

/// Architecture

Oliver East, Manchester

/// Architecture was born from a desire to shine a light through the ‘conspiracy of blindness’ (Thompson, 2017) to the rubbish problem in Greater Manchester. Fly-tipping, the act of dumping waste items and materials in public space, is a problem in the city – as it is wherever the UK government's policy of austerity has decimated local services. Piles of wood, prone mattresses, spilt bags of rubbish, and more can be found everywhere from dead ends, to ginnels, and residential areas. In poorer neighbourhoods, it has simply become part of the street furniture.

/// Architecture recycles this detritus into temporary interventions, making the neglected spaces where dumping occurs impossible to ignore, thus forming new memories in each transient audience, both during the process of making the work, and for the lifetime of each piece thereafter.

The process of each work is an essential part of the piece, as they are executed in daylight and often in places with very high foot and vehicle traffic. Painting rubbish on public land is not illegal, but it is transgressive enough to elicit varied responses. This impulsive methodology engages publics in ways that sanctioned art cannot. I am often engaged in conversation by passers-by and stakeholders in the spaces in which I work. These chance encounters

more readily reveal things about the spirit of place (*genius loci*). The *genius loci* uncovered whilst on site for many hours, across multiple visits, is one part of a multi-dimensional conversation with residents and the city, creating memories in forgotten places.

The project has grown into three distinct threads; works that illuminate the problem, those that imitate the immediate architecture the material was found in, and works that leave spaces immaculate. This third version, ‘bin bag works’, uses yellow bin bags with a thick black line to illustrate the amount of time given over to cleaning a given area. If any design is completed without the material being taken away, I contact the local council to inform them of the rubbish on site. The life of each piece is then from that phone call or email until the material is disposed of.

Placemaking may well provide an ornamental gathering point in areas of gentrification, but the ephemerality of these temporary and sudden interventions – whilst disrupting the perceived lifespan of public art – can generate conversations around neglected space not otherwise heard, especially when executed in areas yet to be gentrified. *///* Architecture is a viable and responsive alternative to the artwashing practices of placemaking.



Figure 1. Bin bags and rubbish. St Michael's and Angel Meadow, Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

Each bag roughly twenty minutes
Of litter picking in mazy
Runs under Mancunian Way
Combing grass verges of this proud
Town that will tell anyone still.

Paying attention that 'we do
Things different here'. All these sacks
O'shite beg to differ, sunshine
We do doorstep dumping as well
As the rest. Civic pride my arse.

First thing on a Sunday morning.
Armed with bags warning 'offensive
Material', I start clearing
A former homeless camp having
Arrived a day late to be of

Any real use to the former
Residents, whose temporary
Camp I had hoped to tidy. Light
Green squares now dot one corner
Of the park where tired bodies.

Lay the night before. With me in
This urban plot, two young drunks and
One quiet man. He'll drop to the floor
A kitchen knife from his trench coat
And apologise as he wraps

If back in newspaper. One of
The other lads will scope me out
As Feds by bowling up to me
And back to his buff strewn perch, where
I'm confirmed as 'safe' to his pal.

Figure 2. Found bed frame, double glazed windows and spray paint. Ayres Road, Old Trafford, Greater Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

Small cars thumb their snotty nose at
The puny speed humps. A scroat in
Training holds a wheelie above
The women's headscarf. I'm followed
By a surveillance van. We nod.





Figure 3. Three found doors and spray paint. Maher Gardens, Greater Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

The sound of stuttering shuttle
Runs on loose stone and glass. Fitful
Legs between emptying cans and
The job at hand. Vacant thresholds
Persistently prone, they're not fussed.

Arcade sky from Hulme to Moss Side
Covers, in sight, myself (clearly)
And the odd walker using lines
Warn down through small gaps in fences.
Going church, college or Asda.



Figure 4. Second visit. Maher Gardens, Greater Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

As heavy doors pirouette on
Corners before crashing down on
Uneven ground, flipping their brass
Handles to the young architect's
Desire to have them stand just so,

The man hopes this clumsy attempt
At spatial agency will at
Least tempt the students to bite and
Ask of his design on dormant
Place. But he's left to fuss alone.

Losing panes as planes to fill with
Each meet and great with floor and door,
The glass to grass ratio does
Naught for paws nor claims to turn
Ignored space to dynamic place.



Figure 5. Third visit. Maher Gardens, Greater Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

More and more like clowns as doors made
Up for shows for naught but those that
Knows short cuts and time. Time to spare
For dawdle and pace, getting to
Place one foot in front of t'other.

