

Kingston School of Art

HA6101 Dissertation: Research & Reflection



**Living in an Unreal World: A Critical Exploration of  
Architectural Visualisation and  
Placebranding in London**

Matthew Clark K1509966

BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Words Count: 8,033

2019/2020

## **Table of Contents**

<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Unreal Worlds .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Placebranding and the Creative City .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Parody and Dark Matter .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>42</b>

## List of Figures

Cover Image. Canniffe, E (2017) *Photograph of Welbeck St, Marylebone Development* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/141716511232> (Accessed 10 Jan. 2020)

Figure 1. Canary Wharf Group PLC & Qatari Diar (2014) *CGI image of Southbank Place* [Render]. Available at [https://issuu.com/sky\\_uk\\_properties/docs/sbp\\_host\\_brochure\\_sky](https://issuu.com/sky_uk_properties/docs/sbp_host_brochure_sky) (Accessed 15 Dec. 2019)

Figure 2. Canary Wharf Group PLC & Qatari Diar (2014) *CGI image of Southbank Place* [Render]. Available at <https://www.southbank-place.com/media/2882/southbankminibrochure.pdf> (Accessed 15 Dec. 2019)

Figure 3. Redrow (2015), *World at Your Feet* [screenshot]. Available at [https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsmOHx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM\\_uhdeCjFz9jc](https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsmOHx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM_uhdeCjFz9jc) (Accessed 15 Dec. 2019)

Figure 4. Picture Plane (2013), *Paxton Rise* [Render]. Available at <http://www.pictureplane.co.uk/projects/paxton-rise> (Accessed 15 Dec. 2019)

Figure 5. Goodwin, M (2017) *Photograph of hoarding outside Battersea power station's development*. [Hoarding]. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/apr/04/the-property-billboards-that-reveal-the-truth-about-britains-luxury-housing-market> (Accessed 17 Dec. 2019)

Figure 6. Colyer, M (2016) *Photograph of The Colyer Hoardings* [Hoardings]. Available at <https://fivethingsseenandheard.com/tag/great-newport-street/> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 7. Inglis, T (2017) *Photograph of Greenwich Peninsula Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/150304384827> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 8. Knight Dragon (2016) *Greenwich Peninsula Advertising by the Beautiful Meme a* [image]. Available at <https://www.designweek.co.uk/inspiration/greenwich-peninsula-campaign-by-the-beautiful-meme/> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 9. Knight Dragon (2016) *Greenwich Peninsula Advertising by the Beautiful Meme b* [image]. Available at <https://www.designweek.co.uk/inspiration/greenwich-peninsula-campaign-by-the-beautiful-meme/> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 10. Hiles, A (2017) *Photograph of 375 Kensington Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/144032979022> (Accessed 12 Jan. 2019)

Figure 11. Clark, M. (2018) *Tidemill Gardens October 2018* [photograph] (Source: Clark, M 2018)

Figure 12. Clark, M. (2018) *Tidemill Gardens March 2019* [photograph] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Figure 13. Clark, M. (2018) *Tidemill Gardens September 2019* [photograph] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Figure 14. Peabody (2019) *Sales Page of The Muse* [screenshot] Available at <https://www.peabodysales.co.uk/developments/the-muse/> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 15. Development Aesthetics (2017) *Photograph of Crofton Development, Brockley* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/151879959417> (Accessed 28 Dec. 2019)

Figure 16. Bruggemann, S (1997) *THE EVENT OF WRITING MAY BE THE UNEVENT OF READING* [artwork] Available at <http://thewallsouthkensington.com/content.php> (Accessed 3 Jan. 2019)

Figure 17. Development Aesthetics (2016) *Photograph of Dalston Curve Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <http://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/> (Accessed 3 Jan. 2019)

Figure 18. Bruggemann, S. (2003) *THIS MUST BE THE PLACE* [artwork] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Figure 19. Spacemakers (2009) *Photograph of Market Trader at Brixton Arcade* [Photograph] Available at <http://www.spacemakers.info/projects/brixton-village> (Accessed 7 Jan. 2019)

Figure 20. Clark, M. (2019) *An Archive of Tidemill Gardens* [publication] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Figure 21. Clark, M. (2019) *Documenting a Walk Around Old Street on CCTV* [image] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Figure 22. Papenek, V (1972) *Design for the Real World*. New York: Bantam Books, 1973. P.68 Print.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to Theo Sykes for posing as my business associate as we enquired to buy one of Elephant Park's luxury apartments and for the continued feedback. Thank you also to Chris Byfield and Victor Wang for their help and comments.

Thank you to Frances Grahil for the assistance in writing the dissertation.

Thank you to Matt Weston and Andre Fagan for taking the time to speak with me about my research, the conversations were incredibly helpful.

Thank you to Veronika Marxer and my family for continued support throughout the process.

## **Introduction**

Long before buildings are built or construction work begins, they are first presented to the world in the form of computer-generated images or renders. In the case of residential developments these CGI images are displayed to the public on hoardings, often accompanied by slogans and descriptions. This combination of branded type and image is found across London and is ingrained into the visual topography of the city.

To an extent they draw similar comparisons to graffiti. Both are found in urban environments, both are visible to the public, both leave an imprint with a signature tag marking ownership and both are political. However the tags of Taylor Wimpey, Berkeley or Galliard are organised, legal and ultimately intended to advertise buildings and places as opposed to representing acts of subversion and protest.

One of the main aims of this dissertation is to decode and interrogate the hidden messages embedded into these images, particularly those aimed at selling an aspirational lifestyle to the wealthy 1% able to afford such developments. Their presence is widespread throughout the city, it is therefore important to question what are these images, how do they work, what do they reveal and whom are they for?

Alongside cranes, the hoardings and the digitised plan of what is to come are key pointers towards gentrification and redevelopment. They are signifiers of an inversion as the affluent classes move back into working class and industrialised areas of the city. Sharon Zukin elaborates on this further, describing it as 'the reconquest of the downtown by high-rent, high-class uses, the re-creation of an urban middle class, and the use of art and culture to further these ends'. (Zukin, 1982, XIV). The second aim of this dissertation is to therefore explore how places in the city are branded and sold.

In many ways the idea of place is entirely irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Advances in transport make it faster and cheaper to travel whilst the internet has completely broken down geographical boundaries. However for some place is more important than ever. Amongst this constant movement and intermixing, a local sense of place is diminished leading to negative ideologies such as nationalism and racism (Massey, 1994 p.146). The Brexit debate in the UK continues to highlight the polarisation of values with the idea of sovereignty and place something that many prioritise (Inglis, 2017, p.15).

My research began in 2018 after working alongside the protestors and activists of Tidemill Gardens and it quickly became apparent the issues and themes relating to place are inherently political. Primary research included interviewing and discussing the ideas with architects to better understand the relationship between graphic design and architecture within this context. Other forms of research also involved visiting a luxury show apartment, interviewing Matt Weston of Spacemakers and documenting visual examples of corporate development aesthetics. Signs and symbols drawn from these visual examples are contextualised by facts and figures such as Transparency International's report on overseas investment on the UK housing market and theorised by writers such as Baudrillard and Debord.

The first two chapters of this dissertation critique the formula of placebranding. Chapter one focuses on the CGI image or render. Using visual analysis it takes a more global view as it seeks to unpack the render revealing it is an example of acute power and luxury intended for the consumption of the top 1%. Chapter two is concentrated more on London. It explores everything else that is used alongside the render such as language, identity and ideology. Chapter three presents examples of artists, designers or theorists taking an alternative approach to placebranding. Their practices do not necessarily offer a solution to the issues raised but rather they confront and subvert the threats of corporatism and its intense power.

Finally, most importantly this dissertation is set against a backdrop of a national housing emergency. Whilst the examples in this dissertation are specific to London, they are symptomatic of a wider issue and reveal the problems of housing in the UK. They symbolise a crisis in which 3 million new social homes must be built within 20 years yet the 200,000 starter homes that were pledged in 2014 are yet to be built (Shelter & NAO, 2019). 400,000 people are homeless or at risk of homelessness and more than 10,000 people are in emergency accommodation (O'Donoghue, 2019). This is a crisis in which housing costs are spiralling entirely out of control and a neoliberal economic and political system does very little to address.

## **Chapter 1: Unreal Worlds**

Architecture and visualisation have always been inextricably linked.

