**01.06.21**

You can't see them here, but I could see I've got two up already, oh. And then the one with the hollybush.

**Yeah, yeah, so I mean, I think the way that this is going to work is for kind of each of the photos or for them as a pair of. I've put some of them together. I thought might kind of go together. Yeah, just like to explore really what each what the images mean for you. You know where where they are, what you are, what you are doing and then what you know kind of going into some detail on what it is. We're actually we're actually looking at.**

Yeah, talking about I can tell you very quickly, it’s a footpath which runs into Saint Johns Church yard and it's it's the the footpath that runs towards the St Augustines’ Tower that drops you right in the middle of Hackney Central, yeah so yeah so. But let's see, yeah, it's the Rd, little cul-de-sac closest to Sutton house. Yeah, so if you were facing Sutton house from that side, the road that I'm talking about is immediately to the right of it.

**Yeah, yeah I know it, yeah, where there’s all that old Regency housing yeah.**

There's a very old brick wall and a little piece of open space maybe 50 feet wide. If it's that. If it's that big at all, 50 feet long and probably 20 feet wide. And you have some ancient rose bushes in it, that's why I was like. But then they pulled out the Rose bushes and they started to kind of manage it and they can't make up their mind if they want to rewild it or manage it. The lens on the camera is so wide it took in the brick wall as well.

**So in this one on the left you know what are we looking at.**

So the tulips are kind of the black tulips in the center of the image for you. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. At the bottom right hand corner of the image, as I'm looking at it and it goes back and you can see to the left we got these. This stems are a bush or a sapling. She looks quite interesting and then you got that many ancient brick wall and you can tell it sold so that the mortar is crumbling and it's got. It's got. It must have had to have something growing on it because it looks quite ashy and it's got different textures on it. So yeah, but you can. It's a very old brick wall and then you got those wild weeds, which I'm not sure what they called the cowslip or cow parsley, something like that. I don't know, the white ones and and then on the right hand side I think that's the remnants of the old Rose bush. But the reason why I remember the Rose bush is because it had the flat roses. You know, like you see in the wild, roses, yeah? It's not some petals, but this one and then further along in those. It used to climb up the wall, yeah?

So yeah, so that that's why I like like that particular piece of ground and the old things in there that they've grown up. And it's not quite interesting. See more of the ground was before there was more. bush is more bushy, so there's less. You can't really see the ground and what you can see now at the weeds that are making the ground ground cover. Yeah, little bit spot 'cause the light is so poor. But within that, it still makes an interesting photo, so I'm really pleasantly surprised.

**Yeah, it's really nice. It's you saying about the difference between wild versus managed? If we're thinking about that, where does this stand at the moment? Is this fully wild or is this partially wild?**

Yeah it it's neither one thing nor the other. I think it's obviously previously been managed at one stage, because, as I say, the type of rose bushes that are in there. Yeah, don't let it be informed that private garden and it was now for redevelopment of it's now open. Or maybe it was always open and nobody knows who's responsible for managing it, so it's neither one thing nor the other.

**In terms of it being a natural space. Do you think that has come about?**

I think it's just a matter of.... I would say managerial neglect. I suspect that the land is owned by Saint John's Church. Uhm? But the local authority lease it from them, to have that piece of land because of access from one side of Hackney from one side of Homerton into Hackney Central. Yeah, so I suspect that it missing out of that, and I'm beginning to discover there were several bits of land that where there is this contentious ownership. So land that was formerly, maybe a private railway and was taken over by the Railway board. And so the local authority. Kind of, you know, when they've got time and money and interest will kind of do a bit of work on it. And then if money dries up, they just leave it. And so it it's in that kind of halfway house and maybe all up and down the country.

This is true, but it's certainly true and he needs to get some land where there are several claims to ownership to the one piece of land simply because of the way that it's being used. They're kind of left to their own devices, and then they end up looking like this. Yeah, but every now and then one organization or not they will take an interest in it, but it's not known, right? If you leave it alone then you're gonna get plants that were popular, say maybe 200 years ago would still be in that piece of land, but they may take interest in it. It's not fashionable, they take them up because they have no idea of the significance of what they're doing, OK?

**It's interesting the plants have like a kind of like cultural, historical kind of importance, as well as being like you know important.**

Yeah, gardening has been a very big hobby in the UK for at least 300 years. I mean they will probably chart the growth of the English Empire. It's just that if you have a family. And live in the same on the same plot and don't move in and tend to the garden, don't change the plants. You have one species that you won't find anywhere else because people with money will pay gardeners to rip it up and front what's fashionable.

**Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I mean it was. I was just gonna ask when when there's when there's those plants have been there for, you know, maybe hundreds of years. Are they then more kind of part of nature or more natural than those ones that then they're like, you know, more fashionable of the moment that come in in the present day?**

No, because the the hybrids. So you're only in that one space because if they were natural there be everywhere like weeds. Yeah. I mean over you you have that Japanese knotweed. We should ramp up let's because nothing controls it, but hybrids will. They have devolved to their original form, so like you'll have one stump, but like two different colored plants flower heads on the branches and it's like under separate or they just it's it thrives because it's strong, but it can't propagate because there's nothing to propagate with. But yeah, it's it's because the other there have been other plants of the same hybrid variety in our gardens, but as the other gardens have been updated or land so that that's why I think that's why you got that one plant that thrives where it is. But it doesn't spread anywhere.

So like this black Tulip here, for any fashion somebody must've put it in last couple years OK? Yeah, because tulips are a big thing. This is why I took it because they are such a cultivated plant. Black tulips don't arise in nature. It's such an obvious plant so you see it in this bed of weeds and the holly bush. And then, just these three black tulips- so somebody else made an in an effort to tidy it up. But they weren't able, so they stuck them in there and left them.

