

## **Of Square and Oval Windows**

Castle Car Park

*Of Square and Oval Windows* is a reworking of a car park, guiding you on a journey from concrete and brick through to speculative histories, and expansive vantages. Here we open up the idea of buildings with agency - that listen! And how rivered worlds, ears as shells and flocking behaviours all have their place in concrete...

This work features the use of wireless headphones and audience participation.  
Please wear sturdy shoes and clothes appropriate to the weather.

**Notes for Voice Artists/Technicians:**

Text not to be spoken is given in **bold**.

Text in square brackets **[ ]** is a location instruction.

**Apex** – top of car park (level 6)

**Lower Level** – Levels 4/5

**Briefing** and **Introduction** are to be heard by all participants through headsets before the individual narratives begin.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY BRIEFING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**To be heard on ALL headsets before audio narratives**

#### **Briefing**

**[Location: Lower level]**

Welcome. We'll begin in a moment. First a little information about the performance...

You are here as a participant in a performance that will involve walking, listening to instructions and participating in individual and collective activities. Throughout the performance you will hear sounds and instructions through your headsets. Our stewards are here to be of assistance should you need help. Be vigilant of your surroundings, and of one another's movements.

Soon we will explore together...

#### **Intro**

**[Location: Lower level]**

What is it that we know?

That the Earth is round; that the planet we reside on revolves around a star that we call the Sun; that gravity is a force shaping our anatomy, pulling each and all bodies down, down towards its arced surface.

Where would we be without the earth beneath us? Would we fall continuously, head over feet - tumbling like Alice - our clothes billowing and ballooning as our bodies transform to suit an unrestrained environment? Were we to land, what new world might we find ourselves inhabiting? And how might we adapt to its pressures and pleasures?

Let us begin then. Right here. Let us forget what we know and explore what it is to think and to be in collaboration with this new world we find around us... A new world that is both many cells and a body; a body and a world; a world and a universe...

## **GROUP ONE**

### **Narrative for Headset 1 (performed simultaneously with headsets 2 & 3)**

#### **To commence AFTER briefing and introduction**

#### **Body / Polyps**

#### **[Location: Apex]**

Let's walk to the top level – the apex – of this body.

We are together, in the air. And yet we do not fall. We are secure in a body that is much bigger than our own. A body that is host to humans and other animals, plant life, fungi, algae, bacteria... and, in all certainty, other life-forms yet to be discovered.

To arrive inside this body, you have risen through layers of time, space and matter; making your way through structure and material: masses of concrete, cement, plaster, metal girders, brickwork, tar and paint; prepared and layered. Geologies of matter transformed from mineral to frozen music.

Where you are standing, envision your body and its constituents, the many cells that have knitted together to form bone, muscle, brain, tooth, nail... Imagine you have a magnifying glass in your hand. Take this lens and look at yourself. Touch your skin, smooth and shining in the light. Look through and below your skin, closer now to the cells that form this protective layer to your body and the world around you.

Now imagine all of the cells that make up the environment around you. Think about these cells coming together by their own free will; clustering for protection and advantage.

Like the polyps of a coral, as one layer of cells comes together, another layer joins the security available in numbers. As layer upon layer forms so too does a protective shell. Imagine how long this would have taken? How might the individual cells organise themselves for a variety of functions?

Think about how you would behave if you were a polyp. Let's begin by bringing our bodies into a ball. You are now a one-celled organism. Look around you. Who is like you, and how might you work together? Move slowly towards the centre of the apex. Circle with others like you. Splay your arms and form into a loose cluster.

Now create a long straight bond – hold hands in a line – so that all individuals in the group are connected. Make your line as straight as you can.

In your own time, move slowly away from the group; proliferate into the space, exploring the nooks where other life-forms have taken purchase. Look out for lichens, green algae and moss. Explore their growing strategies, their abilities to maintain purchase on walls. What can you learn from where they grow – do they need light, water, shelter?

**PTO**

**A Return**      **[Location: Apex]**

Begin to walk to the apex, at the top of the body.