Visualisation transforms an idea into a comprehensible building allowing an audience to envisage an unbuilt space. Blueprints, drawings and CGI renders are the first form a building takes before it is physicalized. However there is a clear distinction between a blueprint and a drawing or render.

Blueprints detail the functional units and measurements of a building. They serve a practical purpose, dictating the process by which the building is constructed. Whilst drawings and CGI renders convey an element of the intangible. Drawings were once produced using paint, pen and ink however they have since been replaced by the computer.

Referred to as architectural rendering or visualisation, it is the art or process of creating 2D images or films which intends to show the proposed construction or building. They are generated using a variety of 3D software. While visual styles differ their intent often remains for sales and marketing purposes as they give the audience an idea or sense of what is to come.

Architect and member of the New York Five Michael Graves posits that this type of visualisation is ‘analogous to hearing the words of a novel read aloud, when reading them on paper it allows us to daydream a little, to make associations beyond the literal sentences on the page.’ (Graves, 2012)

This chapter seeks to unpack the renderings of London's luxury housing developments. Using visual signs and signals to explore what these images are, how they work, and whom they are for.

## **Southbank Place**

Southbank Place is a £1.3bn joint venture between the Canary Wharf Group and Qatari Diar, which will somehow see 900 flats tightly packed behind the London Eye. A third of these will fall below the minimum daylight standard according to an independent survey (Lambeth Council, 2015, p 116). Unsurprisingly the brochure glosses over such details instead proclaiming it is 'a location where residents feel they have truly arrived' (Squire, 13, 2014). Alongside it is a render, which we can begin to decipher its visual signs (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Canary Wharf Group PLC & Qatari Diar (2014) *CGI image of Southbank Place* [Render]. Available at [https://issuu.com/sky\\_uk\\_properties/docs/sbp\\_host\\_brochure\\_sky](https://issuu.com/sky_uk_properties/docs/sbp_host_brochure_sky)

The image features young thirty-year olds enjoying coffee or brunch basking in a non-stop sunlight, which bounces off of various different panes of glass adding to the shiny veneer. Artist James Bridle refers to these people as the 'render ghosts' (n.d).

They live in the 'liminal space between the present and the future, the real and the virtual, the physical and the digital. A world of architecture, urbanism and the city before it is completed - which is also never.' (Bridle, n.d)

Pockets of green are placed throughout the image depicting trees and plants that are somehow immune from ever changing from a different shade of 'Leaf Green' (hex colour code #526b2d). As the sun sets in Southbank Place's render world it gets stuck at sunset casting a hazy summer hue as the render people enjoy a glass of champagne either on a non-descript balcony or plaza with the increasingly ubiquitous skyline of London in the background (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Canary Wharf Group PLC & Qatari Diar (2014) *CGI image of Southbank Place* [Render]. Available at <https://www.southbank-place.com/media/2882/southbankminibrochure.pdf>

These images are less about selling the building and more about selling a utopian lifestyle in which a station on your doorstop allows you to waste less time commuting and more time working, a spin class downstairs at the on-site gym allows you to alleviate the stresses of work and you can magically stumble across a tranquil landscaped garden around the corner. As John Berger explains in his seminal book *Ways of Seeing*: 'This is why publicity can never really afford to be

about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it.' (Berger, 1972, p.132)

The images offer the buyer a future projection of themselves 'made glamorous by the product' (ibid.). In these images the apartment itself becomes irrelevant, instead emphasising these newfound accessories of efficiency or bizarre neighbourly interactions that come with owning this object.

### **Selling a lifestyle**

In some cases promotional films accompany these images and brochures, which go even further to skim over the actual building itself. Again their focus is diverted towards a lifestyle of glitz and glamour achieved only by owning property in London.

One such example is a film titled *World at Your Feet* produced by the developer Redrow, so ridiculous it was swiftly deleted (Figure 3). Fortunately it has since been re-uploaded by a Vimeo account with the username 'Patrick Bateman', the similarities to *American Psycho* cannot be avoided.



Figure 3. Redrow (2015), *World at Your Feet* [screenshot]. Available at [https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsmOHx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM\\_uhdeCjFz9jc](https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsmOHx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM_uhdeCjFz9jc)

The film follows a man downtrodden and disillusioned as he struggles at work. However he slowly begins to ascend the corporate ladder, “stay true to what you believe. Make the impossible, possible” as we see him shaking hands with other businessmen, kissing a woman in a lift and pondering in a nightclub (Redrow, 2015). It then cuts to him striding into a lobby taking the lift up to the top floor. The camera pans across a sterile looking apartment. We see the woman he kissed in the lift now asleep in the apartment, he waves at her and steps out onto a balcony, overlooking the skyline of London. “To look out at the city that could have swallowed you whole and say; I did this to stand with the world at your feet” (*ibid.*).

As a piece of marketing, these films and images are examples of what Frederic Jameson terms as ‘intensities’ (1991); They are completely removed from any sense of reality, ignoring the harsh truths that come with living in cities. For example, city dwellers are at a 40% increased risk of depression and schizophrenia with much of this attributed to high-rise living (Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health, 2016). Instead they show ‘the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity’ (Jameson, 1991, p.27).

In a similar sense Theodor Adorno comments on these hallucinations as ‘desire inflamed by the glossy names and images’ (2016, p.111). However as he mentions ‘the culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises’ and in this case these unreal images selling an unreal lifestyle cheat their audience of the harsh realities of UK and London housing (*ibid.*).

They depict an unreal world devoid of the reality that homes are shrinking in size, a proposed development in Barnet being an example in which some homes will be 40% smaller than a Travelodge room (Booth, 2017). Or that the fact that according to a study, almost a third of private rents fail the National Decent Homes Standard (Kentish, 2017). London is increasingly becoming one of the most unliveable cities in the world, in every sense. Air, noise and light pollution

cause deaths and widespread health problems for thousands. Homelessness continues to escalate. Rents soar and wages cannot keep up, forcing some of the most important members of society such as teachers, nurses and police officers to move out of the capital. (Inglis, 2017, p.88).

### **Hyperreality**

Southbank Place and World at Your Feet are examples of what Baudrillard termed a 'simulacrum' (2001). In the first stage of *Simulcra and Simulation*, architectural visualisation is a representation of an unbuilt space, giving its audience an idea of what is to come.

However, renders are used as a sales tool and are therefore expected to be colourful and vibrant, providing a utopian representation of this world. The second stage is that the render now perverts reality, which begins to take on new meanings. The image has been loaded with an idealised lifestyle that an audience dreams of living. The third stage is when the render is pretending to be truthful but in reality it is 'a copy for which no original has ever existed' (Baudrillard, 1994, p.166).

The final stage is when the image reaches 'hyperreality', which is 'a real without origin or reality' Baudrillard, 1994, p.1). The proliferation of these renders means that this representation precedes the real. Perceptions of these spaces are forever influenced by these renders, resulting in buyers that are totally convinced to part with their millions.

### **Picture Plane**

The London based architectural visualisation studio Picture Plane acknowledges the falsity of rendering. Their work offers an alternative to the hyperrealistic images by going 'beyond photorealistic representation to communicate the atmosphere and ethereal qualities of unbuilt spaces' (Picture Plane, 2020). Founder Jörg Majer comments that most renderings "aspire to the photograph, rather than the painting, but when you are creating spaces that do not yet exist, the painting is more powerful" (Bridle, 2013).

Picture Plane's proposal for Paxton Rise a residential development in South London was created through a process of using the textures, colour palettes and clouds of 18<sup>th</sup> century English landscape painter George Stubbs (Figure 4). The render in this case is self-aware, it acknowledges what it is and therefore does not enter the 'hyperreal'. It avoids the false enhancements and embellishments of Southbank Place. It is purposefully ambiguous and therefore cannot be objectified in the same way other renderings are.



Figure 4. Picture Plane (2013), *Paxton Rise* [Render]. Available at <http://www.pictureplane.co.uk/projects/paxton-rise>

## Audience

This chapter has so far highlighted that architectural renders are fabricated images that project an unreal and unattainable lifestyle as a way of diverting attention from the building itself. Placemaking and branding saturate the streets of London as developments hide behind hoardings that 'fool few' (Macdonald, 2014). It is then worth considering, who are the real intended audience of these images? City dwellers have an increasing scepticism for adverts, coupled with the fact that apps and websites such as Zoopla and Rightmove are far more common for finding a property.

