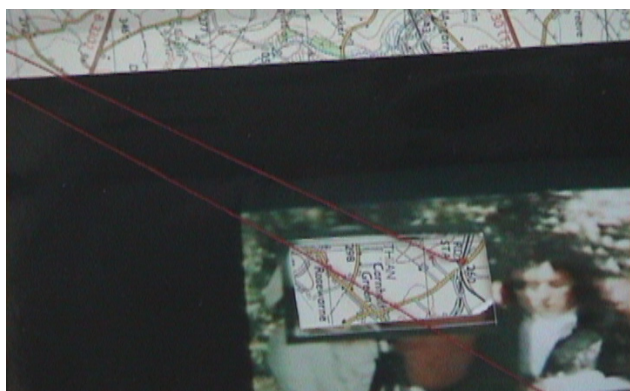


POINT AND PLACE: SIX YEARS IN CONVERSATION...

Rajni Shah writes about an unusual collaboration

Text and images by Camilla Brueton, Julie Brixey-Williams, Simon Kennedy, Theron U. Schmidt, Rajni Shah and Caroline Younger



Extracts from first chat: July 2004*

rajni: Hi, I'm a little early, so whenever...

caroline: hi there. How does this work?

Camilla: just talking to si....

rajni: great! is he logging on?

Camilla: having technical difficulties...

Camilla: just spoke to Si, he's had a wireless connection installed in the studio, but it's very very slow he's hoping to make an appearance at some point... can we copy the chat for him?

Camilla: are we all here then?

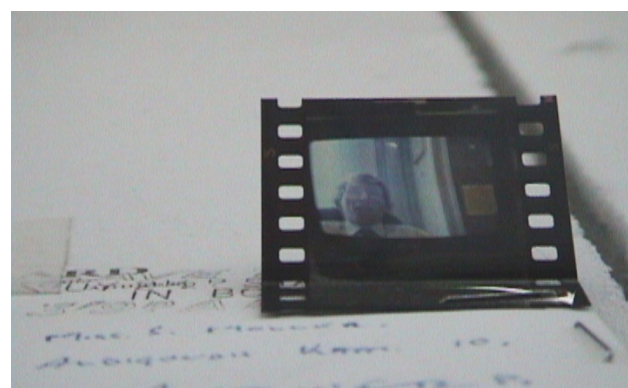
Julie: hi. I am here

Julie: Who starts??

A lossy account of our first six years

It was 2002 when Julie first contacted me about a project she tentatively called "space jam". The idea was to get a group of artists together to discuss the space of a book, what it might become and how we might approach it, with a non-specific idea to create a piece of work or an event at the end of it. I had never actually met Julie but it sounded like a nice idea, so I went along to the first meeting. Six years later, we've just produced our first limited-edition book and are moving on to a new project. Over these years, we've grown and shifted and changed, there have been weddings and births and deaths, and since the very beginning one has joined and two have left.

It's not easy to sum up this wandering series of conversations, meals, images and movement that have made up the journey of this book and this group of artists. Writing about it seems somewhat reductive, to try and condense such a delicate web of counterpointing, simultaneous, connected yet sometime opposing thoughts. So I've edited together some of our online chats - meetings that took place virtually when we were too far-flung to get together in person - and combined these with images from our process and from the book. As with the book itself, I invite you, the reader, to find your own way through the article, to peer through the gaps and choose your own path through it. And so, as we venture into the next unknown phase, here it is, an unlikely, lossy account of our first six years, from the group we have fondly begun to call 'point and place'.



rajni: How did everyone get on with the score?

Theron: I found a certain amount of claustrophobia about it, interestingly enough. I wasn't expecting it. I wonder if that was what those of you who felt uncomfortable in your own front doorways felt

Camilla: i interpreted it a lot more loosley

caroline: i found myself focussed on the subjective, in the body, standing and breathing, etc. ; and very aware of my ownership of the doors and all that the idea entails

Julie: I felt I could play more imaginatively with it because I was one step away this time and also had the advantage of seeing what others had done with my score the first time

Theron: what rajni and caroline are expressing sounds similar to what I am getting at. feeling my body in this space, and the relationships of property/ manufactured space



Camilla: Camilla: isorry- slow computer at this end.... kind of used it as an opportunity to get out and about a bit- visited a bus stop I'd been wanting to take photos of- saw this as my 'looking'. also visited elephant and castle round about- a doorway to many places in south london

Theron: !

