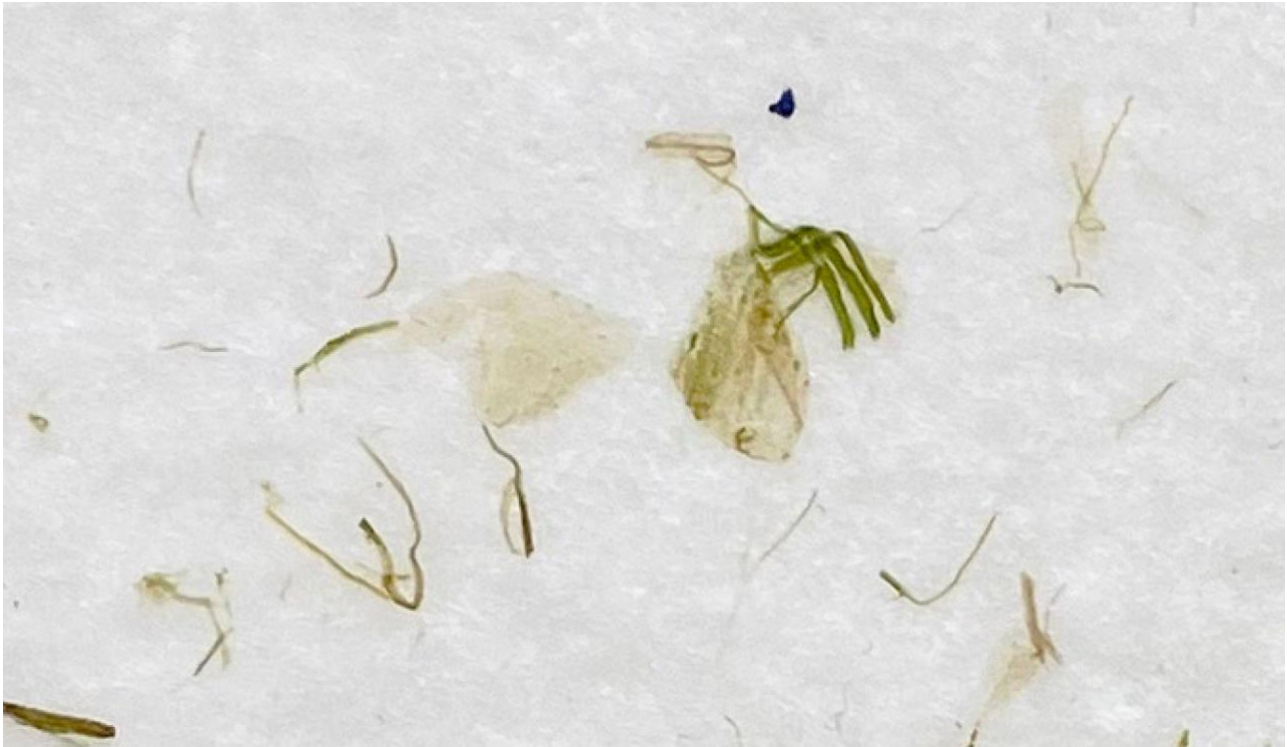


## **We Feel Agitated**

**Alberto Duman**

### **THE FEELING**



**Jessie Brennan**, *To Agitate, Still*, 2023, 311 handmade papers – daffodil, cotton and sisal – produced from plant matter gathered during gardening sessions with residents of Setchell estate, dimensions variable. (Commissioned by Drawing Room; photograph Alberto Duman).

We feel agitated.

We have been agitated for some time.

We make time to remain agitated.

We keep this matter in a stage of agitation.

We don't expect these matters to be settled any time soon.

We stay with it.

We see them as fragments of possible redemption.

We talk to others who also feel this.

We make provisions for how 'we can build worlds we deserve.'<sup>1</sup>

And. We don't know exactly who is We.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ajay Parasram and Alex Khasnabish: 'How Can We Build the World We Deserve', in *Frequently Asked White Questions* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2022), n.p.

It's a We erupting out of a particular kind of pluralising, of a struggle for speaking out of ourselves, looking for a We in the world.

It's an approach to being in the world that acknowledges the situatedness of our positionality and the ways in which the modern colonial order of aesthetics continues to shape our experiences in unique but interdependent ways.

*'What happens when we pluralise the place where we are thinking from?'<sup>2</sup>*

We are feeling agitated by forces around us that structure our context.  
We are being agitated by matter in flux at a particular historical conjuncture.

We, ourselves, are matter in flux.

We are agitating it to keep it in flux, so we can see the elements that compose it, the forces that wish it to be settled in facile narratives and visualise those doing the stirring.

