

BY ELISE TOWERS



Booklet made to
accompany video
work ...

Rest Rooms

Artwork and writing
by

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studio based in the
Royal Standard Liverpool

for FACT Together
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With thanks to Joe Goff
Sound Artist and Assistant



'I bet I could remember it well if I tried
 I remember the case it came in,
 I'd run cotton ear buds along the creases
 and buff the disk with a cloth every time i
 was done for the night
 I remember when it came out,
 I had my old wallpaper up in my room,
 and I remember the haze of the start
 screen in the dark.'
 'And the music too'
 'Yeah the music too, was it different then?'
 'I think'

'It was always dark when I first started playing -
 it must have come out in winter,
 it felt nice,

CAPS

it was set at dawn I think,
 but the moon was still in the sky -
 or was it the sun?
 it had yellows and oranges...

GRAL

NO it was the moon, - it had craters and a face that I was always
 trying to draw -

I remember because I had the pictures all over my notice board'

But my computer won't run it
 anymore
 It doesn't even have a disk slot

If we wanted to play -
 To visit -
 We'd just try to remember.



HAND SOAP



WASH, WASH, WASH
TO TRY YOUR BEST
TO MAKE YOUR HANDS
SOFT + CLEAN
SO YOU CAN SHAKE
WITH OTHERS

If your stomach
hurts, or you feel
any discomfort in
your bladder or
bowels, this is when
you should search

If you are
overwhelmed with
lights, noise or
communication then
you should search

If you feel anxious, and crave the familiarity and repetition of a space which will meet your expectations, search

If you need to briefly be with someone in private, search

If you need to reflect or check your reflection, search

If you need to hide or to find a door with a lock, search

If you need shelter, search

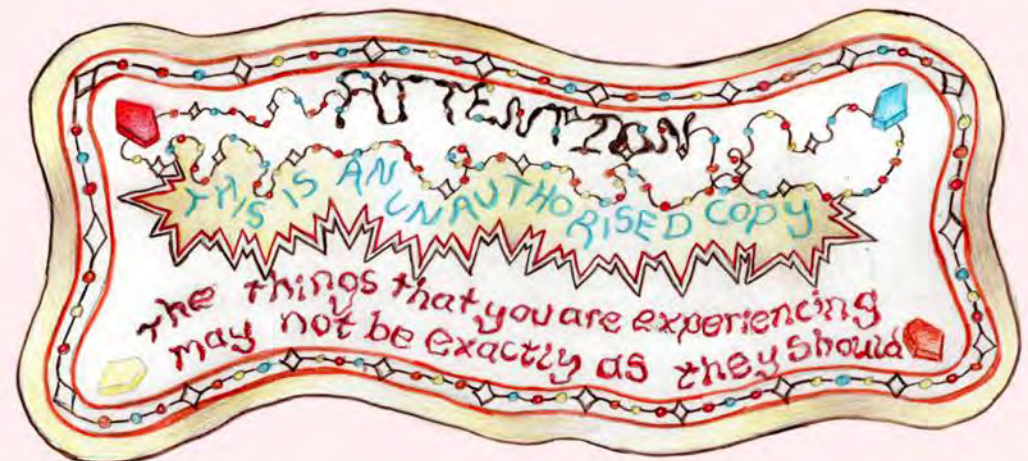
If you need to wash, search

If you need to change search

If you need an excuse search

If you find an old glass dome somewhere unexpected with a sign saying 'public toilets' arched above it and a staircase leading down into the dark you could enter

and search.





To some it seems sensible - a bathroom never seems much out of place - even on top of a tall hill with no other notable landmark to visit, clouds obstructing any distant view.

After scaling it, drinking water, moving your body, digesting, a bare mound hardened with non-absorptive substrate becomes an unappealing plinth to bare your skin on top of - no place to revert to vulnerability.

Crouching down, holding clothing out of the way, searching pockets for tissues, receipts, the concrete for expelled leaves as a hunched posture groans under the strain of years of toilet training and centuries of bodily reformation.