Julie: I chose a doll's house door as I wanted to play with scale. What did rajni and caroline choose?

rajni: i was inspired by camilla's last one and did mine on a bus, by the door that kept opening and closing.

caroline: My second front door needed to confront my privileges. stopping in the door was difficult - it demands to be entered/exited

Julie: I was interested about the way that the doll's house has a front door for dolls but a swing open front that functions as the opening for people.

Camilla: the sense of scale, or exploring scale came across in your communication julie

Julie: I think I was also thinking about the way things gone on 'living' 'moving behind what we see.

rajni: interesting, the doors opening and closing on the bus also made me think of these different time and space scales and simultaneity (?)

caroline: julie - do you mean living behind close doors?

Camilla: there's a slightly voyeuristic feel to them to-as if you're peering in on another world

Theron: re: scale: it seems that is something we have been working on, with respect to the mapping of architectural, topographical, and corporeal spaces onto each other. the different permutations of that.

Theron: (and the bizarre effects of what happens when the "codes" or legends for those various scales are taken out of context)

Julie: Not really living behind closed doors. More that we concentrate on what we see but things go on anyway out of our perception. esp movement which we only 'clock' at certain places but it continues in space as minute(tiny) increments.

Theron: in which case the combination of this shifting of scale and the idea of voyeurism, which could perhaps be connected to what Julie is talking about, too, about discovering the livingness behind things, as a kind of generative rather than malicious voyeurism

Theron: oh dear that clause got out of control

Julie: I felt far more aware of my body this time than when I was standing in my own front door, even though I was trying hard to do so then.

Theron: anyway the combination of shifting scale and voyeurism/liminalism can be a really exciting

SCORE #2

(revision of SCORE#1)

1. Spend one minute in the presence of EITHER the image you selected OR some aspect of the experience of doing the last score.

2. Choose a doorway*

3. Position yourself in the doorway, facing what you perceive to be the inside. Follow between one and six of the following instructions:

-LOOK for 1 min.

-LISTEN for 1 min.

-TOUCH for 1 min.

-SMELL for 1 min.

-BREATHE for 1 min.

-BE ABSENT for 1 min.

4. Position yourself in the doorway, facing what you perceive to be the outside. Follow between one and six of the instructions in question 3.

5. Communicate a message for EITHER Camilla, Simon, Theron, Rajni, Julie OR Caroline. Keep a visual record or reminder of your communication.

6. Select one image from our images file that best sums up your experience.

* The doorway can, but need not, be the same as last time

one -- what does it mean to look at a map of london voyeuristically?

Julie: also prob because I had to crouch down and get into an unusual position to do the things, but that made me less obvious about my responses.

Camilla: voyeurism does have a bad press

rajni: i would like to try looking at a map voyeuristically

Camilla: voyeurism implies something of the personal. you wouldn't describe looking at an a-z as 'voyeuristic'

rajni: but could you? it is something about the way you look rather than what is looked at

caroline: no

Theron: I am wondering if what we have been making is a kind of absurd A-Z

Julie: help I can't read all these impt things quickly enough. I am going to pause and look back.

rajni: ok

Julie: pause'



Theron: yes, perhaps A-Z is the wrong comparison. but I mean when you make a map, you have to decide what are the important things to represent, and how to represent them. which is similar to the struggle we have had.

Theron: I would like to see us talking about "terminal" rather than "liminal", perhaps

rajni: huh? terminal you say? pashoo!

Camilla: does terminal suggest the end. or is it a point of change?

caroline: terminal certainly suggests end to me

rajni: i think we are seeing it as point of change. but threshold and liminal are really key for me because of their householdic qualities *(well threshold anyway)

Camilla: last score made me think about all the minor adjustments you need to stay still, like trying to balance on a gym ball

Camilla: this score made me think about intent

Camilla: don't completely understand liminal

caroline: liminal seems a lot more mythic and symbolic to me. Threshold could be mythic or domestic

Julie: i liked 'terminalia' because it was a celebration of boundaries a bit fizzing too. Simon failing to get connected. How long will we be chatting as he can go to Hackney to find an internet cafe?

Theron: I don't mean to use terminal to connote end-points. that is not the attractive part of it. what is attractive is that there can also be a terminal (but there can't be a liminal, in any but an abstract sense). someone builds a terminal, or declares one.

