

Games' End

Mitch Miller



I AM MITCH MILLER



I DRAW PICTURES.



Foreword

Collective's *All Sided Games* set out to find new ways to work with families in their locality, seeking out areas of mutual interest by thinking and acting, through the production and presentation of art. From June 2013 until April 2015, Mitch Miller produced *Games' End*, a series of three new 'dialectograms' – highly annotated drawings of places which capture the stories of the individuals who live, work or use the places.

Mitch's project traced the route of the Commonwealth Games in Scotland from past to present, starting in Edinburgh in the area of the former host venue of the 1970 and 1986 Commonwealth Games, Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre, before moving to Glasgow's east end, site of the 2014 Games. Mitch's dialectograms directly address the immediate and the local, revealing both tensions and discussions in or around a specific location, and resulting in what Mitch calls 'a pigeon-eyed view.'

Whether in or around a Commonwealth Games venue, *All Sided Games* and in particular Mitch's work, raises questions around the relationship between two areas that are co-ordinated at both governmental and local council level, under the auspices of 'culture and sport'. Engagement with individuals and groups who live in areas geographically considered to be in 'multiple deprivation' result in differing amounts of resources expended to increase cultural and sporting activity in these areas – a participatory art project or a large-scale infrastructural project, being catalysts for 'change' in very different ways.

Mitch's work takes us beyond government markers that identify and categorise entire groups by looking at and discussing the day-to-day lived experience of people in a specific locale, in turn revealing the complex narratives and histories, which define a place. Mitch's dialectograms authoritatively map the unofficial or the colloquial, drawing our attention equally to how individuals or groups live their lives now, whilst also revealing the external pressures and forces socially, politically and economically that enriches, encloses or displaces them.

From taking part in weekly craft classes at Piershill, doing the rounds with staff at Meadowbank, to sitting around a fire with young people at Baltic Street, Mitch's time spent on *All Sided Games*, working alongside Collective staff and project partners, afforded everyone involved a 'dialectic' enquiry into the world around, our differences and what we have in common.

These records of time and place, now hang in the main office in Piershill, Hall 6 in Meadowbank and in the playground on Baltic Street, offering those who live, work, play or simply pass through, a marker of the more ephemeral and transient social characteristics that constitute a place from within.

This publication chronicles and further explores Mitch's time working on *Games' End* in his own words and others and expands on the rich encounters at Piershill, Meadowbank and Baltic Street, whilst providing a wider consideration of his practice in relation to working in these and other contexts.

James Bell
Producer, Collective

When the respective city fathers of Edinburgh and Glasgow selected their dilapidated east ends to host 'The Games' of 1970, 1986 and 2014, they promised a great deal. They promised a cavalcade of athletes, trainers, journalists, managers, Queens, presidents (some 'for life'), fact-finding delegations and spectators. They promised a carnival of sport, culture and fraternity would come to districts that were decayed, denuded and poor. And then, of course, they would leave.

But the organisers had plenty of blueprints and documents stuffed under either oxter. The Games would be a brief, blinding spectacle, but this flash was a by-product of a deeper, longer-term transformation of the proverbial plan. New facilities, infrastructural improvements, investment... Assets through which the city fathers would re-engineer what was now the *Games' End* of town from its doldrums.

Games' End is the notional 'hyper-district' of two major Scottish cities where I made dialectograms – large scale illustrations of place – as part of *All Sided Games*. Its eastern portion is in Edinburgh. Built for the 1970 Commonwealth Games (and re-used for the 1986 event) Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre sits among the predominantly working class communities of Jock's Lodge, Piershill and Restalrig. Used in its time for athletic meets, football and as a leisure centre, now being considered for demolition, the stadium's history begs important questions about the legacy of the Games and its relationship with the inhabitants. Such legacies have indirectly shaped the lives of the people in Piershill Square West and East, the people who use Piershill Community Health Flat, the first dialectogram I made for *Games' End*.

The western environs of *Games' End* are the newest, and remain a story for the future. When Glasgow won the 2014 Games, Dalmarnock and the neighbouring Bridgeton and Calton areas were earmarked for significant redevelopment. The ostensible wastelands of Dalmarnock were to provide the Athletes' Village, Velodrome and the bulk of the legacy projects. The city council (whose relationship with the east end is notoriously antagonistic) promised to use the Games as leverage to deliver an enduring legacy for the area, a better tomorrow for the children who use Baltic Street Adventure Playground, the last of the dialectograms I made, and the one that looks more than any other, to the future.

Piershill Community Health Flat

When I first came to Piershill Community Health Flat my intention was to use it largely as a base – a central node for my work in the wider Piershill community. But I soon found that the flat itself held more than enough of interest to keep me in work for months! A seemingly humble facility, the flat is funded by the NHS to implement 'the social health model', a way of improving levels of health in poor and vulnerable communities by addressing many of the issues that lead to health problems – stress, isolation and conflict being just a few. The work of the Flat Manager Beth Ekman, the volunteers and the core of mostly women who kept the flat an active, lively and non-clinical place had made the flat a genuine bastion of the community, a fascinating mix of collective will and Beth's unique, quirky approach to her work. It's no wonder I was so reluctant to leave by the end of my time there.

"IT'S BEEN A MONTH OR SO SINCE I STARTED COMING TO PIERSHILL COMMUNITY FLAT."



SAID PATCH.



I AM MITCH MILLER



CORDUROY JACKET - APPARENTLY ENGENDERS TRUST...

I DRAW PICTURES.



PRINGLES & IRON BRU.

"I'VE STARTED TO GET INTO SOMETHING OF A ROUTINE, A RHYTHM."

KIM IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION



BETH RUNS THE COMMUNITY FLAT.



MARCUS KEAN GARDNER.



CHARLEY KIM'S DAUGHTER.



JUSTINE CRAPES GARD.



GEORGE KING OF THE HAIRMENTS.



LORRAINE - ONE POWER OF THREE.



KELLY LORRAINE'S DAUGHTER. ANIME FAN.

PIECING IT TOGETHER

"I'M TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER INFORMATION TO DRAW A PICTURE OF LIFE IN THE SHADOW OF MEADOWBANK STADIUM AT JACK'S LODGE IN EDINBURGH'S EAST END."



THIS IS A DIALECTOGRAM. IT'S A BIG DRAWING THAT SHOWS A PLACE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ITS INHABITANTS.

AS WELL AS THE WIDER GROUP, THE FLAT'S MANAGER BETH ERMAN HAS PROVED INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT.



WHETHER IT'S THE HE-MAN HEADS HIDDEN AROUND THE FLAT, THE FINE-PAINTS IN THE KITCHEN, OR THE IMPROMPTU. CLEANSING RITUALS, YOU CAN FIND HER EVERYWHERE SHE'S "IN WITH THE BRICKS."



IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, I'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE FROM YOU ABOUT THE AREA.

