AR 'scapes

Voices from the Concrete Barges

Dr Rosa Ainley, Dr Kate McLean, Dr Rich Perks. February – September 2022

Share local (estuary) heritage with new audiences

concrete barges

project goals (1)

- Contextualise heritage space through the lens of interdisciplinary arts

- Reflect, reimagine and augment physical spaces through creative media

- Engage with contemporary technologies to develop innovative solutions to the problem

project goals (2)

- Consider space/s from multiple perspectives (e.g. human and non-human inhabitants, visitors, intruders)

- Elicit opinions and input/s from local communities, promoting wider and more diverse heritage engagement

- Present outcomes/findings and disseminate through academic forums

...backgrounds

Where

Concrete Barges

River Thames

Rich – music performance

Google

Why

- No heritage narrative is uniformly shared, instead we lay equal weight on input from marginal sections of the population, described as competing narratives or 'dissonance' by Laurajane Smith in *Uses of Heritage* (2006)

- Doreen Massey – stress on the importance of refusing essentialist characterisations in relation to place (1994)
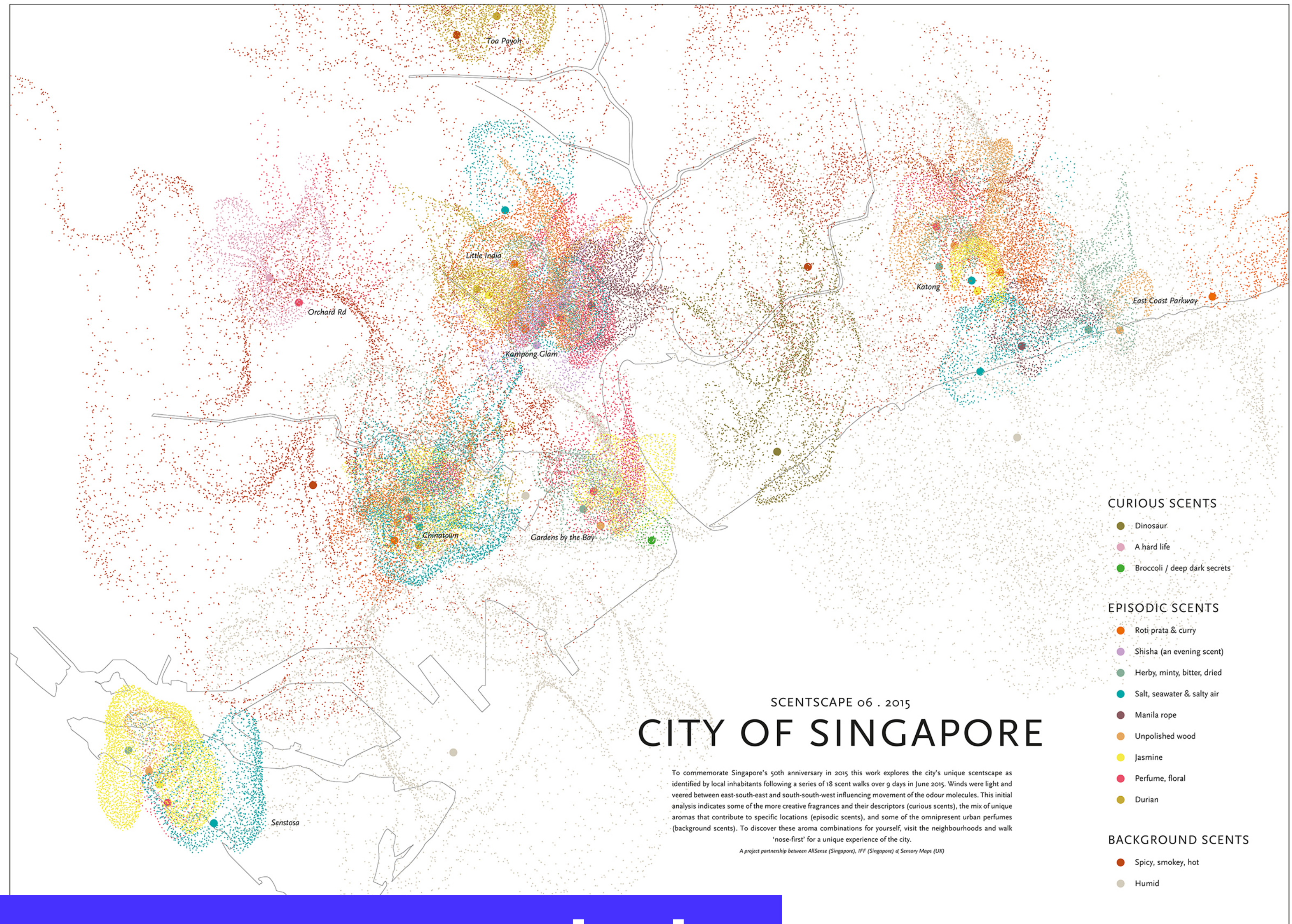
Rosa – writing architectural spaces