Julie: terminal actually means boundary in latin but we usu interpret as end -I do

rajni: we could wait for simon, how long will he be?

caroline: Householdic is a good word. One that looms large in my life

rajni: !

Camilla: much prefer terminalia

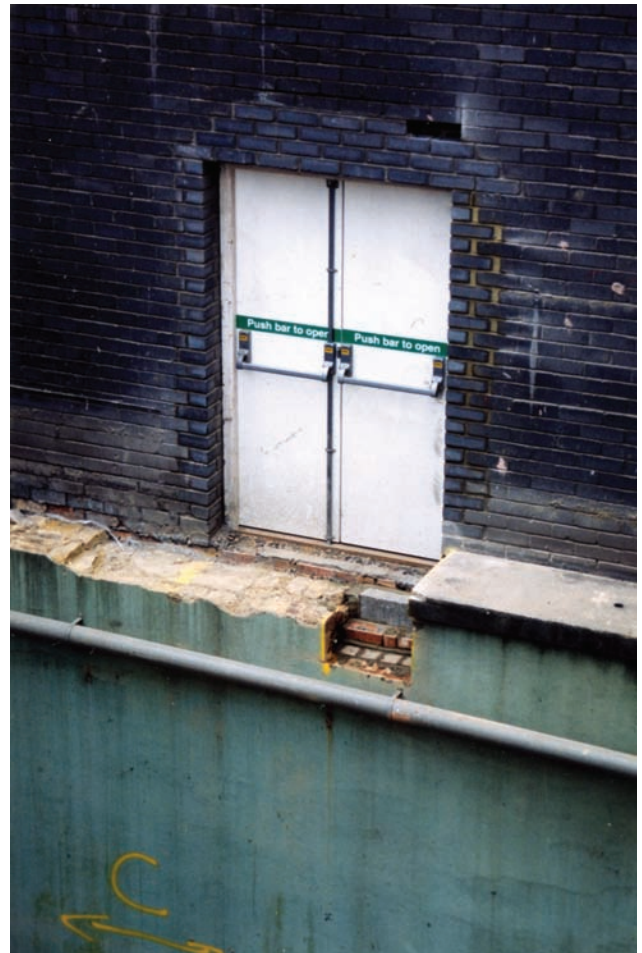
Theron: to what?

rajni: i like the idea of fizzing boundaries, interesting image, like sherbet, and the point between solid and gone

caroline: agree

rajni: to terminal, it is way better, like a festival

rajni: perhaps all three could be around?



rajni: how do we say goodbye? ah

rajni: is anyone there?

Camilla: yep- but am off to the pub shortly

caroline: A big thanx to theron for setting this up

Julie: ditto

rajni: THANKS THERON

caroline: Bye then

Theron: so long

Theron left the chat

Julie: my brain aches! bye

Camilla: ta- bye!

Camilla: bye then...

caroline left the chat

Julie left the chat

Camilla left the chat

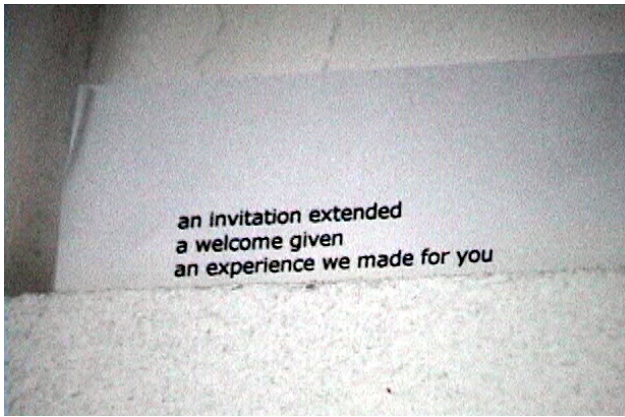
simair joined the chat

rajni: oh no! simon are you there?

rajni: Everyone just left

simair: its taken me all evening to get on line, but you've all gone story of my life, still this wireless stuff final works!!!! free to use it was worth the wait. next time ill be ready!!!