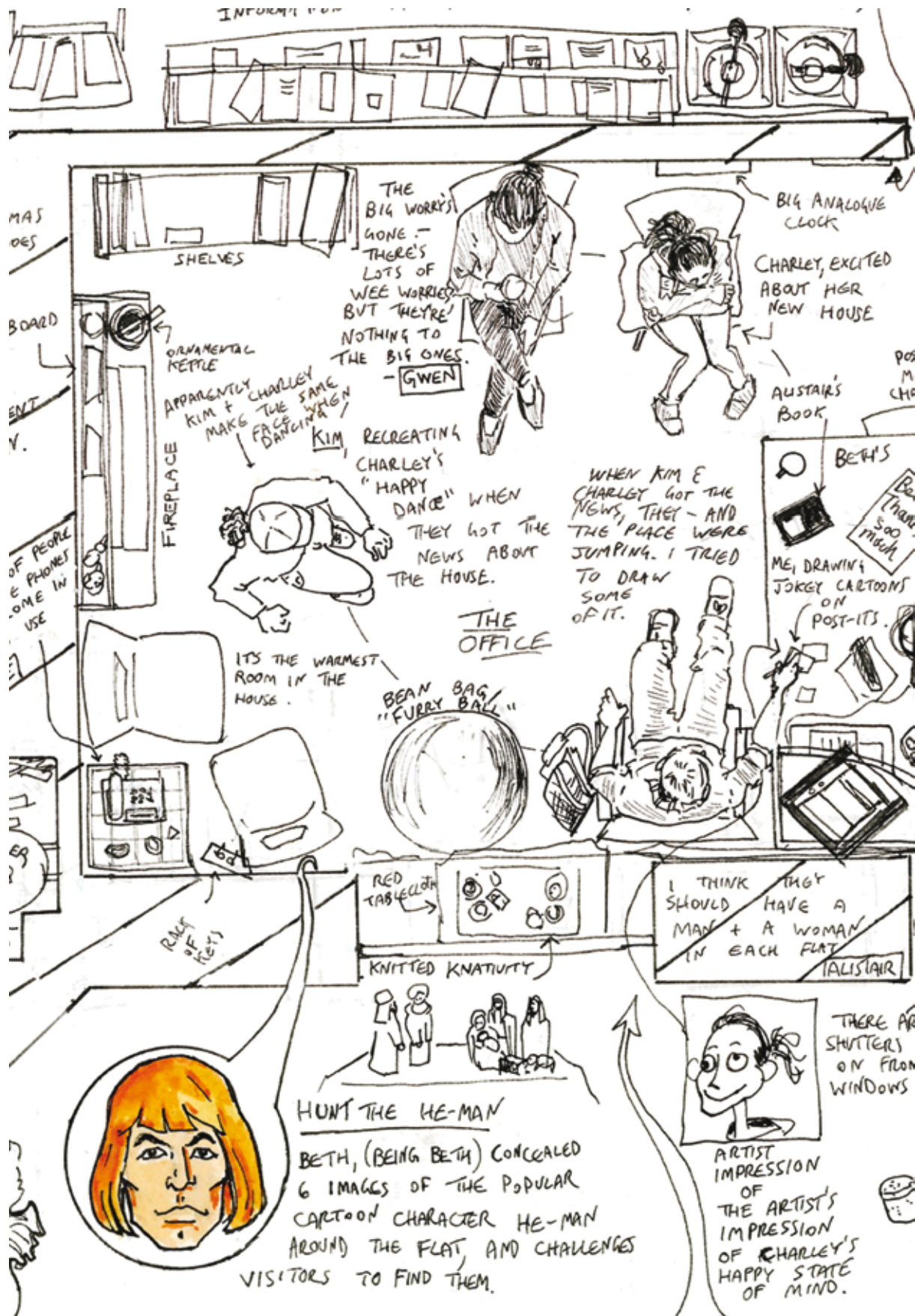
"YOU SHOULD GO TO THE LOCAL LIBRARY - THEY'VE GOT A LOCAL HISTORY SECTION THERE." - PHILIP.

"YOU COULD DRAW MY HOUSE IF YOU LIKE."

"GO THE PORTER'S BAR - THAT'S WHERE THE AUD GUYS GO. I'LL INTRODUCE YE" - KIM.

THIS COMIC STRIP IS MY ATTEMPT TO TELL THE STORY OF A DIALECTOGRAM (OR SERIES OF THEM) - IT WILL SHOW SOME OF THE INBETWEEN BITS INVOLVED IN PIECING TOGETHER A SINGLE, CLEAR PICTURE...





WHY ISN'T IT GOING... MAKING

IN WHICH PIERSHALL'S PET ARTIST SHOWS HIS POISE & PROFESSIONALISM AT "ALL KINDS OF EVERYTHING"

MY

MARK

OH.

THE CRAFT MAGAZINE

KELLY

GWEN

THE CRAFT MAGAZINE PARTICIPANT.

THE WOMAN'S GROUP HAS BEEN BLEEDING SINCE 2006.

"ALL KINDS OF EVERYTHING" COMBINES CRAFTS WITH FREE-RANGING DISCUSSION ON PHILOSOPHY, SPIRITUALITY & THE MEANING OF LIFE.

"FACES OF PIERSHALL" DISPLAY

THIS WAS SHOWN IN 1900

WE ALWAYS ATE A LOT OF HUMMUS & CRUSTY BREAD, SITTING IN A CIRCLE AND PUTTING THE WORLD TO RIGHTS -BETH

5
WAS
UP
YEARS.
USER
BORE
FREN
OUT

OF 3
7 YEARS
OF THE
CONSIDER
LAR AT
' AND

THE FIRST THING
KIMBERLEY TOLD ME ABOUT
WAS A SUPERNATURAL
ADVENTURE...

WE'VE GOT
A GHOST IN
THE FLAT.

I CALLED
HIM **ANDY**.



IT'S A PRESENCE.
I HAD A CONVERSATION
W/ HIM. I'D STARTED
SWEEPIN' AND
I WAS COMIN UP HERE,
AND THIS VOICE
SAID -

WHAT
YOU DOIN?

AND IT WAS A
MAN'S VOICE...

THE CHRISTMAS
TOMBOLA IS HELD HERE

I HAD NO
IDEA WHAT A TOMBOLA WAS, BUT
PHYLIS PAVED THE WAY FOR IT
A REAL TRADITION FOR ALL SORTS
PETTY CASH

BECOMING
OUR FUN.
SOME OF
OUR TABLES
WERE LIKE
HARBORS.

I AM NOT THE FIRST
ARTIST TO WORK HERE, AND
PROBABLY NOT THE
LAST.

THE FLAT ABOVE
(GWEN'S) HAS MUCH
THE SAME FLOORPLAN
EXCEPT THE FRONT
DOOR IS HERE.

KIM
APPARENTLY
LEFT A
LOT OF
TEA
OUT FOR
"ANDY"

ITION IS
TINS FOR
WING AND
' AS

MARIO,
IF I QUOTE

BOOZER, BUT IT BEING
BUT THERE WAS

SHE THEN TOLD ME HOW SHE CAME
TO PIERSHALL... IN MANY RESPECTS IT WAS SCARIER...



WHAT HAPPENED WITH MY OLD FLAT WAS
THAT I'D BEEN BEATEN UP BY ONE
OF MY NEIGHBOURS WHO THEN
PROCEEDED TO GANG UP ON ME
AND MY DAUGHTER, AND GOT
ALL MY NEIGHBOURS TO DO
THE SAME...

SO THEY WERE CALLIN THE
LANDLORD,
SAYIN'
SHE'S DOIN'
THIS, SHE'S
DOIN' THAT...

AND MY MOTTO
IS, IF YE DON'T
ANTAGONISE THEM,
I'LL GO AWAY.
SO I WASNAE FIGHTIN BACK...
AND I WASN'T PHONIN MY LANDLORD...