In 1903, George Simmel wrote in *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, that urban living forces people to adopt a 'blasé attitude', which he describes as 'an

emotional “graying” of reactions, which protects the individual from becoming overwhelmed by the sensory intensity of city life’ (Edles and Appelrouth, 2015, p.334). One hundred years on with access to smartphones and headphones, architectural renders simply blend in with the visual topography of London.

A report published in 2017 by Transparency International on *The Impact of overseas corruption on the London property market* begins to reveal who the intended audience of these vacuous marketing campaigns are. The report found that of the 14-landmark luxury developments and 2,056 properties analysed, at least 76% of properties were bought by beneficiaries coming from overseas (Transparency International, 2017, p.39). One example being the highly contentious Elephant Park development built on the site of the Heygate Estate, which encapsulates everything that is wrong with London’s housing situation. South Gardens, the first stage of the development saw 51 out of 51 properties sold abroad (*ibid.*, p.43). Sales began in Singapore, April 2014, two years before they ever went on sale in the UK. The site which once had 1,194 homes for social rent has now been cut to just 74 (*ibid.*, p.46). Prices start at around £600,000 for a studio flat but exceed well beyond £1 million, completely unaffordable for those on the average Southwark wage of £30,000 (*ibid.*, p.46).

When viewing one of the Elephant Park flats, cupboards were filled with tea and a British spy manual was found on a table. The apartment seemed to be decorated with caricatures of Englishness. This simplifies life in the UK to a series of stereotypes that are easily absorbed to those without a clear knowledge of what life in the UK is really like. As architecture critic Ollie Wainwright confirms:

‘Speak to any property-marketing agency and they will tell you their east-Asian clients are buying a piece of England, which – for them – means blond-haired, blue-eyed Burberry models’. (Wainwright, 2017)

This also translates to the images and billboards with examples such as the renders for the Battersea Power Station development or Embassy Gardens which portray landscapes that are populated by thirty-year-old women with long

blonde hair, occasionally with a partner or family however there are no signs of racial diversity (Figure 5). William Murray of Wordsearch, a property branding agency responsible for the marketing of the Battersea Power Station development responded to comments of whitewashing;

“I would be appalled if people thought this was conscious ethnic cleansing... It just comes down to whatever stock people the rendering company happens to have in its image library. Visualisations are a blunt tool, not something to be relied upon as representative of the place being created. We spend a lot of time discussing what kind of clothes people are wearing, not what colour their skin is.” (Wainwright, 2017)



Figure 5. Goodwin, M (2017) *Photograph of hoarding outside Battersea power station's development*. [Hoarding]. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/apr/04/the-property-billboards-that-reveal-the-truth-about-britains-luxury-housing-market>

Advertising images of luxury developments are used to attract investors rather than residents. They are created for websites and brochures; mediums that will be seen at the property fairs of Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Dubai. Putting them on a billboard is perhaps to give the impression that flats are actually being sold in the UK. Or perhaps it is just an afterthought, a way of occupying some space and act as a façade whilst a utopian community is constructed.

## **Infrastructure Space**

Deconstructing the visual cues and signs of renders and visualisations reveal the hidden truths of London's luxury housing market whereby homes are treated as an asset. They are not singular objects but rather global investments.

Various factors make London an enticing economic opportunity for many, however Keller Easterling points towards a global phenomenon 'Now not only buildings ... but also entire world cities are constructed according to a formula' (Easterling, 2016, p.12). Referring to examples such as Dubai and Shenzhen or 'anywhere in the world with a drumbeat of generic skyscrapers' (ibid.). Like the aforementioned renders and visualisations of Southbank Place or World at Your Feet, these CGI landscapes are accompanied by an abundance of aspirational render porn.

This formula is an example of what Easterling refers to as 'infrastructure space' which itself has 'become a medium of information' (ibid., p13). Just like Marshall McLuhans phrase "medium is the message" there is a clear distinction between the content and the means by which it is carried. He refers to the content as 'the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind' (McLuhan, 2001, p19). The buildings themselves as objects are no longer relevant; it is about the medium by which they are delivered.

Similarly the advertising images mentioned in this chapter do not provide any information; rather they are examples of what Guy Debord termed 'the spectacle' (Debord, 1967). In his essay, Debord writes that 'one part of the world represents itself before the world and is superior to it.' (ibid.) These images are for the consumption and enjoyment of the worlds richest, the top 1%. Their artificiality is almost laughable, as they appear so benevolent, however on closer inspection these images are illustrations that highlight inequality and merely exacerbate the global housing crisis.

## **Chapter 2: Placebranding and the Creative City**

Alongside the CGI generated renders depicting future developments are branded slogans usually with words such as vibrant or luxury. This combination of overly branded type and image is presented in the medium of either hoarding, brochure or website, a package which can be referred to as placebranding.

The American Marketing Association originally provided a definition for a brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (AMA, n.d). Whilst mediums, techniques and attitudes to branding are vastly different today, this definition is still accepted as a common starting point. Jennifer Rowley, a professor of information and communications states that placebranding is simply 'the application of branding techniques to places' (Rowley, 2008, p61). As places are increasingly competing against each other domestically and overseas, placebranding is common practice.

This chapter will focus on the hoarding as an object, its purpose and the content displayed on them. This chapter will also critique particular examples of placebranding in London, decoding the language and visual signs used. Finally using a specific case study this chapter will analyse the importance of creativity to placebranding.

### **Hord (n.)**

If you are to walk through London where development is taking place, such as Battersea, Deptford or Docklands, you will pass by long stretches of hoardings. This is often unbeknownst to you, as they have since become an almost banal part of the visual matter of London's urban landscape. Perhaps this is their intent; to hide construction work or secure derelict buildings, a physical barrier between the outside world and the secured zone. For many of us, what is behind the barrier is simply land however for others it is viewed as potential and hoardings display visual signs of a future intention of harnessing this potential.

This potential can also be found in the word itself. The word ‘hoard’ is derived from the old English word ‘hord’ meaning ‘treasure, valuable stock or store’ and in old Saxon it means ‘treasure, hidden or inmost place’ (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2020). It seems logical therefore that a link between the word ‘hoard’ and ‘treasure’ has translated for a hoarding becoming a space for selling this hidden treasure through placebranding. These physical adverts that line the streets of London with glossy finishes and highly stylized photography are what artist James Bridle considers to be ‘the most visible public, legal, urban art of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (Bridle, 2013). However a quick flick through the showcase pages of developers Galliard, Berkely, Peabody or Ballymore reveal that there are a handful of reused and recycled methods to branding places in London.

### **The Tropes of Placebranding**

Firstly, The Colyer, advertised as ‘14 Luxury apartments in the home of a legendary former jazz club’ (Figure 6), is an example of using the history of what was once there to brand a place. Similarly Newspaper House, Cottonworks or The Printworks follow the same trend. In a city as old as London coupled with the process of deindustrialization, this approach is not uncommon. However it seems the history of places are only worth remembering when it can be capitalised upon. Despite the listing system, nowhere in London is safe from being demolished, regardless of its cultural significance and in the case of the Colyer, being a legendary jazz club was not enough. The Colyer is built on the site of Studio 51 in Soho, Covent Garden, which later became known as the Ken Colyer Jazz Club. History shapes the brand as a jazz motif is used throughout the identity. A trumpet is used as the logo, which is accompanied by promotional images in the style of 60’s cartoons. This type of historical property branding shows a distinction between nostalgia as an affectionate feeling for the past and what Mark Augé considers as ‘there is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle.’ (Augé, 1995, p.103)