It would always be wise not to overstretch the use of the plural, lest we end up speaking out of terms for those absent ones, or we disrespectfully claim individual ownership of our thinking.

But this is a We that stakes its claims in a rejection of the isolated subjectivity of our being in the city.

It may be the We of those in the room – as they say 'the right people are the people in the room' – when they come together for prefigurative work, to make space for different futures while hospicing the present in its agitation.

It's the We that was manifested in the original 'mission statement' for the community centre Centerprise, as explained by founder Margaret Gosley when she was interviewed by Rosa Schling: *'we are a group of people composed of who we are'*.<sup>3</sup>

*'What do we do as practitioners, as thinkers?'*

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<sup>2</sup> Rolando Vázquez, *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthetics and the end of the contemporary*, (Amsterdam: Mondrian Fund, 2020), p.xxv.

<sup>3</sup> Rosa Schling, *The Lime Green Mystery: An Oral history of the Centeprise co-operative* (London: On the Record, 2017). The current exhibition at PEER Gallery, London (23 June – 9 September 2023) also takes its name from Gosley's phrase. The group exhibition traces artistic, cultural and social collective work that took place in Hackney between 1971 and 1986. Bringing together new commissions, existing artwork, literature, film and archival material, the exhibition and accompanying events programme explores the radical, influential and often entwined histories of cooperative and collective work in the borough. See <https://www.peeruk.org/we-are-a-group-of-people>, accessed 5th September 2023.

*Of course, this “we” is as problematic as we can imagine.’<sup>4</sup>*

## THE MAKING



**Jessie Brennan**, *To Agitate, Still*, 2023, 311 handmade papers – daffodil, cotton and sisal – produced from plant matter gathered during gardening sessions with residents of Setchell estate, dimensions variable. (Commissioned by Drawing Room; photograph Alberto Duman).

*‘There is a lot to learn if we listen to the practitioners.’<sup>5</sup>*

I’m listening and looking closely at what kind of community infrastructures Jessie’s work has emerged from, the methods she worked with, the time she spent, the spaces she walked into and the ideas that empowered her choices.

And then, I acknowledge how it all went into the blender...

All that’s left is a slushy condensed matter ready to be laid out into 311 sheets of handmade paper, to be redistributed to Setchell Estate residents, one for each household.

This is where she foraged the plant matter gathered during gardening sessions, which emerged from conversations with a resident named Josephine, a Nigerian woman in her late seventies, whose gentle and constant dedication to the shared green spaces of the estate acted as a condenser of the ideas to this work.

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<sup>4</sup> Carlos Garrido Castellano, quoted from Helen Carey, ‘Art Activism for an Anticolonial Future: a conversation with Carlos Garrido Castellano’, *Community Development Journal* (13 October 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsac027>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

The amalgamate of daffodil, cotton and sisal produced by the harvesting, drying and blending holds in its gooey suspension more than its component parts.

The carefully staged passing of this matter from one state to another also functions like a provisional holding place, a hospicing locus where the personal and cultural histories contained in the memory of the gleaned matter are activated anew, like molecules vigorously shaken in homoeopathic dilutions.

It's all in the fragments of perception of floral beauty, the shreds of conversations held around them during the harvest and the vows of intentionality attempting to answer the question 'what is to be done?'

We're still aware that all that's left of life's experience in between sensing and knowing, is just a formless gloop full of possibilities, a think-feel mushy potion of possible becomings, ebbing and flowing in the excesses of the agitated turmoil.

*'Beauty is not a luxury; rather it is a way of creating possibility in the space of enclosure, a radical act of subsistence, an embrace of our terribleness, a transfiguration of the given. It is a will to adorn, a proclivity for the baroque, and the love of too much.'*<sup>6</sup>

The agitated time of the suspension also affords some cultural forensics, where seemingly inert and neutral species like daffodils are laying bare the politics of 'Colonial and Postcolonial deployment' of its image in action, sending forth its demand for us to remain agitated, attentive, caring and complex.<sup>7</sup>

Surely, for many, there are 'A host, of golden daffodils; / Beside the lake, beneath the trees / Fluttering and dancing in the breeze', but for others, within the same lines there is also a restless reminder of how the power of the poetic can be mobilised and weaponised into servile narratives, the purpose of which is to order aesthetic perceptions and sensibilities.<sup>8</sup>

The effect is to flatten the very horizon that poetry opens up beyond language by fencing

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<sup>6</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals* (London: Profile Books, 2020), p.60, cited in Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, (London: Daunt Books Originals, 2023), p.79.

