

Name:

Subject:

Piped Poetry

Date:

2008

Piped Poetry

By Bettina Furnée

Credits

- Barratt Homes
- Futurecity
- Assael Architects
- Thames Explorer Trust

- Bettina Furnée, Artist
- Paul Lyalls, Poet
- Colin Stevens, Filmmaker
- Thomas Gray, Sound Design
- Lucy Levene, Photographer
- Imagist, Graphic Design
Imagistlondon.com

- Pupils & Staff of Millbank Primary School, with special thanks to headteacher Alyson Russen, class teacher Rachel Story and children in Year 5 (2007-08)

Photographs © Futurecity Ltd

Piped Poetry

By Bettina Furnée

This book is one of a limited edition of 100,
signed and numbered by the artist.

Introduction

Futurecity were appointed by Barratt Homes to commission an artist to respond to their Tachbrook Triangle development in Pimlico. Acclaimed text artist Bettina Furnée was appointed to create an off-site, community-led work in collaboration with Millbank Primary School, inspired by the now subterranean Tachbrook Stream that runs beneath the development.

Through a series of poetry workshops and archaeological visits to the banks of the Thames, Bettina developed a text based work with the school's pupils. The resulting legacy of this commission is a series of thought-provoking interventions sited throughout the school and a poem, 'Murky Thames', compiled from contributions from each of the children.

The building's plumbing system has become a metaphor for a river. Stenciled by Bettina across washbasins, cisterns, Victorian pipework and water storage tanks, 'Piped Poetry' tells the story of water's journey through nature and its use by man, as seen through the eyes of children. Accompanying the work is this exclusive limited edition of artist's books, documenting the artwork through a series of photographs and a film.

Bettina has carefully selected sites in the school that are reflective of the meaning in each fragment of the poem. Some are difficult to find, others awkward to read, others bold and obvious. 'People normally get wet' shouts from a row of three sinks in the girls' toilets, with 'Splash hard' on the cistern above the boys' urinals. A curving pipe reads 'Go on, surf the wave', a cut-off pipe states 'Lost to the world'. In the school's basement, 'Deep in the ocean are the secrets that I want to reveal desperately', stretches in super-size font across the room's ceiling. This is a work that asks to be traced and explored. Like the course of a river across a landscape, it wends its journey through the building, at times going underground, at times bubbling to the surface demanding to be seen and at times quietly pooling in a corner, awaiting discovery.

Quiet and contemplative, witty, powerful and at times strange, 'Piped Poetry' is an engaging and imaginative work which demonstrates Futurecity and Barratt Homes' continued commitment to commissioning high quality public artworks.

Claire Owen
Curator, Futurecity



About The Project

The aim of this project is to create environmental awareness of - and to celebrate - London's 'lost' rivers', by making a link between the school and it's local river system. The story of the Tachbrook Stream, which runs beneath the newly developed Pimlico site and enters the Thames close to Millbank Primary, informed the choice of educational workshops. The existence of 'lost' rivers under the streets of London was a valuable point of departure for this project, as it demonstrates that something as elementary to our lives as water is a shared and finite resource.

The river bed of the Tachbrook, an offshoot of the Tyburn, lies under Upper Tachbrook Street in Pimlico. The Tyburn once flowed from Buckingham Palace towards the river Thames through the generally flat, marshy, ground of Westminster. Once a feature of the landscape, the underground rivers are now symbols of a rural and idyllic age. In the past they have shaped London, as they formed boundaries, dictated the course of roads and influenced the location of industry. Many of the lost rivers, such as the Tachbrook, became part of London's complex sewer system during the 19th century.



Taking the working environment of Millbank Primary School (located in a wonderful Victorian building in Westminster, with rooftop views over the Thames) as a living metaphor of the ecosystem of a local underground river required a leap of the imagination. It was thanks to the intrepid leadership of Alyson Russen and class teacher Rachel Storey, that soon time was found in the busy school schedule to take Year 5 on a trip to the Thames foreshore and the Museum of London, followed by poetry workshops by Paul Lyalls back at school. The children experienced, discussed, performed and wrote about the subject of water and all this means to them for more than three full days.

I was then given the freedom to use the entire school building as a site for the work. I selected phrases from the written work of Year 5 to appear on the water pipes of the building. Stencils were made to measure, with the letters spaced individually using the typeface Optima. Having prepared the surfaces, I applied the texts in blue enamel paint during several weeks, to be gradually discovered by the school community. In the meantime, a film by Colin Stevens was shot, which is an interpretation as well as documentation of the processes surrounding Piped Poetry, featuring an original soundtrack by Thomas Gray and recitals of a class poem. The project was brought to a close with the screening of the film *Murky Thames*, starring the pupils of Year 5, at a special school assembly in June 2008.

That something of the initial aim for this project had been achieved by the children's poetry, was witnessed by the Headteacher, who overheard an exchange by two younger children struggling to read a line of Piped Poetry (but who got there in the end). One child said to the other: 'I never thought of water like that before' and the reply: 'me neither, but now I do'.