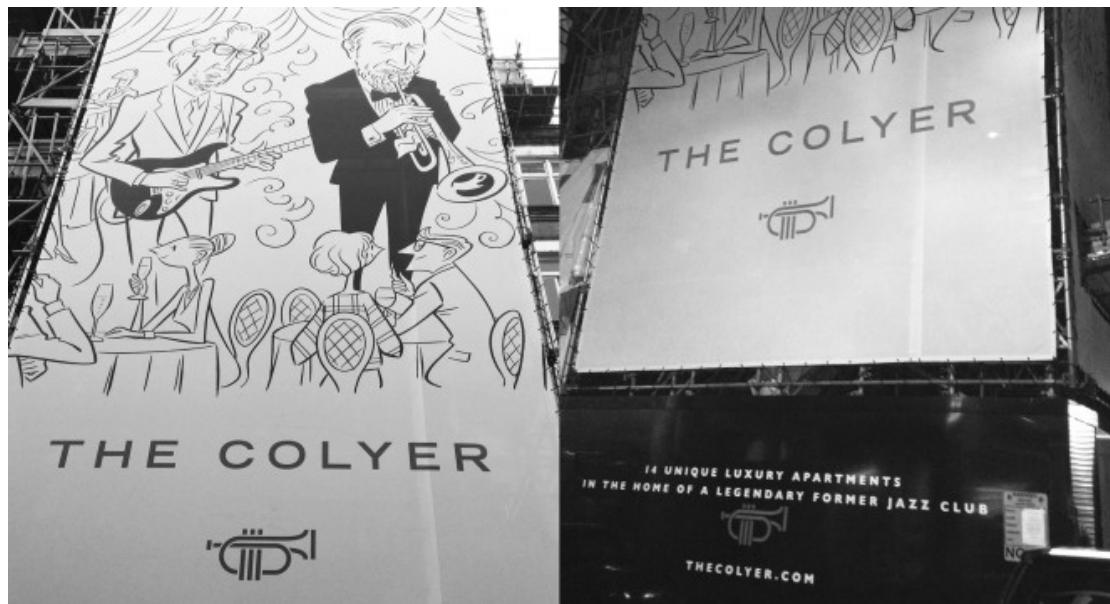


Figure 6. Colyer, M (2016) *Photograph of The Colyer Hoardings [Hoardings]*. Available at <https://fivethingsseenandheard.com/tag/great-newport-street/>

In other cases when a place is deemed it doesn't have a past that can be exploited, residents are encouraged to make their own and become pioneers. The branding for Greenwich Peninsula for example refers to buyers as 'settlers' (Figure 7) and invites them to 'join the land rush' (Figure 8). The advertising images depict a white family sat in a horse drawn carriage alongside slogans such as 'traditions are important in neighbourhoods so lets invent some' (Figure 9). Generally this approach applies to areas outside of central London and considered to be 'on the up' such as the Ram Quarter development in Wandsworth with ads proclaiming 'worth visiting'. This type of placebranding can be deeply divisive, creating an atmosphere of 'us' and 'them', something writer Eula Bliss comments on in reference to Chicago.

'Considering an inhabited place uninhabited. To imagine oneself as a pioneer in a place as densely populated as Chicago is either to deny the existence of your neighbours or to cast them as natives who must be displaced.' (Bliss, 2017)

It is therefore convenient for developers to ignore history when its either not glamorous enough or doesn't suit their narrative. This is a similar approach to how history is recalled; the winners write it and in this case, the winners are those with the economic power.



Figure 8. Knight Dragon (2016) *Greenwich Peninsula Advertising by the Beautiful Meme a* [image]. Available at <https://www.designweek.co.uk/inspiration/greenwich-peninsula-campaign-by-the-beautiful-meme/>



Figure 9. Knight Dragon (2016) *Greenwich Peninsula Advertising by the Beautiful Meme b* [image]. Available at <https://www.designweek.co.uk/inspiration/greenwich-peninsula-campaign-by-the-beautiful-meme/>



Figure 7. Inglis, T (2017) *Photograph of Greenwich Peninsula Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/150304384827>

Lastly, for the past 30 years London's skyline has been growing vertically instead of horizontally with 541 tall buildings under construction or planned in 2019 alone (NLA, 2019, p.12). Tall buildings and tower blocks were originally built as council flats however as spaces have shrunk, plots largely only allow for vertical living. Today, with the promises of luxury views these developments are some of the most expensive. These landmark towers become logos themselves or 'sight bites' (*Abroad Again*, 2007). In London, the trend is to give these skyscrapers names such as the Walkie Talkie building, The Gherkin or Cheese Grater cementing a branded network between name and building. Emulating J.G Ballard's *High-Rise*, the marketing campaigns of towers in London promise that high-rise living will somehow equate to luxury and superiority, a confirmation of an ascension to the top. The irony of this concept is unbearable when compared to post war council flats such as Grenfell Tower or Ronan Point, which were generally viewed, as slums.

Visually, the graphic identities of residential property developments rarely change and follow predictable trends. 'Luxury' developments are normally set in gold, silver or white generic serif typefaces on a conservative dark brown or black background (Figure 10). Whereas 'vibrant' developments deemed to be 'on the up' targeted at a younger clientele are set in brighter, bolder colours using a more on-trend, quirkier typeface such as that of Greenwich Peninsula (Figure 8).



Figure 10. Hiles, A (2017) *Photograph of 375 Kensington Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/144032979022>

These examples of visual identities and language of placebranding in London exist entirely within their own circles. They are not part of the design canon nor featured or referenced by other designers or design blogs. This is because unlike most brands, property branding has a set expiry date. The marketing campaigns start before construction and end once all the flats are sold. Thereby serving its purpose. The hoardings are removed, the brochures binned and the websites expire. These brands have no longevity and their visual identities remain an empty vessel as designer Michael Beirut points out in his book, *How to Use Graphic Design*.

'People forget that a brand-new logo seldom means a thing. It is an empty vessel awaiting the meaning that will be poured into it by history and experience'. (Beirut, 2016, p179)

This is a clear issue with property branding in London, it is impossible to encapsulate the history and meaning of a place in a simple logo or slogan. This results in the placebranding machine re-gurgitating and spitting out recycled tropes and techniques all over hoardings.

## Tidemill Gardens

Figures 11,12 and 13 are photographs of the same view of Tidemill Gardens part of a highly contentious development in Deptford. They provide a visual timeframe and the process in which development hoardings are erected and their intended purpose at the time. The photographs demonstrate how hoardings are not always intended to advertise to potential buyers but also how they can become sites of conflict and tension.



Figure 11. Clark,  
M. (2018)  
*Tidemill  
Gardens October  
2018*  
[photograph]  
(Source: Clark,  
M 2018)



Figure 12. Clark,  
M. (2018)  
*Tidemill  
Gardens March  
2019*  
[photograph]  
(Source: Clark,  
M 2019)



Figure 13. Clark,  
M. (2018)  
*Tidemill  
Gardens  
September 2019*  
[photograph]  
(Source: Clark,  
M 2019)

Figure 11 is a photograph from September 2018 of the site before the development began. Tidemill Gardens was once a communal garden and much loved community space. Protestors occupied the garden when plans for its redevelopment emerged. It became a site of fierce protests, demonstrations and media coverage. Yet by November 2018, bailiffs and police had moved in, evicting the demonstrators and the site was secured with hoardings.

Figure 12 was taken in March 2019, by this time all 74 trees from the garden had been cut down, data collected from Citizen Sense, a Goldsmiths University study found that the garden cut pollution levels by half in an area that was already six times over the WHO limit (Citizen Sense, 2018). Around 50 security guards also stood by the hoardings guarding the garden 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This was thought to be costing around £35,000 a day (Corporate Watch, 2018), this went on until July 2019 when new hoardings were put up, securing the entire area (Figure 13).

Tidemill Gardens illustrates just how contentious the site was and the lengths to which developers are willing to go in order to secure land and its potential. These lengths evidently cause bitterness and animosity between the local community, developers and the council.