<sup>7</sup> For a valuable conversation about these opposed readings of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils', see Karen Welberry, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Deployment of "Daffodils"', *Kunapipi*, Vol.19, Issue 1 (1997), available at <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2460&context=kunapipi>, accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>8</sup> William Wordsworth, 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (commonly known as 'Daffodils'), in Antonia Till, ed., *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), p.187, available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud>, accessed 5 September 2023.

the freedoms it induces into submissive enclosures, their official interpretations acting like a colonisation of the mind.

In the syncopated movement of the vats filled with the pulped, blended substance, this dark historical matter is agitated too, claiming its own harvest, asserting its own historical sedimentation in the here and now, speaking of ruptures and alignments that only an active and wilful silencing of the past could produce.<sup>9</sup>

What the agitation allows us to see is simultaneity and complexity against ghosting, reductionism and silencing; it allows us to see that a year before its famous evocation of daffodils, the same poet would write an elegy to Toussaint Louverture, the figurehead of the Haitian Revolution, who would die in a jail in France two months later.<sup>10</sup>

*'It is about facing our complicity in violence and unsustainability and its implications with the courage of really seeking to connect with the collective pain, past, present and future'.<sup>11</sup>*

Mandy Brannan, the paper maker that Jessie has collaborated with, introduced other words into the mix: couching (pronounced 'coo-ching'), is the term papermakers use to describe transferring a newly formed sheet of paper from the mould to the felts.

So, when we look at these apparently innocuous 311 pieces of handmade paper, we are also seeing the repeated and unique outcomes – more like attempts at desired results – of instinctive and happenstance decision-making. Each one of them becomes the freeze-framed, washed-up recording of the chosen rhythm of the agitation, the only existing snapshot of one-off moments of 'letting go', deliberated by pulling the 'picture' onto the mould.

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<sup>9</sup> See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (London: Penguin Random House, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> This elegy to the 'hero' of the Haitian Revolution was first published in 1803 and it was one of the very few acknowledgements in print of the mere existence of such an event – let alone its positive reception – which was deliberately denied its concrete historical significance for much time after its occurrence by Western academics and scholars, see Haram Lee, "'To Toussaint L'Ouverture" as an Elegy', *Rethinking the Age of Revolution* Brandeis University blog, available at [blogs.brandeis.edu/revolutions/2014/04/14/to-toussaint-louverture-as-an-elegy/](https://blogs.brandeis.edu/revolutions/2014/04/14/to-toussaint-louverture-as-an-elegy/), accessed 5 September 2023. In 1807 Friedrich Hegel would publish *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which, in the section on 'Self-Consciousness', contained the famous 'Master/Slave' dialectic. There is no mention whatsoever of the Haitian Revolution, the constitution of 1804 and the proclamation of the first ever 'Black Republic'. On this and many others deliberate acts of denial and obliteration from history of Western public intellectuals and thinkers, see Susan F. Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Gesturing towards Decolonial Futures: 'Reciprocity gestures', available at [decolonialfutures.net](https://decolonialfutures.net), accessed 5 September 2023.



