



Techniques & Culture

Revue semestrielle d'anthropologie des techniques
Suppléments au n°65-66

Urban Alchemy

Alchimie urbaine

Hilary Powell



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/tc/7868>
ISSN: 1952-420X

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Electronic reference

Hilary Powell, « Urban Alchemy », *Techniques & Culture* [Online], Suppléments au n°65-66, Online since 31 October 2016, connection on 11 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/tc/7868>

This text was automatically generated on 11 May 2019.

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Urban Alchemy

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Artist Hilary Powell examines the material components of the demolition site (from zinc to copper, steel, concrete, brick, asbestos, lime mortar, cement, lead and slate). In direct collaboration with these materials she tells stories and creates images of both demolition sites and those who work transforming them. Through imaginative salvage the work explores regeneration and economic transition by putting the physical remnants of industrial decline to artistic use. Creative production and the poetry and politics of place combine with the science, agency and political ecology of materials in this cross disciplinary exploration of the life cycles and micro and macro economics of the material culture of post-industrial landscapes. The project focuses on often overlooked and undervalued processes, materials, lives and livelihoods and questions the way we value, consume and waste materials.

- 1 The project began through ongoing work on demolition sites as part of an AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. It continued as Hilary became Leverhulme Artist in Residence in UCL Chemistry collaborating with Anthropology through a UCL Sustainable Cities Grand Challenges award on 'Deconstructing Demolition: Journeys through Scrap and Salvage' working towards 'Urban Alchemy' events, printmaking experiments, prints and publication.

Roof tops of London



© Hilary Powell

Zinc in situ



Roof top of *Wates House*, College of London University (UCL) in the course of profound renovation and old building of *Barlett School of Architecture*.

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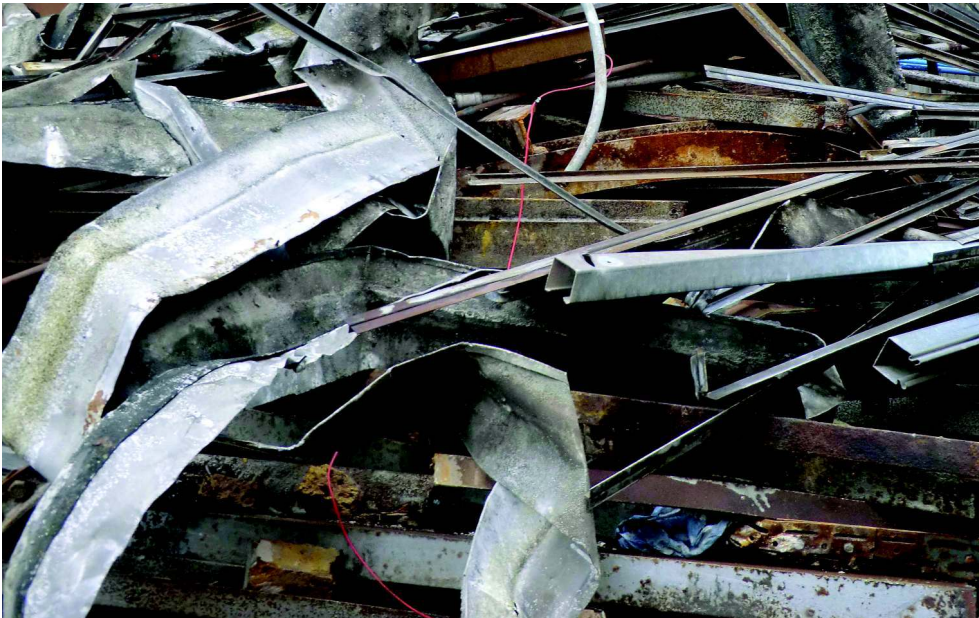
Zinc on the skip



The artist Hilary Powell appropriating some zinc of cover on the construction site of recovery of metals.

