



Explore the area and see the sites

A series of public artworks in the Royal Docks
by Jessie Brennan

Making Space

Making Space has been commissioned by the Royal Docks Team, a joint initiative by the Mayor of London and the Mayor of Newham. This commission is produced and curated by UP Projects.

Image on the cover: Photoshoot for *Custom House Is Our House*, Jessie Brennan, 2019–20. Photograph by Alastair Fyfe

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Jessie Brennan

Jessie Brennan is a visual artist whose previous projects have examined public housing and the politics of regeneration. Her practice is research-led and situated, exploring relations between places and people. Brennan graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2007. She has exhibited extensively in the UK and Europe, and her work is held in public and private collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In 2017, South London Gallery invited Brennan to collaborate with residents on *YOUR WORDS*, a project for their inaugural Open Plan residency on Pelican Estate.

Recent projects include: *Re: development – Inside The Green Backyard*, Carroll/Fletcher Onscreen, London (2017); *If This Were to Be Lost*, dalla Rosa Gallery, London (2016); *RESIDENT*, City Gallery & Museum, Peterborough (2016); *Progress*, The Founding Museum, London (2014); *Talents Contemporains*, François Schneider Foundation, France (2014); *Coup de Ville*, WARP, Belgium (2013). Her authored books include *Re: development* (2016) and *Regeneration!* (2015).

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Archival image from Peacock Gym for *Go The Distance*



CHD scanning process for *Custom House Is Our House*

Making Space is a new four-part commission by London-based artist Jessie Brennan for the Royal Docks in Newham, exhibited 2019–20.

Once the largest enclosed docks in the world, this was the birthplace of Tate & Lyle's first sugar cube and Britain's first flyover. The Royal Docks have since witnessed the decline of the maritime industry, numerous development schemes and an influx of tourism as London continuously expands outwards. Today, the docks are preparing for London's largest and most significant regeneration project to date.

Brennan states that she has been inspired by the ways in which this ongoing pattern of rapid change "has ignited incredible creativity in the form of community organising" in the area.

Over the course of one year, the artist worked with local individuals and organisations to develop four large-scale artworks for public sites in the Royal Docks, weaving together text, newly created images and archival material.

Titled *Go the Distance*, *The People's Plan*, *Custom House Is Our House* and *Take Your Place*, these artworks reflect on the factors that have shaped the area's identity, celebrate its enduring community spirit and look ahead to the future of the Royal Docks.

UP Projects

UP Projects commissions contemporary art for public places. We support artists to make work that has social relevance, encourages learning, transforms places and activates the public realm. We believe that public art has the greatest potential when the process is considered as important as the final outcome.

We develop site-specific artworks through collaborative processes between artists, communities and partners. Whether working on ambitious public commissions, imaginative cultural strategies, artist-led events, educational workshops or community engagement initiatives, we strive to be relevant to the places we work in and people that we work with. We believe contemporary art and artists play a vital role in stimulating debate, creating livable places, shaping place identity, humanising our environment, reflecting and connecting communities, effecting social change and supporting economic development.

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The Royal Docks Team

The Royal Docks Team is a joint initiative from the Mayor of London and Mayor of Newham, delivering a £314 million investment programme in the area over the next five years. Together with stakeholders and the community, the team is championing positive change and good growth in the Royal Docks.

www.royaldocks.london
www.royaldocks.london/publicart



The Royal Docks, Newham, 2018



The People's Plan for The Royal Docks, 1983



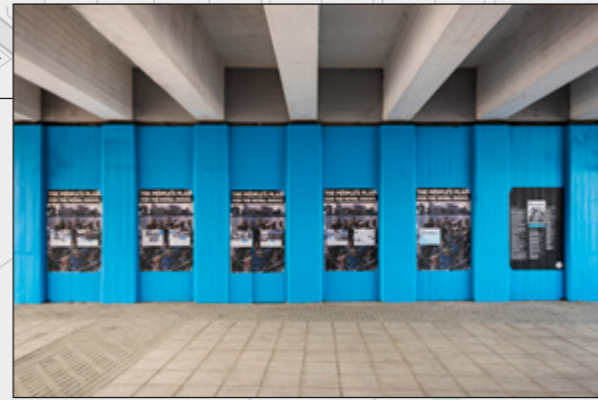
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■ The O2

1 Go the Distance

Victoria Dock Road tunnel, E16 1HL
Nearest DLR: Royal Victoria
8 minutes walk to site 2

The phrase 'Go the Distance' emerged through conversations between Brennan and young people from Peacock Gym Academy, and in boxing championships means fighting a full 12 rounds without being knocked out.

Founded in 1978, Peacock Gym is one of London's most respected community boxing gyms with former members including Frank Bruno and Lennox Lewis. The Academy teaches professional, academic and life skills, focusing on improving mental and physical health with the ethos of "education through sport." Brennan has worked with Academy students and teachers to collect images from their archive that demonstrate Peacock's ongoing relationship with its community.

Overlaid with a blue filter to reference blueprint architectural plans used in regeneration proposals, the artwork highlights the gym's recent application for planning permission and therefore its intention to remain a permanent fixture in the area.

2 The People's Plan

Dock Road underpass, E16 1AG
Nearest DLR: Royal Victoria
15 minutes walk to site 3

This artwork features a full reproduction of 'The People's Plan for the Royal Docks,' a 1980s community-led project which opposed plans for London City Airport. Brennan came to know the Plan well through conversations with members of Royal Docks Communities Voice (RDCV).

The Plan was developed by a large and diverse community in Silvertown and North Woolwich, who came together to imagine alternative civic uses for airport land. Supported by the Greater London Council (GLC) at the time, the residents successfully established a public inquiry which upheld the Plan, though this was overturned by the Conservative government during Margaret Thatcher's leadership.

This specific copy of the Plan belonged to Newham resident and activist Connie Hunt. Currently housed in private and academic archives, Brennan's artwork makes the original document publicly visible and highlights its spirit of community organising and action.

3 Custom House Is Our House

Freemasons Road, E16 3AR
Nearest DLR: Custom House
20 minutes walk or 2 stops on the DLR to site 4

Installed on a two-storey wall facing Custom House station, this artwork brings together individuals who live, work and own businesses on Freemasons Road, which is soon-to-be redeveloped.

The life-sized group portrait was printed on paper then half crumpled to give the impression of a crushed building, highlighting the changes approaching the area. In the foreground residents hold up the words 'Our House,' indicating the strength of the communities here.

The artwork has been closely developed with members of the People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House (PEACH), established in 2013 with the intention of improving jobs, housing, safety and health in the area. PEACH is now working with Newham Council to consult on the regeneration of Custom House.

4 Take Your Place

Royal Docks Adventure, 1012 Dockside Road, E16 2QT
Nearest DLR: Royal Albert

Royal Docks Adventure is a charitable organisation offering water sports activities to local people. Installed across the vast façade of the building in large-scale neon yellow letters is the phrase 'Take Your Place.'

These words refer to taking one's position in a rowing shell, influenced by Brennan's conversations with the local sporting community and particularly London Otters, London's LGBTQI-friendly rowing club. They simultaneously allude to taking one's seat at a table, pointing to the centre's restaurant which has been in situ for over ten years.

Visible from the DLR, neighbouring homes and hotels, this statement is also a call to action that invites people living in and travelling through the Royal Docks to consider the future of the area ahead of its imminent redevelopment.