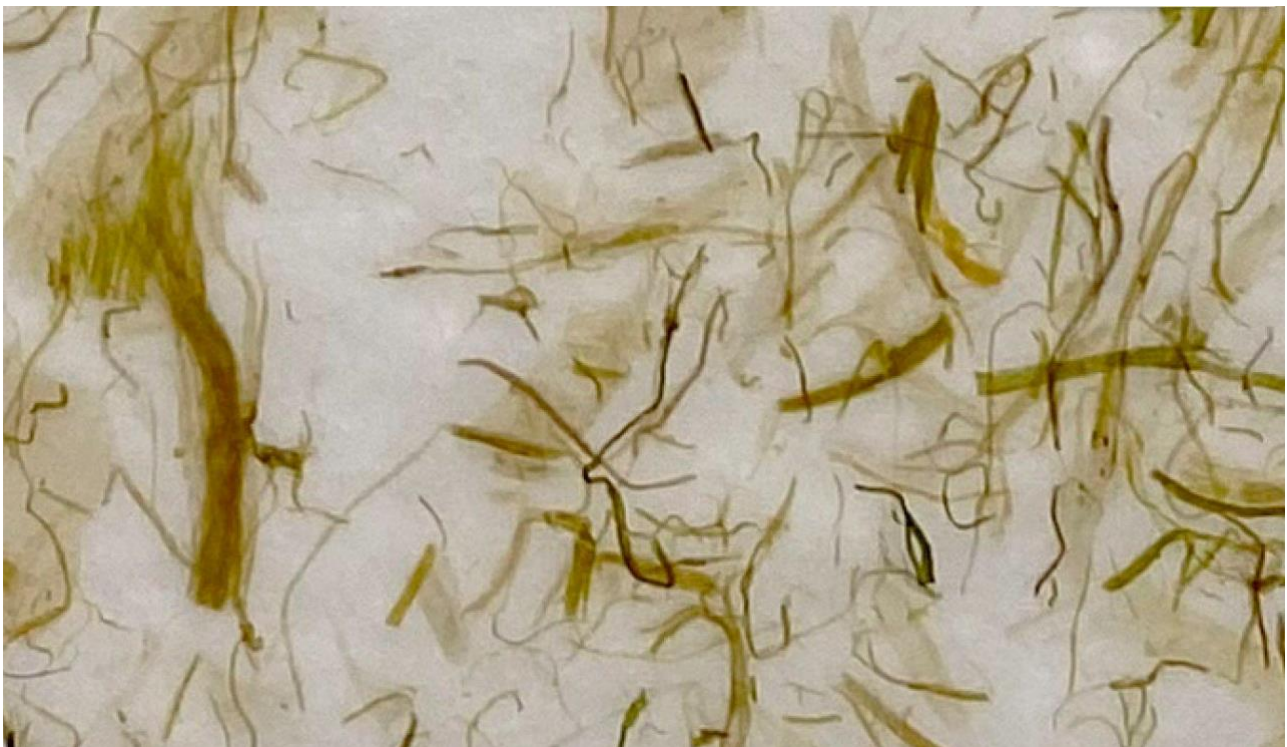
By this, we understand that the overall result is an anxious taxonomy, a restless botany, borne of agitation: the *'heart with pleasure fills'*, neither with the sublime, nor with the picturesque, but with a tainted sense of apprehension and disquiet which exists mostly outside of the frame.<sup>12</sup>

If *'freedom is the distance between the hunter and the hunted'* this here is a conditional, nervous freedom, to be found between charged matter in flux and its multiple surface settlements, sheets of trial and no error.<sup>13</sup>

It's also a space to be found in different and simultaneous time zones.

*'To be nervous is to be aware of time as multiple, as disjunctive [...] We can't avoid recognizing that we are all out of sync.'*<sup>14</sup>

## THE POETICS



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<sup>12</sup> Wordsworth.

<sup>13</sup> Ocean Vuong, *On Earth we're briefly gorgeous: A novel* (Penguin Books: New York, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> Jane Frances Dunlop, 'Nervous? We Should Be', *Real Life* (19 July 2016), available at <https://reallifemag.com/nervous-we-should-be/>, accessed 5 September 2023.

*'We live in a perpetually burning building, and what we must save from it, all the time, is love.'*<sup>15</sup>

Today, there are many cultural prompts that would suggest we recast a colonial memory of recognition and symbolic retribution in our cities, as if everything was seen in a rear-view mirror of history, leaving us on a linear path towards other futures, wilfully or tactically amnesiac.

But still. We feel agitated, haunted by the awareness that the temporality of colonial violence is never linear and that the presences we feel are not just some distant atmospheres of a settled temporality.

They are more likely to embody very present feelings of incredulity and a reluctance to acquiesce to its current settlement and its flattening of positions anywhere in the world. These are histories that actively disturb the present.<sup>16</sup>

Kicking up a storm and then leaving the scene may be painful and traumatic enough. To look at every single frame or fragment of the storm in its passing, as though each one contained some unique truth, is about granting just a little more time to objecthood in its forming stage of process, and see what may reside in the creases of its thinginess.

It's about making space for different times.  
It's about drawing choreographies for dances not yet devised.  
It's about trusting the people in the room, the We.

This is something Jessie knows well, so adept in sensing the flourishings and the pitfalls of working relationally and contextually and, in many of her projects, redeploying the 'crumple' as a visual device so that narratives need not run merely in one direction.<sup>17</sup>

It's about realising through perception that the matter in flux we are agitating is constantly prefiguring a different future, it's an anticipatory action, something like '*gesturing towards a decolonial future*', speaking through the We of a collective.<sup>18</sup>

*'What is the grammar that makes things legible and thus the only things that become real and ideal? If you want to put the world in a box, what is the size of this box and is it a square box? How does the world need to be, in order to be*

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<sup>15</sup> James Grissom, *Follies of God: Tennessee Williams and the Women of the Fog* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Sholette, 'Histories that disturb the present' (2020), available at <https://youtu.be/3SjeAzICGYy>, accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>17</sup> See Jessie Brennan, *A Fall of Ordinarity and Light* (2014), available at [www.jessiebrennan.co.uk/a-fall-of-ordinarity-and-light](http://www.jessiebrennan.co.uk/a-fall-of-ordinarity-and-light), accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Gesturing towards Decolonial Futures.

