



Creative
Lancashire

Conversations in Creativity
Explorations in inspiration

John Puttick • November 2016



John Puttick

“Two brothers, Franz and Jorg, have lived on Sackstrasse at the foot of the Schlossberg all their lives. Depressed by the emptiness of their working routine and desperate to add to their income, the pair dream of becoming farmers. Utilising the only space they have available – the exterior of their apartment buildings, the brothers go into production. Franz establishes a vineyard, while Jorg grows pumpkins to refine into Kurbisol. The two maniacally compete.

Across the street live Olga and Florian, who retired from the civil service five years ago. Horrified by the vegetal chaos erupting in the area, the couple cultivate formal gardens on the façade of their building as an act of floral defence. Lola, owner of the local hairdressing salon, proves more enterprising – taking the petals shed from Franz’ vines to produce an enriching shampoo.

As time passes the area flourishes – the farmers exploit the terrain to provide irrigation, and Franz has to use all his resources to persuade other local characters of the merits of his scheme. All the while wild plants and birds continue to invade and so the struggles of Franz, Jorg, Olga, Florian and Lola continue...”

Extract from ‘Land of Scattered Seeds’ by John Puttick

Originally conceived in 2001 as a diploma project for the city of Graz, in Austria, ‘Land of Scattered Seeds’ was developed in response to a brief that called for the design of an urban microcosm. At the time it was described as one of the most original projects to emerge from The Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL). It has since been published and exhibited internationally and a copy is held in the collection of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York.

Fifteen years later John Puttick is a seminal British architect based in London and New York. His studio, John Puttick Associates has designed a number of residential projects in the United States and their first completed work was the

Surge Gallery for emerging artists in Beijing. In 2015, John Puttick Associates won the prestigious Preston Bus Station competition organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

The work of the studio is gently sculptural. Its logic is based on a desire to express each element and to articulate the interrelationships of spaces. A sense of calmness is brought about by a pared down design aesthetic. Simplicity and clarity is combined with joy and warmth as components in the work; elements that come across in the many hand drawings and physical models that the studio produce as part of the architects’ working process, many of which are presented across the pages of this publication.

johnputtickassociates.com



Architecture is something that all of us experience every day. Far from something remote or abstract it is a part of our lives in a very real way. How the room feels as we get out of bed, how easily we can get to the train, how young people engage with activities in a youth centre and how well art is displayed in a museum are all influenced by buildings.

I established our practice – John Puttick Associates – in 2014 having worked on buildings in the UK, Europe, China and the US. We began with a few small projects and entered a number of design competitions. In 2015 we were privileged to be selected the winners of the Preston Bus Station international competition.

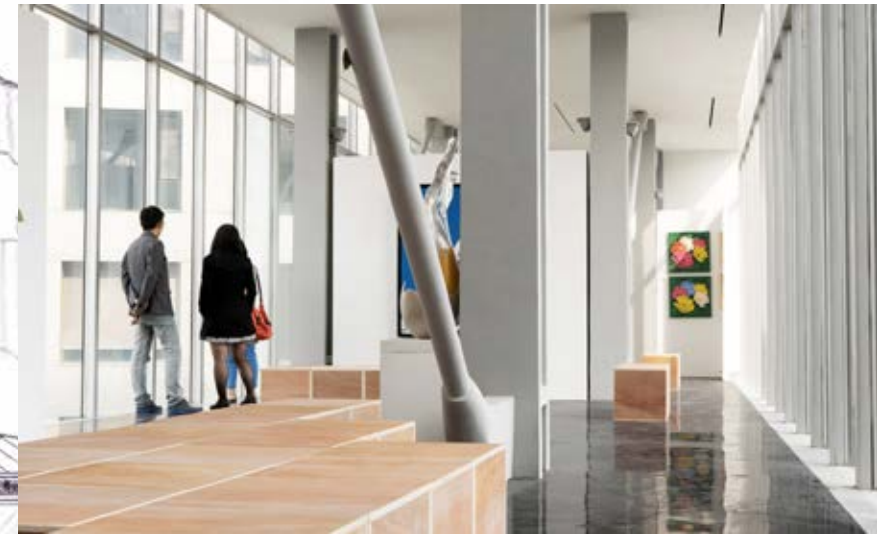
The project involves three components – revitalising the existing bus station to make it work for the future; the construction of a new Youth Zone for the benefit of young people; the creation of a new public space as a place to gather and to connect those buildings to the city. As such it is a generous, public-spirited project with the potential to make an important contribution to Preston city centre. I have – together with my team – greatly enjoyed developing the designs over the past year to the point where we are beginning construction.