Hyper awareness, ragged breathing, the search for watching eyes. The mess, the cleaning, the natural excretion on the carefully considered surface generates unease and embarrassment at the uncanny combination.

It was likely the deep seated fear of this feeling
'being caught short'



that led to the founding of The Restrooms

Created so that any visitor might descend into its belly and find privacy within - or look to share a communal space with others away from the social expectation or cost found elsewhere, it became a burrow that attempted to remedy its outsides.

When you visit the centre

it is empty.

As you look around you get a sense that people are there, moving things, experiencing things, and places are changing. Here you're visiting the place, spending time, hoping that it might become somewhere that you can go to feel safe and welcome, somewhere to visit.

Place is evocative

Through time it becomes a vehicle to reliving dormant memories or emotions. Place as it exists in our mind - it's ephemerality and ever changing nature. New things in a familiar locale are strange. There comes a point where you can no longer revisit places that were there everyday

Old jobs, old houses, old relationships, old permissions, distant places, unwelcome places, welcome but past places, boarded up places, disused places, filled in places, places you never knew,



Only knowing the new places in their place, discovering an important places past, thinking about your current place and how it will be lost in the near future, or how it is slightly lost in change everyday.

The lack of ability to alter the place once it's memory is locked in. The fear of the power of the present moment. The fear of lost memory and place.

When you create, and archive, as people do here, you can lock in objects and memories and thoughts and feelings into a locale that still exists to be drawn upon.

Spatial memory

To improve it you will see each space exists to be filled with things to find, and many tales are told to help you remember.

Then there are two doors on opposite sides - The Boiler room and The Newspaper room.



TWO OF them lived in The Boiler Room - Thick and heavy the air filtered more like water in through the mouth, down the windPipe into the lungs, around the edges, and then back out again. The Shape and design of their respiratory systems were different, The one who lived higher off the ground had a reaching oesophagus that curved down and backwards in an 'L' shape attached to lungs that sat horizontally and closer to its back. The one who stayed closer to the ground had lungs parted by their heart, that were smaller and attached to a windPipe that led straight up to their panting mouth.

On the closed door the sign read ...



Both creatures craved the warmth here that meant they were no longer facing the elements or confronting unfamiliar attackers, in this sense they learned that this environment came with each other, and ensured a temporary protection bond from the opposite's species - an incommunicable rule became long term. Although, this was little more than survival instinct and adaptation away from the harsh conditions of the above ground - the common threat of concrete, discomfort, and gradually decaying extremities - a world not designed for soft pink-padded feet or breakable, twistable, catchable body parts. A world where predators mostly did not look like living breathing creatures but cosy hiding spaces, tasty meals, and unfamiliar contraptions and tools.

They had found a much truer sanctuary - manufactured though it was - it did not intend to harm them - nor them it - and unbeknownst to them they had been granted permission to keep that as a home some time ago by a third member of their pact - a watcher who loved to see them safe.

Take A Look IN THE

Next door's room was connected by a lower faulty vent and higher air pump tube, and was typically darkened as it sat at a low level. The walls were a continuation of tiles but in a way and with such a colour scheme that it felt more like a cinema or theatre. Central to the space was an ornate bird feeder that was hand carved. It had been painted in red, blue, yellow and green and its centre had an intricate diorama of two creatures separately idling under moonlight. This creation provided for the two, as they survived on a similar diet of leftovers and dried feed.

The atrium was filled with tall piles of newspapers and newsletters folded up on different types of folding chairs loosely positioned in a circle facing towards the feeder - you might presume they were kept as documentation of past histories and events for a future interested party.

At the hands of the animals these documents became material - shredded into bedding to create cooler spaces away from the glaring heat of the boiler, and burrows that brought safety as it touched the body on each side. An appreciated physical bond created with the stories of those who occupied the space before them, a reliance on the accounts as home and nesting.



