

daily





Black Drone 2014



Cameron and Merkel in a Boat #3 2014

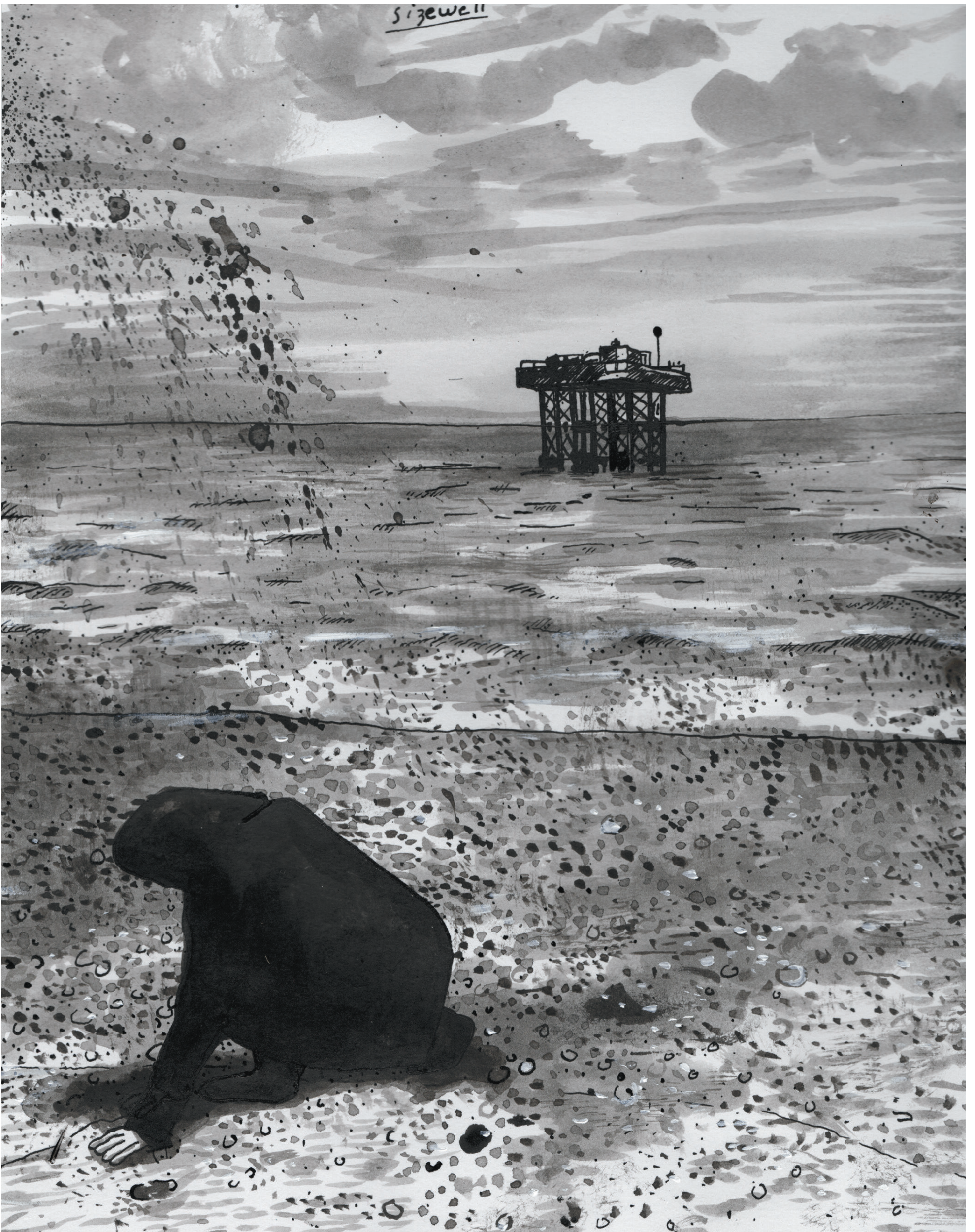
'Daily' accompanies the exhibition of the same name by Phill Hopkins at BasementArtsProject, Leeds UK. 24 October - 1 November 2015. This publication and exhibition forms part of 'About Time', a satellite programme designed to coincide with British Art Show 8. Images ©Phill Hopkins & text ©Bruce Davies/BasementArtsProject 2015.