### **The Muse**

In September 2019, developer Peabody launched the first images detailing the new development on the site of Tidemill Gardens, titled The Muse (Figure 14). The proposed plan is 209 new properties, half of which are available for rents 63% higher than existing Lewisham council rents and the other half available to private sale and shared ownership (Lewisham Council, n.d.) (Worthington, 2019). The language and branding of The Muse regurgitates some of the familiar techniques of placebranding:

‘This stylish development of thoughtfully designed homes sits beside the newly landscaped Charlottenburg Park... Make every day a work of art at The Muse’ (Peabody, 2019)

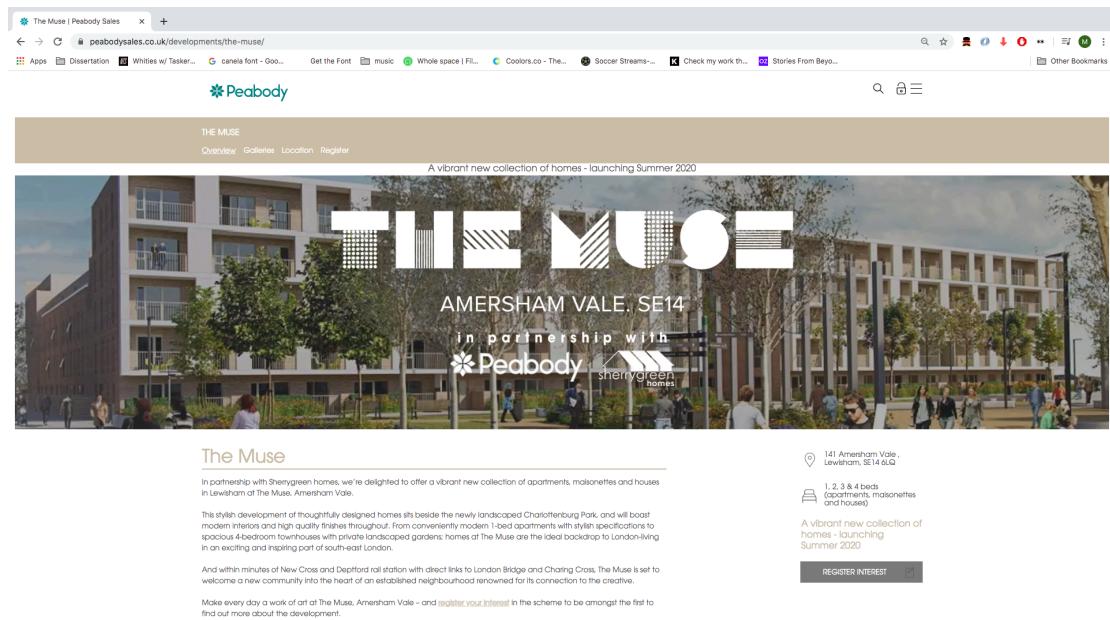


Figure 14. Peabody (2019) *Sales Page of The Muse* [screenshot] Available at <https://www.peabodysales.co.uk/developments/the-muse/>

Despite London mayor Sadiq Khan proclaiming that London is the greatest city in the world, developers seem to get a bit bored of it sometimes. Normally this leads to development projects that mimic New York such as plans for Elephant One to be called Tribeca Square or a development in Fitzrovia named Noho Square. However The Muse is clearly a Berlinisation of London. Charlottenburg, an area in Berlin has somehow had a park in Deptford named after it. It may seem bizarre, but the developers have identified artists, designers and creative professionals as their clientele. As Sharon Zukin writes in *Loft Living*:

‘Providing space in the city for artists... often has the effect of enhancing property values and so it becomes a springboard for real estate development. This phenomenon is not peculiar to New York’. (Zukin, 1982, p.111)

Berlin has long been considered a global cultural hub, a popular destination for artists, designers and creatives from across the globe. Neighbourhoods in other areas deemed edgy, quirky or arty regularly draw comparisons with Berlin, in London it is usually Shoreditch and Dalston but this time it is Deptford, an area next to Peckham and New Cross all of which have fostered a hub of artists, and creatives. The branding of The Muse seeks to capitalise on this creative hub and attract a new group of creative professionals.

It remains to be seen how else the creative rhetoric will be used by the marketing campaign of The Muse however given its highly contentious circumstances, the hoarding will become a focal point in communicating to the local community. One development in Kingston for example saw a local primary school make drawings of their dream building, which were then displayed on the hoardings. The developers of The Muse could replicate this approach as it may serve to ease tensions with the local community. Alternatively, the developers may opt to commission a local graffiti artist to create a mural like a hoarding in Brockley (Figure 15). Graffiti is the perfect medium of containing just enough radical and political symbolism for audiences to feel they have engaged in a resistive act by simply appreciating it. As Oli Mould writes;

‘The ‘new’ creative city needs to have a veneer of ‘edginess’, appeal to hipsters and maintain a radical, progressive and perhaps even anti-capitalist aesthetic, all the while mobilizing these (now stabilized) aesthetics for the same traditions purpose: wealth generation for the elite.’  
(Mould, 2018, p.159)



Figure 15. Development Aesthetics (2017) *Photograph of Crofton Development, Brockley* [hoarding]. Available at <https://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/image/151879959417>

The example of Tidemill Gardens and its redevelopment into The Muse has served to outline the timeline of hoardings and their various uses at each stage of the re-development process. Having identified the theme of creativity in the marketing description of The Muse, it is important to unpack further this language.

## The Creative City

In 2002 urbanist Richard Florida wrote *The Rise of the Creative Class*. The book builds upon the idea that groups of young creatives and tech workers living in towns and cities were leading to increasing economic prosperity. Florida proposes that local councils and mayors should make their towns a place where young people would want to live. Florida argues the creative class ‘prefer indigenous street-level culture-a teeming blend of cafes, sidewalk musicians, and small galleries and bistros’ (Florida, 2002). Architecture critic Ollie Wainwright describes him as ‘the ultimate champion of gentrification, at once celebrated by mayors for reviving their struggling cities and vilified by critics for fuelling urban inequality.’ (Wainwright, 2017b). In his book *Against Creativity*, Oli Mould criticises Florida’s theories highlighting that ‘crucially, to this day, the book is used to justify continued inward investment and gentrification, as long as it *looks* creative’. (Mould, 2018, p.23)

The London Borough of Culture, launched in July 2017 by mayor Sadiq Khan is a sense of what Mould is referring as to what creativity looks like in London. The competition offers £1million of arts funding to a London borough that can successfully organise a series of events that celebrates creativity. The marketing video says; “Now is the time for your borough to step up, to celebrate its creativity, its collaboration and its character”. (Mayor of London, 2017)

The competition and the narrative of The Muse are clear examples of how there is a link between creativity being mobilized and urban development. Ultimately the competition shows how London boroughs are forced into competing with one another for arts funding that would otherwise have been part of a direct funding programme. Mould describes the competition as: ‘An austerity programme with a fine veneer of a Saturday night reality TV ‘winner takes all’ format.’ (Mould, 2018, p.151)

Florida's theories exemplify a formula of urban re-development in which creativity has become a buzzword. This formula is illustrated in the marketing techniques of The Muse in order attract Florida's creative class. The Muse forms a live case study demonstrating the process to which an area is redeveloped whilst also highlighting the importance of hoardings and their connection to placebranding.

## **Chapter 3: Parody and Dark Matter**

Both chapter 1 and 2 used the visual signs and signals of images and language to critique property branding in London to reveal its political relevance. The final chapter of my study offers three antidotes to the vacuousness of placebranding campaigns. The examples referenced serve to highlight how design has been used to subvert and disrupt the property-branding machine and in some cases enrich communities. This chapter will begin by exploring the work of Stefan Brüggemann's *Text Pieces*, which is a comment on the type of placebranding language deployed by The Muse. Meanwhile Metahaven's theories explored in *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments* propose the idea of parodying the visual aesthetic found in luxury renders as a form of embedding activism and dissent. Finally the practice of Spacemakers is an example of a creative practice working against, within and alongside development agencies and councils in relation to the regeneration machine.

### **The Wall**

The Wall is an outdoor exhibition space in South Kensington, making use of 100m of hoardings surrounding a car park, the project features commissioned artist works. The current piece on display is *Text Pieces* (1997-2014) by Mexican-German artist Stefan Brüggemann.

These hoardings don't feature stale graphic identities with outrageous prices, neither are they covered in glossy utopian CGI renders or over-stylized photography. Instead, 26 statements arranged in chronological order all of which are designed in the same style are featured on the temporary walls. The black vinyl lettering is set in all caps as a sans serif typeface, stuck on to the whitewashed hoardings. The statements are short, never more than a couple of sentences and very ambiguous, such as LOOKS CONCEPTUAL or 'THE EVENT OF WRITING MAY BE THE UNEVENT OF READING' (Figure 16)(Brüggemann 1997).