**What do you think about that? Do you think you know? How does that make you feel?**

It's interesting, it means that people are interested in their environment, but for whatever reason can't sustain the Senate. So they they put their own marking, right? Yeah, 'cause I mean things like tomatoes and that there are lots of stories about tomato plants suddenly appearing because the birds eat the seats and drop them out from one end or never, yeah, and they they were thing. But I've never heard of that with tulips. No, so I guess because they're a bulb. Or yeah, exactly yeah. And so yeah, possible. But I don't think you would have just like 3 bulbs, just stuck there. So you can identify the human hand has been. Yeah well is it say I mean, tulips have been hybridized to the nth degree. I mean, they are a very very popular plant an. And you know, the Dutch economy thrives on it. Absolutely, yeah, but yeah. But I mean, certainly the idea of black headed flowers. It's always been a thing that gardeners have amateur and professional. To achieve so, when you see that it's just like it's not random.

**Whereas like that cow parsley and the old holly tree, it's been there for a long time?**

Yeah, it's it's been there for at least 20 years, but I mean the thing looks really old. It hasn't proved high and I suspect that's because the soil really isn't that good quality, yeah? But yeah, but the hollybush actually looks old if you take my point. Yeah, yeah. And then the other one that you can see now you can see the little bit of the old Regency houses and more of the old wall.

**I like the it's interesting with like you say. With those geraniums, those kinds of weeds that are front, and then the cow parsley. But then with that cast iron fence you can see it's a bit of a human and also the non human worlds there.**

Fighting. Yeah, I mean I I don't know if maybe it's quite possible they had some rubble that they tipped on them and put a little bit of topsoil on it, which would explain why the the soil is very poor. Yeah, but I can. But I first moved here. I think that there was definitely more plant life in there. More cultivated plant life in there. They've just been left to it, but it covered the ground in the way that now you just got all this cow parsley, as you say. And it looks kind of barren. Although it's that color, it's a little bit forlorn. It gives illusion of it actually being a bigger space.

It's the interesting thing about plants is that the more plants put in there that makes the space look bigger. You take them out and it just makes the place look smaller.

**Yeah, yeah. Interesting, I'll move these images on again now so we've got the tulips there in a lot of detail I can see some brambles and things there as well.**

Oh yes, right in the foreground, yes, oh, so let's. Bramble is always a sign that is an acidic soil. Which is which makes it interesting that the tulips have survived.

**Yeah, it's interesting as well. You know, like you've got the contrast between the wall and you know those human structures and then the plants. But then in this case you've got the difference between the kind of wild plants and then the cultivated.**

And actually now I'm looking at closely, you've got a pink Tulip and into the to the right of the tallest Tulip you've got, some more coming up, so yeah. So as you say. That is the work of human hands. Tulips don't always flower the first year. Somebody has put that there.

**yeah, so it's sort of. Yeah, this kind of hybrid environment.**

And and that's true. People have taken this as an urban environment of it's not, well, life, wildlife. It's I would say it's neglected OK? That's interesting, I mean how? If we're talking about nature, how much of a how much of nature is present in in that area? And in that photo? Well, it doesn't know. It tells you exactly what it is. If you're looking at it, you're going to see this poor quality soil with the opportunistic wild plants that come along with that. And then you got these cultivated plants. So it's I think it speaks exactly as to what it is.

**What about this this, this, this, this sapling you're talking about? Or it looks maybe a bit bigger than a sapling**

At least when I take pictures of trees and because they are forever pollarding trees, so you can actually see what the proper shapes would be. Yeah, and actually in the top left hand corner it looks like there's a birds tail. I didn't say that they can try and take a picture of the tree. That's a good sign. Probably yes. Probably an and then the thing about trees I like. I like the older trees. They take a really, really long time before you're there in full leaf, younger siblings, so little bit of rain, little bit of sunshine, and they're all green. And so you can see these smaller trees at the bottom there a little bit leafy, but the actual mature tree at the back. It's very sparse.

**That's interesting, it's yeah. So who's doing the pollarding? Is that the the Council?**

It's mostly the Council. But there's also some private individuals that pollarding trees, and I'm like why not leave the mature tree to see its natural shape. Yeah. And pollarding is unnatural. You know if you've got ornamental gardens and you know you, you trim the box hedging shapes, things that look like Peacocks, and that's fair enough. But if you're actually in the public domain, pollarding trees just for the sake of it, for what? For, what purpose and why don't? Why, I'm? Why are they taking the tops of the trees? Because if the problem is that the the branches are obstructing the light and what you want to do take off the lower branches and let the tree get tall and it will create a canopy, but it will still let light go through, so there's there's no logic. Or from my point of view, that they have their logic. But to my mind the logic doesn't make sense that they keep cutting the tops of trees and especially when is all this talk about environment and clean air that is absolutely. So I'm actually opposed to your supposed intention, so I don't understand what this is about. Yeah, so that that's why you will see trees.

The thing is, is just like. I mean I'm looking at and I'm thinking God, you can see that I'm really short because everything's an angle in order for me to get the top of the tree, which I'm not quite good enough to catch, even with those fancy lenses on the phone. Yeah, yeah, so, I mean that that's the thing that tickles me is I'm so sure, about the composition. But if you know anything about trees and then so you've got these saplings in the foreground, but you got that very mature tree at the back, and so you can see that the saplings in younger trees have got a little bit more. Leaf cover and the leaf cover is darker and then if you look up into the branches you can see all the twiglets and the branches of the more mature tree. And then you've got these pale pieces of leaf. Yeah.

**Yeah, and how do you think these things came to be there?**

The. I mean, trees are not random in London? If it's random, it will be plucked like a stray eyelash.