BUT BY ME NO DOIN
THAT, THAT'S HOW THEY
DEEMED ME AS BEIN
INTENTIONALLY WANTIN
TO GO HOMELESS...

* THE COUNCIL



SO WHEN I
CAME HERE, MY
FRIEND MARIO
SAID "HAVE YE
MET BETH YET?
SO HE TAKES ME
OVER - AND IT JUST
STARTED COMMUNICATIN
- BETH'S WRITIN
LETTERS TO
THE COUNCIL - AND
THAT WAS IT. I'D
HAVE BEEN PICKED
OUT OTHERWISE, ON
THE STREETS



"DIAMOND
STUDDED
DOLCE
GABBANA
SUNGGLASSES
RHINESTONE
COWBOY

YE SHOULD
GO INTO THE
MACDONALDS
AND ASK THEM
TO LET YE IN THE
CELLARS -
THAT'S WHERE THE
PRISON CELLS FROM
THE BARRACKS STILL
ARE...

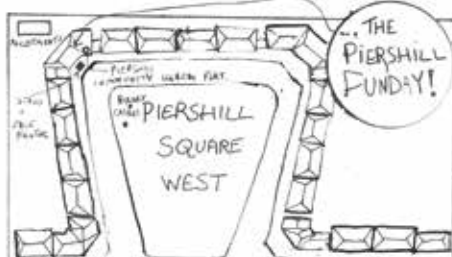
TO
PORTER'S
BAR

CLOSE
ENTRANCE.



BIGGIE SMALLS AKA THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. AKA CHRISTOPHER GEORGE LAMORE WADDELL. BORN IN BROOKLYN NY. CENTRAL FIGURE IN EAST COAST RAP SCENE. HIS FELD WITH TUPAC SHAKUR (W/ COAST) ENDED IN THE VICIOUS BATTLY OF BOBZ MEN.

...AND...



...THE PIERSHILL FUNDAY!

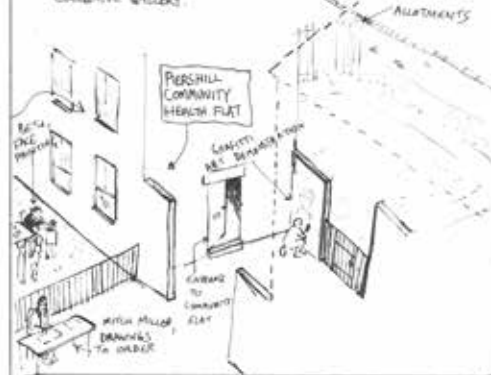
(THE DISTANCE BETWEEN EDINBURGH'S EAST END AND NEW YORK'S SOUTH EISTS BE IS APPROX. 3255.70 MILES...)

BIGGIE &



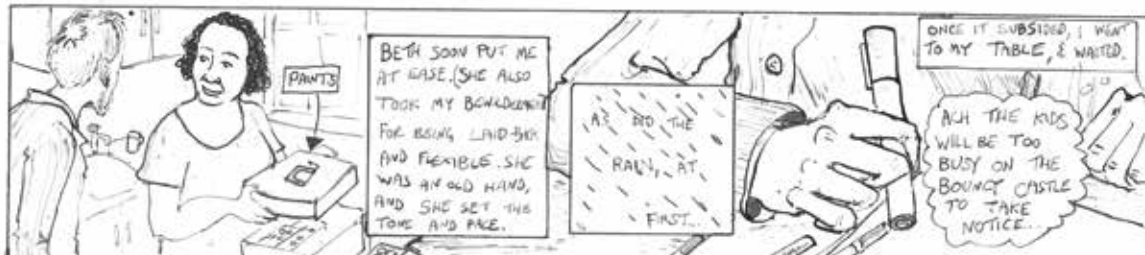
CATHERINE SADLER, COLLECTIVE GALLERIES

BETH IS HAVING A FUN DAY DOWN AT THE COMMUNITY FLAT. I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE A STALL WITH YOU THERE, MAYBE DOING SOME DRAWING? SHOWING THE KIDS A FEW THINGS?



FINE! (I SAID) BUT, TRUTH BE TOLD, I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED... SHOW THEM WHAT! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO LIKE TO APPEAR SOMESTRATED BY SAYING THEY HATE KIDS (OR SOMEONE WHO GENUINELY DOESN'T) - I LOVE 'EM! BUT KIDS ARE TRICKY. IF THEY'RE IN THE MIND, YOU'VE GOT THEM - BUT HOW WOULD I COMPETE WITH FACEPAINTING, GRAFFITI ART AND BOUNCY CASTLES? HOW WOULD I STRUCTURE IT? WOULD THEY JUST THINK I WAS AN ARTY WANKER? (PROBABLY...)

UNCLE BOB



ONCE IT SUBSIDED, I WENT TO MY TABLE, & WAITED.

ALL THE KIDS WILL BE TOO BUSY ON THE BOUNCY CASTLE TO TAKE NOTICE.



AND THEN THE KIDS CAME IN FORCE...



BUT, MAYBE I'M JUST EASILY SHOOK.

JAMES, OF COLLECTIVE, IS DOING THE COLLABORATION.



PUT IN JORDAN FOSTER!



AND DO BIGGIE SMALLS!

AND BOB MARLEY!

DRAW A CANNABIS FLAG NEXT TO HIM!



A PORTRAIT WAS ALMOST A RELIEF



MY SUBJECT ALSO WANTED A RAINBOW FC BADGE ADDED



BEER... BEER... BEER...

HELL, YOU NO DUNE NOES!

Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre

Meadowbank was always the big one – mostly because it was the big one – larger than any single place I'd ever worked on, larger in surface area, larger in the number and range of people involved. It was, in short, daunting.

What also made it tricky was that I was coming into Meadowbank off the back of my work at Piershill – five minutes walk down the road, but a world away. I had become immersed there, had practically gone native, and now I had to shift my focus to something entirely new. I kind of resented it. So it took me a while to warm to Meadowbank.