As the world happens around you, take note of the unravelling of tape that is happening nearby. In your own time, take hold of that tape. Move as the tape moves. Notice how all actions have an effect on one another; just as a murmur of starlings might move across the evening sky. Continue to hold the tape, adapting your behaviour so as to move smoothly along with everyone else you are connected to.

. . .

Thank you for listening. In your own time, walk to the lower level and drop off your headsets with a steward. You will soon be taken to Ark-T for refreshments.

**END**

## **GROUP TWO**

### **Narrative for Headset 2 (performed simultaneously with headsets 1 & 3)**

#### **To commence AFTER briefing and introduction**

**Time /  
River**

#### **[Location: Lower Level to Apex]**

Stand rooted where you are.

The world around you changes, as you change. You and your cells have changed as you move. You won't feel this change, yet it has happened and it continues to happen. It is happening now.

The surface of this body on which you stand maps its own degradation and over the years decay has been inevitable, just as we ourselves grow old. Walk towards the upper levels of the body. From where you are take note of the walls, and the shape of this organism, how has it changed with time, what are the signs of age? Look at yourself, how has your body changed with the seasons? Is your skin peeling or puckering like the surfaces around you?

Are you on the upper level, if not walk there...

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#### **Location: Apex to Lower Level**

Stop a moment on the upper level...

Within the body, notice the angles and patina, like rooves its body is designed to propel water and maintain movement, like blood vessels moving around the body, pumped by an unseen heart.

Let's head into the body, the lower level...

On the inclines, down into the body, notice the marks left by the flow of liquids. Over time, and many rain showers, infinitesimally small grooves have been worn into tarmac; watermarks have layered to form stalagmites.

Using your body, follow a flow line you can perceive on the ground. Look closely at its shapes and lines. Trace the outlines with the chalk you have been given earlier in the evening.

**PTO**

**A Return**      **[Location: Lower Level to Apex]**

All rivers eventually make their way to the sea. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, brush yourself down and begin to make your way to the brightest light at the apex of the structure.

As you walk, think about yourself in relationship to this architectural body. Your size and shape in comparison to its body; yours and its complexity, internal and external... Together this complex organism pulses with activity on many levels – though many are too tiny to be seen with the naked eye or too huge to be experienced in human time.

Stand for a moment and contemplate all these things as an intense feeling of oneness.

. . .

Thank you for listening. In your own time, walk to the lower level and drop off your headsets with a steward. You will soon be taken to Ark-T for refreshments.

**END**



### **GROUP THREE**

#### **Narrative for Headset 3 (performed simultaneously with headsets 1 & 2)**

##### **To commence AFTER briefing and introduction**

#### **Shell / Ear [Location: Apex to Lower Level]**

Let's walk to the top level – the apex – of this body.

As soon as you reach the centre point turn back on yourself and begin to an anti-clockwise descent into the body.

As you go down, slowly and steadily, notice the kinks that form the internal structure of this external skeleton. You are inside the architecture of a shell. Most of us know well the external shape of a shell. Now is your chance to explore the interior. Touch its sides, feel its textures. Create a mental map of the internal chamber.

Move towards the inner whorl, or side, of the shell. Using your body, sense the vibrations and flow of air and sound through the chamber. Use your fingers to explore its surfaces as you continue down the spiral – do you feel the thin, metallic gills? Imagine how air flows through them, like how oxygen is filtered from water by a mollusc.

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#### **[Location: Lower Level to Apex]**

If you are not on the lower level make your way there now.

Look at how the structure curls into a helix. A huge concrete cochlea vibrating imperceptibly. Remember being at the beach, bringing a shell to your ear? Did you ever hear the sea? What do you hear now, from the inside out?

Turn on your heels and follow the internal curve back up to the apex of the structure, cupping your ears with your hands as you go. Stop periodically. Listen. All these sounds!

Walk towards a sound that you find curious. Stop close to its origin. Think about this sound – what might have made it? What does this sound mean to you?

Tune your ears to the other sounds that bounce around inside this resonating chamber. Take your time listening to, and then vocalising, sounds you have heard – this might be the clip of a sentence, the murmur of a car idling, the cheep or trill of a migratory bird...