**I love that metaphor. I'm going to move on to so there's this one. So what are we looking at here please? I think is also this. This is the Saint Johns touch arts, yeah?**

Where am I looking? Oh, I know that's in the following St. That's access to I think on Saint John St. Next week, along from Sutton Grounds and when you go into that part to your left is the church and the footpath. Yeah, I think it's called Saint Johns Well or something like that. I can't remember the names of the footpaths. Well one is St. John's Church yard, maybe Chartwell and I'm not sure what that one's called and but yeah but this is the one that runs alongside the old police station which is now at school. So it runs from Lower Clapton Rd through to that piece of land that we were looking at, the footpaths kind of intersect yeah.

It looks late, but if you look at the sky, the sky is blue so. It can't be that late. It could have been. It could be after six, this time of the year is still good, but after six, yeah, so the sun wouldn't have set, but there wasn't as much like an I'm there was one day when it's raining, but it doesn't appear to be it.

**No, it looks pretty blue. So in terms of, you know, the natural and what is unnatural? What? What things would you identify in this photo?**

Well, but we're looking at it, is it is not strictly speaking, a managed garden. 'cause it was actually fully owned by the church when I was a child, but now you've got as the tombs that were moved. I'm assuming these are tombs from the piece of land that was formerly occupied by St Johnswho still own it, but now there’s just Saint Augustine's Church tower left. OK, yeah, So what happened was when they decided to make it a public space, formally make it public space, they removed some of the tombs and they also discovered more graves and moved the gravestones. A lot of people tells him that wouldn't walk through the churchyard. I've got friends that refused to come and visit me because when I told him I had to go and visit me because now you get off the bus at Hackney Central and walk though they say ‘I can't do that’

**That's funny. I've often seen late at night there's people in there.**

It doesn't seem to scared people off I think because they don't think about what actually doing they think about getting from A to B. Yeah, but I think that people that have a religious spent an would find it they're not comfortable at grave sites. Somewhere you go and visit someone and you get really sad 'cause you can't see them anymore, but they're actually a very managed environment, an right that easy, very peaceful. And they've got trees so they they bring nature to an urban environment. Over what you see is that the urban environment is built up around it and and his encroached all the way around it. 'cause that's reality that there was more. There was more open space, yeah?

**It's yeah, it's interesting that the open space has been kind of created by people.**

By moving those those tombs in a way, it's making it open because it’s the church’s land isn't it, private land. Yeah, because people go to church often they don't think of it as being private lenders private land, but where St. John's Church is situated in the amount of land that it owns. It always had to be accessible. Welcome really long way around and people don't do that. They will take shortcuts. So yeah yeah. And understanding with the local authority an but yeah, so people don't realize it's actually private and it's not public, it's just got public access. Yeah, Saint Johns owns a lot of land in Hackney Central.

**Yeah, you were talking about this wild versus managed thing earlier. You know this research is about looking to understand urban nature. Is that is that a natural kind of plot of land that we're looking at, or is that…**

Oh no, 'cause I say it's it's land that belongs to the church? Because it's in an urban environment, they probably they probably had enough land to farm, but it was. It was not viable for them to sell it and and and have it built apart. Yeah and and and also the church is really quite big so you know, thinking about the size of the church and when it was built Hackney is already quite well developed and it has that part of Hackney quite clearly was where the some of the wealthier citizens lived. And that's why they could afford such a big and fancy church.

**Yeah, yeah. Fantastic thank you. Oh, so we've got a couple more photos,**

this one, more of the tombs there, while you're on the footpath. Right, as well now that is on housing estate. I think it's probably on the housing estate and I just like the way the light was falling on the it's natural because of the shape of the clouds so you can see that it's like really, really bright and then I could have been the shadow of a building, or it could have just been the shadow of the clouds, but this really huge contrast and therefore I want to try and capture that light.

**So does that does that sort of represent nature for you in a way that that photo?**

So it's the way that. Even in a really really built up in urban environment you can have little spots of greenery. And that's why I called. I don't need to call it nature so much. I mean, it is nature 'cause they're living there, that’s their function. The sun and the light and and the nutrients in the soil. And as you can see, the difference between the types of plants and also this is managed because there are no weeds in the flower bed. Yeah, so it's it's managed and that you've got a variety of plants they've selected. So this all. But I think we got a bit of weed there in the left and it won't see through at least three or four different plants in that small space. So it's no. It's people trying to be thoughtful, but also practical and manageable.

**Yeah yeah, that's interesting, and that presumably that's been planted by whoever.**

Yeah, exactly, yeah, somewhere around Hackney Central.

**Yeah, it looks familiar, but I can't quite place yet. Yes. Excellent, thank you. I really liked this this photo when I saw it 'cause the well. Yeah, if you'd like just like to tell me what we're looking at here please.**

Well, those look like bluebells. I think they are on the grounds they look more like those and where those garlicky plants. So yeah, 'cause here they look spiky. But when you're on the ground but the flower heads more spherical, right? OK. So there is that family but flower heads like that and they're really quite popular. And so you know, in the ground there were also daisies, couldn't see any butter cups. Then I'm guessing that this piece of land was formerly the gardens of old terrace housing. There used to be more trees here. To the top left hand corner you can see at least three old trees, and there's one missing. They took it down a couple years ago so they're regular intervals, 'cause this land might have been the gardens and where we've got a row of Council properties now that will loosen that boundary. Further. Council property gardens, yeah. And then the field on the left.

**Where is this exactly?**

That's actually on my estate. So where the bus stiop is at the bottom of Lower Clapton Road, where the White building is just with roads.

**Yeah OK got you. Yeah, I know where I am now.**

And we can't now. Yeah, yeah, yeah system and you can see the edges there too. You've got these hedges and it's I think it's the local authority. Just trying to do landscaping. But they’ve run out of money and decided that they won't spend anymore money but yeah, so, but you can see that there's a trend and was before they would mow all of this area and level the grass. Now they have had spaces for all kind of wild flowers, so it's not quite wild, but they let they let it grow. Don't just mow it all down, but

**What do you think about that?**

I like it. It's really nice, but this piece of land is that over the years they've put in lots and lots of daffodils and different types of bulbs. So from January to March, yeah, along the along, the roadside fence you look in and you can see all these different daffodils. And there's a come and go and come and go so continuously, they're blooming for like about 8-9 weeks. And then I think there was some tulips in there somewhere. And then you know they'll just let it get mowed down, and during the summer and then it all starts again this year, so there's just like a little bit of thoughtfulness. It's untidy. I like it.

