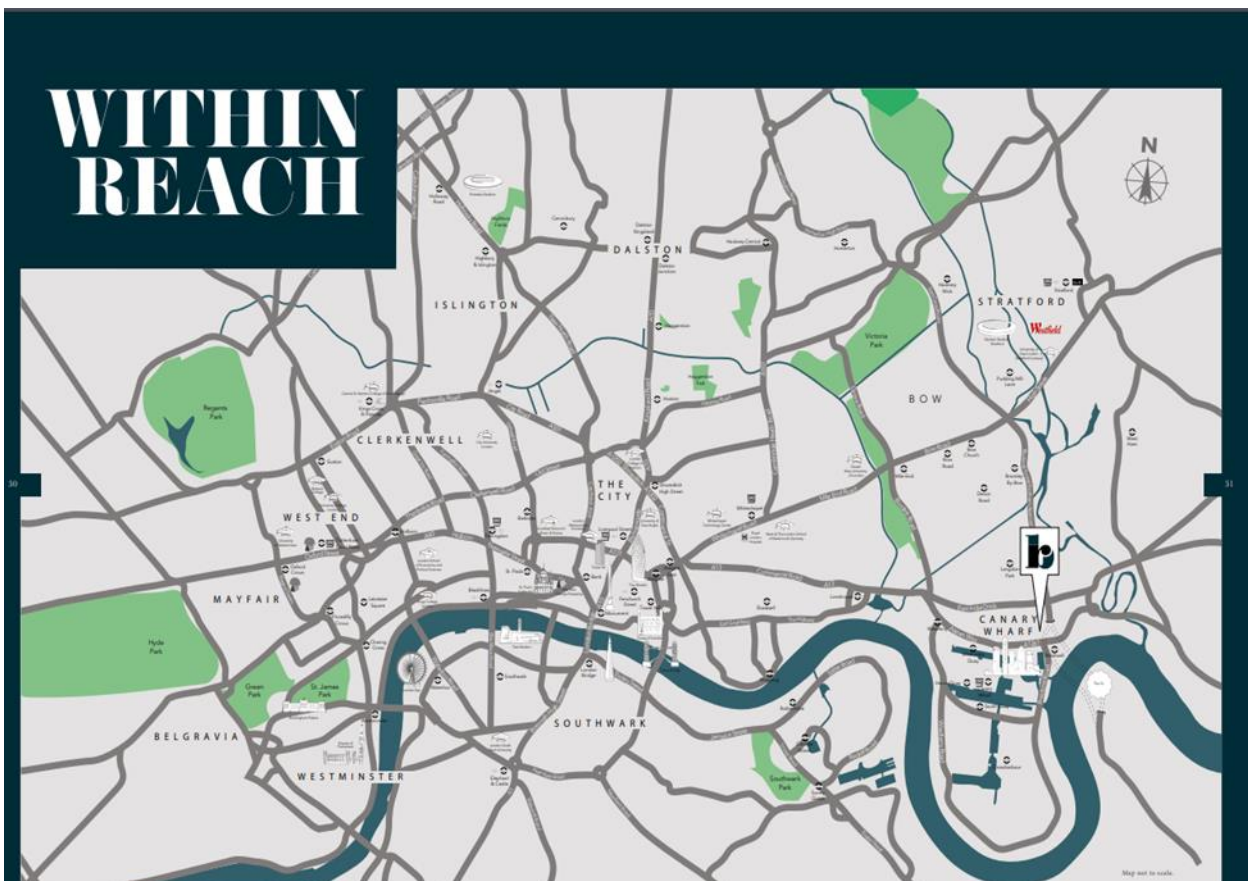


Figure 48. Map from the Blackwall Reach ‘Penthouse’ brochure showing all of the locations ‘within reach’. Crucially it focuses on the city of London rather than the immediate locale – Blackwall Reach 2019

It signals that this area is no longer for those that live there, as the entire community is erased. This absence also continues in the lack of representation of the local mosque and community centre which was built as part of phase 1a of Blackwall Reach and a key part of the community's requests to developers. There is no mention of other local retail and dining opportunities such as Crisp Street Market, or the local schools and library.

This 'non-existence' is extended to the entire borough of Tower Hamlets, as a map of London in the 'Penthouse Brochure' illustrates the entire borough is overlooked in favour of the 'global' attractions of Central London (**Figure 48**). This fits a tried and tested capitalist logic where urban spaces are constructed with explicit reference to globalisation via entrepreneurial urban strategies, urban hierarchies, and architectures (Davidson, 2007; McNeill & Tewdwr-Jones, 2003; Chang, Huang & Savage, 2004). So, Blackwall Reach's claims within the marketing material about focusing on the 'East London vibe' (**Figure 38**) or about creating 'a new community' are misrepresentations, instead the focus is on connecting the site within the context of a 'global London'. It attempts to connect the future apartment complexes to London's global spaces of culture, business, and finance, ignoring the areas existing community and heritage. As a result, what is offered to potential residents is not a local existence, but rather an image of a global city lifestyle (Davidson, 2007).

This is problematic when we consider that there are existing regeneration and community led housing schemes which do attempt to incorporate areas of the surrounding community within their marketing material. For instance, Hackney Borough Council's recent plans for its regeneration scheme, while fraught with its own issues, does have a brochure for its Bridge House properties that mentions the surrounding shopping opportunities and green spaces within a 15-minute walking radius, rather than simply focusing on areas outside the area. While Coin Street Community Builders, a locally focused social enterprise in Southwark, run a range of projects (including a proposal for a housing development at Doon Street) that attempt to solve local social problems and still retain some commercial viability. Both of these examples provide cases where local and commercial interests can be met in ways that do not involve erasing the local community from the finished project, where at least some emphasis is placed on facilities no more than a 20-minute walk away. Therefore, Blackwall Reach's attempts to link their development to more 'celebrated' parts of the city, ultimately facilitates the erasure of the immediate neighbourhood through a marketing rhetoric which emphasises accessibility to other areas. In this sense, RHG and its surrounding neighbourhood are devalued by developers as something largely unimportant to potential residents and investors. Such spatial perspectives clearly reflect the wider neoliberal doxa which valorises the spectacle of

(global) capital and consequently erases contemporaneous poverty and working-class sustenance and architecture (Thoburn, 2018; Davidson, 2007).

This form of place making through 'speculative imagery' helps to normalise the displacements brought about through the increasing 'beautification of housing' (Gassner, 2021). It embodies what Linder & Sandoval (2021) refer to the 'aesthetics of gentrification', where urban redevelopment is used to actively produce spaces of desire and seduction which promote mobility at the expense of lower income populations. This urban power struggle is presented as something that is increasingly transnational and 'aestheticised', as the look and feel of urban space is increasingly dictated by a neoliberal global elite (Lindner & Sandoval, 2021). Therefore, any building/person that does not fit the sleek, sculpted, and corporate image of the speculative design represents that which the future estate is not. It embodies a symbolic politics where the struggle over the power to promote visions of reality and impose visions on reality emerges (Bourdieu, 1991; 1997). The visual juxtaposition of the new 'Blackwall Reach' against the old estate, presents the community as ugly and no longer economically viable, its redevelopment positioned as the only viable alternative.

Derogatory Language

Language has also played a crucial part in how RHG has been represented throughout the process of its regeneration. As Bourdieu (1991: 170) has argued:

'The power to constitute the given through utterances, to make people see and believe, to confirm or to transform the vision of the world and, thereby, action upon the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power that enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (physical or economic) by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization. ...What makes for the power of words and watchwords, the power to maintain or to subvert order, is belief in the legitimacy of the words and of those who utter them.'

This neatly exemplifies the way narratives of the estate have been shaped through uses of language by various actors, as it transitions from 'Brutalist housing estate' to 'Blackwall Reach'. This is reflected within the Ugly/Beauty debate as people comment on its status as either a 'modernist masterpiece' (Powers, 2010) or criticise it as 'ugly' and 'ill designed' (Jenkins, 2008). Over time, as slogans and phrases are repeated by central actors and institutions, the language they use is able to influence the subjective reality of individuals and the environments in which they live (Slater, 2018; Allen & Hatchett, 1986). Certainly, language has been a key medium through which a 'narrative of ugliness' has been constructed and reproduced, RHG in particular. I want to focus on how the estate has been represented and critiqued by various high-profile politicians and media outlets, paying specific attention to some of the derogatory uses of language that revolve around Brutalist housing estates being classified as either a 'concrete monstrosity' or a 'sink estate' (Slater, 2018; Thoburn, 2018).

The use of pejorative phrases has had very real effects on the residents of the estate, contributing to 'territorial stigma' as discussions of the estate's social and economic hardships are reduced to harmful stereotypes (Waquant, 2007). This is particularly poignant when considering the repeated negative portrayal of certain groups (for instance migrants, or benefits claimants) and places (council estates or ethnic minority neighbourhoods) ultimately leads to the perpetuation of toxic categories within society (Liu, 2006). This section therefore looks to illustrate how derogatory language is frequently used to describe the estate, and how this has been mobilised to justify its demolition. It illustrates how the powerful are able to use language to assert their dominance over the landscape (Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014). In order to structure my discussion, I break down my analysis into three themes: *'The sink estate'*, *'The Concrete Monstrosity'* and *'Marketing Rhetoric'*, each will

engage with the different kinds of language used to attack, sell, or critique the estate and the role each plays in the stigmatisation of those that live there. What is clear is that most of the critique focuses on the estate's visual elements in an effort to promote an 'ugly' stereotype which fails to adequately represent the community.

The Sink Estate

RHG has frequently been described as a 'sink estate'. Slater (2018: 6) defines the term as typically an area of council housing where the behaviour of tenants is first; under intense moral condemnation and second; both cause and the symptom of poor housing conditions and neighbourhood malaise. Slater (2018: 6) also links the term's origin to definitions which highlight the visual imagery of 'sink' as the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists one meaning of 'sink' as: 'A receptacle or gathering place of vice, corruption, etc'. This connection to vivid and vulgar imagery again further stigmatises those to which it is applied. These metaphors are then transposed onto residents who live in the places that are singled out, branding them as deviant and responsible for the estate's decline – when in reality it is likely to be a combination of other social issues and years of economic decline and disinvestment. While it is not my intention to list the number of examples where RHG has been called a 'sink estate', I do wish to highlight several examples which illustrate how pervasive the phrase has become in discussing the estate. In turn, I argue that this has only helped construct a territorial stigma and narrative of 'ugliness' that has contributed to RHG's decline and demolition. For instance, the 'sink estate' label has been applied to it on numerous occasions by various public commentators and media outlets: An article in TANK magazine charts the estate's history, labelling the site a 'sink estate' (Westad, 2014); while a letter written for the Guardian by Richard Rogers and Anne Power (2008) lament the use of RHG as a so called 'sink estate'.

Furthermore, an article from the Daily Mail (Doughty, 2011) titled '*The end of sink estates? Council to give more homes to those WITH jobs to help break the benefits culture*' (**Figure 49**) the image of RHG is used to illustrate the kind of 'sink estates' that they see as a problem and in need of more deserving residents. The caption is also a misrepresentation as it states that six in ten homes do not work, however from 2011 census data there is only an unemployment rate of 9% (26% if you include family members looking after the home or other family) at the estate's address (based on 242 respondents (Streetcheck, 2020). This use of false information tied with the rhetoric of the sink

Council estates started to go downhill in the 1970s when houses began to be handed out on the basis of 'need'. This meant that the homeless, those living in overcrowded conditions, people with medical or welfare needs, or those with a claim to live in a particular area took priority.

Efforts to save homes for working people have support from Tory ministers and Labour leader Ed Miliband.

Southend's council house waiting list contains 4,819 names hoping for one of 6,200 homes. Now one in five will be handed out according to a system whereby people get highest priority if they have a job.



Robin Hood Gardens in London. Six out of ten homes rented by councils or state-subsidised housing associations are occupied by families where no-one works

It follows similar initiatives in Tory-controlled Westminster and Labour-run Newham in London.

There are 860,000 council or housing association homes in England where the tenant has a full-time job, but 895,000 where the tenant is classed as 'economically inactive'.

Figure 49. Daily Mail article entitled '*The end of sink estates? Council to give more homes to those WITH jobs to help break the benefits culture*'. The article uses an image of RHG in an attempt add weight to its argument around council housing – Doughty (2011)

estate is exactly what Slater (2018: 5) discusses in his article on the origin of the 'sink estate' as he argues how the term represents a 'semantic battering ram' in the ideological assault on social housing. It deflects attention away from social housing as an urgent necessity during a serious crisis of affordability (Slater, 2018). This point is plainly evident in the article by the Daily Mail (**Figure 49**) as the narratives it constructs around its use of the term 'sink estate' are truncations and distortions of social realities, and particular representations homologous to the material interests of the paper. Therefore, as a popular conservative platform it is likely to have a vested interest in targeting the welfare state, and social housing as it looks to roll back the many intrusions it feels that the state plays in our everyday lives. The 'benefits scrounger' and 'the sink estate' both representing reductive narratives which can be used to label, stigmatise, and quickly generate a reactionary response to those that live in state sponsored housing. This presents how the territorial stigma associated with the rhetoric of the sink estate can be deployed to gain political capital by providing a shorthand misdiagnosis to justify a new policy agenda or political intervention (Sisson, 2020).

Another example of the repeated use of 'sink estate' is from the Time Out magazine website in an article titled '*London's Worst Buildings*' (2016);

'Opened in 1972, this Poplar housing estate was designed by husband-and-wife team Peter and Alison Smithson with all the altruistic intentions for the new, postwar 'cities in the sky'. However, like so many other Brutalist blocks built in economically poor boroughs, lack of adequate financial resources soon resulted in it becoming more of a sink estate than a sky city.'

Although the tone is not overtly political compared to the Daily Mail article, its message is complicit with the implied connotations of the sink estate. Its casual insistence that it is more of a sink estate than a 'sky city' and linking its plight with 'so many other Brutalist blocks' perpetuates the stereotype that all Brutalist social housing is the same. The format of the article also reflects a capitalist logic where places are forced to compete against each other in order to be the 'best' or avoid being the 'worst' (McCann, 2004). This kind of media discourse presents certain spaces as either successful or failures and emphasises the characteristics that have contributed to its downfall – in this case the Smithsons' altruistic intentions for a city in the sky. In doing so it presents a framework to wider society on 'how not to build', using the sink estate as a label to indicate such failure, furthering a political discourse that sees places compete with each other over money, aesthetics, and prestige (McCann, 2004). These ideas are also reflected in Building Design magazine's – 'Carbuncle Cup', where readers nominate which building it believes to be the ugliest. Although RHG has never been nominated, it presents a similar logic to the sink estate – as aesthetic

judgements are imposed upon spaces by those in relative positions of power that demonise local environments, while failing to consider wider socio-economic conditions. It reflects the current neoliberal impulse towards creating liveable and attractive environments for certain class fractions at the expense of others.

Although Time Out is more honest about elements of the economic hardship faced by the estate and its lack of investment, the central message is clear, that the architecture of the estate has failed. As with all symbolic violence the actual community is erased from the debate (Bourdieu, 1991; 1997). Therefore, framing public housing space and its residents as 'a problem' or 'sink estate' has the additional effect of implicitly validating paternalistic behaviour by policymakers as 'saviours', while obscuring the negative effects of demolition as an authoritative intervention. It further highlights the role of territorial stigmatisation within regeneration and how it can provide additional justification for 'fixing' an area via its reincorporation into the real estate circuit of the city (Wacquant, 2008b).

The Concrete Monstrosity

The 'sink estate' is not the only rhetorical medium through which RHG has been stigmatised. Another phrase in the arsenal of those that look to critique Post-War and explicitly Brutalist architecture is the 'concrete monstrosity'. Meades (2014) highlights how the 'monstrosity' has become a popular term in describing Brutalist and concrete architecture. He connects the use of the monstrosity with similar critique levelled at Victorian architecture during its day, just as the 'concrete monstrosity' faces demolition and condemnation so too did the Victorian 'monstrosity' (Meades, 2014). The term 'Monstrous' itself reflects the disruption of classical ideas of proportion and geometry in which any form of disruption leads to the eruption of an unnatural 'monstrosity' (Dorrian, 2000). It relates to concepts of the 'monstrous ugly' or the overly large and disproportioned (Vershaffel, 2020) and signals the subversion of a supposedly natural order (Dorrian, 2000). Therefore, by connecting Brutalism with the monstrous we can see how it is positioned as unnatural and something that disrupts the implied order of architecture. In this way it turns the core principles of Brutalism, as set by Banham and the Smithsons, back on themselves, using its attention to anti beauty as something that goes against the natural order of architecture. Like the sink estate, this combination of vivid and visceral imagery adds to its power as a rhetorical device. Certainly, the use of 'monstrosity' or 'monstrous' has remained popular within the media ever since Prince Charles's 'monstrous carbuncle' speech back 1987 where he lambasted modern design, describing an extension designed by Peter Ahrends to the National Gallery as a 'monstrous carbuncle' on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend' (Glancey, 2004). In a similar fashion the

use of 'monstrous' to describe RHG has also been most prolific in the media, where articles have been quick to call out the estate for its monstrous characteristics, again the Daily Mail highlights how:

'To those unlucky enough to live there [RHG], it is a grim, concrete monstrosity blighted by urine-soaked stairwells and marauding gangs of youths who lob rubbish – and worse – from its brutally modernist aerial walkways (McGee & Philips 2008, n.p).'

Here the monstrous is combined with the language of 'dirtiness' as a space waiting to be gentrified or expropriated, as RHG is characterised as 'urine soaked', 'grim', and 'dangerous'. Melia (2020) highlights how this language is often used within the gentrification process to characterise urban ruin and decay, it often symbolises the disenfranchised and the working classes who city councils aim to 'sweep away'. Often this language is linked to representations of gentrification as a 'civilising', 'purifying' and 'sanitising' process. This is particularly poignant when we combine such language with the sterile images of the new development from Chapter V and the lack of representation of the local Bangladeshi community. Derogatory rhetoric combined with the exclusion of migrants has frequently been central to the construction of so called 'clean' and 'orderly' streets (Melia 2020, Danewid, 2019). This narrative also reflects how dirt and race are often conflated and subtly used (or very explicitly at times) to symbolically remake estates as a form of waste in order to attract investment and government funding (Glucksburg, 2014; Campkin & Cox, 2007). It highlights how issues associated with refuse are treated as an issue of poverty and immigrant poor, while providing justification for developers to come in and purge the local community of its original inhabitants in order to become clean. The monstrosity is therefore another mechanism through which 'otherness' is maintained and constructed.

Another example by Margaret Hodge, the culture secretary in 2008, was completely against what she termed 'concrete monstrosities' (Sandes, 2015). The Daily telegraph quoted her as saying:

'When some concrete monstrosity - sorry, I mean modernist masterpiece - fails to make the cut despite having expert opinion behind it, let's find a third way. This is the 21st century - a perfect digital image of the building, inside and out, could be retained forever.'

As this statement makes clear, the use of the phrase 'concrete monstrosity' like the 'sink estate' has become a 'potent and irresistible cliché' which has been adopted as the default government and media descriptor of post-war modernism (Grindrod, 2014). As Thoburn (2018) goes on to discuss it is a complex trope which turns against the use of concrete within architecture and trades on a claimed

sympathy with working-class residents, who are understood to be the victims of the hubris of modernist middle-class architects and planners (Thoburn, 2018). Therefore, by representing RHG as 'concrete monstrosity' critics of the estate are able to deflect discussion away from the issues it actually faces, effectively justifying its demolition by focusing on its 'monstrous' aesthetic. As is evident from the Daily Mail and Hodge's comments, the focus on its aesthetic elements and perceived anti-social behaviour suggests a failure of the architecture to provide for its residents. We see this again in the way they are able to use the same rhetoric to shift the violence back onto the estate, as further remarks by Margaret Hodge in 2008 highlight:

'Anyone who wants to list that place should try living there. It is simply not fit for purpose, and I cannot believe that anyone is trying to list it. They should try living in it or raising a family there' (Cited in Rogers, 2015 n.p.)

A similar tone is presented by local councillor John Briscoe in the Daily Mail as he challenges Richard Rogers to live in the RHG estate in reaction to his support for its listing:

'These architects should try living here if they think it's so great. They think it's a quaint, living museum-piece, when it's a place people have to call home. The reality is that it has a reputation as one of the worst estates in East London. It's not in a fit state for the people living there. To compare it to the Royal Crescent in Bath is ridiculous. It's ugly; a real monstrosity.' (John Briscoe – In McGee and Philips, 2008 n.p.)

Whereas Thoburn highlights how Jenkins (2008) in the Guardian also presents a similar rhetoric, as he regards RHG through the metaphor of concrete-as-violence:

'Never have the rich been robbed to dump so much concrete ugliness on the heads of the poor'.

Yet these are not just benign statements of architectural critique, they themselves do real violence (Thoburn, 2018). It is not the concrete or even RHG that is the violent party but the image of 'concrete monstrosity'. Despite any emancipatory claims made by the likes of the Daily Mail, Hodge, or Jenkins on behalf of the residents, the lasting effect is the 'territorial stigmatisation' of the estate brought about by the 'monstrous' image (Wacquant 2007; Kallin and Slater 2014). This assertion of the 'monstrous' and the promotion of demolition that accompanies its damning appraisal, is a

significant contributing agent to its destruction (Thoburn, 2018). It extends the symbolic defamation of place to include architectural criticism, as the repeated negative architectural messages of the 'monstrosity' are superimposed onto RHG's population who become tarnished with its failures. It serves the same function as the 'sink estate', wherein welfare retrenchment and class displacement are obscured and refashioned as putative solutions to unsightly and pathogenic moral failing (Thoburn, 2018). A point that Brennan (2015) highlights as she declares how the often used 'concrete monstrosity' mirrors similar metaphors employed by gothic fiction – in that the monstrous reflects those elements that we seek to repress. This serves a political means to an end, as it links to how aesthetic notions of the 'ugly' are used to facilitate the domination of Brutalist architecture by those that are able to distort public opinion of place. It presents how symbolic power enables such categories as the 'concrete monstrosity' to become elevated into authoritative and consequential discourses emanating from state officials, media outlets and institutions (Slater, 2018). This form of territorial stigmatisation serves to build public support for redevelopment and 'primes' places for reinvestment' (Sisson 2020), the negative rhetoric rendering the estate as obsolete, a problem area and a site that requires demolition and redevelopment.

While I am in no doubt that the pervasiveness and frequency of pejorative narratives such as the 'monstrosity' and the 'sink estate' are having a very real effect on the perception of the estate, the stigmatising effect it has on those that continue to live there is perhaps not as detrimental as immediately theorised. The kind of stigma associated with these forms of derogatory language is often presented as incredibly detrimental to residents' experience of place (Wacquant, 2008; Kelaher et al, 2010; Slater, 2018; Damer, 1974; Gans, 1962; Hastings, 2004; Watt, 2008). Wacquant even goes as far to suggest that territorial stigmatisation is *'arguably the single most protrusive feature of the lived experience of those entrapped in these sulphurous zones'* (2008: 169). The resultant effect on residents is purported to be the gradual dissolution of 'place' or the loss of a humanized, culturally familiar, and socially filtered locale with which marginalized populations identify and in which they feel 'at home' and in relative security (Wacquant, 2008b).

Yet in my conversations with the estate's residents these perspectives do not map neatly onto their experiences, presenting a far more complex engagement with the 'monstrous image' of the estate. Often their encounters reflect more ordinary experiences, many choosing not to internalise aspects of the stigma imposed upon them and the building. This certainly reflects a growing body of literature which challenges notions of territorial stigma, suggesting that its impacts on residents may be overstated or at least under theorised (Watt, 2020; Butler-Warke, 2020; Damer, 1974; Gans, 1962). Instead, the realities of living with territorial stigma are far more nuanced, as inhabitants in

some cases are able to utilise their own agency to challenge the harmful images ascribed to their homes (Watt, 2020; Damer, 1974; Gans, 1962). In relation to RHG, while residents were aware of the uncompromising image of the estate and its reputation, many were not bothered by its architectural style, and were more concerned with what the interior was like:

Edward Brookes: Do you like how the original buildings looked?

David: yeah, the building didn't matter to me. I mean everyone said it was like a prison block, but you know it didn't matter. To me it's when you go indoors it's what you go by innit. What it's like not the way it looks on the outside. It's up to you what you make of it inside. That's what I look at it.

Syed: I mean it's not something you like, it's not pleasant to look at. But once you are home...its home sweet home. Once you are inside its ok...you just need, as I said a lick of paint could have done the job rather than taking it down. What's the point of taking it down? But then you know the council will get money and the rich men gets richer and take it from the poor...

Although Syed and David both highlight the negative image associations with the estate, these were not representations that they were concerned about on an everyday basis. In fact, not once did the notions of 'monstrosity' or 'sink estate' come up in conversation, rather these descriptors seem to be wholly reserved for those within the media or government when choosing to discuss the estate. This challenges some of the more damning impacts of the rhetoric associated with the 'monstrosity' and the 'sink estate', as residents were seemingly able to 'shrug off' the stigma associated with RHG in favour of their own narrative. It signals a greater need to understand the effects of stigma and how its impacts can be resisted (Watt, 2020).

While this section presents how symbolic power enables such categories as the 'concrete monstrosity' to become elevated into authoritative and consequential discourses (Slater, 2018), it also stresses that the effects of such rhetoric on those that live there is not always immediately clear. Although my interactions with residents highlight a general lack of internalisation of the negative stereotypes attached to the estate, this is not to say that every resident is equally affected. Regardless, the use of terminology such as the 'monstrosity' and the 'sink estate' illustrate the lack of understanding towards those who live in sites suffering from material and economic deprivation. It signals a need for the government, developers, and the media to be more holistic and more sensitive to the issues associated with housing and the built environment and in the images and language they draw upon to describe people's homes. It is important to understand that the

negative images conjured up by derogatory language are also a mechanism of capitalism, racism, and inequality as they 'prime' run down areas for future reinvestment (Sisson, 2020).

Marketing Rhetoric

The concrete monstrosity and the sink estate arguably represent the two most extreme and consistent linguistic images applied to RHG, there is also a great deal of promotional language which reduces the debate surrounding RHG to key slogans or marketing jargon. This section therefore discusses how marketing slogans and repetitive messages printed on the hoarding also attempt to make explicit differences between the old and new estates. In a similar way to the brochures, the emphasis is on absence and presence, where the language used attempts to make present the new features of 'Blackwall Reach' and indicate an absence at RHG. For instance, the use of 'happier', 'healthier', and 'brand-new community' (**Figure 44**) all imply that what existed or currently exists at RHG is not happy, healthy, or even a community at all. It indicates that there is a lack of acceptable qualities that the new development looks to rectify. This is despite the fact that there was a great deal of community involvement during the planning application process for Blackwall Reach, where numerous residents expressed their concern and resistance to the initial plans. Much of the community came out in support for refurbishment of RHG despite it not being offered by the council (Powers, 2010). The nearby school, community centre (completed as part of phase 1a) and Crisp Street Market also indicate that the community did not lack in the ways the hoarding suggests.

My conversations with residents also highlight the frustration around the marketing slogans, as Stephanie mentioned how she found the notion of 'one brand new community' particularly problematic:

Stephanie: What makes me laugh is that on the boards, the hoarding, it says one brand new community... hang on we had a community before but they're pulling it down moving them on and making a new one. One community is not a new community. I think the wording is problematic. If I knew they'd said that in the beginning I would get something in the window that said it's not a new community, there is a community already here. I think it's a bad choice of words.

Here she acknowledges the questionable choice of words, and how this conflicted with her experience of the estate. While she felt unable to challenge the use of language, especially since the demolition had begun, it highlights her willingness to resist and reject the views imposed upon them

by the developers, again choosing not to internalise the messages around the estate's implied 'failure'. Although Stephanie was not campaigning against the development, we can see how smaller acts of resistance highlight the disconnect between the views of the remaining residents and those wishing to redevelop the estate (Watt, 2020). The hoardings' simple slogans erase a great deal of community presence in favour of speculative promises of a future that simply 'sounds' brighter and better to those that the properties are marketed at. It creates a false narrative that presents the estate's demolition as a failure of the community, rather than the residents' desires for better quality homes and living conditions.

The repetition of the notion of 'affordable housing' as seen in **Figure 50**, also represents another use of marketing language that signals to the wider community that they intend to try and cater to those on lower incomes. Affordability was one of the original estate's virtues, its status as social housing meant it helped house the poorest residents in the community. However, affordability is now an increasingly difficult attribute to find in the current London housing market and by advertising the new development as such it becomes a key selling device. Much like the Banham's curation of the Brutalist image, the notion of affordability is arbitrary, a label they have attached to the site to signal the honesty of their intentions. In reality the term affordable has been debunked for meaning anywhere up to 80% market value (Minton, 2017a), a far cry from the actual affordability that would be required for most of the previous and existing residents to purchase. The speculative nature of the affordable term is also tied to the market, as changes in real estate value result in the 'below 80%' figure to fluctuate. Current flat prices of phase 1b start at around £500,000, while current estimates from an online housing estate agent (Zoopla, 2020) of the single bed properties completed in phase 1a along Cotton Street are close to £330,000. The percentage of affordable properties in the new builds is also not entirely clear, the community website for the new build properties states that 50% of the flats will be affordable, however the hoarding only indicates 43% (**Figure 51**). These figures are also likely to change as the development continues and further reflects the degree of speculation and uncertainty that surrounds the term affordable (Minton, 2018). Thus, the presence of the word 'affordable' is purely there to help build an 'image' of the new estate that is more desirable to potential buyers at the expense of maligning the old estate.

Again, this reflects a symbolic politics whereby the developers are able to dictate the language used to describe both old and new estates. It wants people to believe the new flats are affordable, and thereby signal the benefits of the regeneration. The presence and repetition of the word 'affordable' within the physical landscape, repeated numerous times on the hoarding further makes its meaning and consensus supposedly self-evident and 'common sense' (Bourdieu, 1996). In actuality it is

misrepresenting what would truly be affordable to those in the local community. The deployment of this kind of marketing rhetoric, which is both inaccurate and confusing, presents a strategy through which developers are able to gain consent for dispossession, which further marginalise inhabitants while producing value for the owners and agents of capital (Tyler, 2013; Wacquant, 2008b, 2015).

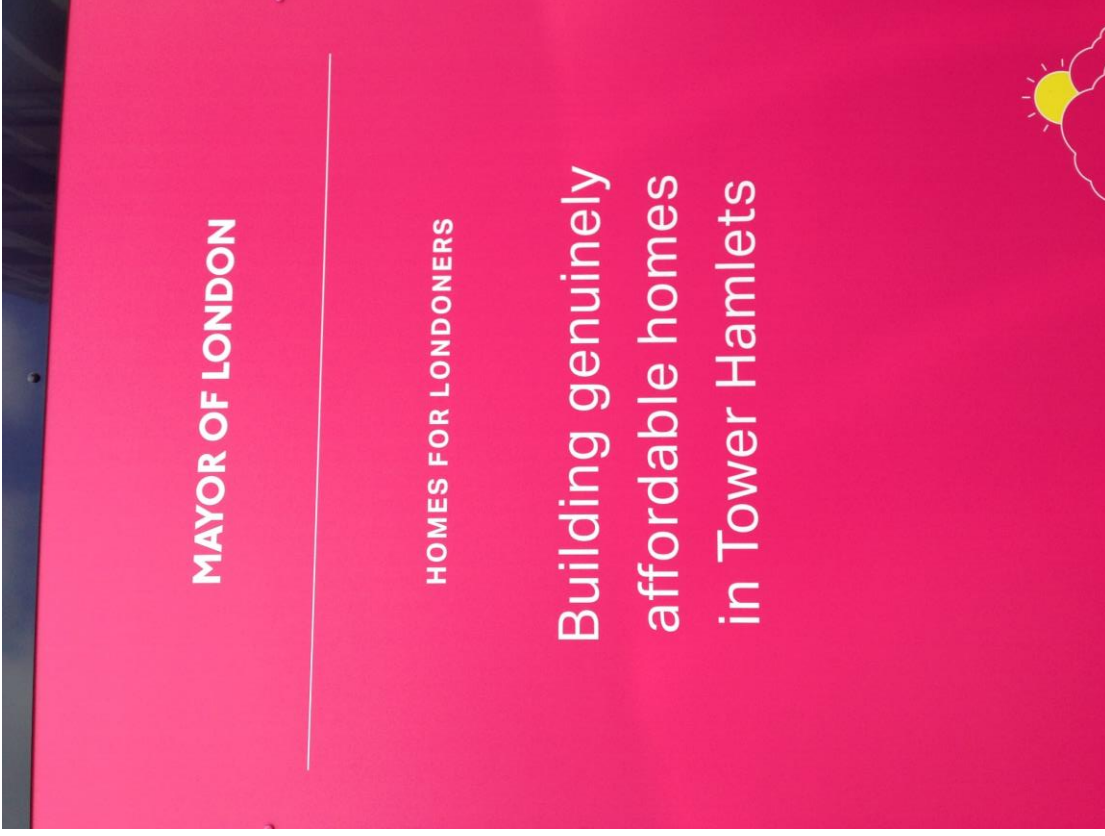


Figure 50. Hoarding surrounding the demolition site of the west block. Clear endorsement by the Mayor of London and prominent display of ‘genuinely affordable homes’ - Image taken by author Brookes 2018

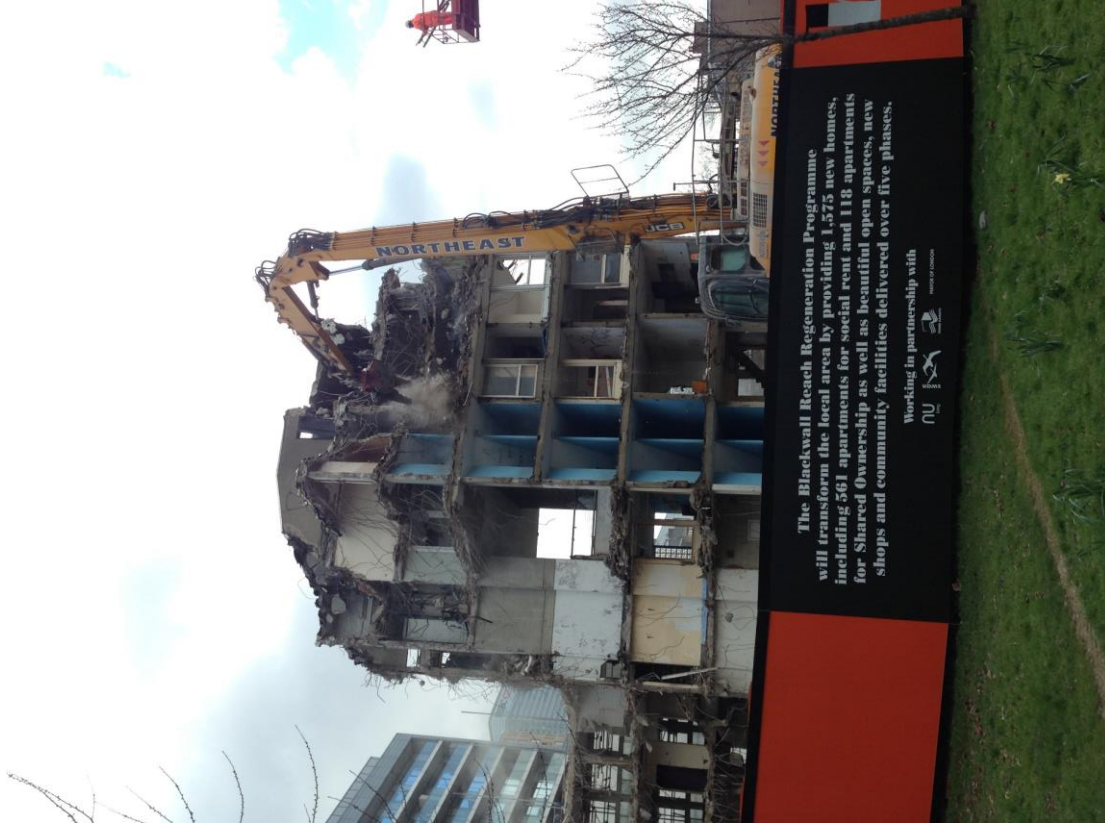


Figure 51. Hoarding surrounding demolition site of the west block including a mission statement from Blackwall reach. The figures indicated regarding affordable housing only suggest that 679 out of 1575 properties will be affordable, only 43% - Image taken by author (2018)

Summary

In attending to notions of the 'ugly' this section has aimed to explore one aspect of the aesthetic debate that surrounds RHG and how a narrative of ugliness has been constructed around the estate. Most notably, it has attempted to signal how different actors, media, images, and rhetoric have been used to represent the site as something that needs 'regenerating'. It has focused on two key processes present within the redevelopment that focus on the use of 'speculative imagery' and 'derogatory language'; both of which contribute to a symbolic politics that attempts to normalise the demolition of supposedly 'bad architecture'. Each of the examples presented represent the ever growing and changing body of digital and physical material that continues to emerge within the immediate landscape of RHG. In doing so, it has explored how each of these different images, marketing materials, representations and textual accounts have focused on the site's aesthetics, simultaneously excluding, and stigmatising the local population in order to benefit the politically and economically powerful (Slater, 2018, Waquant, 2008). Each of these processes and their effects on the community of Robin Hood Gardens further represents how notions of the 'ugly' within architecture are being used as a device to shape the urban landscape according to neoliberal logics of capital accumulation.

Before continuing I would also like to summarise by returning to the notion of 'memorability as image' as set out by Banham and draw a connection between how these contemporary engagements with 'image' and the estate's ugliness relate to ideas in *'The New Brutalism'* (1955), in particular how the notion of both 'image' and 'memorability' have taken on different meanings in the Blackwall Reach development to what Banham originally intended. For instance, it is clear that the role of images within the new development are key to its future form. In some ways it turns Banham's ideas in on itself, as Banham argued for an understanding of architecture in terms of its capacity to embody images (Walsh & Zimmerman, 2016), whereas in the contemporary setting we see how images *take the place* of architecture. The numerous digital representations, renderings and imagery create an architecture that while imaginary is the one that is bought and sold and actively involved in displacing estates such as RHG as they are regenerated. We see how notions of memory and memorability are constructed anew, as the media, developers and politicians construct new narratives and visions of past, present, and future, through which the old estate and its community are actively forgotten in favour of a prosperous future. We see a contrast between the indexical architecture of RHG and the fictional narrative constructed by Blackwall Reach through the assembly of architectural image-objects and linguistic devices. The Smithsons' architecture attempts to demonstrate architectural clarity – it points to itself as truthful representation, whilst Blackwall

Reach recalls narrative to architecture by spinning tales of possible futures rather than telling the whole story. Both developments arguably display their keen awareness of the importance of images, photographic and other, in the propagation of architecture. Whereas one building engages architectural propositions deciphered from Henderson's images of the street, the other assembles computer generated and architectural images blown back up into three-dimensional things. Memorability as image in the present therefore represents the capacity of architectural images to redefine our memory and experience of place – in that it is the image of architecture that serves to define the future architecture that will inhabit the landscape.

Chapter VI

THE POLITICS OF BEAUTY: HERITAGE, PRESERVATION AND ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

Introduction

Following on from the previous chapter this section looks to focus on the second set of key voices that surround RHG, which again form part of a distinct layer of discourse that can be read from the numerous material traces, images, and documents that coalesce around RHG. This second group positions themselves on the other side of the Ugly/Beauty debate and are concerned with trying to preserve the estate or engage with it from a position of heritage. In particular, I explore how this set of actors have been involved in constructing a rhetoric of architectural beauty (or attempt to assess 'objectively' its value/beauty). Specifically, it analyses the major campaign that was launched to get the estate listed (launched by Building Design Magazine and the 20th Century Society), alongside the Victoria & Albert Museum and its involvement in preserving parts of the estate and subsequent exhibition at the 2018 Venice Biennale. This will also entail a closer examination of Historic England's (at the time English Heritage) participation in the listing of the estate and how their position as a heritage authority helped to shape the ultimate outcome of the Ugly/Beauty debate. For a point of clarity, I will switch between English Heritage and Historic England depending on the relevant time frame, the change in name for the organisation occurring in 2015, which sits between the various attempts to list/not list RHG.

Whilst I am appearing to group a whole range of different organisations, institutions, and individual actors under the same analytical frame (which I will loosely refer to as the preservationists), I do not wish to position them as a coherent political or institutional body - the reality is far more complex with many of them following their own agenda or were in active disagreement with one another. My reasons for grouping them together is partly due to their similar end goal ambitions of attempting to retain part(s) of the estate (with varying success), but also reflects an exercise in structural brevity, as by presenting them together I am better able to unpick, and cross examine each aspect of their political and aesthetic involvement with the estate. The discussion will consider two central themes: *'The Politics of Listing'* and *'The V&A'*. The first of these will examine the listing process and how this structured a particular view of the estate, exploring how different groups presented RHG either as a success or failure. This will include interviews with two stakeholders in the listing process; Simon Smithson, and a senior listing advisor at Historic England (who wished to be anonymous) who was involved in the second assessment of RHG, both of which represented different sides of the discussion. The second theme will focus entirely on the V&A's recent involvement with the estate and their position in choosing to salvage a section of the site's interior and exterior features. It will examine how they constructed a particular narrative of the estate which focused on its Brutalist

design, however in their effort to remain 'neutral to its politics' ultimately failed to adequately provide a platform for an open debate around its contested history.

Each of these sections analyses how a particular aesthetic politics is constructed by heritage organisations which has largely reduced the estate to a material artefact. It raises questions around how state-funded institutions like the V&A and Heritage England are able to adequately represent and review politically sensitive sites, as while they have a duty to remain objective and impartial, this has curtailed how they are able to engage in an effective dialogue around the preservation of historic buildings. This is particularly noticeable at RHG where there is a marked absence of perspectives that attempt to understand the estate's community or the destructive effects of its demolition. This reduces the complexity of discussion that surrounds the estate, only attending to a pre-determined set of historically significant forms and features rather than reflecting upon the wider social and political implications of its redevelopment.

This chapter will then conclude by summarising how the narratives of the estate constructed by the heritage sector have become embroiled within wider political debates around aesthetics, gentrification, and the right to inhabit certain parts of the city. As a result, the listing debate illustrates the lack of agency communities have in being able to make decisions about their local heritage and development. The result is a need for the 'preservationists' and the wider heritage sector to be more sensitive about how they choose to represent sites under threat of redevelopment, particularly with respect to people's homes and the potential loss that may be incurred. I now turn to consider the first of the two themes, as I explore the arguments that emerged around the attempts to list the estate.

The Politics of Listing

While this chapter is focused on those I have referred to as 'preservationists', this section is more concerned with a debate between various heritage organisations/councillors/enthusiasts and their contrasting opinions on the future of RHG. In particular it will address the very public disagreement between Tower Hamlets, English Heritage, and the 20th Century Society and the two campaigns to have the estate listed. As previously highlighted, there were two attempts made by the C20 Society to list RHG: one in 2007 after Tower Hamlets Council applied for a Certificate of Immunity (COI), and again in 2015 after the original COI had expired. In both instances the assessment by English Heritage was upheld and immunity from listing was granted. The result of which has led to the

Blackwall Reach regeneration scheme going ahead and the partial demolition (soon to be complete) of the estate.

In a similar way to the previous chapter, I attest that the preservationists are more concerned with particular representations of the estate that focus on its past and historical significance, rather than aspects of its present reality, instead constructing a material design perspective that fails to recognise RHG's human and non-human inhabitants. Although this could be considered appropriate given that the function of listing and the conservation process is to preserve the material characteristics of place, it only gives a partial understanding of the estate, only attending to its historic material realities. As a result, debates about the built environment and the politics of redevelopment are reduced to simplistic arguments attached to notions of architectural and historic 'significance'. I also wish to use this opportunity to go through the events of the debate as they happened, discussing how different representations of the estate were fought over by the 20th Century Society and English Heritage, and how this public dispute manifested itself within the material landscape of the RHG.

In order to support this discussion, I intend to draw upon the numerous archival sources which document the listing and historical assessment of the estate, alongside interviews with Simon Smithson and conversations with a senior listing advisor from Historic England, who was involved in the renewal of the COI at RHG in 2015. Many of the examples I draw upon are policy documents or written guidelines from various heritage institutions, and although I have attempted to be brief in summarising these accounts, there are points where there is too much text, so I have provided examples of the documents I refer too in **Appendix B**. In this respect, I also wish to position these documents as 'artefacts' that can be used to piece together the various aspects of the debate as it unfolded. While it is not necessary to read through each item in great detail (given my attempts at summarising them) they will hopefully provide an additional degree of detail surrounding the attempted conservation of the estate. Hopefully, each of these 'artefacts' will illustrate the very bureaucratic nature of the listing process and how through this trail of digital/material resources different representations of the estate emerge, many of which are contradictory and confusing.

The ultimate outcome of the listing process is a separation of RHG's present context as a form of social housing from its historic architectural and design features, brought about through the numerous administrative procedures and tasks that the conservation assessment demands. In terms of structure, I look to present these materials across four different phases which document the whole process as it was applied to RHG. The first of which: '*The Pre-listing Process*', will provide the context for the discussion, setting out the legal parameters for considering the estate as a candidate

for listing. The second: *'The Assessment of RHG'*, relates to how the listing criteria were applied to the estate by English Heritage and the advice they gave to the DCMS. The third section: *'Listing Controversy'*, then moves on to document how this decision was perceived by various members of the public and other institutions, examining the increasing politicisation of the listing process. The final section: *'The Secretary of State's Decision'*, will then investigate how the Secretary of State responded to the request for review and scrutinise the final decision not to list the estate. To conclude I will provide a summary alongside my own critical reflections, in which I evaluate the flaws within the listing process and the effect this had on the estate. However, in order to begin I turn to the first of the four themes and explore just how a building is listed and in turn how this was applied to RHG.

The Pre-listing Process

Central to any discussions of RHG and its redevelopment requires an understanding of the listing process and the various assessments that are necessary in order to classify a building as worthy of state protection. The act of having a building listed is directly related to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This legislates that buildings of special architectural or historic interest are to be compiled into a national list, presided over by the Secretary of State. Each 'listed' building will then be granted additional legal and planning protections (depending on grade) in order to protect it from detrimental changes/demolition. It is also worth mentioning that there is a local list, which differs slightly from the national list, as it is compiled by each local authority, only attending to sites within its local planning area. Unlike the national list it does not provide any additional planning controls, rather it stresses the need for greater consideration when determining the outcome of individual planning applications. However, to get a building listed at a national level most applications must go through Historic England and this is normally carried out in two primary ways; the first is via the thematic and strategic case work of Historic England, who identify buildings under threat so they can then be protected; the second is through a process of spot listing, where a member of the public or local authority approaches Historic England in order to get a building listed or a COI granted. Once a site is identified and considered eligible for further assessment an evaluation is carried out, this information is then used as evidence to support any decisions on whether to list or not. Once this is completed a final decision is then made by either Historic England or the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS - although during the initial COI request at RHG in 2008 the 'Digital' had not been added yet), depending on the location under review. So, for buildings, monuments, or wreck sites the final decision is taken by the DCMS, while

Historic England are able to make rulings on the conservation of parks, gardens, or battlefields. In the case of RHG a COI (Certificate of Immunity) was first brought forward by the local Tower Hamlets Council and therefore the council were not looking to have it locally listed but rather ensure that it was not historically significant and subsequently exempt from any additional planning restrictions at a national level. Given that it was a building any final decision would fall under the jurisdiction of the DCMS. However, the process of considering the estate for listing was not a straightforward one, given that shortly after the council's application for a COI the C20 Society applied for a 'spot listing' of the estate (unaware of the council's initial application). This resulted in EH choosing to run both applications concurrently, given the potentially sensitive nature of the case, any final ruling would then apply to both applications.

Regardless of how the request for listing arrives the assessment process is exactly the same, each location in question is evaluated against specific sets of guidelines in order to ascertain any potential significance or historic value. In this respect, I wish to briefly review some of the criteria involved in listing a building in order to provide additional context around the unique case of RHG. Firstly, there are the '*Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings*' as set out by the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, initially published in 2010 and more recently updated in 2018, this set of principles stipulates the criteria through which the government should refer in order to decide whether a building should be preserved or not. I have attempted to compile a list of all the relevant listing criteria and a brief description of how they are used during the assessment of historic buildings in **Table 1**, this also includes other guidance by Historic England to assist in the designation of listed buildings. This is divided into both statutory requirements and more general principles. The statutory requirements focus on five broad measures which must be considered when deciding the status of a building, these relate to the notion that a building must be of specific and special architectural/ historical interest, exhibiting a significant example of unique or important techniques within its design in order to be considered for listing. For more recent buildings this may also include the function of the building and the extent to which it met its originally intended design. Additionally, strong historical associations with important individuals may also be grounds for meeting the statutory criteria, as if the building maintains a strong connection with an important historical figure this would also satisfy the requirements for it to be listed. Whereas the general principles offer more open points about how to come to a verdict in more specific sets of circumstances – covering a building's age, rarity, any aesthetic merits, its national interest, and its general state of repair. Of course, when RHG was originally assessed it would have been evaluated against the 2010 set of principles, which were on the whole very similar to current (2018) version,

although they were less broad in their definitions of ‘architectural’ and ‘historic’ interest. The updated 2018 version is more open in what can be classified, introducing a greater emphasis on the artistic and group value of buildings, and downgrading its scrutiny of post-1945 sites from ‘*particularly careful selection*’ to ‘*careful selection*’. These changes represent a clarification of the previous 2010 principles rather than any great departure, and while the evaluation of RHG was likely to have been stricter and perhaps more prescribed compared to the current criteria, the stringent appraisal for post war sites would have remained largely the same.

Alongside the government’s criteria for listing there are six conservation principles set by Historic England (2008), these take the form of a slightly more comprehensive document which provides a framework in which to approach the conservation of historic locations and the listing process as a whole. It is designed to ensure that as an institution they are able to employ a consistent and transparent approach in their role as an advisor to the government regarding the protection of historically significant places. In essence the principles are very similar to the ones outlined in the government’s selection criteria, however they are slightly broader and more wholistic in considering the relationship of the historic building/location to its wider environment and its public impact. Within each of these principles the role of historic, aesthetic, and communal value contributes to what is regarded as a ‘significant’ place and therefore which sites warrant listing and which do not. **Table 1** details the principles as found on Historic England’s website and which form part of their ‘*Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance*’ document (2008).

In addition to this Historic England also utilises a series of ‘selection guides’, which were first published in 2007 (although were updated 2017). Each guide offers more specific advice for applying the listing criteria to particular types of building, for instance the selection guide ‘*Domestic 4: The Modern House and Housing*’ would have been the appropriate guide for assessing RHG (Historic England, 2017). Consequently, the context specific advice given regarding the assessment of the estate sets out the difficulty in establishing any sort of listing criteria for post-war social housing from this era (**Table 1**). It highlights that any understanding of the resource continues to develop and that particular ‘*Key considerations will be architectural interest; degree of survival of design; whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing (Historic England, 2017: 19).*’ The selection guide therefore sets the bar very high for RHG, given its temporal proximity to the present day and a lack of knowledge regarding its relative importance. It emphasizes that an important factor for any post-war building is whether it fulfilled its original brief alongside the architect’s original intentions – points that became important in the subsequent debate that surrounded its potential listing.

