

SUCCEED IN LIFE



*...at the expense of your family, friends, love, safety, sanity,
intelligence, politics, space, time, self, respect, comfort, health, sense...*

*Succeed in Life
At the expense of life.*



Birmingham comes in curves and waves, floods and curls.
Warped dreams in poured concrete, surfaces fall like ribbon on tarmac,
folding upon themselves. Humanist arcs of piqued smiles and raised
eyebrows. Open your eyes to the to and fro, the tide. New Birmingham's
bound in cold references to the organic. Natural forms manhandled again
and again, under the influence of affluence, from Macmillan to Cameron.



National Health Lottery, win a million instantly,
skirt around the concrete, park your car,
enter the bull ring through its big silver sphincter.
Cruise for days, lulled and confused.
Comforted by forms; shapes divined elsewhere,
rendered here as decorative order,
regular polygons for regular people.



*The space must be any-space-whatever...
disused, unassigned, although entirely
geometrically determined... any-space-
whatever is well trodden... the space would
appear to the one who traverses it as a
propulsive... postures, positions and gaits.
All these images of form and decay. (1)*

We pass over, pass through, channelled like blood cells
through glistening arteries.

Video Escalators - <https://youtu.be/Ktm1rPO2-CA>

*You can pass, but you cannot stay.
Gaze and stare, but be careful how you look and make sure that you cannot see.*

You have no agency here. The nil fulfilled promise of reproducing a renewed and ever better
you keeps you spending. Spending time, energy, money, keeps you circulating. But in this
place, *You* can never be an *I*; a solid, a coherent image of beauty. Instead, we are liquid,
flowing through, powering the turbine, keeping this machine afloat.

Liquid states, liquid lives.

Video advertising - <https://youtu.be/hBOrlnT6jFo>

With the advent of mass production, the skilled craftsperson becomes redundant, Piece Work becomes Time Work and making becomes abstracted into isolated gestures repeated again and again. After this, Time Work has become Liquid Work. We have droughts and floods, we walk for days searching for an Oasis and suddenly a deluge swallows us, and all we can do is tread water. I have a thirst and I can't stop drinking. I drink until I pass out.

My Work fills every vessel, flows around corners, leaks into my spaces of retreat. I can't pick it up. I can't handle it.



Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Old Birmingham is majestic in its red and black brick scale, grandeur dour and exotic, northern stark with tones of Roman, of the Arabesque. Civic. Public. Pax and Lux.

I am here working away from home, installing a solo exhibition in a gallery in Digbeth. I book myself into the Paragon hotel and later find out it was built in 1903 by Victorian Philanthropist Lord Rowton to provide decent accommodation for working class men. My boyfriend reads the Trip Advisor reviews and says...

'You've booked yourself into a right shit hole'.

Its disciplinarian, red brick rigour takes me
back to childhood, back to Primary School in
Draycott; a village smouldering in the ashes of
industrial glamour - decrepit textile factories
amongst bland hills above leaky rivers;
animated by the cul-de-sac lust of
nicoteenagers necking plastic bottle cider.





Victoria Mill, Draycott.

The Paragon is ceramic, brass and steel, high ceilings, dirty carpets. Covered in scars badly masked in layers of gloss paint. The facade of service is sheer. Behind polished corners lays detritus, dumped and discarded. Yet I catch glimpses of a harsh and hard-earned elegance; some attenuated *truth* that emanates from its design. Green and light through big windows. Safe spaces for working class people.

In a disconnected way, I feel at home. The place reminds me of my first rented 'room' in Nottingham, Portland House. This student lodging was the former Portland Hotel, next to Nottingham train station on the canal. I lived on D floor, 4 floors up above Carrington Road. The Paragon finds this time (2002-3) and places me above it, beneath it. I remember the strangeness of a former hotel re-purposed. A paucity of interior decoration, living in the stains of ulterior memories soaked deep into cheap carpet. The building is heavy with pain and purpose and pride.

When I am there, I am tired. Over worked from juggling too many things. This exhausted state marries with Portland House 2003. The familiar light and furnishings paste this time over the other. An extenuated sadness of then becomes an under-painting for now.