**PTO**

**A Return**      **[Location: Apex]**

Walk to the top level. Find a spot away from others where you can view the sky...

From your current vantage, you should be able to view the very tips of the tree canopies shimmering in the wind. Do you see the vertebrae of roads spiralling into and out of the city? Can you feel the flow of air circulating above and below us?

Close your eyes for a moment, and take in the world beyond your eyes. Lift your nose – what can you smell in the air? Turn and flex your body. Does the wind feel different across your skin? Do you hear those sounds, rising from below like an inverted waterfall?

. . .

Thank you for listening. In your own time, walk to the lower level and drop off your headsets with a steward. You will soon be taken to Ark-T for refreshments.

**END**

## **TEXT ONE**

**Text for speakers on top level**

**To be replayed - intermittently**

Castle Car Park on which you now stand was completed in 1965. Two years after the Knights Car Park was built on Hockmore Street at the back of the Templar Shopping Centre. The land on which the car parks, the shopping centre, and the flats now stand, was purchased compulsorily by the City Council in 1963. On the land at the time stood houses and cottages that formed part of a village known as Little Cowley or Hockmore – hence the block of flats called Hockmore Tower. This change was part of a regeneration project being implemented by the City Council.

At the time, Barns Road did not run right to Between Towns Road at the mini-roundabout, but stopped at the maisonettes just before the shopping centre. Between Towns Road did not run as it does now, but ran across the land that the shopping centre is built on, before joining Church Cowley Road. The twisting shape of Hockmore Street came about as a result of the shopping centre being built.

Castle Car Park was designed as two rising circles. It was designed as such so that cars could go in and up from the rear and from the front. The cars would move in a figure of eight pattern, crossing one another in the middle of the car park. But after the middle section of the car park was leased to the City Council in the mid 1990s, a one-way system was introduced to stop collisions from happening.

Castle Car Park was refurbished during 1997 and 1998. It was re-painted and decorated, new lights were installed, and the bridge that connects the car park to the shopping centre was covered to protect people from the cold and the wet.

This car park is due for demolition soon to make way for a block of flats as part of the redevelopment of the car parks, the housing and shopping centre. The next phase of regeneration.

**END**

## **TEXT TWO**

### **Text for speakers on lower level**

#### **To be replayed - intermittently**

Multi-storey car parks began to be constructed at the beginning of the twentieth-century. There are different designs to aid the internal movement of vehicles: interior ramps are the most common; exterior ramps such as a circular ramp or 'whirley-gig'; vehicle lifts are least common; and automated robot systems are a combination of ramp and elevator.

If the land is sloping, then a car park will have a split-level design. To support heavy, moving weights of vehicles, weather conditions, and in some places earthquakes, expansion joints are used between sections to allow the building to flex.

With the expansion of the car industry in the middle of the twentieth century, and a need to meet growing demand in cities for parking space, multi-storey car parks were built using precast concrete to reduce construction time. The precast forms of wall panels, interior and exterior columns, structural floors, girders, stairs and slabs were then transported and assembled on site. These pieces had lifting anchors embedded into them, so that they could be rigged to a lifting system to hoist them into place. Concrete covers then concealed these anchors.

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The red and blue colourings in Castle Car Park, introduced to make the one-way system easier to follow, represent movement in and out of the car park, like the colour of blood to and from the heart. As blood enters into different parts of the body from the heart through the arteries, it is red. As blood leaves sections of the body to return to the heart through the veins, it is blue.

The apertures and openings in the car park walls like pores in the skin, secrete the yellowish glow of the lights, coloured flecks of cars, the smell of exhausts, the surge of engines, the chatter of people.

Electrical cabling routed the length of the building group, merge, split, and join. A pulsing, humming network of metal and rubber that form part of the life and movement of the building.

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Alongside these electrical courses, drainage systems start at the top of the car park, positioned in relation to the four corners. Four drains on each level feed into four central columns that run down through the car park to ground level. Tributaries that join the river as it makes its way to its estuary and out into the sea.

The flow of water on each level sweeps round curving away from the drains in the corners, taking its own path down the ramps. Single lines of bricks laid out at corners dam the flow of water and debris, rerouting water back to its intended path.

**END**