**Yeah, do you feel like, yeah, it's like with those tulips earlier, you know when you can see that they've been put in by a person, but then these these blue flowers that seem like they. They maybe they've just been there for a long time.**

Yeah, but I happen to know they haven't been, but it's it's also that trend towards being butterfly friendly. OK yeah, yeah. So you know though, they were given that site for wildflowers and they tried it. They look really really striking and quite ugly and they can't manage it. It's gonna grow. That is insect friendly. But isn't so straggly. Right, so it's so even if it and it has poppies and stuff like that, which is nice when they come up. But then they will really quickly start to look really kind of unpleasant. And other flowers that just they they look fine in the cornfield because of the poppies holding it up but on their own they don't look quite so attractive.

**So what's so important about them looking attractive to people if they have that value to to butterflies?**

You understand that most people don't see it. If you live in urban environment, you're not going to see wildflowers as they really exist. Yeah, 'cause? Even like daisies and butter cups, they actually grow tall. But we don't see them. Yeah, so we have a false impression of stuff actually looks like. I mean, the daisies and things naturally probably grow up about 18 inches high. We can only see it that way. So that's the interesting part about the first photos is that you're seeing wildflowers grow to their natural height, which is closer to 18 inches to two feet high, yeah? But it's just just because then people haven't interfered. Yeah, when they are allowed to grow to then there. Yeah, that's real height.

**Does that make them, you know in the landscape do they become more more natural? They kind of closer to nature than when we when we interfere with those kinds of things at all?**

Oh yeah, definitely. I mean, if you look at these in the old days is here and we see them on the single stem rose to their full height. The stems brown chair. Yeah. No things, I can't actually tell difference to regular and dandelion and all other yellow wildflowers that grow. But it's like if you look at them very natural, but you would actually learn to tell the difference. All I can think is like so yellow but not flower. Just cause 'cause they're so managed that they they all. Tend to look the same. Yeah, because you didn't see them so so when they see the full height for OK and they do look like daisies, they've got yellow tools. Then Yellow Center was there is a wet petals and the yellow center. But other than that I can't really tell them. Dandy lions are similar, but they're bigger. System and. Yeah, I I just don't have the time with information you want to bother to learn. Yeah, one is great. Some days you will because they are people. Most of what the things we call weeds are. Nate's pharmacy right? Yeah, and if you understand how to use them. Then yeah, things like marshmallow and cleavers and they all have their purposes. That's interesting. So I think what have we got here? We got the seven, so they see. So you've got bad caps on one side. True, yeah, and then you've got these pretty things which I'm not sure what they're called, but they managed but they they make good ground cover, so you'll find them on and off housing estates, but they've actually managed the the greenery letter. Other has an estate sale, just have grass and nothing else. Yeah, somehow it's a really fun, managed and attractive and so every piece of spare land. They filled out the flower bed, yeah, easily maintained. Now they just need to be cut back. I see you and that's it. And I come back time and time again and so you have faced and I think these are Evergreen's positively and even for winter.

But then you come to spring and summer and you got the flowers as well. So there's always something to please the eye. But they never really could be described as natural. Unlike the buttercup. Yeah, I mean well not in the UK anyway. I mean, you know if you're in the Mediterranean, these things probably grow wild. Yeah, in the yeah, don't really see them very miles, but what we have in the UK hybridized? To deal with the the climate and with that. Just 'cause you can buy them in the shop. OK, right? He goes that the plant. Those places, yeah, and they can do site no partner for the Council needs like 100 of them so I will just go to the place and they're ready and then they take them out of the box.

**So they're almost like a product or something. Whereas the buttercup isn't**

It isn’t, it’s seeds are always around and and once they actually take root, there actually difficult to get rid of. They are attractive. They say that the colors very pretty. Yeah making like just so you can see this right now. Here you can see the soil is not very good quality. Yeah and all that stuff does it actually nourishes the soil as the plants grow and they probably fixes nitrogen to the soil and improve overtime, yeah?

**That's interesting, so it improves the soil. So having those weeds there, that sort of that helpsthe soil in the earth and the natural processes there. Do you think having these kind of foreign or Mediterranean like plants is a is the only benefit for humans then?**

Because Britain's actually quite a dry country, doesn't have a lot of rain averages like an inch a month. Certain places like Manchester have lots of rain, but overall Britain doesn't. So as it's got warmer and drier. The plants that were that could thrive in the. Fifty 60s and 70s? I'm gonna struggle we're gonna start. You gonna have to keep watering them, but these ones they they can survive more arid and climate. So that that's that's that's one thing that's happened. That's actually one reasons why Hackney dug up a lot of the old plants was because of the changing climate. These things will thrive. They don't need as much an intervention to thrive. Nowhere is it know if it's going to turn back to the 60s range of rain, rain, rain. And then these might rot. They might not survive, or it might be too cold for me to get another day, like yeah.

But but now. I mean April, I think it rained only one day in April, so for 30 days it's actually very dry in London, and there's been. I was growing up in April was always a wet month. Yeah, very. Yeah, may get better in the beginning and then it gradually gets hotter, Ann. It's it's just an illusion. It's because of England is cloudy, but it's not necessarily wet. OK, just illusion that it's wet and there's this thing that it actually rains at the weekend. So it gives the illusion that it is drained out when it rains. Particularly rains in London there isn't much water in the rain unless we get a big thunderstorm. And when do we close in summer? Yeah, it's so very true. That's interesting.

