

Metropolitan Salem, Liverpool

Alessandro Zambelli

at *The Part versus the Whole*

Last May (2018) artist Ben Judd approached me, Maria Venegas Raba and Wanyi Zhang to make some work for a forthcoming exhibition. The exhibition, which ran from 9 June until 18 August 2018, was part of curator Rose Lejeune's series of exhibitions called *New Perspectives* and took place at Liverpool's Victoria Gallery and Museum, a location which became crucial for the work Maria, Wanyi and I produced.

Ben makes deceptively 'gentle' yet provocative work, often depicting highly stylised yet fractured communities, or representations of communities, disassembling and reassembling themselves through invisible or at least barely discernible forces and in seemingly ad-hoc arrangements - a choreography of artefact and performance.

Writing about a previous exhibition Ben argued that it engaged with "an historical overlapping in the development of the empirical and scientific with the irrational and mystical. It is this relationship between the distant and the near, between the unknown and the known," (Judd 2016) an analysis equally applicable to *The Part Versus the Whole*.

The Part Versus the Whole exhibition website says this:

Combining an eclectic mix of materials from the existing Victoria Gallery and Museum's collections and archives, including historic magic lantern slides and the archaeological photography of John Garstang [...] the *Part Versus the Whole* Judd invokes a lost community with its own internal systems,



Figure 1 The Part Versus the Whole
Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018. Photo, Bethanie Brown.

Figure 2 The Part Versus the Whole (detail)
Drawings by Alessandro Zambelli in The Part Versus the Whole, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018. Photo, Bethanie Brown.

beliefs and taxonomies of knowledge. The installation weaves together threads of mythology with imagined and real histories of characters and architecture from the local environment to create an immersive installation. A performance on 9th June, and an accompanying film, imagine this community existing within the Victoria Building.

The Part Versus the Whole is an invitation to viewers to experience a series of alternative readings of the Victoria Building's, and Liverpool's, history, to reimagine what might have been and to bring its possible futures to life (Lejeune 2018).

Lying as if casually set aside (Fig.2), my drawings, which came to be known as the Metropolitan Salem drawings, are both cartographic and archaeological and neither of those things. Amongst John Garstang's other possessions (Fig.1) perhaps these marked the beginnings of a new archaeological inquiry or are the products of an over-ardent admirer of Garstang's, attempting to pique his interest with their own theories about the origins of Liverpool.

There are, after all, many such theories.



A circle of land.
Marshland prevented settlements from becoming anchored.
It is not clear how they survived.

It is believed that their ship was wrecked.
It is understood that they brought to the territory some pre-existing ritualised
behaviour.

The waters of marshland receded, uncovering ground.
There are correspondences between microscopic and macroscopic shapes
observed in the remains of fire-pits, wall design, property boundaries, roof angles,
rows of buildings, and the outlying borders of the settlement itself.

Within a cave, antechambers.
Within antechambers, their objects.

When the next wave of travellers arrived, all previous societies were dead or gone.
The objects were uncovered and misunderstood.

A name, written legibly enough to be understood and repeated.
The old world existed, humming beneath, meeting the new, coming into light.