We are now working on a number of new projects, both in the UK and US. Throughout our work, we aim for simplicity and clarity in our buildings - combined with a gently sculptural nature enlivened through warmth in materials. In developing the projects we study the designs through many hand drawings and physical models. We also have a strong interest in the potential offered by engineering to improve the built environment, seeing architecture as an 'art of construction'.

For any architect public works offer the greatest opportunity to improve the wider city. In this respect the project at Preston Bus Station has been of great importance to our practice and has a special place in the development of our work. I very much look forward to seeing the designs becoming reality over the months ahead.

John Puttick, October 2016

Images from top-bottom:
North Street House (Model). Jersey City NJ (2015), SURGE Gallery.
Beijing (2014), Lakefront kiosk, Chicago (2015).



with John Puttick

What was your first memory of creativity?

I've always enjoyed drawing – I can't remember a time when I didn't draw. Lots of my childhood memories are of drawing both from real life and my imagination. Both my parents were teachers and were very encouraging of all kinds of making activities. My father and grandfather both used their garages as workshops – particularly for woodworking – so I have a sense of being surrounded by a lot of inventiveness growing-up.

What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

Becoming an architect is a long process. After school I studied at the University of Nottingham and then the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. I gained most of my professional experience working for two practices – David Chipperfield Architects and Make Architects – working on a wide range of both public and private projects. I've been particularly fortunate to travel a great deal for work – I was based in Beijing for more than five years during a time of frantic construction which was an extraordinary experience. In 2014 I felt it was time to pursue my own work and opened our practice.



How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

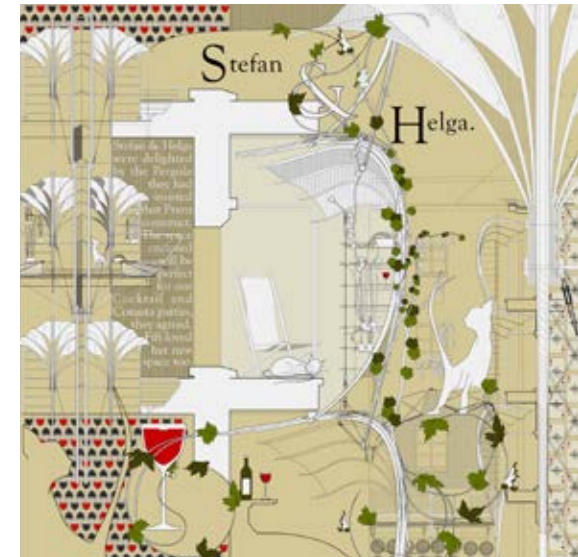
For the architects I most admire, 'style' is something that grows out of the way they approach certain issues – perhaps responses to the site, their interest in materials, resolving conflicted interests of groups involved and so on – rather than being something imposed. Over time their work becomes recognisable as a result of a considered working method which nonetheless is open to the particularities of each project. In that way they achieve an underlying consistency but continue to be relevant to new situations. I think it is a mistake to view creativity as something purely 'artistic' in a narrow sense – much of the best architecture has developed from very creative engineering.

Does your process develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

Architecture necessarily involves tackling issues that can be complex and have many facets – social, technological, economic, environmental and so on. It requires a certain amount of discipline to consider and resolve these things – there is much more to architecture than image and for people to enjoy a building it has to work well. Having said that, we are always on the lookout for opportunities to bring out a sense of delight in each project and that can often emerge from unexpected sources.

What has been the biggest influence on your work?

The biggest influence has been direct experience of the cities I've lived in, how people enjoy them and how they change over time. Observation is a very important part of creativity and architects have the opportunity to observe buildings and cities every day. The three cities I've lived in for the longest periods – London, Beijing and New York – are all extraordinary, exciting places. There is an enormous amount to learn just walking around, whether it is from 'high architecture' or intimate moments of daily life.



Images clockwise from top left: Hoyt Street House, Brooklyn NYC (2014). Barking & Dagenham Youth Zone, London UK (2016). Land of Scattered Seeds (2001). SURGE Gallery, Beijing (2014).