Text for a pack of cards

impede flow "politeness" interruption = danger
 Is there a difference between reading and looking? approach to reading equilibrium
 at interfaces
 smallest detectable threshold the reader balance and failure
 exploring the time and space collapse leapfrog structure A-Z of a specific stretch of
 time or conversation
 a series of scores for the reader mapping of topographical, architectural, corporeal spaces
 simultaneity
 (time and space) scales pages as thresholds removal of self
 claustrophobia body awareness of self in space
 property/manufactured space clock a book being in the moment of becoming a book!
 codes/legends for scales taken out of context codes / legends translations that lose and
 translations that don't lose (lossy:lossless, 1to1:1tomany)
 crossing and recrossing terminal/liminal a point of change
 terminalia is a celebration I brush up and am influenced by things around me
 fizzing boundaries
 voyeurism the livingness behind things intent
 a brink/verge what is a book? the reader



| | | | |
 word string body room colour house



Latest chat: January 2008*

Rajni: What has been most memorable about the process of making point and place?

caroline: following scoring instructions and working as a group around the table

Camilla: sharing and learning from other's practices- how to approach making work in unfamiliar ways

julie: The change of hierarchy as it progressed. Giving up "directorship" of project and allowing book to flow and emerge through collaboration.

simon: working on a long term project without any fixed outcome or completion date

Rajni: for me it has been about space- space to talk and make or not make, space to explore, space to eat and converse, and the merging of spaces

julie: It has been a very supportive space for all the other events and projects in our lives too

Camilla: I think I found the scoring a new experience, as was working in a truly collaborative way- eg losing the authorship of individual pieces, instead collaborative authorship of the whole

simon: i feel its been a very good thing to have fixed points in life, the book has been a marker of the passing of time

theron: I would say most memorable has been the strange, and quite wonderful, combination of having a very strong, fixed commitment -- we are making a book -- combined with complete openness about how we will do that.

Rajni: How, in one or two sentences, would you describe the making of point and place?

Camilla: a collaborative book project, created by 6 artists of various disciplines. It's been a rewarding experience

theron: i suppose it is a bit like devised performance making (to compare it with my experience). where you start off to make something without knowing what it will be, but knowing that it will be. except that the categories of what a book could be felt a lot more wide and open than my assumptions about what a performance could be.

julie: Frustrating at times, being lost but holding faith. Elusive -trying to grasp what book was about and the relief when the word 'thresholds' popped up. Moving forward, decisions decisions and technical issues

Rajni: The making process has been a living process, where our lives and the happenings and routes our lives took have actively fed into what we were doing and the pace it developed

simon: The process of making the book has been the layering and weaving of ideas through conversation, the bringing of ideas to a table

caroline: 6 disparate artists explore the possibilities of the book form over 5 years of regular meetings at which images (including text) are swapped, sampled, deconstructed and reconstructed through

processes of scoring and playing with the boundaries and architecture of 'the book'.

theron: what's been really strong about this project is the way that, at some point, I gave up worrying about the outcome, about my expectations of it. It became just a part of my life. It stopped feeling like a project, at least I know it -- any more than having dinner could be considered a project. (The gathering around a meal was obviously tremendously important!)

Camilla: I agree with theron- it's a kind of quiet confidence that allowed a lot of worries- which are often barriers to making work, be overcome

Rajni: a bit like a family sometimes!

theron: yes, the meals were central ... and that wonderful long table. I think that had a real influence on the book, the shape of it when it's folded completely out ...

Rajni: Where were we at the beginning? Where are we now? Where will we head next?

julie: scattered ions. Now a coherent strongly bonded group with crossover links. Have greater understanding of everyone's practice and how it has developed over the years.

Camilla: in a confused state (not a bad thing); we are now quite satisfied; into the unknown- again!

caroline: comparative strangers aspiring to combine our talents towards an unclear end. Now a strong group with a prize winning book. Going forward as a group to another unknown end

Rajni: The one thing I want to hold onto is this as a 'space', one where we continue to be social and talk and explore, but with a goal to make something and to find a theme from the last project

simon: the experience of meeting over a long duration allowed for ideas and conversations to be reflected on, slow down time and make it unimportant

theron: tough question! to approach it from a narrowly professional direction: I think we started with our own expertises in fields of artistic practice. it feels like now, in addition to developing our practices, we've also acquired expertise in collaboration itself. so that we're talking about wanting to share our experience, not just share the book. (though the book is also a very strong reflection of that experience -- which is one of the things I value very much about it.)

julie: point and place seems a sense of identity. Can't remember when I didn't know that was us!

* All text from the online chats has been left as found, complete with typos, interruptions and unfinished sentences.

To find out more about the artists in *Point and place* or to purchase a copy of the limited edition book (while stocks remain) please visit www.pointandplace.net.