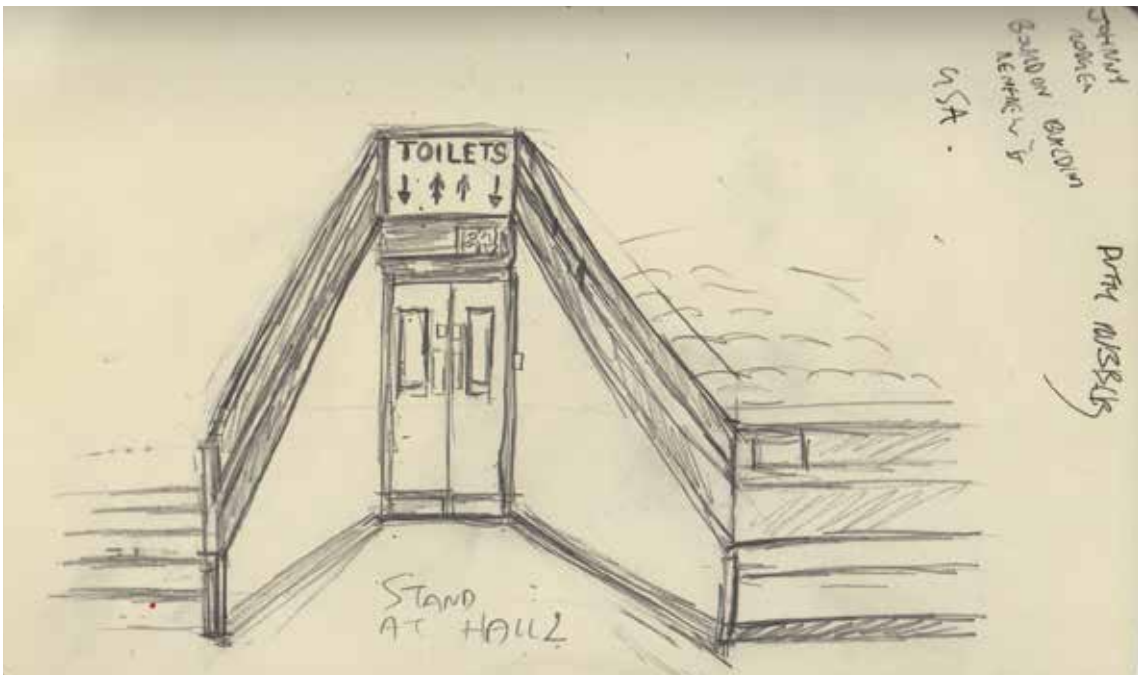
But I did. The first thing that really pulled me in was its architecture. Decayed, modernist and breezeblock – built, it isn't immediately pleasing. Then you look more closely, roam its corridors and you start to find things – moments of delight, surprising nooks and corners and unexpected glimpses of private lives and intimate moments.

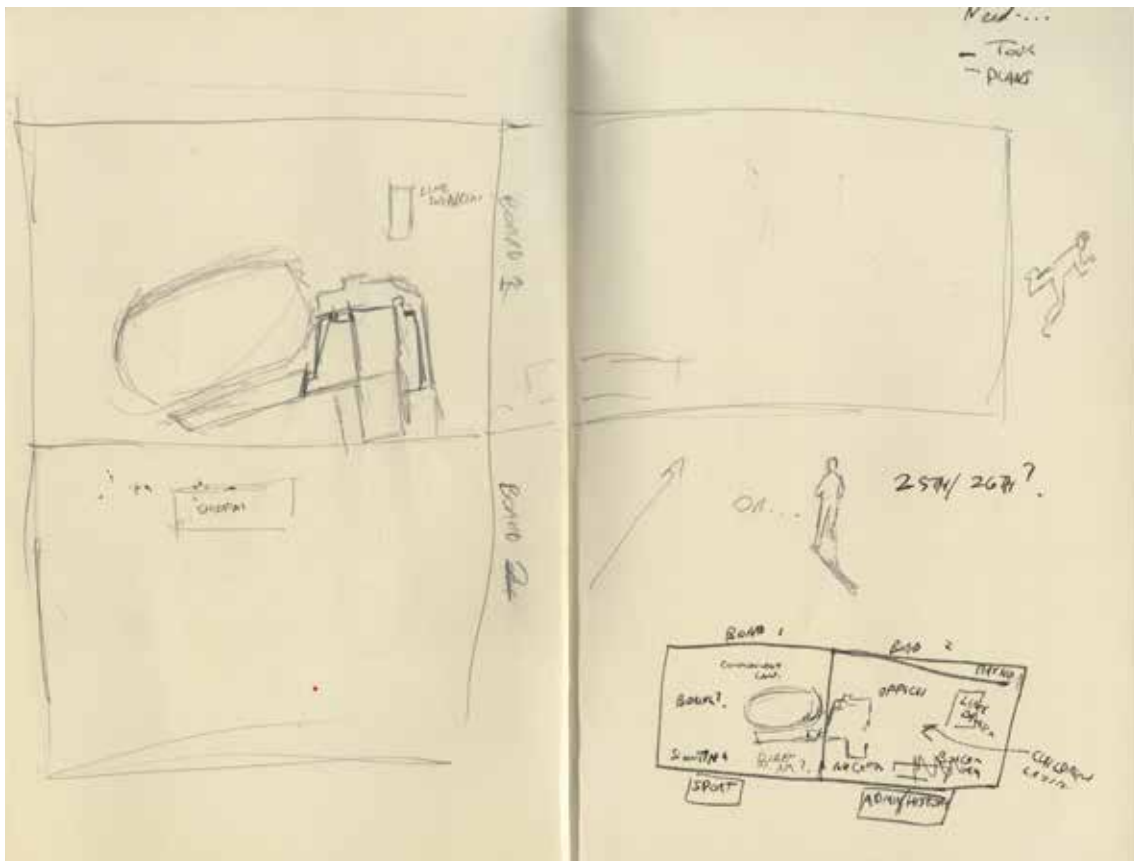
Then I got to know the people. The first were Jo Mathieson, Manager, and Emma Ogilvie-Hall, Events Manager, who got me 'in' there and helped arrange my temporary takeover of the Control Room, which I turned into an on-site studio. Then I met Woody – a man so long-standing he is practically an architectural feature. He offered me his special tour – an amble through every corner of the building (and every chapter of Woody's life story). He also dug out two boxes of programmes and photographs from the past 44 years of the Stadium's life.

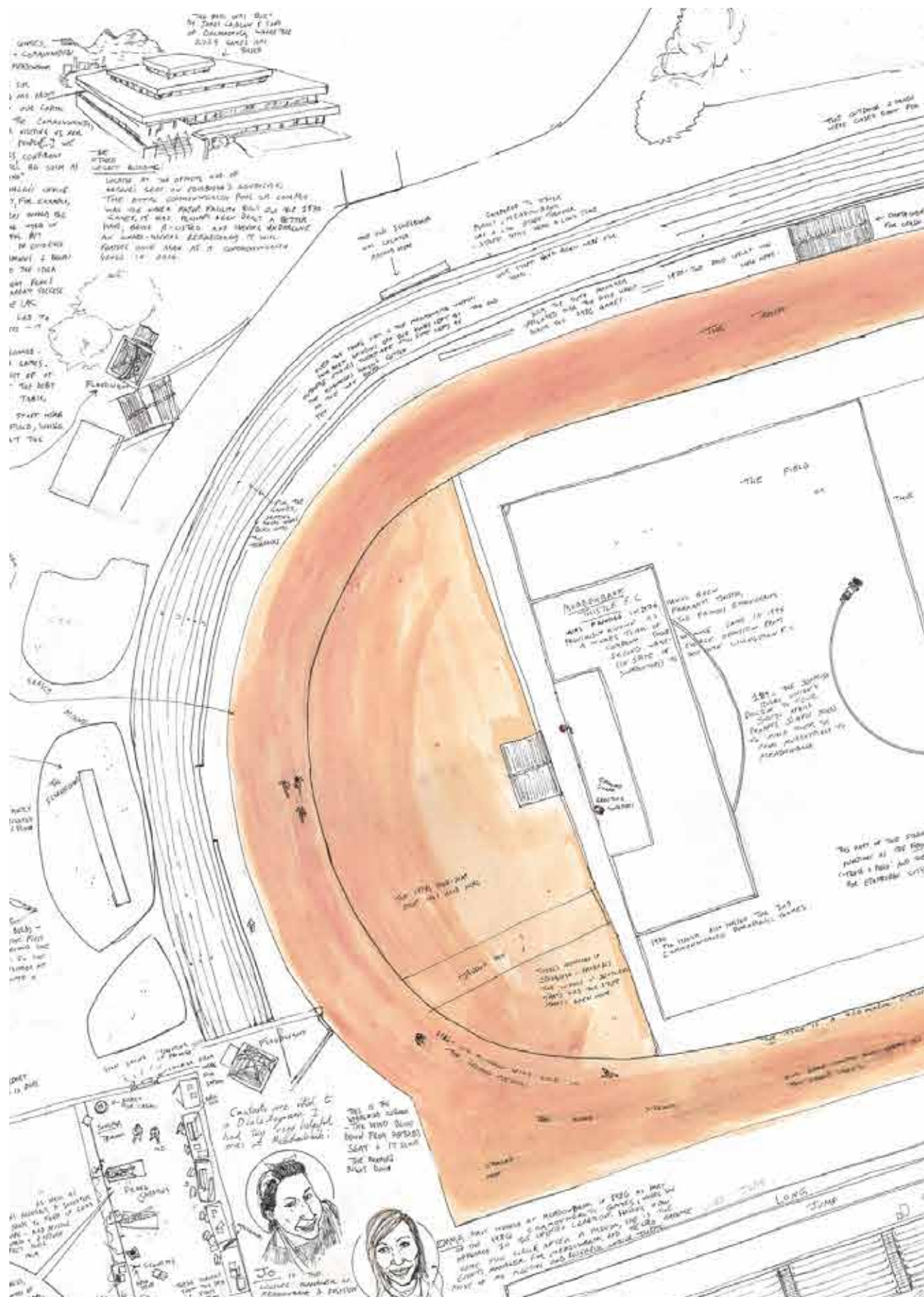
Emma arranged a meticulous schedule of meetings – with the Scottish shooting team, a line dancing class and the Auld Reekie Rollers, the local Roller Derby team. I met Neil, the engineer whose unenviable task it was to keep the place running. Mark, the Duty Manager, supplied some x-rated stories. I showed the drawing at staff training sessions and discussed the white spaces.

