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Brennan, Jessie (2019) Re: Development: Voices, Cyanotypes, and Writings from The Green Backyard. In: 'Aesthetics of Gentrification: Art, Architecture, and Displacement', International Conference, 5th - 6th April 2019, University of Oregon. Portland, Oregon, USA. (Unpublished)

Official URL: <http://www.jessiebrennan.co.uk/news/aesthetics-of-gentrification>

EPrint URI: <http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/9169>

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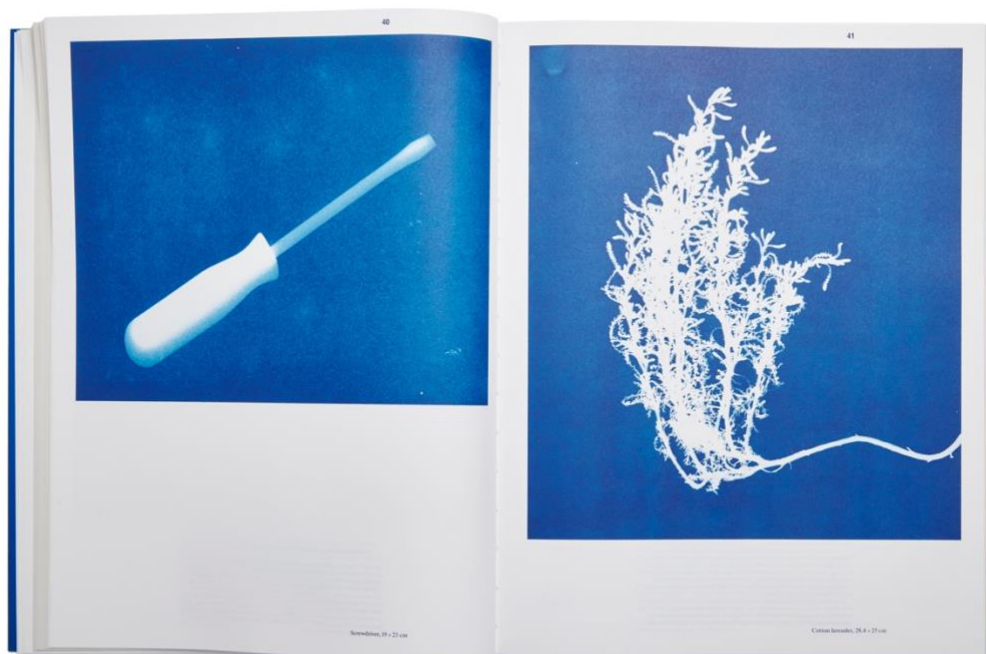
Jessie Brennan,

Re: development: Voices, Cyanotypes and Writings from The Green Backyard

Abstract

What are the processes by which one might creatively relate to, engage, challenge or critique neoliberal practices and narratives of urban development, instead producing 'bottom-up' histories, revealing contested voices and creative archives? This is the question that first drew me to The Green Backyard, a community-growing project in Peterborough (UK), which for years was threatened with a proposed development by its owner, the City Council. While that threat was ongoing the voices resisting it were stronger still: on the 27 January 2017, after a lengthy – but successful – community campaign against the proposed development, the land is finally safeguarded.

*Inside The Green Backyard (Opportunity Area)*¹ is an outcome of my yearlong residency project in collaboration with the people who use and care for The Green Backyard. It takes the form of a visual and audio archive – over 100 cyanotypes and more than 100 oral recordings. During my time in residence in Peterborough, we questioned the capitalist logic of the proposed development and offered alternative evidence for the current social use and value of the land.²



Jessie Brennan, *Re: development: Voices, Cyanotypes & Writings from The Green Backyard* (London: Silent Grid, 2016)

If This Were to Be Lost (2016-17) is an outcome in the form of large-scale text installation (painted birch plywood mounted on scaffold) temporarily sited at The Green Backyard. The phrase is adapted from an oral recording by a contributor to the audio archive, and its 19-metre length was visible to passengers travelling on the adjacent East Coast main-line train from London to Edinburgh. Informed by Doreen Massey's conception of space, a 'cut through ongoing histories', 'not a surface but a simultaneity of stories-so-far',³ the artwork gestured towards its productive political provocation, activating the archive.

The invitation to speak about a significant object of choice and to record their oral contribution in private, led people to reflect frankly and intimately on why they felt The Green Backyard must not be lost to development. The rapacious forces of gentrification were thwarted by community organising and growing, which was performed at a slower pace – coming to represent the deeply cyclical time of living and gardening over the linear time of the historical archive. I would like to hazard that situated knowledges and critical ethnography acknowledge the positionality of the subject, and together the voices form a living example of a broader political challenge to the neoliberalisation of nature.



Jessie Brennan, *If This Were to Be Lost* (2016-17), installation (painted birch plywood mounted on scaffold), 1.9 x 19 m, situated at The Green Backyard, Peterborough.

¹ Jessie Brennan, *Inside The Green Backyard (Opportunity Area)* 2015-16, installation (cyanotypes and oral recordings), dimensions variable, 56:14 minutes.

² See Jessie Brennan, *Re: development: Voices, Cyanotypes & Writings from The Green Backyard* (London: Silent Grid, 2016)

³ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9.