**It's interesting about the like unnatural plants becoming more suitable for the environment than the natural, indigenous ones.**

OK yeah. Say it again. OK yeah 'cause the plants that we know would be the woodland plants because the UK England was covered in forest. Yeah, open up till until 60% because. Henry the eighth used to go hunting and he didn't go any further West than Richmond, you know, sort of 20 minutes from the tower. Yeah, if horses and stuff like that and he was hunting deer is now Richmond Park and you can look up. You can't see from outside. There wasn't really big parks like now. Yeah but yeah but Richmond Park doesn't have that many trees this size of the space. That is right, yeah, yeah yeah, yeah. So it seems like a long way away. But you know, even if you say that the history of the UK is in 2000 years old, which it isn't. But then you learn. You're saying all this has happened in the last 500 years.

The land has been cleared. The landscape that we think of as a country landscape isn't actual landscape. So what you're saying is sort of like what we think of as natural forest nature. It's not, it's not, it's pretty, but it's it's not natural, it's managed.

**Yeah, it's do you feel that there's any still anything that is truly wild or the truly natural left?**

Of course, yeah, yeah. I mean we see the main reason I'm taking these is to show you that nature will force its way.

OK, this is by the roadside. You've got the the A405 close by, we've got trains coming and huge industrial estates. Walking in any direction from where that shot was taken will be an industrial estate. Huge industriale states, so you got motorways, industrial estates and so this is what nature does, so that's probably a decent fencing, probably just metres from a bridge. The auditorium produce and you know how big days are. So maybe she will do its thing, but obviously the soil is not good quality, so you're gonna find Bramble and I don't know if it's better. So yeah, you're gonna get that. The big ones at the bottom. So a privately owned estate developer is now landscaping the pavement. OK, really really. And they spend a lot of money on it. I said something that irks me because there's a housing estate not far away from there that is in dire need of regeneration money, but they are spending 5,000,000 pounds prettying up the street because there's gonna be a new private development. And with the rents those people are paying their council tax that they're anticipating, but justifying that spend right. So the counselor putting money in rather than the private developers. I don't know. Yeah, they're probably saying, Well, it may be going to bring all this stuff to the places, no. We're going to pull down this. You know, even though it's next door to a giant industrial estate, and overlooks an intersection on the motorway.

And their advertising is gonna be so slick that you know hundreds, if not thousands of people are gonna spend at least half a million pounds buying flats on this quite large number of acres. Maybe 10 acres of land. Yeah, and so the least I can do is make the walk from that housing estate to the train station. Extractive yeah that they're doing stuff like that.

**That's interesting so they used the plants and the natural world as a selling tool.**

Yes yeah. Yeah, so the people that have people don't move there. They won't know that this is all going on, but it's a place up in the past five years and they never did anything to it. And now it's just, yeah, this is what they're doing, spending £30 million making the paper pretty right. Yeah?

**But then so then the plants that they would use to make the private estate prettier? Presumably not the same plants that are forcing their way through the cracks.**

Yeah, he did not spend that much money. That's not, no, you're not going to spend all that money getting plants. It will just grow just 'cause they want it to.

**I mean it is this space that we're looking at here. But yeah, like you know, more natural and how natural is this this space?**

It's really totally natural. Basically, what's happened is that you've got this space. You've got this look, little bits of marginal lands. If you look at the picture on on the right. I'm, I'm guessing that those are seeds that have come from somebody's garden and just planted itself, and it's just grown up there.

**Yeah, it's quite big, isn't it?**

Yeah, and presumably some years ago as well. To get to that sort of stuff. Yeah, because The thing is, is it on the other side of that fence? I don't know if it's there exactly, but the River runs alongside the motorway or I mean 100 meters away from motorway. Yeah, so it just looks like a junkyard old canal, but it is actually a river so as there's more water there but you can see the difference in this in. Yeah if you look at the. That that that contrast the pictures of the stuff that nature is throwing up in these two pictures with that little piece of land by the brick wall. And you can see that it's much more nutrient rich. The foliage is more dense and it's not managed at all.

Yeah yeah, I mean even that fence is quite new and I'm not sure how long sending out for a couple of years. So yeah, but it's so it's not hugely rich 'cause you still had Bramble, but you've got a much greater variety of plant life and they look healthier. Yeah.

**Just saying that we’re nearly up to the time I mentioned. Have you got around say 10,15 minutes to carry on?**

I’m enjoying this. It's nice to talk to someone who's actually interested in. Yeah, and it's funny to look at the pictures and then see how much I'm taking out because let's just like let's interesting let me just take a picture without thinking about why I'm taking the picture because I'm talking to you. It makes me know how much I do know. Yeah, and and and and. So yeah, I'm glad you asked me to and we called these I've I was looking through the photos on my phone and I've got more photos, but they were taken outside the timeline that you're asking for.

**OK. Well, maybe, maybe we'll talk about these then afterwards, maybe you can send some along with the if you want.**

Yeah, I know it's something that would be good as well. So there's a few here that list that I wanted to talk about a lot. This one as well. Seems yeah, I get that, but let's let's the local authority manages, but it's it's a particular housing estate. It's actually Hackney Downs, but that the way that they've managed the local authority managed that has an estate and and different types of foliage and different types of plants, and they're just really pretty I. This picture doesn't really capture how lovely it is.

**This is the Pembury Estate, yeah?**

Yeah, the way that they've managed it, it's really lovely. It's really, really lovely. I think that one of the bright, bright green leaves I think is also just the other side of the same footpath. OK, right? Yeah, yeah. Is this all I mean 'cause you've got that really lush, lush foliage and those blue flowers for better sort of underneath it and you got that bare barren ground? Makes it more attractive, yeah? It's just nice to have. There's like a lot of contrast in this picture between. Yeah, true and not natural things.