Table 1. Criteria Considered in the Listing Assessment of Robin Hood Gardens

<i>Listing Assessment Criteria</i>	Brief Description	Source
<i>Architectural interest</i>	To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its design, decoration, or craftsmanship. For more recent buildings the functioning of the building (to the extent that this reflects on its original design and planned use,) will also be a consideration.	Statutory Criteria - Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Historic Interest</i>	A building must illustrate important aspects of the nation’s history and / or have closely substantiated historical associations with nationally important individuals, groups, or events.	Statutory Criteria- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Group Value</i>	The extent to which the exterior of the building contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part, generally known as group value.	Statutory Criteria- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Fixtures and features of a building and curtilage buildings</i>	The desirability of preserving any feature of the building consisting of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or comprised within the curtilage of the building.	Statutory Criteria- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>The character or appearance of conservation areas</i>	In accordance with the terms of section 72 of the 1990 Act, the Secretary of State will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.	Statutory Criteria- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)

<i>Age and Rarity</i>	The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945, another watershed for architecture.	General Principles- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Aesthetic Merits</i>	The appearance of a building (both its intrinsic architectural merit or any group value) is often a key consideration in listing, but the special interest will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality.	General Principles- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Selectivity</i>	A building may be listed primarily because it represents a particular historical type to ensure that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a quality survive.	General Principles- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>State of Repair</i>	The general state of repair and upkeep of a building will not usually be a relevant consideration. Loss of original fabric will however be a relevant consideration when considering special interest.	General Principles- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>Buildings less than 30 years old</i>	It may be appropriate to list some modern buildings despite their relatively recent construction – for example, if they demonstrate outstanding quality (generally interpreted as being equivalent to Grade I or II*).	General Principles- Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, 2018)
<i>The historic environment is a shared resource</i>	Each generation should shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.	Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
<i>Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment</i>	The significance of a place embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage values that people associate with it, or which prompt them to respond to it. Understanding and articulating the values and significance of a place is necessary to inform decisions about its future. The degree of	Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)

	significance determines what, if any, protection, including statutory designation, is appropriate under law and policy.	
<i>Significant places should be managed to sustain their values</i>	Conservation is the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.	Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
<i>Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent</i>	Decisions about change in the historic environment demand the application of expertise, experience, and judgement, in a consistent, transparent process guided by public policy	Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
<i>Documenting and learning from decisions is essential</i>	Accessible records of the justification for decisions and the actions that follow them are crucial to maintaining a cumulative account of what has happened to a significant place and understanding how and why its significance may have been altered.	Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
<i>Post-war housing</i>	It is particularly difficult to establish criteria for the listing of post-war housing, as an understanding of the resource continues to develop but benchmarks have been identified. Key considerations will be architectural interest; degree of survival of design; whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing. Standards are set high, and the important factor for any post-war building is whether it fulfilled its original brief. One-off blocks or towers require individual assessment – for more details see page 19 of listing selection guide.	Domestic 4: Modern Houses and Housing – Listing Selection Guide (Historic England, 2017)

So, as you can see from this rather cursory summary the entire process of getting a building listed (or immune from) is embedded within quite a comprehensive range of different legal and advisory criteria that in a large part overlap with one another. The requirements for post war housing are more stringent but conversely less explicit than those applied to other buildings, given the relative abundance of buildings of that era and a lack of knowledge surrounding what features or characteristics may become significant over time. The fact of the matter is that any assessment is still open to a great deal of interpretation and subjectivity. This is also a view that I was presented with when I spoke to a senior listing advisor from Historic England:

Historic England Senior Listing Advisor: Although the listing criteria are relatively specific the designation of what is regarded as historic is open to some degree of interpretation. In general, it is quite a selective, mental process of what crosses the line and what doesn't in relative terms... So, buildings have to be the best – there has to be a high degree of selectivity (Interview Transcript 19/10/2018)

It is this degree of selectivity and interpretation where conflict can arise, as different heritage institutions unpack the criteria differently. It also suggests a process which attempts to strike a balance between subjective and objective perspectives and how these are then applied to the environment in question. While Historic England and the Government present listing as an objective and transparent process, underpinned by supposedly 'rigid' criteria, as the subsequent debates around RHG illustrate, this is in large part dependent on who is interpreting the criteria.

The Assessment of RHG

The outcome of English Heritage's assessment of RHG advised that the estate should not be listed. It was this decision that triggered the online campaign to save the estate and resulted in a lengthy back and forth discussion between the C20 Society and English Heritage – although this also went on to include the DCMS and other councillors and individuals who felt rightly or wrongly about whether the estate should be protected. The reasons behind English Heritage's decision can be found in their final report, parts of which I have included below in **Appendix B (Documents 1 -2)**. This report takes the form of a 7-page summary which sets out the context and history of the estate, weighing up the pros and cons of listing the site. They also set the benchmarks by which the estate is compared, using other post war sites that have already been listed to evaluate the estate. It focuses heavily on Park Hill in Sheffield as it is presented as a larger and more successful predecessor. Setting out this context is perhaps more crucial for modern housing, given the relative lack of examples compared to

other eras. Yet it is not clear how the different design features of similar buildings are weighted, as in relation to the 'streets-in-the-air', the report only indicates that 'Park Hill achieves this much better'. Therefore, while a precedent is set, it is not obvious as to what or how each site is compared.

After setting a standard for the period they then cite five core reasons behind their decision not to list:

1. The poor critical evaluation and reception of the estate shortly after it was constructed – with a general lack of written praise regarding the site.
2. A lack of innovation and bleakness in its original design which has meant that other post-war estates have supposedly better examples of concepts such as 'streets-in-the-air' that make them more 'hospitable' and less 'austere'.
3. The estate had undergone some alterations and unsympathetic additions to its entrances and street decks which meant that some of its original features had been lost.
4. The excessive emphasis on the architects' reputations was also not a good reason for preserving the estate – they may have been world renowned, but this is not enough to preserve the building.
5. It was not successful as housing, which was attributed to the presence of vandalism shortly after completion.

The report and how it is written has quite a considerable effect on how the estate is represented, largely reducing the experience of the estate to various aesthetic and design considerations. For instance, we see how the use of terms such as 'bleakness', 'fearsome' and 'austere' are used to describe its visual appearance in an attempt to convey and construct a sense of feeling that the estate is inhospitable. There is emphasis here on how the estate 'feels', which is quite a subjective analysis of the site and seems to represent a departure from the initial criteria which do not necessarily mention the particular 'atmospheres' a location may embody. Nonetheless, it constructs a particular 'image' of the estate, one which portrays it as unremarkable and ugly. We see how the material traces of vandalism at the site both historically and in the present day are used to make judgements around the success of the estate as a community and as a form of housing. While the presence of 'other' alterations and materials not in-keeping with the time period are presented as 'matter out of place' that undermine the historical significance of the site. As a result, these points of critique are used to construct a narrative of failure, as the site supposedly no longer creates a 'sense of community' and is unable to be regarded as a successful form of housing. These points were

reiterated in my conversations with Historic England as they highlighted the difficulty in having to be clear but sensitive about the site's condition:

Historic England Senior Listing Advisor: RHG is difficult for human habitation, we tried in the best way possible to present that it is not as good as it should be given its age and status... The original advice presents how staircases are dingy and not pleasant – although this is frequently countered as secondary access – but when on site you realise people will use the staircases and they are narrow and unpleasant, dark, and dingy, whilst the Balfour Tower is a completely different experience, each flight of stairs is different and light and a lot less unpleasant. If the staircases aren't designed well or are inhumane then that is a major flaw...(Interview Transcript 19/10/2018).

Therefore, the lasting image that English Heritage constructs is an estate that was inadequate, and which did not live up to the Smithsons' expectations, with 'dingy', dark' staircases, which only went on to be vandalised and lacking any real 'innovative' qualities. On the other hand, this representation fragments the wider experience of the estate according to its visual and architectural registers, purposefully ignoring other aspects of 'community' in favour of the materially focused listing criteria. There is no mention of the estate's Bangladeshi community and whether or not they regard the estate as a 'successful place to live' or any consideration given to how political or economic factors may have contributed to its present state of decline. Instead, it is heavily dependent on its material condition, how the concrete looks and feels, and where its material configuration fits within a broader historical nexus. The report illustrates the balance between the subjective interpretation of criteria and objective material evidence that EH have decided to strike.

This is something that is a controversial and a difficult process for advisors, as there are points in the report that are contradictory and over generalised, especially around the claims it makes regarding the success of the estate as a form of housing, with very little in the way of supporting evidence. The only real indicator they give to support their argument that the estate has 'failed as a community' is the continued presence of vandalism, which as a geographer feels particularly reductive and contrary to the listing criteria. If anything, this line of argument reflects outdated assumptions made by Coleman (1985) and Newman (1972), whereby the visual presence of crime and poverty are indicators of poor design – points which have been widely disputed (Smith, 1986; Spicker, 1987; Jacobs & Lees, 2013). Yet these contradictions seem to reflect flaws within listing process itself, as the listing advisor I spoke to also remarked on how opinionated the process can be;

*Historic England Senior Listing Advisor: ...within listing, more often than not the community is largely ignored...The whole process is obscure and bureaucratic, and principally the opinion of the advisor coupled with the advice of experts which then has to be verified...
(19/10/2018)*

This highlights that a certain proportion of the report is subject to a degree of individual opinion. A point which becomes problematic when the ideas of 'failure' and 'austerity' applied to the estate by English Heritage are then able to be mobilised by the proponents of rhetoric such as the 'monstrosity' or the 'sink estate' who can justify their claims through the use of the formal advisory report. This is despite the fact that the report may only reflect the opinions and interpretations of a very limited number of individuals, who may only have just been made aware of the site under scrutiny. Whilst this is not likely to be EH's intention, the issue seems to lie with listing and its accompanying legislation, which is unable to support a truly holistic and varied socio-architectural analysis of sites deemed potentially historically significant – instead, it is limited to a site's material and architectural significance. This leaves the entire process open to exploitation as different groups are then able to use EH's assessment in order to bypass complex issues that surround estates like RHG, simply indicating that because its architecture has failed, or is not otherwise 'special', its building and community are equally redundant.

The report was not the only output from English Heritage's assessment, given that RHG was a unique and controversial case, it was also put to the English Heritage Advisory Committee (EHAC). This is a committee that reviews complex cases and can be used to provide an additional layer of evaluation to sites where margins between listing and not listing are particularly narrow. However, any recommendations made by the committee are supplementary, as they do not affect the final advice given by English Heritage or the decision made by the DCMS. In that respect it only offers an additional strand of 'peer review' which captures a wider 'sense of feeling' within the heritage community rather than carrying any weight in the final listing decision. The committee is comprised of members of staff from English Heritage alongside other architectural and design historians/architects/academics who can offer their expertise on more difficult cases. In this instance it only served to add controversy to the debate surrounding RHG, as the decision went against the guidance of the advisor's report, ultimately favouring the listing of the estate. The full minutes of the committee are sadly not available to the public, so only a general picture of what was said emerges (**Appendix B, Documents 3 -5**). However, it highlights the controversial nature of the estate and how differently the various listing criteria can be interpreted. This is especially the case when you consider that the information supplied by the writers of the initial report and that given to the

advisory committee is the same – the site has not suddenly changed in between reports; its material features; alterations; architectural reputation and condition remains unaltered, yet different readings of the site and the criteria contributes to these very different outcomes.

The general points of departure between the initial report and EHAC centre around the committee being more sympathetic to the estate's architectural features and legacy. Greater value was attributed to the influence of the design, as the committee felt that while the estate had not resulted in many imitative schemes it had informed wider views on architecture and landscaping. They also felt that the design was largely intact and could be restored to its original form as opposed to the advisor's report which felt alterations had impacted it too harshly. Again, they also challenge the direct comparisons between RHG and Park Hill, the minutes stressing that given the differences between the estates, that this would not always be appropriate. There were also comments made that the brief the Smithsons would have been given, while short, would have largely been fulfilled. However, they did feel that the scheme had not been successful in terms of providing its inhabitants with a desirable living environment, although they were sceptical as to whether the architecture was solely to blame for this. The committee therefore presents another representation of the estate, although equally focused on its material fabric it is much more sensitive to its design and legacy of the site.

The departure from the advisor's decision again illustrates the importance of 'image' and representation within the conservation process. It subverts any claims that suggest that the assessment carried out by English Heritage was based entirely on the presence of various discrete material features. Instead, it rests upon both how its various material features are interpreted alongside aspects of the sites embodied and more-than-representational qualities. Therefore, we get a very conflicted view of RHG's architectural significance, and how its lack of temporal distance to the present day seems to make it much more difficult for English Heritage to come to a unanimous decision. It adds complexity to the Ugly/Beauty debate as we can see how even within the same institution the estate is simultaneously important enough in one instance to warrant protection but at the same time not.

Both of these reports are passed to the DCMS who provides their interpretation of the advice. However, it is at this point that it becomes particularly controversial, as within the documents obtained by FOI request to EH, just before the report was passed to the Minister of State, there is a discussion between special advisor Moira Costello and the author of the EH assessment Emily Gee. The email exchange presents recommendations for clarification and changes to the report that could be made in order for it to be essentially 'more convincing'. This is controversial because EH

represents an independent advisor to the government and hence should not be unduly influenced by outside parties. Although the request is relatively minor, only requesting changes in a limited way in order to represent the estate in a manner that would more concretely express the advice given. However, it gives the impression that the DCMS had already decided on an outcome for the estate and instead were attempting to get a more solid response from EH. For instance, they request that EH restructure their report to put the most convincing arguments first, such as moving the claims to interest to the narrative section while foregrounding the estate's supposed lack of innovation (**See Appendix B, Documents 6-7**). Additionally, it also suggests developing other lines of argument further in order to strengthen its case, recommending that they clarify the sections on the 'architects brief', the 'bleakness of design' and the 'success of the estate as a community'.

This is in large part addressed by EH in a subsequent memo (**Appendix B, Document 8**) which states that the advice has changed due to amendments from the advisory committee and that they would attempt to address some of the points they highlight. Although on the whole the advice must remain the same due to their own corporate guidelines. In this respect the initial report remains unchanged, however it raises questions around the impartiality of EH and the DCMS in making these decisions. Although this is not evidence of some ground-breaking conspiracy, it still provides an account of how some amendments were considered in order to suit the broader agenda of the DCMS, which ultimately undermines the impartiality of the whole process. Once more, it illustrates how the assessment of the estate has never been entirely about its specific architectural features but more about how it was interpreted and represented. It exposes the balance between subjectivity and objectivity that pervades EH's decision making process, as it moves from attending to the material features of the estate to 'constructing a convincing line of argument'. In this instance we can see how a national politics begins to seep into the process, one that favours 'not listing' and subsequently supports the decision made by Tower Hamlets Council, as a more convincing report is likely to lead to a smoother and more credible decision by the DCMS.

The initial ruling by Margaret Hodge and the DCMS followed the advice of the EH assessment, choosing not to list the estate, examples of the report can also be seen in **Appendix B (Documents 9-10)**, which set out the points that they felt were worthy of consideration. Specifically, the documents discuss the positions of English Heritage alongside the views of other institutions that had also submitted evidence regarding the estate's potential listing. Although the DCMS is not required to consider evidence from other agencies or individuals it may nonetheless be used to justify their final decision, provided that it follows the listing criteria. While the DCMS document only mentions the

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) it is highly likely that C20 had also submitted some of their advice at this point, both of which were in favour of listing the estate.

The decision of the report rests on the argument that the estate lacked innovation and that it again was not successful in its function as housing. Although it is more sympathetic than English Heritage's assessment it is less complimentary than the EHAC review, but it does at least consider other positive and negative perspectives of the estate. However, it does contradict itself in many of its arguments, especially in comparison to the principles of selection (**Table 1**), as it presents the design as both 'bleak' yet at the same time dynamic and of 'some interest'. Also, many of the estate's historic and architectural features seem to be evaluated according to its original context yet the standards applied to it as a form of housing seem to reflect its continued use in the present. This is odd given that the assessment should focus on its original brief, which as EHAC highlighted was likely to have been achieved by the architects. This line of critique also undermines the estate's current use as a form of emergency housing for Tower Hamlets Council residents, as surely if it has 'failed as a form of housing' it should no longer be used as such.

While it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive summary of my own judgments in regard to the DCMS review of RHG, I do wish to use my critique of the English Heritage and DCMS reports to highlight how contradictory and confusing the process can be. This is especially the case in relation to how evidence or lack thereof has been used to justify particular claims, as very little supporting material is provided in relation to the supposed failure of the estate, other than 'Park Hill does it better'. The result is a seemingly inconsistent and reductive representation of the estate, reducing it to its various architectural and design features which does not consider the broader processes behind its supposed 'failure'.

Listing Controversy

Of course, many people were not happy with the outcome of the English Heritage Report and the DCMS's decision. This led the C20 Society to request a formal review, as they felt the judgement had been made incorrectly. The review process is one of the few ways in which a listing decision can be overturned, however for an assessment to be overturned the C20 Society needed to provide evidence that proved the decision was incorrect or unlawful. In this respect they compiled a fifteen-page document highlighting their reasons for why the estate had been assessed wrongly (**Appendix B, Documents 11-12**). Their critique of both assessments is quite comprehensive, breaking down each point of contention and submitting their own rationales as to why they disagreed with EH's

judgements. In essence the main reasons that C20 cite for why they feel the need for a review is that they felt procedure had been incorrectly followed, emphasizing six principal failings:

1. Tower Hamlets Council had refused to provide evidence of the COI application that was given to the Secretary of State, therefore making it harder for them to construct a counter argument.
2. They felt that the EHAC advice had not been adequately provided to the Secretary of State and therefore they had not been able to consider the points of contention within English Heritage.
3. The listing criteria had been applied inappropriately; with an overreliance on the notion of innovation (which is not a part of the statutory principles).
4. The effects of vandalism were overstated and misunderstood, with no evidence that this had been caused by the building itself.
5. The comments made in relation to the building 'not being fit for purpose' also went beyond the remit of the listing criteria.
6. C20 also felt that assumptions made about the design brief not being met had been made incorrectly, especially as this was something that EHAC had also disagreed with.

The language of the report is also in stark contrast to that used by English Heritage in their assessment. For instance, pages 8 & 9 of the C20 Society request for review, challenge the comments made regarding the estates use of materials:

'Comment is made that the treatment of the concrete at the southern elevations is not refined, but the statement of intentions shows a clear rationale for changing the nature of the concrete: it is to be passed by. The boundary wall of course is part of the imaginative and successful layered response to the busy roads adjoining the site. Any description of the architecture as austere and functional overlooks the sculptural qualities of the building, the cranking of the slabs, the use of mullions and shadows, the turning of doorways perpendicular to the decks to create private areas and the spectacular mounded landscape setting. It is apparent, from English Heritage's description alone, that the architecture is not austere or purely functional. The original painted levels, which could easily be recreated, would have added to the colour of the scheme.' (C20 Review Submission Document, Section 33 pp 8-9.)

Instead C20 Society provides a description that presents the boundary wall (perhaps one of the harsher features on the estate) as an *'imaginative, successful and layered response to the busy roads*

that surround the site', contrasting heavily with the terminology used by English Heritage where it is described as a *'fearsome boundary wall'*. Whereas the architecture is described as sculptural with a *'spectacular mounded landscape setting'*, in contrast to English Heritages use of *'austere'*, *'bleak'*, *'ungenerous'* and *'functional'*. It results in two different images of the estate, one in which it is a *'modernist masterpiece'* that met its brief, that was successful, sculptural and was immediately distinctive contributing to its unique sense of place and identity and another that is unremarkable, *'bland'*, and *'austere'*. This conflicting set of representations illustrates how narratives of the estate were fought over by the two institutions, the battleground of which takes the form of these long-winded legal documents. It presents the remarkably limited number of voices and perspectives that are able to pass comment on the estate's heritage. While the process gives the impression of a form of peer review, in reality any feedback given to EH about its report is largely dismissed. Discussion is then reduced to simplistic binaries between good versus bad, ugly versus beautiful.

In addition, the C20 Society also provides a list of *'new evidence'*, as any request for review must involve being able to provide previously unconsidered or *'new'* material that ultimately would impact any decision made by the DCMS. The material that they provide essentially boils down to a number of different historic and architectural assessments by leading architects and academics – from a history and review of the estate by Professor Alan Powers; reviews by Professor Dickon Robinson the former CABE commissioner; Kenneth Baker an assistant architect on the RHG project; testimony by Simon Smithson the son of the architects and a whole host of other statements in support of the estate from Richard Rogers, Zaha Hadid, Neil Jackson and Sir Stuart Lipton. Some of their letters of support can be seen in **Appendix B (Documents 13-14)**, which convey the sense of injustice that was felt by a group of architects and architectural historians that believed it represented an important aspect of national culture. A point which Simon Smithson reiterated when I spoke with him about the events surrounding the estates demolition. He expresses his dissatisfaction at what he felt to be extremely *'arbitrary'* justifications as to why the estate should not be listed:

Simon Smithson: ...but I think English heritage have been criminal, negligent in their role...

...if you read the original argument, they say something like, we've already got 28 modern buildings in London we don't need anymore, and you think Christ... the biggest state building effort in this state and you say you only have 28 and that's enough...what an earth is the magic number of 28...

...You drive round London and there are masterpieces of that period which are important. And the point is they're not supposed to be judging it just on architectural masterpieces but supposed to be deciding on whether they reflect an important period culturally... (Interview Transcript 02/08/2018)

Smithson's comments also echo the points made in the C20 Society's request for a review, querying the use of Park Hill and other listed sites as the benchmark through which to evaluate the estate. His voice adds to the perspectives that felt RHG was architecturally and cultural significant, further highlighting the competing representations that surround the estate and how they became mobilised by different forces within the heritage and architectural sector.

Certainly, the inconsistencies and contradictions present in the DCMS' statement indicate a need for review. Although, the C20 report becomes less convincing in its claims to 'new evidence', especially when the 'facts' (the physical and material features) of the estate according to the listing criteria are not specifically being questioned. It therefore comes back to the issue of interpretation, as each side disagrees about how the details of the estate are to be understood. As a result, the C20 Society fail to make any new claims that have not already been assessed by EH and the DCMS, they just simply did not agree with their assessment. The only evidence they provide is more examples of those that side with their view of the estate. Nevertheless, the request for a review is passed back to the DCMS who calls for the Secretary of State (SoS– which at the time was Andy Burnham) to pass his ruling on the case.

By this point the debate had reached fever pitch within the wider media on both sides of the debate. An article in the Architect's Journal featured scathing comments by the C20 Society which critiqued EH, referring to them as a 'beleaguered quango', whilst the DCMS was accused of 'a lack of vision' that 'future generations would find incomprehensible' (**Figure 52**). Whereas Building Design magazine, a key proponent in the save RHG movement, had been providing in depth coverage of the entire process, encouraging people to write to their local MP in support of listing and also questioning the local council's figures relating to surveys completed by residents (**Figures 53 & 54**). This served to inject new voices into the debate and presented RHG as the battleground for many debates within the city, notably around the politics of housing and gentrification. Especially as for many the estate's demolition represented both an attack on an important architectural icon as well as the ideologies behind social housing. Building Design notes how Margaret Hodge who ruled on the initial decision had long been politically opposed to estates like RHG and that this may have swayed the initial outcome (**Figure 53**). As a result, we see how the listing of the estate gains

notoriety within political and public arenas, as what initially started as a consideration of various planning criteria and architectural features evolves into a much more complex political discussion.

C20 tackles English Heritage after Robin Hood Gardens misses out on listing

2 JULY 2008 - BY MAX THOMPSON

The Twentieth Century Society (C20) has described English Heritage as a 'beleaguered quango' in the light of its decision not to support the listing of the Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens.

In a statement, C20 said that it was not surprised by Architecture Minister Margaret Hodge's decision **not to list the tenement block**, but claimed that future generations would look back on the decision as 'incomprehensible'.

It continued: 'English Heritage's advice to [the Department of Culture, Media and Sport] that the estate was not of significant historic interest will be seen as an example of a beleaguered quango seeking to curry favour with its paymasters.'

After also accusing the Department of having a 'lack of vision', the lobbying group encouraged Tower Hamlets Council to save the building from demolition.

'Tower Hamlets could show visionary forward thinking and deliver a scheme to please both preservationists, residents and set an example of sustainable development.'

C20 said it had 28 days to consider appealing the decision and added that it was seeking legal advice.

Figure 52. Article from the Architects Journal which highlights C20's response to the English Heritage report. They refer to English Heritage as a 'beleaguered quango' and that the DCMS lacked vision and would be likely to regret the decision when looking back in years to come.

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Stirling is among the
architects sculpted
by Celia Scott P.20



BUILDING DESIGN ARCHITECTS' FAVOURITE WEEKLY

EH fails to support Robin Hood Gardens

Politician's dislike of concrete blamed as commissioners overturn listing recommendation

BD news desk

English Heritage commissioners have overruled the advice of the organisation's own advisory committee over the future of Robin Hood Gardens and recommended it is not listed.

After a campaign run by BD which collected more than 2,000 signatures from around the world in support of the threatened 1972 Smithsons-designed estate in east



"For some reason this building is seen as a battle ground"
Simon Smithson

London, the English Heritage Advisory Committee chaired by archaeologist Barry Cunliffe recommended it be listed at grade II.

But because of the high-profile campaign — which has featured prominently on the internet and in national media — Robin Hood Gardens was also considered by the EH commission, its ruling body, which then recommended that architecture minister Margaret Hodge should not list the estate.

Given that Hodge is a well known opponent of late 20th century concrete buildings, Robin Hood Gardens is now under direct threat of bulldozing by Tower Hamlets Council and English Partnerships which plan to replace the two eight-storey blocks with 3,000 new homes.

A member of the EH's advisory committee, who did not wish to be named but has visited Robin Hood



Gardens, suggested the commission had not taken its decision based on architecture alone.

"Seeing it was definitely impressive," the member said. "It was borderline, but we thought it was worth [listing]. Commissioners have other considerations, the public standing of EH, the relationship with the secretary of state. In practice they might have thought it was a no-hoper."

According to sources, it is unusual for commissioners, who include the Earl of Leicester and architect Chris Wilkinson, to disagree with the advisory committee and EH's in-house experts.

"EH was in a real tizzy about Robin Hood Gardens, which has not been helped by the fact that [Hodge] does not like this type of architecture," the source said.

BD'S CAMPAIGN TO LIST THE ESTATE

January 2008
Margaret Hodge says a digital image is a way to preserve unpopular buildings.

February 22
BD launches campaign to list Robin Hood Gardens

February 27
Richard Rogers writes to culture secretary Andy Burnham to support BD's campaign

March 4
Seven RIBA gold medalists and four Pritzker Prize winners back the campaign

March 7
Petition of 1,000 signatures presented to EH, which refers case to commissioners.

Mid-March
EH advisory committee recommends grade II listing

March 27
Three EH commissioners spend four hours visiting RHG, but decision delayed

April 2
EH commissioners meet and overrule the committee

April 11
EH recommends to Hodge that RHG should not be listed



The Smithsons' son Simon, who kick-started BD's campaign in February said he had suspected such an outcome.

"Margaret Hodge doesn't value modernism and believes it should be different rules for evaluating it," he said. "It reflects a general resistance to modernism in the culture."

"For some reason this building is seen as a battle ground and there is a certain bloody-mindedness that if we allow this one we have to rethink our attitude to 20th century buildings as a whole."

RIBA Gold Medalist Peter Cook, who is on the jury for BD/AP's ideas competition said: "Normally specialist advice would be rubber stamped. There must be a very fiendish opposing group somewhere. This is an insult to the advisory committee."

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Profession splits over contracts

Association of Consultant Architects launches rival contract to RIBA's P.3

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And then there were two...

One of the three RIBA presidential candidates has pulled out, citing growing workload P.5

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Richard Rogers disputes the Sunday Times Rich List's valuation of his wealth P.10

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'Attendance has improved thanks to the ETFE bubble over the courtyard'

Marcus Fairs wonders how much good design can really affect education P.11

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Lagging ahead

Our insulation special features a timber framed children's centre in east London and a rammed earth wall at a new monastery library P.16

CULTURE

Canvassing opinion

A new book by Philip Drew examines tent architecture P.20

Figure 53. Front page of Building Design Magazine (May 9th, 2008). It highlights the outcome of the English Heritage Report and the controversy surrounding the overruling of EHAC. It also stresses the dislike of post-war concrete architecture by the minister of state Margaret Hodge who would be ruling on the DCMS decision.

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Hudson Architects delivers a humane HQ for the Sally Army in Chelmsford P.12

Urban Trawl
Tyneside: it's a big town, but it's out of shape P.10



BUILDING DESIGN ARCHITECTS' FAVOURITE WEEKLY

New Robin Hood survey challenges demolition

Council and HCA committed to bulldozing estate as 20th Century Society pledges new fight

Will Hurst

Robin Hood Gardens residents have not been properly consulted about the future of the estate despite renewed attempts to demolish it, new evidence suggests.

In the face of BD's campaign to save the landmark Smithsons-designed buildings in east London, Tower Hamlets Council has consistently claimed that more than 80% of residents are in favour of bulldozing it and rehousing them in new homes.

But resident Darren Pauling, who has lived at Robin Hood Gardens for more than a decade, has now carried out his own survey with the help of Bengali interpreters. It suggests that around 80% in fact want Robin Hood Gardens retained and refurbished.

BD revealed last year that the consultation leaflets used by the council pushed the public to reject refurbishment by listing six positive outcomes of demolition including new community facilities compared to only three associated with redevelopment.

"I managed to speak to 60 people in the [eastern] building and 48 of those said they wanted it refurbished," Pauling said. "Where is the council getting this figure of 80% from? I've had concerns about this right from the start and I've got the sense that the council has always tried to persuade us this is the best option."

Film-maker Martin Ginestie, who has made a documentary on Robin Hood Gardens as part of a new exhibition to be held at the RIBA, also raised concerns about "manipulation" of residents' views.

While he stressed he was an impartial film-maker he said: "I've spoken to perhaps a couple



NEW EXHIBITION KEEPS UP THE PRESSURE

The Twentieth Century Society has pledged to keep up efforts to save Robin Hood Gardens from demolition with an exhibition at the RIBA.

Robin Hood Gardens Re-Visions will run from July 4 till August 26 and feature new

photography of the estate by Ioana Marinescu (above), a documentary film by Martin Ginestie (pictured),

archive material and projects by diploma students at the University of Greenwich.

of hundred people... I was surprised how many people didn't want it pulled down, partly because of distrust of the council and also their liking for features like the streets in the sky."

A spokeswoman for Tower Hamlets said it had consulted with 110 homes on the 213-apartment estate, which she insisted represented a "good cross section". Steve Oakes, north London area

director for the Homes & Communities Agency, which is redeveloping the estate with the council said it was now pressing ahead with its demolition plans following the government's decision to give it immunity from listing.

"We have got to put [housing] up before we can start decanting people, but we'd like to see something happening in the next two years," he said.

INSIDE

NEWS

Cross with Crossrail boss

The chairman of London's new railway line is condemned for suggesting that good design is an expensive luxury. P.3

NEWS

Risk and reward

Halt the buildings on EH's 1999 At Risk register have been saved. P.4

DEBATE

Does the disabled lobby have too much say in planning?

Shared surfaces are generous, says Simon Allford; equal access means taking account of diverse needs, counters Steve Winyard. P.9

OPINION

'Like operas, the villas of the powerful come in two varieties: buffa and seria'

Bill Mitchell on Bertusconi, Nero and the art of the villa. P.9

SOLUTIONS

Fat walls and a cascading stair

Rick Mather's new Ashmolean wing is a concrete poem. P.16

CULTURE

Back on track again

The Architecture Foundation has a new home, a new logo — and a new Facebook page. P.18

PHOTO: IAN MANNING/PHOTO

Figure 54. Front page of Building design magazine (June 26th, 2009). It challenges the survey carried out by Tower Hamlets Council, questioning the options that were made available to residents regarding the estate's regeneration.

This was something that Simon Smithson mentioned in my conversations with him, as he reflected upon how RHG had become emblematic of debates attached to social housing in the city:

Simon Smithson: ...RHG represents a totem of a kind of architects' political position around housing and the city and the constant attempt to destroy it. There is a constant attempt to undermine what it stood for. Whilst the site itself represents a hinge point in time, where such an ideological vision either works or doesn't, and what we've seen is a swing away from state housing.

...But this is why RHG is so totemic, as it attempted to articulate what housing means and should mean. This kind of approach is always going to attract opposition. Housing is always a political issue as the V and A have found out. You have to take a position on it... (Interview Transcript 02/08/2018).

What Smithson makes clear is how it had become increasingly difficult to remove the political context attached to the RHG estate. The continued uncertainty that surrounded the estate's future represented an attack on the ideological promises of social housing. These were issues which heritage organisations ultimately struggled to attend to, often attempting to remain neutral in a debate that was increasingly ideological. He mentions the V&A, but this was also true of English Heritage at the time which was coming under fire for their apparent 'neutrality'. The result was that the position of these major heritage organisations seemed only to further isolate the estate from its socio-economic context.

Amidst the increasingly vitriolic fight between various political and architectural campaign groups, the residents' views on the listing process were far more pragmatic. In this regard, their focus was much more on the positives and negatives of the estate in relation to their own lived experience rather than on the legal processes of assessing the historical significance of its architecture. When I spoke with them, which was after the campaign had ended, they remained relatively balanced in their outlook:

Edward Brookes: What was your view on the several campaigns to try and get it listed? How did you feel about that?

David: Yeah, I did, I thought in one respect that yes, it's a good thing, and another thing no, they don't live here, and they don't realise what has happened to the building. If you look around, you can actually see what's happened to it. Some of the windows I mean they are almost ready to fall out as the wood is literally just rotten.

Edward Brookes: What did you think about the couple of campaigns to try and save the building? What were your views on that? Would you have wanted to save the building?

Stephanie: Part of me yes, part of me no. The building is in bad shape, but part of me says yes if it was redone properly. If it was refurbished, they should change the layout, so people could make their flats bigger. Like if they could knock down some of the walls so people could fit larger families. But you can't because of the thick walls.

From these perspectives we can see how their views challenge the material focus of the listing assessment by inserting their own social perspective, which incorporates both the good and bad aspects of preserving the estate. While both the residents I spoke to were against the estate's conservation, it is in a begrudging fashion that is led by a concern over the quality of their homes rather than the desire to see the estate demolished. This certainly presents a different perspective to the binary narrative of the listing debate which was less concerned with the present realities of the residents in favour of the estate's architectural qualities. As a result, it challenges the English Heritage report which put some of the blame for the estate's condition onto those that lived there. At the same time, they also provide a counter to the C20 Society report and others looking to preserve the estate, as David's comments as to how 'they don't have to live here' chime with previous comments by Margaret Hodge (Chapter V, page 159) and conveys a frustration towards those who were making decisions on behalf of the estate without having to experience it.

It was also during this period where the debate continued to be politicized by many of the local councillors, who throughout the campaign attempted to contact Andy Burnham regarding his ruling on the estate, in many cases applying direct political pressure in order to sway the outcome (examples can be seen in **Appendix B, Documents 15-16**). The same is also true of Margaret Hodge's earlier decision where local politicians wrote to her in an attempt to influence the outcome (**Appendix B, Document 16**). This is another point where the supposed neutrality and constructed 'objectivity' of the assessment is undermined, as each side of the debate attempts to influence the Secretary of State, whether that be through the media or (and perhaps most questionably) through their positions in the local or national government. This is problematic when we consider that legally speaking the decision should be based on the architectural and historical merit of the building in question. For instance, requests by local Labour councillors to Andy Burnham were framed around the fact that any form of review would represent a severe delay to the upcoming regeneration scheme and that they would be missing out financially as a result. Councillor Tim Archer expressed his displeasure at the need for a review, especially given the supposed support for the redevelopment from the council's own survey, again citing (as the residents and Margaret Hodge

had previously) that many of the preservationists 'do not have to live there'. Whereas Lutfur Rahman even goes as far as to request a meeting with Burnham in order to explain the effect the delay is having on 'community cohesion'. These letters would be less troubling, if they did not already reflect trends across London which saw a disproportionate number of Labour boroughs demolishing post-war housing in favour of new regeneration projects (Architects for Social Housing, 2018b; Estate watch, 2020). Of course, there is no evidence to suggest foul play in the case of RHG, however the circumstantial nature of Burnham's decision and the current trend of Labour councils looking to demolish inner city estates definitely raises numerous questions around the impartiality of the process.

Although I am sure Andy Burnham would not claim to have been influenced by these messages, however each correspondence indicates the increasing levels of political lobbying that were present within the listing of the estate. What started out as a difference in opinion regarding a series of listing criteria has become muddled by various individuals and groups competing for their own financial and political gain. This is not purely the consideration of 'objective' material and architectural features that EH and the listing legislation may attempt to purport, as it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the socio-economic factors of the estate's reality from the decisions attached to its potential preservation. It illustrates how the listing of the estate became more than just a conversation about its architectural protection, but as something that was concerned with how people were able to inhabit the city.

The final decision around the estate's future was therefore not conducted in an apolitical bubble, especially given the sheer amount of press coverage and political responses to the ruling. This indicates that any final review of the estate is not made solely from a position of heritage. It reveals the importance of how different 'images' and representations of the estate are constructed and then mobilised - in this instance between EH and the DCMS and how they influence the historic built environment. It starts to present the futility of EH's position in trying to separate the social and political context of the estate from its material reality, as the final decision ultimately became a political one once it was passed to the Secretary of State. This indicates that through no direct fault of their own EH ended up ruling on a decision which is in their view about architectural heritage, when in reality the DCMS was basing the final ruling on the numerous opinions of local councillors, politicians, and media. In this instance the assessment that the estate 'no longer functions as housing' or 'fails as a community' became a damning political indictment, based purely on a set of material characteristics that could only lend support to the local council's plans for regeneration. Whilst EH may have intended their report to only critique the estate's architecture, the reality is that

it became a mechanism through which social and political choices could be justified, which undermined any basis for local or political opposition to the council's plans for redevelopment. In this respect we can see how EH's position became more than just the impartial advisor, but also an active player within the politics of gentrification and housing.

The Secretary of State's Decision

After ten months of heated public debate, the Secretary of State finally provided a ruling on whether a review should take place. With some additional requests for advice from English heritage, Andy Burnham's decision upheld the initial advisory report not to list (**Appendix B, Documents 17-19**). A summary of this 8-page letter centres around 8 key points:

1. It dismisses the procedural errors claimed by C20 Society, stating that the process was followed correctly by EH and that it was not standard procedure to release the COI application when two applications were running concurrently on the same building.
2. It states that the EHAC advice was for internal consideration only and therefore not required to be submitted separately to the SoS.
3. The 'consideration of irrelevant views from current residents' raised by C20 is dismissed - stating that there is established case law that supports the functional performance of a building as a valid part of a listing assessment.
4. It maintains that it was appropriate to consider the 'overwhelming support of residents' who were in favour of replacing the estate as part of the evidence not to list.
5. It dismisses the C20's assertion that too much attention had been given to the notion of innovation, stating that it forms part of the criteria, and it should therefore be considered - not really addressing the original question.
6. It reiterates that the building should not be preserved based on the reputation of the Smithsons alone, and that the estate does not equal the significance of their other listed buildings.
7. It returns to the notions of the estate as an example of 'successful housing' stating that whilst it met the specification in its brief for housing density, type, standards, noise reduction, open space, car parking and ancillary facilities (all of which had been known during the listing assessment), there still remained differing views regarding whether the brief had an 'implicit qualitative element' which had not been met.

8. The report supports earlier claims made by the EH assessment that the vandalism was in fact a direct consequence of the architectural design and planning of the estate.

Burnham concludes by stating that despite the new expert opinion had been submitted, very little new 'factual' information had been supplied, noting that professional judgements on the estate had been strongly divided. He also makes it clear that the issues of listing should be separate from the question of whether RHG should be demolished or refurbished as this is not relevant to whether the estate is of special architectural or historic interest. He summarises that RHG as a whole was not successful as housing and therefore not a good example of design, backing the decision not to list.

Like Margaret Hodge's summary, the report also ends up contradicting itself. The SoS acknowledges both the importance of resident and community opinion but then dismisses it, only valuing the results of the council's report, which again undermines his closing statements around not conflating the report with the proposed development. The same is true of the estate's vandalism and its success as housing which all seem to relate to both its past and present context – yet the actual present context of the estate and its proposed regeneration is again not a worthy consideration. Additionally, the mention of an 'unknown qualitative element' regarding the brief is spurious, especially when this is not mentioned in any of the other assessments. This line of critique falls flat when he discusses the 'lack of new facts that had been presented in the review', so it is unclear precisely what the SoS would have accepted as 'new evidence' when he has himself included new evidence of a largely subjective nature.

Although I agree with Burnham that little new 'factual' evidence had been presented in the case for review, the decision has never been about 'facts', but how material evidence was interpreted. What this review and its assessments do is continue to curate an entirely subjective narrative and image of the estate which is based on the interpretation of its material conditions. It chooses to be selective and decipher the material according to its own expertise while discrediting other advice and opinion due to implied issues of 'bias'. The entire process is inconsistent, making sweeping generalisations on points that any typical social science report would take years to pass judgement on. At the same time, it seems extremely hard to contest both the EH advice and the decision by the DCMS which both, in a very roundabout way, acknowledge that they are subjective interpretations. This is problematic given the far-reaching consequences of the decision itself, especially as the ruling comes to underpin the dominant representation of the site as a 'failure'.

The initial COI certificate can be seen in **Figure 55**, which summarises the outcome. This first COI did eventually expire in 2009 and was followed by another attempt at listing by the C20 Society. However, this also failed, again dismissed on the grounds that there was no new evidence to support a new assessment and the original COI was reissued. This time the reaction to the decision was far more muted, many feeling that Burnham's first ruling was the true end to the estate. In this case the time between expiry and renewal only lasted 10 days and without much of the rancour of the previous decision. Ultimately once the COI had been reissued (**Figure 56**), this signified the end of the estate's involvement within the listing process, and again represented yet another milestone in the site's history as a 'failed estate'. The entire process took a total of 6 years 11 months and 10 days and courted a great deal of controversy. While on their own the two documents in **Figures 55 & 56** are both unassuming and lack any real detail, they each represent numerous years worth of laborious assessment and heated legal debate. In one sense the entirety of the estate and its future is for a brief moment captured in these texts, as this was what the site represented. In the end each document indicates the point at which RHG as a Brutalist social housing estate was no longer tenable.

The case of RHG also leaves behind a number of ironies. Firstly, that by the sheer nature of the controversy that surrounded the estate, the site turned out to be more 'historically' significant than what the initial assessment was able to consider. For instance, the fact that the site became an emblem for discussions surrounding social housing within London, arguably singled it out as a site of acute importance. As the listing debate has illustrated it brought many of the architectural community together in order to preserve it, reflecting aspects of the criteria relating to 'an important aspect of the nation's history'. This suggests that the estate could have met more of the requirements for listing especially as it now has a stronger case relating to its 'historic' and 'architectural' interest. In this sense, a more reflexive assessment may have found this to be enough to nudge the estate towards conservation. It certainly reflects how issues of temporality affected the assessment, as its contemporary setting meant that its present politics could not be considered by the listing criteria. From a contemporary archaeological perspective this certainly seems flawed, as periods of historic importance cannot be constrained by linear distinctions of time (Hill, 2015; 2013). Rather if the estate and its history had been approached as an emergent process that was subject to various encounters and durations, its present context could have been included within the listing assessment (Hill, 2015; Dixon, 2012).

Of course, this contributes to a second irony. Once the estate was denied protection by the DCMS, the V&A Museum acquired part of the estate. This actively positioned different heritage institutions

against each other, with the government and Historic England signalling that it was not worth extra protection, and the museum suggesting that in fact it was. Although each of these different organisations have different remits and responsibilities when it comes to protecting the built environment, there was a clear disconnect between different institutions, which undermined the final decision not to list the estate. It is further evidence of the highly controversial position that debates around the estate had come to occupy, and the level of disagreement between the various preservationist groups. Of course, this leads me to the next point of discussion and just how the V&A chose to represent the estate and the more recent role they have played in preserving its memory.

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Mr Robin Sager
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London Borough of Tower Hamlets
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Your Ref
Our Ref COI 71/07 UID 164613

13 May 2009



Dear Mr Sager

**PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990
BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST
ROBIN HOOD GARDENS, WOOLMORE STREET, LONDON E14**

I refer to your letter dated 30 July 2007 and your application for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing in respect of the above buildings.

The merits of the buildings have been considered and the Secretary of State has consulted with English Heritage, his statutory adviser on the historic environment. He has considered all the representations made and has concluded that the buildings are not of special architectural or historic interest and so should not be included in the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest compiled under section 1 of the above Act. Accordingly, the Secretary of State hereby certifies that he does not intend to list Robin Hood Gardens, Woolmore Street, London E14.

Under section 6(2) of the Act, the effect of this notification is to preclude the Secretary of State from listing the buildings for a period of five years from the date of issue of this certificate and to preclude the local planning authority from serving a Building Preservation Notice on the buildings during that period.

Yours sincerely

Diane Macfarlane
Heritage Protection Branch



Figure 55. Certificate of Immunity granted to the Tower Hamlets Council in relation to the RHG estate. It declares that the certificate will last a total of five years before further applications to list the site will be considered.

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled. Robin Hood Gardens is therefore not recommended for listing, and it is recommended that a further COI be issued.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION

Robin Hood Gardens, a housing development built 1966-72 to the designs of Alison and Peter Smithson, is not recommended for listing, and it is recommended that a COI is issued, for the following principal reason:

* Lack of substantive new information: no substantive new information has come to light since the decision to grant the COI in 2009 that causes us to revise our assessment that Robin Hood Gardens does not meet the criteria for listing.

HE Recommendation

A Certificate of Immunity should be issued in respect of Robin Hood Gardens.

DCMS Decision

Thank you. The Minister has indicated that she is minded to agree with HE's recommendation that a COI should be reissued. Please send a suitable 'minded to issue' letter which allows the usual 28 day period for review.

DCMS Decision Comment

N/A

Consultation Report Countersignature

Figure 56. Historic England Case report after COI expiry at RHG (page 20 of 22) – The report in large part remains the same as the initial assessment in 2008. It also details that after consulting with all relevant parties that the COI should be reissued.

The V&A

Following on from the controversy that surrounded the estate's listing, RHG was again thrust into the spotlight when in November 2017 the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) announced that they had purchased two complete maisonettes from the site's developers. Subsequently parts of the acquisition went on to be used in the Museum's exhibition at the 2018 Architecture Biennale in Venice, where a façade of the estate was erected in order to highlight its architectural history and ongoing redevelopment. However, the intervention of the V&A attracted a great deal of ire, especially from those that saw it as the co-option of a 'working class architecture' by a social and political elite (Thoburn, 2018). It is therefore in the wake of these events that this section seeks to explore, examining the V&A's involvement in preserving parts of the estate and unpicking the processes that led up to the acquisition. In particular it will attend to the conflict that emerged between the perspective of the Museum who felt obliged to intervene in the potential loss of an important architectural artefact and those who saw this as an opportunity for a museum to exploit the cultural capital of an iconic building that was deemed not worth saving as a form of housing. Similar to the Historic England listing debate, the V&A's involvement is criticised for unravelling the site's material context from its social and lived reality, exhibiting RHG within a politically sanitised framework that diminished opportunities for a critical community dialogue (Pritchard, 2020).

In order to explore these different strands of thought, I will break my analysis into three separate themes: '*Acquisition*', '*The Biennale*' and '*Heritage Washing*'. The first theme, '*Acquisition*' will examine how the V&A came to be involved with the estate, and the material processes involved in its dismantling. It will draw upon discussions with two of the museum's curators, each of which have in some way been involved with the procurement of the maisonettes – Neil Bingham and Rory Hyde. Additionally, I also wish to draw upon my conversations with Liza Fior, a director at muf architecture/art who was involved in a residency at the V&A. As it was her tumultuous relationship with the Museum that pushed them to make the controversial purchase. This will also be supported by the inclusion of several documents and images which explore the V&A's purchase of the site and the choices that were made regarding what parts of the estate should be preserved. This is then followed by the second theme '*Biennale*' which will investigate the installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale and how the site came to be narrated and represented. I intend to use my own photographs and ethnographic field notes to document how the exhibition was constructed and how the V&A's depiction of the estate presented it as a 'modernist masterpiece'. This is then followed by the final theme '*Heritage Washing*' which will analyse the backlash that the museum received as a result of its acquisition and exhibition – particularly within the media. This included

protests in both London and Venice, alongside numerous online posts which challenged the actions of the museum. In this respect it draws upon 'art washing' literature to suggest that decisions around the estate's heritage had become a mechanism through which the site's regeneration and gentrification could be sanitised (Pritchard, 2020).

Acquisition

The V&A's plans to acquire parts of the RHG estate began in 2016, as the result of an Andrew Mellon Foundation residency with 'muf', an interdisciplinary arts and architectural practice, who were commissioned to explore the museum's relationship with East London in preparation for the forthcoming development of the V&A East Museum at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (Pritchard, 2020; Heathcote, 2017). This was also something I discussed with Rory Hyde, who was (when I spoke to him in 2018) the 'Curator of Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism' at the museum. Whilst he had not overseen the original acquisition, having been on a different project, (this was instead done by Neil Bingham, the previous curator) he recounts just how the project came to the V&A.

Rory Hyde: 'I mean the impetus goes back to Liza Fior, and Liza was a resident here, she's an architect but she was a resident who was part of a project looking towards East London. So, she was the first V&A resident for V&A East, and we won't open that museum for many years, but were still trying to think about how and what does it mean for the V&A to be in East London... But it was Liza's proposal that we should acquire part of RHG for the collection, and in particular to be able to show it again in East London as part of that new museum, so to somehow return it to its place. So that was the impetus and then Liza's provocation in a way landed in our department...' (Interview Transcript 12/11/2018).

Hyde's comments make clear that the force behind the project was Liza Fior, who suggested that the V&A should acquire some sections of RHG ahead of its demolition (Pritchard, 2018). In doing so it supposedly presented an opportunity through which the V&A could engage with the history and heritage of East London. The estate was therefore seen by the museum as a 'mnemonic anchor' (Crawford et al 2020; Dovey, 1985), an object through which it could theoretically connect the local community with London's living memory. This was also echoed by Fior herself when I spoke to her about the acquisition:

Liza Fior: '...some of the things you could say about my work with the V&A is that it was a thought experiment, when I proposed it to them it was a thought experiment to see what

happened next. And I suppose I like the term what has the cat brought in? and what will the cat bring in? Because when an object comes in, it is decontaminated, it's frozen, its textile is frozen. If it's concrete, it is brushed. So, what can it bring with it, and it is problematic...'

'... So, we created this proposal to just see what it would take to acquire it. What annoys me is the distancing of architects to the brief, and people like Stephen Pritchard, like why would you not talk about right to buy and who was in those flats. When right to buy first came out, people would borrow money to buy the flat and then move away to Essex and then be absentee landlords and move four students in or exploit people. The idea of it being profoundly undermined by right to buy and the need to talk about right to buy in London as it makes it more complicated and makes social housing even more scarce...' (Field Notes 07/12/2018).

