

LUX Online Exhibition: *From Here to There*, Richard Layzell

Transcript of *From Here to There*, Richard Layzell, 2020

From here to there

I walk in the road. I've been doing this for months. I walk these city roads as a transgression, a performative act, to claim them, to challenge the car place of driving authority. You drive. You hold the wheel. You have the power. And the oil price has fallen through the floor, so this is the time to drive, drive, drive, and they're telling you to.

Now I'm not the only one in the road. It's become a new normal to shift across to the other side of the kerb searching for social distance. Watch out, I didn't even see you coming. The road is vehicle surface, designed to support their weight, smooth their wheels, ease their suspension, and then you remember that must-have-been deliberate upgrade as we drove across the border from Arizona to Mexico and back to Arizona, what a difference, unbelievable, man, back on a real highway, smooth driving, easy riders. Here, right here, are the markings, always needing a refresh with that hot thermoplastic paint in white or yellow, poured by hand through a metal trough, designed for purpose in 1955. Now I walk on these lines as I go further and move into the middle of the road, to tread the centre, the rise, the camber. This is crest walking that seemed too risky until the change happened. I've got the road at my feet.

There are seven stopping places on this walk from here to there, N4 through N19 to N6. It's walkable. Everything is, let's face it, even when the

210 bus goes door-to-door with free rides, empty. Exactly. It's a journey I've made on foot before, about 40 minutes without stops, but I do stop, to make recordings. When I listen back to these I hear a strained voice that fades to a whisper. The voice sounds tense and self-conscious, because it is. The stress reflects concern about standing around here in the early morning with large headphones and a microphone, in a public place. And concern about going back to the park, after a three-month gap, from late winter to late spring, a park that always closed at dusk and is now open 24 hours. This is a new reality that creeps. It creeps. It's not the same. There is no same. I walk. These days I walk the streets and not the park. The park becomes other. It represents distance and the previous. The previous is the previous. This is the new, the current.

The seven stops in the three N4 N19 N6 Haringey, Islington and Camden, each with their different recorded rates. Of infection. Keep up with the statistics and then you'll get it, get it? Two wild geese are calling as they fly overhead, and a solitary plane creates an arc of almost-forgotten noise pollution across the clear sky. The hill up, all up, to the marvel that was Andrew Marvell's backyard, the poet's hangout to open his door and write exquisitely about flowers and trees like a spirit who incongruously segued into becoming the MP for Hull for twenty years, from here to there, and then, very likely, was poisoned. And here to there is this now through N19 and the poplar stump trunk of huge dimensions outside Welby House in Sunnyside Road, cut down for the view. Who's view? Keep your distance, keep your distance, the distance is to be kept at all times, for your personal and exclusive safety. This is the distance, now halfway to the park, the P A R K, and the Lux, the L U X almost there, stopping beside the once suicide bridge, now protected from jumping so you can't look down, don't look

down or you may be tempted, temptation in unexpected places, like the long grass rampant in the lockdown outside Arthur Henderson House in Hornsey Lane, almost there. It's levelling out. But the great leveller turns out to have more impact on the less well-off, the deprived, and the already sick. This is not Low Gate.

The visits became almost weekly, to spend time inside the park and the LUX to see what would emerge, like putting a disco light in the abandoned aviary for the night walk, serving up soup to the night walkers, like climbing over railings to stand, one by one, inside the burnt out still alive oak, or projecting a film of falling leaves onto a screen set into the branches of a plane tree, one of a group that tower behind the LUX building, trees that predate this park, (like another line of majestic planes in N4, untouched because they overlook a reservoir, left to scale up year on year on decade, like these), like shouting about this land and who owns WHO OWNS IT until someone interrupts and reminds you that it's a trust, a trust, so this IS public land, even if it doesn't feel like it, especially now when the people from down the hill are less likely to walk up here to claim it, preferring the familiarity of their own Archway streets and estates, where the wind blows hard around the tube station. Like renaming it as Marvell Park, or taking on the title of Creative Ecologist to bridge the gap with all the constituents that have a hand on the handle of this patch of well appointed land with a real estate value of £2 billion, the Trust, the Friends, the Council, the gardeners, the Tree Officers, the House, the volunteers, the local historians, the users of the Mental Health Centre, the dog walkers, the Iranian barbecue picnics.

This acreage laid mainly to lawn with cultivated flower beds and 3 ponds

fed by natural springs, the constant trickle across the footpaths, and a delightful terrace with a Viewing Mound regrettably no longer available to the public, for health and safety reasons. Don't mention the Japanese knotweed. Don't mention the bleeding canker and the leaf blot. Don't mention the ash dieback because there goes another one. Don't mention the elms, the E L M s gone, long gone. Don't mention the feral parakeets and the brown rats because this is a timeless spot, a place of contemplation with a good view of the cemetery, and memorials fixed to the back of every bench, like W.G. Bunting. W.G., now passed on, as we all will, but let's just get through this first. Through this, gate, inside, up across and round, can't stay, too much, too many expectations, anticipations, memories, always would be, knew this would happen, dogs, too many dogs, the fountain switched off, the steps, the closed café, no takeaway, more dogs, keep moving, only one, just the one from 12 months ago, last May, this month, here, set back in a far corner near the bins, the horse chestnut, with its plethora of delicate and exotic leaf clusters attached to every limb, even more than last year, when I stood here open-mouthed.

LUX
Waterlow Park Centre
Dartmouth Park Hill
London
N19 5JF
tel +44 (0)20 3141 2960
fax +44 (0)20 7561 0570
www.lux.org.uk