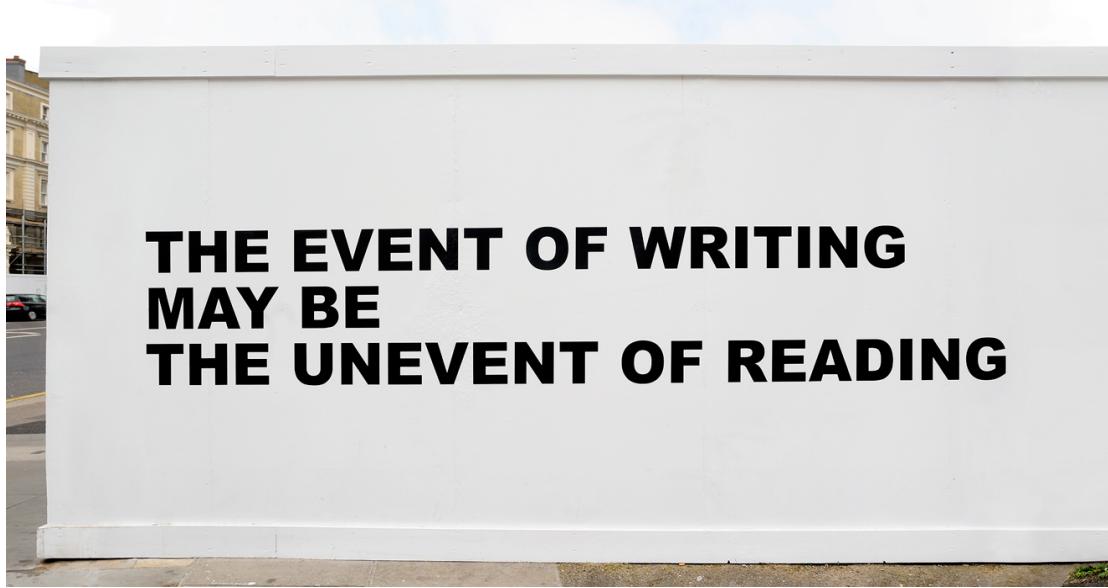


Figure 16. Bruggemann, S (1997) *THE EVENT OF WRITING MAY BE THE UNEVENT OF READING* [artwork] Available at <http://thewallsouthkensington.com/content.php>

When placed within the context of London property branding, the piece is undoubtedly a comment on their aesthetic and language. The visual style is purposefully unbranded and generic. A simple monochrome palette is used alongside Arial, a default font on numerous programmes. It conveys none of the tropes of recycled placebranding techniques such as that of the Greenwich Peninsula. Instead it is a rejection of the visual style of slickness and highly stylized property marketing campaigns.

However despite its default aesthetic, and a rejection of a specific visual style, the consistent use of typography and a colour scheme becomes its own brand as confirmed by Wally Olins a leading figure in the world of branding. 'Colours, typefaces, straplines or slogans, tone of voice... collectively form the visible recognition pattern.' (Olins, 2010, p. 30)

The Wall uses art as a veneer, literally and metaphorically as way of inciting engagement. It appears 'edgy' however the sentences themselves draw comparisons with property branding slogans for their opaque language. It is a challenge to decipher the difference between some of the hollow aspirational jargon found on hoardings and some of Bruggeman's statements. The Dalston Curve development for example displays phrases such as 'There's no better place

to be' and 'Living life to the full – everyday of the week' (Figure 17). Similarly Bruggemans statements include '(THIS MUST BE THE PLACE)' and 'THIS MOMENT IS YOURS' (Figure 18)(Brugemann, 2003) (ibid. 2013).



Figure 17. Development Aesthetics (2016) *Photograph of Dalston Curve Hoarding* [hoarding]. Available at <http://developmentaesthetics.tumblr.com/> (Accessed 3 Jan. 2019)  
Figure 18. Bruggemann, S. (2003) *THIS MUST BE THE PLACE* [artwork] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

Whilst the visual aesthetic of Bruggemans work is a form of differentiating itself from the familiar corporate veneer, the language acts in some parts as a parody but also a critique of capitalism. In an interview with art curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, Bruggeman makes reference to the importance of murals and billboards in Mexico where he grew up as a child.

'They take you as a child to see the murals and they become part of your unconscious. The same way capitalism is also part of your unconscious.' (The Wall, 2014)

In this case the saturation of visual language displayed on hoardings such as that of the Dalston Curve have been assimilated into the unconscious of Londoners.

### **Parody as Dissent**

Bruggeman's reference to the unconscious nature of capitalism is an idea expanded upon by author Mark Fisher. In 2009, amongst the fallout of the financial crisis, Fisher coined the phrase "capitalist realism". The phrase describes the notion that not only is capitalism the only viable economic and political option but also that it is easier to 'imagine an end to the world than an

end to capitalism' (Fisher, 2009, p.1). Amidst this economic and political climate, austerity was unleashed across Europe with reduced public services and higher taxes.

Hyperreal corporate renders are the visual media of this moment. As housing was forced further to become a commodity, something perilously unattainable, the visual sales media proliferated thus these renders furthered. This coupled with the thorough improvement of rendering technologies has meant that more and more they infect our urban environs.

It is amongst this backdrop of no alternative that design collective Metahaven explore the possibilities of dissent. In the book *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments*, they make the case that memes and jokes have assumed a new political potential for protest. They reference Ethan Zuckerman's *Cute Cat Theory for Digital Activism*, which posits that platforms that allow people to exchange pictures of cats can actually become constructive sites for political activism. One has to look no further than the Twitter profile of Trump as evidence of how the meme has become the new political slogan.

Zuckerman considers that if platforms such as Facebook were to be shut down by the state, there would finally be revolt, as users could no longer exchange pictures of cats. Zuckerman proposes that embedding activist ideas within widely accessible popular culture can be more effective because it is harder for subversive content to be stamped out by authoritarians. These activist ideas are therefore more likely to reach the masses.

Similarly Metahaven observe that digital platforms facilitate jokes potential for activism due to their durability and capacity to reach a mass audience: 'To achieve scale, it is deploying new strategies with viral properties and Darwinian survival skills.' (Metahaven, 2013, p 29). The book is a call to arms, largely to designers, to fight "nonsense with nonsense" as 'jokes easily pass through the walls of the fortress. The joke is an open source weapon of the public' (*ibid.*, p

53). This highlights how laughter is the best medicine; it is contagious even if the intention is very serious.

Jacques Rancière commented that 'It's this circulation of stereotypes that critique stereotypes, giant stuffed animals that denounce the media, spectacular installations that denounce the spectacle etc.' (Carnevalle and John Kelsey, 2007, p. 256-69). By engaging with the ideas proposed by Zuckerman, Metahaven and Rancière, can the stereotypes of slick corporate renders be used to expose the masked threat at the heart of the corporatism of UK property branding.

Architect Jack Self refers to these visual stereotypes as the 'ironic corporate' proposing that 'broadly this type of art seeks to raise agency in the subject through parody and proposes activism founded in the subversion of established aesthetic tropes' (Self, 2014). The 'established aesthetic tropes' in reference are the sterile stock landscapes featuring ethnically non-descript people who just cant stop smiling. These tropes are a pastiche of power and luxury representing a form of corporatism that is relentless and brutal.

### **Spacemakers**

Metahaven's theories act as a proposal to hacking and parodying the visual language of corporatism whereas the work of Spacemakers confronts it head on.

Architectural visualisation and renders convey an impression of the final building. This impression is vital as it is required to negotiate through various planning, environmental and legal processes. These processes are examples of what Dan Hill calls "dark matter". He proposes we re-engage with this dark matter in order to enact change, referencing the thoughts of Wouter Vanstiphout:

'If you really want to change the city, or want a real struggle, a real fight, then it would require re-engaging with things like public planning for example, or re-engaging with government, or re-engaging with large-scale institutionalised developers.' (Hill, 2015, p.81)

The work of Spacemakers does just that, it re-engages with the regeneration machine as a means to create positive change. Self-described as a ‘utopian regeneration agency’, Spacemakers occupy a zone of working, against, within and alongside the ‘dark matter’ of urban regeneration (Spacemakers, n.d.). Matt Weston, who leads Spacemakers alongside Tom James, explains that their approach to projects always starts on the ground with an extensive research phase. This allows them to establish the economic and social needs of the community as each place differs.