**What do you think about that?**

So it may be one of the bushes was ripped out, but when they first planted his paper with that, you know the council will put 10 bushes in and they come back and theres only seven and you think it needs to be filled. It's just like you know, if I'm not even sure what type of bushy low growing greenery sort of Evergreen then something that would just fill up that space. But yeah, the the light doesn't really do justice to the contrast or patch. Like yeah, that probably wasn't enough current in the battery. Yeah. That more definition, because when you see it, you really see the contrast and the definition. It's really lovely.

**What do you think the value is? Why the Council putting these kinds of flowers in what did what sort of benefits are there for for you just just walking past?**

Oh man, I just really appreciate it. I mean to me, it's just that more great, the more foliage, the cleaner the air. And now because you know it, it cleans the air it. It sucks getting carbon dioxide and breathing and gives you back, greener an. On a spiritual level, on a physical level, emotional level, an intellectual level. Every level that we operate as a human being is affected by plants. So the more greenery there is, the better it comes you if you're anxious. It it can give you, it can make you slow down your pace. You know, living in in the Western Society, in particular Big City like London list stuff is going on all the time. Even if you're just as I do, power walk past it, you still appreciate it. He still appreciate it and maybe on your way back from your journey. Might just walk a little bit more slowly and just took this. Appreciate it.

I think I think also investing in in the tenants alright so that they get compensation, but they still pay rent for their accommodation. It doesn't have to be Spartan, it doesn't have to be Brutalist an. I think that when you have this it allows. The occupants of these properties to take pride in their environment to appreciate their environment and to feel that the local authorities actually taking time to appreciate them by putting in things and maintaining it. So there was, there's lots of subliminal messages in all of this, so quite apart from the value of nature in itself, the fact that it is well managed and well maintained also says a lot because it's not true for every housing estate in Hackney. That's true.

**Yeah, that's really interesting. I mean, you know Hackney’s very mixed in terms of the social mix of people that live here. Do you feel like it has this kind of thing gives the same benefits to everyone?**

Is that they've probably got a very good tenants residence association. OK, yeah, and they would insist that work gets done, yeah, and yeah, they are persistent and insistent that the work gets done and that the residents and tenants deserve to be treated properly. And if you can't fix the inside, at least make the environment more appealing. Well, one of the things about this is. I've notice that you was my estate isn’t as good as this, or as old. This estate is cleaner.

**Oh, really, yeah.**

So I think the fact that they actually invest in the environment helps too, because it means that people that are visiting these places because it will show up straight away. But if the local authority don't keep the place clean, then other people don't feel a need to comply. Yeah. So I don't know if that's because the local authority command and clean it more often or meet me at the fact that it is maintained properly means that people don't abuse it. Yeah, so I think it's a kind of it's a virtuous cycle, yeah, yeah, yeah yeah, the local authority look after it so that people maintain it and make the local authority maintain the environment. So the people that live there look after it.

**That's interesting, so it has all kinds of benefits.**

Absolutely yeah.

**Moving on, these were some of the ones I was really looking forward to seeing, so would these be?**

First, in the bottom left hand corner you have my very slow growing strawberry plants, oh, I've got some flowers. That's interesting. To the right is where I took an ancient bulb of garlic and stuck in the dirt. Yeah, and in the center was a very old potato. Very large ones. Ones they call out the baking potatoes and it had lots and lots of sprouts and I actually put I deliberately put it in upside down to see what would happen, and yeah they come up. They just took a little bit longer.

Think in the top right might be beans or pumpkin seeds or something like that?To the right we've got something that might be beans also or something else. And above that in that kind of terracotta pot, I think that might be a lime seed that's growing. Yeah, and then the others have no idea what's in them. I’ll find out, I never label things properly when I do. If I do label them that it never. I never remember to use that permanent ink, so you know give it a couple weeks. Even though you've got like the label stand which have no idea what was on it, but quite doing I recognize the strawberry buds. I recognize potato. Recognize the garlic. Yeah, they look good. They're looking good, good, good.

So you can have fun with nature. It's you don't have to be really serious about it. I'm not sure where I got that tomato plant from might have been given to me, but yeah, just take stuff out of the fridge, take these, put them in the compost, let it grow, yeah. So now you know

**How natural or unnatural are these the subjects of these images that we're looking at?**

Well, I would say that all of these plants, all the food that we eat in the UK, is hybridized. But I can't do anything about hybridization 'cause that was done before I got it, but the rest of it is just seeds in compost, and that's just nature, sunshine, rain, and the nutrients in the compost and the plant just does its thing, yeah?

**That's interesting, So what were your plans with with these in the future?**

Just for fun and grow if anything comes out of it then that's good. And if nothing comes out of it in terms of anything edible, it’s just pretty leaves, pretty plants, then the fact that I did this. I did this moment and it's like even though I literally just for one of a bad analogy. I'm like the dad in the relationship and then the wife just gets on with it so, yeah?

**Are these are these unnatural?**

No, what I will say to you is that if you look at the potato plant, yeah. About 11:00 o'clock that's just grass that's overtaken grass seeds that have overtaken the compost. Oh, I see, yeah, yeah. So you get weeds, even if you're in the balcony on the 1st floor, you will still get weeds 'cause they just get blown up there, yeah?

**So that's a bit like with the with the picture with the fence where you say nature will find a way.**

Yes, absolutely you know if there's just a crack, then the dust that falls out of the sky. The dust that comes with all the pollution but that he put some seed in that. And when it falls out of the sky and this gets the seed will germinate. Yeah, obviously it would be nice to have something less toxic, but yeah, but it also means that. Toxic waste man. I'm taking this off on a tangent… but Chernobyl. Well, there was so much radiation they didn't think anything would survive there, but then they realize that they needed people to maintain to make sure that the site doesn't go nuclear, but again. And so they've actually thrown a city and actually pay people to go there. And people go there because although the risk to their health and that of their children is really, really bad, they actually have a much higher standard of living than the rest of the country.