*contained in this box? So we talk about illegibilities: things that are viable, but unimaginable, unthinkable within this grammar.*<sup>19</sup>

In resisting the deployment and weaponisation of poetry – as in the case of Wordsworth’s ‘daffodils’ – we also resist the same agencies that force instrumentalisation, institutionalisation and fixity onto the matter in flux of social practice and socially engaged art.

*‘At a moment of increasing institutionalization of social practice (the appearance of curricula and strict guidelines for scholarships or grants), we run the risk of losing alternative imaginings. By narrowing down and fixing social practice’s past, we also fix and preempt its future’.*<sup>20</sup>

A variety of open, yet-to-be present futures is also embedded into the work itself, an invisible social watermark borne from Jessie’s demands to Drawing Room to instigate and institute an invitation to the neighbouring Setchell Estate as part of her commission.

Each unique specimen emerging from the repetitive ritual of its making acquires the essence of a bond, a value to be redeemed as access to Drawing Room, its facilities, archived knowledge, meeting spaces and other possible claims to its assets not yet envisaged.

What is to move institutions onto less-travelled paths if not the demands of the artists who are its constituents? It’s a We kind of thinking, less about the ‘owning’ and more about the ‘owing’.<sup>21</sup>

Jessie’s demands persuaded decision-makers towards self-reflexivity, affording her provocations to be heard when they landed.

Her ‘work’ as artist in this context asked: *‘What do we want the project to be, to do, and who for?’*<sup>22</sup>

## THE POLITICS

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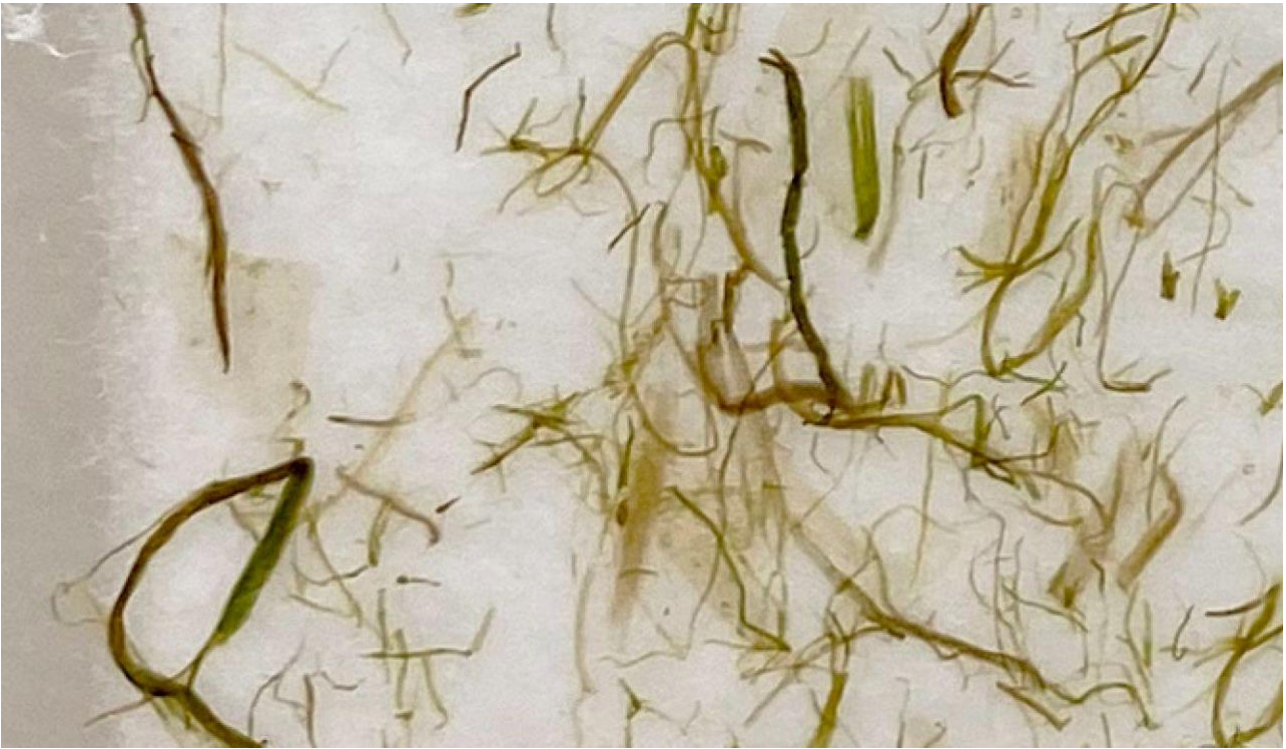
<sup>19</sup> Vanessa Andreotti, quoted from Dougald Hine, ‘The Vital Compass: A Conversation With Vanessa Andreotti’, *Dark Mountain* Issue 16: Refuge (2019), available at [dougald.nu/the-vital-compass-a-conversation-with-vanessa-andreotti/](http://dougald.nu/the-vital-compass-a-conversation-with-vanessa-andreotti/), accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Carlos Garrido Castellano, *Art Activism for A Decolonial Future* (New York: SUNY Press, 2021), p.65, available at [soar.suny.edu/handle/20.500.12648/7166](http://soar.suny.edu/handle/20.500.12648/7166), accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Rolando Vázquez, p.8.