Fior's comments elucidate how in her mind the proposal represented a 'provocation' and a 'thought experiment' which would challenge the museum's relationship to architecture and the city. At the same time, she was attempting to upset the process through which objects are transformed when they enter the space of the museum, and how they are often sanitised (Black, 2011). Arguing that it was the function of the V&A 'to provide a platform for difficult conversations, pointing out that the museum was 'full of bits of buildings that were victims of regeneration, or changes in liturgical fashion and administrative power over the centuries' (Wainwright, 2018). In this respect she hoped that the project would force the museum into difficult debates and discussions around architecture and design that it had not previously had. Yet Fior made her frustrations clear, that this was not an easy or straightforward process. She mentions how critics of her approach were ignoring important aspects of the discussion around the complexity of the estate. Especially regarding the role of the 'right to buy' scheme which she felt undermined the function of the estate as social housing. This point had not been considered by those who were quick to judge her and the project of 'art washing'. This suggests that whilst the intention of the project was to encourage new opportunities for dialogue, these were often challenging and not necessarily the conversations that Fior and the museum initially intended.

Alongside using the estate as a means to generate further discussion, a central part of the museum's reasoning behind the acquisition was inevitably to prevent the potential loss of a valued cultural asset. This was something that was stressed in my brief discussions with Neil Bingham, who unlike Rory, had directly overseen the purchase of the salvaged section. Whilst he was no longer working with the museum and therefore did not wish to be formally interviewed, the general sense of his comments was that as an architectural historian, he felt pressured to save the estate and that he

was very proud of the acquisition which could have easily been left and forgotten. This also reflected his statements in the media in which he highlighted how acquisition would 'motivate new thinking and research into this highly experimental period of British architectural and urban history' (quoted in Brown, 2017). Although Bingham's emphasis was far more on the materiality of the estate rather than the debates it would provoke, which given his role as an architectural historian was something that he felt was only natural. Although, he did acknowledge the estate's controversy, for him it was more about saving its aesthetic value for a future when the disputes around the estate had subsided. A point that seems slightly at odds with the provocative intrusion that Fior had first suggested. This was also a point that Hyde returned to when I discussed the irony surrounding EH's rejection of the estate and the V&A's acquisition.

Rory Hyde: ...The idea that one museum on top of that big list [petition to list the estate] would have tipped the balance is quite optimistic, so the decision to acquire it is not a decision between keeping the building or putting it in the museum but a decision between having a pile of rubble or putting it in the museum. So that's the way we think about it, and that's the choice on the table, a pile of rubble or something. So that's why I think its super important that we do make the acquisition and that it is done properly and respectfully, and it's done in a way that can preserve all of those memories and all of those complex narratives that it stands for. Everything from the lives that were enacted within it, to the broader political statement about the value of social housing and the housing crisis in London and the aesthetic and architectural ones, to talk about Brutalism to talk about post war modernism, machine fabrication, mass production and back to the period of the 1970s, which is currently the period of architecture that is most threatened at the moment because it sits in that you know gap of things where things are so unloved. I mean that wave is coming but that's what makes it so critical now is that we protect those buildings that do exist (Interview Transcript 12/11/2018).

Hyde makes clear that the choice for the museum came down to having a pile of rubble or being able to save parts of the estate. That having something to remember was perceived by the V&A as better than nothing at all. Therefore, the acquisition represented an attempt to preserve aspects of an architectural period that the museum felt to be under threat from being lost. He stresses that this should be done in a sensitive and respectful manner, inclusive of its politics and its material significance. However, the binary position between having something and nothing is problematic, especially given that the destruction of heritage objects should not necessarily be seen as inherently detrimental to their capacity to facilitate remembering (Holtorf, 2015). This perhaps reflects a

limited perspective by the museum and perhaps the heritage sector more broadly who are arguably fixated on the loss of buildings, artefacts, sites, and landscapes and less so on the social worlds in which this destruction occurs, or to the impact it has on the continuation or otherwise of those processes through which heritage is made and unmade (Sterling, 2020; Mah, 2012). This perhaps explains why the V&A was reluctant to intervene until the estate was already being demolished, failing to consider how socially and politically charged the site had become. It also indicates a naïveté on the museum's part in thinking that they would also be able to extract the estate without any controversy, only considering the 'artefacts' that they stood to gain. These positions therefore reflect the different and sometimes competing pools of thought surrounding the initial acquisition; presenting both a material concern for a historical site that would be lost, alongside utilising the estate as a means to generate a set of discussions around the museum's place within the city. However, it was often the limitations and tension between these two positions where conflict around the museum arose, as decisions regarding the estate's preservation came to undermine the ability of the V&A to provide a platform for nuanced discussion.

Further to these justifications of *why* the museum acquired the estate were the more practical questions of *how* they would do it and *what* they would take. This would be important as how the V&A chose to dismantle the site alongside which elements it looked to preserve would in large part dictate the narrative they would tell when exhibiting the estate (Brown & Davis-Brown, 1998; Black 2011). From documents surrounding the acquisition, what the museum really wanted to display was both the exterior façade and at least one of the flats in their entirety. **Figure 57** highlights the various options that Bingham and Fior eventually presented to the museum, and some of the practical considerations of the different scenarios. Storage is presented as one of the core concerns, as ultimately the size and dimensions of the estate would need to be weighed up against the storage space of the museum. This perspective therefore exposes some of the 'behind the scenes' decisions that had to be made regarding the acquisition, as whilst the museum wished to explore its relationship to the East End, it could only do so within the physical limits of its warehouse and galleries (Geoghegan & Hess, 2014; Dudley, 2012; Forgan, 2005; Brown & Davis-Brown, 1998). In the end the museum chose to acquire two of the maisonettes, leaving out plans for the garden and the 'third storey'. The same is true of the interior features, as **Figure 58** highlights one of the proposal documents presented by muf, and their wish to retain as much of the joinery as was feasible, detailing the space each element would occupy. In this respect the final decision was to attempt to preserve as many of the original interior features as possible including the façade, stairs, walkway, and windows. These material considerations, therefore, structure the specific narratives that the

V&A is able to present about the estate, which can only ever be a partial depiction of the site. We can see how the initial focus on the estate's 'original' features privileges a specific moment in its history, one shortly after it was completed. It therefore presents a perspective that looks to the past and is less concerned with the estate's present-day social context. The fragments consequently leave out many of the changes to the estate's material fabric and any of the more personal items that previous residents may have left behind. It also does not include the shared raised garden beds or reflect the overall scale of the building, which would have both been difficult and costly for the museum to address. Instead, they choose to capture and reflect upon the architectural and design milieu in which the estate was constructed. Again, this fits the narrative of the V&A's curators who frame their role as both preservationists and collectors wishing to prevent the perceived loss of a discrete period.

Once the project got the final go-ahead Swan housing and the demolition contractors, Hill, hired a full-time cataloguer who numbered and recorded all the elements that the V&A sought to remove. Some of the details behind how this was carried out and the various fragments that were salvaged can be seen in **Figure 59** which depicts the estate's structural elements that were highlighted for removal; naming, and recording the number of each in a table, alongside additional features that could be removed later. The image of its dismantling and cataloguing presents an interesting perspective of the estate, one which is not dissimilar from the written EH and C20 reports, as the very material and tangible features of the building are identified, evaluated, and selected according to their specific characteristics, condition, and significance.

Robin Hood Gardens: fragment size, display, storage & transport options

[Extract for FOI request June 2018]

Fragment size

Following discussion at Collections Group on 17/08/2017, we have modelled five alternative options for the portion of RHG that might be acquired, ranging from minimum to maximum. These are detailed in the attached pdf (RHG_Options_20170823) and summarised here:

Option 1: to acquire two storeys of the street façade and no interior elements.

Option 2: to acquire two storeys each of both street and garden façades and no interior elements.

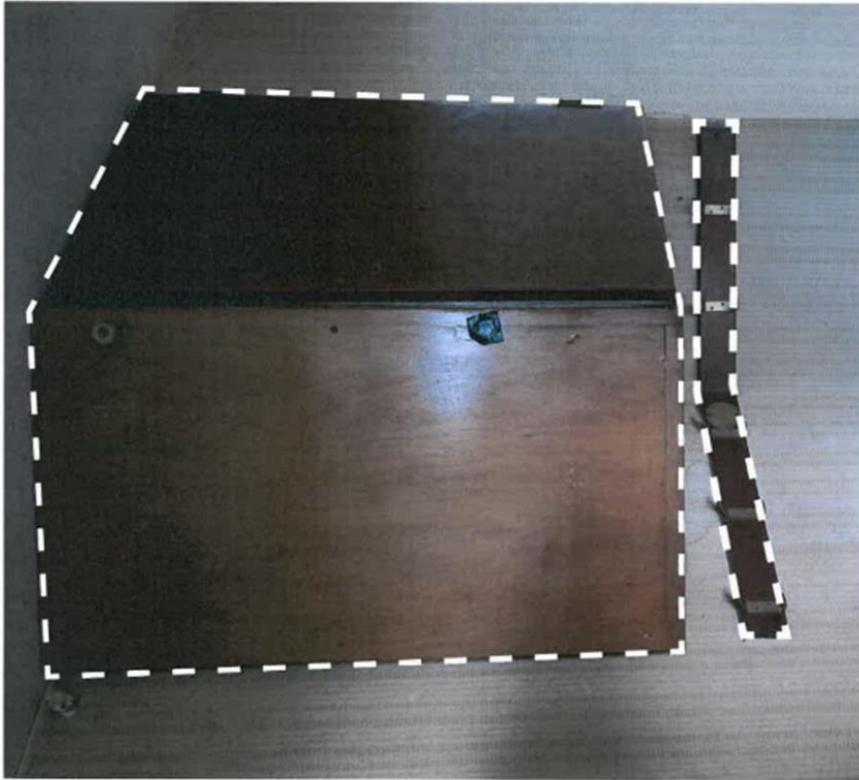
Option 3: to acquire a two-storey section of the street façade and the interior of one flat. N.B. this is different from the proposal of 17 August, which proposed acquiring a narrower section of the building that would therefore have half of one flat and half of another. All the interior options presented here are based on the desirability of showing one whole flat. It is not proposed to take the walls, floors or ceilings of the flat. Instead, we would take all the interior fixtures and fittings that would allow for the interior of a flat to be recreated with integrity.

Option 4: to acquire a two-storey section of both street and garden façades and the interior of one flat. This is the option that would give the Museum the ability to show the piece of the building with as much integrity as possible, while still being of a reasonable size for display and storage.

Option 5: to acquire a three-storey section of both street and garden façades and the interior of one flat. This has a particular logic to it – while the flats are based on a two-storey unit, the façades are based on a three-storey unit. This is the only option which would allow the Museum to show a single interior and exterior design unit; but it has the disadvantage of resulting in a section of building that is 9m high, which poses challenges for suitable display locations.

[Remainder of document out of scope]

Figure 57. ‘V&A acquisition proposals’ It sets out 5 possible scenarios each of which requires an increasing level of storage and display space.



he original hall cupboards are designed to maximise storage whilst acknowledging the movement of the inhabitants within the flat. This could be stored upright or on it's side.

<600mm high
<900mm wide
<500mm deep

Coat rack and hooks
< 900mm wide
<150mm high

muf 2017

Figure 58. muf RHG interiors document that highlights features of RHG and how they could be stored. Specifically, it provides additional detail around the hall cupboards and how they were designed with resident's movement in mind. This is alongside its various dimensions.



V&A Front Façade External Elements

Item Ref	Item to Acquire	Naming	Number required	Additional Elements (To be agreed)
1	Internal Panel	IP	3	2
2	Roof Bottom Internal Pannel	RBIP	1	1
3	Roof Top Pannel	RTP	1	1
4	Handrail	HR	2	2
5	Larg Roof Fin	LRF	2	0
6	Small Roof Fin	SRF	3	2
7	Top Large Fin	TLF	2	0
8	Boltom Larg Fin	BLF	1	1
9	Bottom Medium Fin	BMF	1	1
10	Small Fin	SF	6	4
11	Parapet	P	2	2
12	Entrance Mat	EM	2	0
13	Entrance Window Panel	EWP	2	0
14	Left Entrance Column	LEC	1	0
15	Right Entrance Column	REC	1	0
16	Middle Column	MC	2	0
17	Entrance Beam	EB	1	0
18	Staircase Panel	SP	1	0
19	Staircase	S	2	0
20	Staircase Column	SC	2	0

Figure 59. Pages 1&2 of RHG’s schedule of External Elements and Reference. It details the external fragments that the V&A looked to extract.

The processes of removal, and classification served to disassemble RHG, the building's agency is therefore diminished in favour of its numerous material pieces. The decisions about what should and should not be kept, present how the museum is able to fix the memory of an entire community, signalling those items which 'deserve' to be kept, remembered, and treasured (Heatherington, 2014; Black, 2011; Lord 2006). New meanings of the estate are then constructed by the museum (Black, 2011; Crang, 2003a), as only those features which are 'original' will remain part of V&A's collection. What emerges is how through a process of abstraction the context of the lived estate is gradually removed. We can see how there is a conscious fracturing between the lived realities of the estate in its present context and the self-conscious process of curating a specific place of memory (Nora, 1989). It reflects notions by Nora (1989) that highlights the role of museums, memorials, and archives in producing 'prosthetic artefacts' that replace natural connections to reality. Whilst I would challenge the distinctions Nora makes between the natural and the unnatural (each is arguably equally constructed; Black, 2011), the point still remains that through the acquisition process, aspects of the estate's present material reality are lost and at once transformed into something that is entirely of the V&A's choosing. It exposes the representational procedures behind the museum's decision to exhibit the estate, and how objects are first 'sanitised' when they enter the museum before they are then allocated new meaning (Black, 2011; Crang, 2003a; Nora, 1989; Adorno, 1986).

Therefore, each part of RHG is abstracted, reduced to a sign, a signifier (Latour, 1999), numbered and logged in a computer (**Figure 59**); a literal movement from the concrete of the estate (the walls, floors, mullions, and stairways) to the abstract (diagrams, tables, charts, and presentations). RHG moves from 'thing' to 'sign', and 3 dimensions to 2 dimensions, (Latour 1999) each transformation reducing the complexity and detail of the estate to that which can be readily transported and stored within the museum. The artefacts themselves become a signifier of the 'whole', a metonym, where one item is taken to stand for the larger class of which it was part (Crang, 2003a; Heatherington, 2014). Thus, the two maisonettes become rhetorical devices in which to signify and represent the whole of RHG. In many ways this directly reflects the notions of 'monumentality' and the 'memorability of image' inherent within Brutalism as identified by Banham (highlighted in Chapter II), as the single image or 'fragments' of RHG come to convey the same logics as the wider whole of the estate. Yet at the same time, the selective salvaging of parts of the estate by the museum could be seen to 'shatter' the topological relationship between the different aspects of the site. Especially when we consider that the fragments of the façade no longer connect RHG with Banham's second principle; 'Clear Exhibition of Structure', as whilst the remains give an impression of the individual flats it is only at a surface level, hinting at a structure that once was, rather than actually is. In many

respects, the salvaged remains become what Banham was critiquing in the first place when he wrote 'The New Brutalism' (1955), as the hollowed-out fragments are a simulacrum, a façade that eludes any of the site's previous connections to those that lived within it. Consequently, the acquisition brings into focus the physical and representational processes behind the removal of matter from the estate's present context as it then enters the space of the museum and how they impact the Brutalist sensibilities of the site (Lord, 2006; Heatherington, 2014; Luke, 2002; Bennett, 1995, 2004; Pearce, 1992; Crimp, 1983).

These newly classified objects will then be allocated different interpretations and meanings as it goes onto form part of the V&A's collection of 'Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism'. Precisely what messages the museum will portray is something that I raised with Rory Hyde as I looked to understand how they wished to interpret the remains of the estate:

Ed Brookes: With that in mind is there a particular message you might want to be promoting with that? Is it more to celebrate the architecture, or to be more socially engaged?

Rory Hyde: That's a really good question, and that's what's so powerful about RHG as an object is that it brings all of those questions into play whether you like it or not. You can't have a discussion about Robin Hood Gardens and just talk about the aesthetics. Without talking about social housing, the housing crisis of the present, without talking about regeneration and what's happening to many of those housing estates of that period. It opens up all of those things, whether you like it or not, and I think that's what's so powerful about RHG, and critically and why we should have it in the V&A (Interview Transcript 12/11/2018).

He presents how the estate as an object lends itself to a consideration of both its architectural and social significance. The fragments therefore provide material triggers through which to spark the discussions that Hyde highlights. As an emotionally charged set of objects its associated meanings are therefore of great value to the museum. Again, it returns to the notion that the V&A and its platform are an adequate space for a national debate around certain forms of architecture and wider issues of housing and gentrification. He stresses the need to go beyond simply considering the aesthetics of the estate and instead its links to broader issues within society. A point which feels socially minded but is slightly contradictory, especially given the museum's remit as a state funded collector and exhibitor of design. In this respect whilst acquiring the estate may encourage these conversations due to its recent past, the narrative the V&A is actually able to present may not be as socially inclusive as Fior initially intentioned. Already we can see how through the process of acquisition that the museum comes to separate the material aspects of the estate from its social

reality. At the same time there appears to be emerging contradiction between the capacity of the museum to preserve parts of the estate and its ability to facilitate and provoke adequate debate. Fior's earlier comments already make this clear, her frustrations that the V&A was not as critical as perhaps it could have been. Therefore, whilst the museum's aims for the acquisition were socially minded, how this played out has been a lot more problematic.

Biennale

Shortly after the V&A's announcement that they would be acquiring a section of RHG, came the news that they would be exhibiting fragments of the estate at the upcoming 2018 Architecture Biennale in Venice. Titled '*Ruins in Reverse*', (which was a reference to a previous display by the Smithsons featuring Robin Hood Gardens at the 1976 Biennale) the exhibition was promoted as an opportunity to explore the legacy of the architects and the future of social housing (V&A website, 2018). Like the initial acquisition, the exhibition courted further controversy, sparking protests outside of the museum which called for a boycott, requesting that the fragments of the estate be returned to the community (Pritchard, 2020). Whilst these demonstrations were important (as I examine in the next section), what I wish to focus on here is precisely what the V&A's exhibition entailed, analysing the rhetoric and poetics used by the museum to curate a specific history and image of the estate (Crang, 2003a). The installation therefore introduces another version of RHG, that adds to the multiple competing representations of the site that have emerged since the initial plans for its redevelopment. As a result, I wish to raise additional questions around the V&A's decision to remove RHG from its social and political context, challenging its attempts at being 'socially engaged'. In order to do so I wish to provide an account of my experience of the exhibition, which follows in the footsteps of other academic first-hand encounters with museum spaces (Geoghegan & Hess, 2014; Peers, 2013; Desforge & Maddern, 2006; Crang, 2003a). It will draw upon my own interpretations of the display, incorporating photographs and field notes that document my movements through the V&A's installation. Whilst this only offers a single reading of the exhibition, I at least hope to present a much-needed critical appraisal of how RHG has been presented by the museum and the politics embedded behind its decisions to do so.

My engagement with the exhibition began as I approached the V&A's allocated display space in one of the more obscure alleyways of Venice's Arsenale district. I saw the 9m reconstruction of the estate's façade towering over the water's edge (**Figure 60**), and I was immediately taken aback by the experience:

'Tucked away in the Sale d'Armi in a quiet corner of the Arsenale, the precast concrete elements of Robin Hood gardens stand for all to see. The eviscerated remains of a housing estate with no one left to house. I feel uneasy and uncomfortable. A temporary memorial to an estate that currently still stands. It is a sad display of social politics presented as ancient history.' (Field Notes 06/2018)

My notes are particularly emotive, as they attempt to capture the reconstruction of the estate. The few fragments appear skeletal without the estate's other components; the lack of walls, floors, doors, and other objects, present only a hollowed-out shell of the building. This is also tempered with my own sense of the 'uncanny' (Vidler, 1987) as the estate is no longer a place of home, instead I am confronted with a sterile façade of something that feels familiar but is fundamentally unrecognisable. It seems apparent that through its reconstruction, RHG has been transformed from housing estate into an object of memory. Where once there would have been a concern for a particular individual who inhabited the flats above and below, there is now only the recognition of a 'generalized nostalgia' (Vidler, 1987 p24). The exhibit removes all visible and physical attachments of the estate from its previous location in East London, and seemingly dumps it along the Venice riviera.

The installation is partially interactive, as visitors are able to ascend its stairs and walk along the 'streets in the sky' (**Figure 61**). This seems to try and give an experience of what the estate's architecture would have been like, and functionally speaking it certainly presents the material character of the walkway it lacks any further connection with how the estate would have been lived in:

I walk along the raised walkway; I brush the concrete as I pass. Whilst it feels the same as what I had experienced before, almost everything is missing. There are no smells of cooking, sounds of children playing, people shouting, or the hum of traffic. Just dry summer heat and the texture of coarse concrete (Field Notes 06/2018).

The display perhaps falls into what Heatherington (2014) identifies as the 'reconstructive approach' whereby the museum has attempted to recreate the experience of a particular time through its collection of the estate's various fragments, in an effort to provide an example of a particular period that can become meaningful as a totality (Heatherington, 2014). It therefore tries desperately to restore an aspect of the estate that encourages an appreciation of its design alongside a tactile engagement with its materials. In reality, it ends up falling into the paradox of nostalgia, as despite its yearning for a specific place and time, the object is neither here nor there, present nor absent,

now nor then (Vidler, 1987). It therefore feels out of place and out of time, the juxtaposition between inner city concrete housing estate and historic Venice waterside is just too jarring. This sense of 'placelessness' (Arefi, 1999) is also compounded by the knowledge that half of the estate still stands, the constructed elements of the façade attempting to memorialise something which still remains. Thus, the separation of the estate's elements from the infinite complexity of its previous context seems to work against any ideas that this could in anyway be representative of the social and political environment in which it emerged. Yet whilst it fails at capturing the estate's previously lived registers, it still aids the agenda of the museum, as it cultivates a sense of authority and realism in their claims to knowledge about the estate (Crang, 2003a; Porter, 1989).

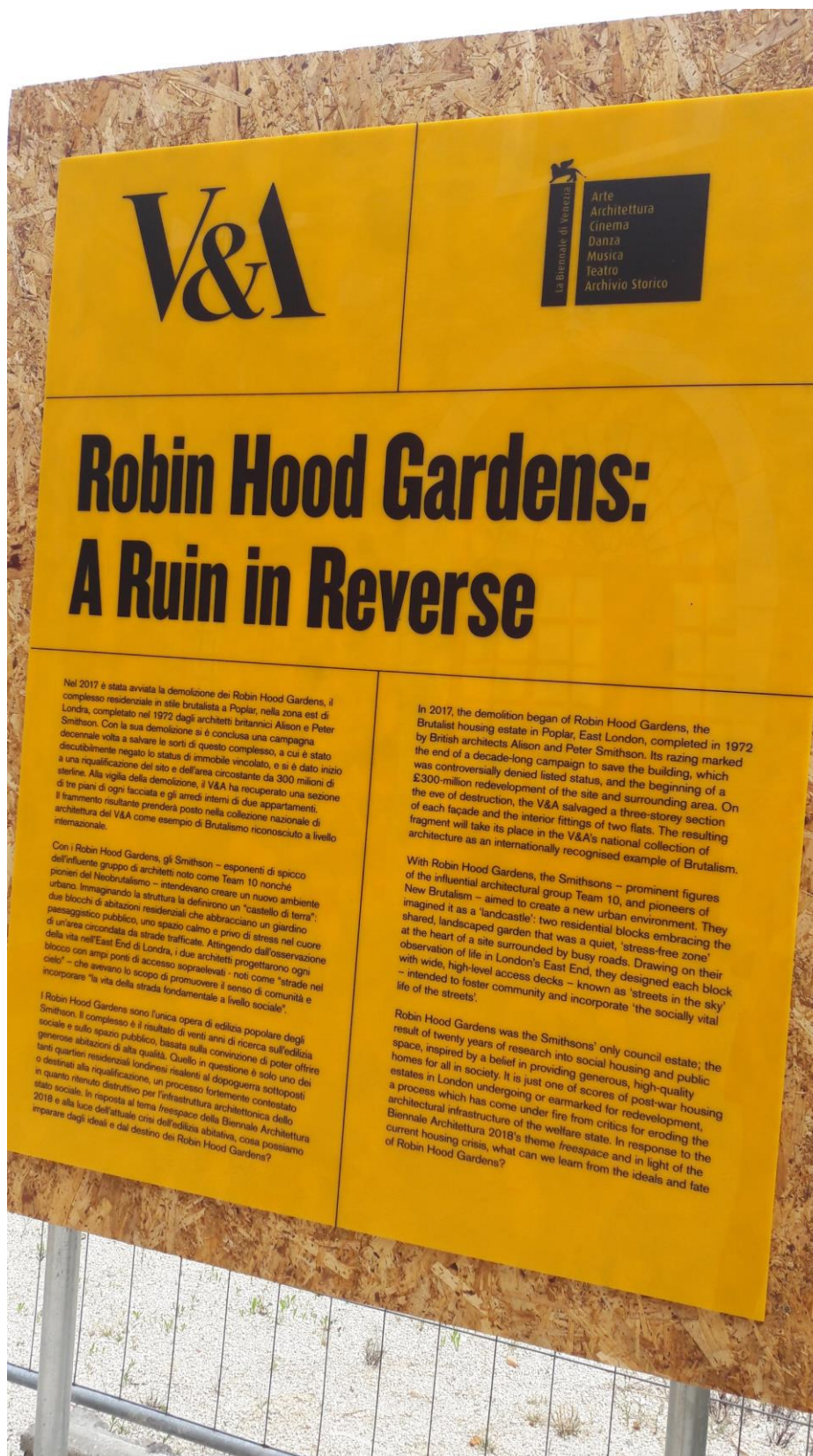
Although the façade is immediately arresting for its stark portrayal of RHG it is not presented in complete isolation. To the right of the scaffold is some accompanying text, pinned to a section of chip board and fixed to a temporary metal fence, it captures much of the 'ruin aesthetic' of the wider display. However, the information it provides does attempt to add some flesh to the bare bones of the installation (**Figure 62.**), providing a brief overview of the campaign surrounding the demolition of the estate. The V&A presents themselves as a saviour who 'on the eve of demolition' were able to salvage it before it was too late. It then goes on to mention the Smithsons and their involvement in 'Team 10' as well as their intentions for RHG as a social housing estate, mentioning the 'streets in the sky' alongside the landscaped central mound as a 'stress free zone'. Again, the focus is very much on the materiality of the estate, its architectural significance, and the perceived loss of a potential artefact, which was then saved at the last moment. Whilst it is clear in setting out the political debates which have surrounded the estate, it seems to gloss over the aspects which present the site as a space of home. Instead, the residents lack of portrayal positions them as the passive victims of an architectural battle waged between those that wish to redevelop and those that value the architecture of social housing.



Figure 60. Reconstructed façade of RHG presented at the 2018 Venice Biennale. A stairway runs to the side and up the back allowing visitors to walk up and down. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 61. View from the top of the reconstructed façade of RHG at the 2018 Venice Biennale. Image taken by author (2018)



V&A

La Biennale di Venezia
 Arte
 Architettura
 Cinema
 Danza
 Musica
 Teatro
 Archivio Storico

Robin Hood Gardens: A Ruin in Reverse

Nel 2017 è stata avviata la demolizione dei Robin Hood Gardens, il complesso residenziale in stile brutalista a Poplar, nella zona est di Londra, completato nel 1972 dagli architetti britannici Alison e Peter Smithson. Con la sua demolizione si è conclusa una campagna discorsiva volta a salvare le sorti di questo complesso, a cui è stato discorsivamente negato lo status di immobile vincolato, e si è dato inizio a una riqualificazione del sito e dell'area circostante da 300 milioni di sterline. Alla vigilia della demolizione, il V&A ha recuperato una sezione di tre piani di ogni facciata e gli arredi interni di due appartamenti. Il frammento risultante prenderà posto nella collezione nazionale di architettura del V&A come esempio di Brutalismo riconosciuto a livello internazionale.

Con i Robin Hood Gardens, gli Smithson – esponenti di spicco dell'influente gruppo di architetti noto come Team 10 nonché pionieri del Neobrutalismo – intendevano creare un nuovo ambiente urbano. Immaginando la struttura la definirono un "castello di terra": due blocchi di abitazioni residenziali che abbracciano un giardino paesaggistico pubblico, uno spazio calmo e privo di stress nel cuore di un'area circondata da strade trafficate. Atingendo dall'osservazione della vita nell'East End di Londra, i due architetti progettarono ogni blocco con ampi ponti di accesso sopraelevati – noti come "strade nel cielo" – che avevano lo scopo di promuovere il senso di comunità e incorporare "la vita della strada fondamentale a livello sociale".

I Robin Hood Gardens sono l'unica opera di edilizia popolare degli Smithson. Il complesso è il risultato di venti anni di ricerca sull'edilizia sociale e sullo spazio pubblico, basata sulla convinzione di poter offrire generose abitazioni di alta qualità. Quello in questione è solo uno dei tanti quartieri residenziali londinesi risorti al dopoguerra sottoposti a quanto ritenuto distruttivo per l'infrastruttura architettonica dello stato sociale. In risposta al tema /reespace della Biennale Architettura 2018 e alla luce dell'attuale crisi dell'edilizia abitativa, cosa possiamo imparare dagli ideali e dal destino dei Robin Hood Gardens?

In 2017, the demolition began of Robin Hood Gardens, the Brutalist housing estate in Poplar, East London, completed in 1972 by British architects Alison and Peter Smithson. Its razing marked the end of a decade-long campaign to save the building, which was controversially denied listed status, and the beginning of a £300-million redevelopment of the site and surrounding area. On the eve of destruction, the V&A salvaged a three-storey section of each façade and the interior fittings of two flats. The resulting fragment will take its place in the V&A's national collection of architecture as an internationally recognised example of Brutalism.

With Robin Hood Gardens, the Smithsons – prominent figures of the influential architectural group Team 10, and pioneers of New Brutalism – aimed to create a new urban environment. They imagined it as a 'landcastle': two residential blocks embracing the shared, landscaped garden that was a quiet, 'stress-free zone' at the heart of a site surrounded by busy roads. Drawing on their observation of life in London's East End, they designed each block with wide, high-level access decks – known as 'streets in the sky' – intended to foster community and incorporate 'the socially vital life of the streets'.

Robin Hood Gardens was the Smithsons' only council estate; the result of twenty years of research into social housing and public space, inspired by a belief in providing generous, high-quality homes for all in society. It is just one of scores of post-war housing estates in London undergoing or earmarked for redevelopment, a process which has come under fire from critics for eroding the architectural infrastructure of the welfare state. In response to the Biennale Architettura 2018's theme /reespace and in light of the current housing crisis, what can we learn from the ideals and fate of Robin Hood Gardens?

Figure 62. Accompanying text for the V&A exhibition 'Ruin in Reverse'. The board was situated just beside the reconstructed façade. It details the demolition of the estate and its planned regeneration whilst also introducing the Smithsons as pioneers of social housing. Image taken by author (2018).

The façade is arguably the most controversial and ‘out-of-place’ piece in the entire exhibition. It certainly presents itself as a provocative, if a slightly taboo talking point rather than any kind of faithful recreation. In this sense it does achieve parts of Fior’s initial vision for the acquisition to provoke the museum and its audience to consider more complex social issues. However, the unsympathetic presentation of the fragments in apparent isolation and with seemingly little explanation seems to reduce its capacity as a facilitator of discussion. If anything, it represents more of a proof of concept for the museum, in that they can acquire, disassemble, and reassemble large pieces of architecture or social housing for their collections with relative ease. It again taps into notions of concrete voyeurism or ‘ruin lust’, as contemporary urban decay is presented as an opportunity for seemingly ‘guilt free’ visual pleasure (Lindner, 2019; Beswick, 2015). This controversy was also something that was implied by Fior and Bingham, who both distanced themselves from the Venice project. Bingham made it clear that he had not been involved during this part of the estate’s incorporation into the museum’s collection, the general view being that the fragments should have been left out.

Instead, it appears that the Venice project reflects the oversight of other curators who had stepped in once the residency had ended to take on the project until Rory Hyde returned from working on a different exhibition for the museum. In this instance it was Christopher Turner, the museum’s ‘Head of Design’ and Olivia Horsfall-Turner, a ‘Senior Curator of Design’, who found themselves working with the estate. Certainly, the impression that was given to me when speaking to the museum was that this was a temporary arrangement until the appropriate staff could return to pick up the project (which was eventually Rory Hyde). This difference in tone is also evident in an article written for the V&A by Turner (2018) which is not particularly sympathetic to the estate, instead it positions the site as a ‘failure’ and ‘sink estate’, focusing more on a concern for its material fabric than for those that lived there. This further suggests a fracture with the curators’ initial brief, shifting the politics of the museum to something more closely aligned to its role as a collector and preservationist and less as a host for difficult discussions. This change in leadership therefore clarifies why there was an internal disagreement and discomfort with the project as highlighted by Fior. At the same time, it also explains the apparent contradiction that the façade embodies especially in relation to the projects initial aims of remaining socially and politically sensitive to the estate’s context. In this respect we get a brief glimpse into some of the curatorial choices which are often ‘screened’ from the public (Geoghegan & Hess, 2014; Crang, 2003a). It highlights the complexity behind the decisions regarding the exhibition, and how they have been shaped by multiple, and at times competing agendas from a

range of different actors. The different opinions, internal politics and staff changes within the V&A have come to influence their particular vision of the estate.

Returning to consider my experience of the rest of the exhibition, I move away from the façade and continue to the next room. This part of the V&A's display involves a screening of a film by Korean artist Do Ho Suh. Using a mixture of time lapse photography, drone footage, 3D scanning and photogrammetry he creates a visual journey in which the camera pans vertically and horizontally through the estate, moving seamlessly between each of the resident's flats (**Figure 63**):

The film is a juxtaposition to the sterile fragments just outside, as we finally get a window into how the estate was inhabited. The screen on which it is played is sufficiently large that it is hard to take it in all at once, giving a sense of scale to the estate. (Field Notes 06/2018)

The film is both hesitant and contemplative, giving a much-needed human dimension to the entire exhibition. It also presents footage of the estate as it is being destroyed, something which the fragments outside imply but do not explicitly acknowledge. Meanwhile the residents are shown sitting in their flats, only to slowly fade away, recognizing the human casualties of the redevelopment process. Whilst I do not wish to explore Suh's film in too great a depth here (this will be done in Chapter VII), I do wish to comment on how his film sits within the V&A's exhibition. Just as the reconstruction of the façade, the video also attempts to capture the 'materiality' of the estate, exploring the numerous 'nooks' and 'crannies' of residents' flats in precise and mimetic detail. It therefore reflects the general tone of the exhibition as a celebration of the estate's architecture, counterpoised with a sadness at its destruction and displacement of residents. Its depiction of 3D floor plans and panoramas of the site's exterior arguably stray into architectural fetishism, as it attempts to document the last traces of an estate that is under threat of being 'lost forever'.

Like the façade much of what it portrays is presented uncritically for the viewer to consume. Although what the video does well is to give a different perspective of the estate, one which makes its loss that much more visceral and apparent. Therefore, whilst it still incorporates the same structures of viewing as embodied by the rest of the exhibition, it does attempt to move the audience into considering the role of loss present in the estate's demolition. In this way the film adds much of the context back into the exhibition's discussion, (where perhaps the recreated façade removes it) attempting to tie each element of the estate back together.

The final part of the exhibition is more traditional in its presentation, where a gallery of various media, including images and text are displayed within a room in order to reconstruct a narrative

timeline of the estate (Heatherington, 2014). In particular the viewer is presented with snapshots of RHG at various points in its history (**Figures 64 – 70**) which seemingly transition from the ‘socialist utopia’ of RHG’s construction to contemporary ruin of its demolition and redevelopment. This includes several displays of text, which attempt to emphasize aspects of the estate socioeconomic context, such as its consistent underfunding by the council, and the political resistance to modernist forms of living (**Figure 64 & 65**). The text also sets out the different perspectives within the debates that have come to surround the estate’s redevelopment, although it does not go on to take a particular side within the arguments. The effect of the display presents the museum as a detached observer that is simply presenting a case to its audience, all the emotion and controversy embedded within the redevelopment is therefore filtered out in order to retain a sense of impartiality. It perhaps has the unintended effect of making the demolition of RHG seem inevitable, as a simple statement of historical fact, rather than a current occurring event. This makes the estate seem like a distant memory more than a present and highly contestable reality. Like the façade it appears to memorialise a building that is still very much inhabited.

Most of the other images depict the estate in its planning stages or shortly after its completion, as **Figure 65** highlights some of the Smithsons’ drawings alongside a proposed model of RHG. Whereas **Figures 66 & 67**, present pictures of families living on the estate, providing a view into their rooms and belongings within the flats. Most are relatively positive in tone, presenting an optimistic view of the Smithsons’ designs. Like the photos taken by Ioana Marinescu and in the C20 Society book ‘*RHG Revisions*’ they are very nostalgic in construction, capturing the traces of people and a personal character to the estate. This is then contrasted with more recent photos which highlight the demolition of uninhabited parts of the site (**Figure 69**). The exhibition presents social housing as something that was vibrant, affordable, and well-built, as well as a space of home for many people. Its images of the estate’s residents alongside their various rooms and belongings are an attempt at humanising the image of social housing (**Figure 67 & 68**). **Figure 68** in particular presents a very romantic view of the estate, displaying what looks like a family photo collection, as light streams into a bedroom, a child prepares for a bike ride and a kettle sits atop a cooker, bathed in what could be early morning light.



Figure 63. Do Ho Suh's film at the Venice Biennale. Displayed in a darkened room, the film depicts several 3D reconstructions of the estate, alongside images of its residents. Image taken by author (2018)

The Road to Ruin

In 1972, the same year that Robin Hood Gardens was completed, the high-rise Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri, which had been beset by vandalism since it opened in 1954, was demolished. Architectural historian Charles Jencks declared that its dynamiting was the moment 'modern architecture died'. Likewise, in the UK, debates about the impact of estate design on anti-social behaviour both preceded and justified Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' scheme introduced in 1980, under which by 2014 over 50% of all council housing stock was sold to private owners, without being replaced.

At Robin Hood Gardens, almost as soon as it was occupied, vandalism blighted the communal areas. In 1976 a study found that most tenants interviewed thought the site as a whole was noisy and unattractive, even though they liked their own flats. Tenants' views were also a contested part of the redevelopment consultation process. The council pointed to an official 2008 survey of 94 residents, 80% of whom apparently favoured demolition, while a self-conducted poll of 140 tenants found 90% favoured refurbishment. The council's case for demolition also cited the increased need for housing and the prohibitive cost of refurbishment, estimated at £77,000 per flat.

In response, the Twentieth Century Society and Building Design magazine led a campaign to save the estate on the grounds of its architectural importance. English Heritage's advice to the government, however, concluded that Robin Hood Gardens 'failed ... to create a housing development which worked on human terms'. The Secretary of State denied it listed status, declaring it 'not fit for purpose'. In 2017, demolition began in order to make way for Blackwall Reach, a £300-million project that promises 1,500 new homes.

Figure 64. Display text 'The Road to Ruin' for the V&A exhibition 'Ruin in Reverse'. It details the decline of high-rise modernism alongside some of the social and political factors that led to RHG's decline. Image taken by author (2018)

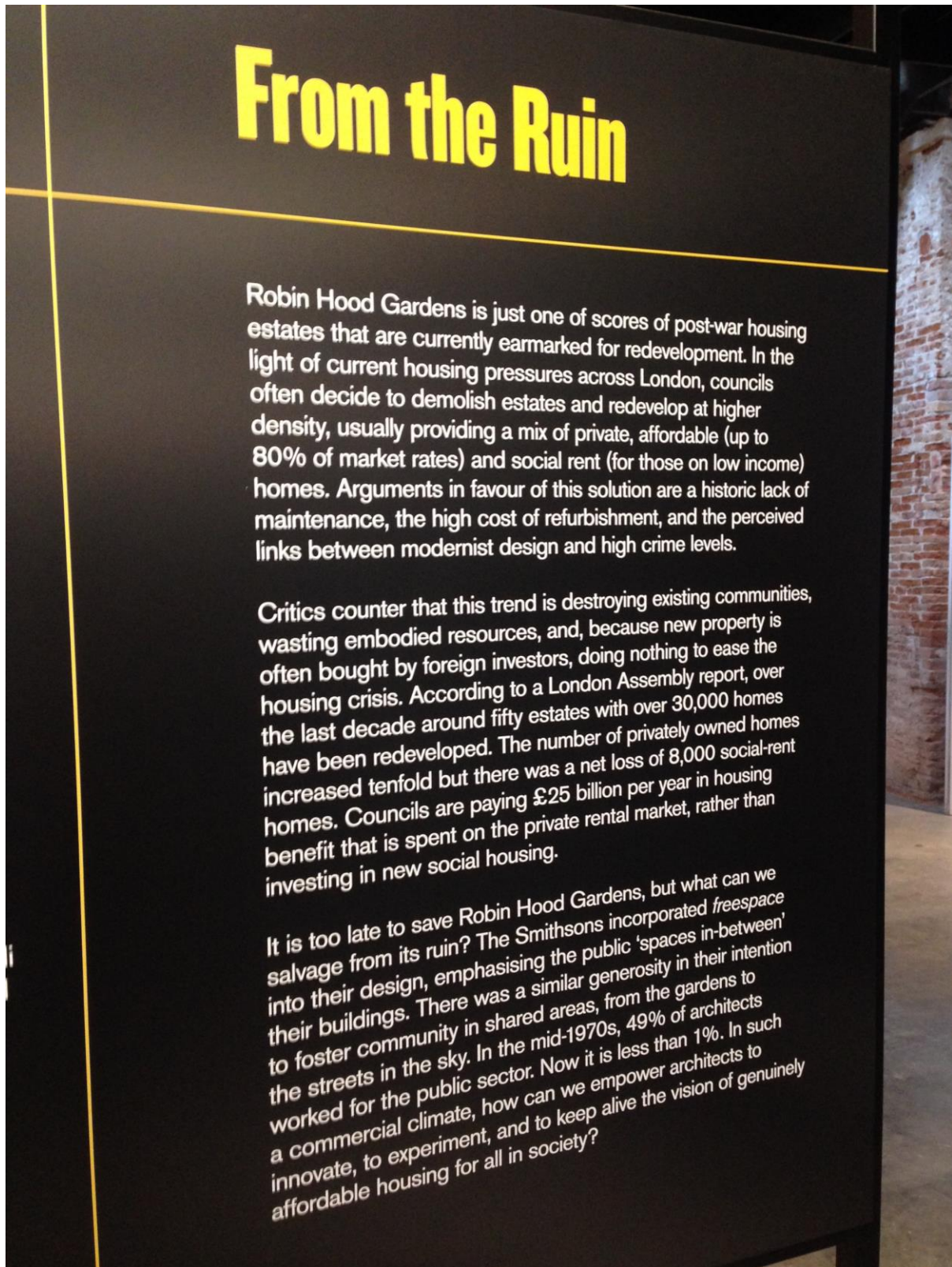


Figure 65. Display text 'From the Ruin' for the V&A exhibition 'Ruin in Reverse'. One of the final boards in the room's display, it details the wider effects of redevelopment on the city of London. It presents how housing estate s are increasingly under threat as housing and its design is becoming increasingly privatised. Image taken by author (2018).

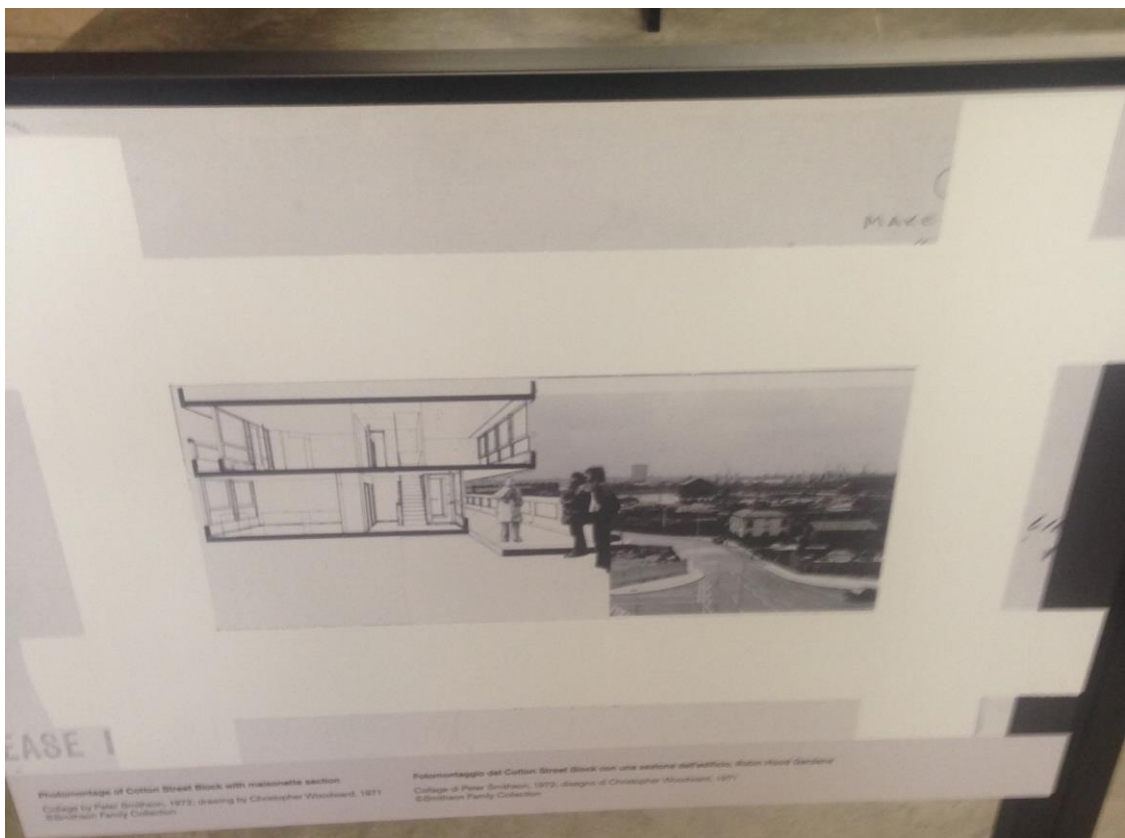
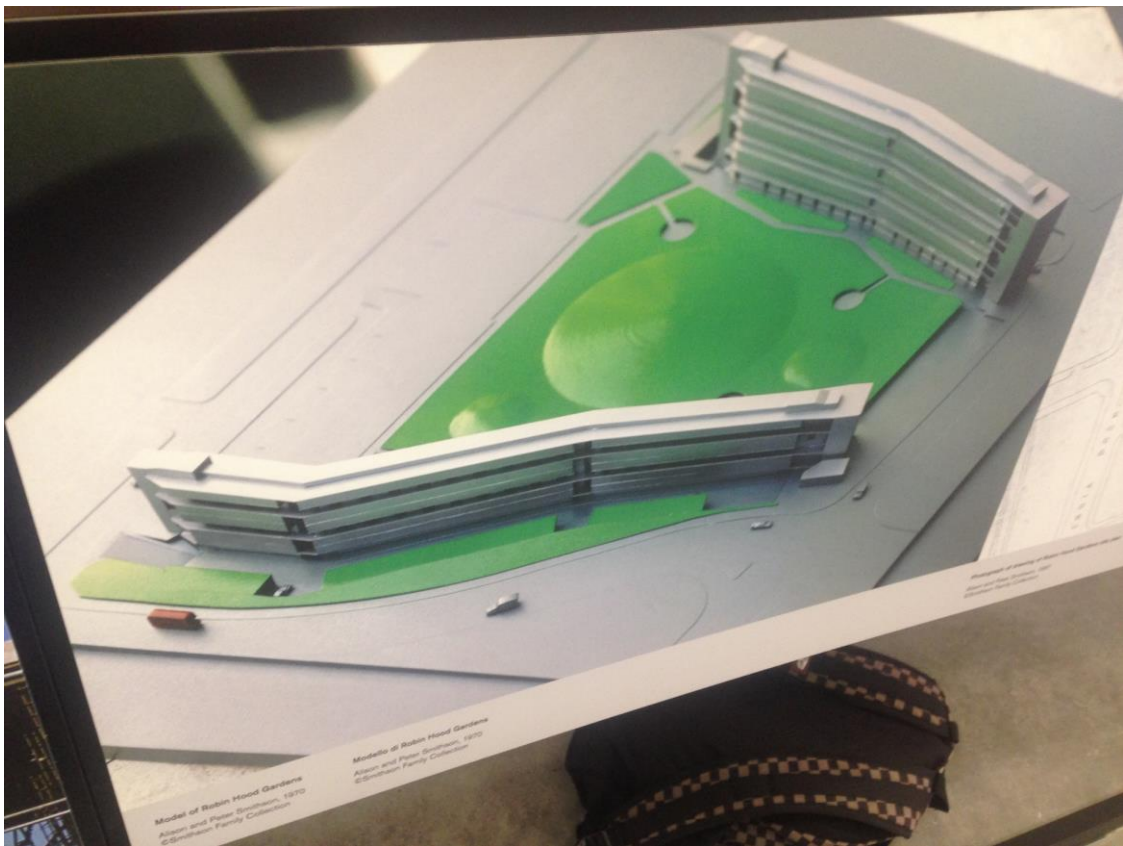


Figure 66. Display boards at the V&A's exhibition which show designs of the estate. The top depicts a model made of RHG before it was built, whilst the bottom displays sketches by the Smithsons which demonstrate what the interiors of the flats would look like. Both are provided by the Smithson Family Collection to the Museum. Image taken by author (2018). 223



Figure 67. Display board of two photographs by Ioana Marinescu (2009) at the 'Ruin in Reverse' exhibition. The top is titled 'The old lady's kitchen', whilst the bottom is called 'Bedroom with cat'. Each captures the more personal and material aspects of resident's homes. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 68. Display board with images of the estate's residents and interiors between 1976 – 1979 given to the Museum by Eileen and Alan Magness. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 69. Display board with an image of the estate's demolition by Peter Kelleher (2018). Image taken by author (2018)

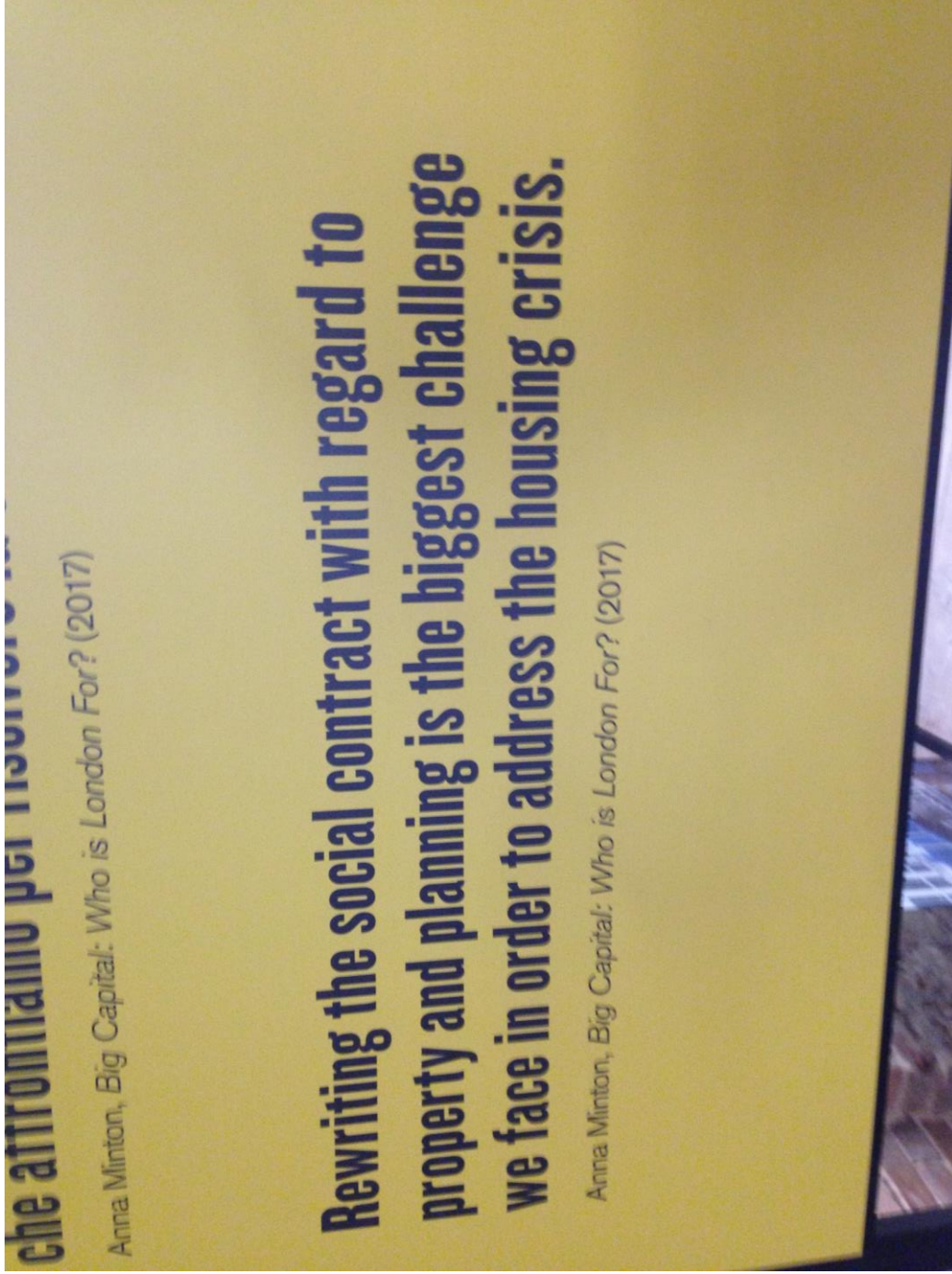


Figure 70 Display board with quotes by Anna Minton from her book 'Big Capital: Who is London for?' (2017). Image taken by author (2018). (2018).