© Hilary Powell

Zinc in pile



Zinc of cover deformed, piled on a demolition site

© Hilary Powell

Zinc in studio



Zinc bands of cover waiting to be cleaned to the workshop of print.

© Hilary Powell

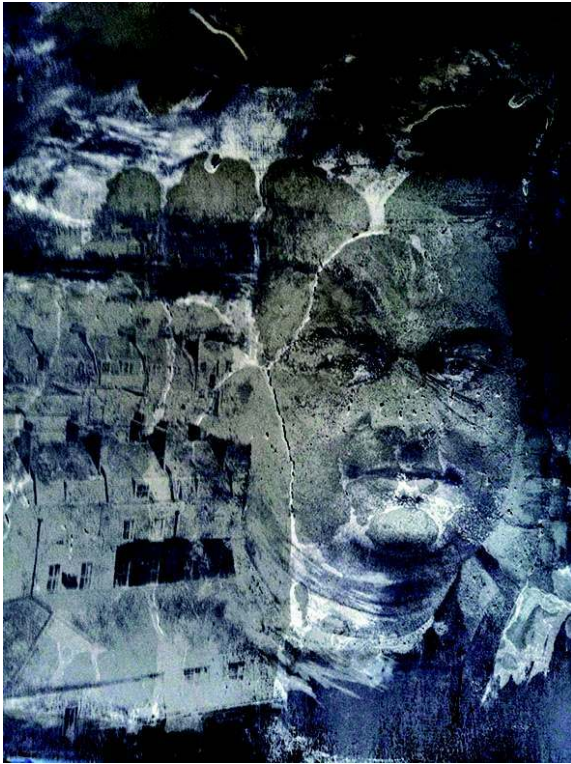
Zinc in acid



Overview of an image taking shape as the zinc, handled with a cloud of powder of resin of warmed aquatint, is bitten into the nitric acid.

© Hilary Powell

Zinc image in acid



Portrait of a worker in demolition forming while the zinc is washed in the water.

© Hilary Powell

History of zinc



A story of the zinc engraved in the zinc (in mirror) by means of a varnish on the zinc collected and covered with nitric acid.

© Hilary Powell

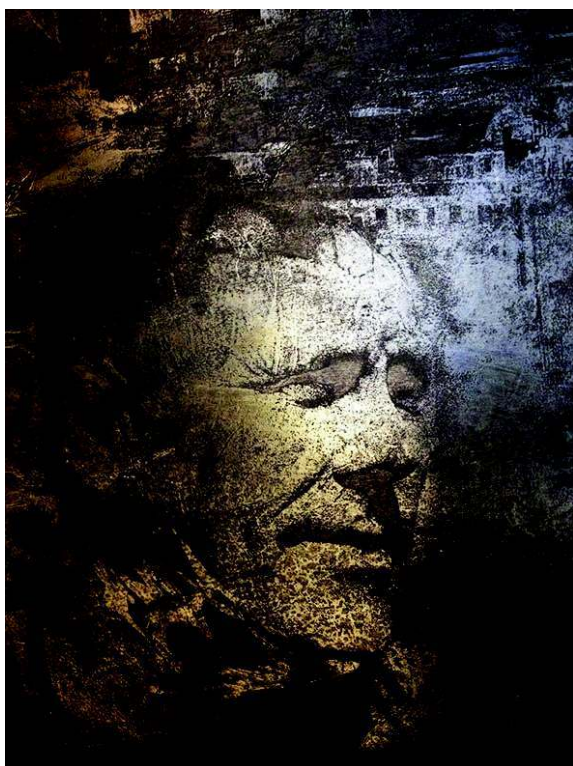
AndyMacLachlan



Andy MacLachlan's portrait, worker in demolition working for the company Scudder, hired on the site of the UCL.