<sup>22</sup> Extract from written notes recorded after a conversation between Drawing Room and Jessie Brennan, revealing the significance of Jessie’s presence and role in the process, to be understood as an active ‘agent of change’ rather than just an ‘exhibiting artist’.





**Jessie Brennan**, *To Agitate, Still*, 2023, 311 handmade papers – daffodil, cotton and sisal – produced from plant matter gathered during gardening sessions with residents of Setchell estate, dimensions variable. (Commissioned by Drawing Room; photograph Alberto Duman).

*‘When culture and art materialises into the contemporary city we must not just ask “what art?” or “what culture?”, but also “what city?” and crucially “for whom?”’<sup>23</sup>*

*‘This project announces Drawing Room’s intent - to use the medium of drawing to begin to unbuild existing institutional and societal hierarchies, to demolish the obstacles that prevent access to culture and creativity and to bring people together.’<sup>24</sup>*

We have so far conceived in the poetic terms of artmaking, that the matter in flux we are agitating is constantly prefiguring a different future.

But in the different grammar of urban cultural politics at the ‘world-class’ city scale, the composition of regeneration atmospheres coerces ‘culture’ to operate as an intangible aesthetic asset to increase property values, while the housing market adopts the unbridled, ultimate mobility and unlimited growth of the financial investments that underwrite its reach and activity.

<sup>23</sup> Alberto Duman, ‘Beauty and the Beast: capital forces and cultural production’, *The Architectural Review* (2 April 2014), available at [www.architectural-review.com/essays/beauty-and-the-beast-capital-forces-and-cultural-production](http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/beauty-and-the-beast-capital-forces-and-cultural-production), accessed 5 September 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Drawing Room, ‘UNBUILD: A Site of Possibility’, available at [drawingroom.org.uk/exhibition/unbuild-a-site-of-possibility/](http://drawingroom.org.uk/exhibition/unbuild-a-site-of-possibility/), accessed 5 September 2023.

These inherent, operative mechanisms turn the possible future potentialities of matter in flux into the tangible temporalities of land and property investments, where only future presents count: the symbolic turns into the financial.

It's in these crossing points between poetics and politics that a fracture is exposed between present futures yet-to-be-written and future presents teeming with agitation, linear narratives of urban development traded and exchanged for wealth creation, which are intrinsically prone to anticipation and colonisation.

*'In the utter uncertainty of the present, the time of the global institution and its own planning (whether business or cultural seems not to matter anymore) is the one that asserts its ownership, it prefigures and articulates future urban landscapes visually and aurally and sets their goals to achieve them through marketing and management.'*<sup>25</sup>

The intrinsic structural inequalities that global capital investments in London reproduce in their imaginaries still connect colonial pasts with the politics of the present: a toxic discourse agitated by populist and deceptive identity politics and misplaced nostalgia for empires – misplaced because the inherent logic of Empire has never truly left this world.

Indeed, the sadness of the present lies mostly in the manifested arrogance of a psychotic, recalcitrant, dead-on-arrival whiteness structural complex, which does not wish to come to terms with its own deadly inheritance at the root of it all, pretending instead to be free to roam: *'White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.'*<sup>26</sup>

How can a decolonisation agenda and worldbuilding of alternative futures in artistic activity and community action impact these trajectories of financial imaginaries, besides the routinely vacuous statutory consultation processes with 'key community groups and local stakeholders' or the traumatic stirrings of riots?

*'Decolonial thought starts with the awareness that there is no modernity without coloniality, that the history of progress of Western civilisation cannot be accounted*

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<sup>25</sup> Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), p.?

<sup>26</sup> Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), p.1. This was already made academic knowledge by the eminent Trinidadian scholar Eric Williams in his masterful *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), then given a further push in Robin Blackburn's *The Making of New World Slavery* (1997). Continuing in this illustrious tradition of radical Black scholars in the Anglophone world, Kehinde Nkosi Andrews is Professor of Black Studies in the School of Social Sciences at Birmingham City University. His most well-known publications are *Back to Black, Retelling Black Radicalism for the 21st Century* (2018), *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World* (2021) and *The Psychosis of Whiteness: Surviving the Insanity of a Racist World* (2023).