"One of our key objectives has been to design a building maximizing available public space in and around the Bus Station to create a major new square for Preston. This supports the civic quality of the project. It has also been important to respond to the proudly utilitarian quality of Preston Bus Station by designing a new neighbour that shares and celebrates this robustness just a youth centre used for sport and as a place for creativity should do."

John Puttick

What is it you love most about what you do?

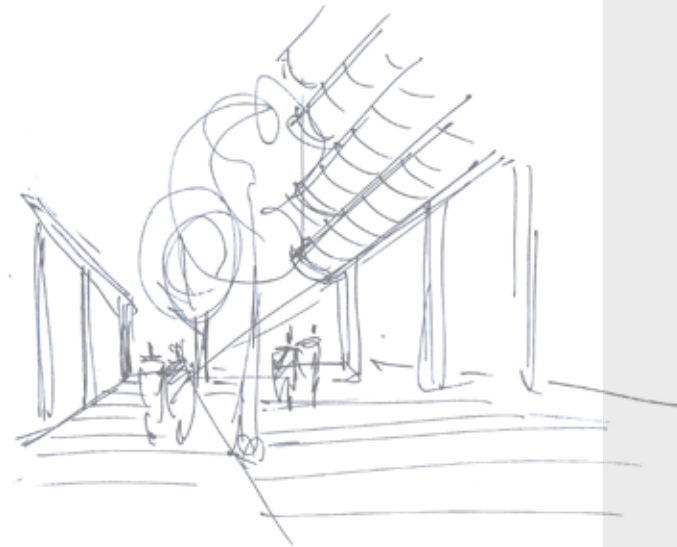
Ultimately there is nothing more satisfying than seeing a building you have designed being taken over and enjoyed by people. To get there takes a long process – understanding all the parameters, thinking through initial ideas, developing models and detailed drawings, finally the construction itself. That whole journey – moving from the most intangible ideas to the most concrete reality – is something I absolutely love.

What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

Motivation often comes from day-to-day things. Buildings are used by people every day and have an important effect on them. How can we bring light into an existing house so it opens up to the outside? How can we arrange a school to encourage young people to become interested in the lessons taking place? How can we keep the trees on a particular site and make our building sit comfortably with them? These are small things but if developed they can have a real impact on how people live.

Which designers inspire you the most?

For architects, there are really too many to list – there are many that I admire and their work is often very different from one another. Perhaps most frequently I find myself coming back to Alvar Aalto when looking for inspiration. For artists, since living in New York I've become very interested in the painter Ellsworth Kelly. In fact there is something that I find compelling in the work of both – while their work is uncompromising in its modernism, each was able to bring something lyrical and human that can be quite moving.



Image/Model: Preston Bus Station & Youth Zone, Preston UK (2015).





An Iconic 20th Century Building

Working with engineers Ove Arup, BDP created an iconic modernist structure that was hailed as an architectural triumph when it was built in 1969.



Original Preston Bus Station images courtesy of BDP.

Preston Bus Station

Preston's visionary Brutalist bus station was nearly bulldozed but will now be restored by John Puttick Associates, part of a wider scheme that includes a new youth centre and civic space. The imminent start of refurbishment works provided a final opportunity to record the building in its unaltered state. **Words and photographs by Gareth Gardner.**

To paraphrase *A Tale of Two Cities*, British aficionados of Brutalist architecture are finding 2016 to be the best of times and the worst of times. Birmingham's inverted ziggurat Central Library succumbed to the wrecking ball, while Robin Hood Gardens continued to stare death ever more closely in the face. However, the ruins of St Peter's Seminary were finally reopened to great acclaim, and work is about to begin on restoring the country's biggest bus station to its former glory, while adding a youth centre and creating a new public space, designed by John Puttick Associates.

Preston's Brobdingnagian bus station is the largest in the UK by some stretch. It was completed in 1969 to designs by Keith Ingham and Charles Wilson of Building Design Partnership (BDP) working with consulting engineer Ove Arup and Borough Engineer and Surveyor E H Staziker. The glass-clad double-height waiting concourse – think more airport terminal than municipal bus station – is topped by five levels of car parking, expressed externally by their distinctive curved precast concrete parapets and accessed via dramatic curved ramps. At one end is a connected taxi rank, in recent years the haunt of street drinkers.