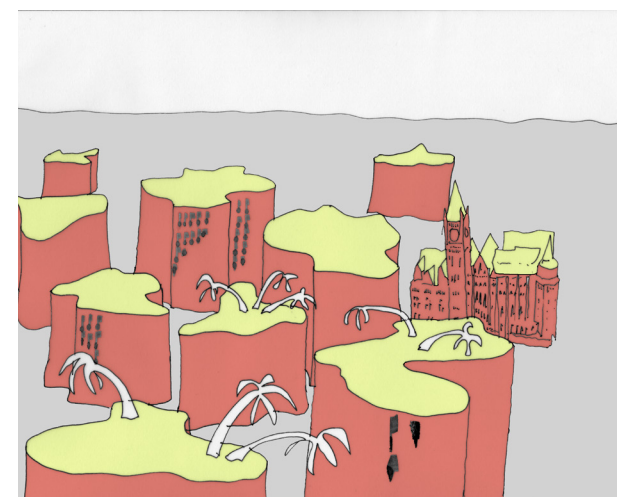
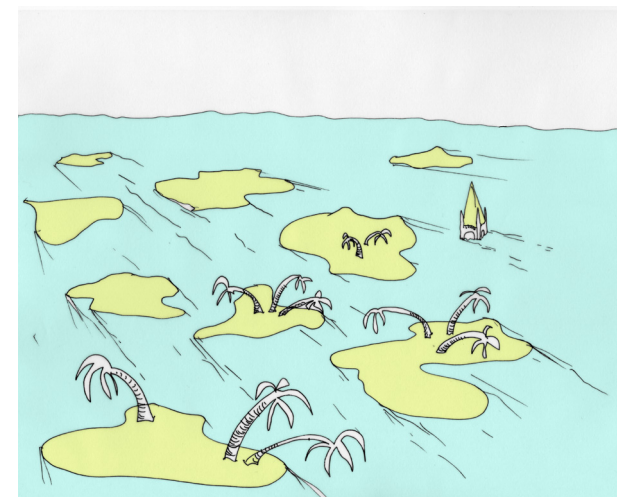
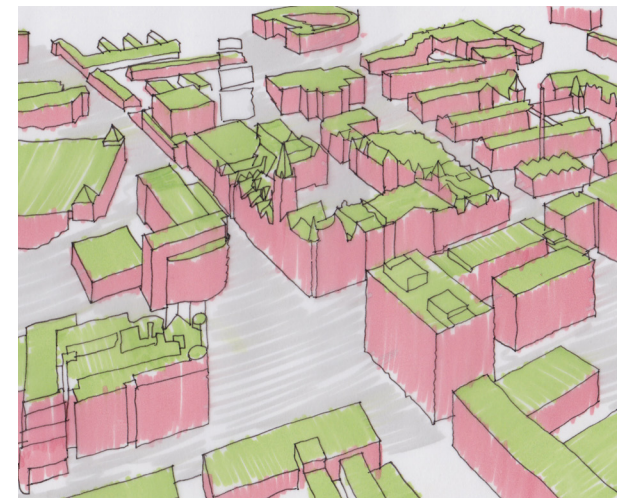
Through forgetting or through remembering, both times briefly converged.
Records are unclear.
The community returned, became solid, appeared in the world again.
Listen before they fade. They are singing now.

Judd, Ben. Excerpts from *Outline of Gallery Audio*

Intended to suggest an undifferentiated primordial mass carved through by valley-like routes, the drawings I made for Ben were developed by overlaying every map I could find of the area. This notion of primordial urban genesis with blocks as 'islands' surrounded by receding waters connects nicely with the Ben's installation narrative outlined above. But for me this also comes directly from John Outram's *London as Mythological Landscape* lecture, a lecture I saw some time in the early 1990s. There is a very poor recording of the same lecture delivered by Outram at the

Architectural Association in 1991 on their website where Outram uses these drawings as a foundational myth for the design of his Queen Victoria Street building.

Figure 3 (opposite)
Alessandro Zambelli 'This is how we think Liuerpul began.' after John Outram.