Yet much of the narration comes from the architects, photographers, artists, or the museum itself. It is an idyllic view of the estate that glosses over many of the likely hardships and realities that the residents encountered living there. In this respect it largely documents how a group of people living in the estate are ultimately moved in and then over time moved out, with little perspective on their individual experience. It therefore romanticises a working-class culture that is entirely fabricated by the exhibition. The estate's residents only really feature as a spectre to be exorcized for the aesthetic consumption of Brutalist architecture (Thornburn, 2018). Their rooms and belongings represent the material traces of the working class turned into a spectacle for the audience of the Biennale (Thornburn, 2018).

Overall, the V&A's exhibition presents a single version of the past which is embedded within the museum's particular networks of power. For instance, the V&A is able to gain a certain cultural authority because of their traditional role at the juncture between the public and the so called 'expert' (Macdonald, 1996), this is then combined with the use of display and diorama, the reconstructed façade is used to give concrete form to figurative, discursive, and performative readings of the past (Till, 1999). The result is that the story told by the museum appears to convey a sense of durability which makes it difficult to contest. Its use of the façade and its focus on the architectural history and the 'materiality' of RHG gives a very narrow view of the estate, one that is focused on detailing, documenting, preserving, and mapping the site, rather than a concern for the processes contributing to the estate's demolition and the subsequent displacement of its residents. The location of the exhibition also remains a point of contention, the display of RHG in Venice seems only to act as a mechanism to attract the desired audience at the Biennale rather than a means of considering the residents at the time of the regeneration itself (Miles, 2005). This is again reflected in the tone of the exhibits where the residents are seemingly removed in favour of a celebration of the Smithsons and the estate's architectural features. In this sense the messages the museum expresses along with its choice of location undermine its attempts at providing an adequate platform for discussion around the estate's regeneration. In many ways it arguably legitimises contemporary acts of regeneration by presenting demolition through a lens of continuity and progression, naturalising forms of urban displacement (Graham, Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

Heritage Washing

The V&A's involvement with RHG has always been greeted with a great deal of ambivalence. The acquisition is seen by some as unsuitable on the grounds of taste - Brutalism reflecting a period of modernism that has long divided opinion (Sterling, 2020; Highmore, 2017). Whilst others viewed the salvage as bittersweet - the C20 Society commenting that such a small section was *'by no means an adequate way of preserving all that is important about a great building'* but were nevertheless *'delighted that some of the physical materiality of RHG will endure'* (Croft, 2017). However perhaps the most vocal response has always been from those that see the museum's acquisition as an arrogant intrusion upon the utopian aspirations of the estate's design. The V&A's act of 'preservation' is therefore viewed as little more than *'PR for luxury condos...a fetishization of working-class ways of living'* (Pritchard, 2017a: 183). Here the very process of saving, conserving, displaying, and interpreting social housing is questioned as being part of a 'state-led cycle of gentrification' (Sterling, 2020; Pritchard, 2017a). The acquisition representing another form of 'art washing' or 'heritage washing', whereby artistic (or in this case heritage) practices unwittingly (or not) are mobilised in the service of private capital, which is *'intentionally employed as a tool designed to make a place more amenable'* (Pritchard, 2020: 179; Mould, 2017).

This backlash against the museum was felt almost immediately, especially online, as numerous articles, blogs and twitter users criticised the V&A for their removal of part of the estate. Many formed around the slogan 'Vile Arrogance', in order to criticise its top down and heavy-handed approach to the estate's preservation. The central thrust of the critique was focused on highlighting the perceived violence of the museum, in order to make people aware of the deeper processes behind gentrification, and how the redevelopment of RHG was being politically 'smoothed over' by the V&A. **Figure 71** highlights an article by someone called 'Vile and Arrogant' (2018) in 'Mute', a left-wing culture and politics magazine, which presents how the salvaged maisonettes represented an *'an obscene spectacle, where working class housing is usurped for middle class pleasure, social vandalism whitewashed by the circuits of cultural heritage'*. Whereas **Figure 72** illustrates the twitter page of a user also called 'Vile Arrogance', whose bio highlights how the V&A's *'butchered chunk of Robin Hood Gardens represents a monument to social cleansing'*. The rhetoric used by these critics is quite vitriolic and does not really come grounded in any discussion of the issues faced by the estate, other than a focus on the V&A's complicity in the site's regeneration. In this respect the systematic neglect and decline of the estate are all ignored in favour of promoting a narrative that sees the museum as the true 'enemy' in the site's regeneration (rather than the developers, council and others who actively campaigned against it). From these articles and statements, it is also not clear

who the protestors are and who they actually represent, it is therefore not obvious whether they are also imposing a particular narrative and set of politics onto the estate and its residents. In this respect the critics of the museum seem to capitalise on this moment as a means to promote a more general anti estate-demolition agenda.

The museum's initial public response to these accusations was in an article in 'The Art Newspaper' by the director, Tristram Hunt (2018), who argued against the claims of art washing, instead situating the acquisition amongst the museum's other collections of historic rooms. In this respect he attempts to put into context the actions of the museum, the salvaging of the estate's façade fitting in with its wider collection of historically important interiors. However, whilst the article tries to put the acquisition into perspective, it is also contradictory as Hunt expresses his unease around the idea that museums should become vehicles for social justice, but rather should retain their focus as a site of civic exchange. Yet this seems at odds with his earlier comments in the article which signal the '*constructive role that cultural institutions can have in promoting much needed urban regeneration*' - a profoundly political position for a museum to take. Similar contradictions also arise in his concluding statements, which suggest that where critics are right to question the museum is when it fails to consider the social context of the sites they present, it being imperative that they avoid '*fetishizing architecture devoid of its social prehistory*'. This seems odd, when it is precisely what many of the online comments and criticism were actively critiquing (albeit in a manner that Hunt found unacceptable). The article is then signed off with a direct address to the museum's opponents as 'keyboard warriors' or 'art-wash agitators' – despite genuine concern and disapproval from the public (**Figure 73**).

YOUR POSTS

ROBIN HOOD IN REVERSE

By Vile & Arrogant , 22 May 2018

Politics / Culture / Urbanism

0 Comments 2756 Reads Print



Image: <https://socialcleansing-is-brutal.tumblr.com/>

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Figure 71. Mute Magazine Online article (2018). It highlights the V&A's acquisition of part of the RHG estate and expresses its opposition to the exhibition in Venice. The image displayed attempts to convey the violence of the Museum and its supposed aggressive expansion into the East End. 231

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Vile Arrogance
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The V&A's butchered chunk of Robin Hood Gardens is a vile and arrogant monument to the social cleansing of London.

Robin Hood Gardens, London socialcleansing-is-brutal.tumblr.com
Born March 2 Joined May 2018

400 Following 288 Followers

Followed by Up the Elephant, Cockney Campaign, and 12 others you follow

Tweets
Tweets & replies
Media
Likes

Pinned Tweet

Vile Arrogance @VArrogance · Jun 9, 2018

We're giving @V_and_A a headache. But we don't give a fuck. We want an end to estate demolitions. An end to myth of the failure of social housing. UK institutions and the state have run social housing into the ground symbolically and materially. It's a disgrace. Housing 4all 4eva



When the Victoria & Albert Museum salvaged a chunk of a half-demolished council estate last year, it hailed the new exhibit as "a real opportunity to maintain conversations about social housing". But the conversations in Venice, where the V&A has reassembled the three-storey slice of 1970s flatland for the Architecture Biennale display, has been far from civil. The problem is that the Robin Hood Gardens estate in Poplar, east London, of which the slice was part, is being "redeveloped", said The Times. As a result, the V&A stands accused of "art washing", using art and the prestige of an art gallery's name to help gentrify a disused area. The online magazine Mute called the Venice exhibit a "monument to the social cleansing of London", and it has become a rallying point for Venetians bemoaning the lack of public housing in their own city. But V&A director Tim Bonython must be disappointed: he has missed out.




4 19 28

Vile Arrogance Retweeted


Southwark Notes @SouthwarkNotes · Dec 13, 2019

We fought through the Tory 80's, the new Labour 2000's & the Tories again. We never gave up our belief that party politics is a circus. Shout out to

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Trending with **Bill Belichick**



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Figure 72. Twitter user 'Vile Arrogance' – although no longer active, the account supported the protests against the V&A and its acquisition of the estate. Much of the account was also strongly supportive of other social housing estates at risk of demolition. It was also likely to be behind the Mute article, both sharing similar links and messages.

Displaying the ruins of demolished social housing at the Venice Architecture Biennale is not ‘art-washing’

The V&A acquired a fragment of London's Robin Hood Gardens before it was demolished

Tristram Hunt
28th May 2018 05:26 GMT



Close-up of the reassembled fragment of the façade of Robin Hood Gardens, Pavilion of Applied Arts, at the Venice Architecture Biennale © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 73. Article in the Art Newspaper by Tristram Hunt (Director of the V&A). It attempts to dismiss the criticism surrounding the museum's acquisition of RHG.

In many ways it is a reactionary response which did not go down well with those already annoyed at how the V&A had handled the acquisition. It highlights the internal contradictions of the museum's position throughout the entire process, in that they wished to enter a debate that had become inherently political but also wished to remain separate from its politics, despite taking the curatorial responsibility of choosing to present the estate to the public. It seems that the uncomfortable conversations and provocation that the museum had initially intended for the acquisition had finally started to emerge, yet at the first opportunity this was shut down by the museum's director. The response to Hunt's article was a series of protests, both outside the V&A and at the Biennale itself. These were also recorded and put online (**Figure 74**) by the 'Rainbow Collective' (A social justice film production company) who again looked to pressure the V&A into halting the exhibition in Venice and return the fragments of the estate to its original context.

Much of the critique levelled at the museum, particularly around 'art washing', reflects work by Stephen Pritchard (2020; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c), who is an active critic of the V&A's acquisition and was a participant in the protests. In this respect he highlights how the 'salvaged' chunks of what were once people's homes have become objects for collection, voyeurism, and preservation, rather than of functioning as artefacts designed to prompt engagement with East London (Pritchard, 2020; p187; Wainwright, 2018). Whilst he frames much of his critique around 'art washing', and the capacity of artistic and creative practices to sanitise 'problematic' places or issues, this understanding can be broadened to encompass the practices of heritage organisations (heritage washing) and their role in deciding what historic narratives are told about certain places. Especially when the social capital often targeted by 'gentrifiers' often takes the form of memories, stories, histories, and even old photographs which may be used to create memorials to disadvantaged communities displaced by gentrification (Sterling, 2020). Therefore, part of the injustice embodied by the V&A's example of 'heritage washing' was in the irony that it only seemed to be concerned with the estate and its material preservation once demolition had begun. In this respect it seemed both ironic and convenient that the V&A did not take part in the campaign to have the estate listed, only choosing to intervene when they stood to supposedly gain from the exploitation of the site's social and cultural capital (Pritchard, 2020). However, the V&A did not see their involvement in this way, as when I spoke to Rory Hyde about how he felt the museum responded to the criticism, he stressed that importance of separating the process from the estate's demolition:

Rory Hyde: In terms of one-to-one fragments, we've got to be... we don't want to be the place that is used as the excuse for demolition. That's very dangerous, you know if there was sense that we're going to knock this building down but its ok because the V&A are going to

keep a section of the façade then our role is being misused and misappropriated. We can never stand for being that place. We would absolutely oppose anyone that was suggesting that was the role that we could play, as a justification for demolition. We would only ever get involved once that decision is beyond doubt (Interview Transcript 12/11/2018).

We can see that Hyde is firmly against the V&A becoming a mechanism through which sites would simply be redeveloped because their remains would be preserved by the museum. This is why the museum took the decision not to get involved until the very last moment, not wanting to actively influence the debate around the site's regeneration. However, Hyde raises an interesting point about the role of the museum within the redevelopment process. Although, he is against the museum being used as a justification for demolition, he does not acknowledge the active role that the V&A is already taking in how regeneration is managed in the city. It could be argued that the V&A is already involved in the process of 'museum-ifying' the city, a process which describes how subjects of the everyday world are transformed in ways that position them as inert artefacts to be consumed as if they were in a museum (Gobster, 2007). Therefore when 'a living city' becomes 'an idealized re-presentation of itself' any usefulness is displaced by the possibility of everything (tangible and intangible) becoming a museum artefact (Di Giovine, 2009). In this respect the estate as a space of home becomes an artefact for voyeuristic appreciation. 'Museumification' can therefore become one of the processes central to art/heritage washing and can be accidental or intentional, its aim might be to conserve or commodify, but the end result is a shift in the meanings, behaviours, and experiences people have in relation to a place or subject (Gobster, 2007). The argument here is that the increasing involvement of the V&A within the fabric of the city and its collection of the entire estate arguably begins to turn parts of the city into a kind of museum. An institutional, and private façade where any kind of political discourse is erased or sanitised in favour of uncritical appreciation. Therefore, the V&A's choice to preserve parts of the estate, only exhibiting them outside of their original context and in an environment that attempts to remain neutral to their original politics seems to reflect these broader notions of museumification. In a sense it collapses any distinction between the image of the city and that which we might expect to see within a museum and the lived built environment (Pritchard, 2020).



Figure 74. Rainbow Collective video which documents the protests outside the V&A and in Venice. It interviews some of the protestors (including Stephen Pritchard) and attempts to link the Museum's actions to wider practices of gentrification and art washing.

An article by George Kafka for 'Failed architecture' (2018) captures this point more succinctly, as it connects the importance of the 'image of heritage' within the city and how it is used as a marketing force. Heritage therefore becomes a central point of distinction between cities and their ongoing competition for globally mobile populations and sources of capital (Sterling, 2020; Harvey, 2012). While the museum is not involved in the active demolition of estates across the city, they are involved in the wider development and investment politics of London. This is certainly evident from the V&A's involvement within the redevelopment of London's Olympic Park, as it looks to open two interconnected sites, one along the Stratford waterfront and a research centre at 'Here East'. The regeneration scheme reflects what has been termed an 'innovation cluster' (Minton, 2018; Florida, 2002), or a collection of commercial, retail, cultural and educational spaces which aims to foster urban growth through 'consumption', and 'innovation'. Although the V&A did not swing the hammer itself, it is still instrumental in the regeneration of East London and in providing a platform from which to look at the estate as a disconnected observer. As an institutional power it is therefore able to control notions of the past and subsequently justify and buttress its power in the present (Porter, 1992; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1989; Norkunas 1993). The V&A is consequently part of a range of hegemonic strategies, whereby particular groups in society sustain their powerful position by persuading others to consent to it, by making it appear natural, inevitable, or justifiable - normalising how strategies and images of regeneration are carried out.

However, the art/heritage washing debate assumes that all readings of the museum's collection practices will be interpreted the same way. There is an implication that these readings are to then be internalised by an audience which is then unable to adequately challenge what it is viewing. For instance, I have outlined how conflict and social divisions around the estate might be glossed over by the museum in the interests of powerful groups in society. This position suggests a situation where people visiting the V&A's display automatically imbibe this message. A flaw then arises in the fact that much of the art washing scenario is devised by people who are compulsive readers of texts. They pay close attention to their semiotic surroundings and believe that others do too (Price, 2019; Mellor, 1991). In other words, we can be clear that the museum may organise its representations of places and objects in particular ways – that is not the same as saying its visitors come out agreeing or following them (Crang, 2003a).

In this sense whilst the V&A's practices may constitute art/heritage washing and be actively involved in 'sanitising' the present image and history of East London, there is no guarantee that these messages will be internalised by a wider audience, who will no doubt interpret the museum's actions according to their own logic. Whilst the acquisition could be seen as exploitative, it does not mean

that the history of the estate will necessarily be erased. As a result, the notion that it is washing or cleansing East London of its history could be somewhat overstated. Indeed, Handler & Gable (1997) suggest that semiotic readings of the representations, catalogues and exhibitions curated by museums miss the sociality of the process, often ignoring what actually happens in them. The same could be true of wider arts practices, as the critique is not always focused on how institutions present a social arena in which many people of differing backgrounds continuously and routinely interact to produce, exchange, and consume different messages (Handler & Gable, 1997). Therefore, whilst art/heritage washing is no doubt an important process, especially in the co-option of places by capital, further attention needs to be placed on how such messages are internalised by the communities they supposedly exploit. Most analysis has taken the form of critical reviews of the messages inherent in contemporary practices of 'place-making', with little concern being demonstrated for the experience of those who actually visit or internalise them.

Much of the critique surrounding the role of the museum in the art/heritage washing of the estate arguably stems from the museum's characterisation as an Enlightenment institution (Hooper-Greenhill 1989, 1992, 2000; Bennett 1995; Pearce 1992; Crimp 1983; Luke 2002), whose power to collect and display objects is a function of capitalism and imperialism. This ignores the capacity of the museum as a heterotopia which is able to work within these structures, and within notions of an implied 'total history' (Foucault 2002; Lord, 2006) to actively present multiple voices that are able to critique such perceived enlightenment values. In this sense it relates back to comments by Fior, which suggest that the process of acquiring the estate presents an opportunity for provocation and in so doing constructs a space of difference, in which ordinary cultural expectations are brought together and represented, contested, and reversed. My conversations with Rory also reiterate this point, as the V&A's exhibition was still able to provide both a platform and a perspective to visitors who may not have originally interpreted the estate in that way.

Rory Hyde: ...and really, it's the biggest platform for having a conversation about architecture, and it's mainly an in house conversation if you like. I imagine the audience is other architects... that's the biggest sort of stage you can have in the architectural world, so we thought it was important to advocate those values in that context. It's true it wasn't easy for people from East London to go there, but I don't think that was necessarily the point, we can't speak to all people at all times. That was an exhibition that was bringing a social conscience to a discipline that doesn't really have one. Architecture at the moment is not normally involved in those sorts of discussions, it's normally involved in the thing that replaces that, and to bring that a collective, that reminder to Venice was an important thing to do.

Our main ambition though is to present it in East London. When our new building opens which is not for 5 or 6 years and to make it permanently on display there. So, Venice shouldn't be seen as either or... it is coming back to East London. (Interview Transcript 12/11/2018).

In this sense the museum creates the potential to promote multiple visions and voices of the estate. Whilst some are problematic, the fact that the museum can offer multiple perspectives enables it to challenge the meaning between subject and object. In this case there is value in presenting a counter narrative to architects at a festival who may not have previously had a 'social conscience'. In this respect the V&A does provide a space for the visitor to reflect upon the order of things and the problem of the adequacy of representation. The visitor is invited – though sometimes only implicitly – to consider how its conceptual schemes really relate to the objects of RHG, and whether other conceptual schemes are more or less adequate to represent those objects. This is arguably expanded when we consider the broader public sphere and the dialogue between protestors and the museum or even further to include the wider debates surrounding RHG and its listing. The V&A is therefore able to provide a setting for these discussions, its position as a space of representation and display exposes the problem of relating words and things (Foucault 2002, Lord 2006).

Consequently, the museum as a process of collecting, preserving, displaying, and narrating artefacts, performs a kind of discursive analysis, displaying systems of representation and revealing the bodies of rules that are used to bind words and things together (Foucault, 2002; Lord, 2006). It 'loosens the embrace' between rhetoric and objects and shows the rules that bind them are both contingent and reversible (Lord, 2006). In this respect it exposes the disconnect between language and objects as evident in the listing debate, as it highlights the multiple meanings attached to the estate and that the decisions made regarding its future were not a 'natural order' that was perhaps implied by the other heritage institutions (Historic England and the DCMS). Therefore, in its own way the V&A and its exhibition in Venice, invites a form of discussion and analysis that encourages the possibility for new meanings of RHG to be explored. While many of us would challenge and critique the specific acts of the museum in its acquisition and representation of the estate, the fact that it can encourage that debate is of course valuable in itself. The V&A therefore pushes others to conceive of new ways of representing sites such as RHG and to reflect more broadly on issues attached to architecture, space, and social housing.

While I am sympathetic to certain aspects of V&A's situation – in the sense that I am not against the museum acquiring highly sensitive objects in order to spark a debate around social housing, it still remains that the top down and unsympathetic manner in which the acquisition was carried out was

deeply problematic. Instead of choosing an approach that worked with the community and considered the sensitive social context of the site, they fell back on the default enlightenment responsibilities of the museum as a material collector and authority on the history of design. This is coupled with the museum's ignorance to the irony behind their vested interests in East London and the increasingly blatant role that they and other major arts/ heritage institutions have played in the gentrification and rebranding of London's Riverside. In this sense the V&A could have done more and should have been more self-reflexive in fighting the spread of capital as it appropriated the heritage of the estate. From the outset they should have supported the estate's listing and looked for other ways to resist the destructive forces of capitalist urbanisation inherent within the estate's regeneration, not simply because destruction of the estate was antithetical to its heritage (it is not), but because this mode of erasure shuts down the multitude of voices that would have helped to generate the further discussions they were so desperate to encourage around the site's history and significance (Harvey, 2012; Sterling, 2020) .

Summary

This chapter has attempted to explore the other side of the Ugly/Beauty debate by focusing on a number of heritage institutions (Historic England, C20 Society, The V&A, the DCMS) and how their involvement with RHG shifted discussions around its future in order to consider its architectural and historical significance. In doing so it has attempted to chart a course through the series of very public and contentious events which surrounded RHG's immunity from listing, as well as its eventual salvage and exhibition in Venice. This analysis has largely focused on the initial attempts in 2008 to list the estate, and the exhibition in Venice, partly because the dialogue and document trail is far denser and more detailed in these areas, but also because of their significance.

Whilst I positioned these organisations under the title of 'preventionists', hopefully it is now clear that this did not necessarily mean they were united in their stance on how RHG should be preserved. Certainly, my discussion has tried to capture just how different and competing notions of heritage are contested within the city, and how this played out through the longwinded and often bureaucratic practices of listing or through museum collection. Of particular note is the role that Historic England took in constructing an image of the estate as a 'failure', in contrast to that of the C20 Society and the V&A who present it as an 'architectural masterpiece'. In essence this is where the battle between the two sides of the Ugly/Beauty debate takes place, albeit in a very one-sided

fashion given that certain opinions carry more weight in their capacity to protect parts of the building.

However, what I wish to return to in these concluding statements is the central theme that ties each of the 'preservationist' organisations together, namely that they each attend to RHG purely as an 'artefact' or as a 'heritage object'. Whilst this view obviously fits their function in society, at the same time it takes a complex array of dissonant discussions around social housing policy and the role of the state in large scale urban planning projects and ultimately reduces them into a solitary moment which is personified by an infamous piece of architecture (Li, 2015). Whether it be the 'failed estate' as presented by Historic England or the 'modernist masterpiece' of the C20 Society and the V&A, each of these representations become problematic reductions of the site. As a result, the architectural significance of the estate is divorced from its socio-material contexts. For instance, throughout the listing process a considerable proportion of time is spent ascertaining whether the presence of 'graffiti' or whether the size of the street decks in comparison to 'Park Hill' indicates a 'failure of the estate as housing'. It surmises that the only value the estate has to offer is that which can be derived from its material reality, which can only provide a limited perspective of the estate. At the same time, the 'Ruins in Reverse' exhibition depicts an array of families living in the estate but fails to provide a platform for them to both attend or speak about their experiences living on the estate. Of course, many would argue that it is not within Historic England's (the listing legislation) or the V&A's remit to provide comments on factors extraneous to architectural and historic concerns, however this seems to be precisely what did happen. As HE and the V&A attempt to draw conclusions around the success or failure of an entire community without really acknowledging any of its social complexity.

This lack of attention paid to the wider complexity of the site arguably blinkered each institution into thinking that the biggest threat to the estate's heritage was to somehow be impartial, to present an object that was tainted by the intrusion of incomplete and multifaceted subjects. This frequently meant that the estate's community were often overlooked or fetishized in order to produce a particular 'image' of the estate that was either worthy of aesthetic appreciation or as justification that it had failed as a form of housing. This is also reflected in the responses by Tristram Hunt and the Secretary of State where political impartiality and bias are seen as justifications for ignoring social justice issues or the present context of the estate's residents. In the case of Historic England this arguably represents a failure of the listing process itself and its reliance on material evidence and its interpretation by a handful of architectural historians. Whereas for the V&A a similar process occurred as a result of its failure to recognise its own complicity in the regeneration of East London,

making it harder for it to truly provide an open platform for discussion around the estate's demolition. The processes embedded within the acquisition and the exhibition also reduced connections between the present politics of the estate and its subsequent representation by the V&A.

The knock-on effect of these processes is that decisions regarding the architectural aesthetics and heritage of the city are made by external institutions, using obscure legal precedents or institutional powers which circumvent public responses. It further illustrates how particular narratives about housing estates are actively produced by heritage organizations which then become mobilised by political bodies to fuel their own representations of places like RHG – either as success or in the case of Historic England, as failure. These representations can then be mobilised by either side of the Ugly/Beauty debate and used to settle arguments framed around the preservation (or not) of unique architectural spaces, which are in fact more about housing and its increasing 'beautification' and financialization. In this respect the social aspects of the estate are seen as unimportant or tangential to the real considerations attached to the fabric of the estate, despite both being inherently intertwined. An outcome of this seems to be reflected in how each of the organisations I have highlighted in this chapter at one-point stresses the value of the RHG's community, its role as a form of social housing, and of the architect's intentions, yet each fail (with varying degrees) to actively challenge or resist the forces that have sought to destroy those things. As a result, heritage should not be reduced to a single category or process. It should not be separated from the social and political realities of everyday life. Instead, it must be seen as a malleable and a highly contested component in the broader interplay of capital, activism, property speculation and financialization (Sterling, 2020). Taking this approach would mean that heritage itself cannot be considered at risk from development or erasure, but at the same would be able to recognise that certain aspects of these developmental pressures do threaten the production of different forms of heritage. Thus, institutions must seek to challenge these forces, hold them to account and be more reflexive in their engagement with sites that are actively embedded within communities, and which are at risk of being silenced.

Chapter VII

ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS AND ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

Introduction

What the previous sections have highlighted are the numerous ways that image(s) have been mobilised around RHG to critique or justify its visual appearance. This analysis has up until now largely attended to the two main perspectives within the Ugly/Beauty debate; either those that look to demonise the estate, advocating its demolition, or those that wish to see it eternally preserved as an architectural/art object. At present very little of the discussion has focused on the estate as a place where people currently live, this in some ways reflects how rarely the notion of ‘social housing as home’, with all the emotional attachment and significance this concept implies, is given credence in the public sphere (Price, 2019). However, in the midst of the large-scale development taking place at RHG and the displacement of the community from the estate there is evidence of attempts by residents, artists, and audio enthusiasts to do just that: to make social housing estates visible in ways which resist their recent stigmatisation. Therefore, this chapter problematises the discussions that surround RHG by incorporating additional perspectives that whilst still focused on the estate’s ‘image’, are resistant to the forces of regeneration and sensitive to how the site reflects a space of home. It discusses how spatial identities in areas marked for ‘regeneration’ are constructed and resisted through recent artistic practice. It adds complexity to a dialogue, often presented along dualistic lines (Ugly/Beauty), by discussing how artists attempt to reassert the lived realities of Robin Hood Gardens.

Artists and artwork are often seen as complicit or the victims of processes of gentrification. While this may be true in some instances the processes are not always clear-cut (Matthews, 2010). Typically, when art is drawn into regeneration strategies it is smoothed of contestation and served up for aesthetic delight (Matthews, 2010), as could be argued in case of the V&A’s acquisition of the façade of the estate. However, some of the artistic practices that have emerged while RHG has been undergoing regeneration have encouraged opportunities for local and contested ‘meaning-making’ that offers some resistance against gentrification. As a result, the artists are able to use their work to provide an additional platform through which they are able to raise awareness of the estate’s political contestation or actively enable the residents to present some of their own experience of its future demolition. Whilst I do not want to suggest that art provides some kind of silver bullet against the forces of regeneration, I do wish to present how art can complicate the reductive discussions that present estates like RHG as failures or monstrosities.

In order to support this discussion this section will draw upon my research into several RHG artists (Jessie Brennan, Do Hou Suh and A.J Holmes), collected through a combination of semi structured interviews, ethnographic data and artwork. In terms of structure the subsequent sections will be

split into two key themes: *'Rebuilding Notions of Home'* and *'Place Listening'*. The first section will focus on how each artist's work confronts the audience with the materiality of the estate as a home. The second critiques the dominance of the 'image' in how we understand the estate, exploring how different kinds of listening can be used to add complexity to how we engage with RHG. Each of these sections will be split further into subheadings that relate to individual artists, each examining how the artist's work relates to our understanding of the various images and representations that surround the estate. In doing so each theme will illustrate how arts practice can offer some challenge to the complex and destructive forces of regeneration, providing a much-needed critique of the simplistic understandings that purely discuss the estate in reductive, visual terms. It will then go on to discuss the potentials of art to create a political common ground as well as the risk it poses in amplifying otherness through artistic spectacle, which, whilst well intentioned may also pose more harm than good to the residents of the estate. I will now consider the first of the strategies displayed by some of the RHG artists, notably how they redirect audiences back to the idea of RHG as a site of home and social housing.

Rebuilding Notions of 'Home'

A key theme in how some of the RHG artists choose to represent the estate is through reinforcing its status as a space of home. This is particularly evident in the work of Jessie Brennan and Do Ho Suh, who have both produced work that focuses on the lived aspects of the estate and the experiences of those that live(d) there. This section explores both these artist's work, focusing on how they attend to the loss of the estate as a site of home, and how they attempt to confront the audience with that loss. It focuses on some of the images, artworks and interviews used in the publication *'Regeneration! Conversations, Drawings, Archives & Photographs from Robin Hood Gardens'*, by Jessie Brennan (2015), alongside the video installation of Do Ho Suh which was originally presented at the V&A's exhibit at the 2018 Venice Biennale. Again, I'd like to reiterate that my intention here is not to present this work as providing a 'true' or innocent representation of the estate, but rather I wish to present these artistic perspectives as another layer of voices that have emerged around discussions concerning the estate's image and heritage. As a result, each of the artists' projects provides an alternative viewpoint to the many representations which present RHG as a failure. In this way they are able to reassert the purpose of the site as a form of social housing, providing a counter-narrative that positions the estate as a vibrant community that is more than an architectural artefact.

Jessie Brennan

Whilst I have discussed some of Brennan's artwork earlier in Chapter IV, particularly in relation to her renderings of RHG in various states of ruin, I wish to now look more deeply at other aspects of her practice that formed part of her larger project that culminated in the publication 'Regeneration! Conversations, Drawings, Archives & Photographs from Robin Hood Gardens' (2015). Specifically, I explore the ways in which Brennan's engagement with RHG provides an example of artwork that is actively engaged with residents of the estate and offers an opportunity for resistance against its regeneration, presenting a platform through which some of the concerns and voices of residents are able to be heard. One of the ways in which she achieves this is through reconstructing a narrative of RHG that reiterates its function as a home. In this way her work attempts to connect with the community that lives there and openly discusses the positive and negative realities of living on the estate. Therefore, this section aims to investigate how her book and her research led practice presents numerous strategies that re-engage the site's residents within discussions of the estate's regeneration as well as how it 'rebuilds' notions of RHG as a site of home.

The project in question; *'Regeneration! Conversations, Drawings, Archives & Photographs from Robin Hood Gardens'* (2015) attempts to explore RHG before it succumbs to demolition, bringing together plans and images from several archives, two essays, a series of drawings, personal experiences of long- and short-term tenants and a series of photographs by a former tenant Abdul Kalam. The project is presented as a means to engage with the people of the estate, who Brennan stresses have largely been left out of discussions around its preservation and demolition (Brennan, 2015). As a result, it is described as an opportunity to 'address in a small but meaningful way the qualities of a lived-in Brutalism and the personal impacts of redevelopment' (Brennan, 2015). The way in which this is achieved is in how she situates her own work within its historic background, as the book is quick to provide the context within which RHG was initially built, this is then supplemented by including numerous archival images (**Figures 75, 76 & 77**) and written essays from Owen Hatherley and Richard Martin. It provides a history of the estate and links it to broader debates within social housing, going into greater detail around the political and economic forces that have shaped its present-day decline; attributing much to the decline of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberal housing policy and conservative right to buy schemes. Already it provides a different narrative of the estate to that of the marketing material, and like the preservationists tries to account for some of the reasons behind its perceived failure instead of pinning it all on its Brutalist aesthetic or sweeping generalisations about the site's condition.

A central theme in how she chooses to represent RHG in order to construct a more sympathetic narrative of the estate is in her reassertion of the estate as a space of home. Whereby the reader/viewer is confronted with numerous examples of how RHG was and is lived in, and what its destruction means for those that live there. Certainly, the combination of text and images presents the audience with how the estate looked when it was constructed, this includes a double page spread of the householder's manual showing off its many internal features (**Figure 75, 76 & 77**). The images present a contrast to many of the media representations of the estate which emphasise its poor state of repair or lack of quality, the new pristine blocks in some way mirror the new marketing images of the Blackwall Reach development and presents how RHG was also at one point a new scheme that was to be marketed as the future for social housing. These similarities are also reflected in the list of design specifications used to promote both estates, as like the RHG householder's manual, Blackwall Reach also has a page dedicated to its many internal features in the marketing brochure (**Figures 37 & 77**). Both these lists of specifications go some way to illustrate the very tangible and material aspects of the homes that have/will occupy the site.

Brennan's use of this image is particularly poignant, especially when juxtaposed alongside its modern-day counterpart. Certainly, as historical documents they give an implication into how different societies/architects intended the properties to be lived in and the ways in which the built environment is shaped to structure these activities; as we can see both properties list the variety of storage solutions, location of toilets, drying and washing facilities and how the properties will be heated – whether underfloor or through a warm air system. Despite each list being over fifty years apart it narrates a story of lives both yet to be lived and those that have likely moved away; as it conjures up images of residents putting away their clothes in the bedroom storage units, opening their integrated fridge freezer to make dinner, or paint their treated ceiling a different colour. Materially speaking it shows that in their similarities both estates offer the same basic needs for dwelling, providing solutions for warmth, water, light, storage and sleeping (alongside various cosmetic features and modern conveniences) that emphasize that these are first and foremost spaces for people to live. Of course, strongly embedded within these material lists of each home is a clear marketing dimension as they only present the features designed to promote and sell the estates to members of the public. Therefore, in highlighting this image and putting each estate's specifications side by side it shows that each of the flats, although many years apart, are in many ways very similar and born out of very similar architectural processes and strategies. They reassert both sites as future homes that whilst technologically different in terms of type of amenities, will still be lived in by future tenants who will use these features in largely similar ways. It therefore breaks

down some of the boundaries erected (both physically and symbolically) between the two estates as we are encouraged to encounter them both as sites of future home.

However, although there are similarities between the images there are also some quite stark differences, especially in relation to the shared and community facilities. Whilst Blackwall Reach offers a concierge service a lot of the other services such as a car parking space, access to garages, a communal clubroom, bike storage, drying rooms and an on-site caretaker are all missing in comparison to RHG. In some ways this reflects the different needs and expectations of society at the time; with RHG largely born out of a post-war demand to house the poorest and most disadvantaged in society (Crimson, 2018). Instead, Blackwall Reach reflects a shift to house growing numbers of people within the city, alongside an increasing demand for profit by investors who look to capitalise off artificially induced shortages of housing in London (Minton, 2018). However, despite these very different social circumstances, the juxtaposition between the two images calls into question the very logic and marketing rhetoric of Blackwall Reach and its attention to the modern and luxury finish that it stresses its flats embody. The loss of some of these facilities (garages and motorbike storage) could reflect wider city trends of becoming 'greener', as indicated by the Mayor of London and his plans to prioritise eco-friendly streets and buildings (Mayor of London, 2020). However, it still doesn't account for the loss of the clubroom, the extra storage and access to an on-site caretaker. It again highlights the shift from public/social housing to private communities, as the increased cost of the new builds and the lack of funding available for council projects mean that the new estate is unable to deliver the same number of facilities as RHG.

These images pose a direct challenge to much of the marketing material and rhetoric that was encountered in Chapter V (138-146); the notion of 'one brand new community' or 'genuinely affordable homes' as presented on some of the site's hoarding and brochures is at odds with images that show that this was already the case before Blackwall Reach started building. Therefore, from a purely historical comparison the new builds will not offer 'genuine affordability', instead it illustrates a shift away from the public facilities of social housing, choosing to cater to the demand for more individual units that are easily marketable and provide more modern conveniences. This juxtaposition questions the legitimacy of the private property markets, as despite being a new development Blackwall Reach appears to offer comparatively less in terms of size and access to community space. It exposes the role that the real estate market plays in narrating the history and heritage of housing through regeneration, as by choosing to ignore the many positive or similar features of the old estate and instead emphasizing the new estate's 'current' affordability Blackwall Reach only presents an uncritical and positive view of the new flats. It suggests that the facilities and

architecture of the old estate were never really the problem, but rather the social, political, and economic conditions it was greeted with after its construction. Therefore, by unpacking and displaying archival images which show RHG after its recent completion, Brennan is able to introduce images into the debate which challenge the narratives set out by the Blackwall Reach's marketing and reassert the aspects of the estate's history that have been omitted. It goes further to expose how ideas of home and human experience in the regeneration process have been displaced by perspectives of capital.

The other archival images in which she draws upon depict an array of the estate's interiors, alongside residents and children playing around the estate (**Figures 75 & 76**). Each image gives us further glimpses of what it was like to live at RHG before parts of it became neglected or run down. It reasserts the purpose of the building as a place of home and provides a stark contrast to the sterile marketing images of the new development. Like the images taken by Kois Miah mentioned in Chapter IV (166-118), they also capture the in-situ realities of families who used to live on the estate. It contributes to a representation of RHG as a site of home rather than one of ugliness and failure, as we see it being lived in according to its intended function. Again, like Henderson's images of the East End it advances a view that accentuates its lived qualities; the children playing, and the family sat in the living room conveying ideas of the 'as found' as these supposedly candid images attempt to convey a snapshot of their lives. It makes visible the residents that the estate housed and questions the redevelopment policies that actively contribute to the decline of social housing. The fact that we see 'mundane' images of people in their own homes and people going about their lives in very ordinary ways also challenges the assumptions which present the site as either a 'sink estate' and 'concrete monstrosity'. Where are the 'benefit scroungers' that the Daily Mail suggests clog up the estate? The mere presence of people who usually go unseen enables us to exercise what Azoulay (2012: 107) calls 'the civil imagination' in which we display a concern for shared worlds through exercising imagination in areas typically blocked to the gaze and suspending 'the perspective of governmental power'. Therefore, in using these archival images Brennan is able to add complexity to representations of RHG which challenge reductive arguments that focus on the estate's failure through its aesthetics. It re-humanises the estate and forces the viewer to consider the perspectives of those that have been ignored by the new development.

However, it is important to remember that whilst these images provide a record and a narrative of the estate that presents a different perspective to that of dominant mainstream media discourse, they are still constructed to present a positive view of the estate (Martin, 2000). The format of the book gives a sense of these various images as a collection, but it is crucial to remember that they are

scattered fragments, reminding us that community is fragile and transitory (Craggs, 2016). The sense of community that they supposedly convey is not imposed by the artist, but (potentially) constructed in the process of making the photographs. In the same way as Henderson's images of the East End and Miah's photos of the estate it only gives a sense of what the community could be like in a very specific moment. Yet by including them and exploring aspects of their historical context Brennan is able to capture a time when the Robin Hood Gardens estate represented hope rather than failure. Again, it provides a poignant and sympathetic counter narrative to those that seek to erase these traces of life on the estate or overlook them in favour of architectural purity. It certainly helps to make visible many of the contradictions that have been imposed upon the estate by the future regeneration, whilst also subverting the smooth trajectory of progress that capitalism attempts to enforce upon the past.

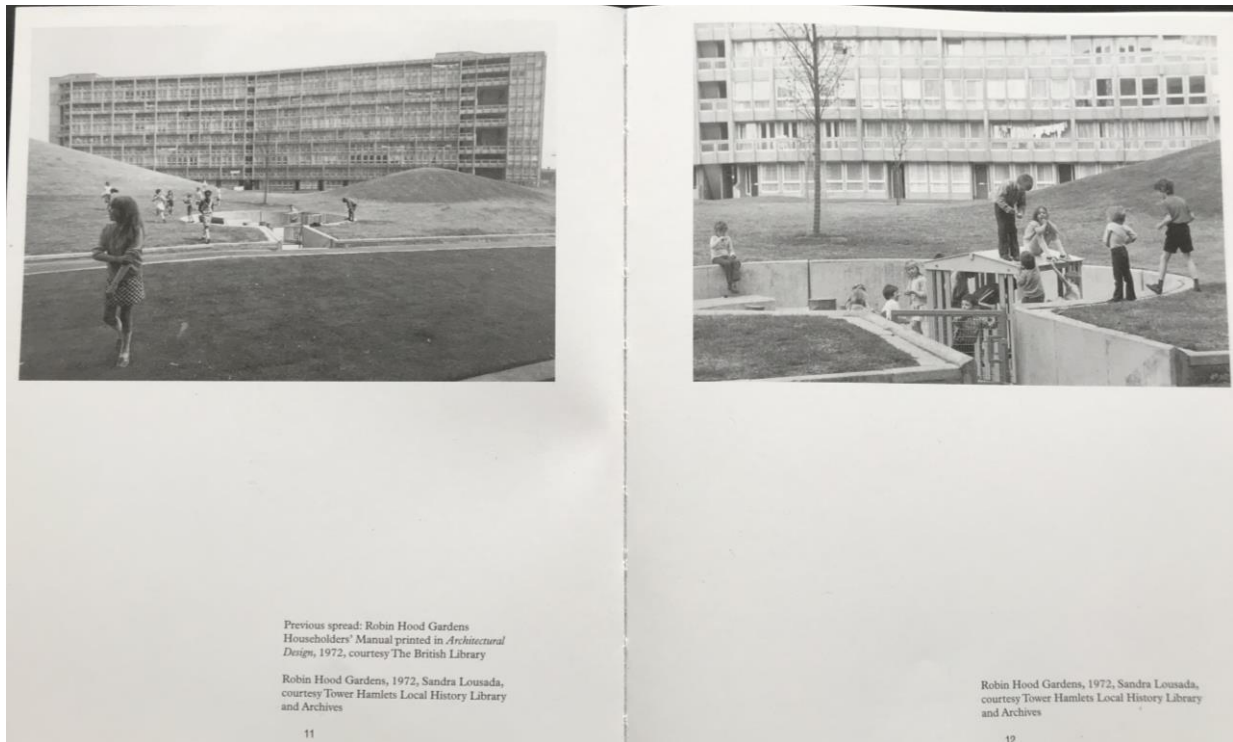


Figure 75. Archival images of Robin Hood Gardens and its exterior shortly after completion - Sandra Lousada, (1972) Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Featured on pages 11 & 12 of 'Regeneration! Conversations, Drawings, Archives & Photographs from Robin Hood Gardens' (Brennan, 2015).

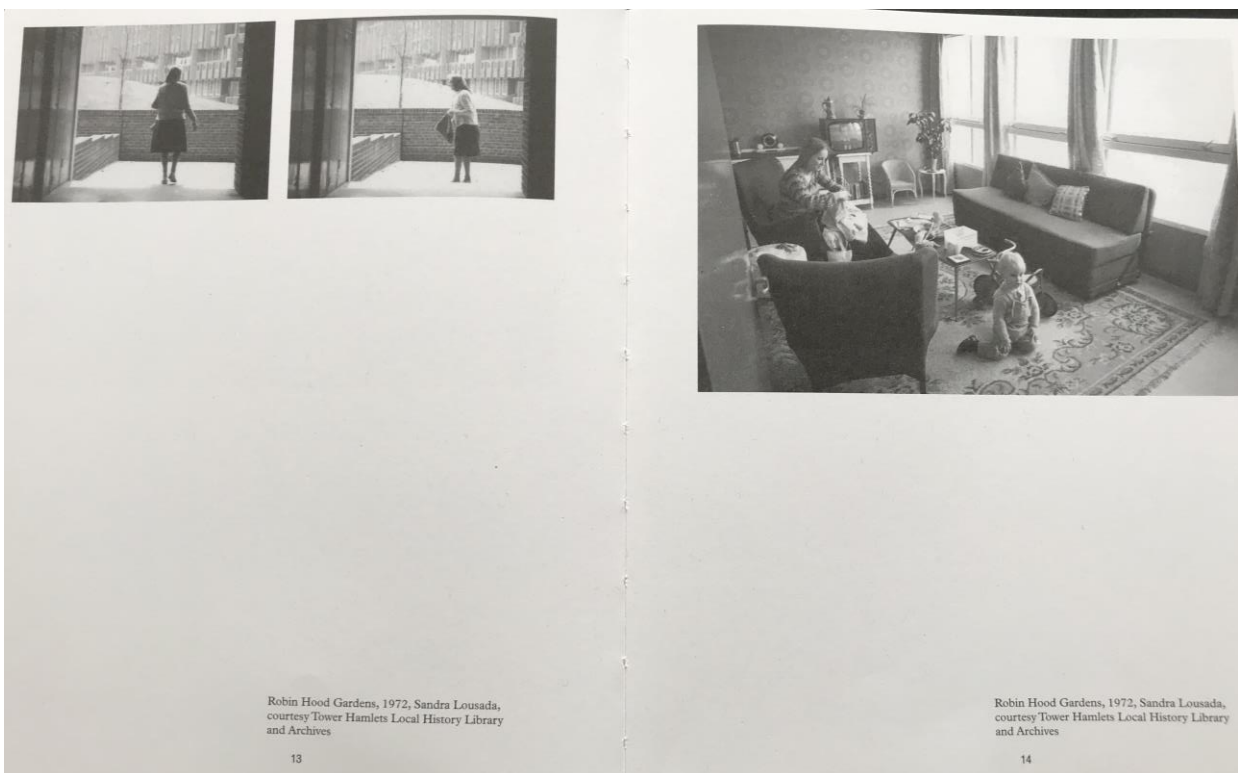


Figure 76. Archival images of Robin Hood Gardens and its interiors shortly after its completion - Sandra Lousada, (1972) Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Featured on pages 13 & 14 of 'Regeneration! Conversations, Drawings, Archives & Photographs from Robin Hood Gardens' (Brennan, 2015).

The reassertion of RHG as a space of home continues in Brennan's two series of artworks; *A Fall of Ordinariness and Light*, (2014) and *Conversation Pieces*, (2014) (**Figures 31, 78 & 79**), both series look to reengage with how RHG represents a physical and material space of home by illustrating some of the spaces through which we confront RHG. They create a tangible encounter whereby the viewer is presented with physical traces of lives lived on the estate. Already I have discussed some aspects of the series 'A fall of ordinariness and light' (Brennan, 2014), which takes the form of a series of four graphite drawings that imagine the planned demolition of RHG. Each crumpled drawing represents a further level of collapse, symbolising in her words 'the fall of social ideals and progress' as the estate is slowly demolished (Brennan, 2015). Whilst I do not wish to repeat myself as I have discussed elements of this work earlier however, I do wish to stress how these drawings evoke the image of the ruin, and that in doing so they make visible the forces and violence behind the process of regeneration, highlighting the social and political context within which it is embedded. It invites the viewer to confront the material realities between policies of redevelopment and encourages us to question what we see. It re-establishes a connection with RHG that presents it as a space of home, moving beyond the reductive representations of the site as 'ruin', 'architectural masterpiece' or 'concrete monstrosity'.