The guard doing laps of college
Grounds measures his gait so that each
Fly by abides by the same count
Of steps, give or take. He cares not
For what he's up to with them doors.

With fists of bags, black save for where
They've split and warned to spill colours
Running the gamut from Fisher-
Price pink to pilau white, the tank
Topped woman dumps them in plain sight.

Figure 6. Found wood and vinyl paint. Four consecutive visits to St Bride's Way, Old Trafford, Greater Manchester, UK. Photographs ©Oliver East.

Shelves, I think. The audit'll wait
Though as I'm blindsided by the
Matriarch who dumped this shit, armed
With tea and biscuits plus pasta
And potatoes. I'm welcomed home.

The merry mother of three (that
I can see) stifles my questions
As to why she's littered with Rich
Tea. Six biscuits to one brew. A
Treat to graft ratio askew.



Figure 7.

At school runs I'm blessed by a crowd
Easily impressed. Saddled up,
They circle, at a distance mind.
Daylight transgression allows a
handsome studio and soapbox.

When I return each morning my
Past inquisitors have left their
Own marks on their new public art
As tyre treads and skids now top
The paint and scrape it from the wood.



Figure 8.

From my lectern on the grass I
Can lecture lithe young men in the
Outfield as Pakistan take on
More Pakistan. Deep square leg gets
An earful mid stuttering starts.

The Match of the Day theme plays (like
a birthday card speaker system)
Across the streets of Old Trafford
As Mr Whippy, or a Sikh
Sibling, parks by my feeder's house.



Figure 9.

After accepting double pay
For a cider lolly so he'll
Reverse four feet so me photo's,
Just so, my audience figures
Rise ninety-nine with a flake times.



Figure 10. Found cushion, pillow, bungee cord and vinyl paint. John Street, Salford, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

John street should be prefixed with an
'Off' or a 'Back' and take its name
From a surrounding road, as to
Bestow full-on road worthiness
On this moody stretch of cobbles

And a beauty of a blind wall,
Is, well, spot on, on reflection.
The buddleia, the red brick, grey
Flags are all very everyday.
Ordinary. Perfect. They're 'John'.



Figure 11. Found fridge and spray paint. Greenhorn Walk, Hulme, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

Between the first trip and the next
A stack of twenty-plus white bowls
Is left on the ersatz table.
Dictating the day's design, they
Find a new home before I'm back

For a third, on which I find a
Key ring with the portrait of a
kid, propped up in room in Hulme,
I assume. The vivid frigid
Box amplifying its return.



Figure 12. Found easel and spray paint. Salem Avenue, Toronto, Canada. Photograph ©Oliver East.

Trying my best to wait till that
School bus rolls past again, so this
Thing works. Painting on the school run
But no joy. On frozen finger
Petting terms with local fingers though.



Figure 13. Bin bags and rubbish. Mancunian Way, Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

Toiletries and bags of bras, socks
And pants. Things we know where to find
At home and dry, lay here, piss wet
Through. Abandoned when told to do
One from this mint city of ours.



Figure 14. Various shapes and lengths of found wood and spray paint. South Croston Street, Old Trafford, Greater Manchester, UK. Photograph ©Oliver East.

The sound of a busy timber
Yard. Let's assume a Polish tongue
Before our prejudice is kicked
To the kerb by Balkan banter
Labouring Man U's loss last night.

'You-Nigh-Teed', peppered with childish
Jeers, starts keeping metronomic
Time with reversing signals from
Lorries backing in to pick up
Or drop off all the wood you'd need.

Broken English across the yard
May be why our 'Anyone but
United' friend is taking this
Slight and running with it. Leaning
Half out his cab, grin breaching 'fache.



Oliver East

As a dyslexic with attention deficit disorder, I'm forever exploring methods for betterment outside of a classroom and quickly. I have created many long walks with arbitrarily imposed restrictions to complete whilst figuring this out. I'm interested in walking as a creative act, and how one might create knowledge from this. I design situations that put myself or a project at risk of total failure, and then create work telling you how badly that went – such as walking from Helsinki to Tampere whilst drawing constantly. I currently use impromptu illustration as a means to expose issues regarding the ownership, demarcation, and governance of public space. I live and work in Manchester, UK.

Reference

Thompson, M. (2017) *Rubbish theory: the creation and destruction of value* London: Pluto Press.