Well, 'cause stuff grows, people grow, people will eat because they're outside, there were lots and lots of villages and people would grow their own food and so they continue to do so. So even though it's irradiated. Uh, and it will eventually kill them. It's still better than the processed food that they that the people get in the cities, right? Right? Because that's it's the so that the natural is more is more preferable to the absolute mandate.

Yeah, and then that sort of taking the Russian thing further back in then when Stalin was around and and then there's the the USSR was. It was then and they had that command economy and these huge farms that were supposed to feed the country, but people did not like working on it and what? What the truth of the matter was is that more food was produced on the little private plots of land that people had them. Look at them that are produced on the giant farms. Because they say they love to do what they were doing. Right, so little bit like what you're doing here, I suppose. Yeah, it's like, yeah, I'm. Far too lazy to be a farmer, but I mean, you know if I have an acre of land and the willpower. Yeah, I'd do it. And crop rotation and so you know you put Clover in one year for nitrogen fixing and you have beets and then you can have grain and something else. And sometimes you rotate it.

You won't exhaust the soil and what happens with commercial farming is that they will grow for the same problem. The on the same patch of land for maybe 5-6 or more years and then wonder. And then send it to you. But each crop has successively less nutrition in it. Right now these fertilizers fertilizers do not have the full spectrum of minerals that would naturally occur in in in in nature. So that's one of the reasons why people in the West get sick the way that we did, 'cause the food has very little nutritional value. Or let's say they look it is insufficient. So and then they they don't. Do it, but if I actually gave everybody a blood test in this country, you would find a huge amount of malnutrition.

**It's interesting- because we've got so far away from nature?**

No, it's because the land is intensively farmed. OK, yeah, and and so yeah, there are several things. One is that people eat fast food and the more the more food is processed and less nutrients in it. But it's even when we get the food because the UK so far north. Even when we get stuff that should be healthy for us, it was picked so young and then wrap and up when it gets to the UK. So and it's the sun. That gives the food its nutrition. So even if you eat exotic fruits and there isn't as much nutrient in it or flavorful as well as if you then. Grown in its home country and allowed it to ripen on the tree. Right, yeah? So then and then like things that the UK can grow like beets and turnips. Know those root vegetables and they landed. Just found too intensively. They just don't give it enough time to rest. And so then the nutrition in the food. So it's basically like you get to know so many micrograms of vitamin C in a potato. Suppose, and then you get 100 grams of it. Oh, in 1950, you're probably gonna get maybe 10 micrograms of vitamins in a potato today, right, 'cause there's no, there's insufficient nutrition in the soil.

**That's interesting, that's interesting, fantastic thank you. Thank you for going through that with me, I think we just got one last one last picture that, well, a couple of pictures so so this is probably the same fence we were looking at earlier.**

So yeah, so you can just give you the location. Do you see I'm saying about the bricks and the bridge is in the house. Yeah yeah. So what you can actually see here is. If you don't draw a line vertically through, but the picture, so it's just like where the sign is on one side, and then the greenery is on the other. So on on on the left hand side behind the fence is the wildness. Yeah, and on the right hand side you can see where they've landscaped it, because if you look at the foot of the bridge you can see pavement, but it's very even. It's very, very new, yes. So are you drawing a distinction between wild and natural wild managed? Yeah yeah so so. But so wild and managed. But then can can you have it being wild but it's also unnatural, like saying with those garden plants that have just gone feral.

Yeah well I mean The thing is that the whole thing in this environment, insofar as we call it wild, it's probably feral is a more accurate description. And so on. The one hand, you've got to closely manage because it's been freshly painted and you can't like, well, you can see the the color of the dirt let's you know, that's like, really, really fresh, like within a couple of weeks. And then the stuff poking through is where it's been not been managed. It's been left, and that stuff grows up really quickly. I don't think anything. There's probably going to be more than 5 to 10 years old. It just grows up that quickly. Yeah, yeah.

**How about how about on the the left of the road?**

This is the this is, I think it's called Saint Johns Rd. Yeah, but then it says keep clear that says which Rd looking towards St. John's Church yard. Yeah you got then the old trees at the back so there's so tall they sold their taller than the buildings, yeah? You know, like you know you have that convergence. If you look at the buildings and they're kind of swaying downwards, towards the center of the tree is taller than them.

**Yeah, yeah, it must be extremely old**

so I would have thought yes, exactly

**yeah that's interesting.**

Those conifers grow really, really fast at the top on the left hand side is a very, very old horse chestnut tree 'cause it's falling to the ground and that's tall as you can see even from his notes in the foreground you can see it's tall. It's taller than the house. So you know it's very old, so it's probably planted not long after the house went up. Yeah, yeah, it's do you feel when you is this all a very managed area? The same that we're looking at? Or is there any wildness there? It's all managed.

I mean they've actually any again if you look at last year they start to plant trees in because they they did a little survey and they realize that this particular wards in Hackney really didn't have enough trees in it, right? It's it's. One of the most densely populated wards, and it's actually quite underresourced, so even though it's next door to Hackney Central, an. Yeah, it's. It, but it wasn't well looked after. It wasn't instantly well looked after, so it's very densely populated and doesn't have as many amenities as other wards in Hackney.

**What's this is 'cause this is this part of Homerton?**

Or just yeah, yeah, yeah, which is adjacent. I mean, I'm sure it may possibly be that that side of the road is actually part of Hackney. Might be part of his central 'cause about runs along somewhere around here. It's very close, yeah? The boundary might actually run alongside aspect, right? Yeah, so that side the road last year they put trees in too. Not stand for it, but simply because Homerton just didn't have as many trees or that kind of thing as as meat. Whatever measure they have, it didn't meet it. Didn't meet it, so they started to plant trees on the pavements.