Brennan's second series in the book is entitled 'Conversation Pieces' (Brennan, 2014; **Figure 79.**) and is a collection of drawings made on site by rubbing graphite across paper revealing the pattern and everyday wear and tear of a doormat beneath. The drawings visualise a literal and metaphorical threshold between semi public and private spaces, from the old street deck to the home's interior. They reflect the apparently unlikely human qualities associated with Brutalism and bring to mind the day-to-day experiences of lives lived within the block. It presents a site of encounter with the 'other', where we are confronted with an 'artefact' of those living inside and it makes us question our assumptions about the estate. The artwork therefore presents a challenge to the estate's regeneration as it reinserts some of the material traces of the community back into the discussion. This challenge occurs in the realm of what Henri Lefebvre (1991, p39) describes as the 'spaces of representation', in which aesthetics can offer a form of symbolic resistance and in doing so, propose alternative understandings of space (Price, 2019). In this case the representation of each resident's doormat is used to challenge the sterile and dehumanising process of demolition-led regeneration. In this way Brennan's art provides a crucial means of articulating and contesting place and identity and has the potential to activate the spaces in which it is situated, acting as a trigger for new ways of seeing, relating, and experiencing the world (Price, 2019; Grierson & Sharp, 2014). Visual symbols of place also act as powerful emotive triggers and point to what is or is not culturally valorised, to the

extent that visual symbols can be 'read' as narratives of identity, politics, and power (Shields, 1992). In this sense the doormat becomes a powerful symbol of home and our encounter with the 'other'; the regeneration reflects the erasure of these traces of life in favour of capital accumulation. As Baker (2012) argues: The images, landmarks, and symbols of a neighbourhood function as 'identity space', the shared knowledge of the material landscape, and the sensory impacts this materiality has on the body, can act as binding forces, which connect people to place and imaginatively to each other (Price, 2019). Therefore, in highlighting the presence of the doormat the viewer is invited to connect with the estate's residents as they are given an opportunity to relate to the estate as a site of home. The familiar signifier of the doormat embodies a site in which the identities of those living in the estate can be performed, and through which glimpses of the estate's materiality are presented to the viewer. In this way the title of the series is particularly apt given that it initiates a conversation/dialogue between the viewer and the residents around the nature of home and the identities of those living on the estate. It is no longer about the developers and the future estate but about confronting the material realities of those that currently live/lived there.

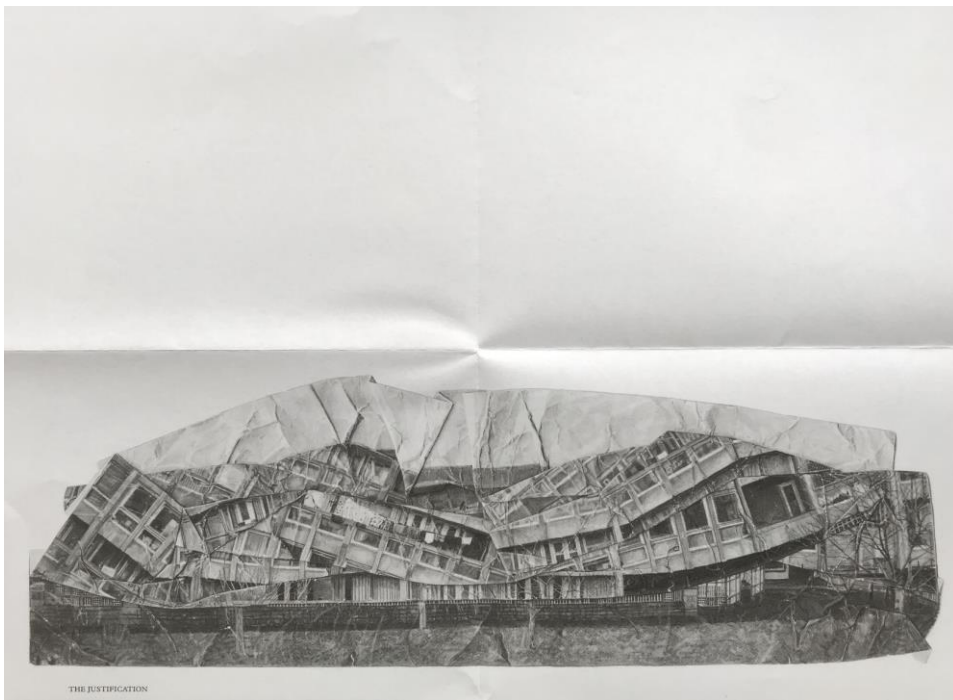
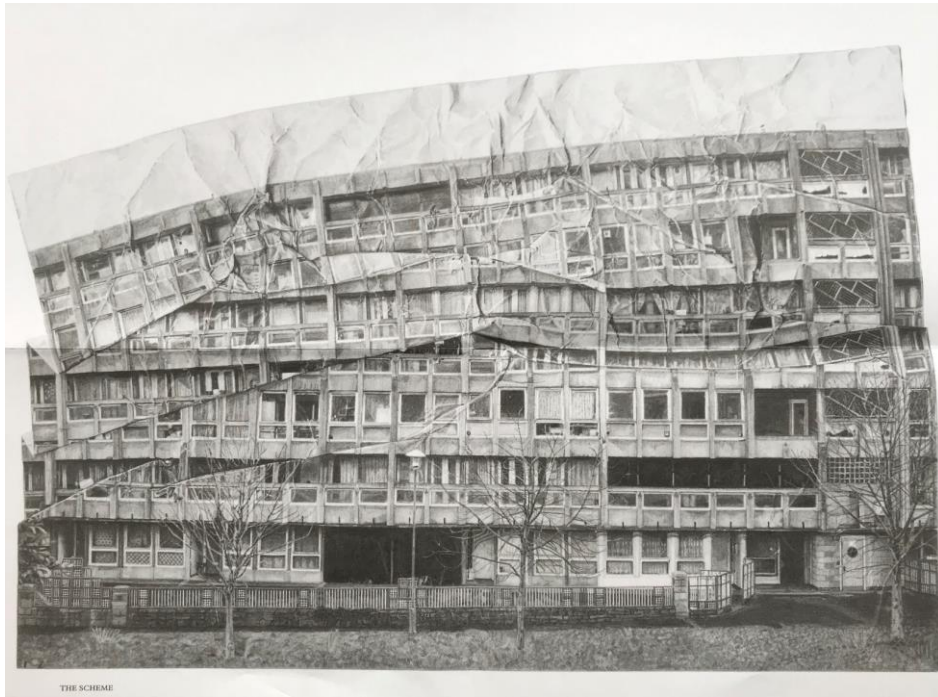


Figure 78. 'The Scheme' and 'The Justification' from the series 'A Fall of Ordinarity and Light' - Jessie Brennan (2014)

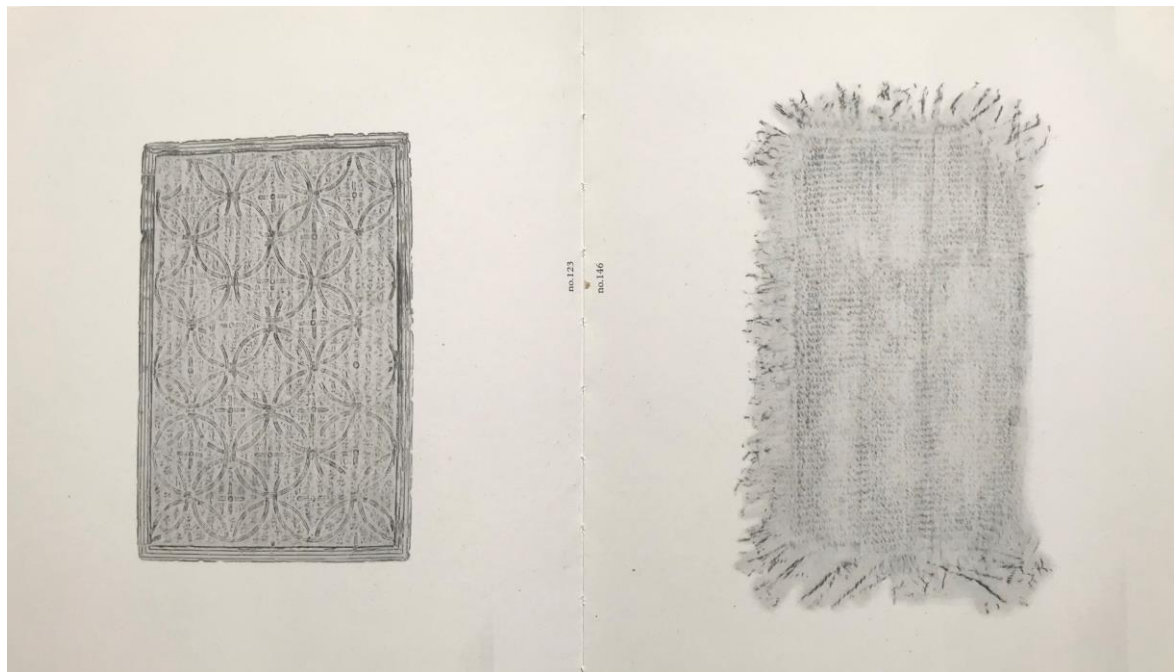
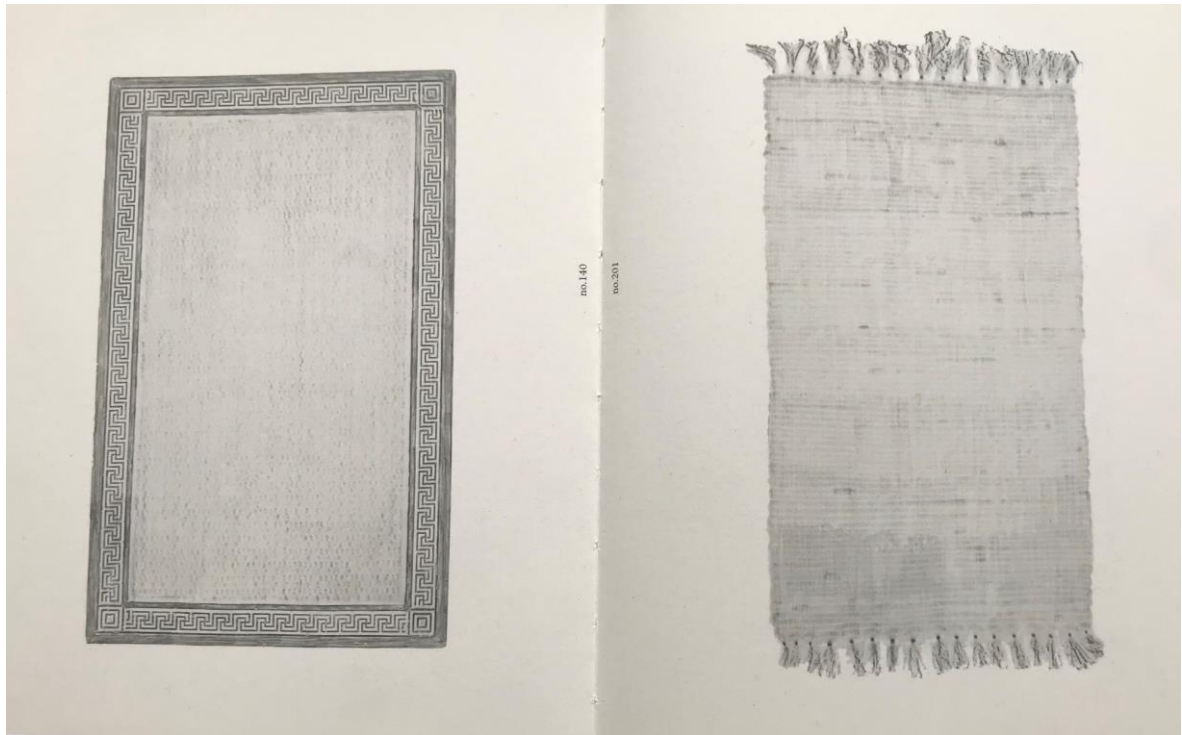


Figure 79. 'Conversation Pieces' A series of graphite and paper rubbings of various door mats from the residents of RHG - Jessie Brennan (2014)

Do Ho Suh

The second artist I consider who also recaptures the estate's materiality as a space of home is Do Ho Suh. Originally born in South Korea and moving to the United States in his late 20s, much of Suh's oeuvre explore the relationships we build with home and experiences of his own feelings of displacement (Spence, 2018). He also represents one of the more globally renowned RHG artists, having artworks in collections around the world; including the Tate Modern in London, MOMA in New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. This section explores one of Suh's more recent video installations, which was commissioned by the V&A as part of their acquisition of the estate's façade. His video artwork attempts to capture many of RHG's interiors alongside the site's demolition. This formed part of the V&A's 'Ruins in Reverse' exhibition for the 2018 Venice Biennale. Suh's installation became embroiled in accusations of art washing and the appropriation of working-class architecture by critics of the V&A (Thoburn, 2018; Sterling, 2020; Pritchard, 2017a). As I explored in Chapter VI, this left some calling for the museum to return the fragments of RHG back to East London and to cancel their involvement with the Biennale (Pritchard, 2017a). This certainly painted Suh's installation as problematic, especially when we consider the networks of power through which it was commissioned and subsequently displayed away from RHG's geographic and social context.

While the role of the V&A in this process was argued to be misjudged, regarded as aestheticizing, or profiting from acquiring working class architecture (Thoburn, 2018; Sterling, 2020), I feel the work of Do Ho Suh should not be dismissed outright for its involvement without due consideration of its broader message. This is especially the case when we engage with the idea that artists have an important role to play in supporting communities to 'articulate experience' and 'advocate for their rights' in the face of neoliberal urban development (Francis, 2017). Although we must acknowledge the contested and conflicted nature of the film and its commission, it still retains an important message in how the estate is represented. Whilst the actions of the V&A reduce the installation's capacity as a form of resistance against capitalistic forces, in choosing to tease out and engage with the video's emancipatory messages regarding the destruction of home, it still has the potential to raise awareness of those erased by the property development. Its position within the Biennale is a double-edged sword: it is part of a broader machine of corporate power but can also pose some (however minor) challenge to the structures and forces that underpin demolition-led regeneration by subverting its prevailing logics from within. This is particularly the case when we consider that many of the attendees of the Biennale and viewers of Suh's installation are likely to be embedded

within architectural and developer communities, therefore the location and content of the artwork could create more opportunities to push for change within networks of power.

Suh has distanced himself from the position of the museum and the surrounding controversy, as he describes that part of the project's appeal to him lay in the 'fundamental difference' between his approach to buildings and the V&A (Spence, 2018);

'They see spaces as an architect would, that is, as a physical entity, a hard shell. For me it's the intangible quality — energy, history, life and memory that has accumulated [there].' (Do Ho Suh in the *Financial Times*, Spence, 2018).

Therefore, it is the intangible qualities, energy, and history that Suh identifies which this section aims to explore in his video installation of RHG, and how these elements reassert the lived notions of home in a way that can be used to critique and problematise representations of the estate. His distinction between the hard shell of the building as seen by the V&A is also an important point, as for many in the Ugly/Beauty debate that is largely how it is represented, the intangible experience of the residents and its registers of life are often overlooked. So, presenting how RHG engages with notions of energy and life, Suh tries to expand the way in which we think about the estate and architectural space more broadly, in that there is a deep intangible connection that is being lost in the discussions we have about buildings. As Suh states his attention to the lives and memories that accumulated at RHG provides an opportunity for dialogue which both the architectural and developer discourse is currently lacking. In this way the content of the video is much like Brennan's images in that it forces the viewer to engage with the materiality of people's homes and their subsequent destruction. With this in mind the remainder of this section will explore Suh's video installation, utilising autoethnographic accounts and images of the 2018 Biennale alongside academic literature to unpick how Suh curates representations of RHG as a space of home.

'The installation takes place in a darkened room in the Sale d'Armi. On the far wall is a 42-foot-long screen on which Suh's video plays on a loop. The film moves from flat to flat, displaying the numerous details that characterize the interiors of the few families who remain at Robin Hood Gardens. Suh's film is very much shaped by the architecture and interiors of Robin Hood Gardens before its demolition. It is site-specific and time-specific, and it documents the modular interiors of the building with the adaptations, decoration, and furnishings of the residents (Figures 80-83). It emphasises how the Smithsons chose to design the building, illustrating the way the flats connected and overlapped each other in a 'Tetris' like configuration. However, what is most striking is how the film attempts to capture how

the residents have adapted to the interior space and the ways in which they have made each space their own...' (Field Notes 06/2018)

Suh's attention to the more intimate spaces of architecture, provides a lens through which we are again to relate and engage with the estate's residents. As we encounter the windows, nooks, crannies and doorways of the resident's rooms, they provide 'lines of force' inside stable notions of home and architecture, as the fabric of built space no longer conforms to the logic of the plan or the architect's vision that dominates architectural discussions of RHG and Blackwall reach, for instance:

'A spare room has been used to house a freezer (Figure 82), we see boxes and suitcases haphazardly arranged under a bed (Figures 81 & 82), the decorative arrangement of flowers on a coffee table (Figure 83) and the mixed arrangement of personal items including a teddy bear on a kitchen table (Figure 84). They provide very personal viewpoints and explore the architecture in a degree of intimacy that gives the audience a privileged insight into the individuals homes...' (Field Notes – 06/2018)

Suh confronts us with the material artefacts of dwelling. We see the various assemblages of personal items – the table, the flowers, the teddy bear; all of which fix notions of the estate as a site of home. The objects that we see (re)territorialize the site as one belonging to the residents, where the configurations of different items and spaces temporarily secures the estate into a seemingly stable configuration which enables domestic life to take place (McFarlane, 2011). This (re)territorialisation enacted by Suh challenges the dehumanising process of the estate's regeneration. We see how various homemaking objects imbue the space of RHG with personal meaning that is significant to the residents. It confronts the audience with the practices of dwelling that take place in RHG that have been overlooked by other narratives. However, minutes later the work of this assemblage is thrown into question as we see the destruction of the west block taking place. The reterritorialization of the estate is therefore juxtaposed with its precarity and its unmaking. We see how the various material objects and assemblages that come to signify and fix notions of home can be undone in a matter of minutes. No matter how fixed items or residents appear, they will face the destructive forces of its regeneration and deterritorialization. In this way Suh confronts us with these destructive forces and what this means for our own sense of fixity.

These ephemeral traces of home are captured by Suh using a mixture of time-lapse photography, 3D scanning and photogrammetry. Whilst traditional architectural photography would document a room relatively quickly using a limited number of photographs, Suh's use of time-lapse sees his camera move from floor to ceiling in 30 minutes, taking hundreds of shots which are then stitched

together to create a video sequence. His use of photogrammetry, unlike laser scanning, is able to capture the visual information of the room, emphasising the visual and material aspects of the spaces in which the residents live (**Figures 80 - 85**) (Spence, 2018).

'As I stand and watch the video and see how the installation takes us through the various residents' flats and explores the numerous cross sections of baths and walls as various rooms are stitched together...'

Figure 85 in particular captures how these images were used by Suh to recreate the layout of the flats, which were then rotated and panned through by the film.

'... I am reminded of its similarity to methods used in archaeology which use photogrammetry as a tool for recording spatial data and 3D modelling...' (Field Notes 06/2018)

Here photogrammetry refers to the practice of determining geometric properties from images (Kjellman, 2012, Samaan et al 2013), which in this instance has been done digitally using specific software or hardware which is able to convert this geometric data into 3D shapes and other geometric environments (Kjellman, 2012). As a more recent technique in digital archaeology, it uses practices like photogrammetry to both document and record in fine detail the environments and artefacts they are studying (Kjellman, 2012). These techniques have also enjoyed some commercial success and arguably represent an increasing prevalence in how we engage with the physical and urban environment (Feriozzi et al 2019). The choice by Suh to document and reconstruct the environment of RHG using photogrammetry arguably presents an alternative way of engaging with urban space that is only now being realised by certain academic disciplines. The technique itself also blurs boundaries between many fields; as it engages concepts associated with GIS and imaging in geography; the modelling of built environments in architecture; and the use of data and images in informing artistic practice. His use of the technique also raises questions around how this visual data is used by different individuals and organisations to convey different messages.

'In returning to my notes I find myself having written down hastily scribbled questions around how should we use this data? What images should be emphasised and how and by who should this data be narrated? Is Suh's narration of the estate using photogrammetry a just one?' (Field Notes 06/2018)

For instance, Suh's video creates an interesting parallel with the virtual tour offered by Blackwall Reach on its marketing website, as both use the same techniques to reconstruct the present realities

of RHG. However, there is a contrast in the way these images are used; as Blackwall Reach uses them to construct a new virtual and imagined environment in order to market new properties and future homes; whereas Suh uses the technique to capture the intricate detail and material qualities of lives already living on the estate. Blackwall Reach's virtual environments focuses on user experience of the new development and how prospective buyers can individually navigate and explore one of the new flats under the premise of viewing it without having to be there. The emphasis is much more about measurements, visualisation, and a homogeneous experience of the site. Suh documents and displays some of the stories of the lives soon to be displaced by the flats recreated in Blackwall Reach's virtual tour. Suh's use of images and 3D reconstruction therefore provides a stark counter-narrative to Blackwall Reach's use of the 'virtual tour', where we see clean and pristine flats which have been decorated in minimalistic ways, contrasted with images of cluttered and vibrant interiors, decorated according to the personal taste of the residents. It confronts the dehumanising forces of property development with the visceral realities of people living in the spaces that developers/architects build. It highlights the disconnection between a system designed to remake places with the aim of accumulating capital with the realities of people actually having to live in them. Suh's work therefore provides a perspective that rehumanises the more sterile 'tour' as it confronts the audience with the very detail and material realities that capital tries to erase.

The film also raises questions around how these techniques are used and for what purpose, as typically they are used to recreate physical environments with the intention of presenting them as fact (Kjellman, 2012). When in reality this is far from the case, as both these depictions, whilst capturing much of the visual characteristics of the environment they look to replicate, omit the many smells, sounds, tastes, and other affective registers of the spaces in which they are situated. It reminds us that the way these images are used is also curated and that they do not represent accurate depictions of a real-world engagement with space, curating very prescribed narratives of the built environment (Rose, 2014) – in this case either that of flat waiting to be sold or to record, as a form of art/archaeological artefact, the residents, and their homes prior to demolition. Therefore, we cannot assume Suh's video depicts an accurate understanding of social life as seen through culturally mediated visual materials. Rather, his installation produces a social world that is visible, but lacks an exploration of the complex social relations behind each of the images and his own acts of viewing (Rose, 2014).



Figure 80. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. It depicts a moment where the camera seamlessly pans between the cross section of two rooms, creating the sense of one long interconnected space. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 81. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. It captures how Suh uses photogrammetry to capture the various cross sections of the flats at RHG. Image taken by author (2018).



Figure 82. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. Low angle shot of one of the residents' beds, the camera slowly rises from floor to ceiling, capturing very intimate spaces within the flat. Image taken by author (2018).

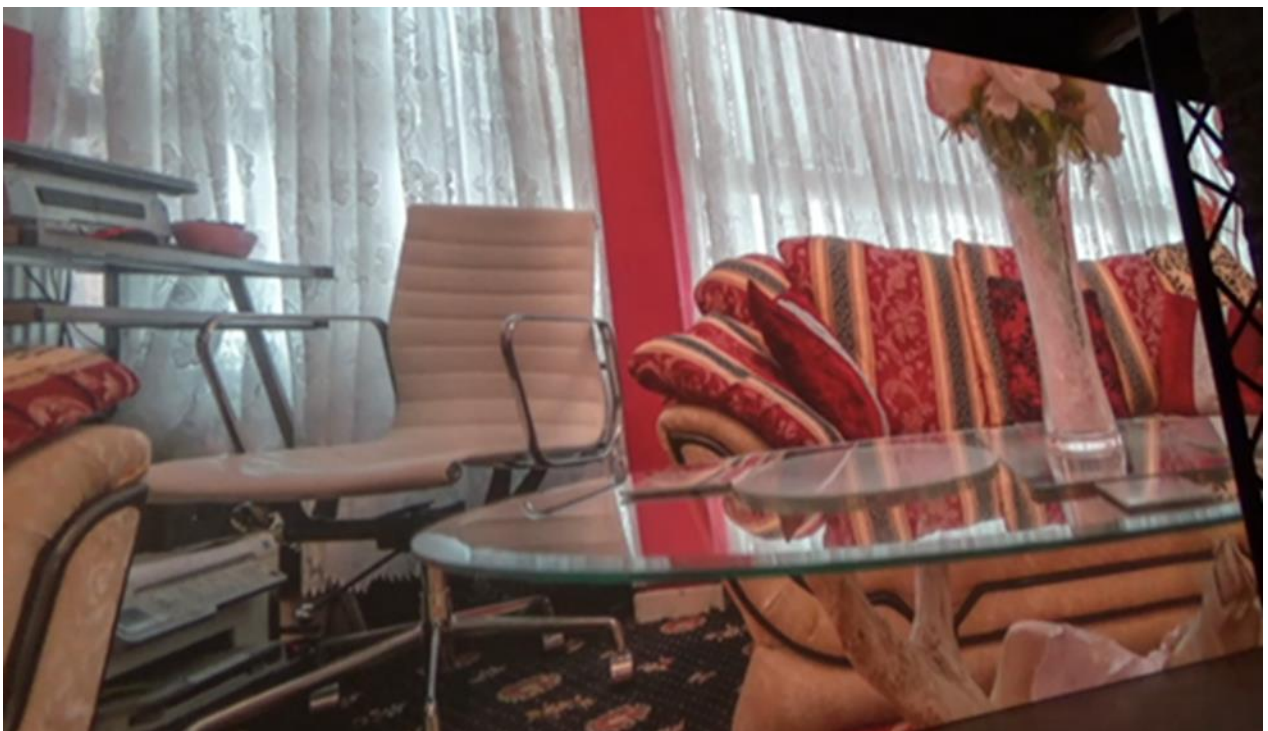


Figure 83. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. Low angle shot of a living room showing the décor and a flower arrangement on a glass coffee table. Image taken by author (2018).



Figure 84. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. The camera captures a kitchen with a collection of items on the side including fruit, gloves, and a teddy bear. Image taken by author (2018)



Figure 85. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. It depicts one of the 3D rendered 'nets' of the flats and its layout. Image taken by Author (2018).

The same is true for Blackwall Reach's tours – it structures a particular act of looking that makes visible a world of architecture that exists only in digital space, overlooking the processes behind its own creation. This highlights how acts of viewing and lived experience are both constructed and mediated by the role of the image. From this we can see how two different representations of home are produced by different uses of photogrammetry. On the one hand we have the materially vibrant and humanised home as presented by Suh and on the other we have the empty, commodified yet full of potential future homes as presented by Blackwall Reach. Thus, in capturing a selection of the site's interiors, Suh is able to record in minute detail the many visceral and material features of life on the estate that many of the other narratives both positive and negative of the estate choose not to emphasise.

The connection between lived experience, the image, and the act of viewing in Suh's installation is also evident in the work undertaken by the Independent Group. In particular there is an interesting relationship between Suh's work, photogrammetry, and the logics of Brutalism, in that they each encourage and structure a specific approach to viewing that seeks to derive geometric principles/connections from images. If we return to Banham's tripartite discussion of Brutalism, one of the key elements within that discussion is based round being able to derive the formal unity of a building from its image alone. As I mentioned in Chapter II this informed the approach of both the Smithsons and the Independent Group, in that image, rather than geometry became the starting point in their relationship to art and architecture. Therefore, if we take photogrammetry as being concerned with the mapping and ordering of images in order to derive topological and topographical geometries, then we can see how Banham's ideas of Brutalism are related to the core principles of photogrammetric reconstruction. Therefore, Brutalism in its attempts to use images to determine a logic from space/society also reflects the operations of photogrammetry in its attempts to distil a formal logic of the environment through an engagement with images.

These connections are again best illustrated in the Independent Group's exhibition '*Parallel of Life and Art*', as its eclectic collection of images taken as a whole is where much of its commentary on classification and art are derived. The collages of Paolozzi and other Brutalist inspired artists such as John McHale also build on this logic whereby space and geometry are derived through a relationship with images and their curation. Therefore, if we return to Suh's use of photogrammetry, we can also see how on certain levels it captures Brutalism's unique relationship to the image and explores how images are intricately connected to our experience of space and architecture. Its attention to detail, capture elements of the 'as found', as the in-situ materials of everyday life are used to derive a formal logic out of each resident's existence on the estate. The individual items that Suh's film

lingers on, which on their own would seem out of place derive a formal legibility when viewed as a whole, similar to the *'Parallel of Life and Art'*. Thus, we are confronted with a teddy, a washing machine, flowers, a table, chequerboard pattern, a digger, rubble, and a window, which on their own are just objects, but when viewed as a whole, pieced together so that a formal logic can be determined they symbolise the materials of a home soon to be demolished. In this way Brutalism could be seen as a practice of applied photogrammetry, albeit a more analogue and abstract form, in that it derives its practice from seeking to apprehend the relationships we have with space from images. Therefore, through a form of radically indiscriminate viewing *'Parallel of Life and Art'* exemplifies the role that visual communication plays in representing overlooked or obscure connections and narratives. It creates a space where new relationships can emerge, and new geometries can be created. Suh's film embodies this Brutalist sensibility in its curation of images and film in order to create the image of architecture. Instead of a purely mimetic reconstruction of the estate it attends to the relationships we can draw between the image, geometric space, and the everyday acts of living. Again, this is something we can see in the Smithsons' CIAM grid, the many geometries of Henderson's images of the street brought to the fore through their photogrammetric reconstruction (see Chapter IV, page 97).

Therefore, by connecting the practices of Brutalism with concepts associated with photogrammetry and Suh's art we can see how interconnected and interchangeable the 'image' is with our understanding of built space. It presents the importance of exploring our connections to the images of everyday life as well as raising questions around who is granted the ability to curate them. This therefore emphasises the need to be critical of the way in which photo narratives and practices of recording are constructed. This is perhaps where the ethics of Brutalism emerge, in that it attempts to curate the 'image' in a way that connects its radically indiscriminate form of viewing with the various aspects of human experience in an emancipatory and democratic fashion that would not be overtly dominated by one image's perspective, but rather consumed as a whole. Thus, Suh's work embodies an extension of these principles, in that his attempt to indiscriminately reconstruct the estate's interiors through its in-situ capturing and recreation of the residents' material space is curated in such a way to express the connections between the fabric of the building and the lived realities of those on the estate. It illustrates how Suh's attempts to recreate RHG and the lives of its residents through photogrammetric techniques embodies a Brutalist sensibility that carves out space for a critical dialogue around its demolition and wider representation that seek to challenge the more destructive narratives that uncritically promote the estate's regeneration.

As a form of counter narrative, Suh's installation, is also important in its ability to capture or represent the role of displacement. Typically capturing displacement in academic research has proven to be problematic, particularly in terms of data. Many authors (Lees, 2012; Wylie et al., 2010; Atkinson, 2000) acknowledge the difficulty in measuring displacement, however, Suh as an artist is able to capture aspects of this process where perhaps physical data struggles. For instance, his film reflects on the ideas of dislocation and the invisibility of its victims, as it presents them slowly standing up and walking off only to fade away (**Figure 88**). It provides a visual manifestation of how the residents will be displaced and become invisible within both the landscape and to those who are desperately trying to document their movement. It provides a commentary on both the voiceless residents and the difficulty in capturing and representing the 'invisible' victims of displacement. Their slow disappearance from the material fabric of the surroundings is a metaphor for gradual loss and their invisibility as people in the entire process. It again rehumanises the estate and the discussions that have focused on its removal, Suh reminding the viewer that buildings are the sites of everyday life for the people who occupy them and that the shelter they offer is precarious. It contrasts the specific and personal realities of the site with the dehumanising forces of its destruction. In the face of a neoliberal hegemony that is reliant on a series of rhetorical, including visual, devices and public images that signal the normal and desirable, then Suh's video offers a critical challenge to that narrative (Giroux, 2016). It therefore creates a space to 'forge new democratic visions' (Giroux, 2016) and produces alternative readings of urban space that counter those that uncritically promote the redevelopment of the estate.



Figure 86. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. The film pans across the west block whilst it is slowly taken apart. In the background you can see the concrete frame of part of the Blackwall Reach development also being constructed. Image taken by author (2018).



Figure 87. Still image from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. An interior window is used to frame a time-lapse of the demolition taking place. The video shows the gradual taking apart of the block as if from the perspective of the residents. Image taken by author (2018).



Figure 88. Still images taken from Do Ho Suh's video Installation at the 2018 Venice Biennale. The images show how he presents the residents gradually fading away, representing their loss as the destruction of RHG continues. Image taken by author (2018)

Whilst these represent some of the ways in which Suh's installation attempts to reassert the materiality of RHG and the ephemeral traces of its residents, the film is not without issue. Perhaps first and foremost is the controversial nature of the film's commission. As explored in Chapter VI the film was linked to the wider acquisition of part of the estate by the V&A and was therefore tied up in the accusations of art washing and the appropriation of working-class architecture (Thoburn, 2018). In this regard his film is problematic, especially considering the networks of power through which it was commissioned and the site in which it was installed. Problems also arise in that the film only depicts a limited number of residents, all male. While I imagine this is unintentional, as from my own research experience many of the residents were unwilling to participate in academic projects. However, the end result is a more constrained portrayal of the estate, as we are given a very limited narrative of who is living in the building and who will be affected by the regeneration, especially given that from the census data over half of the residents are women. It also provokes a lot of wider issues around violence and the visibility of women in the home. As the film is quite explicit in its depiction of the demolition of regeneration and the violence that is involved and therefore to exclude women from those depictions perpetuates the widely documented experiences of women as invisible victims of violence within the home (Femi-Ajao et al, 2018; Kwan, 2009; Sims, 2008; Meth, 2003). This is particularly poignant when we consider how such violence is continued at the level of state and within regeneration policy, in that not only are women more likely to be the victim of violence within the home (Meth, 2003) they are also subject to the violence of state led practices of unhoming and demolition (Nowicki, 2014; Harris et al, 2019). Thus, the result of Suh's omission is troubling in that as his video presents a narrative that depicts violence done to and within the home, there is a worrying absence of those that it disproportionately affects. Whilst these readings may not be explicit and certainly not the intended narrative of Suh it certainly highlights the gender inequality built into the fabric of the home and issues in relying on a single interpretation to provide a clear voice of resistance to acts of regeneration.

Further issues also arise in how the residents remain mute throughout the film. While this gives the film a certain degree of intensity, it presents them as silent victims, when many of the residents did speak out and challenge the redevelopment. In this sense aspects of the film's production could be seen to reduce the agency of those living there and instead present them as passive bystanders caught in the way of the corporate housing machine. Instead, the film focuses a lot more on the materiality of home and the physical destruction of communities through demolition, especially when we consider how emphasis is placed on many of the objects and 'artefacts' of each flat. Therefore, it gives an impression of speaking on behalf of the residents and the building rather than

allowing them to actively speak out about their own estate. There is also a danger here that residents are instead presented as objects of aesthetic value to be fetishized by the Biennale's audience – rather than as active residents whose lives have and will be fundamentally impacted by the destruction of their home. In this respect elements of the film could be seen to embody notions of urban pastoralism as explored by Harris (2011), whereby the presentation of urban life and its precarity takes on an aesthetic form to be consumed by a viewing elite. Whilst, notions of the pastoral have traditionally been rooted in poetic depictions and artistic representations of idealised rural settings and characters (Alpers, 1996), these representations of rural life were frequently created for a more socially and economically advantaged audience, often those that employed or extracted rent from these 'low' subjects (Williams, 1973). However, as Harris (2011) argues that the pastoral is not necessarily simply a question of rural subject matter but is an attitude and a perspective on social relations. Instead, he draws on Stallabrass (1999) and the North American art historian Thomas Crow (1996), to suggest that the outlook and attitude embodied in the pastoral is now most prevalent within urban settings, that pastoral fantasies and portrayals are no longer to be found in simple yet virtuous representations of rural life, but in the everyday artefacts and abjection of working-class life now almost exclusively located in cities.

Suh's film is a kind of urban pastoral in its aestheticization of working-class plight and poverty. Particularly when we consider the attention it pays to the 'artefacts' of each resident's flat and the voyeuristic pleasure it derives from reconstructing the estate in digital 3D. This is then combined with the presentation of the film at the prestigious Venice Biennale to an audience far removed from the site of the estate, which again serves to remove power and agency away from the subjects that the film depicts. Thus, the film is another example of how a problematic set of social relations is structured through the many representations of the estate and the continued need for viewers to unpick, examine and critique the images and representation they are confronted with.

Whilst the installation is problematic (at times deeply so) and couched within a great degree of state and corporate power, I am reluctant to dismiss its message entirely. This is in large part because its central argument is directed at those that are perhaps most in need of hearing it – specifically the architects, artists, planners and organisations present at the Biennale who are powerful enough to change the violent and destructive practices of the discipline (whether they choose to reflect on it or not is a different matter). Like Brennan's work its aim is to make visible the destructive acts of regeneration and illustrate the lives of those that are actually affected by it. I am hesitant to say it offers any agency to the residents, as it mainly focuses on the material registers of regeneration but in critiquing the system from within it is able to contribute to the body of representations that

continue to make acts of domicide visible. Although Suh's film does not offer any solutions or more sustainable pathways, it is at least a first step in challenging a process that is deeply dehumanising. This is particularly valuable when placed alongside the representations presented by Blackwall Reach as they provide a much-needed counter narrative to the perceived benefits of the regeneration and its wholesale erasure of the estate's previous community.

Place listening

Alongside the artistic work that attends to the material and lived realities of the estate as a space of home, there is a body of practice that attempts to engage with the site in ways that move away from purely visual representations. In particular I wish to present how through the curation of an auditory archive one of the RHG artists is actively involved in what Speight (2013) refers to as 'place listening'. In this context place listening is defined as involving the construction of various social and relational spaces, within which individual and collective experiences of a place can be expressed, re-enacted, and discussed (Speight, 2013). These diverse narratives present a challenge to the essentialist readings of place that inform the model of place-making (Speight, 2013). As such, place listening could be said to possess what Papastergiadis describes as an 'aesthetics of resistance' (Papastergiadis, 2012: 97), in that it attempts to 'produce' new forms of knowledge rather than simply reflecting it back upon the viewer/participant (ibid: 101). With this in mind I consider the audio recordings of RHG by A.J Holmes which form part of his larger sound archive, which attempt to capture the sonic experience of housing estates in the UK. In choosing to focus on the audible relationships of RHG, Holmes is able to adopt a more relational framework, engaging with different aspects of the estate's communities both in person and online. In this way his efforts to understand place through conversation or auditory recordings try to capture aspects of the estate's more intangible, embodied, and durational features.

These approaches also present an opportunity to re-engage with expanded notions of the aesthetic which return to the original Greek notion of aesthesis which relates to 'perception by the senses' (Rose, 2015). It therefore complicates and builds upon the purely visual accounts of the 'image' that a large part of the Ugly/Beauty debate has focused on, moving past occularcentric and purely visual perspectives in order to consider some of the multi-sensory positions that capture alternative aspects of the estate. As with the representations of RHG as a home, I wish to suggest that Holmes's aural perspectives add further depth and nuance to the public aesthetic discussion and incorporate a

perspective which has been overlooked by the more vocal and high-profile contributors to the debate.

A.J Holmes

A.J Holmes is a musician and sound artist who uses his expertise in audio recording to produce 'soundscapes' of numerous London housing estates. Many of these recordings have been added to an online independent archive which is also curated by Holmes and available for the public to access entitled the 'Social Housing Sound Archive' (SHSA <https://www.socialhousingsoundarchive.com/>).

On top of Holmes's soundscape work he has also produced an EP of his own music which he states was recorded in the various architectural spaces of RHG, this is also available to listen to and purchase online:

<https://ajholmes.bandcamp.com/album/robin-hood-gardens>.

Holmes's oeuvre seeks to capture and record the many different sonic experiences of London's social housing, using different recording styles, practices, and techniques. The result is at times an eclectic mix of different aural experiences which each try to preserve the sonic qualities of the estates in which they were recorded. These are then made (in the most part) freely available online. For instance, the SHSA website can be regarded as Holmes's attempt at an 'independent' archive, in the sense that it has been created by him rather than an institutional body and has been broken down into the various London housing estates he has visited and chosen to record. Many of the sites he has chosen are so selected as they are already undergoing their own regeneration/demolition or actively involved in resisting proposals to be regenerated including sites such as; Cressingham Gardens, the Excalibur Estate, Alton Estate, Woodbury Down, Chrisp Street Market and RHG.

The archive platform is relatively basic, and has been created using WIX, a commercial website builder that allows users to create free (or relatively cheap) websites through signing up to the service and choosing a template that fits your intended purpose. The recordings are then embedded into the website using a SoundCloud widget, with very little supporting text or other supporting documents or media. It is clear that whilst the website presents itself as an archive it is also very much a showcase for Holmes, a place where he can store and share his hobby and passion with a wider community in a relatively low cost and low-tech format. Additionally, Holmes is quick to emphasise his own political agenda, which he discusses in the 'about' section of his website. In it he stresses that he is concerned about the number of estates targeted for regeneration in London, and

that his aim for his archive is to 'document these environments and most importantly the communities that live there and their campaigns to save their homes'. Thus, in a similar way to Brennan and Suh (whose work attempts to capture the more physical and visual aspects of the estate in the face of its imminent demolition), his work attempts to preserve the sonic memories of estates like RHG that he feels will be lost when they are demolished.

His online recordings generally take one of three different forms; the first being the 'soundscape style', which Gallagher (2015) identifies as a more typical ethnographic style of field recording, in that it attempts to capture the ambient experiences of place that largely omit the presence of the person recording, instead focusing on the space itself at a given moment in time. The second takes on the role of an 'oral history/interview style' of recording (Gallagher, 2015) in which Holmes records dialogue with passers-by and residents, typically asking them about their relationship to the space he is attempting to explore; whilst the third represents a 'sound art style of recording' (Gallagher, 2015), where Holmes actively records songs and performances inside RHG, and uses the acoustic characteristics of the estate's architecture to influence the sonic qualities of his work. Therefore, using Holmes's various different sound recordings I wish to argue that his work presents an example of place listening, in that they create opportunities to actively listen to both the residents of social housing estates as well as the ambient acoustic qualities of their architecture (Speight, 2013). As freely accessible resources they also help document the consequences of unhoming/demolition and provide additional detail around the victims and 'collateral damage' of the estate's regeneration (Giroux, 2016). At the same time, I contend that the wider project of the SHSA represents a form of 'independent archival activism' (Carter, 2017), which whilst limited in scope and tied to his personal political agenda does present another opportunity for residents and communities to engage with different sensual experiences of the estate. This also positions his work as a means to attend to some of the more affective registers of the estate's built environment and forces listeners to confront the sonic characteristics of the site (children playing, birds singing, cars moving) which are often neglected from mainstream perspectives. His album of RHG original music also extends these ideas to illustrate the performative aspects of RHG's architecture and addresses how the acoustic aspects of the building can be explored through art, politics, sound, and music.

However before going further, I would also like to acknowledge that there are some obvious difficulties in investigating Holmes's sonic and auditory experiences, especially as such experiences can be ephemeral and difficult to translate into text, which does mean that some of the affective elements of Holmes's recordings are likely to be partially lost in translation (Duffy, 2005).

Unfortunately, the format of this document restricts my ability to play the recordings in question,

however I will provide links to the recordings I refer to alongside my own attempts at description. Additionally, it is also important to acknowledge that recording and capturing sounds is like any other form of representation and can therefore only be partial in its attempts to document the lived realities of RHG, presenting only a snapshot of the estate's myriad vibrations at a particular time and place (Macfarlane, 2020; Gallagher, 2015). Furthermore, we have to consider that audio formats on their own privilege those who are able to hear and experience such sensory registers (Renel, 2019), and therefore the experience of sound must not be taken as given and instead contingent on who is listening, where it is played and what is being recorded. Thus, the intention behind exploring Holmes's work is not to privilege the sonic over other sensory media; as Matless (2005: 746) has concluded that 'to mark out the sonic is not to argue that it can be granted autonomy, or that it provides some privileged arena for social and cultural enquiry'. Rather I wish to explore the ever-increasing arena of practice that expresses an interest in multi-sensory approaches (e.g Gallagher & Prior, 2014; Adams et al., 2007; Mason & Davies, 2009; Pink, 2009) and how audio enthusiasts like Holmes use these approaches to document spaces like RHG. Therefore, I do not wish to represent these audio explorations as more accurate or necessarily more vibrant than other representations of the estate, instead my argument revolves around how they deepen our understanding of RHG and access different affective aspects of its architectural experience that go beyond the images produced by the demolition and regeneration process. In an effort to broaden my analysis I also intend to include parts of an interview that I conducted with Holmes which centred around the reasons behind his wishes to record the estate, hopefully this will also add depth to the discussions of his work as well as provide a greater insight around his relationship with RHG and his audio recordings.

The first of Holmes's 'sonic explorations' I wish to explore falls into the first category of recording as highlighted by Gallagher (2015), notably that of the 'the soundscape'. The track itself is entitled '*Robin Hood Gardens - Summer Solstice Dawn Chorus 2016*' and is available as part of a playlist on both SoundCloud and in an embedded media player on the SHSA website,

(<https://soundcloud.com/robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/summer-solstice-dawn-chorus-2016?in=robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/sets/robin-hood-gardens-field>).

The soundscape was recorded in 2016 prior to any demolition taking place and is around 35 minutes long. It captures many of the ambient noises of the estate as heard from the central mound between the two blocks. In terms of describing what can be heard on the recording; there is the low constant rumble of traffic, occasionally punctuated by what could be the rustling of leaves. These sounds provide the backdrop to the sporadic chirping of numerous birds that make up what Holmes refers to in the tracks title as the 'dawn chorus'. Around 6 minutes into the recording the sound of a gull

can be heard, its shrill cry cutting across the white noise of the surrounding roads and the intermittent 'chirrup' of the other birds. Numerous gulls can then be heard towards the end of the recording which dominate the final moments of the track, their squawking echoing between what I imagine to be the space between the two blocks of the estate, emphasising a ghostly emptiness between.

The presence of a such an array of different bird sounds emphasises the often-overlooked aspects of the estate's relationship to the natural environment. It presents a perspective of the estate that captures many of its non-human connections and highlights the relationship between the built and natural worlds. For many it may be surprising that an inner-city housing estate should sound this way, with such a variety of birdsong alongside the somewhat subdued (although no less present) hum of traffic. By listening to the recording, we are forced to confront the noisy presence of animal life mixed with urban sounds. It also signals an awareness of the future audible loss that will occur when the estate is demolished. It expands notions of unhoming and demolition by building on its potential environmental consequences – notably the loss of biodiversity and disruption of bird habitats (Nowicki, 2014; Cooper et al 2020). The environmental impact of housing demolition is already a rapidly growing point of discussion within academic and popular consciousness, many of these arguments highlight the increasing amounts of energy, waste and short-term loss of land triggered by practices of demolition over refurbishment (Alba-Rodriguez et al 2017; Power, 2008). Thus, the presence of the birds within these recordings potentially adds another dimension to these perspectives as they signal that there is a wider community of wildlife that could be under threat by the ongoing regeneration.

This is something that has not been greatly considered by the current regeneration, as whilst all large-scale building projects are required to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment this only tends to assess whether any protected species are likely to be affected. In the case of Blackwall Reach this assessment was carried out by Capita Symonds (2012) from which their non-technical summary concluded that there are no threatened species at risk. Which whilst reassuring in one sense does not capture the actual losses to habitats in the surrounding area, or which plants or animals will or have been affected by the scheme, and therefore can only be partial in its understanding. The sonic data provided by Holmes would indicate that there are many birds and other wildlife that whilst not vulnerable are likely to be affected by the demolition. It reveals that the existing interconnected relationships between humans and non-humans on the estate along with its unique sound will inevitably be lost in the regeneration. It raises questions around the relationship of housing blocks to the non-human environment and questions the limitations of

impact assessments in truly ascertaining the consequences of demolition led regeneration. In this respect Holmes's recordings provide a different insight and gives presence to the natural communities that reside on the estate. It again provides a different perspective that moves away from the developers' understanding of the estate and instead gives a voice to the non-human within the Ugly/Beauty debate at RHG.

This relationship between the building, its human community and non-human residents is also something that Holmes touched upon when I spoke to him. He remarked on the vibrancy of the estate's wildlife, notably its bird population and that even though the estate was neglected by the council it was still able to prosper adding different aural qualities to the soundscape of the estate;

A. J. Holmes: Certain things really worked on the estate [RHG]... especially the mound and the green. Through neglect it turned into this kind of oasis. It became this overgrown space where birds and animals could live. When I did my recordings, you could hear lots of wildlife – it was basically overrun with seagulls at one point, they were really territorial. One time I managed to get onto the roof, and they were swooping down angrily at me. They weren't very pleased... this was during the summer solstice and I wanted to record the dawn chorus at around 3 or 4 in the morning and there were loads of birds, it was quite amazing...But when they demolished the estate you could tell the seagulls were very distressed... it was more than just a home for people...

Edward Brookes: I agree... its more than just people affected by the demolition. There is a lot of wildlife that people seem to overlook when they think about big concrete estates like RHG...

A. J. Holmes: Plus people used to plant stuff all the time, I met a woman with her niece taking up some of the plants... the niece lived on the estate and they were removing veg and other edibles and transporting them to a new house or wherever they'd been moved too. So, when I saw that I took a geranium from the estate and planted it in my own garden... I remember seeing people using all the available space they could to grow things... (Interview with A.J. Holmes– 20/11/2018)

This account again highlights the loss and distress faced by the birds as well as the flight of the estate's human residents who were also trying to salvage some of the estate's plant population. It signals how the demolition process slowly fractures the connections made between the different living elements of the estate and how each one attempts to deal with the violence of being unhomed. What also emerges from Holmes's account are the numerous practices of everyday life;

the boundary marking of the birds, the cultivation of plants and the sharing of vegetables that extend notions of RHG beyond its physical architecture and emphasises its role as a hub in a network of different human and nonhuman relationships. That whilst it was overgrown and neglected, in its neglect it found new ways of adapting and became a new home for different birds and wildlife. It signals the central role of the mound and the estate's numerous raised beds in facilitating community activities – whether that be planting crops to grow and eat, providing a place for people to walk and gather or as a space to get away from some of the noise of the city. In this instance it also points to the complexity of urban spaces, and that whilst a great deal of attention has been paid to the aesthetics of architecture and its design, less so is afforded to its sonic registers. This is in large part because the 'sonic' reflects an additional 'invisible' consideration, which is not only hard to measure and ascertain but also likely to raise budgets or demand greater imaginative effort in terms of preservation and design – particularly from developers (Dilane et al., 2015; Treasure, 2012).

Holmes's recordings of the estate also allow us to engage with issues of power and who has access to the unique sounds of the estate. This is particularly poignant when we consider that more often than not cheaply constructed, densely populated city centre housing is usually guaranteed to be noisier than spacious green suburbs (Dilane et al 2015). However here Holmes provides an example of where social housing has achieved a degree of calm and sonic tranquillity within the city - albeit that sounds of the surrounding roads can still be heard. Yet the presence of birdsong reflects a more varied urban-aural experience and alongside the green space of the mound is one in which seems to appeal to residents, wildlife, artists, and architects alike. The fact that Blackwall Reach is intending to preserve the central green space also serves to endorse aspects of its popularity and success. However, the demolition of the estate and the wholesale removal of its community arguably represents a denial of access to this particular land/soundscape for those that previously lived there.