MIRROR

One day the lower creature came across a smooth oval object as it pulled paper in through the vent into their empty room. Instinct took over as curious hands then teeth tested the surface. Breaking through the membrane, bloody clear and yellow innards flowed down the small gullet, and gluttony took over. Previously unknown sensations became loud, and every drop consumed and then picked out from underneath tiny nail beds. Consideration came next, it made the brain ache and the mouth dry. A white crust was forming on their upper lip as the creature looked upwards to find the one that lived above was re-entering and pacing, cooing in a concerned search. This was it's and not theirs to take.

It was a silent loss, the animal did not know how much it hurt the other - and never would. It became weak with guilt, unsure if this was a new life born via different means and taken as a pissish meal. Unable to communicate or ask questions, the small creature thought about its life conditions and if it was owed repentance. Born a rodent, scavenging and taking found food was what it knew. However respect, morality and care, was what it owed. It watched carefully up at the bird, who sat in its nest and called out every now and then. It did not express with its face - muscles did not distort to emit sadness in downturned lips.

The rat cleaned itself - it's home - thought of doing better and started to build. It began to pull paper together, took pieces of dried seed and corn, rolled, tucked and stuck. Across the room a mural was realised but the bird still paced and nested un-blinking and un-aware - for it did not perceive the way the rat did. It was all the lower creature could do, and so it slept and woke for many days more until all the time had gone by. Water damaged by a boiler burst some time later, the mural was in part preserved and through group memory and collaborative efforts, was recreated - hung proudly in the space.

- C T Recording, imagining what happened here.

Drawings Thinking
about a pigeon done in the
Bark

Drawings Thinking
about a rat done in the
Bark

News Paper

2N The Rest Rooms 20.03.23

BOARD GAME

EVENT

Last month or the month before, a group gathered to play a game of preservation, tactility and evasion. Two rounds were played, each with a different Victor. Many gathered to watch as competitors held part of the restrooms in their hands. Partakers selected one of two roles and one of five playing pieces before selecting their start point in the form of a pint of red, orange, cream and blue.

Members of our community have said the success of the event means it should take place again.

IN OTHER NEWS



Not too long ago a wooden feeder was built to provide our resident creatures with support and nutrition. Here's what the creator had to say:

"I love to make and I'm honoured to contribute to the space"

Game Components



- Starting**
1. Highest roll goes first then the rest follow clockwise around the board.
 2. The caretaker moves by rolling between each player's turn.
 3. The players move around the board attempting to move away from the janitor but towards their counter using their playing piece to mark their position. They are free to move around any colour in any direction but to move between tiles they must be touching.
 4. The caretaker is also free to move in any direction on any coloured tile but is instead attempting to move towards the other players and get onto the same tile as them. When this happens one of the two players' counters of the janitors choice likely the closest one is taken out of the game.
 5. This repeats until each player has lost both of their counters in which case they have lost and are out of the game or until the player has managed to land on both of their counters collecting them around the center and then returned to the middle without getting caught.
 6. If a counter is removed by the caretaker from the board it must be retrieved by the player returning to their start point. The caretaker will then replace the counter on the board.
 7. The caretaker wins by removing every counter from the board.

continued on the next page

5 Player game - X1 The caretaker 1 person per colour X4

3 Player game X1 The caretaker 2 people per colour X4

The caretakers aims
To remove all the counters from the board by catching each playing piece twice or sweeping all counters from the board.

Players aims
To reach both of their counters and then return their playing piece to the center whilst avoiding being caught by the caretaker.

Setting up

1. Players select who will be the caretaker (who must play as the hat playing piece) and who will play as which colour and select a playing piece.

2. Each player places their chosen playing piece on a coloured start point. The caretaker begins in the center.

3. The caretaker then takes the 2 coloured counters and places them strategically on the board - he is likely aiming to do this far enough away that it takes the player time to get it, but close enough that he can easily catch the player. He must place the counter on its corresponding colored tile i.e. orange counter on orange tile.