How

Kate – sensory comm design

SCENTSCAPE 06 . 2015

CITY OF SINGAPORE

To commemorate Singapore's 50th anniversary in 2015 this work explores the city's unique scentscape as identified by local inhabitants following a series of 18 scent walks over 9 days in June 2015. Winds were light and veered between east-south-east and south-south-west influencing movement of the odour molecules. This initial analysis indicates some of the more creative fragrances and their descriptors (curious scents), the mix of unique aromas that contribute to specific locations (episodic scents), and some of the omnipresent urban perfumes (background scents). To discover these aroma combinations for yourself, visit the neighbourhoods and walk 'nose-first' for a unique experience of the city.

A project partnership between AllSense (Singapore), IFF (Singapore) & Sensory Maps (UK)

CURIOUS SCENTS

- Dinosaur
- A hard life
- Broccoli / deep dark secrets

EPISODIC SCENTS

- Roti prata & curry
- Shisha (an evening scent)
- Herby, minty, bitter, dried
- Salt, seawater & salty air
- Manila rope
- Unpolished wood
- Jasmine
- Perfume, floral
- Durian

BACKGROUND SCENTS

- Spicy, smokey, hot
- Humid

Augmented reality (AR) is an enhanced version of the real physical world…achieved through…digital visual elements, sound, or other sensory stimuli and delivered via technology…a growing trend…in mobile computing and business applications in particular. (Hayes, A. 2020)

...methodology

Ethnography

"…gathering information and inspiration from site visits, observation and interviews."
(Ainley. R. 2016)

Site visit: tide out

Concrete barges February 2022 – © Rosa Ainley

Site visit: tide in

Concrete barges April 2022 – © Kate McLean

Signs and interventions

Hazard sign (modified)

Warning

Wayfinding (RSPB)

Grafitti

Art Project

Plurivocity

"…designed to respond to…unique significance, to capture and represent different opinions and experiences, whether of the past or present, marginal or official. It is an imaginative method based on the factual that disrupts the categories of creative and critical writing so that each contributes to the other and then creates something different." (Ainley, R. 2016)

content creation: Havering College sixth form students

Barges Writing Task

Choose one of these viewpoints and write in their voice.
Creatures: **Water pipits, Water voles, Water rats**
Objects: **Barges, flags, memorial signs**
Visitors/residents: **Sailors, dog walkers, workers, pilgrims**

Write what they see, write their story,
their conversation, their ideas,
their complaints .... could be a
'flash fiction' (100 words), a series of
thoughts and ideas, a song, a poem.

Think about:
**– how you'd see the barges, the land-
scape and the industrial development
if you were a bird looking from above,
a pilgrim crossing the water, or a
half-submerged barge itself.**

– the era you're inhabiting:
today? post Second World War?
how the area might be in
the future?

**– how your chosen character would
sound, what are they interested in?**

Whatever your viewpoint,
consider these questions:
**In your dreams, what does
Rainham marshes look like
and what does it sound like?
What's going to put the marshes
on the map?
What does listening to and
watching the landscape tell you
from your perspective?**