The fact that the mound is being preserved whilst the surrounding landscape and its population are removed raises an argument around who are these spaces and more specifically their sounds for? Whilst it is clear that the unique range of sounds attributed to RHG and recorded by Holmes are ultimately going to be lost with its demolition, it certainly presents how access to green space and its accompanying sensory registers is being denied to the previous residents and instead being given to those who can afford the new flats and who will ultimately benefit from the future green space as developed by Blackwall Reach. Thus, Holmes's soundscapes inject a new perspective into the broader symbolic economy (Zukin, 2005), and in our understanding of unhoming in that by including sounds of the estate we are able to negotiate other aspects of the estate's politics including who has access to what kinds of sonic experience and the spaces they are attached too. The impending loss

of this largely public space and its sounds therefore reflect the broader inequalities in access to quality green space across England (Gidlow & Ellis, 2011; CABE, 2010), with those in deprived areas and from ethnic minority backgrounds being disproportionately affected. In this respect the Blackwall Reach development only embeds these inequalities further into the landscape. Whilst the developers would argue that this is not their intention, the fact is that the local Bangladeshi community are not only erased by Blackwall Reach's marketing images but are also deprived of the sounds, vibrations and resonances of the old estate and any future green space. Therefore, by including Holmes's aural perspectives in an examination of RHG we can further understand the degrees of loss and exclusion that current and previous residents face as they are slowly removed.

Whilst Holmes's recording reasserts some of the more natural aspects of RHG and its connection to the many flows, resonances and vibrations that occur within the estate, they also emphasise its acoustic qualities. For instance, the echoing calls of the birds help to give an indication of how sound is trapped by the shape of the buildings, as well as how sheltered the central space is from the noise of the Blackwall Tunnel. Whilst the recording does not create a clear or coherent picture of the estate's structure, the particular resonances we hear create a sense of its shape and form, reducing the solidity of the estate to a tentative and weak architecture that can only be sensed as vibrations as sound bounces off its surfaces. This helps curate a particular perception of RHG's architecture and many of the embodied logics behind the Smithsons' design, in particular that they stressed the importance of wanting to create a 'calm pool in the face of jarring qualities of the surrounding city' (Crimson, 2018). It provides a contrast to the images of urban blight that have been promoted by other media and extends the significance of sound in understanding our relationship to the built environment. This relationship is something that Holmes returns to in his other recordings, each of which try to capture the particular sounds of the estate's architecture. For instance, one track entitled '*Inside Flat*' which is just over two minutes long, sees Holmes move from room to room in one of the estate's flats, recording its ambient sounds:

<https://soundcloud.com/robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/inside-flat?in=robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/sets/robin-hood-gardens-field>

It differs from the dawn chorus recording as Holmes takes more of an active presence in its production, as he narrates his journey through the flat. We hear him walking and opening doors as he moves about the property. Throughout he updates the listener each time he moves location as we hear; 'I'm now in the kitchen', 'I'm now in the bathroom', in a way it is not dissimilar from an audio tour guide except we are unable to see precisely where we are; rather we can only hear the subtle changes as we enter different spaces in the flat. We hear the reverb and echo change as he

moves from the living room to what he describes as the bedroom. This gives presence to the rooms of the flat – although we cannot see them, we can definitely hear them and how they change and affect the voice of Holmes and his movements. In this way we see how that even without the architecture of the room being visible to the listener we get a sense of how it is both shaped and shapes the experience of space in accordance with the movement and sounds of Holmes's body (Revill, 2016; Borden, 2001). It creates a different perspective of the estate that whilst focused on its vibrations and resonances, implies a material reality that we cannot see but are able to perceive. It creates an architecture of sound and one in which we are forced to imagine as we put the various noises and echoes that Holmes captures in their place within an imagined RHG.

Amidst these various soundscapes we also hear the movements of Holmes as he shifts about. Occasionally we also hear the crackle and whine of sonic interference which lasts but a few fleeting seconds. Certainly, in the first recording of the dawn chorus on several occasions you can also hear a slightly haunting whistling and whining, once at around 2 minutes 20 and again around 27 minutes, the latter of which is most likely the noise from a passing aircraft, however the nondiegetic nature of listening to these recordings through Holmes's website means that the original context of the estate is removed, instead presenting the listener with a slightly unnerving experience. Sounds which seem familiar but which we are unable to assign to a particular source become unfamiliar and disconcerting. This leaves the audience guessing as to what the various unidentified noises could be. The lasting effect is that the soundscape creates a sense of the uncanny, as by estranging us from a visual relation to the estate, the soundscape creates an opportunity through which our senses are replaced or subverted by the recorded sounds themselves. However, the results are only partial in that what we are presented with is a localisation (as opposed to a location) which can only be understood as an opening, a 'presentation of sense that refers to nothing but this presentation' (Nancy, 2005: 58). Thus, the result is only a partial reconstruction of the estate, the connection that is created is estranged, dislocated from its visual context, in turn rendering the experience somewhat haunting and melancholy.

This is not limited to his 'Dawn Chorus' soundscape, others by Holmes capture this similar sense of the uncanny, and in some ways the unfamiliarity of the sounds being heard compounds the feelings of loss attached to the demolition of the estate. Take for instance the recording entitled '*Fire Alarm at the Blackwall Tunnel*';

<https://soundcloud.com/robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/fire-alarm-from-near-blackwell-tune?in=robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/sets/robin-hood-gardens-field>

This is a 43 second track in which the majority of the recording is dominated by the sounds of an alarm going off in the distance – presumably at the Blackwall Tunnel. However, being unable to attribute the alarm to a particular source and the distance implied by its slightly muffled tones again creates a sense of the uncanny. There is an expectation that something is about to happen or is happening, but we cannot perceive it, and the recording does not supply us with anything other than the sound of the alarm. Again, it implies a vastness to the space in which the recording was taken, the emptiness facilitating a sense of the melancholy. Whilst the tone and urgency of the alarm signals an invisible danger, we are unable attribute it to anything visible, which seems to reflect upon the perceived dangers faced by RHG and its demolition. An alarm sounds but no one comes – and so RHG is abandoned to its fate.

Thus, rather than a mimetic copy, or framing of reality, Holmes’s soundscape compositions by virtue of the schizophrenic loss that defines audio recording – a splitting between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction in a soundscape (Foreman, 2011; Schafer, 1994) - heightens our exposure to that which is absent from presence, amplifying a sense of loss. In this sense the reproduction of the estate at a specific moment through its various recorded sounds, reminds us of the many other aspects lost in the act of recording. It becomes but a ghostly fragment in the seemingly futile attempts to recreate the estate. This sense of loss is also intensified by the fact that absence is at the heart of Holmes’s aural point of view. The fact that Holmes is documenting the sounds of the estate in order to preserve the memory of social housing creates a deeper ‘structural absence’ that accentuates rather than recovers loss (Foreman, 2011). This contributes to a narrative of the estate that revolves around the loss structured by the upcoming regeneration that perhaps overlooks many of the more vibrant and happier aspects of life inside the blocks. This again gives only a very partial view of the estate, one which focuses on its last moments and curates a sense of absence and melancholy.

Separate to Holmes’s ambient recordings that are available on the SHSA are a series of songs he wrote and recorded at RHG. Available on his Bandcamp website the EP is entitled ‘*Robin Hood Gardens*’ and consists of five tracks. Although the tracks can be freely listened too there are options to buy digital or physical versions of the EP (<https://ajholmes.bandcamp.com/album/robin-hood-gardens>).

This distinguishes his work from his previous recordings and sets out a slightly different agenda, one in which focuses on Holmes as an active musician rather than archivist. His EP therefore represents a form of site-specific sound art/performance that uses the acoustics and space of the estate to actively influence the sound of his work. The focus is therefore much less about preserving the

memory of the estate but instead on its architecture as an instrument which can actively contribute to the production of music. As a result, in each of the songs you can hear the echoes and reverb of the surrounding space influence the sound of the recording. At times it gives it an almost ethereal quality as the echo persists, drawing out the notes and voice of Holmes giving him a warbled and distant sound. The degree of reverb also means that sometimes you hear the notes clash with each other as they persist, newer notes discordant with the echo of older ones.

The lyrics and theme of the album centre around a celebration of utopian ideals as envisaged by the Robin Hood Gardens estate. Many of the songs sing of a utopian future that could have been, attempting to commemorate many of the principles behind social housing and the designs of the Smithsons. For instance, in the track entitled 'A Song for Utopia' many of the lyrics revolve around an ideal future where – 'every hero has a home' and 'no one is enslaved, and no one is repressed'. More explicit mentions of RHG are mentioned as he sings 'enough space for all' and 'see for yourself, stay if you want to'. Other more political statements are prevalent throughout each of the songs, another notable line which can be heard in the same track is 'austerity is manufactured to stop the working class from building their own spaceships'. This again attempts to capture the utopian optimism engendered by Brutalist architecture whilst at the same time providing an outlet for Holmes's politics. This illustrates how the aesthetic (in its original expanded sense) and the political come to coalesce around RHG and inform the many ways it is mediated and represented by different individuals and groups. We see how Holmes is sympathetic to the ideals of the original estate and like Brennan and Suh is keen to preserve that in his work. The representation of RHG created in Holmes's work therefore attempts to celebrate the ideals behind its original design and at the same time mournful of its loss, attempting to preserve what fleeting elements remain.

Holmes's musical performances like his soundscapes also draw our attention to the specific characteristics of sound as mediated by the estate, opening up other ways of thinking about modernist/Brutalist architecture, and how sound can influence our understanding of the built environment. This again was crucial to some of the reasons behind Holmes's interest in the estate:

A. J. Holmes: Once inside I felt it had a very unique and characteristic sound. The high ceilings in the entry ways created a very nice echo and I wondered why this was... In some ways its almost cathedral like reverb as it's such an enormous space, with glass bricks as if it was designed as a reverb chamber. I felt the Smithsons must have designed it on purpose like this, and I remember reading about the Smithsons designing a home for an acoustic engineer, a friend of theirs, so I felt they must have known about these different sound qualities.

(Interview with A.J. Holmes– 20/11/2018)

Hearing this 'cathedral like' reverb in Holmes's music therefore lets us reconceptualize the relationship between the human body and architectural space, whilst also shaping collective musical experience (Revill, 2016). We can hear how Holmes's body and his voice change, with varying degrees of echo and reverb, the body as a material through which sound travels, is given presence by the acoustics of the estate. Thus, sound invokes a relational conception of space in which the human body is at once a listening body and an 'organic' element of an architectural space that gives sound a spatial form (Jasper, 2020). By giving presence to both the body and the architecture of the estate through sound, Holmes disrupts and redraws the various spatial boundaries of the estate. As we go from track to track it is clear that different songs are recorded in different spaces, this presents distinct aural perspectives of the same building, undoing the coherent design of the estate's architecture. Instead, it creates an experience of RHG that separates it from its physical reality and instead contributes to an aural imaginary of the estate which allows us to experience new atmospheres of RHG that are mediated by the shape of the estate and Holmes's music.

By subverting the fixed understandings of RHG as an architectural space as depicted in plans, designs, and other texts we are presented with an experience that is not limited by its physical or visual characteristics. It produces an understanding of the estate that can resist perspectives that only attend to its visible attributes and instead complicates our knowledge of RHG by illustrating how it can become an active part of musical practice. Thus, the compositions made by Holmes appropriate architectural space as a form of musical instrument, as the estate responds (Matthews, 2017). His different compositions exploit acoustical phenomena such as reverberance and sympathetic resonance to articulate and augment his various musical motifs (Matthews, 2017). It presents how music and sound provide an immersive medium through which worlds are experienced and, at the same time, *'a profoundly physical phenomenon which only exists when embodied in other material'* (Chion, 1994 cited in Revill, 2016: 6). This therefore illustrates how music can enliven the material fabric of buildings, positioning the architecture of RHG as something that is not simply a 'failure' but a complex assemblage of different material and sonic registers that contributes to meaningful human encounters with space.

However, not all of Holmes's recordings are carried out in isolation, several of them focus on encounters with individuals, or at the very least record the sounds of 'others' such as people/children playing, talking, or shouting. I therefore return to recordings uploaded to the SHSA, which sit somewhere in-between a form of ethnographic soundscape and an oral history as Holmes documents the sonic presence of people on the estate. One of these recordings stands out in particular as it sees Holmes having a discussion with one of the residents. Entitled *'Meet and Greet'*,

The track starts with Holmes carrying out his usual routine of recording the different acoustic qualities of the estate, however during his journey he encounters a woman who takes Holmes up to her flat to show them what it's like inside:

<https://soundcloud.com/robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/meet-and-greet?in=robinhoodgardensfieldrecording/sets/robin-hood-gardens-field>

From the recording we hear the 'in passing' encounter between Holmes and the other resident, as he starts off the conversation, mentioning that 'It seems we have a similar interest', referring to being interested in the estate and its demolition. From here, there appears to be a reserved conversation between the two about the estate. They briefly discuss the estate's wildlife, and how breath-taking it is, in which the resident stresses how RHG represents a 'natural oasis'. The conversation continues as she asks Holmes whether he has had access to one of the flats, he replies that he has not, so she takes him up to see one. During their walk up to the flat, she mentions that not everyone has left the estate yet despite Holmes's earlier assumptions at the beginning of the recording that they had. Once in the flat they share a moment where they discuss the 'billion-dollar view'. The resident makes an effort to stress how big the flat is and how this is 'only for one person' yet they are bigger than living in a shoebox (in reference to the new build flats). The recording then ends somewhat abruptly where we hear the resident mention that in the flats 'barely a drop of space' is wasted.

Whilst the other recordings on the SHSA focus more on the estate's ambient sounds, this track is centred around a dialogue between Holmes and a resident of the estate. This also reflects aspects of place listening as theorised by Speight (2013) as we see how through a sharing of each of their experiences of RHG, they encounter new perspectives and understandings of the estate. This is particularly evident in how Holmes learns of the dawn chorus and the potential opportunities for future recording – which we can now see has actively shaped his own practice, having included the sounds of the birds in his archive. He also learns that the estate is still lived in, as is also evident by the resident taking him up to the flats. As a result, we get to experience how Holmes's practice of documenting the estate facilitates an encounter with others who also wish to experience its architecture. This in turn creates a space through which various knowledges, ideas and perspectives can be shared (Speight 2013, Price, 2019). There is also an opportunity for some minor acts of collective resistance (Price 2019), as there is a shared frustration with the development and the estate demolition, as the resident distinguishes the process as a 'blatant landgrab'. We see how this reflects Holmes's own politics, as stipulated on his website and how this dialogue has shaped his understanding. Holmes's recording also challenges many of his others which perhaps give a false

impression of the estate as empty, echoey and ethereal; instead as the resident indicates there are many who remain and are resistant to its impending destruction. It again presents a representation of the estate which is geared around drawing attention to that which people are unaware of, creating an opportunity to challenge the assumptions implied by the regeneration project (Price, 2019). This sharing of knowledge and choosing to preserve a particular aspect of the estate's memory and history which was geared around life on the estate was also evident in my own discussions with Holmes:

A.J. Holmes: Its significance to architectural design is enormous, that is abundantly clear...but people forget that people live there. That they are just doing what we all do, and my recordings attempt to capture some of that. I feel it is important that people have access to this information and that people can inform themselves about the things that are going on, especially around housing... I did write to the V&A and told them about my recordings, to see if they were interested and they seemed quite responsive and added them to their archive. In that sense I was glad that at least in some way I could be a part of recording this aspect of the estate's history...' (Interview with A.J. Holmes– 20/11/2018)

Here Holmes makes some of his intentions more explicit in that he is keen to be a part of preserving and recording the memory of the estate, and the aspects which he feels many have forgotten or overlooked. Also evident is his desire to share his work with a wider audience, demonstrated by providing his recordings to the V&A (although they have yet to make his recordings publicly available). This also suggests his desire to preserve the sonic aspects of the estate beyond the longevity of his own archiving practice. However, given that currently Holmes is one of the only individuals publicly sharing this kind of audio data, his work in curating the SHSA arguably represents a form of independent archival activism. Especially when we consider that Holmes has chosen to document, collect and make available information that other institutions have not. It seeks to present a political challenge to the dominant forces of regeneration (Carter, 2017). Holmes's website and practices of recording therefore illustrates how archives are often engaged in the politicized act of recovering hidden stories missing from the formal archive (Craggs 2016); in this context, the ephemeral becomes all the more valuable through its rarity and the act of its recovery (Carter, 2017). The fragments of sound and vibrations that Holmes captures provide rare glimpses into spaces and lives often left undocumented, a response or provocation to the gaps and absences in the formal archive which document only a 'sliver of a sliver' of lived experience (Carter, 2017). However as Cook & Harris (2007) have argued, archives are a construct of societal and political frameworks, and the process of archiving is bound up in the political act of deciding who is

remembered and who forgotten. Therefore, by forming an archive, Holmes is able to take control over the histories of the estates he is interested in to ensure that their memories and perspectives are captured in the historical record.

The act of archiving for Holmes is therefore an individual project that reflects a conscious and political means of keeping the memory of the estate and its community alive. This represents the crux of Holmes's project; it operates as a challenge to the misrepresentation of the estate and the regeneration programme. He seeks to preserve and document the many affective qualities of the site that are not easily or readily documented by other accounts, and that in some ways express the romantic aspects of social housing that he feels will be lost as social housing estates slowly disappear. However, it is possible here to fall into the trap of describing counter-hegemonic independent archiving activities as 'empowering' without taking this consideration further to consider how the archive might offer change (Carter, 2017). The challenge here is trying to understand exactly how and in what ways Holmes's archive is empowering; in practical terms, if the archive offers change, how is this achieved? (Carter, 2017). In this respect we can see that Holmes's artistic and creative interventions at RHG are limited, in that whilst he documents and records that which is being destroyed by those with the power to do so, it does little else to offer or encourage active resistance/change. It also seems to offer limited community engagement. In this sense it could fall into the category of art-washing (Pritchard, 2017b) or heritage washing (Sterling 2020) in that whilst it uses the language of community benefit it may still be exploiting the intangible assets of the estate, facilitating a form of social change that may be antithetical to the principles of social justice. (Pritchard, 2017c), especially around Holmes's use of community memory as a means to tell stories of the estate according to his own political agenda.

Other problematic features also arise in the fact that there are many other estates across London that are facing demolition that have not been documented by Holmes (the Lansbury and Aberfeldy estates to name but a few) which therefore limits the overall project's scope and aims. In this regard, the archive is very much Holmes's project and therefore not always as reflexive as definitions of community archiving or place listening might account for. Therefore, we get a very limited perspective of RHG and one in which Holmes has specifically curated. We only hear the estate as mediated by Holmes and his equipment; and are only able to explore where Holmes wants us to go. As such, it compounds the limitations of attempting to record the estate purely through its sonic qualities. Whilst I think Holmes has tried to be sensitive to these issues there is a sense from his recordings at RHG that the focus is largely on the estate's ambient sounds rather than the more conversational aspects explored in his *'Meet and Greet'* recording. Although his work on other

estates seems to offer more in the way of community dialogues, in the case of RHG what emerges are Holmes's attempts to take on the role of a guide who leads us around the estate, in a seemingly passive manner, exploring the various sounds that emerge. Therefore, as with Suh's film, the power to represent RHG and its many affective qualities still rests with Holmes. In this respect the politically empowering quality of his archive is therefore limited. However, it is worth considering that despite these drawbacks that Holmes is an individual and not affiliated with a major organisation, in this sense his archive is never going to have the scope and resources of a major museum. He is also carrying out this work largely as a hobby and clearly loves working with sound. Therefore, we should not deny the important work that his recordings play in narrating the 'image' of Robin Hood Gardens and in preserving the 'more than representational' aspects of its environment that go beyond the purely visual and textual accounts of the estate. His work is therefore a crucial counter narrative to many of the more reductive perspectives of the estate, as they draw out a more nuanced encounter between the various living entities of RHG and how they interact and experience its architecture.

Summary

What this chapter achieves through its discussion of different artistic practice, is to problematise the prevailing aesthetic debates that surround RHG by incorporating additional perspectives that offer alternative representations of the site. In doing so it has added nuance to a discussion which has largely centred around the binary of Ugly/Beauty and instead consider many of the more embodied, affective, and intimate aspects of the estate's residents, architecture, non-human entanglements, and material fabric. In centring the discussion around the key themes of 'rebuilding notions of home' and 'place listening' what emerges is how the artists' representations of the estate attempt to resist accounts promoted by the current developers and also complicate the position of the preservationists. In particular, each artist is able to go into greater detail around the characteristics of the estate, often choosing to look past the stylistic and aesthetic positions taken up by the other accounts in order to capture many of the estate's complicated social and material assemblages. For instance, we can see how through Brennan's archival and artistic work the material fabric and vulnerability of the estate emerges. Through her sketches in the *'Fall of Ordinarity and Light'* and the rubbings she makes in *'Conversation Pieces'* we are confronted with the human and material casualties of those soon to be made homeless. She forces us to face the prospect of the estate's demolition, as her archival photographs challenge the misleading marketing material of Blackwall Reach, presenting the viewer with images that both reflect and contrast the sleek images of the

future regeneration. Whereas Suh through his video work on behalf of the V&A reconstructs the site as a space of home. Through his use of photogrammetric imaging, we are able to gain an insight into the intimate lives of residents on the estate. It again affirms and makes present the material and social casualties that will occur when the estate is finally demolished and again confronts us with the seemingly slow but inevitable loss of home. A. J. Holmes through his practices of recording, listening, composing, and archiving is able to expand definitions of the aesthetic to consider more than just the visual and stylistic accounts of RHG. His work as a form of place listening connects the various networks of humans, non-humans, and architectural space, making visible the various aspects of life that will be lost by the impending demolition. The use of sound enlivens the building as a performative space, his compositions actively subverting its role as a purely architectural space by using its form and structure to produce music.

It is therefore clear that each of these artist's work broadens the current aesthetic discussion that surrounds the estate, however it does not deny that the representations produced by each artist are problematic. As this chapter has sought to discuss, issues emerge around the notion of art washing or the involvement of the artist with more powerful groups. Many would critique the complicity of each of the artists within the processes of regeneration (Pritchard, 2017b), or their capacity to actively critique the new development (Pritchard, 2017b; O'Sullivan 2014; Jones 2016; Francis 2017; Minton 2017b; Mould 2017). Whilst I am aware that these are valid and concerning critiques of the RHG artists and their practices, I also do not believe that it is as clear-cut as art washing would sometimes suggest. Certainly, there are many obvious examples of this in practice, and Suh's video in particular is evidence of that, but I am hesitant to suggest that in their attempts to offer more complex and sensitive representations of the estate that they are as complicit as Blackwall Reach and Tower Hamlets Council in the processes of regeneration. I would also argue that art washing implies a certain level of uncritical acceptance by readers of these images and representations and does not account for the dialogue that often follows their production (however problematic they may be). As Rancière (2009c) would argue, spectators are active readers of images, not passive, unthinking consumers of them. Photographs, artworks, images, and other media are fundamentally communicative, inviting us to engage with them in dialogue, to project ourselves into their world. Sound and images therefore act as a way of creating a space of exchange and reciprocity that can complicate and enliven space beyond the narratives imposed by the powerful. Therefore, in exploring these artworks within their context and how they represent RHG we are better able to diversify the architectural discussion which surrounds its redevelopment, facilitating a more informed and more complex dialogue that challenges the binary focus of Ugly/Beauty.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

The Aesthetic Politics of Robin Hood Gardens

'The rich and powerful not only own more real estate than the less privileged, but they also command more visual space. Their status is made evident to outsiders by the superior location of their residence; and from their residence the rich are reassured of their position in life each time they look out the window and see the world at their feet.' (Tuan, 1977: 38)

The central objective of this research has been to explore the contested aesthetic politics of RHG as it undergoes demolition and redevelopment. It has done so using a blend of archaeological and geographical approaches, which have connected the material traces of the estate with how it has been 'imaged' and symbolically appropriated by various actors. Much of this discussion has focused on what I have referred to as the 'Ugly/Beauty' debate, a series of representations that have dramatized and reduced the events surrounding the regeneration of RHG to a series of visual aesthetic considerations that concern only the visual quality of its architecture. I have challenged these one-dimensional readings of the site, instead unravelling a multitude of different representational 'layers', each of which constructs a different narrative of the estate. The tensions between these different representations contribute to a wider aesthetic politics which concerns how the 'look' of urban space is dictated by the politically powerful. It reflects Rancière's (2009a) 'distribution of the sensible' as the Ugly/Beauty debate informs who has a place and a voice in the future of RHG and who doesn't. My analysis has captured how this politics is (re)produced, alongside the variety of representational strategies that contribute to socially constructed notions of beauty and ugliness. The redevelopment of the estate represents how the landscape is visually and aesthetically restructured according to the interests of a financialised neoliberal elite, as the plans for the new development are dominated by seductive images of consumption which systematically exclude RHG's remaining residents. By unravelling how the aesthetic political debate at RHG has been mobilised, I wish to conclude by articulating how socially constructed notions of 'beauty' have helped to perpetuate exploitative forms of dispossession which disproportionately target lower income and often ethnically diverse communities which do not meet the financialised image of capital.

However, before going further I wish to illustrate how I have attended to the central aims of this thesis and the research questions it has explored. This discussion will be split into three: First, I will summarise the points of analysis explored by each chapter and its line of argument; secondly, I breakdown the four research questions identified in the introduction and discuss how they have

been addressed by my analysis; while the third section highlights the wider political implications of my research and how it relates to the increasing use of 'beauty' to justify neoliberal urban policy. I conclude by asserting the value of 'ugliness', and the need to avoid stigmatising discourses of beauty. It suggests possible directions for further study and the opportunities for embracing 'ugly' architecture as a radical form of resistance against capitalism.

Research Summary

Throughout this thesis I have identified and attended to the 'layers' of representation that have surrounded RHG throughout its recent past. Each 'layer' has been crucial in curating a particular narrative of the estate, especially in relation to its aesthetic appearance. The chapters within this document therefore represent an engagement with these layers, critically analysing the processes which produce 'images' of the RHG estate. While these 'layers' provided starting points for my enquiry, my analysis has shown that these were not discrete entities but often connected and interwoven.

For instance, Chapter IV has considered the ways in which the 'Image' as a concept has been integral to Brutalist forms of architecture. It addresses how the photographic image continues to shape RHG in the present, as similarities emerge between the visual strategies used by the Smithsons, and the Brutalist photography uploaded to social media. It concludes by highlighting how 'New Brutalism' began as the aestheticization of an ethic, but since its recent revival it no longer embodies the same ethical considerations. Instead, 'modern' Brutalist images are presented as reflecting a counter cultural chic and retro revisionism which flirts dangerously with the constructed 'beauty' inherent within practices of consumption and gentrification.

Similarly, Chapter V, has explored how a range of marketing images and derogatory language contribute to the social construction of ugliness which has underpinned one half of the 'Ugly/Beauty' debate. It addresses the overwhelming co-option of RHG's aesthetic by the politically powerful to further its ambitions towards the greater beautification of housing. The use of homogenised digital images of chrome filled and 'luxury' interiors combined with a rhetoric which stigmatises the remaining residents continue to feed the notion that Blackwall Reach is looking to target forms of personal success that are divorced from the social life of the surrounding area. The arguments that present the estate as ugly therefore rest upon an elitist dogma that wishes to expunge racialised urban poverty in the name of capital accumulation.

Following this analysis, Chapter VI has documented those on the other side of the Ugly/Beauty debate, who attend to the estate from a point of heritage and beauty in order to justify decisions

around listing/not listing. It examines the inherent contradictions within purely historical interpretations of the site, as they have failed to consider the social and political complexity of the estate in the present day. This chapter also discusses the opportunities for bias and political influence in how the listing process is managed, and the role that Historic England plays as a mediator between the built landscape and the government. Different heritage organisations are therefore positioned as complicit in the regeneration process, as they unconsciously provide justification for RHG's demolition. This is embodied by the V&A's decision to preserve aspects of the estate for the purposes of exhibition, a decision which has failed to acknowledge the complexity attached to the site as an important emblem of 'working class architecture' (Thoburn, 2018).

By understanding the two dominant positions within the Ugly/Beauty debate (Chapters V & VI) what becomes apparent is how the discussion has been able to insulate those looking to buy or develop the estate from any form of social connection with the surrounding community. Instead, the debate perpetuates myths attached to architectural success/failure without any meaningful acknowledgement of the social and political issues facing the community. This constructed ignorance is best reflected in the above quote by Tuan (1977) and how the rich and powerful continue to dominate visual and representational spaces within the city, which reaffirms their position in wider society, enabling them to shape urban space seemingly at will.

These perspectives are juxtaposed by Chapter VII, which explores a range of artworks by a number of RHG artists as they reconnect the materiality of the estate to notions of home. The chapter discusses how art is able to add nuance and complexity to representations of the estate, going beyond the dominant narratives associated with ugliness and beauty. These artistic perspectives humanise the estate, putting the experience of loss at the forefront of discussion. These ideas have been developed further by incorporating different sensual experiences which broaden the purely visual dimensions of the estate to consider many of its embodied and experiential registers. For instance, artists Do Ho Suh and Jessie Brennan invite audiences to visualise the material destruction of the estate as a space of home, while A.J. Holmes encourages people to listen to the more-than-human sounds of the site in order to reconnect with socialist forms of housing. Each artist articulates an aesthetic experience that challenges the constructed notions of beauty put forward by the developers and instead champions the social complexity of the estate. The practices of the RHG artists therefore present a political critique to those who continue to separate the lived realities of the estate from its perceived financial and material worth (Ranci re, 2009a).

Together, each of these chapters of analysis constructs a dialogue around how images and representations have been used to produce specific narratives and knowledge of the RHG estate. My

argument is critical of how this knowledge has been used to reinforce inequality and dispossession in the name of financial and political gain.

Research Questions

In building on this summary of my findings, I now turn to the four research questions I introduced at the beginning of the thesis. By addressing them directly I hope to provide further insight into how my research adds to Archaeology and Geography scholarship, as well as the broader discussion of aesthetic politics as it concerns RHG.

In answering **RQ 1** and how **RHG as a particular image can be deconstructed**, I have illustrated in a variety of contexts how the 'image' of RHG can be analysed. This has been achieved using a combination of geographical and archaeological methods, which have principally centred on unravelling layers of discourse as they manifest within different representations of the estate. It is clear that this approach has provided a great deal of versatility in its ability to apprehend a wide variety of representational data as it appears across a range of physical and digital contexts. I would also argue that by remaining sensitive to the more-than-representational aspects of the estate, my analysis has been able to connect the 'image' of RHG with different kinds of architectural experience and encounter. Similarly, my attention to the 'digital image' has also provided an understanding of how images of the estate continue to be circulated and are often mediated by different digital platforms including social media. Consequently, this broad array of deconstructive considerations has allowed greater insight into how RHG as an image is both produced and reproduced for different audiences. This is most evident in Chapters IV, V and VII where specific representational strategies are examined more closely in order to tease out how various forms of art, social media and marketing material are interwoven with social and material politics. As a result, we can see how images of the estate as 'sink estate' or as an 'art object' carry specific meaning which structures distinct divisions within society.

Secondly **RQ 2** reflects upon **how we might problematise the existing debates that surround Brutalism, art, and gentrification**. In this regard, my argument has sought to broaden the discussions that surround the estate and its connection to various artistic and political forms. Each part of the analysis relates to how we can engage with the politics of the estate and how it is presented through art, architecture, or forms of dispossession. This has been primarily achieved through interrogating the power dynamics imbedded within various layers of representational discourse. What emerges is an acknowledgement of the ways in which Brutalism, art and gentrification can be linked to serve competing agendas. This can be seen in the way that capitalistic

forces present Brutalism as a blight to be eradicated, positioning heritage and artistic practice as a mechanism to smooth the way for forms of gentrification. This process reflects a broader 'aesthetics of gentrification' (Lindner & Sandoval, 2021) which is actively involved in producing spaces of desire and seduction that look and feel constructed, while exploiting the displacement of lower income populations (evident in the erasure of the Bangladeshi community from the marketing of the Blackwall Reach Development). However, this can be contrasted with accounts that position Brutalism as an emancipatory form of radical architecture that can be enlivened through various forms of relational artwork and place listening to resist harmful forms of gentrification. Brutalism becomes synonymous with working class resistance, as it is co-opted by communities, artists, and heritage groups as a social architecture which poses a challenge to the homogenised images of gentrified space. In this respect the politics of the debates that surround the estate are particularly complex and represent the struggle over both the rights of different groups to urban space but also the social construction of ugliness and beauty. The current system is therefore built upon naturalising its own constructions of beauty, while simultaneously denigrating others. 'Beauty' in this case becomes synonymous with capitalism, while ugliness becomes a subversive act that simultaneously threatens the sleek image of capital.

RQ 3, relates to how the **heritage and listing process have contributed to specific narratives and 'images' of RHG and how these affect its future preservation**. This is a question that was primarily addressed by Chapter VI, which explored the listing and exhibition of the estate by Historic England and the V&A museum. It presented how the refusal to list and the removal of the estate from its original location only acted to erase its connection to the social and human realities of its community. This is particularly problematic when we consider that (intentionally or not) it served the agenda of the developers and the council who sought to capitalise on the regeneration at the expense of the local community. Likewise, the future exhibition of the estate may contribute to similar issues, where 'working class architecture' becomes a point of financial and voyeuristic gain for the museum. However, it should be noted that the estate's preservation in any form will nonetheless keep some aspect of RHG's history alive, which may hopefully encourage further dialogue for future generations. As a result, I question the validity and usefulness of preservation and listing in this context, in which it is unable to adequately respond to the complexity of socially and politically charged sites of urban development. Instead, I argue that heritage institutions need to be more aware and more willing to incorporate the lived realities of places in their assessment of sites they feel that are worth preserving/or not, so as to avoid a position that treats all heritage as a material artefact – devoid of social complexity.

Finally, **RQ 4** asks **How can we utilise cultural geographic and contemporary archaeological disciplines to draw out new knowledge of urban space?** This is addressed throughout each chapter of my thesis, with specific regard to Chapter III which sets out much of the framework for considering how each discipline can be woven together in order to interrogate RHG and sites undergoing regeneration. Hopefully, what becomes apparent are the ways in which such an approach has enabled a more nuanced and multi-sensuous apprehension of urban and architectural space. It extends cultural geographic thought and critique into archaeological realms, adding to the growing body of geographic literature that erodes boundaries between disciplines (Hill, 2015; Dixon, 2010), as contemporary archaeology becomes a lens through which geography and architecture can be united in their examination of regeneration.

My use of the (anti)metaphors of 'layer' 'fragment' and 'sediment' have helped to visualise the various strands of political discussion and how they are situated amongst other complex representational strategies. They have provided identifiable and familiar imaginaries through which to approach the socio-material politics of the estate, but also emphasise its intricacy. Through analysis the terms no longer end up referring to discrete entities but rather a range of interconnected phenomena that construct different understandings of the estate. Their usefulness thus shifts from being simplistic descriptors of the material world to reinforcing the nuance and complexity inherent within the landscape. Thus, attending to the 'layers' 'fragments' and 'sediments' of RHG represents a sustained consideration of the social, material and political forces that have surrounded the estate and how they continue to be (re)produced within the built environment.

Furthermore, from a practical and methodological point of view, the similarities between geography and contemporary archeology are abundant, and at times the distinction between the two is non-existent. In this regard, my research does more to suggest that geography and archaeology are one and the same, each concerned with a material sensibility and 'way of seeing', rather than a specific form of practice or engagement. That is not to reduce the value of each discipline's enquiry, whilst my work is imbedded within both traditions, being open to the advantages of each has broadened the conclusions of this thesis, and the various material and social connections woven into the estate.

Resisting a Politics of Beauty

By engaging with the aesthetic politics of RHG this thesis has highlighted how different sensible 'regimes' are reinforced by the politically powerful through different representational strategies. Inherent within this discussion is an understanding of how ugliness and beauty have been socially

constructed around the RHG estate and how this has been politically mobilised to serve different political agendas. Indeed, some of the representations of the estate which I document continue to perpetuate a form of symbolic violence which disproportionately targets the poorer elements of RHG's community, presenting them as a by-product of the estate's failed architecture. The framing of the estate as 'ugly' therefore becomes synonymous with urban poverty and racial otherness, while violent acts of demolition are presented as the only solution. This is compounded by a heritage sector which is complicit in justifying the decisions of the developers/council, whether through sanitising processes of exhibition, or through narrowly focused listing criteria which are fraught with dogmatic legalese. The resultant effect is a system of power that resists any kind of nuance or productive political discussion. Any issues associated with the estate are then reduced to the Ugly/Beauty binary – it is bad because it ugly, it is good because it is beautiful etc. While Rancière (2009a) would suggest that this kind of aesthetic dissensus is intrinsic to any political discussion, I contend that the particular articulation and construction of 'ugliness' at RHG represent more recent authoritarian political shifts which chime with Benjamin's ([1935] 1968) critique of fascism. In this regard, those that uncritically blame Brutalism (and other architectural styles) for social and political failings without reflecting upon the context in which they are embedded seem hellbent on excluding entire communities and their experiences from society. In the present moment this seems to be couched within an ideological culture war that is won and lost through reductive and simplistic slogans, which cries out for mindless 'beauty' while simultaneously eradicating any trace of 'otherness'. This is reinforced by modern Brutalist photography which seems to erode its historical and ethical legacy in favour of a voyeuristic aesthetic. In reality, the beauty it champions is nothing more than the continued rollback of the welfare state, and a political arrogance that will stop at nothing to blame others for its own inability to address issues of urban poverty. The beauty the new development espouses is couched within the rhetoric of gentrification and its seductive images of mobility and capital (Linder & Sandoval, 2021). RHG's failed listing campaigns provide evidence for this, as while they sought to save the estate, and in part its community, the fight could not be won when the terms of engagement were entirely predicated on its architectural and aesthetic quality – rather than its community value.

Our concern should therefore be focused on how we can bring *the people* back in, how do we make these forms of aesthetic politics less about 'image' and more about the connections between them and the wider world. I have highlighted some of these opportunities in this text, as community forms of participation and practice are able to rehumanise estates tarnished by reductive political rhetoric. Artwork that repositions the boundaries between ugliness and beauty in favour of individual

experience and encounter therefore subverts reductive assumptions imposed upon 'undesirable' spaces. Likewise, the Smithsons use of the 'as found' captures this ethic, as it appreciates the connections between the objects and representations of everyday life in all their complexity, in ways that do not detract from the wider whole. We must therefore continue to make these processes and symbolic forms of violence more visible, complicate them, unpick the reductive binary of success/failure. Furthermore, we should enable communities to take back how they are represented and take charge of their own aesthetic politics so that they can begin to challenge a system united against them. I concur with Mould (2016) that Brutalism and RHG can be part of the solution, as it embodies an 'anti-beauty' ethic which can, on the face of it, stand up to the jingoistic rhetoric of the governments 'Living with Beauty Report' (2020). 'Ugliness' can therefore become a subversive act of resistance; its constant provocation of expectation forces us to consider different experiences of reality. Embracing and promoting ugliness or 'anti beauty' can therefore be a motor for change. Understanding it not as a condition that is opposed to beauty but rather a condition itself, ugliness can become a valid architectural aspiration (O'ddonnell, 2011). In this respect the ugly embodies diversity, making our experience of the world more conscious by manipulating our expectations. Ugliness can arguably resist the homogenising forces of capital which seek to eradicate or co-opt that which is different.

I therefore wish to conclude by suggesting that 'ugliness' represents a radical form of anticapitalism. Consequently, identifying how ugliness is produced in other areas of art and design, and what politics this creates would generate an interesting dialogue around how dominant capitalist discourses of 'beauty' can be resisted. While my research has sought to document the Ugly/Beauty representations that have surrounded RHG, it has been less effective at examining how residents are affected by the narratives they structure (in part due to circumstances beyond my control). In this regard, additional research should consider how the impacts associated with 'ugly' or 'beautiful' architecture are internalised by different communities. This could involve studies which focus on residents' experience more directly, and how they engage with the positive or negative images of the places they live as they undergo redevelopment. This could be used to address questions that I raise in relation to how marketing materials created by housing developers affect residents' daily lives, or whether living in 'ugly/beautiful' places is associated with intrinsically positive or negative effects. This would also build upon calls by other academics for a greater understanding around the individual nuances and impacts inherent within gentrification and stigma discourses (Watt 2020; Lindner & Sandoval, 2021).

This form of enquiry could also utilise archaeo-geographical methods to reconnect communities with the power to produce and situate their own forms of representation within the landscape. Future researchers could work collaboratively with local populations to create new narratives and images about the places they live, in an effort to promote greater awareness around the production of stigmatising labels (such as Ugly/Beauty). This would grant residents the agency to challenge negative descriptors and foreground the stories they wish to present about their own neighbourhoods. This could offer some resistance against forms of dispossession which are centred around eradicating the 'ugly', humanising sites that are often ignored by developers. Likewise, examining these different avenues of resistance would help to grow the co-operative network between archaeology and geography, and develop a range of community focused studies that could attend to the aesthetic, representational and material politics of society which would be better able to resist the destructive forces of capitalism. It is therefore imperative that we reject that which mindlessly seeks the beautiful and embrace a multiplicity of forms and experiences which are sympathetic to the 'ugly' as a radical form of resistance.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Data

Consent Forms



CONSENT FORM (1.0 18/06/2018)

Study title: Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.

Researcher name: Edward Brookes

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to the taping of the interview, understanding that I may ask for the tape to be switched off at any point and for data to be deleted at any time during the process.

I agree to photographs being taken of me or my personal belongings (with my permission) and being used in the study, understanding that I may ask for these photos to be deleted/destroyed at any point during the process.

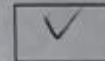
I am happy to be contacted about future opportunities to take part in research and events related to this project.



Copyright Consent for Oral Histories:

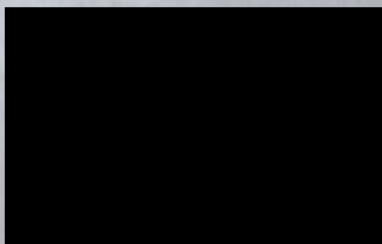
I agree to take part in an oral history and that as the present owner of copyright in the contributor content (i.e. the words spoken by the interviewee), I hereby assign such copyright to Royal Holloway University of London on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner and that the author of the contribution will be correctly identified in all uses of it. In assigning my copyright, I understand that I am giving Royal Holloway University of London the right to use and make available the content of the recorded interview in the following ways:

- Public performance, lecture or talks.
- Use in publications, including print, audio or video cassettes or CD ROM.
- Public reference purposes in libraries, museums and archives.
- Use on radio or television.
- Use in schools, universities, colleges and other educational establishments, including use in a thesis, dissertation or similar research.
- Publication worldwide on the internet.



Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.



Date:

02/18



CONSENT FORM (1.0 18/06/2018)

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Researcher name: Edward Brookes

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

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I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to the taping of the interview, understanding that I may ask for the tape to be switched off at any point and for data to be deleted at any time during the process.

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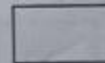
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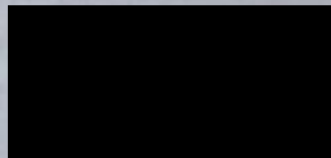
- Public performance, lecture or talks.
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- Publication worldwide on the internet.



Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Signature of participant:



Date:

19th Nov 18.



CONSENT FORM (1.0 18/06/2018)

Study title: Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.

Researcher name: Edward Brookes

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to the taping of the interview, understanding that I may ask for the tape to be switched off at any point and for data to be deleted at any time during the process.

I agree to photographs being taken of me or my personal belongings (with my permission) and being used in the study, understanding that I may ask for these photos to be deleted/destroyed at any point during the process.

I am happy to be contacted about future opportunities to take part in research and events related to this project.



Copyright Consent for Oral Histories:

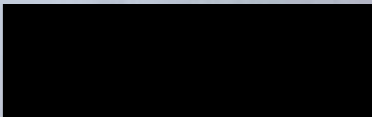
I agree to take part in an oral history and that as the present owner of copyright in the contributor content (i.e. the words spoken by the interviewee), I hereby assign such copyright to Royal Holloway University of London on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner and that the author of the contribution will be correctly identified in all uses of it. In assigning my copyright, I understand that I am giving Royal Holloway University of London the right to use and make available the content of the recorded interview in the following ways:

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Date: 6/11/18



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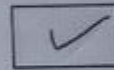
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Signature of participant:



Date: 6/11/18

Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.

Researcher: Edward Brookes

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

My name is Edward Brookes and I am currently a PhD student studying Cultural Geography at Royal Holloway University of London. I am currently in the process of conducting research as part of my PhD thesis. This project therefore represents a culmination of my own research interests into urban regeneration and spaces of home. Focusing specifically on how we can document the multiple histories and stories of those that live in places undergoing rapid urban change.

Robin Hood Gardens is a site that is very central to debates around gentrification. Recently, London has witnessed rapid and rampant financial investment, leading to accusations of hyper-gentrification in parts of the city. Not least in the East, with the continuing dominance of Canary Wharf demanding a housing stock befitting of its high-earning labour force. As such, the surrounding borough of Tower Hamlets has experienced rapid physical and social change, as council housing blocks including Robin Hood Gardens are demolished to make way for luxury flats. The narratives of the developers (backed by national and local political discourses) have presented Robin Hood Gardens as a hub of anti-social behaviour, squalor and sub-standard living, blaming this on the (post-war brutalist) architecture of the site; thereby justifying its demolition, and the displacement of people living inside its walls.

The project itself aims to investigate such debates exploring the contemporary urban geography and history of Robin Hood Gardens. It will focus on the present-day site, and the multiple narratives that surround its ongoing political contestation as well as its historical, architectural and emotional significance. It will explore the site's unique architectural history as a brutalist building and uncover how brutalism has shaped the site's changing identity. It looks to document the lived experiences of Robin Hood Gardens, in part to preserve its rich social history, but also as a means to help inform the contested debate about London's on-going housing crisis.

[19/06/2018] [Version 1.0]



The project will therefore involve curating an archive of various stories and materials that have come to surround Robin Hood Gardens, particularly during its demolition, including key policy and historical documents, oral histories, lived accounts of residents, as well as interviews with stakeholders and developers. In this way it looks to provide a unique perspective in the way we understand sites of urban change and provide a more nuanced account of processes of regeneration, gentrification, and domicile.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The process will involve creating an oral history, or account of your life and experiences associated with Robin Hood gardens. This will involve a prearranged interview lasting between 1 - 2 hours, in which you will be asked questions about your experiences and life in the housing estate. If consent is given I will record the interview and provide copies of the transcripts for you to edit prior to completion of the study.

If you are also happy to be contacted after the interview there may be other opportunities to take part in further research.

Are there any risks involved?

The risks involved are few, but there are some minor risks which may affect your personal wellbeing:

- you may not necessarily feel comfortable with the presence of a researcher or with being interviewed and therefore some anxiety may result
- being asked about past events or questions relating to previous experiences may be emotional for some, and thus some emotional discomfort may result

If at any point you feel unsafe or threatened do not hesitate to withdraw from the study or alert the researcher to how you are feeling.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation will be kept confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and university policy, additionally all data will remain confidential and be stored on a password protected computer. Whilst anonymity cannot be assured due to the nature of the project, any data that is collected will be available to participants prior to the final written form, to ensure that any sensitive information can be omitted.

What happens if I change my mind?

At any time you have the right to withdraw, without your legal rights being affected, just alert the researcher to how you feel and the research will stop immediately and you will not be adversely affected by any decision you make.

Where can I get more information?

You may retain this information sheet for reference and contact us with any queries.

For simple routine questions or more information regarding the study do not hesitate to contact the researcher: Mr Edward Brookes, (07581391653)

mbvb211@live.rhul.ac.uk

Sample Questions



Robin Hood Gardens – Resident Interviews

1. Can you tell me about yourself? Your name, where do you work?
2. How long have you lived at RHG?
3. Where did you live before RHG?
4. What was your life like before moving to RHG?
5. How has it been living here?
6. Do you feel like this is your home?
7. What is your favourite part of the flat?
8. Are there are parts of the flat you don't like? – can you show me?
9. What are your favourite/worst places on the whole estate?
10. Can you tell me about your time living here? Have you enjoyed it?
11. What do you think of the building?
12. Did you hear about the plans to try and save the building from being knocked down?
13. Did you hear about the V&A museum acquiring part of the other block before it was demolished?

V and A Discussion Questions

1. To critically analyse and understand the multiple political, socio-cultural and architectural 'layers' of Robin Hood Gardens, and how they are represented as it is today.
2. To explore how these layers can problematize prevailing rhetoric to represent a more equitable future of the site within the broader debates around gentrification.
3. To articulate how new innovative methods can illuminate new dimensions of lived experience, adding depth to existing political and geographical debates

What were the V and As reasons for getting involved with saving parts of RHG?

What are the V and As future plans for the fragments they have gathered?

By preserving the fragments what do you hope people in the future will learn from the RHG?

What are your personal views on RHG and the campaign to save and preserve it?

Do you think the V and A is able to adequately comment on political issues surrounding London's housing crisis? Do you think it should?

What is your opinion of Historic England's decision not to list the site?

Can you tell me more about the collection that RHG will form a part of?

Do you feel the V and A as an institution has a responsibility to push for more equitable futures when it comes to housing/architectural design?

There was quite a strong backlash regarding the V and As involvement with the site? What are your views on this? Do you feel it was justified?

Is the V and A likely to acquire more architectural features/ fragments in this way?

Can you tell me more about the processes involved in preserving a site of this scale?

I am interested in the processes involved in creating a collection, can you tell me more about how this is done?

Can you tell me about the exhibition in venice? What was your view on the exhibiton?

Some people are concerned with how the museum is putting working class culture on display, is that something that you think the museum would need to handle carefully?

Sample Interview Transcripts

Simon Smithson Interview Transcription

02/08/2018 – Leadenhall Building

Edward Brookes: My project aims to use contemporary archaeology and cultural geography to uncover the contemporary history of RHG and explore many of the political debates that surround its demolition in order to inform and critique current processes of housing regeneration in the city. In that sense I want to speak to you about your feelings in relation to the site and about your parent's involvement with it. As well as talk to you about your experience as an architect and how we can challenge processes of gentrification in the city and whether there is a place for archaeology and geography in architecture. With that in mind what are your feelings in relation to RHG and the current social and political debates that surround it and its demolition?

Simon Smithson: Well the site has been incredibly vandalised. The playgrounds are gone. There is only one mound. It has lost a lot of its colour scheme. An act of sabotage that I don't entirely understand or agree with.

RHG represents a totem of a kind of architects' political position around housing and the city and the constant attempt to destroy it. There is a constant attempt to undermine what it stood for. Whilst the site itself represents a hinge point in time, where such an ideological vision either works or doesn't, and what we've seen is a swing away from state housing. Although there seems now to be a swing back towards state housing. Perhaps what we really need is something in the middle.

But this is why RHG is so totemic, as it attempted to articulate what housing means and should mean. This kind of approach is always going to attract opposition. Housing is always a political issue as the V and A have found out. You have to take a position on it.

I was going to answer the other part of your question as you have mentioned archaeology. It just so happens at the end of last week I went to where we keep a lot of my parent's stuff and we were putting stuff away that we lent for books and exhibitions and I end up going through stuff and end up discovering things that I'd forgotten existed and of course what's extraordinary is that they travelled to Europe directly after the war. My father went to Japan pretty soon after the war and given that he fought the Japanese in Burma was quite interesting. Part of that must have been a belief that Europe was where modernism was emerging from.