Other Rules

The player can go through the coloured plugholes marked slug and come out at another location on the board. The caretaker cannot use the plugholes.

If the janitor lands on the same tile as a counter, he can use his remaining moves to make sweeps i.e. if he has 4 moves he could move twice onto the occupied tile, then still keep his own playing piece counter away, i.e. if he had 5X he could move five times then do one sweep away.

If a player is caught whilst their two counters are in the center and they are making their way to the middle they are out of the game.



"If the Player understands those who take care

they should try to interpret for themselves the forms of expression shown in the figure.

They should try to envisage the situations in which they might deeply feel a particular emotion.

Then as a second exercise, they should try to predict what the care taker will do in the next second or minute"

Cracked and colourful tiles shimmered in the dim light of the deep room. Some seemed to bare the palm marks of those who made them.

The swirls and lines of many patterned hands made you feel as if you were cupped inside the space. The room had been used plenty, a space to relieve themselves, rest, de-socialize, be with others, create, play.

The need to Preserve - Archive - seems inherent to the role of the care taker. The act of rendering an artefact precious enough as to be allocated undisturbed original space even a written description - in hopes it will be revisited, - un-earthed, added over once more.

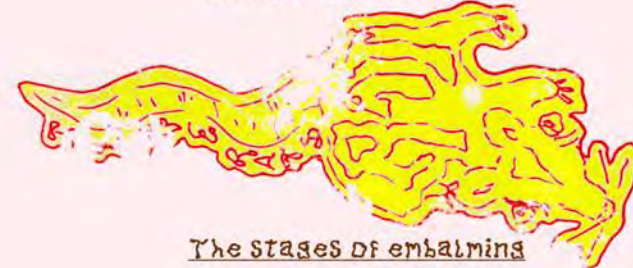
In turn, it makes not just the thing itself important, but the one who chose to collect it, as, like many other things - a filmmaker, an artist, an architect, a child raiser, - we look to hope we are part of an ultimate outcome, that will - to a future third person - be just as important.

This is of course in opposition to the much truer notion that it can be a way to over-glorify uniqueness and strengthen the elitism of achievement - often a singular portrayal of a well tropped or pre-trodden path - over the beauty and wider celebration that comes with collectivity - community - and contribution over exclusivity.

The space was being sealed over, & buried. A ploy from a bigger body to stop activities they felt were not suitable in the space - challenged by its nature to both welcome anyone, and also give them a private space with which they could do as they pleased.

Despite its necessity. Despite this being the way so many places operated as long as you had something to spend or knew someone who did.

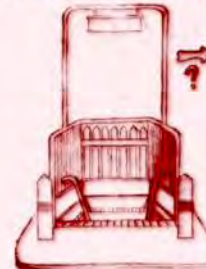
And so The Caretaker, as their last act within the space, looked to perform an embalming.



The Stages of embalming

1. The body is first cleaned.

Skin inside latex gloves to protect from stained porcelain sliding up to the elbows, and catching against squeaking glass. Soap to lather and sanitise, to get in the cracks, to sink in deep and extract grime and grit. Sponges to scrub then soak, hands and knees, all fours like a beast on wet tile. Cloth to polish and shine all that is so precious inside the centre, so vividly that it creates a glow that could rise up through the soil and above the ground, as a soft peach emission hovering just over the cracked concrete, only to be seen in the pale mist of the dusk and dawn.



Glove, soap, sponge, cloth ...

Cap



This bore the name of the action performed. The documentary that all would see - the one who cared so much that this intensive labour of love was performed as if the unwavering passion of the role, absolved them, saved them from redundancy, a great mind who saw nothing beyond their world and creation. Their archive. They existed. They took care.

2. Any fluids are removed, then, embalming fluid is injected into the arteries, which helps to preserve the body tissues.

The mass extraction of the fluids saw puddles brushed into drains, water tanks emptied and pipes plunged until buckets held their entire contents. The room smelt now of human waste but the caretaker couldn't help but dream of how many people this space had provided for, and how, in some minute form, they were all embroidered together in the mire of viscous liquid. (used it as fertiliser?)