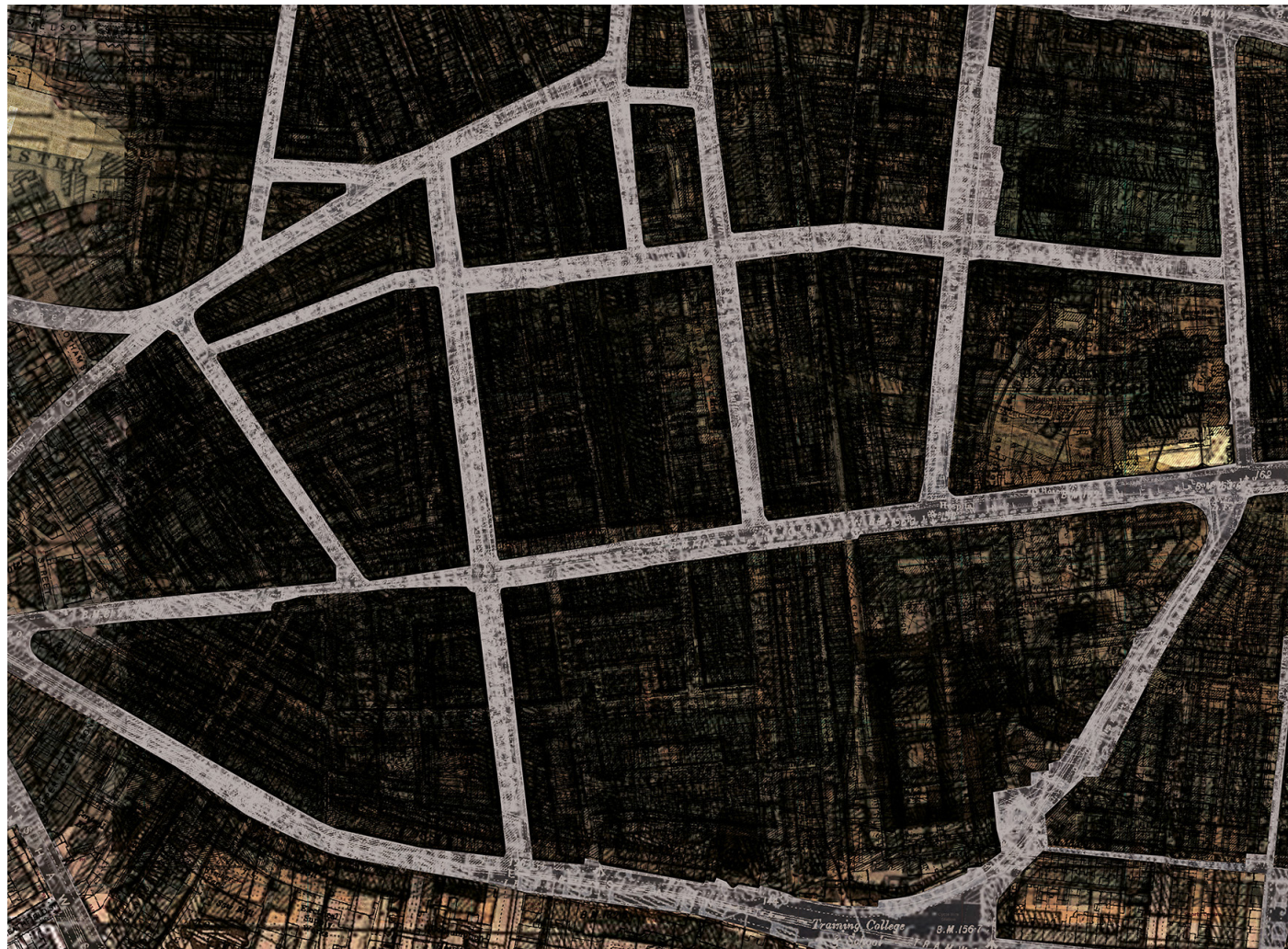


Figure 4. Liuerpul Now
Alessandro Zambelli, in *The Part Versus the Whole*, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018.

In Figure 4, despite the density of mapping, certain features persist and remain just visible (roads and Lime Street Station for example) and some of them, like the exhibition venue itself, the building which is now called the Victoria Gallery and Museum, I manipulated in order to highlight. Faintly visible is the diagonal of the railway leaving Lime Street.

Peeling away some of the maps in Figure 5 reveals the Lime Street Station site with the railway leaving it as, perhaps, some kind of ceremonial precinct and route. Garstang's own survey of the K1 Egyptian tomb is just visible. This route seems to be called Liuerpul Great Way and it passes, eventually and tellingly, under one corner of the Victoria Building. The site and route can be seen more clearly in Figure 6.