And in a sense probably by default a kind of critique that England had taken, as we're about to do with Brexit, we sort of take these routes that lead us into oblivion. But you either had that arts and crafts movement, which in the end you would say is all very beautiful but is not going to deliver office buildings and housing for the masses. Or you had the imperialist claptrap as in Lutyens at his worst. So, I think they were saying that there was another route which Europe was pointing the way. But in one sense they were Europeans before Europe existed, along with other members of Team X, it was kind of a mini EU. Dubrovnik was 58... so they'd driven across war torn Europe, which you know you'd probably find quite hard to drive to Dubrovnik now...I'm getting to the point...

Edward Brookes: (laughs) No its fine

Simon Smithson: At the same time they were very grounded in English culture so that you can read if you look at the analysis of , you know my mother drew up a lot of the analyses of the context, and then look at the consequences. I think there was a belief that the east end and the docks had produced a very tough kind of architecture, the old great Victoria docks and strangely enough they were walled. For a variety of reasons and even down to the wall again the idea that they were bounded by these terrible roads which you had to do all the acoustics that my father talks about in

that BBC documentary. But it is about trying to create a space... well what I'm trying to get round to here is there were illusions to the context. The fact that the context was very sub context, the fact that the 1980s was swept away by American vision of a financial district.

And of course that's the grand irony is and I think I've said this somewhere else, is that in the end... we took the view as a family that we could try and save it but we couldn't and we shouldn't try and destroy our lives by it... me in particular and maybe that was a mistake and it'll haunt me until I go, but the point being that I also took the view that you go down there and you see this Mount Vesuvius of canary wharf just pouring out and you say, it is going to fall and it will fall to the might of capitalism. I put it into very political terms, as you've got social housing, you know which is viewed as a burden on a prime property for lots of reasons, its going to be subsumed. I mean someone pointed out at the film the grand irony... what I liked about the film was that it doesn't talk about the building it talks about the people, and in some sense its easy to do that, but in a sense, they were sold a lie. Which is given that they are predominantly the most disenfranchised and I don't necessarily mean just economically, in that they are recent immigrants from very far very distant cultures. To lie to that group who aren't necessarily able to kind of read is a heinous crime I think. I did mention at the talk that there is another irony there that the whole notion of the social state and the social contract that was established by the Atlee government was of course built around a notion of Britain as it was then, and then you have Windrush etc, so it was built around a particular set of values, if you like was formalised by things like parker Morris which said the English was a nuclear family was this kind of size, and what's amazing if you look at he photography is that people are using the buildings of the house in a completely different way...

Edward Brookes: Yeah that wasn't planned

Simon Smithson: The English notion was that there was a kitchen, a dining room, and a notion of a pattern of how they were going to be used. And you look at the flats and you think oh my god they were never conceived to be used that way... but that's fine but as I say you've got the most vulnerable group there and you lie to them about the promise and actually what you're doing is selling the land from underneath their feet.

Edward Brookes: As an architect yourself, how do you see the role of the architect in trying to counter that? That was something that did come up, especially on the day of the film premiere. How does the architect challenge that wave of capitalism that feels unstoppable in places such as robin hood.

Simon Smithson: Well I think I touch on this, I believe its on a recording somewhere in the national voice what ever it is, but my father says he only voted once in his life which was for the Atlee government as it was the only politician who ever had something to offer and he never voted again.

Edward Brookes: (Laughs)

Simon Smithson: Whether that's true or not I don't know... but it probably is. But I think that post war generation, they were faced with destroyed cities. Naturally the question is how should we build them? what values are we building them on? And I think they believed, as did Neve Brown, as did Erno Goldfinger, that if you provided noble buildings, be it the national theatre, be it housing, be it schools, that people would...value them with all the consequences. I think that what became a problem was that when they moved in the most, form the outset they moved in the most problematic families, possibly just to park them in an out of the way place. I think it became clear that the notion you provided, I mean to use an example if you provide for people's health that if you provided people with free healthcare that they'd look after themselves, they would take their

responsibility for it. One wants to be positive. Lots of people do but there is a proportion of the population that doesn't. so I think it became apparent that there was a limit to what the architects could do, and on top of that there was then a backlash, where architects, and I don't know if I used the Neve Brown example when I talked is that Neve Brown that did Alexandra Road, he never built again. As did Patrick Hodgkinson who built Brunswick Square, both fantastic buildings, both like Robin Hood Lane you now sort of tough expressions of a view. But neither of them... in fact all of them never built again, they were castigated. The problem isn't the physical building... I mean yes there were housing estates that were patently wrong, the majority not by architects, like Ronan Point designed by builders, they were done in good faith. But the problems that emerged were much deeper social problems that was the failure of the social. Failure of the social contract. I think there was quite a big shift, if you listen to people who first moved not Park Hill they were saying how this was just amazing. Its clean its modern, its got day light, its got sunlight, its got central heating, running water, the toilets inside. The second generation had forgotten that, they're wanting a semi-detached and a holiday in Benidorm...

Edward Brookes: Their priorities had shifted

Simon Smithson: Well yes, their sense of value, as with the growing affluence of society naturally, their aspirations become different. I mean the usual things about moving the wrong families into the wrong kinds of flats and then not maintaining them etc. I think there was a sudden realisation that its maybe not quite as simple as we thought. As what we thought would happen doesn't really happen. Using Alexandra Road as an example, and its not personal in that sense. I went to Alexandra Road the day before it opened, with Neve, and I thought these were just beautiful flats. But clearly a lot of people didn't, and I don't know what their scale of appraisal was. But I think there as sudden realisation that it was actually going to be complicated and in addition the architects were going to carry the can, and indeed architects generally walked away from the problem because we, and I say we collectively because we had been blamed for the failures. Of course, there were failures, but you know the bad examples were not actually architect designed and the failures, I mean Darbon and Dar came up with that development as one of the responses to the more heroic housing projects. Darbon and Dar on the coat tails of Christopher Alexander who did all these houses where it was sorts of little pokey spaces again they had some problems as suddenly you had this warren of passages as what was described as a human scale throws up other problem. So, what I'm saying is each of them throws up different problem, but the real problems were much more substantial and not to do with architecture. But as a consequence of all of that the architects have said were not going to do that. Now things have changed, and architects are getting involved again on a political level and talking about prefabricated houses. Histories going to repeat itself.

Edward Brookes: Yeah, going round and round

Simon Smithson: As we do prefabricated houses as we think it solves a certain problem and suddenly its going to be perceived in another way in a way it hasn't been anticipated. So does that answer the question?

Edward Brookes: Yeah definitely, and the role of the architect in stopping capital...

Simon Smithson: As I've said I think that led to a bit of a reappraisal. Aside from the fact that they didn't really get much more work in the UK. Others suffered worse... Neve Brown and Patrick Hodgkinson... I don't think Patrick Hodgkinson ever worked again, suddenly the Brunswick Centre is the new Valhalla... I mean poor guy.

Edward Brookes: (Laughs)

Simon Smithson: It's interesting you go down there and you say you know what...Yes. You put in decent shops. You look after the place, you know its got a bit of a cinema etc and you've got a bit of a mix of a population because some of them now are quite middle class. But again it wasn't being used inappropriately for families that should have probably been somewhere else.

Edward Brookes: Bringing it back to RHG as well, can you tell me a bit more about your parents' decisions to design it? I mean you've touched on it in their ideological motivation. I mean what are your memories of it growing up and things like that?

Simon Smithson: Well we used to go to the site often on Saturday when it was under construction. So, I remember the hut. They used to have a thing called the clerk of works, who was employed by the client and was there to oversee quality and make sure things were done right. So he was kind of always a guide to the architect. They don't exist anymore. He would meet my parents when we went to the site and we would have a cup of tea in the shed. I mean on a technical level I don't think I know much more than what's in the books, as to go that high was not their first choice. That was around this business of if you went over a certain height you got more money from the central government. So, I think you might say, their instinct was that something else was required. But as far as I know I don't think there is any evidence of what the other schemes were, I just know there were. I mean I know I think if I would answer in what my sense of it was, I think there was exciting times for them. I mean its an incredibly... I mean if you look at Max Risseladas analysis, the way he looks at buildings is analytical, it's a masterclass of proportions and perspective. I think that also the scale of the landscape and the character of the landscape they created. I think an awful lot of things came together which gave them as architects' enormous pleasure. So, I think visiting the site was exciting for them. I think I've said that in a Dezeen article, which talks about why I think...I mean im being reasonably guarded, but I think English heritage have been criminal, negligent in their role. And I've got another view on that which is in the end there's a kind of profession of architectural historians. The roots of English heritage come out of the Victorian society, John Betjeman etc. Who quite rightly were fighting to preserve industrial heritage and perversely my parents spent all the profits when Brasilia was cancelled on doing a book on Euston arch. Which was defending and important historic building but of course in general the Victorian society was against architects. As the architects were the people were in theory were the owners because they were building new buildings whilst the old ones were being pulled down. But in the end, they staffed English heritage. Which is the ideology of that body, of course it's got an overriding mission, the ideology and outlook of that body reflects people who have come through that particular phase of evolution. So, if you read their original argument they say something like, we've already got 28 modern buildings in London we don't need anymore, and you think Christ... the biggest state building effort in this state and you say you only have 28 and that's enough...what an earth is the magic number of 28...

Edward Brookes: And to put a number on it feels wrong...

Simon Smithson: Its like saying no no we have 13 Victorian buildings that'll do thank you very much.

Edward Brookes: Like we've ticked our checklist of Victorian bingo...

Simon Smithson: You drive round London and there are masterpieces of that period which are important. And the point is they're not supposed to be judging it just on architectural masterpieces but supposed to be deciding on whether they reflect an important period culturally.

Edward Brookes: I think personally speaking as well, I think that should be separate to the numbers game. I mean why bring numbers into it when you're judging it on a criteria that should be more than that.

Simon Smithson: when you're looking at a Victorian warehouse, you don't say we've already got three, even though it might be the most important warehouse in the city of Manchester. But obviously that has coloured them. **Mysteriously... just like robin hood was built at the wrong time by sort of ten years too late, you could say its time for listing came less about 5 years too early... as suddenly there's this flip you know... I have this photograph I took of when it last came up for listing where Richard and I went to see the head of English Heritage who was a complete buffoon. Then we went to see the head of Newham council (Ed: I'm assuming this was probably meant to be Tower Hamlets) or whatever it is... and that was a disgrace as well. Obviously, it turns out he was one of the corrupt ones. The following Saturday I went to Foyle's and they had a stand the size of this table... all with books about brutalism. You think for goodness sakes. That's the irony of it all as now you've got the V and A which is charged with safe guarding the artistic design aspects of it, and they say yes this is valuable and the other side which is English heritage which says no its not.**

Edward Brookes: It is very strange...

Simon Smithson: I think they were very excited, because its own particular history, and this could be a critique, it was an idea which they had in Haus bahnhoff going back to 56 – 53 soon after the war of this sort of kinked block and streets in the sky and they tried again in golden lane and it was copied at park hill. They finally got an opportunity to build it 25 years later or something. So you might say well maybe things move on... but as I said earlier it was their first choice for format...

Edward Brookes: Do you know what their first choice was?

Simon Smithson: I'm sure somebody might... it wouldn't be me... you'd have to talk to Kenny baker or... actually I don't think any of them were in the office when they started... Maxwell dirk might know... max may have talked to my father about it. But I don't recall seeing any drawing in the archives. But by deduction it was low rise.

Edward Brookes: Going back to the V and A question, I know you have spoken a few bits around their acquisition of it, what is your honest opinion about their management of the whole situation and the politics that surround it at the moment.

Simon Smithson: Well I think the two people that ran the exhibition... the two Drs that I can't remember... d

Edward Brookes: Olivia Horsfall-Turner and Christopher Horsfall-Turner

Simon Smithson: **ahh yeah...I did go out to Venice as I felt obliged too. I think they really understands the building. She in particular really understands it. She was very articulate. She is a very bright lady and obviously you know PhD and they really understood it. But I think there was some comments... I never read them... but comments by the new director the ex-politician which got taken off the website...**

Edward Brookes: which probably shouldn't have been said as he basically... it was a toys out the pram moment and they should have risen above the critique but they were having a go at keyboard warriors, which is a pointless game, but it shouldn't have been said... (Laughs) Tristram Hunt.

Simon Smithson: I **mean I'm highly sceptical of politicians, and politicians becoming the director of the V and A...**

Edward Brookes: ...and then to come out and say its not a political institution as a result of that..

Simon Smithson: Yes I agree. It depends what you mean by political, yes you're making judgements about things that will read as a political evaluation. I think he was still in politicians' mode. By the time he did his speech in Venice it had been so managed for him that he kind of got the picture. So he was a bit sheepish.

Edward Brookes: (Laughs)

Simon Smithson: No I think they did a really nice show, I think the way the pieces were mounted lacked a bit of art. I mean I feel it should have faced something... the water or something, but that's a detail. I think my take would be I think there was a major failing of an institution, I'm talking about English heritage as its mandate is quite clear. Its not actually making aesthetic decisions rather than on historic significance. The case for that is absolutely crystal clear. I would actually read the V and A as that as it were a Mea Culpa on the behalf of the arts institutions that yes there had been a big mistake, it should have been kept. Now the only thing we can do is this. Of course, now it reflects a changing generation, that Dr Olivia is the new generation of Historians whose reflecting on the one hand a slightly rose-tinted glasses look back on a bygone age which is the 60s and 70s as rather idyllic which is slightly flawed. But that's how history works as the people that came out of the Victorian Era they were living the 60s so it wasn't history. The 60s and 70s now becomes history. I mean what is history... its sort of three cars behind you not one car behind you. So that history is now...60s and 70s is real history. Probably that cycle reflects the PhD students going through their training. i want to study something, history is before I was born when my parents were young, that's their definition of history. Also, historians want to find new topics and that tends to be areas they haven't covered, and that's more likely to be very obscure history or recent history. By its nature its revisionist too, I mean the easiest thing to do is to take a... here's a non-architectural example you could do a biography of Lawrence of Arabia. The older ones used to say he was the way he was because he caught his mother and father making love and that scarred him for life, then someone comes along and says no don't be stupid, it was because he was recruited by the secret service when he was at Cambridge or whatever it is. So erm were in that revisionist period where we are reevaluating the 60s and 70s

Edward Brookes: In relation to the ideas of your parents' methodology being around 'as Found' could you talk me a bit through how that's affected your own work and how that came into their practice and robin hood gardens as well? Or if at all?

Simon Smithson: I think it defiantly came into it yeah. I think as I said earlier there are elements of it the toughness of it, putting in a wall. My mother actually made a mural out of archaeological bits, basically pottery that was found when they were digging, the mound was basically bomb waste. My view on the as found, I mean I think id come at it in a number of different ways. One is what team x was in ciam was saying no you can't ignore the past. You can raise Paris and build a new Paris. There's something valuable there, you have to work within that. Which I think then, there's an interesting overlap because I think on the one hand there was the influence of a number of emigres largely Jewish escaping the persecution of Europe and had come to England in the 30s and of which our doctor was one and a friend who was a buyer for liberties. The point is they brought with them, as they were from the Austro-Hungarian side of Europe, they brought with them this interest and love for exotic things from the middle east, so there was that influence. Which you can sort of see when you look at 'corbs' interiors there's sort of funny masks and things in there. There's an interest that's inherited from far eastern Europe and north Africa that entered the aesthetic. You know where if you like, native arts or whatever you call it, art by those who are not necessarily educated

as artists was given value. The other influence would be Eames the beauty of the everyday. If we take the original Eames cards, you say actually balls of thread or thimbles or simple toys are of immense beauty because they reflect whatever...

Edward Brookes: Wider social relations

Simon Smithson: Yeah, or because they are a very simple everyday object that as its evolved through time takes on a beauty of itself. So I think that was a starting point, a kind of aesthetic that influenced them. The last thing was, and this does come from Morris and believe in the modern movement...I think it was Ruskin that said you never own anything that does not have beauty either that or Morris (Ed – it was Morris). That combined with the belief that Industrialisation could produce beautiful things, like a VW, my parents happened to buy one, it must have been one of the early VWs into the UK. That mass production could deliver things of elegance to the masses. SO as found says actually there are things being produced all the time that in and of themselves are of great beauty. So I think it's sort of... I mean to me the consistent thing through their career was actually probably... I know the photographs of Nigel Henderson are always referred to as significant I think they probably were... but that little group was... I forgot what I was going to say...

Ahh yes you know the bit about adverts, the important thing was there the kind of social mores evolved constantly. If you look through their careers that interested them. What are the social values and how do you then take those and reflect, how does architecture respond to that and I think that's sort of the most exciting and most difficult thing about architecture. So if you look at their string of houses, all the way from house of the future to you know exon house to the put away house. They're all reflecting something that's in the air. So, the put away house is saying you know the consumer side is coming to the point where we all have so many things that the difficulty becomes where do you store it which is where if you like is, if you put it into context at the same time you have the minimalist architects who just have one thing and its going to be there on the table exposed. It's a sort of a...who lives like that, a few architects... the rest of us live with just stuff...

Edward Brookes: (laughs) with clutter and papers

Simon Smithson: Exactly, so the answer to how that influences me I think that's a more difficult terrain to get into but (Pause as Simon catches and talks to colleague who walks by about a project) sorry just were just doing a competition for a big Chinese company and it sort of raises the same question because this is a company where the average age is 22 and has grown like the clappers, and the question is what are the values and how do you reflect that into the design. I have a house full of As Found junk, I cant stop picking up nice things, like cardboard boxes that I find, indelibly marked, but either you accept it and roll with it or reject it. Children are like that you either carry on, my two sisters, one has clearly rejected those values and the other is a spitting image of my mother.

Edward Brookes: I find it interesting as well with the as found approach as well that it feels very archaeological, in a sense that it takes the materials that are there and present in an everyday sense, and makes do with them.

Simon Smithson: I think that's a particularly interesting vein of thought to pursue. I mean my mother well they were both passionate visitors of archaeological sites and they'd pick up all sorts of bits. Part of the stuff that I've got are bits of the stuff which probably should not have been taken off classical sites. But there is an unpublished book which is called...(Pause) well its on classical sites, quite a complex analysis of classical archaeological sites. Its Mathewson who taught at Witwatersrand, you know the university in south Africa do you know the name?

Edward Brookes: No I haven't heard of them

Simon Smithson: That's the link you want to make. They must have come in contact with him in south Africa. But also, Vincent Scully who was influential... well Wittgenstein, who I've never read but I mean that sort of generation of philosophers, art, classical historians I think that whether or not they had a classical education I think they definitely did. I think they definitely formulated the view that to be an architect you had to be able to draw you had to be able to write, you had to explore in the tradition of Alberti or 'Corb'. The belief that it wasn't just about designing buildings. So I think there was an obligation to study classical science in some detail and mysteriously they both obviously loved to write. The amount of material they produced was just extraordinary. I'm trying to remember the book, I should know this, I was out of looking at some of the material, I found an article by Mathewson, I pretty sure he's called Mathewson in a copy of the South African journal of architects in about 50 something.

Edward Brookes: Do you feel there is a place in architecture? I mean if we were taking archaeology in its loosest sense?

Simon Smithson: I think so, if you look at the analysis drawings that my mother did of Robin Hood Lane, as an example, or Kuwait, which were beautiful, where she was looking at site lines. But also she wrote extensively about the lines, and on ancient Rhodes. In a sense I think there is a belief that you are building the landscape up, in a broader sense the landscape being the built landscape, so you are building on the ruins of other things and in a sense those mythical lines, those ley-lines or whatever you know you can... We I suppose you can believe or wish to believe that the sort of the cumulative ghosts of the past are something important and that you should respect. I don't want to sound too wacky about it but I mean in a sense that I don't think it's unrelated to the views they're putting to claim that you can't just sweep away history. London for example, when I first came I didn't know the city at all, it's got all these back routes, those have a historic significance and they represent the ghosts of the past, but they're also rather nice things to have. The significance and the quality go arm in arm in some degree.

Right how much more. It sounds to me like you probably need to come back again at some point.

Edward Brookes: If you'd be happy to do that, that was a conversation I did want to have, as to how involved would you like to get? Because you know my project wants to kind of document the lived experience of RHG and its broader sphere, using contemporary archaeology, which is just a buzzword for like a modern day history so if I could speak to you more about your own views and relationship with the site. I would like to know more about the architectural profession and its relation to geography and archaeology and how they fit together and how I can tie those together and how I can tie it into my project and try and push for more equitable futures for when it comes like social housing and sites like RHG and brutalism as well.

Simon Smithson: I think it's an interesting and fruitful vein of thought and in a sense as a very generic, it gets to the root of conservation. Yes, there is a need to keep buildings. Well the underlying thing is you shouldn't replace something if what you replace it with isn't better. That ought to be a sort of underscoring, but at the same time, there's the need to protect buildings of value, I think there's another issue that we don't talk about very much, which in a sense cities ought to be layering of different periods of your term 'archaeology', because the sense of continuity and the presence of the past or antecedents is something possibly important to people.

Edward Brookes: yeah, and certainly when it comes to RHG you feel that the stories of those that have lived there is fading, like you say with the film they released, that at least tried to bring in those

voices. That's what I aim to do and try and speak to as many people as possible and as many sides as possible to build a kind of picture.

Simon Smithson: I agree, and I thought that was what was good about the film, and certainly when I went out there for another film that some young Germans are making, and they showed a few pieces of it at the Venice biennale, what I think I said in the film when I was interviewed and they took me out there, and I must admit I was very reluctant to go but we wandered over the one remaining hill, which is now covered with trees, and the trees were full of birds and I thought what a fantastic epitaph, as in a sense the wilderness reclaimed it before the bulldozers, in a sense that was nicer. It did become ruins, so the articles that my parents wrote about ruins in reverse this seemed to be a nicer way to remember it

Edward Brookes: I agree and there's something as well about that kind of overwhelming power of nature and the sublime that you realise how futile things become. It is quite nice, sort of a relief in a way. But yeah if you would be happy to meet and chat at regular intervals, I will probably email you again and maybe do it in a month or two. Thank you for the time.

RHG Resident Interview Transcript (stephanie)

Edward Brookes: Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Stephanie: I was born in the countryside and I moved to London In 1994. But I've been around all over, Nottingham then back to London. I moved here and lived here for 3 years now.

Edward Brookes: What brought you to this estate?

Stephanie: We are homeless, I am under the homeless team. They put me and my wife here, we didn't have any choice. But before that, I had another flat in Abbeyfield and I went for a walk around here, and I seen the old the building, and the flat was empty. I looked through a window and about 3 weeks later they moved me here. But when they told me that I was moving here I could not sleep. Because I'm like 'Robin hood gardens! Here!?' but lucky my father in the north said don't worry the flat is bigger than your old one. I thought right... but when I came in everything was painted, new carpet, everything was brand new. Now we've been here 3 years. I know the front garden, really don't belong to the flat. Really it belongs to tower hamlets homes but they're so busy with repairs and fixing things, so I asked them can I use it? So, I made it my garden. Then I encouraged Robert (one of the other residents) to do his garden as well, to make it look nice. Because when you walk along here, it looks better with gardens. The path looks a dirty, but I think it looks nicer with the garden.

Edward Brookes: so where you were before was that the Aylesbury estate?

Stephanie: No, Abbeyfield estate. That had a garden.

Edward Brookes: Did that get knocked down as well?

Stephanie: Yes *laughs*, I lived there about three and a half years. As soon as I moved in, I was home. I knew it was coming down, but I made it my home as I didn't know how long before they moved us. So now I live here with my wife and we know the whole building is coming down. But people tell us different things. Some say 2 years others say 5 some say 8. So really nobody knows what's happening. But now the whole building is gone. I speak to some people who are like 'that's life' and at the beginning I wasn't happy because of everything but now I've got good neighbours, the people who care about round here. I volunteer, I help clear up all the rubbish particularly the fireworks. Because nobody would clear up. When I'm out with the dogs I pick up a bag and clear all the rubbish.

Edward Brookes: Do you feel that the council could do more to clear up?

Stephanie: Not really, I mean I've been lucky, for them giving me this *points to flat* but I think the size of everything is good in the flat. But the ground floor, the storage isn't good enough its tiny. The garden could be fenced off.

Edward Brookes: So, it'd feel more like your garden rather than just open

Stephanie: Yes.

Edward Brookes: How have you felt about knowing, especially as well as where you lived before, that the buildings are always going to be knocked down? Do you find it difficult to start a new home every time?

Stephanie: I would say no. because it's not my permanent home. But I know I've had it better; this is a big flat than most people. I think that 95% of the people in this building were or are homeless.

When I speak to them and they say the kitchen isn't so nice, I know I am lucky as they fitted a new one for when I moved in along with carpets and new paint. The problem we've had recently in the flats is that when there is a water leak, it's really difficult to know where it is coming from. Because the way the building is up down up down up down in its layout, you've got to try and pinpoint where the water is. If someone has a leak upstairs, it could come out in the middle or at one of the ends. So, it's trying to pin point where it is. I had some water damage up there before, and I phoned a plumber and he went 'oh' trying to find where it was coming from. Eventually he found it upstairs in the kitchen. Because on the ground floor the kitchen and the bedroom are at the back. But you go upstairs, the kitchens are all in the front and on the second floor, and you go down to the bedrooms. So when we get leakages it's a nightmare.

Edward Brookes: it sounds like a jigsaw puzzle

Stephanie: Then you have the problem that it's very hard through the wall, it's a nightmare to drill into because of the concrete. One thing is that I am deaf, but my wife can hear me. But we have no trouble with noise from next door or the other side because of the thick walls. But above, if they drop something that is loud.

Edward Brookes: So with this block being demolished, does not knowing when you're going to have to move does that bother you at all?

Stephanie: Half and half because I'd like somewhere bigger but I don't know where I'm going, but another half I would like to stay here, I have good neighbours. They're really nice. And I've got the DLR and the high street, everything right on the doorstep. You've got the road as well. It's better that I'm near the DLR and you can just hop on. It's convenient.

Edward Brookes: You mentioned you feel like no one really knows what's going on, has it felt like that with the regeneration the whole time?

Stephanie: They've been planning since 2012, but I wasn't part of it then but now I am. It's a shame to pull that building down, but it'll probably be better. In some way, because they will have to repair the whole block really. But I know a lot of people have complained, as the new flats have thinner walls. Because the plasterboards are so thin. Another thing is that there is piping under the floors here and along by the garages between the floors and I've never had to bother putting the heating on until November because it's so warm.

Edward Brookes: Has it been difficult living next to the estate being knocked down?

Stephanie: No, it's been quite interesting. Because I take photographs of the process. How they pull that down is amazing. I've seen people taking photos of it too. The noise isn't really an issue.

Edward Brookes: What was your life like before you moved to RHG?

Stephanie: More room! *laughs* I don't know, but everything is so close. I suffer from anxiety so everything being close is quite handy, you can go DLR or Shops. It's nice and cosy. I can't ask for anymore. Compared to the other owners. The people who live upstairs whose kitchens are bad. All the rooms painted before I moved in. Because I know a couple of people in a different area and they've been given a flat that hadn't had any work done to it which was really bad.

Edward Brookes: So, what are your favourite parts about your flat and where you live?

Stephanie: The open space! The Flat, although it's tiny I am very lucky. Sometimes it's nice and quiet, although it can be very noisy.

Edward Brookes: Do you worry about when you move over to the other side, whether the flat will be as a big or as a nice?

Stephanie: Because I've seen the design plan for that flat. Because the kitchen and the lounge is open plan. And I know they've got storage space in that house and that flat **than here**. Because I asked about the underground car park, I have a feeling its for the people that buy a property though, I think we will get a bike shed and rubbish bins.

Edward Brookes: Is that something you've asked the council about

Stephanie: well I asked why, I'm worried that we won't all be connected, and wont all be able to park, it'll only be for those who buy. My worry when you're parking here is its very difficult especially on Monday because people work in the council and if they live in the same catchment area the parking permit is C1 and if they have permit, they can park here all day. Where if it was a different zone you can only park for up to 3 hours. I'm not sure once they start building new flats if it'll be a car free zone or people can only park after 5.30. or if at the weekend there will be too many cars. So I'm worried about the parking.

Edward Brookes: What don't you like about living on the estate?

Stephanie: some of the people in the block they keep throwing food outside. Thinking its ok to throw food out the window or cigarettes or rubbish. Because they don't realise people actually walk through. When I first moved here there were more people under the cover along here and I'm thinking that's a bit close under my window. So, I put flowerpots here, but people were still throwing food... *stops as dog barks* but we've caught people throwing things and we've told them don't do it anymore, but they haven't stopped. Number 10, 11 and number 12 don't like to go outside because they throw stuff down. I think people don't respect other people when they have rubbish, they just dump it. its not fair. People could do better, if people had their own gardens, they wouldn't throw it. but they still throw it and it goes bang and they just leave it there.

Edward Brookes: What do you think of the building? Because lots of people have been interested in its architecture? What do you think about it?

Stephanie: For me I quite like the building, its unique. Its something different, its good. It's a bit strange with the layout with the up down up down. But it's nice, I really like it. but some people don't.

Edward Brookes: It's like marmite *laughs*

Stephanie: I think I'm quite lucky as I'm on the ground floor and I don't have to worry about other people up there. I know someone from the other block, and they said it was so noisy, as people are constantly moving around, and you go up and then you go out and you walk along the corridor the pathway along here. So, it can generate lots of noise.

Edward Brookes: What did you think about the couple of campaigns to try and save the building? What were your views on that? Would you have wanted to save the building?

Stephanie: Part of me yes, part of me no. The building is in bad shape, but part of me says yes if it was redone properly. If it was refurbished, they should change the layout, so people could make their flats bigger. Like if they could knock down some of the walls so people could fit larger families. But you can't because of the thick walls. Whereas with the new builds you can change around the rooms more freely. The only thing I would like is save the green space, which they have done, so that spot will always be the green space. So, no buildings will be allowed on that space. So, no

building will be some on the mound. I would campaign if they said they were going to get rid of that space, because everyone needs that space.

Edward Brookes: Did you hear about the V&A saving parts of the other block for an exhibition?

Stephanie: The Victoria and Albert Museum?

Edward Brookes: Yeah, what did you make of that?

Stephanie: Very good, that would be good as I live on the ground floor, I don't really know exactly what the other flats look like. But I've got a book about it. I'll get it. It shows all the plans and photographs of the building. I like looking at the photographs of the flats. There's nothing for the young people here, no youth club, so they come out here and make mess. Sometimes things are burned, or they have a bonfire on top of the green space. When I'm clearing up that about 15 volunteers came down and helped and found that there were two benches under the hedges. So, I asked them to cut it back so people could sit on it but now I went up there this morning and someone had ripped the bench off.

Edward Brookes: So, are you a fan of the architecture and the architects?

Stephanie: Yes, when first moved here, I thought huh what's that building I've never seen anything like it before. So, the more I've been here the more I like the look of it. Have you been to East Berlin?

Edward Brookes: Yes, I have.

Stephanie: I don't know a bit of it looks like it's from East Berlin, when you walk round.

Edward Brookes: Did that put you off at all?

Stephanie: No, I quite like it. I like the quality of the building as I've never seen anything like it before. I know there's another one like it up in Sheffield.

Edward Brookes: Yes! Park Hill.

Stephanie: But I don't know what it looks like. But I've never seen a mound the same. It used to have a common room but now they've knocked it down.

Edward Brookes: Do you know much about the architects at all? Alison and Peter Smithson?

Stephanie: From what I've read in my book, I know they're from Germany. We've got a crew from Germany coming over here now and then to film. They take pictures and they've been around a couple of times. I know in the new building they will have two community gardens on both ends of the block and an outdoor gym. They revamp the whole thing and make them more people friendly, with tables and chairs so you can sit outside. It'll be nice to see it more friendly. I know you can't compare the new building and the old building because they're both different.

Edward Brookes: Does the fact you quite like its quirkiness does that mean you're sad to see it go or are you happy about getting a new flat?

Stephanie: It'll be sad because I live here but it's probably best as it's in poor condition. You can't really change the rooms around. I know over here many of the flats over here are also overcrowded. There's one of them that has 3 adults, two children and another one with just 2 bedrooms and a lounge with 4 boys and a mother all crammed in, so they go to bed in the hallway and kitchen. I don't know why they were housed there.

Edward Brookes: So how do you feel overall about the regeneration scheme? Have they listened to you as residents or do you feel its all been decided for you?

Stephanie: Because I moved here three years ago and I'm homeless, so I don't have much of a say. Whereas people like Robert are permanent they probably have more to say. So, I go wherever the council move us too so... I know there's a lot of people that were fighting against the demolition but then they promised to build a mosque and so they stopped the fight. Its an interesting building, its probably 80% of people here are Muslim, but there are all different religions there's maybe only 4 or 5 flats with white people. Most of the maStephanierity are from different ethnic minorities.

Edward Brookes: How does being homeless impact how you live, does it change how you live and treat your home?

Stephanie: Some days it does and some days it doesn't. because we don't really know where were going to end up. Im uncertain where they will move me. I don't know exactly we'll be here for. We have some ideas 2 maybe 3 years. Then we make the most of it.

Edward Brookes: does it change how you see your home? Does it feel harder to settle? Does it fell like you have to ready to move at any point?

Stephanie: because I've moved so many times, I think I'm used to it. with the homeless people what they say is they phone you on Tuesday or Wednesday then you go up to the council offices and they tell you where they have property. And you have about 4 days to pack. But I know we are homeless, and we will move to temporary accommodation. Sometimes I dread that phone call, as they say you're going, and you've got that much time to pack. But I try not to let it bother me.

Edward Brookes: So, have you been promised a new flat in the block when its built?

Stephanie: No, from what the homeless team are saying that they do not move people that are homeless into a new flat. They move them to an old block. In that case I don't know who will actually be moving over there. But the new building for the new tenants will be in the middle of the block. They will be council tenants. Then you've got private tenants and the bottom bit will be the people who part buy part rent. There will only be one and a half blocks for people who are with the council. most of them are for new buyers. I think a one or 2 bedroom flat in the new block over 500000 pounds!

Edward Brookes: How do you feel about that then that there's only one block and a half block for tenants who are with the council?

Stephanie: **For the price** Its ridiculous. When people work in the emergency services can't afford it. The need more part rent, part buy, but they don't they just sell it. I think it's wrong, they should be focusing on people that actually need a place to live. The people that actually need the flat, its unfair. What makes me laugh is that on the boards, the hoarding, it says one brand new community, hang on we had a community before. But they're pulling it down moving them on and making a new one. One community is not a new community. I think the wording is problematic. If I knew they'd said that in the beginning I would get something in the window that said its not a new community, there is a community already here. I think it's a bad choice of words.

Edward Brookes: DO you feel this a problem across London as well with the price of property? Given that the price of flats over there is half a million pounds. Do you think this is problematic?

Stephanie: Yeah because they're pushing people out. I remember them telling the homeless people, the people who run the homeless department have said if me or my partner were not working then

we'd be out of London. Out of tower hamlets. But if one of you is working then you can stay in tower hamlets. But I think that's wrong because if people are born here or live here for more than 5 or 10 years they should be allowed to stay. Not kicking people out.

Edward Brookes: Do you think this regeneration scheme is doing that, pushing people out?

Stephanie: Probably yes, as how can people afford the price? Because they might have to move or get sent away, places like Birmingham, Manchester which are so far away. I think it's wrong.

Edward Brookes: Yeah, I agree, especially as if you reject the housing that's been offered to you by the council, they consider you as an intentionally homeless.

Stephanie: Here I have really good neighbours and if I move away, I have to start those connections again and again. But I'm married to my wife 45 years and my wife lives on the isle of dogs she works in Newham. If I moved shed move with me.

Edward Brookes: DO you feel that a lot of the people that used to live here are no longer here now?

Stephanie: Most of them to Essex, most of them are happy because its not the same now as it used to be. Many of them say I'm glad that I moved out at the right time. I think everyone's going through different changes. The building as well. If you think about 30 years ago there wasn't that much round here, and now its very busy.

Edward Brookes: Do you feel part of what's happening is because of canary wharf spreading further out?

Stephanie: I know the area is long overdue for a regeneration anyway, because when they built canary wharf, they forgot about the other areas. So, in once sense it's good that they're trying to improve it, like canning town some of the areas have been regenerated. Hopefully for the better. But the older generation my night think that, as what they went through might be different from what I'm going through.

Edward Brookes: so, would you say you feel like forced to live here or forced to eventually move on?

Stephanie: I think the people who are homeless, we don't have a choice. Wherever they want to move us we will have to go otherwise wed be on the street. But I'm lucky with what I have here. But they could move me anyway where in London.

Edward Brookes: DO you think that the community has been pushed out by the regeneration? Has anyone been forced to leave?

Stephanie: Half and half, I think some of the people have been forced out, some of the people haven't. because they chose to move out. Some of them had no choice but to move. I mean I know most of the people here were moved over there in phase 1. When I first moved here, about 6 months later the whole block was empty except for one person. Because he was waiting for his new place to be finished, but when that was finished, he moved out. I know some people had bought heir flats so whether they're getting enough money to be bought out, because if you compare that much money to buy a house or a flat here, you just can't.

Edward Brookes: DO you know if they are happy with what they've got in phase one?

Stephanie: I assume presume so. The main problem they complain with is the noise. It's too noisy. You got lots of people living very lose to each other.

Edward Brookes: Have many people spoken to you at all about the regeneration from swan or the council? Do they tell you much about what's going on?

Stephanie: Yes and no, they normally post it on the internet or send you an email. But there is a project shop next door. You can go in there and ask. One or two months ago in the hub there was a meeting where they showed you how the building would look like, what would be in, along with the floor plan for the new people. I think at the moment though people don't exactly know what's going on, now whether we are out or in. People who can't afford the property still don't know if they can rent it. But I know one of the properties on the island, they've got one door for those who are council tenants and another door for people who buy the property. So, you've got two different entrances which is not good.

Edward Brookes: I've heard of those, they call them poor doors, there was one recently with the Battersea development about how the gym was only for people who bought the flats not the council tenants. Even though they lived in the same block.

Stephanie: Over there they've got a gym a swimming pool, but the council tenants are not allowed to use it. and one block here to get a parking space its 20,000 pounds on top of the flat cost.

Edward Brookes: it's not good

Stephanie: Its crazy

Edward Brookes: are you worried that its going to happen here, where its going to be so expensive that the community that is here isn't going to be here in a few years' time?

Stephanie: I'd be very surprised if they sold all the flats over there, I don't know how many flats have been sold, but if it's not sold after 6 months I say they should give it to the council for them to rent out for homeless or people who genuinely need the flat. Let them be used instead of being empty for months and months and months.

Edward Brookes: I agree, my concern is always that if they don't sell will the social housing be cut back to make the redevelopment more profitable, because generally what happens is the affordable housing gets reduced so they can sell more or cheaper ones that might go and then recoup their losses. Especially with projects like this.

Stephanie: when they build a block, they should say 50% go to social housing 50% goes to private sellers. So, its equal. That would never happen sadly.

Edward Brookes: Not with current policy, in some ways you cant expect developers to do it any differently because they want to make a profit, and you understand that, but in that case the government needs to do more to ensure that it is 50/50 so they've got no choice. So that way you can get that affordable housing there and it be a much more property available for everyone and people don't have to move out.

Stephanie: The other thing people can buy the council property, then when they sell it they don't give any money back to the council, for giving them a step up. I think money should be given back to the council so that they can invest in more properties, not the people who are buying. They should buy back their stock. I think councils should have more powers to get back their house if someone wants to move, whether that be that the owners pay a deposit back to the council so they can buy another house or whether they buy it back off them.

Edward Brookes: How do you find then living in London more broadly?

Stephanie: Its good and bad, there's lots of land around that has been unused for a long time, but then you could think about using that land for people who need it, for people on the council tenants waiting list. They need to focus on that. I'm sure when I come back after the regeneration I will be surprised as when I lived in London the first time, they didn't necessarily have what I wanted at that time but now they've got cinema and things like that. I think with the new build there will be five blocks as I think if I come back here after its finished its going to be a lot more in your face and busier. Some of the flats are too close. But I think where they will keep the green space the new residents will know that nothing will be built there so they will get a better view. They won't have to worry about new buildings interrupting the space.

Edward Brookes: DO you feel then that the character of poplar is changing then with the regeneration here?

Stephanie: I've been living in tower hamlet ten years now. Over the last ten years its changed a lot. With that property over there going out at night is better, there is more lighting. The council building wasn't there so there used to be a lot more space in the area too.

Edward Brookes: I'd be very interested to see how its going to be, and also go back in time to see how it was before. So you can see how its become one thing to another.

Stephanie: I think with that book I showed you earlier, its gives a good impression of what it looked like. With my wife living on the island we used to drive past and say how horrible it looked. Its hard to visualise things. So I'm thankful I can see it in these photos of how it was originally supposed to look. It looks great brand new. Its not like this now sadly. Now I've got the photographs I can see what it looks like.

Edward Brookes: It looks a very different place back then compared to now.

Stephanie: Because I'm on the people of poplar or something on Facebook, people have been posting what it was like before. There used to be two busses that would run up and down robin hood lane. They're gone now. There used to be a pub in the top and bottom corners which are also gone. There used to be a theatre, the queens theatre, but that's also gone. Without the book I wouldn't have been able to visualise what it looked like but with that book that helped. Luther was also filmed here. 3rd series. The actor actually came around the flats and filmed. They tried to make it look how it did at the time so that also helped to visualise it. the car park, the corridors. Watch that programme as they made it look like the original.

Edward Brookes: Do you think the book changed your opinion what it was like living here?

Stephanie: I think it would be good if the realised another book of what its like now and then another one in 20, 30 years so you can see how its changed. So, you've got a book from 1972 to 2000 and then another book from 2000 until now and then 20 years later. So, you can look all the way back and how its changed. I know they'll keep the hill but everything else is going. They'll move the flats along here, and so they'll be here, here and here *points to book* then there will be a walkway between each flat. Then you look over the road and it'll be more flats.

Edward Brookes: Are you happy they're keeping the hill?

Stephanie: Oh yeah, I've seen the new plan and it's a lot better than what they've got now. Some people who are staying know they've got the hill. When they built here, they put all the rubble under the hill. Some people believe there is a bunker or something that went under it. Or whether they just put rubbish under there. The bunker was under the hill. Because that was flat around it.

Edward Brookes: I thought it as the rubble from the older estate? That's interesting though!

Stephanie: I'm not sure if its true though... *Laughs*

Edward Brookes: Its interesting that you talk about seeing it throughout different points in history is that this is something id like to do with my work with all the planning documents and voices and things. Specifically, for here. I've taken a lot of photographs of both blocks, but the other block was still was empty. What id like to do is put it all online so people can see it. what happens here is a lot more complicated that people imagine.

Stephanie: It doesn't matter, how important or special a building is the way things change and how the government treats older places like this it's important to take pictures, because in 15, 30 years later they could be gone. And you can look back and say that's what it looked like.

Edward Brookes: I think that's just about it, thank you! You've been amazing.

Appendix B: Listing Documents

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

There are some significant claims to interest at Robin Hood Gardens. They include the stature of the Smithsons and the importance of Robin Hood Gardens as the embodiment of a certain approach to city-making. The relationship between concept and built reality lies at the heart of whether Robin Hood Gardens possesses special architectural or historic interest.

It is important to note that there are already 13 listed public housing projects of the post-war period in London. These range from immediate post-war estates such as Churchill Gardens, Westminster (Powell and Moya, 1947-54) and the LCC Alton Estate, Roehampton (1952-60); 1960s estates which show the transition away from Le Corbusier influences, such as Lillington Gardens, Pimlico

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(Darbourne & Darke, 1964-72), Goldfinger's Trellick Tower, Ladbroke Grove (1968-72), or Patrick Hodgkinson's Brunswick Centre, Bloomsbury (1967-72). More recent examples include Neave Brown's Alexandra Road Estate, West Hampstead (1972-78); other contemporary estates in Camden are presently being assessed too. Outside London, the largest housing estate to be listed is Ralph Erskine's Byker development in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1978-81), which was premised upon a more community-led approach to design. All of the listed examples display special architectural interest of a high order, and some are listed in Grade II*. These are the benchmarks against which Robin Hood Gardens must be assessed.

The closest comparison of all is to be found in the Park Hill Estate, the major scheme of the Sheffield City Architects' Department of 1957-61. (its completion pre-dating the start of Robin Hood Gardens by some years). It was listed at Grade II* in 1998. Here, Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, architects who, like the Smithsons, had entered the 1952 Golden Lane competition and were designing projects based on the 'streets-in-the-air' concept, were brought on board. The scheme was much larger than Robin Hood Gardens, accommodating 994 flats, but there are considerable formal similarities. At Park Hill, however, the major success is the way that the sloping site allowed for the access decks to connect with the street, a way of grounding and connecting the development that was not possible at the Smithsons' scheme. The decks are also much wider at Park Hill, and their position at Robin Hood Gardens overlooking such busy traffic produces a much less satisfactory effect. As an example of this approach to design, Park Hill is considerably more interesting and successful. This parallel needs to be borne in when weighing up the case for Robin Hood gardens.

Given the particular nature of this case, it is helpful to set out the arguments for and against listing in order to present a balanced view of the case.

Claims to interest:

* Renown of the architects: It is the only built housing project of a much-esteemed architectural partnership, known for its extensive work on the theory of mass housing;

* Architectural quality: the building has considerable sculptural qualities from some angles and the rhythmic effect of the concrete detailing is impressive; daunting as it is, Robin Hood Gardens is on a monumental scale, and there is little else quite like it;

* Intellectual Renown: the scheme is well known by the architectural cognoscenti, and while held in distinctly mixed esteem, it is part of the post-war architectural canon in this country, as well as being admired abroad;

Document 1. Part of the English Heritage advisors report (Pages 4 & 5 of 7, 2008) that sets out the context and the precedents to which RHG would be compared, indicating the 13 other post war housing estates that had already been listed. Obtained through FOI request p112-113

* Critical evaluation. While acclaimed in some quarters, it was not as published at the time of construction as might be expected, and has not been widely written up subsequently. Most publications latterly have been critical, including Charles Jencks, whose 'The Language of Post-Modernism' of 1977 criticised the scheme for inhumanity and a flawed approach to place-making. Helena Webster, in her detailed account of the Smithsons, 'Modernism without Rhetoric' (1997), describes the estate as 'a paradigm of the British 'Brutalist' aesthetic and praises 'the modulation of the facades of the slab blocks handled with great dexterity and confidence' but concludes that the scheme ultimately 'failed as a place of human habitation'. The Buildings of England East London (2005) says 'though impressively monumental, the scheme is ill-planned to the point of being inhumane'. The estate has received very little written praise, and Peter Smithson himself is alleged to have expressed disappointment with the outcome (i.e. in an interview printed in Webster's 1997 book); 'by their own admission a disappointing realization of so many years thought about housing design' according to Alan Powers. Fellow Team X member Aldo van Eyck described the result as 'grim'

Conclusion: While designed with an optimism and a vision that must be applauded it has, ultimately, failed as a piece of community architecture. We can respect and admire the vision, and admire the formal qualities it possesses, but in conclusion we cannot recommend it for listing.

Reasons For Designation Decision:

The Robin Hood Gardens Estate is not recommended for designation for the following principal reasons:

* Poor critical evaluation: While acclaimed in some quarters, the building was not as published at the time of construction as might be expected, and has not been widely written up subsequently. The estate has received very little written praise, and Peter Smithson is alleged to have expressed disappointment with the outcome.

* Not successful as housing: the vandalism soon after it was built and the social problems that it has faced in recent years represent the failure of the 'streets-in-the-air' access desks to foster the strong sense of community that the Smithsons envisioned;

* Bleakness of design: Other features such as the ungenerous stairwells and entrance lobbies, the materials, and the fearsome boundary wall, contribute to the feeling that this architecture is most austere and functional, regardless of the thought that went into its design;

* Alterations: The landscape has undergone some changes in recent years, and unsympathetic additions have been made to entrances and stairwells; the colour that once identified each deck of the garden elevation is lost;

* Excessive emphasis on architectural reputation: There is no denying the importance attached by some to Alison and Peter Smithson in post-war architecture, but it does not follow that all their buildings should be listed; a strong reputation is not sufficient to sustain a recommendation to list when the architecture does not stand up.

* Lack of innovation: Nor can Robin Hood Gardens be said to be a positive manifestation of the 'streets-in-the-air' approach: Park Hill achieves this much better, and by the time Robin Hood Gardens was completed, this idea was twenty years old and under challenge. It can be seen as the product of a determination to realise an earlier vision for housing, but executed in such a way as to set aside the emergent lessons of ways of providing social housing.

Document 2. Part of the English Heritage advisors report (page 6 of 7, 2008) that sets out the reasons behind choosing not to list the estate. Obtained through FOI request p114.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

English Heritage Advisory Committee

Exempt Minutes of the 36th meeting held at 12.30pm on Thursday 27 March 2008 at the Museum in Docklands, West India Quay, London E14 4AL

These minutes contain the exempt items not included within the minutes available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The matters included below potentially fall within the exemptions provided in the Act, as specified, although other exemptions may also apply.

Members present: Mr Les Sparks OBE (Acting Chair)
Mr David Baker OBE
Professor Martin Bell
Professor Timothy Champion
Dr Jane Grenville
Mr Julian Munby
Mr Paul Walshe
Ms Elizabeth Williamson

Staff present: Ms Gemma Abercrombie – Head of Operations, Heritage Protection
Mr Steve Bee – Director of Planning and Development
Dr Roger Bowdler – Head of Designation
Mr Ian George – Committee Co-ordinator
Mr Michael Harlow – Legal Director
Ms Helen Jones – Committee Secretary
Ms Deborah Lamb – Director of Policy and Communications
Dr Andrew Saint – Editor, Survey of London

Observers/others: Mr John Allan (LAC)
Ms Diane Haigh (CABE)

Item 1 – Apologies, Announcements, Declarations of Interest

Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Ian Ayris, Mr Geoff Clifton, Mr Nick Johnson MBE, Mr Rodney Melville, Ms Helen Maclagan, Mr Barry Shaw MBE, Mr Peter Studdert, Mr Charles Wilson and Dr Stuart Wrathmell.

Document 3. Minutes from the English Heritage Advisory Committee held on the 27th of March 2008 relating to the RHG estate report. This represents the first of five pages and lists the various members and staff present during the meeting. Obtained through FOI request p279

- Influence of the design
- 2.7 It was felt that the building would have been well-known by architects and architectural students from the time of its construction to the present, although few endorsements of the scheme were to be found among the available literature. There were mixed views on how influential the design had been, particularly given that it was a late example of its genre, although it was suggested that it should not necessarily be considered of less influence for not being the first of its type. It was concluded that within the architectural profession, the scheme had informed wider views on architecture, landscape and social housing even though it had not resulted in imitative schemes.
- Intactness of the design
- 2.8 It was reported that the design had been executed largely as intended. Several alterations to the buildings had been made but it was felt that these could all be reversed. It was felt that it would be possible to restore the original vision of the building.
- A good example of a development in housing?
- 2.9 It was specified that this criterion referred to whether a building was a good representative of its type, rather than necessarily an example of a successful housing scheme, and that 'development' in this context referred to the evolution of approaches to design. The relationship between Robin Hood Gardens and comparative schemes such as Park Hill and Lillington Gardens was considered, although it was suggested that there were a number of significant differences between the schemes that precluded direct comparison. The combination of the buildings and landscape was felt to distinguish Robin Hood Gardens from other similar schemes, and it was noted that it retained a number of features rarely found in surviving schemes whilst others have been demolished. It was concluded that Robin Hood Gardens had notable qualities which made it a good example of deck-access housing, although for reasons other than architectural quality alone, Park Hill and Lillington Gardens may be better.
- Fulfillment of the original brief
- 2.10 It was noted that the brief was likely to have been a very short document, specifying quantitative aspects of the scheme only. From primary literature, however, it was known that the Smithsons had aspirations for the social benefit of the design. The Committee felt that the scheme had not been successful in terms of providing its intended inhabitants with a desirable living environment, although the extent to which the architecture was responsible for this, and whether it was wholly within the capabilities of architecture to deliver such an ambition, was debatable. It was felt that the scheme had successfully responded to the conditions created by the surrounding road layout.