The pipes that encased the structure now hollow, the caretaker imagined the predominantly underground structure swaying in the wind without the fluid weight - air blowing through the soil from one side of the hill to the other, rocking, cradling the insides of the skeleton.

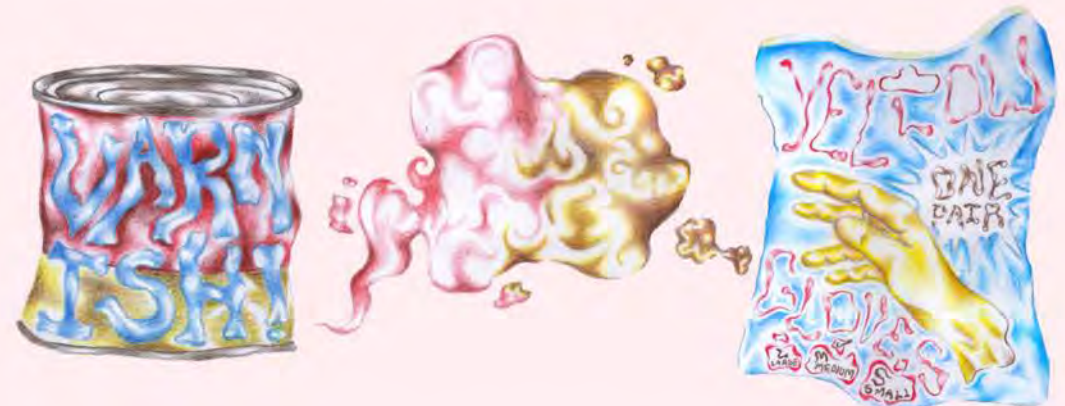
As they lugged the buckets into a collective formation, they began to hear grunts and groans echoing around the building. Feeling uncertain but not deeply afraid (like one might feel after coming across the apparition of a loved one) they sought out the source. Check one - All rooms empty. Check two - the imprints of people were there in the darker corners beyond the eye. Check three They were back in the before times, & could feel presences all around them - connections made and time spent. It felt good.



As the gases dispersed, the high wore off, and they soon realised they had been experiencing a form of sewage asphyxiation, and they were unsure if they had even been exploring the building at all, or if their mental map of the layout and their memories were so comprehensive that they just believed that they were as they lay down. The noises were certainly real though.

This time they located the true source. It seemed that now the pipes were cleared, if they made the smallest noise by one end - a toilet bowl, a plug hole, a drain pipe, the rest of the opposite exits across the building belled out an amplified version, made more ethereal as feedback leaked out of holes of all shapes and sizes, making a chorus of voices, higher and lower pitched echo out all around the space.

As they injected the embalming fluid - a mixture of bleach and varnish, deep into the cavities of the building, they hoped this would make the place more palatable and infinitely pristinely preserved for anyone who might come across it - always freshly cleaned - always taken care of.



3. Finally, the body is dressed and prepared for viewing.

Voices chirruping from all around, the Care Taker set about preparing the dressing, patching it up, stitch by stitch. They believed that the next person to discover this place must find it remarkable. Blankets, perhaps once tucked around warming bodies, sheets of plastic and cotton, bedding and construction tarpaulin hugged, draped, stuck to and moulded against the tiles that lined the bathroom walls, acting all at once as a protective layer against the erosive nature of time and a barrier between the onlookers eye and the man made beauty that lay underneath. Baring murals that stretched against the greens, peaches and oranges of the tiles that leaked through from underneath they created a ghostly omnipresence of past visitors, events, creations and interactions - constantly encountered in the dim light.





Created to accompany
Video work 'Rest Rooms'
Product of FACT
LIVERPOOLS 2022-2023
FACT Together
residency by artist Ellie
Towers

YOU WILL SOON ENTER THE REST ROOMS...