By this point I had accepted that it would have to be a 'doubler' – two A0 boards rather than the one I'd used for Piershill. It started to take shape in the Control Room, the largely unused space where the scorers for Athletics meets would work. It was also the best view of the track and stadium. From here I could look out at the running track and watch the sun creep over as the day wore on, the shadow that never left the south side of the track. Runners would run, kids' clubs would cavort, the ground staff lifted mats, erected goals, painted lines. On a sunny day the reds and greens looked fantastic. It was a good view. It was distracting; it was the point where I went beyond warming to the Meadowbank building. I'd fallen in love with it.











PIGEON-VISION

The View from the Dialectogram

In order to get my head around the complex spaces of Meadowbank, I used rough 3D sketches to establish the relationship between the different halls, practice rooms and studios.

Whether running with their crew or playing their own angle, *Rattus Volaticus* carves out its territory from the kerbs and cornices with a keen awareness of crumb, kebab and chip spillages. The pigeon is down, and it is dirty. It is street-wise, it is, as the theorist Michel de Certeau would say, 'clasped to the street'.

But it also flies, and that means it has the bird's-eye view. People probably first imagined the bird's-eye view back in the prehistoric age of the hand axe, and ever since it has been the viewpoint of the privileged, the powerful and the elevated. As geographer Hayden Lorimer remarked to me, when we think of the bird's-eye view, we imagine great migratory birds – swallows, swifts or geese – the real high flyers.

We do not imagine pigeons, the rat with wings, the flyer of low birth and lineage, irredeemably a bird of dirt, asphalt, muck and discarded things.

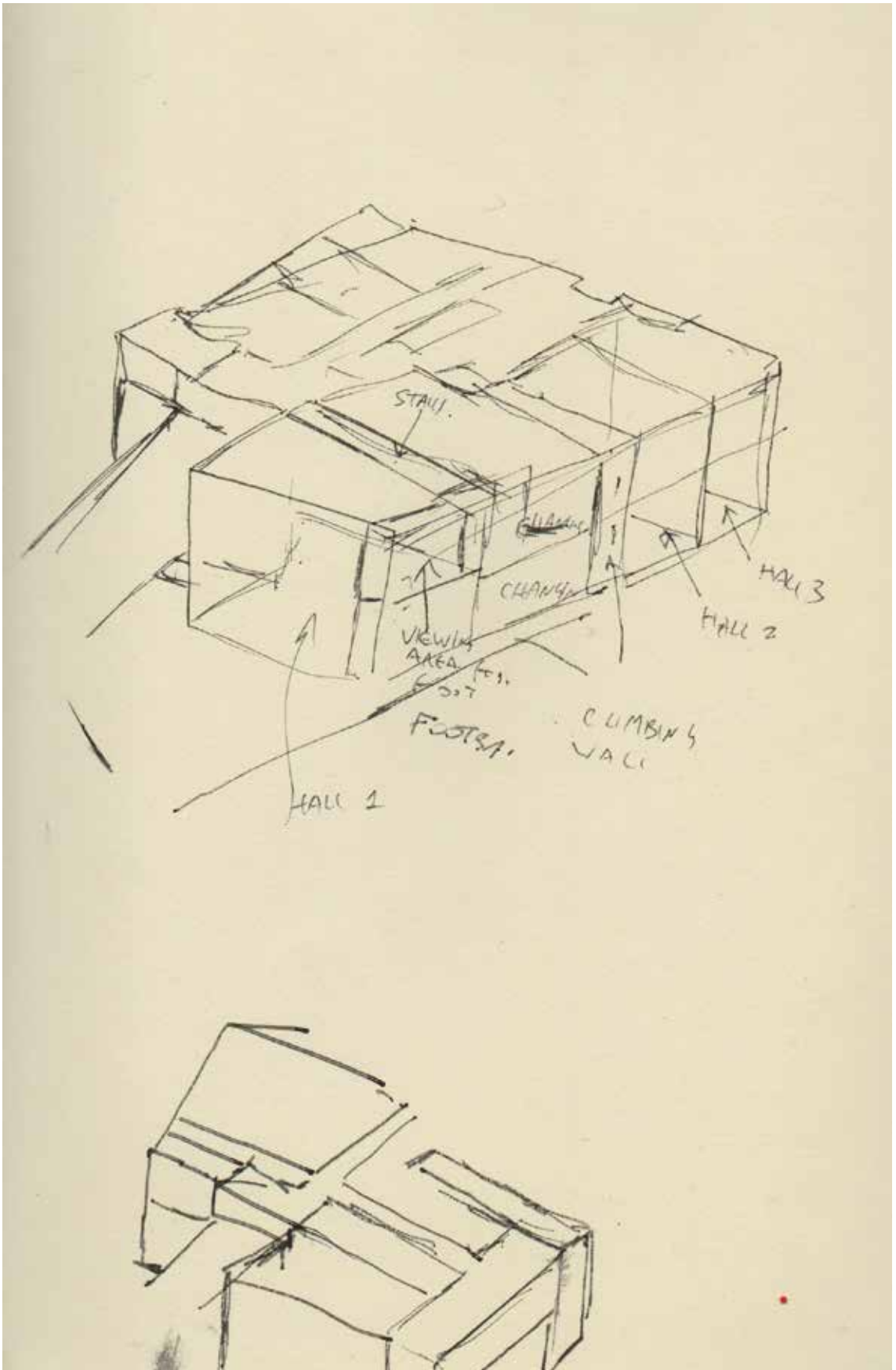
Six years ago I invented something called a 'dialectogram'. I made the name up by conflating diagram with dialect; so diagram + dialect = dialectogram. Both words incorporate the Greek 'dia', meaning across, through or apart – definitions I could squeeze and manipulate as I needed. But why incorporate 'dialect' at all? I see drawing as a language of sorts – the different marks, lines and gestures we make in a drawing are as particular as speech. And like spoken or written language, drawing has its accents and variants. It can be formal – or posh – like the mannered drawing style of the art academy or the precise 'jargon' of technical drawings and architectural plans. It can be as down and dirty as a sketch, or have the qualities of a demotic or dialect in the form of graffiti, folk or naïve art, or be as peculiar and individual as a pencilled portrait or doodle. The word 'dialect' as I use it, represents a whole range of ways in which language can vary beyond official or 'proper' usage.