**Yeah, that's interesting. It's funny. Yeah, you said you mentioned gentrifying there, where the private developers green the streets. Is this similar for you?**

Yes, I’ve got loads of examples. I mean an example I've given you here about the Pembury estate. The residents wanted a bus stop. But when they knew that there was going to be Barrets housing put up. It was like they had this term so called exercise. We're gonna move the bus stop from outside the bus garage. And we're going to put temporary bus stop at the corner by the Pembury Tavern. Yeah, now like 15 years I've wanted a bus stop to be there. 'cause it's a long was not that far more work, but it's a longish walk because there was no stop there. Then you took it, but you bought or you took the bus. The bus stopped at Hackney Central, but they didn't stop near Hackney Downs. Interestingly, they actually named the bus stop so it wasn't going to be temporary. It's gonna be permanent.

So for all the years that people have lived on, Pembury estate never had a bus stop there. But as soon as they built that housing, they knew that they were going to build this new stop. Now, do you know which one I'm talking about? The one that came out by there exactly well soon as that property was gonna be then given the go ahead, the bus stop went in. And these kinds of things have been happening all around.

You know the fact that we've got gated communities and so there were two in Hackney Central. And then there's one at the Narrowway where the old girl guide both boys brigades property premises where yeah, I know, yeah yeah yeah. So you've got all these things happening and then all the landscaping that's going on on the Narrowway so all the time that us all no working class people were asking for facilities we couldn't have. But now we have landscaping and we have some architecture and all kinds of crap. Now it's just so much pavement furniture which is redundant and all those bollards feel so… the the new yuppies, right? Very very rude. I mean the thing. The thing that he was known for an 'cause.

When I was working, I would actually travel. So the people that come in central London. So I've got to places like you and Southend and Luton whatever. Yeah even in places like that, it's New Richmond. The people there were really a love and pretty affluent, but whenever I told my came from Hackney, they saw me. I've been there. The people they really, really friendly. But they still act like the sun shines out of their own backsides. They look at you said So what you doing? I'm like I was here before you were born late yeah yeah and and yeah they just really incredibly rude and they only associate together, so they don't shop where we shop. They shopping all the new shops where they will congregate in all the the old mums, now have their first baby at 35 and 40. Yeah all those sort of health foodie sort of shops.

But now that these people got money, we've got a lot more often we've got more organic food, but the working class shops have shuts, again, excluding us. And it's just that now there's a bigger audience. So the shops that used to sell us crap now send us an organic food at highly inflated prices.

**And what do you think that means for for, say, the landscaping or the trees on the street?**

They go on particular streets just like the the that the low.. LTNs- that the parking thing, LTNs. Yeah yeah they happen on certain streets, but there's certain streets happened to be in the streets with all the newbies are living right. What This is why is that just for the what do you think the thinking behind that is? Well, it's because the people are running Hackney all of that same ilk, right? People? The people have been coming in that know that the mayor and his boyfriend and all the other people that heads of department's overall all from the same ilk. So it appeals to them when they get those requests. And also the people are coming in. They're the kind of people that will bombard you with emails if they don't get their own way, right, yeah? They know how to use the tools at their disposal, and they're willing to use them, and so I don't know if it's a huge transfer of wealth, but it's certainly a huge transfer of asset. From both festival, sometimes it's because those assets were made available to everybody else before, and so now the money is coming in and it's being spent on the things that have priority to this particular section of the Community.

**How does that make you feel?**

More power to your elbow, they are privileged already and it’s making life really unbearable for everybody else, yeah. I mean, I mean, it's not. It's not entirely bad in the sense that young people do spend a huge amount of their income on accommodation. And so they've adopted a lifestyle where they eat out a lot and will take out a lot because. Then it's not like when I was say that age and I had the opportunity to have council accommodation so your accommodation costs were lower than. It made your income was a lot lower, but was now they have a high income but they have high outgoings and they have a lifestyle that doesn't allow them to. Settle and put down roots, so unless they have a really incredibly good income. Yeah, yeah, it's it's. It's runs around about us.

Like those sort of people have look at all this open nature stuff in a different way to us. I can't really say. I think they do appreciate it. I mean every last blade of grass, as I say that the popular. I mean about 20-30 years ago the population some about 100,000 yeah and now it's closer to 300,000, yes. So when my son was smallwe would go to the park. Yeah, and it's fine. Now you go over and you need to rent your own place across because it's actually packed.

I just don't go to those places. Fun and it's but it's a you know in the park. This is Hackney, not Victoria station. You're in the wrong place. So yeah, I I choose to go at different times or and one of the things that's happened but over there as I don't like to go out as much now. So even though I'm free to travel and I've become a lot more house back home bound, not housebound. Yeah so yeah it's actually I have to make a mental effort to actually get out of the house so when you gave that project as well, yeah, you know I'll just I'll go down. Do the marshes or I'll go down to Clissold Park or walk along the canal and I didn't do any of those things. Yeah, but these these photos were taken on the days that she got myself out of the house.

Yeah yeah, that that this one 'cause it was raining. So the reasons why that that the picture of the tombs was dark is because it had been raining 'cause you can see the puddle. I think those days when we had those really heavy there, but three days and we had some really heavy rain.

**It was horrible, yeah?**

I didn't mind it, I just didn't go out in it, but I like them and I like I like to understand. Look at them. Yes, he never catch me. Take a picture, yeah? Yeah yeah, that's funny. Yeah, so long as I'm not in it I don't mind it. Alright, sure half, but then it's just fun afterwards, yeah?. Get wet, keep walking and get wet and then you have a story to tell.

**I think that's concludes all of the all of the questions that I wanted to ask. But yeah, I'm happy to carry on chatting if there's anything else that you want to discuss.**

I just really enjoyed it. It's so far ranging and it's interesting to be interviewed, yeah?

**I really enjoyed it as well.**

it's just interesting talking, 'cause I don't have anyone to have conversation with, so being able to actually examine what I did from an intellectual point of view as well as a conversational point of view has been very, very interesting.

I'm really glad to offer that opportunity.

**Appreciate it and I'm so glad you could accept me.**