



## Detail Detectives | Unravelling the Urban Lexicon

### DETAILS AND THE URBAN LEXICON

When you first come across a new place in London, you often get a gut reaction as to whether you like it or not. That's the city 'speaking' to you, and you understanding the city around you; an urban lexicon or language. We believe this communication between people and the city is down to the details; a freshly painted door, a graffiti tag, the smell of cut grass or spilt petrol, the feel of broken glass or cobbles underfoot. Details can be seen, and to a lesser extent heard, smelt and touched. Maybe its easier to show you what we mean by 'details' and the images below give you some examples. You can see more at our project blog:

<http://urbanlexicon.blogspot.com/2008/04/image-cloud.html>

### CITY CLUES TO AN URBAN LEXICON

Details act like clues left around our environment. We interpret those clues and understand the places that surround us through them. It's like reading the city, or its lexicon, with the clues building up a story in our heads of the place. They hint to activities that might have happened there, or might be about to happen. They help us to work out whether we want to stick around or get straight out of there.

We're running street workshops called 'Detail Detectives' over the next week to find out more about these details.

### EMOTIONAL CITIES

Some places immediately make you feel good and want to stay there longer, whilst others make you want to get out of there straight away. We'd like to know what your instinctive reaction is to a place, then will help you breakdown how details you've seen, heard, smelt or touched might have encouraged that feeling.

+ When you have a positive reaction to a place, it might make you feel:

Excitement / Calm / Curious / Energetic / Comfortable / Amused / Clear-headed / Delighted / At ease / Energized / Empowered / Focused / Loved / Respectful / Proud / Close / Patient / Content / Thrilled / Surprised / Warmed / etc ...

- When you have a negative reaction to a place, it might make you feel:

Scared / Disgusted / Nervous / Frustrated / Bored / Confused / Lacking control / Threatened / Hurried / Angry / Unwelcome / Ashamed / Disappointed / Apathetic / Distant / Stressed / Sluggish / Dullness / etc ...



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### **WHAT**

With this project we're attempting to unravel how details in an urban environment affect the way you feel about a place, and which details might trigger certain emotional reactions. We'd like to know what your instinctive reaction is to a place, then will help you breakdown how details you've seen, heard, smelt or touched might have encouraged that feeling. We're trying to piece together those clues and see how they combine to create an 'urban lexicon' or a language of the city.

### **WHY**

We believe that details, although small, could have a big impact on how people feel about a place, and that this will ultimately affect how a place is used. If we can understand how they affect us, details could be managed in ways that transform an inhospitable place into somewhere lively and well-loved.

### **WHEN**

The street workshops, 'Detail Detectives' will run on **Friday 2nd, Sat 3rd, Sun 4th and Thursday 8th May**. We suggest allowing two half days or one full day. Let us know when suits you best during those times and how long you're able to spend with us, and we'll aim to tailor the workshops to suit you. We'll be in contact via email to confirm where and when to meet.

### **HOW**

We'll be visiting four diverse areas of London with you where you'll play the role of 'Detail Detectives'. We'll give you a Detectives Investigation pack, a trail to follow and a digital camera to document the details you find. Once you've finished the tour, we'll talk to you to work out what you felt and what details might have affected that.

**We'll cover travel expenses, food and drink for refueling and pass you a small fee for your commitment.**

The results will form a series of visual stories documenting your journey, published and distributed on the project website and as part of the Bright Sparks seminar on public art and public space research in September.

### **WHERE**

We're visiting boroughs across north east, north, west and central London. We'll meet in a central location and travel together to our destination, when you'll find out where we're going, as we'd like to keep an element of the place being unknown.

### **WHO**

Marcus Willcocks and Rosanna Vitiello will be taking you on the street workshops. They are designers and experts in how people use public spaces and work internationally. There will be anything between two and six people taking part at one time.

If you want to know more or would like to take part please get in touch with us on **07966 505673** or at **rosvit@yahoo.co.uk by Thursday 1st May**, and we can work out which days suit you best.

You can see more about the project at  
**<http://urbanlexicon.blogspot.com>**

To find out more about the project's sponsors and where the final work will be showcased, go to:  
**[www.gunpowderpark.org/brightsparks](http://www.gunpowderpark.org/brightsparks)**