It was formed in 2009 as a result of a yearlong project to rethink the future of the Brixton Village Arcade. The space had been earmarked for demolition and there were plans to build an apartment block in its place. Working alongside London & Associated Properties and Lambeth Council, Spacemakers put out an open call offering 3 months rent-free to anyone with an idea to use one of the units in the arcade. It proved to be a resounding success with the spaces being used by musicians, galleries, cafes, bars and meeting rooms. The initiative in turn fed back into the local community with socio-economic benefits for the existing traders and Brixton. Crucially by 2010 the market was fully let for the first time since 1979. The Brixton Arcade is an example of an approach that makes use of the existing structures and facilities to enrich the area around them. (Figure 19)



Figure 19. Spacemakers (2009) *Photograph of Market Trader at Brixton Arcade* [Photograph] Available at <http://www.spacemakers.info/projects/brixton-village>

Another of Spacemakers more recent projects saw them working alongside Harrow Council and a variety of other collaborators to create a new public space that brought the community together. As a result of in-depth field research, the Wealdstone Youth Workshop was established. It aims to challenge the pre-conceptions of young people in Wealdstone by collaborating with them to design a piece of sellable furniture that will also be used by the community. All profits go back into the project with a percentage going towards the youth participants.

To an extent there are similarities between the approach theorised by Metahaven and that of Spacemakers. They both seek to pass through the walls of corporatism, unveiling its threats and injustices such as cuts to youth services in Wealdstone. However Spacemakers differs from the trojan horse approach of Metahaven in that it confronts these issues without parody, which in a sense affords them more agency. For example Matt of Spacemakers has also recently taken on the role of strategy lead for the Becontree Estate, one of the largest public housing developments in the world. He mentions that this role allows him to get inside the working process of Barking and Dagenham Council as a way to challenge the sometimes-ludicrous urban regeneration machine and use it as a force for good.

Of the three creative practices referenced, Spacemakers are the most successful at being able to affect change and enrich communities. Their approach shows that it is not solely memes that can infiltrate the walls of corporatism. Whilst social pressure and raising awareness can further challenge these threats, the agency lies in internal shifts. Subversion is effective however it is through engaging with the more formal elements of dark matter that can lead to real change.

## Conclusion

'You scarcely pass a new block of flats that does not display a sign reading:  
FOR SALE (or TO LET), LUXUROUSLY APPOINTED GENTLEMEN'S  
APARTMENTS, or some such phrase.' (Munari, 2008, p.135)

Munari's observation encapsulates much of the overall argument of this dissertation. It began by analysing the CGI depiction of a building exposing that these hyperreal images are not representations of buildings at all but rather they are representations of economic assets.

The overload of this visual media and its aesthetics of luxury serves to highlight the direction of the city. The ability to generate huge amounts of wealth and power is prioritised whilst those who truly need housing are neglected. Therefore inequality spirals.

The second chapter looked at examples on the ground focusing on the concept of placebranding and how it is mobilized in London. However, similarly it too exposed a homogenous formula deployed across redevelopments in the city. The identities of redevelopments are made up of hollow language that reflects the desires of many, but are only attainable to the 1%.

As the grotesque property machine leaves its mark, cities become increasingly unliveable and places lose their distinctiveness. Chapter three presented a series of countermeasures to the issues raised in the first two chapters. Metahaven's idea of parodying a visual aesthetic, as a way of embedding activism and dissent is an approach that references the stereotypes of luxury corporate CGI renders. Meanwhile Stefan Bruggeman's Text Pieces are a comment on the saturation of placebranding language. The practice of Spacemakers is an example of regeneration successfully becoming more inclusive, functional and engaging.

One of the main aims of this dissertation was to interrogate the CGI images, hoardings and corporate identities that simply pass us by on a daily basis and decode their hidden messages. They have proven to be emblematic of a wider

issue revealing the problems of housing in the UK. Through my research I have discovered the power and agency of images and semiotics. Whilst it is easy to become obsessed with gentrification and develop an overly cynical mind-set, I have learned the importance of critically assessing the visual language of power and luxury. My research has allowed me to develop a visual literacy in reference to the placebranding machine.

My interests and motivations were sparked from everyday observations and beginning to question for whom is the city really for. This approach coupled with ongoing research has fed back into my design practice. For example, together with Harry Balchin, we worked alongside the campaigners of Tidemill Gardens to help archive the garden through photographs, drawings and stories, acting also as a wider pointer towards the social cleansing that is happening across London (Figure 20). More recently I have explored concepts of privacy in the city such as documenting a walk around Old Street using open access CCTV cameras and I am currently researching the significance of Privately Owned Public Spaces (Figure 21).



Figure 20. Clark, M. (2019) *An Archive of Tidemill Gardens* [publication] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

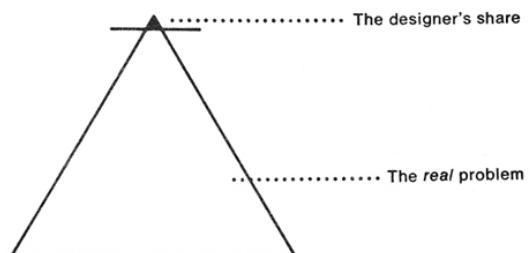


Figure 21. Clark, M. (2019) *Documenting a Walk Around Old Street on CCTV* [image] (Source: Clark, M 2019)

The themes and ideas explored in this dissertation are by no means conclusive and I intend to continue researching them further. I aim to scrutinize the ethical role and responsibility of designers and creatives within placebranding. As part of Florida's creativity script, artists and designers are regularly co-opted into the process of regeneration forcing them to balance earning a living and the social ethics of their practice. In many cases regeneration projects are accused of 'artwashing' a process of softening a corporate image through the use of art and design. As such it is worth considering the motivations behind the practice of Studio Raw. The Deptford based PR and branding studio responsible for the placebranding of The Muse development.

Victor Papenek alludes to this conundrum in his book *Design for the Real World*. Referring to the design problem pyramid, he makes the point that to an extent the designer's share of the problem is only the top 5% whereas the *real* problem is the rest of the 95%, something that a designer cannot change (Figure 22). However it does not deflect from the importance of designers engaging in these problems. The UK housing emergency is still dubbed as a slow crisis. Designers can work alongside others to inject a sense of urgency.

Figure 22. Papenek, V (1972) *Design for the Real World*. New York: Bantam Books, 1973. P.68 Print.



Finally, this research has revealed that as designers, the typefaces, objects, images and buildings that we design help to create and form our surroundings. Using these skills and interests, we build worlds. By creating those surroundings, we are also ultimately responsible for the political and social themes within that world (Clark, 2019). The worlds constructed in examples such as Southbank Place are entirely unreal which only serves to highlight the brutal and inhumane social and political themes of that world as Adam Curtis comments in the short film *Living in an Unreal World*,

‘All around you are enormous new buildings. They look alike. But you will never be able to afford to live in them. Because they are not really homes, they are blocks of money bought by global investors whose money has nowhere else to go’ (Curtis, 2016).

## Bibliography

### Books

Adorno, Theodor W, and Max Horkheimer. (2016) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Augé, M. (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

Beirut, Michael. (2016) *How to Use Graphic Design to Sell Things, Explain Things, Make Things Look Better, Make People Laugh, Make People Cry, and (every Once in a While) Change the World*. New York: Harper Design. Print.

Berger, John. (1972) *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin. Print

Bridle, J. (2018). *New Dark Age : Technology, Knowledge and the End of the Future*. Verso Books.

Calvino, Italo. (1978). *Invisible cities*. New York :Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,

Debord, G. (1967). *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York, Zone Books.

Easterling, K. (2014). *Extrastatecraft*. London: Verso.

Easterling, Keller. (2014) *Subtraction*. Berlin: Sternberg Press. Print.

Edles and Appelrouth, S. (2010). *Sociological theory in the classical era : text and readings*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

Ehrenhalt, Alan, (2012). *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Gillespies, South Garde

Fisher, Mark. (2009) *Capitalist Realism*. Winchester: Zero books, Print.

Hill, D. (2015). *Dark matter and Trojan horses : a strategic design vocabulary*. Strelka Press, X.