**Write yourself into the story –
where are you on the Marshes,
what would you like to do there?**

What happens here? What else do you want to see? Write it!
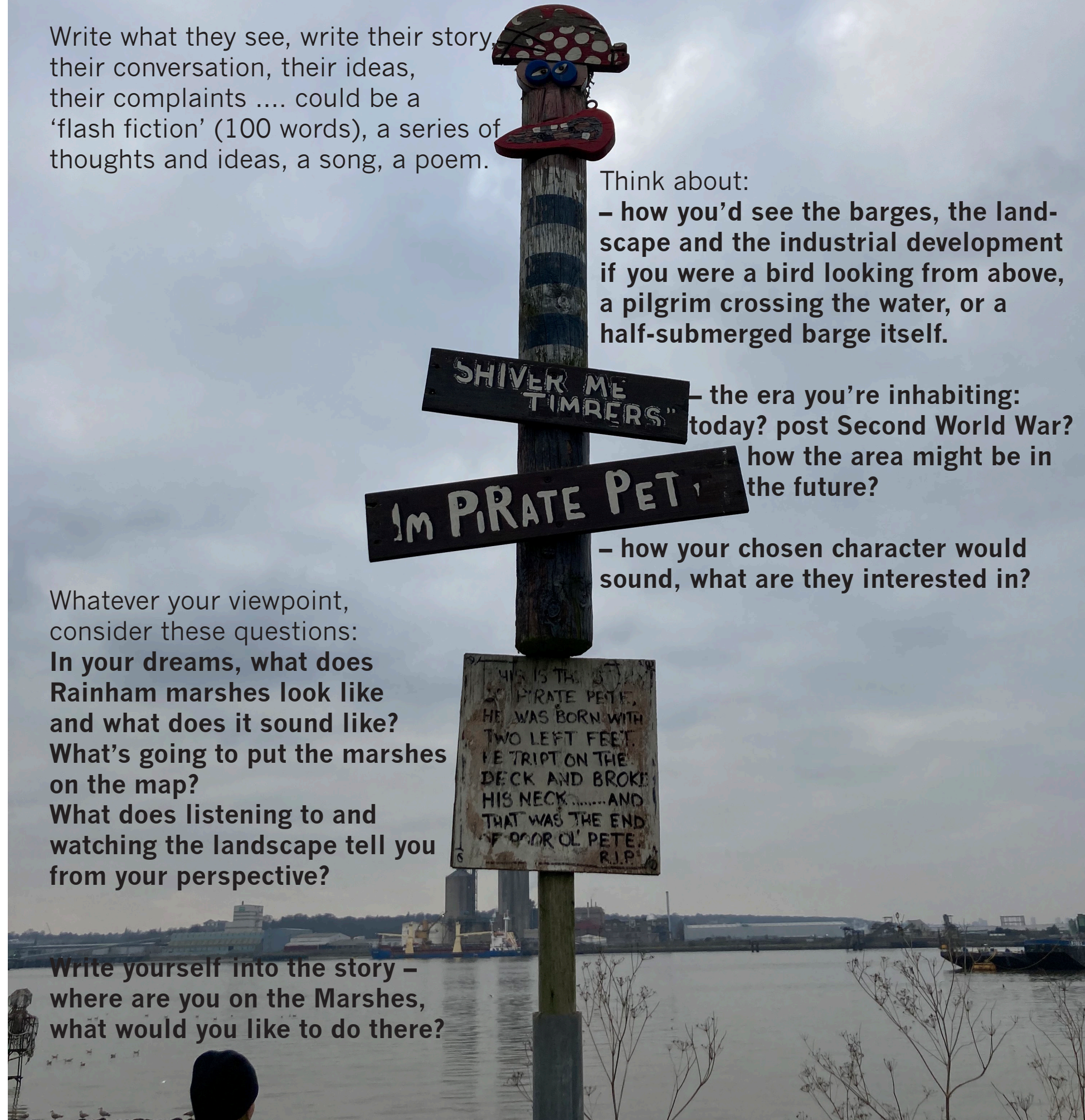
A creature speaks

'No one saw us volesters as anything much. Small furry creatures, taste for the water, more of the same – rats or mice or hamsters. For the longest time, no one cared, no one thought we were special. But now they know. And that's all changed. Do not say the word mink! We're not like any others and now we've got our own safe places just for us, as last. Sheppey up the estuary (or is it down?), that's one of them. Who knows, who cares, a shelter for water voles, power to the creature! Only yesterday [well, nearly] we were headline news: 'Water vole rescued from Marine Parade, Sheerness' 2020.
What do we do all day? Depends who's asking. Sit on my feet and eat the grass, that's a good day. A swift dive into the water if – no, when – I get disturbed. You'll hear it, vole dive splashy sound, and then you'll see it, see me, head and back, swimming for my life.'

Voice of an object

'In our prime, we were groundbreaking, in more ways than one. Made of concrete and afloat, who'd a thunk it. Concrete in steel even. Beat that. Can put a bit of a spin on it now: once sleek surfaces have weathered into more rugged terrains. Beached, landed. Gulls aswarm, concrete no problem, part of their manor. That's who lives here now. With us, on us, in us. Never mind that silver fox nonsense. Our greys and greens are melding with the circs, this is our habitat too, y'know. Don't leave it all to the birds! More embedded in the landscape that we are just isn't possible – we are the landscape, we were beached here and soon we'll be part of the land. Not fading, coming more into view, we reckon. Now is our time. Not drowning, waving at our future.'

