

I've been thinking about how *SOUND* travels in our house, in the flat. How we can hear our neighbours, and I'm sure they can hear us. But when? And where? The other day I was doing some work in the spare room, and I could hear two different downstairs neighbours both on the phone. Then I could also hear you in the shower in our bathroom (where I'm always having a chat with myself or singing away on the toilet). It made me think about how we always ask people that stay with us if they can hear us in this room. They've always said no, but surely they must hear something? I hate to think. Haha. Do you feel like you act differently in the flat when there are people staying with us? Do you use your voice/make *SOUNDS*/are aware of volume differently in this scenario?

We were chatting about this the other day; how people are meant to behave in their homes. Don't make too much 'noise'! Be careful not to upset anyone with the *SOUND* of your voice, body, footsteps, singing, chatting, chanting... I was telling you about a previous neighbour and his problem with the squeaking *SOUND* on the stairs, my footsteps, my voice, heck!.. even my *breathing* seemed to bother him. Homes seem to act as bubbles, cocoons to protect you from all the bodies and "noise" surrounding you. Making you believe you're the only one in the world. You don't want to be awoken from this little utopian bubble by a a ah ah... neighbours sneeze.

I do behave differently with guests around. I try to be calmer, quieter, yell at you less... Haha. I might play different music when people are around. Or no music at all. We try to *whisper* to each other quietly at night. But how do you laugh *whisperingly*?

I guess it's a type of hissing. Hysterical hissing. *Breathing* loudly between your teeth. Muffled. We laugh into things; pillows, the duvet, various clothes from the pile that seems to move from the bed in the day to the floor at night and then back again to the bed in the day. I think of making piles as being tidy!

When we have guests I feel like I need to keep my stuff in these piles. Be neat and tidy. Try to keep my stuff out of their way. But most of the time I think people actually like it, it makes them feel at home, they ask questions about it or they don't actually mind this way or that. Would you call it 'clutter'? I say the tidying is for them but it's actually for me, to feel like I'm hosting or something, but that's not what sharing your home is about.

Housemates, family members, close friends, friends, acquaintances, residency guests, I think our behaviour, well at least mine, differs. Like 7 days of hysteric cleaning before my Mum arrives. Friends require less physical prep but I've gotta make sure I'll be in tip-top form so I'm fun to be around. Residency folk is different - it feels like there needs to be an element of care that is 'honest' no strings attached. Create an environment for someone to feel comfortable in but also feel comfortable ourselves.

The other day I was cooking and thinking about how ideas are shaped, how little of them are actualised... and what happens in your mind set when you do actually make something happen. It's like some ideas stay in your head and it becomes frustrating because you have these ideas but don't know if and how to realise them but then suddenly they just start to realise themselves. I was wondering what change you need to make for these things to actualise...

The residency has been one of those ideas. Having this in my head for years and then suddenly it just developed. The home, our domestic *s p a c e*, is such an important part

of this, I find there is some sort of lack or lessening of hierarchy. There is an element of playing things by ear.. Chance and error.. *S p a c e* to have conversations, lots of conversations, also outside of the 'practice'... cook together, share skills, tell stories, learn about and from each other. What is your favourite part of sharing a living *s p a c e*?

Sharing a living *s p a c e* with not just you? If that's the question, then it would have to be the intimacy of the conversations. I've had really personal conversations which didn't feel out of place or strange. I think that comes from being in a domestic setting, in the comfort and/or security of being in my own home, compared to maybe a public space with other distractions. Feeling like I can be vulnerable and honest with them because this is my comfortable *s p a c e*.

I am quite shy when it comes to talking to other people I don't know very well - most of the time I let you dominate that side of social interactions. I get quite self-conscious of how I'm acting around people, creating a lot of anxiety. Even with some close friends, I don't think I've had the same level of intimacy I've experienced in conversations with people I've lived with. So it's definitely a unique type of relationship that can grow. I reckon proximity has something to do with this intimacy as well.

That probably highlights my least favourite aspect too. I do like to have my own *s p a c e*. Being an extroverted introvert (i did a quiz), I think my limit is two and a half weeks of constant interaction with people, and then I get grumpy and need to have a couple of days by myself. I'm not very good at vocalising this, which can come across as a bit hot and cold.

I find the fact of how self aware I become when sharing a living environment quite interesting. It's like continuously being confronted with my own presence in a *s p a c e* and taking care of how I move and *SOUND*, not in a way of being controlled, but it's this thing of where you start behaving the way you would like another person to behave. I find that the confrontations or annoyances towards others are often things I also do but never was confronted with... it's like a projection thing. I think being with others in different forms or *s p a c e s* really teaches you all sorts of things about yourself. I find that difficult but also really important and feel privileged to be able to experience these kinds of moments of exchange.

I never really thought about this much, but enjoying being surrounded by others and having people around the house might be something to do with my upbringing socially and culturally... We always had friends around the house, it was never a problem for my Mum to cook an extra plate of pasta. I really enjoy cooking for others which is 100% something that was passed on. Still haven't figured out how much of it is for me and is for others. I think there is always an element of caring for others, nurturing, sharing that feels really fulfilling and you do it for you. However domestic *s p a c e* can also be very problematic environments.

