

#04 : A BRUTAL UTOPIA.

1/11/21

Photographed and Written by Adrian Maidman.



This series of photographs is the result of very little planning. During a weekend where I initially intended to simply exist with my friends Hugh and Alice, we gradually decided on plans to go to a gig and hit up the Barbican Centre the following day.

Since I have now resorted to obnoxiously carrying my Leica with me to most places, I feel I am trying more often to look for interesting things.



The Barbican Centre itself is amazing, but the surrounding architecture is as much of a spectacle.

Anyone familiar with the area outside of the Moorgate tube station might have noticed the eclectic mix of architecture and industry that seem to change with each street. It's exciting honestly. As with a lot of London's architecture, there is a clear effort to integrate heritage within innovation and I am all for that.

It doesn't always work, so one of the two sides can suffer, but from my perspective, the London environment mostly presents itself as harmoniously diverse.



Just outside the Barbican Centre is a sprawling array of flats that seem to be devoid of settled life. The same can be said for the business district. It's odd and surreal which is exactly what draws me to it.



Before I elaborate more, I have never lived here, nor do I intend to. So any inference in this work regarding the

quality of life in such brutalist and unusual environments is coming from a place of childlike ignorance.



Each building and feature seems to be placed randomly. Not entirely disorganised, just sporadic and at off angles which makes navigating the space more of an intellectual challenge than a physical one. This is a contradiction in the world of “real brutalism” since it defies pure utilitarianism for the sake of aesthetics. Which I think is necessary to make a place like this not horribly depressing.

Introducing subtle organic defiance of utilitarian order and control makes places like the Barbican Centre more welcoming than you’d initially expect. Due to this, it is fair to say that these spaces emit some big Bauhaus energy and that is nothing but a beautiful thing in my eyes.







The balance between aesthetics and utility is important in making a place pleasant, but by trying to perform this balancing act, you are already making a misstep.

Within any architectural project, there is another equally vital element that cannot be ignored. Nature and organism.

The 'Uncanny Valley' is an occurrence that shows how a lack of authenticity in organisms creates discomfort. This is not only true for humanoid robots but also for walkways, houses, and city streets. To our monkey brains, fabrication means conscious alteration and potentially deception, which then means that other humans have conspired (for good or bad) to make this robot/house/supermarket/road etc.

In a practical sense, I am glad this is the way it is because I think that society is generally a good thing. But according to my monkey brain, my species has been trying to control nature for 9 million years and to find myself in a space that is entirely devoid of nature, that which I am designed to overcome, is alien and disconcerting.

(Side Note: Maybe the most universally enjoyable life might exist along the lines of hedonistic ethical primitivism. Please send this to your MP)

I can only say this with confidence since I grew up in a semi-rural area with easy access to many forests and moderately unfabricated landscapes. I love London, but its

considerable lack of unconscious life makes it slightly intimidating and cold.

My point is that plants are good and a vital antidote to the soul-crushing indiscriminate brutality of concrete. And don't just stick a line of trees outside of a tube station. Trees don't grow in lines! We can't even let trees grow naturally. We have to control them in such a way that it looks like they are servants waiting on our command.



The Barbican, on the other hand, seems to share my bitterness. A hidden gem is the Conservatory on the 3rd floor which is a beautifully free and vibrant space that shows a war between nature and concrete where the plants are clearly winning.