© Hilary Powell

Brass plate engraved with figure



Andy McLachlan's portrait, worker in demolition, engraved on a brass plate of couverture recycled.
© Hilary Powell

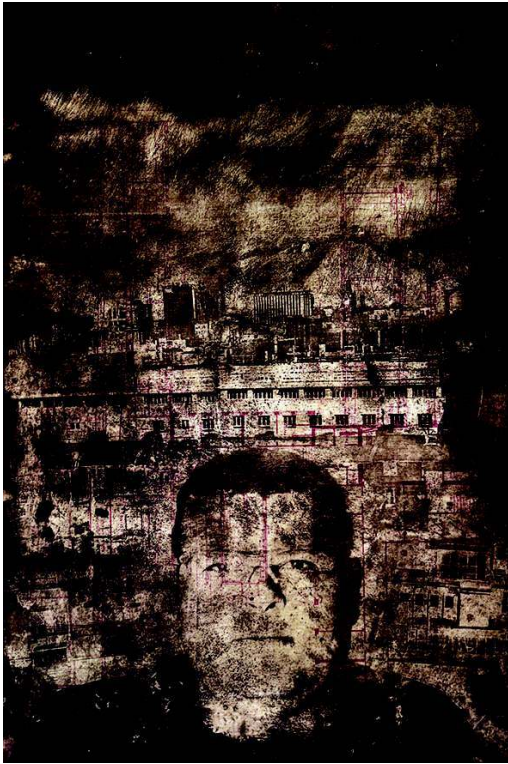
Detail of the final test of Andy's portrait



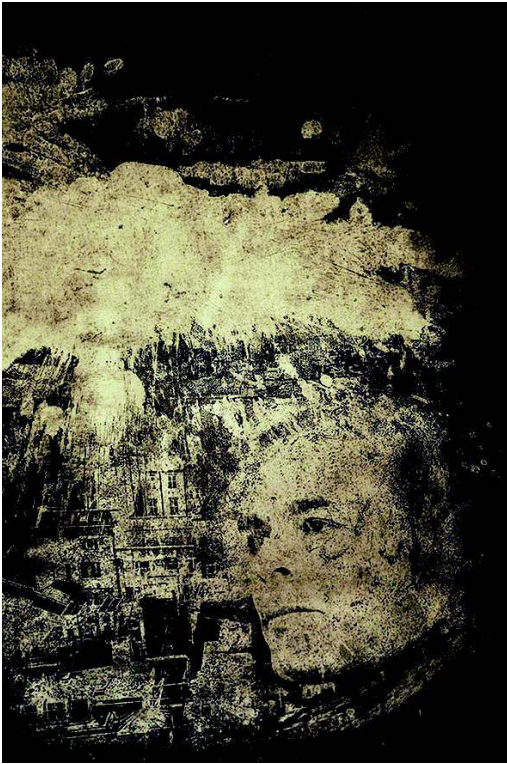
ANDY MCLACHLAN TO THE CANTEEN OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS OF THE UCL IN FRONT OF A VERSION ENLARGED BY THE PAPER PRINT MAKES FROM THE ZINC OF COUVREMENT RECYCLED AND PRINTED ON ARCHITECT'S COLLECTED PLANS.

© Hilary Powell

Final test on architect's collected plans



Portrait of Lybomir, worker working on a demolition site.
© Hilary Powell

Final test 2

Brian's portrait, worker working on a demolition site, engraved on some zinc recycled and printed on architect's recycled plans.

© Hilary Powell

Hilary Powell on demolition site

© Hilary Powell

INDEX

Mots-clés: Démolition, régénération, ferraille, récupération, destruction/construction

Keywords: Demolition, regeneration, scrap, salvage, destruction/construction

AUTHOR

HILARY POWELL

Artist Hilary Powell works with undervalued or overlooked processes, materials, people and places across a wide range of media. Her practice is a creative salvage operation that has taken her onto the London Olympic regeneration site, into underused urban precincts and around urban demolition sites. Recent projects include making portraits of the last working coal miners of South Wales printed from stone with coal dust and enlisting a gang of children from a local adventure playground to assist with the creative destruction of BBC TV Centre's East Tower.
www.hilarypowell.com