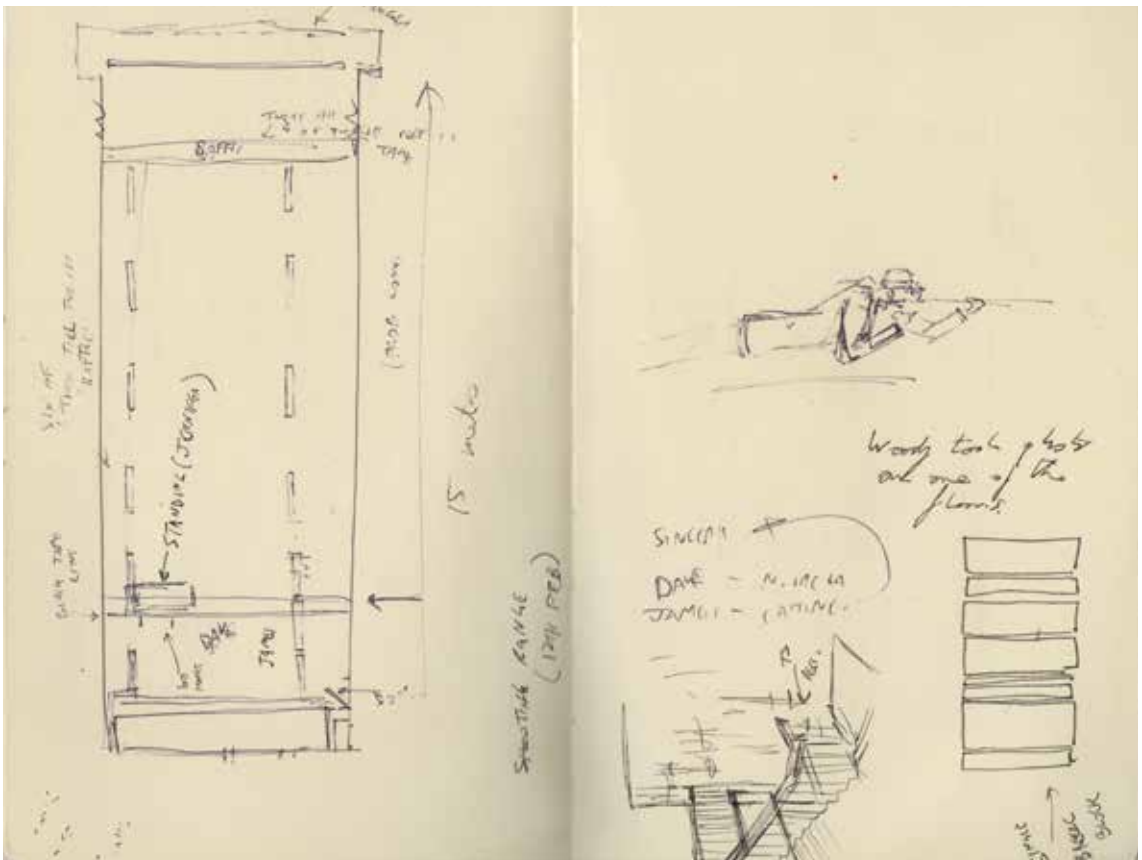
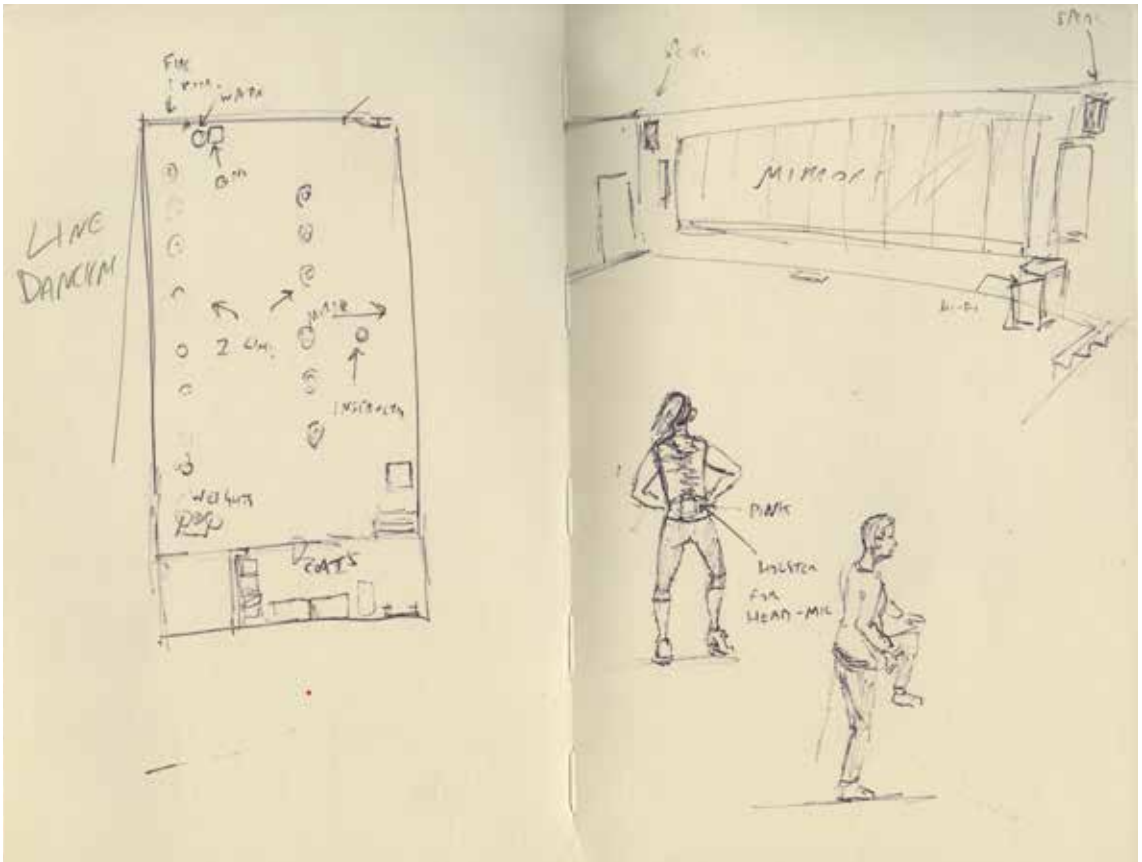
Since 2013 I have been making dialectograms for Collective's *All Sided Games*, six artist commissions developed in and around venues used for the Edinburgh 1970, 1986 and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Images such as Piershill Community Health Flat or Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre reflect the pigeon's-eye view of such venues in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We might see Meadowbank Stadium (home to the 1970 and 1986 Commonwealth Games in Scotland) from above, but the majority of what it shows you is based on knowledge of what's happening in its corridors, halls and pitches. Like the women of Piershill Square West who keep an eye on their community from the flat on the corner, the pigeon-eyed dialectogram gets to know its turf intimately – who is who, what is what, where it all happens – while keeping in mind how it all fits together.