Barges Visuals Task

Take on the form, size, eye sight and personality of an 'inhabitant' of the barges and draw something you see the world around you.

To consider:

- What are you? (Water pipet, water vole, earthworm, pirate, barge crew, concrete slab, ghost)
- Where are you? (Inside the barge, on the deck, on the water, sea level, mud level, in the sky, in the reeds, on the river bank)
- What do you see/notice first? (animals, predators, food…)
- What is of interest to you in the surrounding area?
- Indicate on the photos where you are, and the direction you are looking in (use arrows)

Visual Inspiration

Draw as best you can based on the line-drawing style of Sasha Ansimova. Use black fibre tip pens and draw only the edges of the item you are focussed on. Your work will be digitised to produce assets for an AR experience.

Source: Sasha Ansimova https://www.instagram.com/sasanisimova/

Barges Audio Task

Imagine you are situated somewhere in the landscape/s shown.

Close your eyes: What can you hear?
  Sound Source: e.g. nature/industry sounds?
  Sound Location: e.g. above or below you?
  Sound Type: e.g. low/high pitch sounds?
  Sound Length: e.g. long/short sounds?

Write down a list of sounds you can hear; describe them as clearly as possible.

You can either submit the written description, or alternatively read them out aloud (we will record them). You may draw inspiration from the visual stimuli as well as the audio tracks you have been played.

Your work will be digitised to produce assets for an **AR** experience.
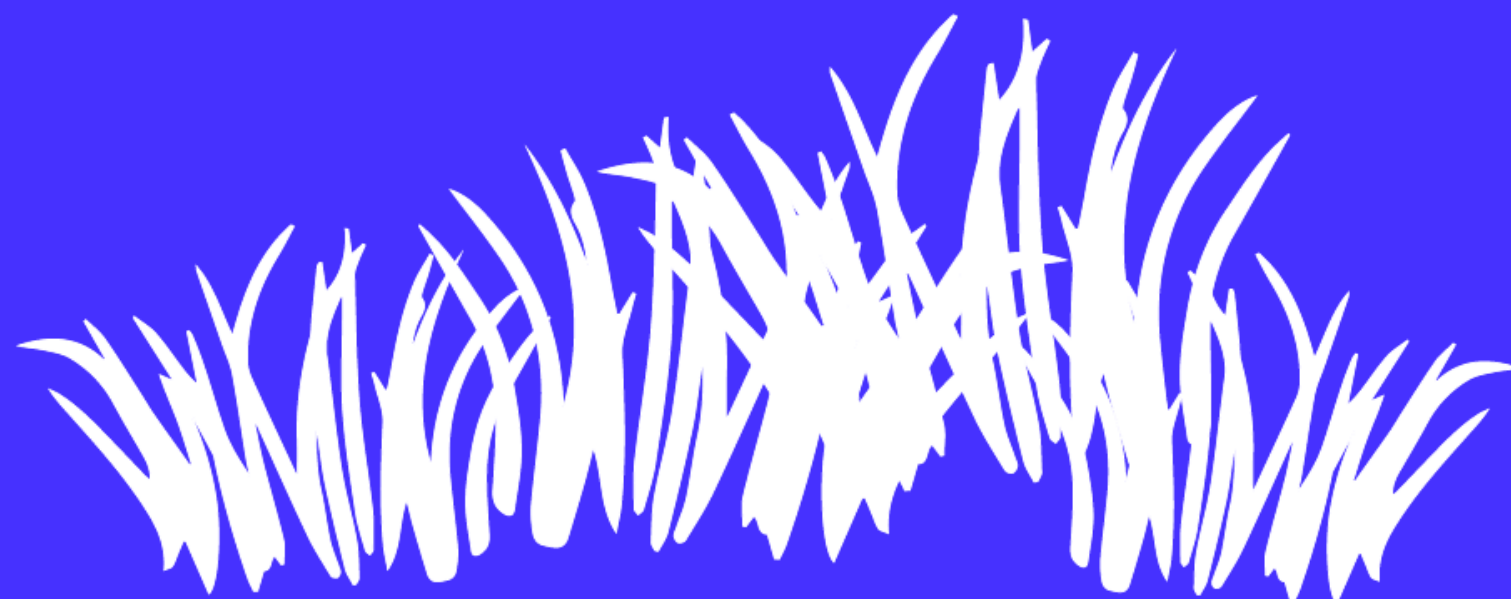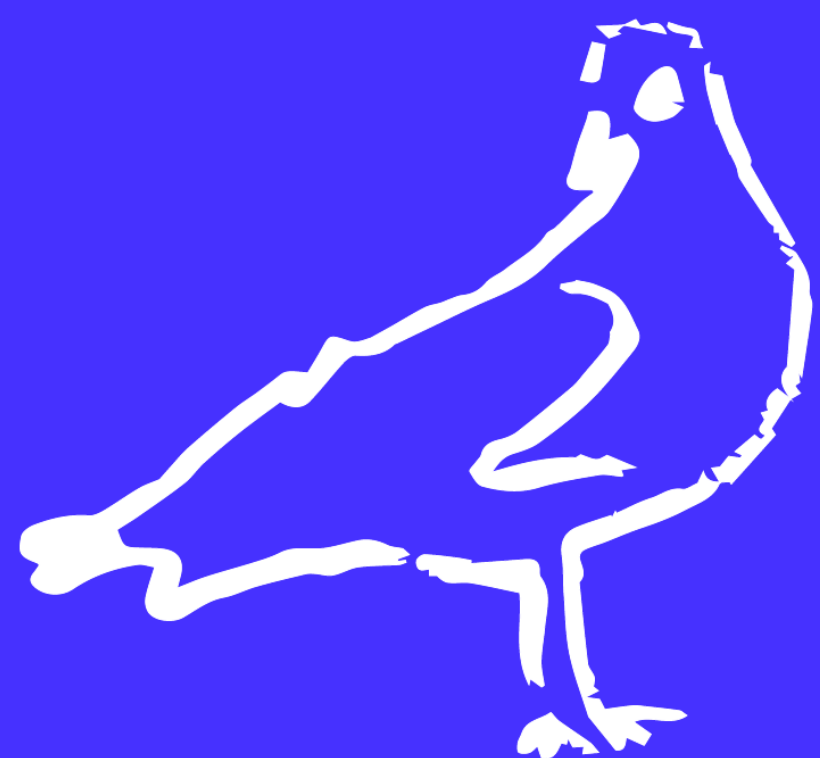
...asset development