When first visiting Preston Central Bus Station and Car Park (as it is officially known), its sheer scale comes as a great surprise. "The first thing I thought when I first visited the building is that it's very big," recalls Puttick. "It is like a spaceship that has landed in this northern city." Despite its monumental extent - there are 40 bays along both sides of the building, each capable of accommodating a double-decker bus – the megastructure remains concealed within the city fabric, its distinctive elevations only visible as you round a final street corner or emerge through the shopping arcade that faces-off against it. "You can definitely visit Preston and not run into the bus station," Catherine Croft, director of the Twentieth Century Society comments. For John Puttick, there is excitement in the big reveal: "The view breaks open and you suddenly see the full length of the building. It's very impressive."

This extract is the opening to a lavishly illustrated 19-page feature by photographer and journalist Gareth Gardner in the November/December 2016 issue of Blueprint Magazine.

store.blueprintmagazine.co.uk



Gareth Gardner

Architectural photojournalist

Gareth is a photographer and writer specialising in architecture and design. He works with many leading architecture and design consultancies, photographing their completed projects in the UK and overseas.

He is former editor of interiors magazine FX and features editor of architectural weekly, Building Design. Gareth contributes to many different publications including a regular photography slot in FX and a series of major photojournalism features for Blueprint. Gareth's work has been widely published in books, magazines and newspapers around the world.

In 2016 his project Middle England was featured by BBC Radio 4 in the Archive on 4 documentary Return to Subtopia. This year also saw publication of 50 Architects 50 Buildings, a book based on the landmark Inspiration series in Building Design magazine, which features many of Gareth's specially-commissioned photographs.

Gareth recently visited Preston to shoot a feature for Blueprint about John Puttick and the refurbishment of the iconic bus station. This will also be the subject of a forthcoming exhibition in collaboration with the publication and the Twentieth Century Society.

We were naturally delighted when Gareth agreed to host the Conversations in Creativity event at the Harris Museum and the opportunity to gain an insight into both his and John's respective careers design inspirations and creative process.

Gareth is a fellow of the RSA and a member of the Association of Photographers.

www.garethgardner.com

with Gareth Gardner



What was your first memory of creativity?

My main early memories of education are all about being creative. I remember fighting other kids to get to use the black wax crayons at play school. The teachers must have thought I was a bit weird.

In terms of architecture - my main subject matter - I have memories of my gran taking me shopping to Coventry and being overawed by all the modern buildings.

What impact have big name clients had on your career?

I don't really have clients who you would call big name, my parents have never heard of any of them! But in my world of architecture and design, I have been really lucky to work with some of the leading practitioners, forming strong working relationships and being supported throughout my photographic career. It's very satisfying working in close collaboration with clients, learning to understand their creative aspirations and helping to deliver that through photography.

What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

My creative journey has been long and tortuous. I studied art at GCSE back at the dawn of time, but subsequently went to university to study civil and structural engineering. While there, I found greater enjoyment in the creative aspects of the subject rather than all the maths - I particularly loved architecture, design, history, writing - and realised that my future career was not as an engineer but as a journalist.

With persistence, I was lucky to land a job on an engineering magazine, where I received excellent journalism training and was also encouraged to take my own photographs (they even bought me my first SLR camera). From there, I moved into architectural and interiors journalism before returning to study photography at London College of Printing.

For the last 13 years I have worked freelance, working with a pool of loyal clients while also developing my own personal projects. I also work closely with several magazines, both on photography and photojournalism projects. Most notable is my relationship with the architecture and design magazine Blueprint and my photography for Building Design magazine for its Inspirations series, which has been published in a book this year, published in collaboration with the Twentieth Century Society.

CIC 007

How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

Unlike fashion photography, style in architecture and interiors doesn't change too rapidly. Mine is very much derived from my own background in engineering as well as journalism, and my training using large format film cameras. I love precision, grids, single-point perspectives and also creating images that tell a story. I'm also fortunate that my photographic career has coincided with a resurgence of interest in modernist and brutalist architecture.

Glasgow School of Art



Below: Maison Louis Carré, near Paris





St Peter's Seminary, Cardross, Scotland (2016)

Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

I think my work is much more thematic than random. In my personal work, I'm very interested in the impact of changing social and economic conditions on our landscape and built environment. I'm keen to produce series of images that tell a story rather than one-offs.

Who has been the biggest influence on your work?

The post-war architectural journalist Ian Nairn has been a huge influence on my work. He famously coined the term 'Subtopia' to describe the dreary suburbanisation of our landscape. He also claimed that in the future the end of Southampton would look like the beginning of Carlisle. His epic journey from Southampton to Gretna Green inspired my Middle England project, and his writing, particularly his guide to London, reminds me that it's cathartic to be angry but also tremendously heartening to stumble upon a piece of good design, whether is a beautiful old industrial structure or sparkling bit of modern architecture.