Bettina Furnée
Artist

About The Artist

Trained as a letter-cutter and art historian, Bettina Furnée's work developed through many private and public art commissions towards a contemporary arts practice which is rooted in notions of site and uses language as its primary material. Her commissioned works often become part of the built environment, and commissioners have included local government, architects, colleges and universities. These projects derive from an interest in the identity, history and future of a place, and are produced in collaboration with local communities or writers in order to create literary content. Her recent public art works have combined text, sculptural form and light, using a range of media and the involvement of other artists.

Bettina's self initiated project 'If Ever You're in the Area' (2005-06) www.ifever.org.uk was funded by the Arts Council and included film, video and temporary outdoor works relating to fear of invasion. The project was held at two coastal locations and arts venues in East Anglia, and included the film 'Lines of Defence' (Bettina Furnée & Tim Sidell 2007), which captures a year of coastal erosion. A 'Space for 10' residency at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, resulted in an 8-week live word association game 'Powerhouse' (2008) www.powerhouse.me.uk held at Cambridge University Library.

Bettina Furnée (1963) was taught lettering at David Kindersley's Workshop in Cambridge (1982-89). She went on to study at Chelsea College of Art and Design (1992-93) and gained a first in History of Art from Anglia Ruskin University (1999).





About Futurecity

Futurecity, the curators and project managers of 'Piped Poetry', are the UK's leading cultural agency, with experience in commissioning, curating and project-managing a wide range of cultural and public art projects. The agency's strength lies in its proven track record and close collaboration with artists, cultural organisations, design teams and clients as well as researchers, planning departments, education authorities, local communities and regeneration experts.

Set up in 2000, Futurecity has developed a specialist culture-led model for regeneration called 'Cultural Masterplanning'. Their innovative approach has attracted attention from the property sector, which now form over 80% of Futurecity's client base. As a result of their cultural strategy work Futurecity has secured £8million of private-sector funding for the arts over the past seven years.

Futurecity's cultural strategies have led to a continuous series of acclaimed public art initiatives, including the £2million Ebbsfleet Landmark Project for North Kent, the memorial to the abolition of Slavery for the City of London by sculptor Michael Visocchi and poet Lemn Sissay and a range of art and architecture collaborations, including the façade of MAKE's new building in Grosvenor Waterside by Clare Woods and a new architectural collaboration between Paul Morrison and Rolfe Judd Architects.

www.futurecity.co.uk



Pg 13

Gently she leans over to see the sea

Shamima

Trickling through time / Flowing to the future

Tanzim

Enjoy your water, be grateful

Mia

Help us to survive

Ali

Once I am healthy I get wealthy!

Elamin

Go on / Surf on the wave!