illustrations

Robbie Trotter

Tommy Irish-Jones :)

Anika

texts

Creature: vole

The rusted, brittle barges … rats scurrying around their forgotten homes … pipits fly high watching us voles hide.

The water rats are but small moving dots in my eyes.

Object: barge

I'm no longer afloat but I remember when I was free to move, gliding, transporting, fulfilling my purpose.

Revolutionary we were. Rows upon rows of soldiers with bags upon bags of goods. From rice to men, we moved them all.

Seemingly futile, we may appear, yet an abundance of life has made home here. Away from the chaotic rush of the past, peace at last.

Visitor/resident: human

Sink my feet into the mush of sand and mud surrounding the barges, making sure to fill my lungs with the cool, pollutant-filled estuary air.

I watch as the man struggles, paddling against the force of the river.

Object: signs

Watches the tide every morning and every evening.

Hears the machinery start up every morning and power down in the quiet evening.

Gets written on by visitors. Gets pooped on by birds.

Creature: bird of some description!

Crashing waves and calls from fellow birds and rodents.

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The rusted, brittle barges ... rats scurrying around their forgotten homes ... pipits fly high watching us voles hide.

Us water pipits eat, see barges, industry and the water. And then we see the water voles and rats.

sounds

Holly Hooper

viewpoint of a dog walker

- high pitched chirping
- water voles conversation over the ponds
- movement of the waves on the barges
- dogs chasing birds in the bushes (rustling)
- humming of the factories over the river.

Melodic chirping of water pippets and the conversational squeaks of the water vole, overshadow the industrial humming across the estuary, bringing a peculiar sense of tranquility an otherwise ~~unruly~~ modern environment.

Jenny Ruth Jones

Dogs chasing birds in the bushes (Holly)

Melodic chirping of water pipits. (Tommy)

Vole

AR mock-ups

The rusted, brittle barges ... rats scurrying around their forgotten homes ... pipits fly high watching us voles hide.

...next steps

local feedback (college/community/tourist office)

visitor attraction (?)

interaction design

AR development (geo-activated/offsite for home viewing

References and Partners

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CREATIVE ESTUARY