

The Infra-ordinary Shuffle

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“What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms.” (Perec, 1989, 210)

The interior and spatial design teaching studio is often associated with a space of tangible experimentation, dialogue and thinking (Preston, 2011). Interconnecting material, discipline, people and places to form meaningful, holistic and life-long communities of art and design practice that endeavour mutual adaptation (Dewey, 1938/1997). Looking back, comparative radical pedagogies (Colomina et al, 2022) include the Bauhaus ‘ad-hoc’ band (Barone, 2019); Black Mountain College in North Carolina USA (Erickson; Molesworth. 2015); “cross-fertilisation” at Dartington College of Arts in Devon (Myers, 2018); Experiments in the Environment, a creative methodology for sensory collaboration conceived by Lawrence and Anna Halprin in 1969 (Hirsch, 2016) and The Pattern and Chaos at Norwich University of the Arts (Fijalkowski; Mitchell, 2023) signal the value of collective improvisation and agency. Entangling hands-on processes with images, language and making (Bardt, 2019) to exercise a learning environment through a variety of context-specific responses such as drawing, performing and building. This is also evident inside architectural education, like architecture group NATØ (1983) (Jamieson, 2017) and ‘Round and round the Old Kent Road the radical rascal ran’ (Hardy, 2017) at the Architectural Association, London; Deakin University, Australia (Ham, 2003) and Office Party X Unmasking Space at ETH School of Architecture (Office Party, 2023), where gathering celebrates the collegiate. This sense of aleatory event (Priest, 2010) sometimes extends expressive freedom into the urban context. Here, Ropery Songs (2017), a multidisciplinary public collaboration with art and design academics and students from University of the Arts London and University of Kent in the Historic Dockyard Chatham Rope Walk (LHT Community of Practice, 2017) which sought to braid disciplines (Priest, 2018) resonates. Exploring collective rhythms via gamelan techniques gestured informal immediacy, situating event-based attunement with contingent sonic and spatial relationships. Positioning a space where art and design practice is destabilised to “make the processes and structures that surround us intelligible and knowable” (Escobar, 2017, 35) and furthermore question disciplinary boundaries (Abdullah, 2021). Harnessing the infra-ordinary spirit of Georges Perec and potential of critical sound making, how might these ludic practices invigorate institutional routine and image a collective experience of the contemporary multilingual interior and spatial design teaching studio?

MA Interior and Spatial Design Improvisational Sound Band started in 2021 as an experimental small-scale post-pandemic community of practice around the assembly of sound in space. Opportunistically situating learning (Lave; Wenger, 1991) in various locations around Peckham Road, Camberwell College of Arts in frequent and unfamiliar spaces. Attesting an institutional “slack space” (Schneider, 2015) by activating unprogrammed studios, empty lecture theatres and corridors as tools to support various forms of programmed open learning. Jazz-like (Morrow; Waddell, 2020), the ad-hoc (Jencks, 2013) initiative sparked multiple student-led curiosities; informal sensitivities, multilingual conversations, politics of inclusion and material engagement to serendipitously counter institutional routine and spatial practice conventions. Improvised jamming with found or recycled waste and classical instruments from home (e.g. barbat, karaoke microphone etc.) to people and plants alongside pop-up exhibitions and happenings framed practical concerns and local power structures with the living and built environment, “only once” (Kaprow, 1968).

Through a sequence of participatory seasonal happenings across the academic year, the first group 'No-Name' staged a Winter Gathering involving a clapping promenade and paper snowflake interaction with 'Russell the Snowman' and their peers. This was followed by an anti-lecture performance, deep sensing geology through sound, drawing, action and projection after a brainstorm in the Natural History Museum Minerals Gallery. The final gathering elaborated a cacophony of 'chaotic' water in the studio, choreographing ball-throwing, instrument playing and instructional lottery. Across all the sessions, interaction, found and recycled waste, loose invitation and display blended tacit knowledge and sensory play in real terms and as Till highlights; the urgency to "educate for moving targets" (Schneider, 2015). A virtual album of recordings from across the year and associated ephemera collated endeavours, stirring further experimentation and sound making to gently examine disciplinarily edges, material uncertainties and interior futures. Student BAND-member Minhye Choi noted the "opportunities to explore new ways of seeing objects", underlining the value of intuition, challenging assumptions combined with reflexive teaching and learning practices.

The BAND continued into 2022-23 with '404', implicating a digital disruption when a server cannot find a requested webpage. Common interest for polyrhythm led to a participatory event, utilising various recordings and media to expedite a cosmological happening. Transforming studio furniture, leftover seasonal decorations and live music into 'One Giant Leap' (figure 1). The ensemble's eagerness after circled incidental spaces of institutional silence inside and outside the teaching studio and library context, titled 'Sounds from Empty Rooms around UAL' through recording, sculpture, drawing, performance, poster, exhibition, podcasting (UAL Frequencies, 2023) and subsequent cartographic synthesis (figures 2 and 3). In 2023-24, 'NOGO' shared musical knowledge, from keyboard and programming to zheng and violin, guiding discovery toward revealing low-key college environments, using found and recycled material and spaces. 2024-25 group 'KRAFT' focussed on the potential of wastepaper. Various forms of knowledge sharing, percussive rhythm and collective exploration unfolded; wrapping paper, leftover cardboard, tubes and tape were coordinated into a live multilingual invitation-based studio happening titled 'Hear Here'. Continuing across the academic year in the design of 'air-KRAFT', a light-soundscape installation; 'noise book' tour in a virtual collaboration and exhibition in Camberwell College of Arts Library with MA Interior Design students in IED Kunsthal Bilbao; and contribution to Sensing Space Differently symposium with the design of a blind-debossed tactile 'takeaway' edition. Designed during a graphic grid typography studio-Jam session, the band improvised the 'Hear Here' instruction in familiar languages Arabic, English, Farsi, Spanish, Traditional and Simplified Chinese. Inviting a cordial space of immediacy, action and reflection by the audience in and outside the symposium setting and later in the university library as an accessioned artefact.

Over these formative years, BAND has harnessed often latent sound-based enthusiasms from a group of students from across the globe to manifest material and social confidences and happenings over an academic year. Encouraging risk-taking through an open approach of stochastic interaction, resourceful space use and ephemeral public display. The proximity of improvisation, whereby the compression of thinking, action and being in a shared space of learning evidently illuminated individual and collective cooperation, trust, knowledge exchange, self-awareness and persistence. Altogether these catalyst activities only exist as mutual memories, storytelling and chance phone image. Printed small, these snapshot 3" x 2" photographs have become tools for recollection, akin to Aby Warburg's Bilderatlas Mnemosyne and the street-like orientation of roaming connections (Johnson, 2012). Randomly laying the images, in landscape or portrait, the incomplete space between as architectural historian and

educator Jonathan Hill in *The Montage of Gaps* notes, “invites the viewer or user to attempt to complete the montage” (Hill, 2003, 110) through a spatial, sensual and semantic lens. The short silent visual essay-film offers a glimpse of one improvised shuffle, adjusting emphasis, associative connection and semiotic interpretation of an internal logic (e.g. material, activity, form etc.) of actions past. Here the visual metonymy images time; tuning leaps of imagination, continuities and responsibilities, institutional rhythms, material and interior, mind and body beyond the spoken word toward a porous pedagogy.

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FILM LINK: <https://vimeo.com/1066324513>