What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

Most frequently, it's anger. The anger at seeing how our urban and rural landscapes have been trashed by developers looking to make a quick buck. Anger at the social and political landscapes that underpin these changes. Anger every time I look out of a train or car window and see endless retail parks and bland housing estates.

Which photographers do you admire or inspire you the most?

I particularly admire the work of celebrated German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher. They were extremely rigorous and methodical in their exhaustive journeys to photograph different types of industrial structure around the world, such as coal mines and gasometers. The resulting images were laid out in strict grids, encouraging viewers to explore the variations and differences in design of the structures. The pair, who taught at the Dusseldorf School of Photography, were hugely influential on an entire generation of inspirational photographers including Andreas Gursky and Edward Burntynsky. Their work encourages a rigorous analytical approach while also documenting the world around us, exploring the tiniest details. I think that resonates with my technical background in engineering.

In the US, the New Topographics movement is a term that encompasses a number of photographers who recorded the built environment in the 1960s and 1970s. I love the colour photography of Stephen Shore - incidentally a close friend of the Bechers - and the monochrome images of Lewis Baltz and Robert Adams.

What unites all of these is their chosen medium - large format film photography. They worked with huge cameras and large sheets of film to maximise the amount of detail recorded in their images and photographed with absolute precision.

What is it you love most about what you do?

I am extremely fortunate to get the opportunity to visit buildings that are full of inspiration for me. Preston Bus Station is just one example! I also love working closely with a designer or architect, taking time to really fine-tune an image. And even now, seeing the end results printed in a magazine is really exciting.



Nicholas Rena - Artist (2015)

Cassidy + Ashton

Cassidy + Ashton (est. 1960), is one of the largest multi-disciplinary practices in the North West of England with offices in Preston and in Chester. The architectural, building surveying and town planning consultancy is experienced in a wide range of sectors including education, residential, defence, retail and historical buildings.

Riley Sixth Form Centre,
Bolton School (2013)



“As a multi-disciplinary practice, there is scope to get involved in a wide range of projects via our planning, surveying or architectural offering. We’re always proud to work on schemes close to home and being involved in the Preston Bus Station project, which has attracted national and international interest because of its architectural significance, is definitely a great one for the practice’s CV.”

Lawrence McBurney,
director and architect at Cassidy + Ashton,

With Lancashire at the heartland of its project portfolio, the firm has worked on a range of well-known buildings. These include the Lancashire Evening Post head offices, UCLan’s Faculty of Dentistry, Bolton School and the £43m Spar distribution centre at Preston East, as well as a number of schemes in Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and the South East of England.

Built and grown by reputation, the company, which employs more than 50 staff, has a number of long-standing customers, most notably with Stonyhurst College. Spanning 18 years, the relationship has seen the delivery of many projects, including the

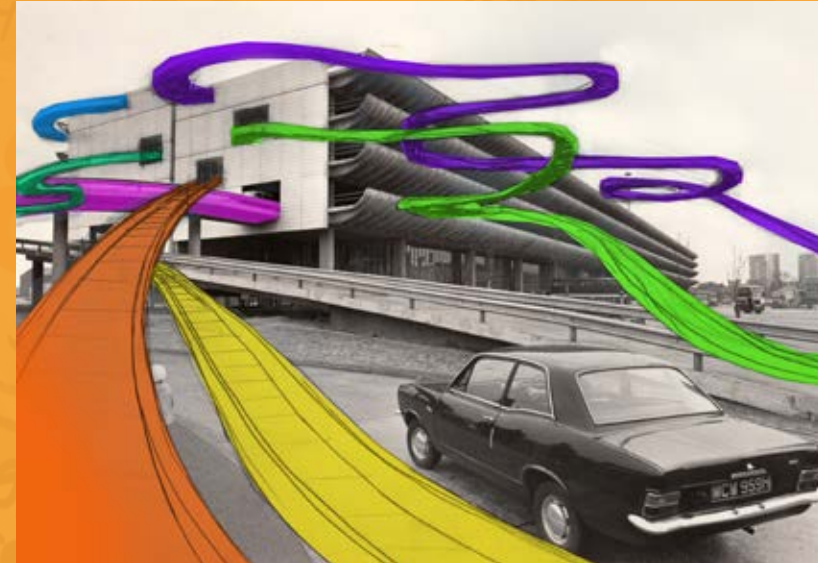
latest £5m scheme to convert a Grade II-listed former corn mill into a new Christian Heritage Retreat Centre, part of a wider plan by the Trustees of Stonyhurst Christian Heritage Trust to create a purpose-built facility at the school - work commences April 2017.