Document 4. Minutes from the English Heritage Advisory Committee held on the 27th of March 2008 relating to the RHG estate report. This is the third page of the report and sets out some of the covered points in relation to the committee's assessment of the estate. Obtained through FOI request p.277

- 2.11 In general, it was concluded that the scheme had fulfilled its assumed brief in a number of areas, and that any failures were due to poor maintenance and housing management. A number of Committee members did feel that the architecture was a significant contributing factor to these failures, however.

Conclusions

- 2.12 While it did not score highly against all criteria it was felt that, on balance, Robin Hood Gardens was of sufficient special interest to merit listing, although reservations were expressed by a number of Committee members, in particular relating to the criterion of whether the building fulfilled its brief.

Item 3 – Any other business

- 3.1 The Committee was thanked for its valuable discussion.

Helen Jones
Committee Secretary
March 2008

Document 5. Minutes from the English Heritage Advisory Committee held on the 27th of March 2008 relating to the RHG estate report. This final section highlights the conclusions of the committee indicating their support for listing of the estate. Obtained through FOI request p.276

Emily Gee
English Heritage
1 Waterhouse Square
138-142 Holborn
London
EC1N 2ST

30 April 2008



Dear Emily

ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

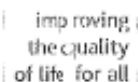
Thank you for sending your advice on the above building, which you have recommended as not suitable for listing.

As a general point, we have noted that the advice is presented in a slightly different way to the usual format which gives rise to a couple of issues. In particular, we think that the way the 'claims to interest' are presented gives them undue prominence (thus detracting from the 'reasons for designation'). While it is obviously important to present a full and balanced case, we wonder whether this may be addressed simply by moving some of these points to the narrative section.

We also think it might be useful to relate the 'claims to interest' and 'reasons for designation' more closely to the key considerations contained in your published designation guide (mentioned in para 2).

We also have some specific points where it would be helpful to us if you could clarify further how you reached your decision:-

- Of the arguments for not designating, we believe the strongest is the lack of innovation – Park Hill is a better and earlier example and already Grade II* listed – and it therefore might be given more emphasis by putting this point at the top of the list.
- The argument that the estate is not successful as housing is also a very persuasive one. However, we wonder whether it might be developed further. For example, the advice notes that there was "general contentment amongst residents" and this might suggest that



Document 6. The letter sent by Moira Costello to Emily Gee (EH Advisor) requesting clarification and amendments to the EH advice on RHG (Page 1 of 2). It sets out series of points which they request clarification or structural changes in order to strengthen the argument put forward by EH. Obtained through FOI request p.249

on one level the estate did fulfil its brief. This needs to be further explored and weighed up against the arguments that the building failed as a piece of community architecture. It would also be helpful to know whether other listed estates were successful as housing, or whether they suffered from similar problems.

- The argument that the estate has been subject to alterations appears to contradict the point in the description (para 2, page 4) that although alterations have taken place, overall the open space has retained a distinctive quality and the alterations cumulatively do not undermine the character of the block. This therefore needs further explanation.
- In relation to poor critical evaluation, could you clarify the argument that the fact that this building was not critically acclaimed at the time it was built is justification for not designating now?
- The bleakness of design – is this point a reflection on the quality of the architecture, or a reflection on the aesthetic value of these features, even when taking into account the architectural design.
- Excessive emphasis on architectural reputation – whilst this is a point that can legitimately be made in order to counter the arguments about the reputation of the architects, we do not think that it works as a reason in itself for not listing. Could this be moved to the discussion section?
- Comparison with other listed examples – the advice refers to 13 listed public housing projects (page 4, last para) and notes that these all display architectural interest of the highest order but does not go into any further detail, save for in relation to Park Hill. Whilst we consider the unfavourable comparison with Park Hill to support the arguments against designation, we are conscious that as a Grade II* listed building, Park Hill is considered to be of *more than* special interest and it could therefore be argued that its level of special interest does not represent the threshold which the RHG should be required to meet. In light of this, we think it would be helpful if the advice could provide further detail about other (Grade II) listed examples in order to broaden the context within which the RHG is being judged.

Apologies for coming back to you on this, but we are keen that the advice should be as watertight as possible. I would be grateful if you could reply by 13 May, but as always, we are happy to discuss.

MOIRA COSTELLO
Heritage Protection Branch

Document 7. The letter sent by Moira Costello (DCMS Special Advisor) to Emily Gee (EH Advisor) requesting clarification and amendments to the EH advice on RHG (Page 2 of 2). It raises questions around the EH report looking to strengthen its argument around its decision not to list. Obtained through FOI request p250

14 May 2008

Dear Moira,

Thank you for your letter of 30th April which raised several points about our Robin Hood Gardens Estate advice.

You have commented that the format of our advice is slightly different than usual. This is because (as was the case with the December 2007 advice for the Woodberry Down Estate housing) the advice has evolved directly from the paper that was endorsed by our Advisory Committee, and in this case also Commission. I have discussed this point with Peter Beacham and he is clear that according to our corporate governance, our advice to you should remain largely as it was agreed by Commission. We could re-organise some of the sections as you request, and I have done so in an attached slightly amended version of the advice, but as for the substantive points you raise, I am addressing these here in a memo (the bullet points accord with those in your letter).

As for re-organising the text we can set out the 'Claims to interest' in a more narrative format and have done so in the amended advice. This, as I hope you will agree, was a device for setting out both sides of the case, with a goal of being balanced and fair in our assessment, and as a direct acknowledgement of the representations we have received. In our opinion, both these points, and those in the 'Reasons for Designation' address each of the points in the Selection Guides. The key considerations are: *architectural interest; intactness of design; whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing*. Following on from your request, I have re-ordered them to accord more closely with the order in the Selection Guides.

- Following on from above, we can move the point about Park Hill to earlier in the Reasons for Designation, thereby giving it the emphasis you think would be appropriate. Since this addresses *whether the design was influential; or a particularly good example of a development in housing*, I suggest it becomes the third point.
- As for the contentment of the residents, it was the case, as set out in the limited writings we have of the time (when Building Design revisited the site in 1973), that some of the early residents were content with the flats (which were built to Parker Morris standards and would most likely have been more generous than their previous accommodation). We feel it is fair to set this out in our advice, but also to be guarded about it and not place too much store in a few quotes by early residents who were keen to be proud of their homes; this short anecdotal account could not be the determining factor about whether it worked as housing.

Document 8. Letter response to Moira Costello (DCMS Special Advisor) by Emily Gee (EH Advisor) responding the suggested changes by the DCMS – they reject the changes to content but agree to tweak the structure (Page 1 of 3). Obtained through FOI request p.254

In arriving at his decision the Secretary of State took particular note of the following matters.

In their advice, English Heritage highlight the vandalism and social problems that have faced the Estate, along with the failure of the 'streets-in-the-air' access decks to foster a sense of community and other features such as the ungenerous stairwells and the fearsome boundary wall, as illustrations that the estate was not successful as housing. The Secretary of State has taken account of other representations that have been made opposing English Heritage's view that "as housing, it has serious shortcomings" which argued that this is a very subjective view. For example rather than the "prison-like boundary walls" described by English Heritage, another description given is of "a beautifully sculpted enclosure that also acts as a sound baffle." It is



improving
the quality
of life for all

Culture Team

argued that there are no significant problems with vandalism or anti social behaviour. It is also argued that it is still possible to see the original concept if one looks beyond the present condition of the building.

Having weighed up the evidence, the Secretary of State considers English Heritage's argument that the Estate was not successful as housing to be a persuasive one. He considers that it is right to look at the functional performance of a building and to question whether it worked as it was intended. If functional (or operational) failures are fundamental, it might raise questions about the architectural performance of the building, and thus its claims to special interest. English Heritage have acknowledged in their advice that there are some short anecdotal accounts indicating that some of the early residents were content. However, the Secretary of State considers that evidence that vandalism was rife as early as 1973, very soon after the Estate was completed, illustrates that the 'streets-in-the-air' concept failed to foster the sense of community that the Smithsons envisaged. He also notes the evidence that local residents recently demonstrated their discontent with the building by voting overwhelmingly in favour of replacing the Estate during the consultation on the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project. On balance, the Secretary of State considers there to be strong evidence that Robin Hood Gardens did not work as intended as housing and agrees with English Heritage that this impacts considerably on its architectural interest.

Document 9. Pages 1 and 2 (out of 4) of the Secretary of State's decision not to list the RHG estate (dated 1st of July) sent by the Deputy Director of the Culture team to - Emily Gee (writer of the initial English Heritage report). It Details the role of vandalism and the social problems in the DCMS's decision. Obtained through FOI request p.185-6.

The Secretary of States notes that English Heritage consider the overall impression given by the Estate to be "striking and dramatic" and the rhythm and texture of the fins on both elevations to be "dynamic and sculptural". However, he also notes their description of the South end elevations are as "one dimensional and fairly plain" and the treatment of concrete as "not refined in terms of surface finish, aggregate or colour." EH comment in particular on the bleakness of the design and the fact that the "ungenerous stairwells and entrance lobbies, the materials and the fearsome boundary wall, contribute to the feeling that this architecture is most austere and functional regardless of the thought that went into the design."

CABE, however, note that the building has an "elegant flow" and "considerable sculptural qualities" but see the concrete structure as being "in good condition" and comment on the "intricate concrete detailing". Other representations refer to the "unique and powerful aesthetic" created by the "repetitive window frames, the columns and the linear terraces."

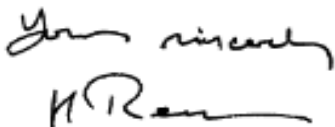
On balance, the Secretary of State accepts English Heritage's view that the "bleakness of design" is a reflection of the quality of the architecture and therefore is a factor that impacts on the level of its architectural interest. Whilst the evidence of both English Heritage and CABE demonstrates that the design of the Estate is clearly of some interest, the Secretary of State does not consider that it is of sufficient interest to meet the threshold for listing.

The Secretary of State has considered evidence from English Heritage that the estate has undergone gives "unsympathetic additions". Other representations highlight the alterations to the buildings such as the provision of new concierge and door entry systems and the replacement of the majority of the original windows with replacement UPVC double glazed window units. Whilst it is clear that the alterations are relevant to the assessment of the building's special interest, we note that English Heritage conclude that overall, the alterations do not undermine the character of the estate due to the "rugged quality of the architecture". In light of this, the Secretary of State considers that any alterations that have taken place to Robin Hood Gardens do not impact significantly on its architectural interest.

After very careful consideration of all the available evidence, it is the Secretary of State's view that Robin Hood Gardens Estate does not have the special architectural or historical interest required to meet the criteria for listing. Whilst he acknowledges the reputation of the Smithsons and the architectural quality evident in some aspects of the building, he considers that these factors are outweighed by the failure of the estate to fulfil its function as a piece of community architecture and its lack of innovation coming as it did at the end of 'streets-in-the-sky' movement. His conclusion, therefore is that he agrees with English Heritage's recommendation

not to list and to issue the COI, when the period for reviews has expired.

The decision was made on 1 July. The applicants for listing have 28 days from the date of this decision to apply for a review of it. In the event that no such application is received the Secretary of State intends to issue a Certificate of Immunity from listing on 28 July. You will be notified once any Certificate of Immunity is issued. If a valid application for review is received, the Secretary of State will reconsider the issue of the Certificate of Immunity in the light of his decision on the review.



Harry Reeves
Deputy Director Culture Team

Document 10. Pages 3 and 4 (out of 4) of the Secretary of State's decisions not to list the RHG estate (dated 1st of July) sent by the Deputy Director of the Culture team to -Emily Gee (writer of the initial English Heritage report). It details the contradictory aspects of the estate's appearance from its 'sculptural' and 'elegant flow' alongside its 'bleakness' and 'bland' design. Obtained through FOI request – p.187-8.

Need for a review

4. The Secretary of State's criteria for a review are that there is evidence that the original decision has been made wrongly or there is significant new evidence which was not previously considered. Both of these criteria are met in the present case.
The decision has been made wrongly
5. We understand this criterion to be concerned with matters more than simply differences of judgment. The examples are given of a factual error or matters which may give rise to successful judicial review proceedings. The following such errors arise in this case:
 - (i) the procedure adopted was unfair as the Twentieth Century Society has not been allowed to see the Certificate of Immunity application made by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Tower Hamlets have refused to provide the application. Neither the Twentieth Century Society nor any other persons concerned in this matter can make appropriate representations without being aware of the material and arguments before the Secretary of State;
 - (ii) it is understood that the English Heritage Advisory Committee ("EHAC") recommended that Robin Hood Gardens be listed. That advice appears not to have been conveyed to the Secretary of State. The English Heritage adviser's report says, under the First Countersigning Adviser 'This case has been very carefully considered, including at English Heritage Advisory Committee and Commission level.' That advice was, no doubt unwittingly, significantly misleading as it implies that EHAC agreed with the English Heritage recommendation. The Secretary of State therefore failed to have regard to a material consideration, namely EHAC's view, was not given proper information and the advice was significantly misleading: see *R v Durham County Council ex p Lowther* [2001] EWCA Civ 781, [2002] J.P.L. 197 at para 97, 98;
 - (iii) the Secretary of State failed to apply Circular 01/07 and the Selection Guide 'The Modern House and Housing'. The correct approach is set out in our substantive submissions below, but the legal errors arise from a failure to address many of the criteria and selection principles and reliance on a matter, innovation, which is not part of the criteria or principles. This is not a complaint about form, but the substance of the Secretary of State's decision was flawed. The analysis hinged on a matter which was not one of the policy considerations;
 - (iv) the Secretary of State erred by taking into account views said to have been expressed by local residents as to whether the building should remain as evidence as to whether the building worked. This either in the context of the present utility of the building, which is irrelevant;
 - (v) the decision was taken by the Minister of State. In comments released by DCMS and quoted in *Building Design* on 4th July 2008, she said Robin Hood Gardens 'is not fit for purpose'. As the Minister acknowledged in the House of Commons on 10th December 2007, whether a building is presently fit for purpose is not part of the criteria for listing. Indeed, such an approach is contrary to PPG15 and section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Therefore the Minister took into account an immaterial consideration;
 - (vi) the Secretary of State's assessment whether the building met its original brief was factually wrong. On any view it did meet the brief set for it. The issue of vandalism has been misunderstood and there was no evidence to support any conclusion that vandalism was rife or that it was caused by the building;

Document 11. Pages 2 & 3 (out of 15) of the Twentieth Century Society's application to the Secretary of State for a review into the decision on the listing of RHG. It lists the main points of contention around why a decision was made incorrectly and the main legal reasons for why a review was needed. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

Significant new evidence

6. Significant new evidence is enclosed with these submissions, in particular:
 - (i) Professor Alan Powers provides an authoritative assessment of Robin Hood Gardens, its role in the work of Alison and Peter Smithson, its influence and the case for listing;
 - (ii) Professor Dickon Robinson, a housing specialist and former CABE Commissioner explains how Robin Hood Gardens works as housing. This area of expertise was not available to English Heritage;
 - (iii) Mr Kenneth Baker was an assistant architect on the Robin Hood Gardens project. He explains how the scheme met the design brief and the innovation displayed in dealing with noise, open space, car and pedestrian issues;
 - (iv) Mr Simon Smithson, a distinguished architect in his own right, considers Robin Hood Gardens 'to be the most significant building completed by my parents, bringing together in one project the key preoccupations that guided their work throughout their career';
 - (v) whilst the Secretary of State will have been aware that many leading architects want the building to be listed, we provide statements explaining its influence. Lord Rogers says 'The building's original concept combined an heroic scale with beautiful, human proportions which is still clearly evident today'. Ms Zaha Hadid says 'The importance of Robin Hood Gardens as a formative project in the history of architecture cannot be under-estimated'. Professor Neil Jackson says it 'is a highly significant example of post-war public housing'. Professor Peter St John refers to its 'huge international reputation'. Accounts are given of study tours and the use of Robin Hood Gardens in the teaching of architecture. Ms Hadid and Ms Deborah Saunt point out that Alison Smithson was one of the few, and the best, female architects up to that time. As a developer and former chairman of CABE, Sir Stuart Lipton explains that the buildings can provide 'exciting and useful residential accommodation';
 - (vi) further documentation and comment on the building has also been revealed, including Alison and Peter Smithson's statement of intentions for the project.
7. Both of the alternative criteria for a review are met, consequently the Secretary of State should review his decision.

Merits of the case

8. The case for listing is considered in accordance with the criteria and factors identified in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, as amended by DCMS Circular PP992 (CLG Circular 01/07), and English Heritage's 'The Modern

Document 12. Page 4 (out of 15) of the Twentieth Century Society's application to the Secretary of State for a review into the decision on the listing of RHG. It lists the new evidence that they feel should have been taken into consideration when reviewing the estate. Specifically, it details the work of many notable architects and supporters of the RHG estate and their comments on why it should be preserved. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS

e mail: mail@zaha-hadid.com

STUDIO 9, 10 BOWLING GREEN LANE LONDON EC1R 0BQ TEL 020 7253 5147 FAX 020 7251 8322

28 May 2008

Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Margaret,

Petition for Robin Hood Gardens

With the decision to potentially demolish Robin Hood Gardens imminent, I would like to personally petition for the retention and listing of this internationally renowned, architecturally important building.

Robin Hood Gardens is a seminal project of socially responsible architecture from the era of Utopian thinking, and one of the few executed works of Alison and Peter Smithson and their only built example of public housing. The Smithsons were the first architects of 20th Century Britain to make a hugely significant contribution to world architectural discourse, and Alison Smithson still remains one of the few built female architects.

I understand that reports now detail the economic benefits to renovating Robin Hood Gardens over demolition. I urge you to seriously consider listing the buildings for future generations, as it would be a tragedy to lose this national landmark.

Yours sincerely,

Zaha Hadid

Zaha Hadid Ltd t/a Zaha Hadid Architects. Registered in England No 3749443.
Registered Office: 5 Southampton Place, London WC1A 2DA. VAT Reg.No. 743 7288 09

Document 13. Letter sent to Margaret Hodge by Zaha Hadid in support of listing the RHG estate. It sets out some of the reasons behind why it should be preserved citing the lack of works built by female architects from this period. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners

Richard Rogers
Michael Davies
Graham Stirk
Joan Harbour
Andrew Morris
Lennart Sjöström
Ansgar Kasper
Richard Pease
Mark Denton
Jan Sjöström
Thames Wharf
Ratcliffe Road
London W6 8HA
Telephone 44 (0) 20 7288 0335
Facsimile 44 (0) 20 7288 8409
Email enquiries@rsh-p.com
Website www.rsh-p.com
Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners Ltd
London, Barcelona, Madrid, Tokyo
Registered office as above
Registration number
1407989 England

27 February 2008

Dear Mr Burnham

ROBIN HOOD GARDENS - TOWER HAMLETS

I am writing in support of retaining Robin Hood Gardens.

Peter and Alison Smithson built two seminal buildings in London - the Economist Building in St James' Street and Robin Hood Gardens in Tower Hamlets - both as good, if not better, than any other modern building in Britain.

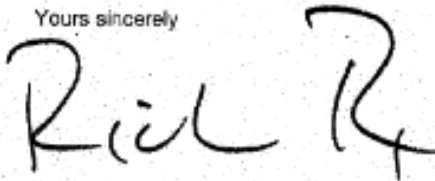
If one looks beyond the present condition of the landscape and the buildings of Robin Hood Gardens, one can still see the original concept which combined an heroic scale with beautiful, human proportions. The juxtaposition of the repetitive window frames, the columns and the linear terraces creates a unique and powerful aesthetic.

The siting of the buildings around an elegant man-made mound creates a harmonious spacious enclosure, reminiscent of the great Georgian crescents and squares in Bath.

Whilst the Economist Building has been maintained and upgraded, Robin Hood Gardens has been appallingly neglected and from the beginning, has been used as a sink estate to house those least capable of looking after themselves - much less their environment.

It would be a real tragedy and a terrible mistake to demolish this important and extraordinary piece of modern architecture.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD ROGERS

cc Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MBE MP
Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
Rt Hon Caroline Flint MP

Document 14. A letter sent to Andy Burnham (Secretary of State) by Richard Rogers with Margaret Hodge, Hazel Blears and Caroline Flint CC'd. The letter documents Rogers' support for the estate and that despite the fact it has been 'appallingly neglected' it represents one of the most seminal buildings in London. Obtained through FOI request p.313



Councillor Tim Archer
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

listing case work

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street,
London, SW1Y 5DH

20 APR 2009

17th April 2009

Dear Mr Burnham

Decision to list Robin Hood Gardens, London E14 0HQ

I represent the ward of Blackwall & Cubitt Town in Tower Hamlets. This is the ward that includes the Robin Hood Gardens estate.

I along with hundreds of my residents were extremely disappointed when you decided to re-look at the decision not to list Robin Hood Gardens. A recent survey by myself and my fellow ward councillors has revealed that 80% of residents want the estate to be redeveloped with 68% of them wanting Robin Hood Gardens to be demolished.

The arguments put forward to preserve the estate have been championed by those that do not have to live in what is a decaying and dangerous set of buildings. The original design of the buildings was poor to start with, containing many blind corners, windswept landings and sub-standard plumbing arrangements.

The continued delay in making a final decision is unacceptable; these are people's homes and their futures that are being decided on. Further delay just prolongs the uncertainty.

Please can you urgently come to a conclusion on the future of the estate. I also attach a petition signed by Robin Hood Gardens residents urging you not to list the buildings.

I look forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely

Tim Archer

Cllr Tim Archer
Conservative Councillor for Blackwall & Cubitt Town.



The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Secretary of State for Culture
Department for Culture Media & Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

18 December 2008

22 DEC 2008

Tel: 020 7364 4993
Fax: 020 7364 7999

E-mail: Rachel.Bielby@towerhamlets.gov.uk
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

Councillor Lutfur Rahman
Leader of the Council

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

Contact Name: Rachel Bielby

Review
Sector Culture
Paul Haley

Dear Andy

THE POTENTIAL LISTING OF ROBIN HOOD GARDENS, E14

The Council has been informed that you are reviewing the decision not to list the Robin Hood Gardens buildings as being of special architectural or historic interest made by Margaret Hodge following a subsequent submission from the 20th Century Society. Margaret's decision arose from a request from a member of the public that the buildings should be listed and an application from my Council for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing which we submitted in July 2007, some 17 months ago now.

Robin Hood Gardens forms a pivotal part of the wider regeneration of Blackwall Reach area, which could if implemented as the Council wishes, deliver up to 2500 new homes, of which a significant proportion would be family and affordable homes; new and improved community facilities, an enlarged primary school, better connectivity and a much improved environment and open space. We are working together with the Homes & Communities Agency and the private sector to deliver this key initiative.

The previous Leader of this Council, Denise Jones, wrote to Margaret in April of this year setting out the Council's concerns about the listing request and this was followed by a further letter to Margaret at the end of May from my Interim Director for Development and Renewal, Paul Evans, reinforcing this position.

My purpose in writing to you today is twofold. Firstly, to emphasise and reaffirm the sentiments already expressed by my colleagues to Margaret, and secondly to ask that you meet with me as a matter of urgency so that we may discuss the implications of this review for the critical regeneration of this area of Tower Hamlets and the impact that the delay in clarifying the status of these buildings is having on community cohesion and the Council's commitment to deliver decent homes for its residents.



Document 15. Letters from councillor Tim Archer and Lutfur Rahman to Andy Burnham expressing their displeasure at his review into the decision not to list RHG. The letter by Tim Archer (left) highlights the uncertain position this puts residents in as he raises the point that those looking to preserve the estate are not the ones that have to live in it. Whilst Rahman's letter (right) is much more focused on the effect the delay will have on the redevelopment project. Obtained through FOI request. pp. 38 & 94

Scot's letter PERU

Jim Fitzpatrick MP
Tel: 020 7219 5085/6215
Fax: 020 7219 2776
Email: fitzpatrick@parliament.uk
www.jimfitzpatrickmp.co.uk



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP
Minister of State
DCMS
INTERNAL

Our Ref: **dkifFITZ01006/01080502**
Your Ref:

25 April 2008

Dear Margaret

Re: Robin Hood Gardens

I am writing in support of the wishes of local residents living in flats at the above address, and in support of the decision of the local authority, Tower Hamlets, to request these buildings **not** to be listed.

There are a number of reasons why I take this view:

- There are other better examples of this era of architecture in the vicinity, eg. Balfron Tower, Carradale House and others.
- I have been dealing with constituents' problems associated with the flats for years. These problems appear to be insuperable without huge amounts of money being spent to deal with: concrete cancer; inherent damp due to various problems; electrical problems requiring new wiring; window problems.
- There have been other social problems associated with the structures, including long communal corridors and landings which, to provide adequate security, would require substantial structural alterations.
- Complete wastage of almost the whole ground floor, given over to garages not used or suitable for modern society.
- There are a whole range of social problems associated with the blocks concerning drug abuse and drug dealing, vandalism and harassment, which would need resources to be spent to address, and could affect the aesthetics by requiring structural alterations, eg. more CCTV, external and internal lighting, gates and fencing, etc.
- Finally, the blocks do not lend themselves to helping create the mixed, vibrant communities we are trying to build in Poplar. The mono-tenure or poor leaseholders would benefit from the differences that would be introduced from the mixed developments that is proposed to replace the blocks that make up Robin Hood Gardens.

Councillor Mike Hancock CBE MP

London Office:
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
Tel: 0207 219 5180
Fax: 0207 219 2496



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Margaret Hodge, MP
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4, Cockspur Street
LONDON
SW1Y 5DH.

MP
APED

With request Barbara Axel

OUR REF: MA/PERRY

17 March 2008

Dear Minister

Please find enclosed a copy of an email that I have received from a constituent of mine – Anthony Robert Perry of 56, King Street, Southsea, PO5 4EQ. As you can see it concerns the Robin Hood Gardens Building in Tower Hamlets which he wants to see listed. While I appreciate that the residents there have voted for its demolition, Building Design magazine on its website essentially feels that the consultation was skewed in favour of demolition and that there are options that could see its refurbishment instead of its demolition. It would be sad to see such a building which many eminent architects have said should remain be demolished so I would be grateful if you could look into this and my constituent's concerns.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Mike Hancock

MIKE HANCOCK CBE MP

DATE RECEIVED	16.3.08
MESSAGE	Fr. Hodge
LEAD	B. Abel
ASSIST	11/4
PREVIOUS SOCIAL	
DIRECTOR	AV
DEPT. OF STATE	
PROJECT NUMBER	98
LIBRARY NO.	
DATE	9193

Please reply to 1A, Albert Road, Portsmouth PO5 2SE and quote ref above

SOMEONE WORKING FOR YOU

Two Advice Centres: Every Monday from 5.45-7pm at the City of Portsmouth Girls School. No appointment necessary. Saturdays by appointment. Please ring 9286 1055. Website: www.mikehancock.co.uk

Document 16. Letters from MP Jim Fitzpatrick (left) and Councillor Mike Hancock (right) to MP and Minister of State Margaret

Hodge regarding her upcoming ruling on the listing of RHG. Whilst Fitzpatrick cites how he and the local residents of his constituency are in support of not listing the estate, Mike Hancock's letter is a response he received from a local constituent who has answered to the Build Design Magazines call to support the listing of the estate. pp.235 & 295.

Culture Team
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH
www.culture.gov.uk

Tel 020 7211 2366
Fax 020 7211 6130
laura.warren@
culture.gsi.gov.uk

Mr Jon Wright – Case Officer
Twentieth Century Society
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ

Your Ref
Our Ref 165247
13 May 2009



department for
culture, media
and sport

BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST
Robin Hood Gardens, Poplar, Tower Hamlets, Greater London

I refer to the Twentieth Century Society's submission of July 25th 2009, in which the Society requested a review of the Secretary of State's decision not to list Robin Hood Gardens. I am writing as the Review Officer for this case and confirm that I had no involvement in the previous decision.

In light of your review request the Secretary of State sought further advice from English Heritage, his statutory adviser on the historic environment, on particular points raised.

English Heritage reiterated their earlier recommendation that Robin Hood Gardens does not merit listing. Copies of English Heritage's advice have already been sent to you.

The Secretary of State has carefully considered all the evidence before him, including your own representations and English Heritage's advice, and has decided not to change the earlier decision not to list Robin Hood Gardens.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State has reviewed the decision not to list Robin Hood Gardens based on the grounds for review, and has not conducted a full reappraisal of the estate. He considers that the decision was properly made for the following reasons:

Procedural errors

The Twentieth Century Society has alleged that a number of procedural errors took place during the listing assessment. After careful consideration of their claims, the Secretary of State has decided that the process was correctly followed by English Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The Society also argues that it was at a disadvantage when preparing representations on the listing application because it had not seen certificate of immunity (COI) application. It is not standard procedure to release COI applications to listing applicants where two such applications run concurrently concerning the same building. The Society has had the benefit of seeing the COI application during the listing review, and has had sufficient opportunity to consider its content and to provide representations to the Secretary of State.

The role of English Heritage's Advisory Committee (EHAC) has also been questioned. EHAC provides advice as part of English Heritage's internal assessment of buildings considered for listing only. English Heritage's formal listing advice represents English Heritage's recommendation to the Secretary of State in accordance with their statutory advisory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. EHAC's advice is never submitted separately to the Secretary of State as English Heritage's advice comprises the product of their internal procedures on the formulation of such advice, including the consideration of EHAC views where relevant.

The Society suggests that English Heritage did not consult an internal colleague known to have expertise on post-war listing when compiling their listing advice. Whilst English Heritage did in fact consult this person, the Secretary of State does not consider that this is a valid ground for review. English Heritage's Heritage Protection Department possesses sufficient expertise to conduct the role and process of English Heritage as statutory advisor on listing applications, including judging when consultation of internal colleagues and external experts is required. The statutory advice given is submitted and received as the collective view of English Heritage as an organisation fulfilling its role as the statutory advisor in listing matters.

Document 17. Pages 1 and 2 (of 8) of the Secretary of States responses to the C20 request to review the DCMS decision not to list RHG. The first two pages go through the suggested procedural errors that were highlighted by C20 and clarifies why the initial responses were valid and the critique by C20 was incorrect. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

Architectural design

The listing assessment had the benefit of varying opinions on the aesthetics of Robin Hood Gardens. In light of the limited substantive evidence as to the way in which the design of Robin Hood Gardens influenced later architecture, the Secretary of State is not persuaded by the new opinions provided to depart from his decision that the design of Robin Hood Gardens is bleak and unsuccessful in many ways (see below), and therefore of limited architectural interest. The Secretary of State considers that the original colour scheme can be taken into account when assessing the design of the buildings. However, now that the original colours have been lost, the scheme's contribution to both the design and aesthetic interest of Robin Hood Gardens is difficult to assess conclusively.

The Secretary of State considers that the statement of intentions adds little to the existing understanding of Robin Hood Gardens. He notes Peter Smithson's comment that the written statement of intentions "seems so banal that one wonders quite why it is worth saying", which suggests he may not have put great interpretive value on it.

Success as housing

The Secretary of State accepts that Robin Hood Gardens met the specification in the brief for housing density, types and standards; noise reduction; open space; car parking; and ancillary facilities. This was known during the listing assessment. The Secretary of State notes that views differ regarding whether the brief had an implicit qualitative element. He considers that it would be contradictory to provide social housing that was not a good place to live. He also notes that the Smithsons' intended to foster a sense of community, particularly with their use of street decks, which further persuades him to conclude that the overarching aim of Robin Hood Gardens as a social housing project was to provide a decent place to live. Whether Robin Hood Gardens was a decent place to live is consequently relevant to this review.

There are conflicting views on whether Robin Hood Gardens was a decent place to live and therefore successful as a housing design. One of the factors against listing was vandalism and the Secretary of State remains of the view that vandalism was present soon after the completion of Robin Hood Gardens. He notes research from 1973 that claimed vandalism was not related to built form, but further notes that the credibility of this evidence over 30 years later has been challenged. With this in mind, he is not persuaded to depart from his view that the presence of vandalism early on in the life of Robin Hood Gardens was in part as a result of the architectural design and planning of the estate. The Secretary of State does not agree that undue emphasis has been placed on vandalism, and notes that the listing decision was clear that vandalism was one of several factors considered in the assessment of whether Robin Hood Gardens was a success as housing.

In considering the success of Robin Hood Gardens, the Secretary of State considers that the views of residents should, amongst others, be taken into account. The listing decision recognised that some early residents were content with Robin Hood Gardens thus demonstrating that a range of residents' views have been used fully considered. The Secretary of State acknowledges that English

Culture Team

Heritage's listing advice selectively quoted a reference to Robin Hood Gardens as 'Alcatraz', but given the references in publications to Robin Hood Gardens as a 'ghetto' and 'inhumane', the Secretary of State does not consider that he has been significantly misled in this respect.

Document 18. Pages 5 and 6 (of 8) of the Secretary of States responses to the C20 request to review the DCMS decision not to list RHG. This section of the report details why the initial EH report along with the DCMS listing decision were correct in regards the estates architectural design and success as housing – reiterating previous advice relating to vandalism present on the estate. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

Conclusion

Whilst new expert opinions have been submitted during the review, very little new factual information that was not previously considered during the listing assessment has been supplied. It should also be noted that the expert opinions are still strongly divergent on the merits of Robin Hood Gardens.

It is important to keep the issue of listing separate from the question of whether Robin Hood Gardens should be demolished or refurbished, as this is not relevant to whether the estate is of special architectural or historic interest. The assessment of the grounds for review has been conducted against the statutory and non-statutory selection criteria for listing 1970s housing estates.

The Secretary of State concludes that, on balance, Robin Hood Gardens as a whole was not successful housing and consequently not a particularly good example of housing design. He further concludes that, in respect of a number of individual elements, its design is flawed resulting in limited architectural quality, and he notes that his previous conclusion that the buildings and landscaping have been altered remains unchallenged. Furthermore, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the listing decision underestimated the innovation of the estate.

For the above reasons, the Secretary of State considers that the negative factors outweigh the interest of the landscaping of the estate, the significance of the Smithsons and their thinking, and the influence of the estate on the work of notable architects. The Secretary of State therefore maintains that Robin Hood Gardens does not have the special architectural and historic interest required to merit listing.

The Secretary of State has accordingly decided to uphold his decision not to list Robin Hood Gardens and has issued a certificate to certify that he will not consider Robin Hood Gardens for addition to the statutory list for a period of five years.

Yours sincerely



Laura Warren
Heritage Protection Policy Adviser, Heritage Protection Branch

Document 19. Pages 7 and 8 (of 8) of the Secretary of States responses to the C20 request to review the DCMS decision not to list RHG. This represents the conclusion to the report which upholds the initial decision not to list the estate. Document obtained from Twentieth Century Society records.

Appendix C: Ethics and Risk Assessment

Ethics Review Form



Ethics Review Details

You have chosen to submit your project to the REC for review.	
Name:	Brookes, Edward (2015)
Email:	MBVB211@live.rhul.ac.uk
Title of research project or grant:	Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.
Project type:	Royal Holloway postgraduate research project/grant
Department:	Geography
Academic supervisor:	Oli Mould
Email address of Academic Supervisor:	oli.mould@rhul.ac.uk
Funding Body Category:	Research Councils
Funding Body:	ESRC
Start date:	01/03/2018
End date:	10/09/2020

Research question summary:

This project will investigate the contemporary urban geography of the Robin Hood Gardens (RHG) housing estate in Tower Hamlets (London, UK). It will focus on how the present-day site, and its on-going political contestation, is continually 'produced' by historical and layered assemblages of materiality, culture and urban politics.

Its key questions are:

What are the multiple political, affective, socio-cultural and architectural 'layers' of Robin Hood Gardens, and how are they represented as it is today?

How have the lived experiences of the resident's been affected by the ongoing processes of gentrification at Robin Hood Gardens?

How can we use these 'layers' to problematize prevailing rhetoric around urban regeneration to represent a more equitable future of the site within broader debates around gentrification in London?

How can innovative new methods that combine cultural geography with contemporary archaeology help to illuminate new dimensions of lived experience? And subsequently how does such an interdisciplinary approach add depth to existing political and geographical debates?

Research method summary:

Methodologically the project will involve a combination of on-site exploration at Robin Hood Gardens and archival research. This will entail numerous on-site visits to explore the site's exteriors and interiors (the interior of individual apartments as well as the communal areas such as stairwells, lifts, walkways and roof spaces). Through contemporary archaeological methods, data on the materiality of the site and the practices of inhabitation (i.e. evidence of daily life, leisure activities, vandalism, graffiti and so on) will also be obtained. These will be documented visually via photography, audio recording and film, but also materially (discarded waste, etchings, chalk rubbings etc.), textually, ethnographically and verbally. This process will therefore involve interviewing residents and the local community about their own experiences and ideas around the regeneration project and changes to Robin Hood Gardens. Interviews will take the form of oral histories where participants will recount their relationship to robin hood gardens and the regeneration project. They will take place throughout the duration of the project, the idea being that once a rapport develops with the community they will inform aspects of the projects research focus. Archival research will also be undertaken to obtain architectural plans, construction procedures and policy documents. This is to ensure that the 'assemblage' of the site will be analysed, investigating how the site 'came into being' physically, politically and socially.

Risks to participants

Does your research involve any of the below?

Children (under the age of 16),

No

Participants with cognitive or physical impairment that may render them unable to give informed consent,

No

Participants who may be vulnerable for personal, emotional, psychological or other reasons,

No

Participants who may become vulnerable as a result of the conduct of the study (e.g. because it raises sensitive issues) or as a result of what is revealed in the study (e.g. criminal behaviour, or behaviour which is culturally or socially questionable),

Yes

Participants in unequal power relations (e.g. groups that you teach or work with, in which participants may feel coerced or unable to withdraw),

No

Participants who are likely to suffer negative consequences if identified (e.g. professional censure, exposure to stigma or abuse, damage to professional or social standing),

No

Details,

The research will entail intense immersion into the lives of many people who live in RHG. It will require being invited into people's homes, talking about their intimate history with the site, and may discuss potential illegal activity (vandalism etc.). This means that there will be full disclosure documents produced that will detail exactly how the data will be used, so the participant is fully aware of what they are taking part in. All data will be made anonymous, and destroyed after it has been written up. All participants will be shown the final product (quote or image in thesis or in other related publication) and asked to sign off on its suitability. The on-site research will be conducted overtly, with full disclosure of the institutions involved from the outset

Design and Data

Does your study include any of the following?

Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and/or informed consent at the time?,

No

Is there a risk that participants may be or become identifiable?,

Yes

Is pain or discomfort likely to result from the study?,

No

Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?,

No

Does this research require approval from the NHS?,

No

If so what is the NHS Approval number,

Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?,

No

Will human tissue including blood, saliva, urine, faeces, sperm or eggs be collected or used in the project?

No

Will the research involve the use of administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?

No

Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?

No

Is there a risk that any of the material, data, or outcomes to be used in this study has been derived from ethically-unsound procedures?

No

Details,

As the research is taking place at a specific housing estate and local community (Robin Hood Gardens) that cannot be anonymised there is a high risk that certain individuals may be identifiable to those in the area or to those involved in the regeneration project. However all participants and their data will be made anonymous and any information that goes into the project will be subject to participants approval and consent.

Risks to the Environment / Society

Will the conduct of the research pose risks to the environment, site, society, or artifacts?

No

Will the research be undertaken on private or government property without permission?

No

Will geological or sedimentological samples be removed without permission?

No

Will cultural or archaeological artifacts be removed without permission?

No

Details,

Risks to Researchers/Institution

Does your research present any of the following risks to researchers or to the institution?

Is there a possibility that the researcher could be placed in a vulnerable situation either emotionally or physically (e.g. by being alone with vulnerable, or potentially aggressive participants, by entering an unsafe environment, or by working in countries in which there is unrest)?

Yes

Is the topic of the research sensitive or controversial such that the researcher could be ethically or legally compromised (e.g. as a result of disclosures made during the research)?

No

Will the research involve the investigation or observation of illegal practices, or the participation in illegal practices?

No

Could any aspects of the research mean that the University has failed in its duty to care for researchers, participants, or the environment / society?,

No

Is there any reputational risk concerning the source of your funding?,

No

Is there any other ethical issue that may arise during the conduct of this study that could bring the institution into disrepute?,

No

Details,

Due to the politically contested nature of Robin Hood Gardens there is a low risk of encountering individuals who may be hostile to researchers/research taking place at the site. In addition as the site is currently undergoing demolition there is also an extremely low risk of coming into contact with potentially unsafe environments and materials. Although this is mitigated by on site safety measures and security.

Declaration

By submitting this form, I declare that the questions above have been answered truthfully and to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I take full responsibility for these responses. I undertake to observe ethical principles throughout the research project and to report any changes that affect the ethics of the project to the University Research Ethics Committee for review.

Certificate produced for user ID, MBVB211

Date:	19/06/2018 17:06
Signed by:	Brookes, Edward (2015)
Digital Signature:	Edward Brookes
Certificate dated:	6/19/2018 5:28:04 PM
Files uploaded:	Full-Review-818-2018-03-01-13-01-MBVB211.pdf RHGparticipantinformationsheet.doc RHG Consent Form.doc

Confirmation of Ethics Approval

04/05/2021

Email - Brookes, Edward (2015) - Outlook

Result of your application to the Research Ethics Committee (application ID 818)

Ethics Application System <ethics@rhul.ac.uk>

Thu 23/08/2018 16:40

To: Brookes, Edward (2015) <Edward.Brookes.2015@live.rhul.ac.uk>; Mould, Oli <Oli.Mould@rhul.ac.uk>; ethics@rhul.ac.uk <ethics@rhul.ac.uk>

PI: Oli Mould

Project title: Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.

REC ProjectID: 818

Your application has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

Please report any subsequent changes that affect the ethics of the project to the University Research Ethics Committee ethics@rhul.ac.uk

Risk Assessment

Form Identification No.
(For Departmental Use)

ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON FIELD WORK RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

ANNEX 1

SECTION 1: GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS	
Proposed field trip by (group or individual): Edward Brookes	Status (undergraduate/postgraduate/staff): Postgraduate
Department: Geography	Name of risk assessor: Edward Brookes
Named Course Leader/Supervisor (if different): Oli Mould/ David Gilbert	Course and course code (if applicable): PhD
Is this field trip for:	
a. Undergraduates	<input type="checkbox"/> a. Teaching purposes
b. Postgraduates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> b. Thesis
c. Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> c. Dissertation
d. Other	<input type="checkbox"/> d. Other research project
Locations: Robin Hood Gardens Estate (RHG- currently undergoing demolition and subsequent construction of new flats), Poplar, London, for interviews with residents, photographs and material evidence. Victoria and Albert Museum- interviews data collection in conjunction with preservation of Robin Hood Gardens. Home based research in Kent.	
Dates: 17/02/2018 to 17/09/2020	From: N/A To: N/A
SECTION 2: DETAILED ITINERARY	
Place of departure: Ebbsfleet international/ Chatham railway station	Destination(s): Blackwell station (DLR), Robin Hood Gardens Estate, Poplar. Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London
Mode of transport/travel arrangements: Train/ Car	Dates of stay at accommodation: N/A will stay at home in-between research and commute
Name, address and telephone number of accommodation: N/A	Name, address and telephone number of fieldwork base camp (if different): 01634 845715 07581391653
Summary of proposed activities: Semi structured Interviews, Video Ethnography, Material evidence Collection, Photographs, Film, Audio Recording.	
Equipment/techniques to be used: Digital Camera on phone, Digital Voice Recorder, SLR Camera, HD Video Camera	
SECTION 3: PRE-TRIP PREPARATION AND CHECKS	
Insurance (please specify personal, third party, travel, equipment) arranged with and date:	
Equipment inventory attached?	Yes/No
List of field workers attached? *	Yes/No
Ratio of staff to students identified to be necessary:	
Health Checks & Vaccinations identified to be necessary (please specify): N/A	
Specific health requirements for individuals available to Course leader?	Yes/No
Record of next of kin details for each individual available to Course leader? *	Yes/No
Record of Foreign Office advice (to be checked immediately prior to overseas trips): Checked – No Concerns	
SECTION 4: DECLARATION	
The above has been completed to the best of my/our knowledge and is an accurate identification of the known or foreseeable hazards and of the safety controls to be followed.	

Risk Assessor	Signature: <i>Edward Prokes</i>	Date: 17/02/2018
Worker or course leader	Signature:	Date:
Supervisor	Signature:	Date:
Health and Safety Co-ordinator	Signature:	Date:

* To be logged with Head of Department

ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: FIELDWORK RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Person Undertaking Assessment		Date Conducted	Field trip / Field work being undertaken					
Edward Brookes		17/02/2018	Excavating Gentrification: A contemporary history of Robin Hood Gardens, London.					
Ref No	Hazard under review	No & Description of Staff/Students/ Others Involved	Existing Controls	Assessed Level of Risk			Further Action Required	By (Date) + Review Date
				L	M	H		
Physical Hazards (e.g. extreme weather, mountains and cliffs, quarries, excavations, marshes and quicksand, fresh or seawater, etc)*								
	<p>Possible extreme weather conditions: Please consider risk of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong winds • Thunderstorms • Hurricane/tornados • Dusty conditions • Seasonal weather conditions <p>Hot and Sunny conditions</p> <p>RHG – Demolition/ Building site – ground may be uneven, muddy, some hazardous material may be <u>present</u></p>	1 Student	<p>Check local weather reports in <u>advance</u></p> <p>Appropriate sun hat/cream protection Not working during midday sun</p> <p>Make sure to wear appropriate <u>foot wear</u>- boots and protective clothing. Access to the building site will be supervised.</p>	X			<p>Plan to Reschedule trip if <u>required</u></p> <p>Ensure that appropriate clothes are worn based on <u>weather</u></p> <p>Consider whether <u>you'll</u> need to acquire these items</p>	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
Biological Hazards (e.g. poisonous animals or plants, aggressive animals, soil (tetanus), freshwater where rats may be endemic (leptospirosis or Weil's disease), dense vegetation (where Lyme disease from sheep ticks could be endemic), insects, hygiene, etc)*								
	General Hygiene – being in a city <u>environment</u>	1 Student	Washing & toilet facilities may be unsanitary, may require gels, wipes etc	X			Consider whether <u>you'll</u> need to acquire these items	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
Chemical Hazards (e.g. pesticides, dusts, contaminated soils, chemicals brought on the site, biological fixatives, etc)*								

	RHG – Demolition/ Building site, some minor risk of being exposed to dust and other waste materials.	1 Student	Building site will have own health and safety regulations that should also be complied with - Access will be supervised, and appropriate protection will be provided – aka hard hat and dust mask if needed	X		Consider purchasing own protective equipment for individual use when visiting surrounding area.	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
Man-made Hazards (e.g. electrical equipment, machinery, transport and vehicles, insecure buildings, slurry and silage pits, power and pipelines, military property)*							
	Using portable electrical Appliances – Possible risk of Electrocution RHG – Demolition/ Building site – presence of large machinery, building rubble, waste and hazardous materials	1 Student	All portable electrical appliances will have been PAT tested and will show the appropriate sticker to show when this was done. Building site will have own health and safety regulations that should also be complied with - Access will be supervised, and appropriate protection will be provided – aka hard hat and dust mask if needed. Time spent on site will also be limited to no more than several hours, so risk of exposure will be low. Wear high visibility clothing	X	X	Do not use equipment if it appears to be faulty or unsafe, or if it does not display the appropriate PAT test sticker. Consider purchasing own protective equipment for individual use when visiting surrounding area. Ensure to wear appropriate footwear – boots Will have to be aware of surroundings at all times, to avoid tripping hazards. Do not move around the site unsupervised If not comfortable with safety features at the site then consider abandoning research collection	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020

	Roads, Public transport- Travelling between <u>locations</u> and venues.	1 Student	Carry a <u>map</u> Ensure that you have a means of raising the alarm if lost. Road safety knowledge, and awareness of local traffic regulations Awareness of crime, pickpocketing etc.	X		Get advice on being <u>vigilant</u> Do not assume that drivers will stop at pedestrian crossing. Wait for the traffic to stop before stepping into the road. If there is no pavement, walk facing the oncoming traffic and step out of the road for oncoming vehicles, if possible	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
Personal Safety (e.g. lone working, night working, attack on person or property, cultural differences, poor communication/remoteness etc)*							
	Potential conflict in interview situations	1 Student	Carry a mobile phone at all times and know how to raise help should you need it. Ask local advice on safe places to go. Avoid travelling alone in an unfamiliar place.	X		Respect local customs and be aware of social problems.	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
	Lone working – risk of personal attack	1 Student	Work in public areas, have mobile phone on at all times. leave details of your itinerary with a friend or family member	X		Do not enter unfamiliar areas <u>alone</u> Do not carry more money than needed	17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020
Environmental Hazards (e.g. pollution, rubbish, disturbance of eco-system, etc)*							

	<p>RHG – Demolition/ Building site – presence of building rubble, waste, building materials.</p> <p>City based pollution/ rubbish</p>	<p>1 Student</p>	<p>Access to building site will be supervised and limited so exposure will be low.</p> <p>Appropriate clothing and footwear will be worn to minimise risks. If handling materials on site, then gloves to be worn at all <u>times</u></p> <p>To avoid contact with street level waste, and to ensure appropriate hygiene procedures – as mentioned above – carry hand <u>sanitiser</u></p> <p>Check <u>city pollution</u> levels on days of research to ensure they are within acceptable limits</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>		<p>Consider purchasing appropriate safety equipment – gloves/boots</p>	
<p>Other Hazards (please <u>specify</u>)*</p>							

	<p>Managing and exacerbation of pre-existing medical conditions (e.g., asthma, phobias, diabetes) -Personal health and living or unfamiliar working environment</p>	<p>1 Student</p>	<p>Will take, or know where to <u>find</u> adequate supplies of any medication or medical materials that are needed</p> <p>Inform supervisor of any pre-existing medical conditions or phobias that might affect the work that you are able to do.</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>Obtain GP advice on pre-existing medical conditions. When working in remote locations, ensure that you carry your required (preventative or emergency aid) medication with you.</p> <p>Know your limitations and stop work if necessary, let someone know of your medical condition before embarking on fieldwork, carry a first aid kit</p>	<p>17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020</p>
	<p>Working in other establishments</p>	<p>1 Student</p>	<p>Check establishments have their own safety guidelines in place (they should be able to provide you with their own risk assessments), follow all instructions given by establishment</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>Carry a mobile phone with you at all times. if uneasy, stop the <u>interview</u> immediately</p>	<p>17/02/2018 – 17/09/2020</p>

Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form
MP 10.3.04

* Specify precisely which apply