

CONTACT DETAILS

Matt Westbrook

Grand Union Studios,

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Work is held in the Deutsche Bank, Bruntwood, Chamberlain Highbury Trust and University of Birmingham collections.

C.V.

EDUCATION

1999–2000	M.A Fine Art – 2:1 – Birmingham City University
1996–1999	B.A Fine Art – 1st Class Honours – Birmingham City University
1995–1996	Foundation Diploma Art and Design – University of Portsmouth

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

2006	Certificate of Education – University of Birmingham
2003	City and Guilds 7307 Stage 2 – Birmingham Metropolitan College
2002	City and Guilds 7307 Stage 1 – Birmingham Metropolitan College

TEACHING

2024 – present	Visiting Lecturer – Loughborough University
2024	Visiting Lecturer – Worcester University
2006 – present	Course Leader – Foundation Diploma Art and Design – Dudley College
2006	Visiting Lecturer – Birmingham City University
2001 – 2002	Visiting Lecturer – Birmingham Metropolitan College

ART ORGANISATION POSITIONS

2011–2012	Director – Grand Union, Birmingham
2009–2011	Company Secretary – Grand Union, Birmingham

SOLO PROJECTS, EXHIBITIONS, CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

2026	Artist in Residence – Aspex gallery, Portsmouth
2021	Creative Environments Conference - Brigstow Institute & University of Bristol
2020	The Silent Orchid Festival and Summer School
2019	Mr Chamberlain's Orchids - Kew Gardens, RHS International Orchid Fair Malvern,
	Approachable Joe walk and Paolozzigram - University of Birmingham
2017	Are the Bears Necessities? – Still Walking Festival, Birmingham
	Corby Woods – Deep Roots Tall Trees Festival, Corby
2016	Port Victorious – Aspex Gallery / Victorious Festival
	Uncommon Building Conference – Theatrum Mundi & University of Sheffield

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026	2126:What If? – Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth
2025	Photocopies – Recent Activity, Birmingham
	POST-Card – Noble and Common Gallery, Worcester
2023	Tree and Leaf – Division of Labour, Paradise Works, Manchester
2022	Slung over the bones of a collage – Gallery North, Newcastle
	Process – Asylum Gallery, Wolverhampton
2015	New Art WM – Waterhall Gallery, Birmingham
	The Discerning Eye – Mall Galleries, London

BAZ PROJECTS, COMMISSIONS, EVENTS

2016	The Regeneration Game – The Newbridge Project, Newcastle
2014	The Quartic Rides Again! – Longbridge Light Festival,
2013	Art Dine With Me / Gallery Homebrew – Rhubaba, Edinburgh
	The Hecklers – New Art Gallery Walsall
	The Fiction Show – Tramshed, London
2012	Bread and Fortunes – Frieze Art Fair, London
	The Magic City – Liverpool Biennial

SELECTED PREVIOUS PROJECTS

Please see other projects at www.mattwestbrook.co.uk



The Silent Orchid Festival and Summer School (2020)

The Silent Orchid Festival was originally intended as a campus-wide celebration of orchid growing at the University of Birmingham but was re-imagined as an online Summer School in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

Before lockdown a modular display structure had been made to host the festival. Previously this had been exhibited at the International Orchid Conference at Kew Gardens and the RHS International Orchid Fair in Malvern 2019 (pictured), where it won a silver-gilt medal in the educational display category.

Participants in the Silent Orchid Summer School received an orchid grow kit, art materials and a specially made hanging basket, whilst a programme of talks, demonstrations and discussions on science, heritage and cultural themes were adapted for online delivery. The work created an international network of artists, scientists, historians and orchid enthusiasts who continue to correspond today.



Port Victorious (2016)

This project began with a series of guided pareidolia* walks and drop-in printing workshops being commissioned by Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth.

This led to the design of a set of flags and temporary tattoos that represented animals and locations found within Old Portsmouth's traditional sea defences. The flags were used to adorn the entrance archway of Victorious Festival's inaugural 'World Music Village'.

Initiated by BIG Adventures, the project also involved an elaborate parade, with experienced festival performers Dragon Heart Beats and street theatre director Nick Downes. The procession drew large crowds and celebrated global mythical creatures, escorting a large fire-breathing dragon towards the World Music Village.

*Pareidolia is the psychologists' term for the brain's tendency to detect forms and faces in nature where none exist.

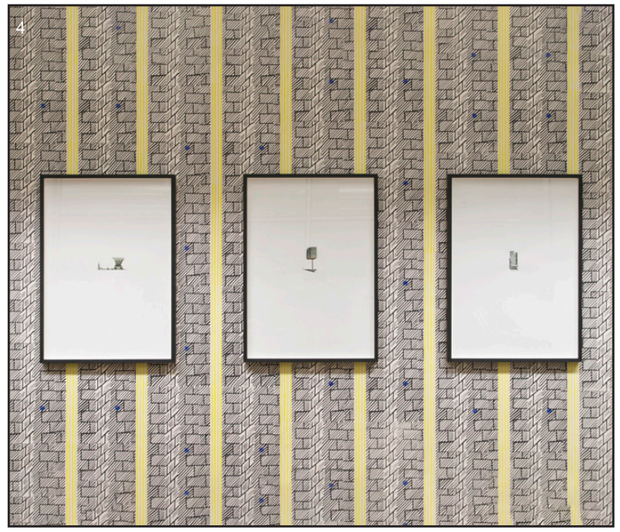


Mr Chamberlain's Orchids (2020)

A three year art and science participatory project that used Joseph Chamberlain's passion for orchid growing as a means to engage new audiences in conversations on cultural, political and environmental themes.