This hotel chants 'Work'. I am back in a chain-restaurant kitchen working after a day at college, I am doing the Sunday double shift, again. Everything about it shouts WORK (never REST). My glands become swollen.

If you have worked as a manual or service labourer; in factories, kitchens, warehouses, pubs, then you understand performance and time. You will have an acute sense of how these terms mutate between your different performed/paid roles and their accompanying responsibilities/freedoms. Your brain and body become separate. Your face is a membrane, mask, window you wear with the shutters closed.

*I can do a good job
I am a hard worker*



'but when does enough effort actually equate to success?'

I am now in Sienna doing a residency.

Liquid work, liquid lives

Seeping into the cracks between places, times, cultures and classes

Working when works over

Playing when works begun

No distinction between productivity, leisure, research, consumption,

Just a spectrum of mood and substances: content, angry, ambitious,

engaged, despondent, elated, sugar, carbohydrate, fat, alcohol, caffeine,

nicotine, etc, etc

'but when does enough effort actually equate to success?'

Says the bronzed American to his beautiful partner whilst tucking into a carpaccio of salted monkfish sipping a fine glass of pecorino, gazing over into paradise.



Quest for the Holy Grail Tapestries - Panel 1 - Knights of the Round Table Summoned to the Quest by the Strange Damsel, by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, John Henry Dearle, 1888 - 1899.

A play on surface and representation. Folds of fabric rendered in tapestry. A double weave. Allegory in an architectural frame. At the bottom of the tapestry real flowers mark the outside space of the forest. On the wall of the inside space hangs a floral tapestry. Double nature, twice removed. The object (re)presenting itself.

The hope of pleasure in the work itself: how strange that hope must seem to some of my readers – to most of them! But I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies and even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul, as well as his body. Memory and imagination help him as he works. Not only his own thoughts but the thoughts of the men of past ages guide his hands; and, as a part of the human race, he creates. (2)

Back in Birmingham the installation went well and I have time to wonder to the local Museum and Art Gallery. Traversing grand halls full of proud, humble artifacts I came across *Love is Enough* curated by Jeremy Deller. Wall-paper, prints, designs and texts by William Morris and Andy Warhol collide. These processes evoke both artists' constructed worlds and social ideals.

This disperses over my own experiences to spark a marbled flow of discordant associations. Work, pleasure, play, society, repeat. Communities apart from the drudgery of REAL LIFE. Hip dreams of escape. Sun glassed socialists. 15 minutes of celebrity News from Nowhere. Factories of Factories. A whole summer spent working in a screen-printing factory on an industrial estate in Ilkeston making stickers for the (now closed) Raleigh Bike factory. Looping birds and leaves become a middle-class shorthand for something better than the 'mass produced'; heritage, Arcadia, perhaps Habitat but not IKEA. We are now beyond the flat pack IKEA lives of the 90's.