Rasha

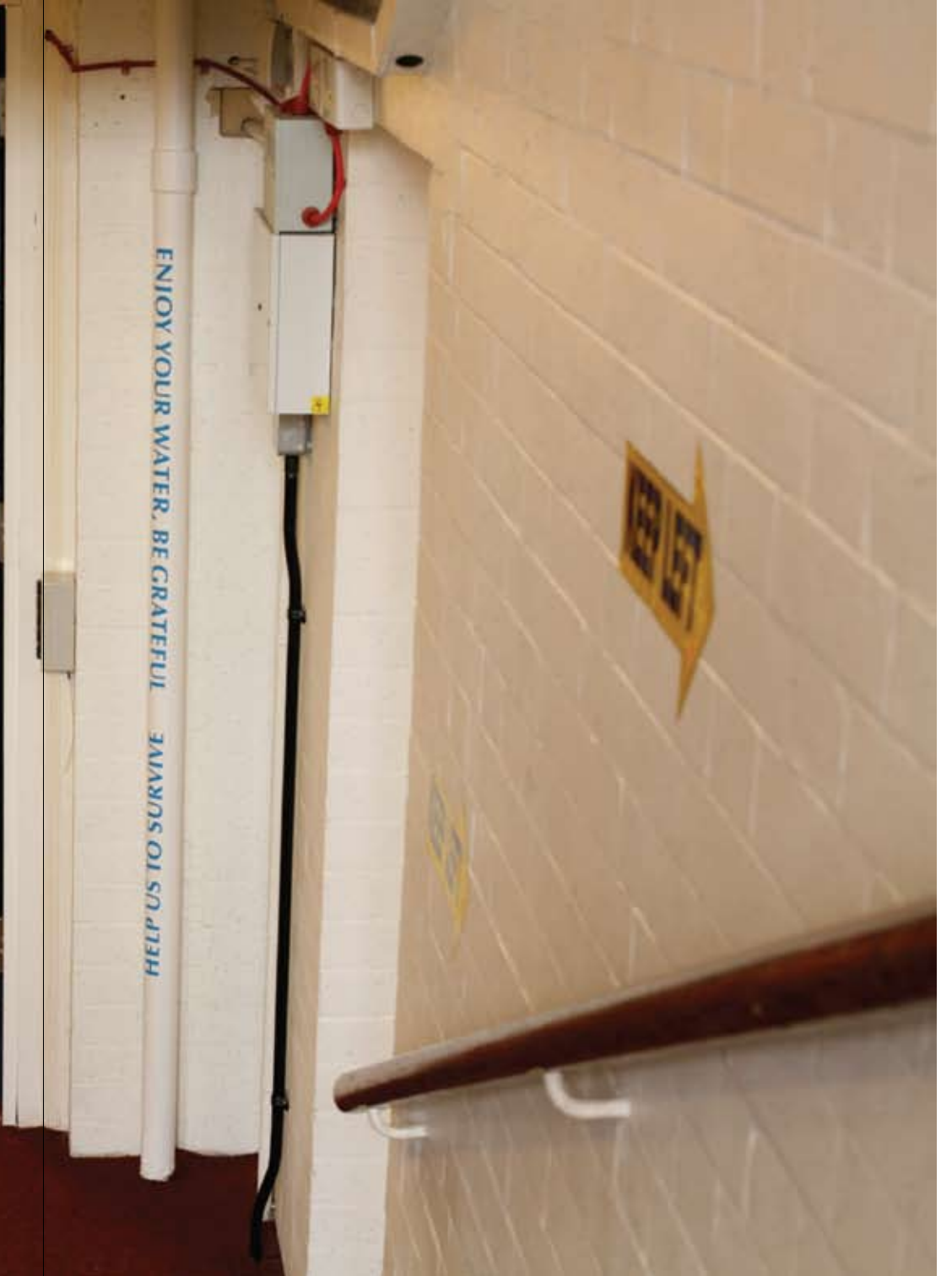
Water cleans messy lives

Ellal

The splash of the water swallows me up with
a wave, drowning me so I had to be saved

Benie











Pg 23

Waves pushing to Antarctica

Fatima

The relaxing rain enjoys your day

Basma E.

Celebrate your birthday everyday

Rasha

Waves on the beach / swaying / working it hard

Anas

In some places the water is shallow

Jon

The ocean swaying different ways / left and
right fighting / against the strong winds

Imtinan

Warm and cold can never be the same

Hiba

Cold water / warm water / check it out!

Basma



CELEBRATE YOUR BIRTHDAY EVERYDAY







WARM AND COLD CAN NEVER BE THE SAME

COLD WATER WARM WATER CHECK IT OUT!



Pg 33

From mountain to sea

Basma

Drip down, drip down

Hiba

It pushes the river to other countries

Hiba

Water makes me think of the ocean

Ali

I can feel the calm river beside me

Mohammed

Smooth liquid / like the ocean

Yasmin

Can you hear the sea calling for peace, timidly,
in a strange way?

Shayma

Water swaying from side to side

Yasmin

When it can't get any more quiet, waves burst
into laughter, laughing at their fresh self

Shayma

Romantic: the feeling of water whispering
my name only I can hear it

Shayma

I was happy then

Daiyan











Pg 43

Water pure as a pearl

Rasha

Clear as if it's never been dirty before

Benie

One drop breaking the silence

Lamis

Waves move from side to side, like a pattern

Razan

What if the world was upside down?

Basma

The wavy water is smashing and crashing like
an attack in the war

Fatima

Angry as a mad dinosaur

Billal

The angry sea pushing itself

Mohammed

Dirty and clean liquid / green and blue

Basma

It thought back to when it was popular, cleaner than now

Lum

Lost to the world

Aniqa

Drink it from the Queen, drink it from a dinosaur,
drink it from the Romans 'till now

Basma

Water sways around the world

Daiyan

I can feel the wet feeling, angry like a devil's arm

Ruhel

I am / I was / I remember

Elamin















Pg 57

Lots of sound like the river going

Umar

Splash hard

Umar

People normally get wet

Jon

The others can see me grow into a new
size and shape

Tanzim

Water is so clear I see my reflection.

But that's not me. Oh, yes, it's my other side

Mia

The furious water washes

Takbeer

Water is like a best friend

Rasha

Deep in the ocean lie the secrets that

I want to reveal desperately

Andrei











Murky Thames

Poem

Clear blue or foamy white
The waterfall reflecting the sun
Making me think of the ocean
I can feel the water dripping from my hands
Refreshing as a bath
Water pure as a pearl
Deep in the ocean
It's hard to survive
The water saying 'I am angry'
It drags you in and makes you drown
Smashing and crashing like an attack in a war
Angry as a mad dinosaur
The splash of the sea swallows me up in a wave
Trickling through time
I can see
Clear water spilling from the waterfall
Bashing the rocks
Pushing the river to other countries
The river rushing down
Pure sea bursting into laughter
It does lovely waves
Water can spare your life
Keeps you healthy
Enjoy your water, be grateful
Warm and cold can never be the same
Cold water, warm water, check it out.

Year 5 (2007-08)

Millbank Primary School

Arranged by Paul Lyalls using one line by each pupil.



Piped Poetry

A Barratt Homes and Futurecity commission

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HOMES