Looking ahead, Cassidy + Ashton’s attention will be focussed on three large-scale developments: Whyndyke Farm, a 225-acre mixed-use scheme straddling both Fylde and Blackpool Council boundaries, Park Hotel and Preston Bus Station working together with John Puttick Associates to provide planning and architectural service to the project.



Images clockwise from top left: Christian Heritage Retreat Centre internal 3D image. The altar at St Peter’s Church, Stonyhurst. School of Dentistry. James Hall, Preston East.

They Eat Culture



Gate 81 is a collaborative and creative project centred on exploring preservation and ideas of creatively adapting Preston Bus Station to serve the City. The project started in response to the proposed demolition plans and worked hard with other organisations to help shine a light on this landmark building which after two unsuccessful attempts it was granted Grade II listed building status.

The project was initiated by They Eat Culture (September 2013), as a direct creative intervention into the cultural life of Preston and Lancashire.



See our work at www.theyeatculture.org



Creating A Space To Exemplify
The Very Fabric Of A Northern Town

Community Clothing

We spoke to Philip Gannon & Joe Dempsey at DAG Architectural about the collaboration with Community Clothing on the design of the new store in Blackburn.

To establish a brief it was crucial to develop an understanding of the Community Clothing brand. It became clear very quickly that what Iain Trickett and Patrick Grant (clients & co directors of Community Clothing), were proposing was a lot more than creating a retail space for quality manufactured garments. Rather they were establishing a co-operative that sought to champion the textile industry that is inherent within northern town.

The unit is housed within a Victorian storage facility, which stands as a reminder of Blackburn's industrial heritage. The materiality applied within the scheme was used to affect a reminiscent reference to the buildings heritage as well being responsive to Community Clothing brand; this achieved through the use of bare OSB (chipboard), and exposed copper piping as hanging rails.

One of the main stipulations of the brief was to orchestrate a response to the buildings lack of storage. By installing partitions with an angled

abutment to the wall there would be the provision of storage between the studs whilst creating space for display on the OSB faces of the partitions each one being longer than the next.

The partitions are angled towards the door to catch the eye of passing trade. In addition to the built storage units, display modules on casters, promote flexibility and are finished with the same OSB Board. The changing room was incorporated into the storage units in order to make it easier for staff members to monitor its use.

All of these elements come together to provide a solution that is elevated from being a standard retail space to something that is more architectural that in turn leaves a lasting impression.

communityclothing.co.uk



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Conversations
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In 2011, Creative Lancashire with local design agencies Wash and JP74 launched 'Conversations in Creativity' - a network and series of events where creatives from across the crafts, trades and creative disciplines explore how inspiration from around the world informs process. Previous events have featured Hemingway Design, Gary Aspden (Adidas), Pete Fowler (Animator & Artist), Donna Wilson (Designer), Cherry Ghost, I am Kloot, Nick Park (Aardman), Lemn Sissay (Poet) and Jeanette Winterson (Author) - hosted by Dave Haslam & John Robb.



Who's Involved

Wash
EST 2003
www.wash-design.co.uk


www.jp74.co.uk

Upcoming Events

A selection of creative outings on the horizon from around the North West

Make:Shift
10-11 November 2016
Museum of Science & Industry,
Manchester

A two day conference exploring the importance of craft and innovation to the future of making.

craftscouncil.org.uk

NEON: The Charged Line
Until 7 Jan 2017
Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool

A major new exhibition exploring how artists have worked with neon, from the 1960s to the present day.

grundyartgallery.com

Thanks to: Johnny Tucker (Blueprint Magazine), Laura Iloniemi (Architectural Press & PR), Joanne Wallis (RIBA), Martin Davies (BDP), Matthew Hill (NLSA), John Bridge (FWP), Danielle Woodhouse (Croft Goode), James Cook (The Odd Chair Company), Stephen Axon (LCC), Stephen Walker & Jon Finch (Harris Museum), Emma Smart & Gabriela Jardim (Wash)

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