This is the opposite of what we tend to see in modern maps, where this kind of local knowledge is rarely included or even seen as relevant. The strolling, loitering, perambulating pedestrians are cleaned away from the streets that only exist because people need to move from place to place. The map is an example of the drawing language of the powerful, not particularly interested in communicating low-level experience.

You have to be careful when taking the bird's-eye view. Back in the '90s I read 'What I Hate about the News' (1994) an essay by the poet Tom Leonard on the first Gulf War. He describes the spectacular news footage of guided missiles dropping on Kuwait, far enough below to look pretty much like a map:

It's one thing to have wide-angle spectaculars of twelve-rockets-at-a-time whooshing upwards into a dark desert sky, patriotic flag somewhere on screen; it's another to have wide-angle spectaculars of what happens to the conscripts on whom the over eight thousand disintegrating 'bomblets' fall from each salvo.





It's a long way from the Gulf to Edinburgh's east end, but when I came up with *Games' End* I was in some respects thinking about Leonard's words. Top down views obscure local culture; they observe – and describe – life, but do not participate in it, or take any stake in it. It's a view that makes it easier to realise the masterplans that politicians and architects dream up. But it can also make it easier to be callous, to clear away what is inconvenient or messy to your grand plans. In architecture, lines enforce or represent to a greater or lesser degree, an exercise of authority or at least intended authority, over a given space: the power to build a wall, prevent people moving freely from one point to another – to tell them what the landscape is. It is interested in its own agenda and disinterested in the local culture of that landscape.

*

When I signed up for *All Sided Games* it felt very much as if my work had come full circle. Dialectograms are as much a creation of Glasgow's Commonwealth Games project as the Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome or dancing Tunnock's Teacakes from the Opening Ceremony. In 2008 Glasgow announced it had won the hosting of the Games and that, as a result, an ambitious programme of regeneration would change the east end. This dovetailed with plans for a major extension to the M74 Motorway and the ambitious strategies of Clyde Gateway, the partnership that oversaw much of the Games' legacy commitments in Dalmarnock, Parkhead and Bridgeton on the north side of the river Clyde, and Rutherglen and Shawfield to the south.

The plans were ambitious; the much-neglected district of Dalmarnock, home to Baltic Street Adventure Playground, would be home to the new Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome and Athletes' Village. The Clyde Gateway vowed to bring 20000 jobs to the area and build significant new residential properties, sports and leisure facilities. 'New' was very much the watchword, the stated goal being to create a 'vibrant, new city district'. This led to a process of land procurement through compulsory purchase orders and the subsequent clearance of existing communities within Dalmarnock – although much of the official images and rhetoric acted as if there were no existing communities. And fair enough, when viewed from an architect's masterplan, high up where the swallows flew, it's not as if they were visible.

I live in the east end, as do a sizeable chunk of my family and friends, part of those apparently non-existing communities who sat in the path of this redevelopment. Cases of resistance and disagreement were already coming to light in the mainstream media: local homeowner Margaret Jaconelli engaged in a long, bitter, stand off against Glasgow City Council, documented by the filmmaker and photographer Chris Leslie. And yet there was much smoothing over: Stephen Bennet's otherwise excellent series on the changes to Dalmarnock running up to the Games left out the large community of Travelling Showpeople whose yards are located in the area (even in its aerial shots which, given how numerous these yards are, was quite a feat in itself). Dalmarnock was put at the centre of a paradoxical narrative that, on the one hand, indicated it was deserted, yet on the other, emphasised how much 'existing' communities would benefit alongside the new.

And that is where the dialectogram came in: it began as a vernacular, demotic counterpoint to the authoritative diction of maps, diagrams, anthropological schematics and architectural floor plans. A satire of official drawings and the agenda they push. I began the first one by drawing the place where I came from as if I was seeing it from above – the Showman's Yard where my own parents, siblings and relatives lived. It showed not a here today, gone tomorrow 'encampment' (the loaded word local politicians deliberately used to describe them) but what it was – a place that had been there for 11 years, that had its own order, values and culture. My drawing 'borrowed' the bird's-eye view to make a point about what existed in the white spaces of the east end masterplan – the scratchy marks that would never be included in a map of the new Dalmarnock.

*

Backcauseway, the proto-dialectogram based on my experiences as a member of Glasgow's travelling show community, was born partly in anger at the way in which Glasgow's new 'Games' End' was being created. Its most immediate inspiration was however, from the sociologist Judith Okely who described a Gypsy camp thus:

When Gypsies choose the layout, they often place the trailers in a circle, with a single entrance. The main windows, usually the towing bar end, face inwards. Every trailer and its occupants can be seen by everyone else.

I had not invented the pigeon's-eye view when I read this, but Okely's piece of diagrammatic thinking is all street-bird. It begins from above, with the notional, not-quite-closed circle described and then immediately forces us to swoop back down, to the level of the main windows (discernible only when looking at a trailer face on). She ends up placing us in a trailer, appreciating the view from the window itself. Her pigeon-vision poaches the strategic vantage point to better explore and understand what she has learned at ground level. Like a pigeon, she only flies in order to get a better sense of how the streets all fit together, so she can continue to interact with it and crucially, be of it.

From *Backcauseway* I went on to produce a series of drawings at the Red Road flats, based on long periods of working with its tenants and employees, struggling at all times, to find authentic means to let them speak through the work. The basic idea of the dialectogram was a good start – the tension created by drawing out a floor plan as if from above, then insisting upon explaining that floor plan in terms only attainable from below. The scholar Scott Hames described this to me as a 'clever way of 'hijacking' third-person/monumental style for first-person knowledge and concrete experience, without relinquishing its authority.' It flutters down to the tarmac, grabs the discarded chip, then hovers up, looking for the next one...

I like being called clever as much as the next person, but this was also a genuinely useful statement. It scanned fairly well to my then professional position, working on these weird illustrations in the everyday swim of Red Road for a cultural project run by a partnership of such satanic majesties as the Glasgow Housing Association and Glasgow Life (it has to be emphasised that on a personal level the representatives of these organisations were frequently very good people). The contradictions of the political arrangements that made this activity possible are never far from the surface, so that not only was I trying to depict the tactical cleverness of the people of Red Road as they lived in those massive blocks, I was having to be tactical myself in the face of various establishment bodies. That's what happens when you step out of the studio.