So I think I'm probably more of a nosey neighbour than anyone else around here. I spend most of my time staring at the people in the house opposite. I'm fascinated by their routines, family relationships, *gardening*, meals, pets, ect. I like to know if they're getting on at the moment or not. I think calling yourself an artist means you can get away with doing these things: 'artists are curious', 'it's for research', 'i'm observing the world around me'. But the reality is, I am just a nosy parker and watch them like

television so I don't get bored. The worst part is that I have this fantasy that one day I will be staring at them through the window, and will see someone breaking into their house, and I can scream at them and save the day. I think this fantasy is all about justifying to myself that my over-interest in their lives is more than just me being creepy.

My other favourite place to stare at people is on the tube. You very often hit me or kick me and tell me to stop staring at people. I think I'm being subtle but, apparently, very much not. The exhaustion that comes from travelling in London is something that I always think I'm used to by now and don't get tired from, but it's actually a constant battle to prepare for it. Headphones come into play a lot here. And having a charged phone! I've given up on trying to read a book because it's so awkward. I can't even manage to get it out of my bag, let alone, hold it in some strange unnatural position to actually see the words. Oh and those crap apple headphones are so useless for this battle, the screeching and grinding wheels on the track in between Baker Street and Bond Street are no match for them. Even when I jam them deeper, they don't even work as earplugs! I dream of *silence* through noise-cancelling headphones. I could pretend none of this is actually happening.

It's interesting how something can become much more apparent or amplified in moments of unease. I don't think I told you - I was speaking about it to Felicia the other day - I think I've actually had some sort of panic attack on the tube before. It was like all of a sudden all my senses were magnified, amplified, swollen, turned up... *SOUNDS* becoming louder turning them into noise, bodies slightly touching the side of my arm felt like heavy pushing. I can remember the smell.. perfume, sweat, the can of pop the person next to me was sipping on, crumbs of food. The smells were growing stronger and stronger and stronger. It made me nauseous like being carsick.. I start counting the stops not long to go.. Bank... Moorgate... Old Street... Angel... Kings Cross... Euston... Camden Town... I think I'll get off and walk from here.

That experience reminds me of a news story from a good few years ago, about this man who has lexical-gustatory synesthesia and made an alternative tube map listing all of the tastes and flavours he gets from hearing the names of all the different London tube stations. Some are delicious: Paddington is a pink marshmallow, Oxford Circus is pea and ham soup, Covent Garden is a chocolate digestive, Marylebone is a chicken leg. Some are disgusting: Bond Street is hairspray, Kilburn High Road is putrid meat, Bethnal Green is a very strong taste of boiled cabbage, Cannon Street is 3-in-1 lubricating oil.

So when you think back to your anxiety-inducing sensory-overload panic attack journey you could try thinking about it as a 7-course meal of Minstrels... bacon and semolina... crumbly cheshire cheese... jelly tots... fruit cake and dripping... roast lamb... and dolly mixtures.

I love to cook, learn about food but mostly sharing this with others. Most of my comforting memories that remind me of home, family, nostalgia, relate to cooking. Thinking of this now it might even be more the smell of the cooking than the actual act of cooking or flavours that recall most of my memories. I know my ravioli will never be the same as my Nonna's just by the smell of the flour, of the dough... her dough smelled different to mine. The other week I was frying spices in ghee (something I have little knowledge of; Indian cooking) but this smell awakened something in me and transported me into my great-uncle's home in Mumbai. I remember this home by a

strong scent but only now it hit me... this scent of fried clarified butter. Such a common and particular perfume of south asian cooking, but it was nice how it suddenly hit me as I found that missing part of the puzzle.

I say my first ever memory is the smell of freshly cut grass. No it's not grass... those bushy things! The smell of these bushes being cut and it started raining. I still have no idea where this smell comes from but I'm pretty sure it's not the actual smell of rain but of water coming from a *gardening* hose. A slight smell of chlorine mixed in with the fresh green cut bush thing. I've never had a *garden* or a *gardening* hose at any of my homes.. Everytime I smell something that is close to this memory I almost get transported to the s p a c e where this memory started but I've never managed to fully get there. It's like trying to remember the name of the actress in that film you watched 15 years ago, except only finding that the google search result to cut bush garden hose chlorine smell won't be able to transport you back into this moment in time.

It's a funny thing 'trying to remember'... recalling things... being so certain that what you remember is 'true' or true enough. I have this, I don't know, complex, concern, insecurity, about how much I can trust myself remembering things, as I feel like I have a really poor memory - or maybe I'm just getting lazy because of that search engine in my pocket.

I guess I'm wondering about what 'true' or 'right' even is, I mean everyone has their own completely different experience of the same thing, so is truth just the average, the most common understanding?

In our little writing game we started in the black notebook I wrote something like "your home is not my home and my home is not yours". My memories, experiences of a s p a c e are different to yours due to so many factors. When we share our home with others they will be making their own memories, experiences, little secrets, stories...

a written conversation between Alex Bell & Giulia Shah