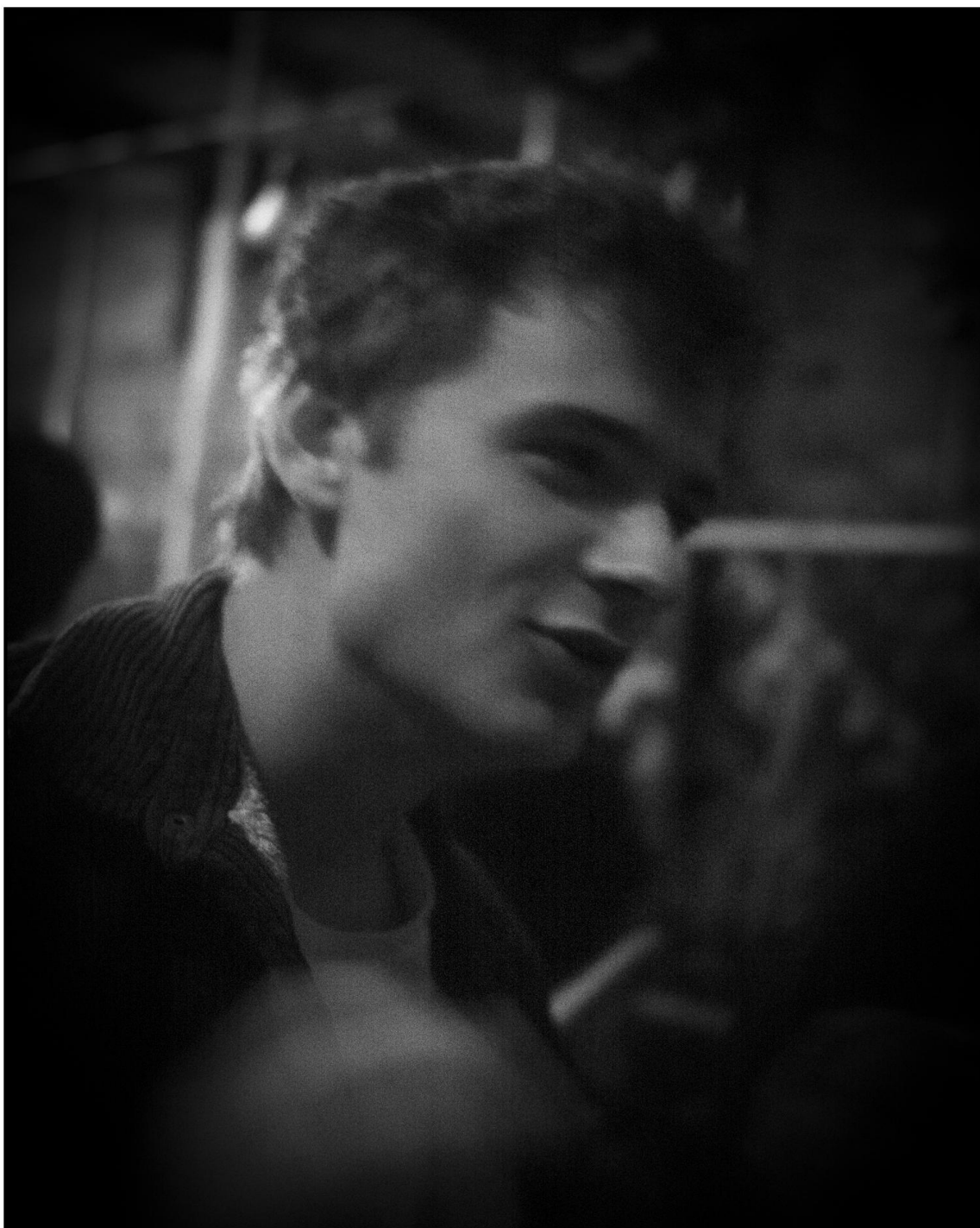
Balance is key here. We need supermarkets, healthcare, transport, housing, industry, and society. But maybe there is room to reintroduce the natural chaos of nature, that which we have been trying to push aside for so long.



Hugh “Homeboy” Selway



Jowan "Jwan" Mead



Bill "Bill" Griffin



My life has been stagnating a little bit recently. The novelty of a new job is beginning to wear off and I am looking to start something more meaningful.

I currently possess an offer from UAL to do an MA in Art and Science in Sep 2022 and I am considerably more interested than I was in my 2021 place. In the meantime, I have to fill that void somehow and these regular articles are helping.

Next week's title will (potentially) be ...

#05 : IN MY AREA.

Photographs Shot on a Leica SL 601.

If, for whatever reason, you wish to not receive any more articles, let me know and I'll remove you from the list, you wimp.