*for without the violence of coloniality, that there is no possession without dispossession; that there is no claim to contemporaneity without erasure.'*<sup>27</sup>

A different future can also begin in the past.

11 July 2023 marked the forty-year anniversary of the official release of The People's Plan for the Royal Docks, but neither the Greater London Authority Royal Docks Team, nor the Mayoralty in their new home at Royal Victoria Dock, were anywhere to be seen in acknowledging or celebrating this historic event for London.

The People's Plan remains a truly remarkable example of a community plan initiative, which in 1983 envisioned an alternative future for the closed docks, through the efforts of local people and the support of the Popular Planning Unit of the Greater London Council.<sup>28</sup>



**Jessie Brennan**, *The People's Plan*, installed at the Pump Room, London, as part of *Making Space*, 2018–20. (Commissioned by UP Projects, London).

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<sup>27</sup> Rolando Vázquez, p.8.

<sup>28</sup> A colour documentary by the London Metropolitan Archives explores issues associated with the development of London's Docklands and the involvement of the Greater London Council (GLC) in providing a voice for the local community. It includes interviews with individuals from the 'People's Plan Centre', which was established by the GLC, available at

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV8GRdWgntU&ab\\_channel=LondonMetropolitanArchives](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV8GRdWgntU&ab_channel=LondonMetropolitanArchives), accessed 5 September 2023.



In the political discourse of urban development in London, the last decade has offered some interesting arguments and debates as to what's worth and not worth salvaging from the ultimate monetisation drive that has clearly submerged this city since the running up to and in the aftermath of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

In the creation of atmospheres of global investment in the city, everything entered into 'Regeneration Supernova' mode. Ten years later, the marketing ploy of 'London is moving East' has crystallised into the Mayoral office actually moving East, into the building once called the Siemens Crystal.<sup>29</sup>

Out of these urban agitations and survival struggles, which appeared still to be in some flux only a decade ago, a new pecking order has emerged and established itself – one in which 'culture' has played a decisive role as the key asset in an aesthetic economy of the city; one that can shift the value of a private development upwards through the facilitation of public administration mechanisms and their planning agreement conditions.

As part of a sustained research and policy drive by the Greater London Authority Culture and Creative Industries Unit, now institutionally supported and absorbed into its plan by the Mayoral office (regardless of the transition between parties on the Mayoral seat), an argument has been won in regards to the value that 'culture' brings to London and the need to protect its infrastructures.<sup>30</sup>

This successful discourse at the heart of London's governance, in turn, has empowered an array of policies, tools and mechanisms with the aim of protecting the survival and reproduction of this value across the city.

From Creative Enterprise Zones to the parcelling of Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy for artistic and cultural institutions of various sizes, and the now-common treaties between studio providers and private housebuilders, the impulse 'to protect' creative production in London against the market onslaught has indeed been very successful, to the degree that a whole new ecology of 'win-win' alliances between developers, city governance and cultural institutions and producers has emerged.

Today, Tannery Arts – of which Drawing Room is a part – is a privileged recipient of this ecology of survival and protection, by positioning itself as the beneficiary of a Section 106 agreement brokered by Southwark Council, which granted it a twenty-five-year lease in a newly built permanent site in the Rich Industrial Estate development by London Square.

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<sup>29</sup> See Alberto Duman, 'Music for Masterplanning: The Complete Soundtracks', available at <https://vimeo.com/417195496>, accessed 6 September 2023.

<sup>30</sup> See Culture and Creative Industries Unit, 'Securing Cultural Infrastructure and Workspace planning practice note', available at [www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/culture-and-good-growth/cultural-infrastructure-plan-and-toolbox/securing-cultural-infrastructure-and-workspace-planning-practice-note-planning-conditions-158540-title](http://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/culture-and-good-growth/cultural-infrastructure-plan-and-toolbox/securing-cultural-infrastructure-and-workspace-planning-practice-note-planning-conditions-158540-title), accessed 6 September 2023.

On the one hand, this form of urban privilege has been rightfully accrued by the enduring success of Drawing Room throughout its twenty years of nomadic existence, confirmed as a matter of self-evident 'excellence' through its status as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and the broad network of its direct supporters.

On the other hand, in the urban atmosphere of intense, predatory and sometimes ruthless development of London growth, for an art organisation to be granted a Section 106 recipient status in a new, privately built, speculative development still constitutes a privilege vis-à-vis the needs of other players.

