

University of Greenwich, BA Unit 2 –

The People's Republic of Elephant & Castle: (Nationhood as a Design Project)

Pedro Gil + Christo Meyer



Image: Matthias Jung, Abendland, Surreal Homes, 2015

Unit 2 explores a design development primarily through the making / crafting of physical models that lead into the crafting of drawings and spaces. In this Unit, the act of making sophisticated models and drawings is the premise and method that we use to test ideas, explore solutions, and communicate our designs. We are interested in the tactilities of architecture, tectonics, and physicalities of buildings and space. Students in Unit 2 are encouraged to engage in the physical act of model-making as a primary design tool. We see the model as not just a 'final presentation' device, but rather as a highly coveted way of working and thinking that can lead to complex propositions and architectures. Models are the departure point for Unit 2.

"Given the fundamental questions of organisation, function, threshold and spatial organisation, we could imagine nationhood as a design project or as architecture at its fullest expression – where the usual relationship of architecture serving society is reversed, and we use the tools of design to construct possibilities of society.

Indeed the very word statecraft – the thing that Britain's going to need heaped spoons of in the near future – suggests that "state" is a thing that is fabricated rather than an inert inevitability, a thing that needs to be made and a thing that has to be designed."

Sam Jacob, Dezeen, online article, 12th August 2016

Imagine that the people of Britain have voted to leave the European Union.
Imagine that the people of London have voted to leave Britain.

Your task is to take a position within this current political context (Leave, Remain, London Independence) and use this as the backdrop and departure point for your design project.

We will be taking the area of Elephant and Castle, London SE17, as the site to base Unit 2 projects and to explore your position of the current social and political context that Britain finds itself in.

London is a particularly rich environment with a plethora of communities. The vibrant cosmopolitan nature of the place is conducive to harvesting cross-pollination, an unquantifiable exchange of ideas, thoughts, customs, and habits. London serves as a wonderful hotbed that actively encourages cultural cross-pollination. These conditions are clearly highlighted and demonstrated in Elephant & Castle.

As a group, Unit 2 will be researching the Elephant and Castle and will be devising their visions for 'nationhood'.

Y2 students will develop an [embassy] facility for their notion of 'nationhood', and Y3 students will be asked to take a position in order to define a programme for their vision of 'nation'.

An emphasis will be placed on internal architectures, external architectures, and their respective interfaces + thresholds.

Unit 2 will be taking inspiration from machines, experimental buildings, crafting techniques, film, literature, exhibitions, drawings, models, and beyond.

References:

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