But there could be a pleasure in this too; the contradictions of Red Road put paid to ideological purity but kept things interesting – and that has certain narcotic qualities. Negotiating between my own values, those of a big, ambitious project and those I encountered was not exactly fun but it was enlivening, constantly requiring a hop from one back foot to another. Being out in the field, embracing a community that is not mine but I come to terms with, has pleasures of its own, small but important triumphs. The pop-culture critic Philip Sandifer calls this 'collectivist hedonism', squeezing joy out of the world as part of an on-going existential inquiry into how we relate to one another. For Okely and myself you could say it's a 'hedonism of the field' where we embrace lives that are unlike ours. With every dialectogram project I run the risk of being changed every time I pick up my sketchbook, chap on a door, hunker down by a playground fire pit, or gratefully accept a cup of tea. I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy it.

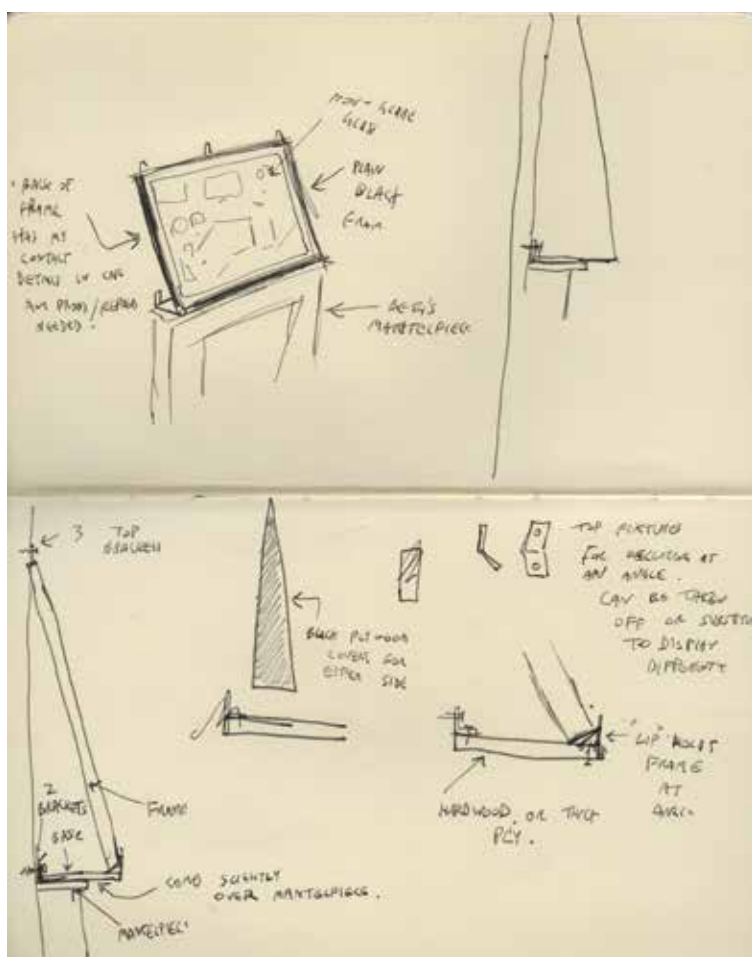
Since that first satire, the dialectogram has become a participatory thing – and I do mean thing. I am not a fine artist; I have no training in that tradition and am fortunate that bodies such as Collective are happy to work with interlopers such as myself. I am an illustrator, which means I straddle the great aesthetic tribes of art and design. That is, I can merrily steal from both. In putting together *Games' End* with Catherine Sadler, James Bell and Kate Gray at Collective, I drew inspiration (if you'll pardon the pun) from design practice, in particular Bruno Latour and Pelle Ehn's notion of the 'Thing' as an assembly around material. What do we mean by this?

We'll start with the material; at Piershill this was the flat, the allotments, the clinking mugs for tea. At Meadowbank the grand scheme of the stadium, the judo mats, the steel spars left over from the old terraces. The Baltic Street Adventure Playground's materials are its grass knolls, the fire pit and the bits and pieces that are potentially, swings, ladders and thrill rides. That's what we talked about in *Games' End*. But in all three of these endeavours there was that other material we assembled around – the big white mount board I would draw upon and the oral accounts of the participants who agreed to take part. We discussed their lives, what the place meant to them, but also what we could illustrate about their place, and how. This meant asking them to imagine it as if from above, and then anchor that in their grounded experience. It asked them to think a bit like me, just as I was learning to think a bit like them. It asked them to be pigeons.

In Piershill, this method allowed a group of women to rethink and illustrate the complex relationships and problems of their community flat. The drawing itself, which was shown to them many times during its long, tortuous road to something like completion, became a sort of place where we could build new relationships between each other, remember old stories, create new ones, discuss things that were not usually discussed but left implicit.

What I am trying to get across is that the dialectogram illustration is not just the drawing but a kind of behaviour, a state of mind. As well as drawing, I participated in fun-days, baton-relay events, games of hidey. At the fun day I drew pictures to order, at Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre I gave an idiosyncratic walking tour that encouraged those who joined it to see the stadium in my skew-whiff fashion. I tried to create an atmosphere where we could all acquire pigeon-vision. Participants did their own fieldwork on my turf – they visited my studio, saw my works in progress, came to the Edinburgh International Book Festival where they could share my arch-comic geekery. We got to know each other. We flocked together. We made dialectograms.

Mitch Miller
~~Illustrator~~ Pigeon



An important part of Games' End was the 'handover' of the original dialectogram drawing to the communities I'd worked with. These pages show an early concept for how we could install the Piershill Community Flat drawing in the main office area.

Baltic Street Adventure Playground

What can be said about Baltic Street Adventure Playground that gets anywhere near the feel or atmosphere of this place? On my first visit I saw a kid just shy of seven brandishing an axe. It was to cut wood for the campfire that sits at the heart of the playground, a converted gap-site just a short walk away from the sleek new builds of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. It's a playground the children build themselves, under the light-touch supervision of the playworkers. Baltic Street stands in much the same relation to the signature venues of the Games (Celtic Park and the new Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome) as Piershill does to the Meadowbank (signature venue of the Edinburgh 1970 and 1986 Games). Tiny in comparison, blink and you'll miss it, but arguably, every bit as important to the health of *Games' End*.

Proximity is not the only comparison; leading the playworkers is Robert Kennedy, someone who, much like Beth at Piershill, has given his all to make this place work – not just through his organisation, persuasion and supervision of the project, but in imprinting a large part of himself onto it, and encouraging others to follow suit. The likes of Beth and Robert are the kind of people routinely derided by would be sophisticates as 'do-gooders'. It's an epithet we need to reclaim for its positive connotations because these guys really are do-gooders. And we'd miss them if they ever became a bit more like the rest of us. Perish the thought.

With a whole playground to compete with, keeping the interest of the young people at Baltic Street Adventure Playground was not always easy. Among the activities we did together was to ask them to express their thoughts and feelings about the place in their own (much more vivid) drawings. These cost me a lot of off-the-cuff sketches of skateboarders, BMX bikers, Celtic Park (enough with the stadiums already!) and the occasional vampire.





OBSERVER EFFECT





All Sided Games

All Sided Games was a series of off-site commissions, placing artists in and around venues built or used for the Edinburgh 1970, 1986 and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. It brought people together to make work of mutual interest.

Collective is a contemporary visual art organisation that delivers an exciting and ambitious programme of new exhibitions, commissions and projects.

Established in 1984 to support new and emergent artists to exhibit work in Edinburgh, it now commissions new work by artists who are at a pivotal stage in their development.

COLLECTIVE