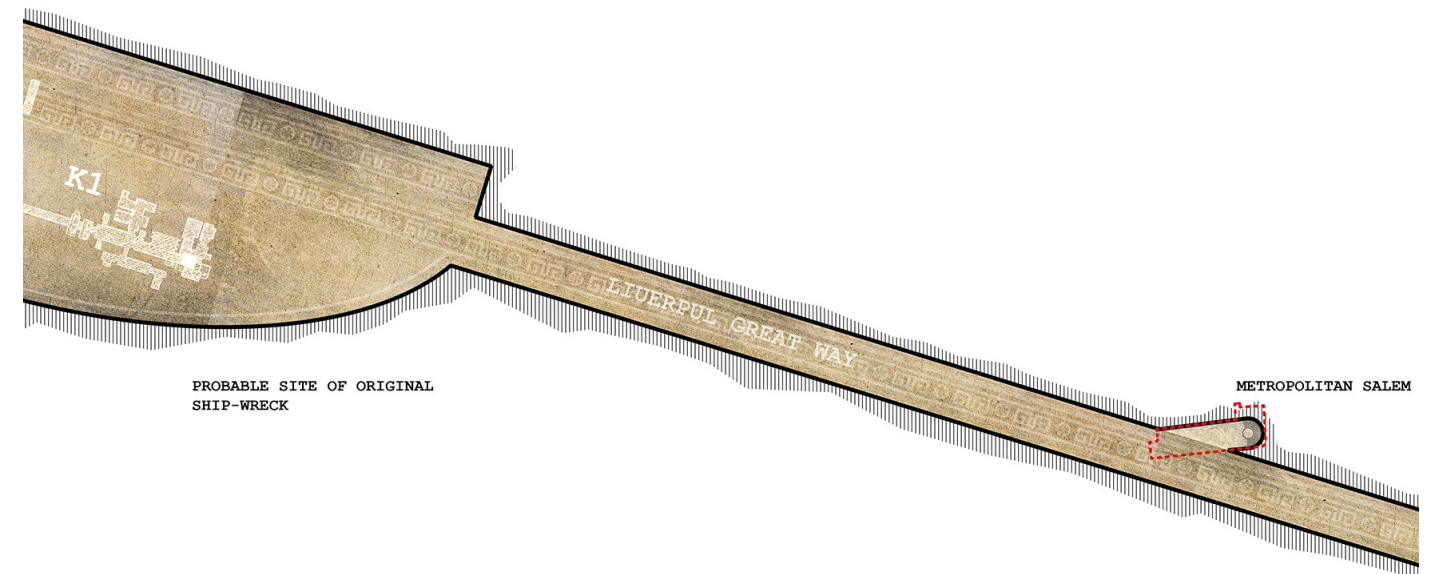
Ben commissioned writer David Hering to flesh out the mythical origin story of Liverpool (here called, archaically, Liuerpul) and in his narrative David describes how original settlers were ship-wrecked on a series of islands which later became Liverpool. These drawings connects with this narrative and construct a new one, describing how the settlers journeyed, our fictional evidence suggests, a little way inland to what is now the Victoria Building then a place they might have called the Metropolitan Salem. This term and others in Figure 8 (Liuerpul Metropolitan Salem) seem to be constructed only from words taken from the as-found overlaid maps.

The 'word-key' to this final drawing can be found at the end of this document.



Figure 5. Liuerpul Then
Alessandro Zambelli, in *The Part Versus the Whole*, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018.

Figure 6. Liuerpul Before
Alessandro Zambelli, in *The Part Versus the Whole*, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018.