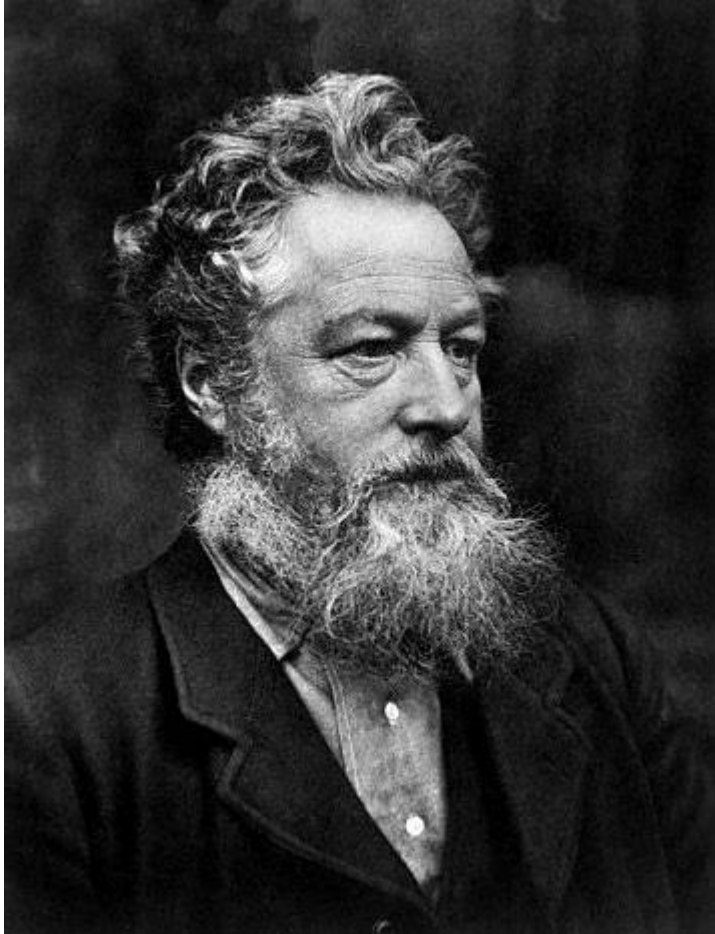


Luxury Fully Furnished Beach House Emo - Modern 1 bed luxury room, available on Second Life Market Place for L\$1'250.

We want spaces that reflect our current circumstances. The objects around us are liquid, zero hours, always never working. Monitoring and marking, assessing and extracting, invisible, reflective, slippery, mutating, upgrading, mining, syncing, updating, suggesting. The work that made these objects is fractured through a global chain of micro piece-work. The glassy glossy object (at once hollow and holistic) is made and maintained by many and none. By ghost workers.

Phantom objects cast faint possibilities for tactile engagement. It's almost impossible to understand how these objects work or how they were made. A reaction to (or symptom of) this spectral objecthood could be seen as the contemporary performance of 'craft'.

This can be cynically traced in the emergence of a *faux-naturelle* aesthetic. A desperate craving to re-enact authenticity, to reconnect to natural materials and hand-crafted goods.



William Morris

This appears in the streets and the media as hessian coffee sacks and reclaimed wooden table tops; the use of beards (as substantial as William Morris') to endorse new lines of hand-crafted ciders and fine ales. A thousand advertised suns glistening in GCI orchards. Fingers that usually stroke apple key boards now fingering barrels of hops. A screen play about 4 young ad execs that jack it all in to start a cottage-industry style, organic, ethically sourced (delete as appropriate): butchers; bakers; candlestick makers; cat cafe; salad farm; vape n' jazz bar. This false craft economy makes us feel closer, closer to the appearance of the production of things.

We must come down to earth from the clouds where we live in vagueness, and experience the most real thing there is: material.

Civilization seems in general to estrange men from materials, that is, from materials in their original form. For the process of shaping these is so divided into separate steps that one person is rarely involved in the whole course of manufacture, often knowing only the finished product. But if we want to get from materials the sense of directness, the adventure of being close to the stuff the world is made of, we have to go back to the material itself, to its original state, and from there on partake in its stages of change. (3)



Anni Albers

Craft is performed in galleries as artists seek an engagement with something real, something slow, awkward, messy. A substance that yields, responds, that offers rules through its materiality, through processes that can't be undone by clicking back through the history tab.

As an artist, working, doing, I am drawn again to *making*. It's a release from the pseudo-rational, proposal-first, this-means-this, matrix of contemporary work-life. If you invest time in making an *object* and work until it is finished (and then use this knowledge to begin the next thing) hours disappear. (I mean 'object' in an expanded sense encompassing video, audio, text, dance, etc.). Time is not easily carved up or tallied; actions cannot be executed in predetermined ways. These objects begin to command time, or to absorb it. Is this a method of reversal, resistance?

I want to bank my time elsewhere, shore it up in material investigations. I want my work to *appear*, I want to *show you it!* I don't want it to be washed away in the hours of administrative maintenance that suck on my energy. I don't want it to be pushed under the surface through the appropriation or out-sourcing of labour.



I've done it I've made it it works it fails it succeeds.

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(1). Giles Deleuze, The Exhausted,
http://pages.akbild.ac.at/kdm/_media/_pdf/Gilles%20Deleuze%20-%20The%20Exhausted.pdf

(2). William Morris, Useful Work Versus Useless Toil,
<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/u/ulsmanuscripts/pdf/31735061544049.pdf>

(3). Anni Albers, Work With Material,
<http://albersfoundation.org/artists/selected-writings/anni-albers/>

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