Inglis, T (2017) An Absurd Machine

Jameson, Fredric. (1991) *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

- McLuhan, M., Fiore, Q., & AgelL, J. (1967). *The medium is the massage*. New York, Bantam Books. Neate,
- Mcluhan, Marshall. (2001) *Understanding Media*. London, Sphere Books, 1973.
- Metahaven. (2013) *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments? Memes, Design and Politics*. Moscow. Strelka Press
- Munari, Bruno. (2008) *Design as Art*. London: Penguin. Print
- Mould. (2018) *Against Creativity*. S.L., Verso, 2019.
- Olins, Wally. *The Brand Handbook*. London, Thames & Hudson, 2010.
- Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.
- Papanek, Victor. (1973) *Design for the Real World*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Papanek, V. (2019). *Design For The Real World*. S.L.: Thames & Hudson.
- Virilio, Paul. (1997) *Open Sky*. London: Verso., Print .
- Zukin, Sharon. (1982) *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. Print.
- Zukin, Sharon. (2011) *Naked City : The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*.

## **Talks**

Keller Easterling *Medium Design*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019, University of London

## **Videos/Films/Programmes**

Abroad Again, (2007) Episode 2: *On the Brandwagon*. Dir. Colin Murray. Writer. Jonathan Meades. BBC

Curtis, A, (2016) Living in an Unreal World, Vice Media Available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtjfoEvsR9w>

Redrow (2015) *World At Your Feet* Available at  
[https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsm0Hx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM\\_uhdeCjFz9jc](https://vimeo.com/115968280?fbclid=IwAR0cSGLJaqHsm0Hx17nHfuwg8D3d3Tur0bbWUAVPx6674kM_uhdeCjFz9jc)

## Webpages/Journals/Articles

AMA (2014). *What is Marketing? — The Definition of Marketing — AMA*. [online] American Marketing Association. Available at: <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>.

Biss, E. (2017). *Confessions of a reluctant gentrifier*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/11/confessions-gentrification-race-rogers-park-chicago> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Booth, R. (2017). *"Dog kennel" flats in Barnet will be 40% smaller than Travelodge room*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/27/dog-kennel-flats-barnet-house-smaller-than-travelodge-room> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Bridle, J. (2013). *Balloons and render ghosts*. [online] Domusweb.it. Available at: <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2013/02/27/balloons-and-render-ghosts.html> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Bridle, J. (n.d) The Render Ghosts — R / D . R / D. [online] R / D. Available at: <https://www.readingdesign.org/render-ghosts> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Carnevalle and John Kelsey, (2007) *Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevalle and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Ranciere*. Artforum 45. P 256-69

Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health. (2016). *Mind the GAPS Framework*. [online] Available at: <https://www.urbandesignmentalhealth.com/mind-the-gaps-framework.html> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Citizen Sense (2017). *Old Tidemill Garden*. [online] Citizen Sense. Available at: <https://datastories-deptford.citizensense.net/old-tidemill/>.

CorporateWatch (2018). *Tidemill: factsheet on the battle for Deptford – Corporate Watch*. [online] Corporatewatch.org. Available at: <https://corporatewatch.org/tidemill-development-factsheet-on-the-battle-for-deptford/> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Etymonline.com. (2020). *hoard / Origin and meaning of hoard by Online Etymology Dictionary*. [online] Available at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/hoard> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Florida, R (2002) *The rise of the creative class*, The Washington Monthly; Washington Vol 34, Iss 5

Graves, M. (2012). Opinion | Architecture and the Lost Art of Drawing. *The New York Times*. [online] 1 Sep. Available at:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/02/opinion/sunday/architecture-and-the-lost-art-of-drawing.html>.

Hatherley, O. (2014). "London's new typology: the tasteful modernist non-dom investment." [online] Dezeen. Available at:  
<https://www.dezeen.com/2014/08/21/owen-hatherley-london-housing-typology-yuppie-flats-tasteful-modernist-investment/> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Jarvis, G. (2015). *Developer-speak: decoding the language of London's property billboards*. [online] the Guardian. Available at:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/oct/02/london-housing-property-boom-developers-language-advertising-hoardings> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Kentish, B. (2017). Third of private rented homes fail basic health and safety standards, new analysis finds. *The Independent*. [online] 10 Aug. Available at:  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/private-rental-homes-health-safety-standards-fail-third-landlords-lease-flats-houses-a7883016.html>.

Lambeth Council, (2015) *Lambeth Plannie Applications Committee, Shell Centre 2-4 York Road London SE1*, p 116).

Lewisham Council, (2019). *Tidemill site development – questions and answers*. [online] Lewisham.gov.uk. Available at: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/tidemill> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

London, M. of (2017). *London Borough of Culture*. YouTube. Available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzySG36Ucqk> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Macdonald, H. (2014). *Could those utopian hoardings for new developments get any more nauseating?* [online] the Guardian. Available at:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/25/utopian-hoardings-new-developments-nauseating> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

National Audit Office. NAO (2019). *Investigation into Starter Homes - National Audit Office (NAO) Report*. [online] Available at:  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/investigation-into-starter-homes/> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

NLA (2019) *London Tall Buildings Survey 2019*, New London Architecture, March 2019 Available at <https://www.hpa.co.uk/storage/app/media/nla-tall-buildings-publication-2019.pdf>

O'Donoghue, P. (2019). '*Sense of hopelessness' over growing housing crisis.* [online] Thetimes.co.uk. Available at: [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sense-of-hopelessness-over-growing-housing-crisis-b5gjqs78d?wgu=270525\\_54264\\_15791909577952\\_e85f9eaedc&wgexpiry=1586966957&utm\\_source=planit&utm\\_medium=affiliate&utm\\_content=22278](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sense-of-hopelessness-over-growing-housing-crisis-b5gjqs78d?wgu=270525_54264_15791909577952_e85f9eaedc&wgexpiry=1586966957&utm_source=planit&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_content=22278) [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Peabody (2020). *The Muse / Peabody Sales.* [online] Peabodysales.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.peabodysales.co.uk/developments/the-muse/> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Picture Plane (2020) *Paxton Rise* Available at <http://www.pictureplane.co.uk/projects/paxton-rise>  
Lewisham Council, n.d., *Tidemill site development – questions and answers* Available at <https://lewisham.gov.uk/tidemill>

Rowley, J, (2008) *An Analysis of Terminology Use in Place Branding*, JOUR, p 61

Transparency International (2017) *Faulty Towers: Understanding the impact of overseas corruption on the London property market* Transparency International UK, March 2017 Available at [https://issuu.com/transparencyuk/docs/tiuk\\_faulty\\_towers\\_april\\_web](https://issuu.com/transparencyuk/docs/tiuk_faulty_towers_april_web)

Self, J (2014), *Corporate Aesthetic*, Fulcrum Issue 89, March 2014

Shelter (2019). *Three million new social homes key to solving housing crisis - Shelter England.* [online] Available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_releases/articles/three\\_million\\_new\\_social\\_homes\\_key\\_to\\_solving\\_housing\\_crisis2](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/three_million_new_social_homes_key_to_solving_housing_crisis2) [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Spacemakers (N.d) Available at <http://www.spacemakers.info/>

Squire (201) Southbank Place Brochure, Canary Wharf Group PLC and Qatari Diar P. 13 Available at [https://issuu.com/sky\\_uk\\_properties/docs/sbp\\_host\\_brochure\\_sky](https://issuu.com/sky_uk_properties/docs/sbp_host_brochure_sky)

The Wall (2014) *An Interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist with Stefan Bruggemann 'Stefan Bruggemann. Text Pieces (1997 — 2014)' May 2014 — October 2014* Available at

<http://thewallsouthkensington.com/static/downloads/TheWallHOUInterview.pdf>

Wainwright, O. (2017a). *The property billboards that reveal the truth about Britain's luxury housing market.* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/apr/04/the-property-billboards-that-reveal-the-truth-about-britains-luxury-housing-market> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020]

Wainwright, O. (2017b). '*Everything is gentrification now': but Richard Florida isn't sorry.* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/oct/26/gentrification-richard-florida-interview-creative-class-new-urban-crisis> [Accessed 9 Jan. 2020].

Wiseman, E. (2016). *Beware the vibrant, emerging, misleading language of gentrification.* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/oct/09/beware-the-vibrant-emerging-misleading-language-of-gentrification> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].

Worthington, A. (2011). *Beyond Irony: Peabody Launches 'The Muse' at Amersham Vale in New Cross, Profiting from the Destruction of the Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden / Andy Worthington.* [online] Andyworthington.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/2019/09/16/beyond-irony-peabody-launches-the-muse-at-amersham-vale-in-new-cross-profiting-from-the-destruction-of-the-old-tidemill-wildlife-garden/> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2020].