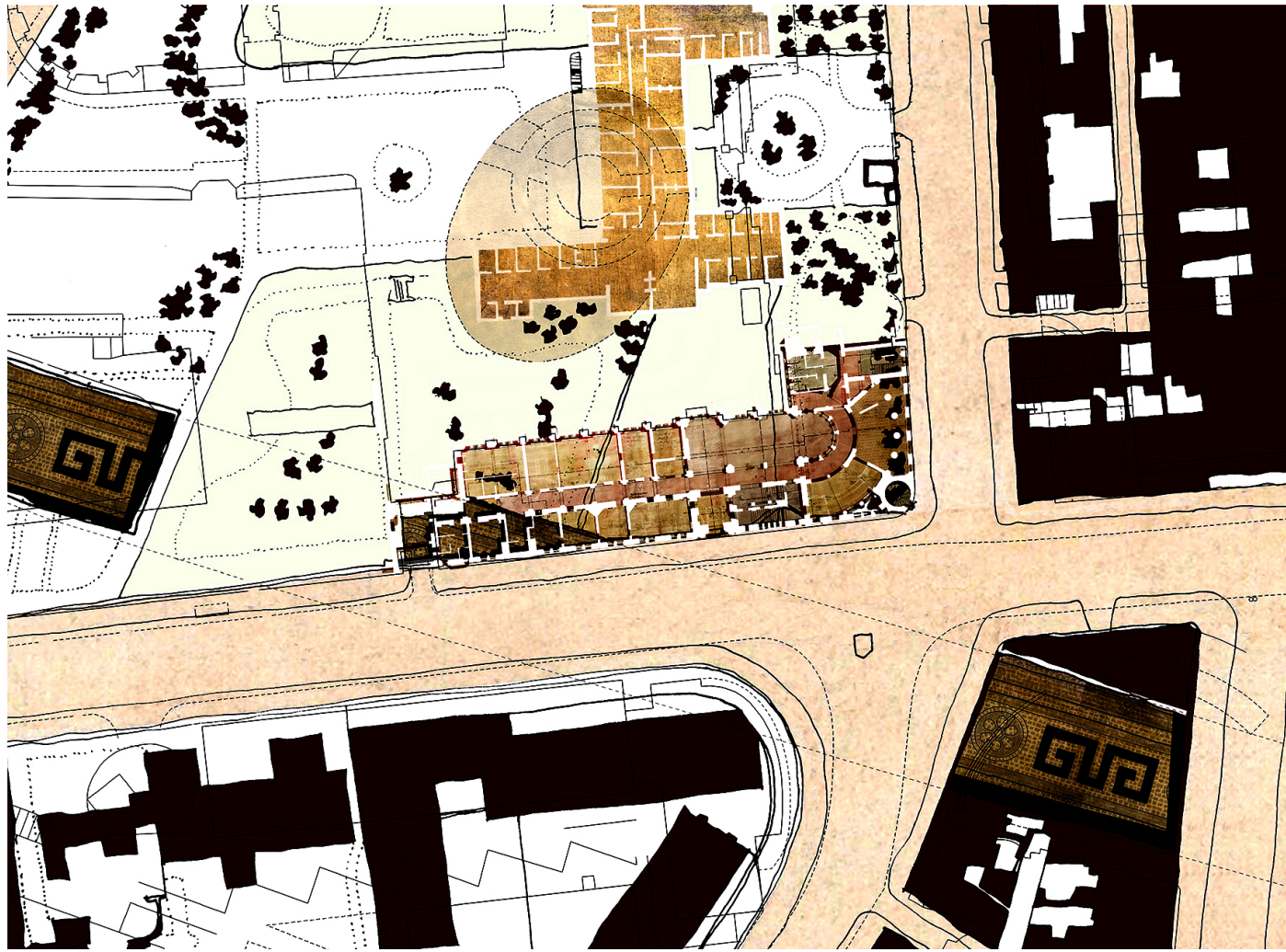


Figure 7. Liverpool Great Way
Alessandro Zambelli, in *The Part Versus the Whole*, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018.

Figure 8 (opposite) Liverpool Metropolitan Salem
Alessandro Zambelli, in *The Part Versus the Whole*, Ben Judd, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, 2018.

Zooming-in (Fig.7) we see something more recognisably the Victoria Building, but overlaid with other maps of the site and the building interior. Fragments from different times co-exists as well as fictional elements: the Liverpool Great Way is lined with tiles whose pattern echoes tiles found in the Victoria Building, alongside the ghost of the former 'Lunatic Asylum,' which, although long since demolished, hovers just to the north.

In the meantime Wanyi and Maria designed and built a pleasingly threatening model of the site – partly a version of the overlaid maps and partly Joseph Gandy's apocalyptic vision of Soane's Bank of England.

Stripping the overlaid maps of all of their text I then used that text to re-label a close-up of the plan, allowing overlaid features from plans of different times an equivalence of solidity and presence, blurring also the inside and outside of the Victoria Building. Emerging from archaeological layers is, perhaps, the amphitheatre-like form represented in the model. This, we believe, was what the early Liverpoolians called their Metropolitan Salem, fed by the waters of the Fever Fountain and all administered by that Spring's Lunatic Professor. Later the people would feast in the Congregational Drinking Sheds, entertained by performances from the Gospel Boxes.

But this is all, of course, pure speculation.



Arts	Congregational	Independent	Principal	Tank
Ashton	Corridor	Infirmary	Professor	Tanks
Box	Drinking	Laboratories	Ramp	Thompson
Brownlow	Engineering	Ladies	Reading	Timber
Building	Fever	Lavatory	Room	Tunnel
Buildings	Fountain	Letter	Salem	Union
Cathedral	Free	Library	School	University
Catholic	Gospel	Liverpool	Seats	Upper
Chapel	Hall	Lodge	Senate	Victoria
Chaplaincy	Harold	Lunatic	Sheds	Walker
Church	Harrison	Medical	Staircase	William
Class	Hill	Methodist	Street	Yard
Cohen	Hospital	Metropolitan	Students	Yates
College	Hughes	Part	Sunday	Zion
Common		Posts		