Working in partnership with world orchid expert Philip Seaton the project emerged from a period of residency in the Research and Cultural Collections at University of Birmingham and was presented at the 2019 and 2020 Heritage Open Days at Highbury, the Birmingham residence of Chamberlain.

My work was shown on three specially commissioned plant stands that made architectural reference to public memorials to Chamberlain in Birmingham.



Rotate: Contemporary Art Society, London (2012)

A series of collages inspired by tool and engineering catalogues were shown as part of a presentation of Grand Union studio holders within the Contemporary Art Society's offices.

Work was presented on a specially commissioned reprint of a Curwen Press wallpaper, designed by Edward Bawden in 1930, and reprinted by graphic designers 'An Endless Supply' for the exhibition.

This project gives an indication of how I may decide to frame and present wall based work within a gallery setting gallery.

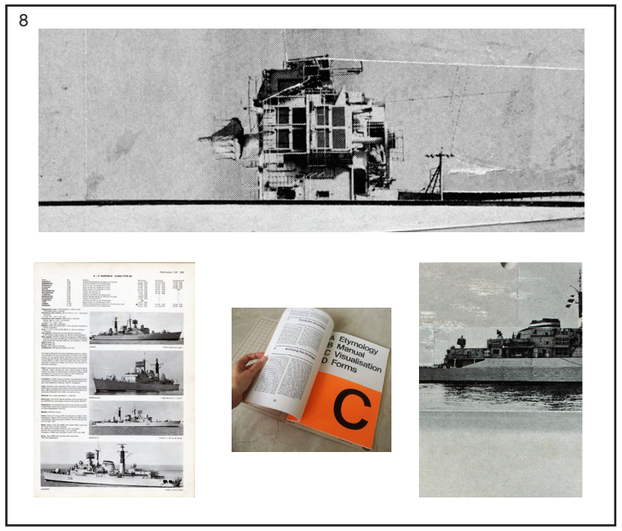
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BAZ - The Quartic Rides Again! (2014)

The desire to develop more public facing projects stemmed from my ongoing teaching experience and previous collaboration with artist and writer Chris Poolman, BAZ (Birmingham Art Zine). BAZ started as a zine, but gradually became a self-appointed 'Art World Think-Tank' and shared alter ego to make work from.

'The Quartic Rides Again!' was a live performance and installation held during the Longbridge Light Festival on the site of the former Rover car factory in Birmingham.

BAZ presented a concept imagining how future archaeologists in the year 3300 might perceive the unusual 'quartic'-shaped steering wheel of the Austin Allegro 1300. They led an interactive performance exploring what people in the future might have envisioned as the origins of this distinctive vehicle and its steering wheel.

Approachable Joe (2019)

A guided walk from Victorian statesman Joseph Chamberlain's home Highbury to the University clock tower named in his honour. Zig-zagging through the side streets and waterways, the three hour walk was a sight-seeing expedition and reflection on the nature of lines of sight, holiday itineraries and the Italian influence on the city.

This project is an example of how walking has become an important part of my research when developing ideas. By discussing ideas with others during a walk I often gain a wider perspective on a project's potential themes.

For example, in this image the group is considering the connection that a cluster of Sequoria, or Giant Redwood, trees planted within Highbury's grounds may have had with the design of the 'Red brick' University of Birmingham campus.

Slung over the bones of a collage (2022)

'Dunlopilli' (on right hand wall) was a large wall mounted work that was shown as part of the group exhibition 'Slung over the bones of a collage' at Gallery North in the University of Northumbria and 36 Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne. The exhibition focused on contemporary artists use of collage and included a range of works by Jennifer Douglas, Neil Gall, Peter Lamb, Paul Merrick and Fay Nicolson.

The title 'Dunlopilli' is taken from the accompanying text of the original image, a prosaic photo of the Dunlopillo latex foam factory in Harrogate, suggesting a plural extension of the image whilst also invoking a distant location.

Imbued with the graininess of the original image and enlarged to cinematic size, the work borders on abstraction and representation, encouraging the viewer to imagine different scenarios, placing them in a moment of creation.

Uncommon Building (2016)
Contribution to academic conference.

I was asked to give a presentation on a fictional building connected with Sheffield. Inspired by my birthplace Portsmouth's connection with the Navy I made a series of collaged landscapes from photos of HMS Sheffield taken from the 'Jane's Ships' books of warships.

I discussed the naming of inanimate objects and led a group visit to Sheffield Cathedral to ring the ship's bell of the World War Two warship HMS Sheffield that resides there.

This project highlights my typical approach to creative work and commissions. I am driven by a passion for uncovering hidden stories, and will often explore new locations, archives, and contexts to craft speculative visions of the future.