In keeping with its declared aims, can we think of the exercise of this privilege as an operative intentionality, acting as an intersectional paralegal deed attached to the legitimate presence of Drawing Room in this place, in this time, in this London?

What can we yield from the prompt to 'Unbuild' at the very time of completion of the built environment? And what can occur when we shift from the singular 'possibility' to the plural, complex and contradictory 'possibilities'? Can we read more than virtue signalling and changes in programming and seek a more decisive structural change, driven by a decolonial agenda?

Jessie has nurtured the conversations with Drawing Room and the Setchell Estate, seizing those invisible, inaudible instances of discursive possibilities in the world as opportunities for the institution to learn more and again.

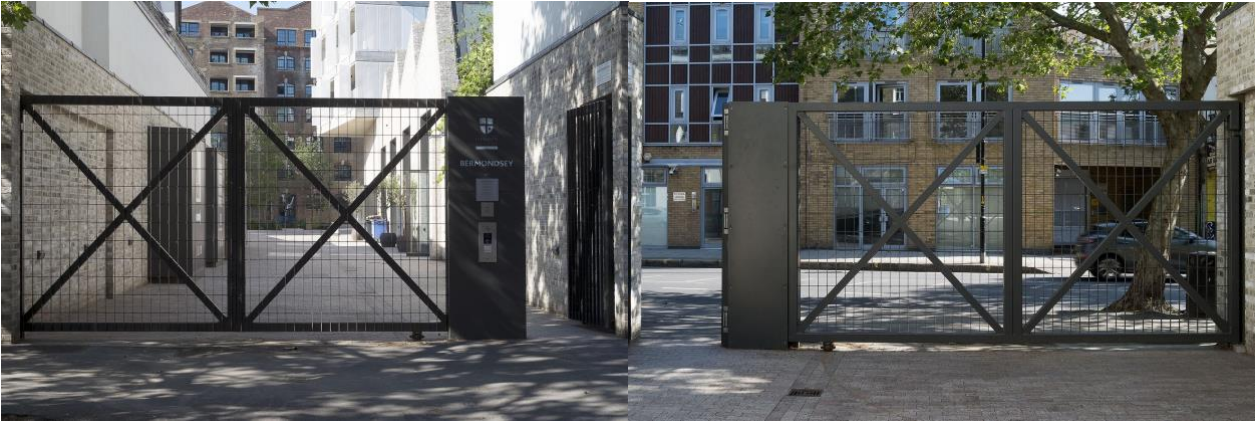
For Drawing Room and its renewed mandate in the neighbourhood, it would mean to radically open itself to diverse voices; to be accountable for its own positionality and to those with lived experiences of modernity and coloniality; to learn the lessons that need to be learnt; and to actively labour towards its stated intentionalities for change to survive – let alone thrive – and for the possibilities of such learnings to influence, shape and steer the organisation's governance.

Through this projection into an open-ended future, the self-inscribed paralegal mandate of the 'room' within the 'room' would be read as an entente that could make a so-called 'neighbourhood connection' initiative truly meaningful and upfront in its code of conduct.

It would mean making the iron gates separating the street from the courtyard less harmful in their elegant bisecting violence, safe keeping and unfortunate material presence – objects that themselves counter the very things that the artists supposedly wish to explore.

It would take an unseeing of the very materiality of the gates, understood otherwise as an imaginary interface between the built and unbuilt, hard matter redeployed as a discursive tool, a matter in flux truly ready to be unmade, dematerialised by the quality of the invitation for making space.





Photography by Alberto Duman © 2023

It might mean to feel the agitation of the real, without escaping too easily into representation and its instrumentalised manufacturing of settled narratives.  
 It could mean making space for the time it takes for spaces to change.  
 It would mean to practise a decolonial pedagogy of neighbourhood relations, rooted in the plural possibilities of anticipatory alternative futures and their nurturing.  
 It should mean the acceptance of staying agitated, 311 times over, leading to thousands more 'cooching' possibilities.

It means for the We, to come back to the We.  
 Still, agitated, nervous, uneasy.  
 But also open, in a planetary dimension, learning in a truly lifelong manner.  
 It means aiming for '*whiteness to become just another colour in the rainbow*'.<sup>31</sup>

We might then begin to accept an array of new prospects, based on an awareness of our positioned realities.

It could flip Drawing into the Draw In.  
 It could mean turning the 'room' into a World.

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<sup>31</sup> See Linda Martin Alcoff, 'Whiteness and Race Temperament', in *On Whiteness: The Racial Imaginary Institute* (SPBH Editions, 2022), pp.83–99.