

4 Walls: A Neighbourhood Confessional



surround sound installation - artist's video

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4Walls originally started life as a surround sound installation where two sets of surround sound speakers were housed in two walls. A domestic space was created with wallpaper, curtains and a digital window showing projected scenes of neighbourhoods recorded from within the homes of a group of participants. Central to the installation is a database of recorded anecdotes from each participant on the theme of living with neighbours. To listen to these stories the gallery audience had to interact with the installation through placing an ear to the wall thus going through the ritual of listening to the neighbours. *4Walls* has been adapted for a single channel DVD projection and stereo sound system.

...a few comments

'Hypnotic. Mesmerising. Where did the last hour go?' Rich, 39

'I think it's a lovely idea, the whole exhibition. I like the whole idea of it being interactive'. Robin, 18

'Great exhibition and gave me lots to think about as a photography student.' Joanne, 33

'You've made me believe computer programmers could possibly become artist's too! Great work – a wonderful collection of stuff.' Mark, 31

'A tonic in comparison to the British Art Show. Excellent!' Anne, 52

'A cool thingy to behold!' Louis, 13

4Walls



4Walls is a project that investigates the life that exists beyond the confines of the home: the neighbours. Based upon the experiences of an eclectic group of participants of different nationalities, gender, age groups and ethnicity, a database of stories and anecdotes has been documented for a digital artwork of sound and moving image that can be re-presented as installation, video or audio book. These recorded narratives form the core of the work and act as both documentation and oral history, providing insights into how social dynamics have changed throughout the years. What is also made explicit is how community is viewed; its formation and disintegration; how contemporary community is not determined by proximity but by affiliation.

The database contains nearly eighty real-life narratives that explore the underbelly of living in the company of, for the most part, *virtual* strangers. The private space of the home is a frontier town that at times becomes invaded by the outside world. The sounds that permeate the brick and concrete to penetrate our private lives; the arguments, the love making, and the pets that scream away the day; the stories of others but stories only half heard form a virtual reality that can only be guessed at.

4Walls is a commentary on the insularity of modern times, of living with sets of neighbours who are strangers and accessed solely through the walls. Based on the vagaries of these sounds we attempt to build their profiles, making our own meanings from the sonic accompaniment that surrounds us. They become part figment of our imagination, part ghost in the skirting with personas that conform to what we believe.

Joining the sonic database are the views captured from each participants front and back room windows. Static for the most part these views show us the homogeneity of contemporary existence; the clothes line washing breezes that sway away the day; the car rides that break the sweat of tired streets and the open spaces of hypnotic seascapes.

The database has been configured for an interactive installation, artist's video and audio book.

The Neighbourhood Confessional: Building the Database

There were 19 participants who gave their time to the project. An age / gender / nationality demographic breakdown is shown below:

Total participants = 19

British = 12

Irish = 6

American = 1

Male = 8

Female = 11

11 – 18 years = 1

19 – 30 years = 5

31 – 40 years = 4

41 – 50 years = 5

51 – 60 years = 1

61 – 70 years = 2

71 + = 1

.

The Locations: Leicester, UK and Waterford, Ireland

4Walls Audit

Being in bed by 10 o'clock	2.40
Crap Drummer	2.04
Getting Older	1.55
Having it Both Ways	1.38
I am a Nice Neighbour	1.47
The Sound of a Wardrobe	1.06
A Coppers Borrowings	1.49
Breathing Problems	1.52
Crashing Student Parties	1.04
For Occupants of this House	1.54
Fur Coats and Boobs	1.33
Roller-skate Stability	2.16
Twinkly Lights	2.03
When I Flashed	1.44
A Dog Chained Up	1.16
Alpine Carnage	2.29
Borders and Fences	1.15
Cherry Brandy	1.54
It Come to Cats	2.44
Rangers Dog	1.50
They Caused a Lot of Upset	1.39
Toeing the Line	0.49
Close line Shenanigans1	2.02
Close line Shenanigans2	1.14
Curtain-Twitcher	1.35
Drugs Theory	2.47
Eye Candy for the Lonely Housewife	2.39
I Understand the Noise Thing	0.34
Kids Behaving Badly	1.25
Shitty-Hole	2.22
A Fisherwoman	0.53
Elvis at 4am	0.46
Killing You on a Saturday Night	1.57
Plenty of Neighbours	2.54
They are all Rushing	2.32
AKA The Hopper House	2.23

Isolationism	0.51
'Les Ratz'	1.55
'Wookie'	1.19
A Good Neighbour	2.13
Glue & Knockers	1.46
Hand-jamming	1.29
Housesit	0.49
A Big Mother	0.42
A Clip of the Bush	1.08
Cold Feet	0.51
Coronation Street	0.51
Do You Want to Come Outside	1.18
Sex mad Looks	1.14
It's a Cycle, isn't it?	1.19
Kids & Walls	2.26
The House Before	0.39
The Right to Party	0.47
A New Phenomena	1.16
Kids and Walls2	2.26
Taking Alex Round	0.46
Fancy Clothes pegs	0.29
Three Point Turns in London	1.25
London Drains	2.45
London Suspicions	0.27
No 1 Single Destruction	1.09
The Cutest Little Kid Crying	1.15
A Neighbourly Wave	0.43
Broom Stick Bashing	2.44
And Then Back to Normality	1.00
Bent Copper	1.13
DIY Dave	1.00
Shit Sculpture	1.25
Taking the Poles Out	1.22
The Copper Next Door	0.59
3Days	1.14
Because of the Kids	1.34
Neighbours from Hell	0.46
Themselves to Themselves	1.23
Weird Neighbours	1.03
You'll Never get us out of Here	1.39

Future Developments for Touring

The future development of *4Walls* would be to repeat the data collecting exercise of recording individuals talking about their experiences of neighbours and community. The strategy would be to use each gallery as a hub for the development of a relationship with a local community with the intention of recording their experiences for a new *4Walls* database. These new narratives would therefore be unique to the gallery space with a database specific to the area.