Two Boys 2015



Crowd Watching Explosion 2014 (front page Border 2015)



Sizewell (Gunshot) 2015



Roadblock 2015



Handgun 2015



Untitled (Scenes from an Execution Variations) 2014

The World Spins

"The daily papers tell of everything except the daily"[1]

What is it that marks the passage of time for us as individuals? Turning on the radio in the morning, as we ready ourselves to confront the day, it is hard not to be overwhelmed by the litany of disasters, violence, corruption, injustice and general despicable behaviour. It seems that this defines our society in the early twenty-first century, if, that is, the media is to be believed. Having been forced into consideration of the world's problems over Cornflakes most of us are then required to change our perspective as we consider our own position

within the world. It is at this point we remove the telephoto lens and replace it with the macro, pulling the focus further and further in until we are dwelling on the minutiae of our own existence. The rest of the world is still out there but for now we must pay strictest attention to our immediate environment.

In an age of social media most of us experience this kind of macroscopic world view on a fairly regular basis. From the Instagrammed meal and observational updates of Facebook and Twitter, through to the six second video snapshots of life through Vine, it is now virtually impossible to leave anything to the imagination. "Believe nothing that you hear and only half that you

see." [2] It is in this shift between an expansive panoramic view of the universe and the narrow view of our own lives that confusion, doubt and disbelief reign supreme; any kind of truth in a situation is hard to pinpoint let alone uphold as a point of view. But of course all of media is presented through a lens that is biased in one way or another, so we should probably be unsurprised that, for example, Maya Angelou never said "A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song." The quote itself is likely to have originated with Joan Walsh Anglund, an author of children's stories in the 1960's, yet it has ended up on a U.S postal stamp attributed to Angelou. [3] Says Ralph Keyes "Famous quotes need famous mouths" and for this very reason



Mother (Camp) 2015. Private collection.



Brother 2015

we ought to be careful of how we read into stories presented as either media fact or motivational meme.

At this point we enter the world of Phill Hopkins, or if we are talking about social media it is more likely that the world of Phill Hopkins enters us. Since the early days of BasementArtsProject Hopkins' work has been a fairly constant presence and whilst the medium may have changed in recent years the message never has. Hopkins, originally a native of Bristol, educated at Goldsmith's and for a long time an established artist that has chosen to locate himself in Leeds, has a voracious appetite for world news and the situations that we as human beings find ourselves subject to. Hopkins is an extremely prolific artist whose past work has involved predominantly drawings and small scale sculptural constructions. When we first exhibited his work as part of a group exhibition in early 2012, it was a single work consisting of a house frame made of matches and presented in a box of sand, a year later he exhibited a similar piece only this time presented atop a single speaker that blasted passages from Mahler, shaking the house to it's very foundations, of which of course there were none. These two pieces were part of a large ongoing series entitled

'Fukushima', a reference to the Japanese nuclear reactor meltdown following the 2011 Tsunami. Running alongside this was another series entitled 'Occupy', again a long running pictorial evocation of events depicted by the media after the banking crisis of 2008.

"Be just and if you can't be just, be arbitrary."[4]

Since late 2012 Hopkins' practice has come to encompass the discipline of painting whilst utilising the chronological possibilities of social media as a vehicle for the communication of ideas. As national media



Outlaw, Politicians and Terrorist 2014

and social media output have led to a form of atomisation within society, with marginal voices, good and bad, suddenly gaining traction with their opinions due to what has become known as the 'echo chamber' effect, it is interesting then to reflect on the possibilities for art within this. The hyperactivity of the national media can, with dizzying speed, take us from the heights of elation to the depths of despair quick enough to give us the emotional bends. In reality news does not happen that quick, returning to the news at various points during the day and late on into the night, the pace of change is glacial. They say a week is a long time in politics well it is even longer when refracted through the lens of national media, it is just designed not to seem that way.

"Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one"[5]

And so how does social media fit into the scheme of things. On the face of it, it would appear to operate in a similar manner to national media as we are fed a continual torrent of information, slightly altered each time it appears. Here though all biases



Picking Strawberries 2015

are presented side by side and we begin to see how naturally the world spins, an indicator that nothing should ever be taken at face value. It is also at this point that the world focus starts to align with the personal and we see information from our friends, neighbours, acquaintances past and present drip fed between the headlines. When this starts to happen suddenly the problems of the world seem very close indeed. With an ever-quickening eye the people working behind the scenes on an array of memes, gif's and spoofs can spin a story into complete abstraction with the twisting of a few words and the weaving of a few faux pie charts.



Cameron & Merkel in a Boat #1 2014

Truth, so they say, is stranger than fiction and for this reason it becomes even harder to tell what is real and what is fake? Amidst this scrolling downpour of activity enters the images created by Hopkins, often several a day, some finished, others -works in progress, sometimes titled, sometimes not, other times just headings that mix the news from which the image has been culled with things that indicate a more localised viewpoint, a life in the studio - 'Studio, Drawing detail, Mozart's Clarinet, Robin and bluetit'. Here news media is ripped from its context, re-presented in paint or Indian ink, uploaded to the internet in varying states' of completion and placed alongside other indicators of Daily life. Mozart, Robin's, Blue Tit's, do you take tea or coffee, biscuit with that, what is being talked about on Women's Hour - no hierarchy, no differential focussing to foreground one specific thing just pure information to make of what you will.

'Time and memory are True Artists; they remould reality nearer to the heart's desire'[6]

The quotidian is important, it allows us to rebalance our efforts and take a less biased look at the world. Remove the media desire to sway emotion in one direction or the other and the pace is immediately slowed down, allowing us a more reasonable aspect ratio, one that our 'fatigued' vision can cope with. The images are generally fairly small and this is intentional, for a start this is how many of us, Hopkins' included, view news media in the twenty-first century, through laptop, tablet and phone. Interpreting these images presented in such a highly stylised manner one starts to remove elements of scale, grandeur, despair and other such emotions. No attempt at explanation, none need-

ed, for an explanation we must instead reach inside ourselves to start finding some answers. It matters not whether it is studies of gun types, 'Cameron and Merkel in a Boat', a 'Roadblock', 'Three Women' or a 'Studio On Fire', the intention here is to convey content without interpretation allowing us, the viewer, to react according to



Women's Shelter 2015

our own feelings. Rather interestingly a recent work entitled 'The Good Shepherd' that reproduced the image of a soldier carrying the body of Aylan Kurdi across a beach, provoked the only negative reaction I've ever seen to a piece of Phill's work on social media. Apparently the echo chamber is not



Bombed Building (Strange Industry Variations) 2014



Man 2014



Exploding Buildings 2014. Private collection.



Night Bombing 2014. Private collection.

infallible. So what is it that makes certain images acceptable in a media context but unsuitable in others? Is it content, length of time between event and the reproduction of images, the presence of a child or is it something external to the work itself? Will certain images unmediated always be off limits? If so, why? Is it that our own emotions and experiences are being brought to the fore, forcing us to confront our own deepest feelings about such situations unmediated by the sensibilities of the masses. Perhaps it is in these moments that we encounter the world at large on a more personal level and see things for what they really are.

[1] Georges Perec

[2] Edgar Allen Poe 'The System Of Dr. Tarr and Prof. Fether'

[https://www.poemuseum.org/blog/did-poe-real-](https://www.poemuseum.org/blog/did-poe-real-ly-say-that/)

[ly-say-that/](https://www.poemuseum.org/blog/did-poe-real-ly-say-that/)

[3] <http://blogs.umb.edu/quoteunquote/2015/04/06/neither-snow-nor-rain-nor-heat-nor-gloom-of-night-stays-this-misattributed-quote-from-its-appointed-rounds/>

[4] 'Naked Lunch' William S Burroughs

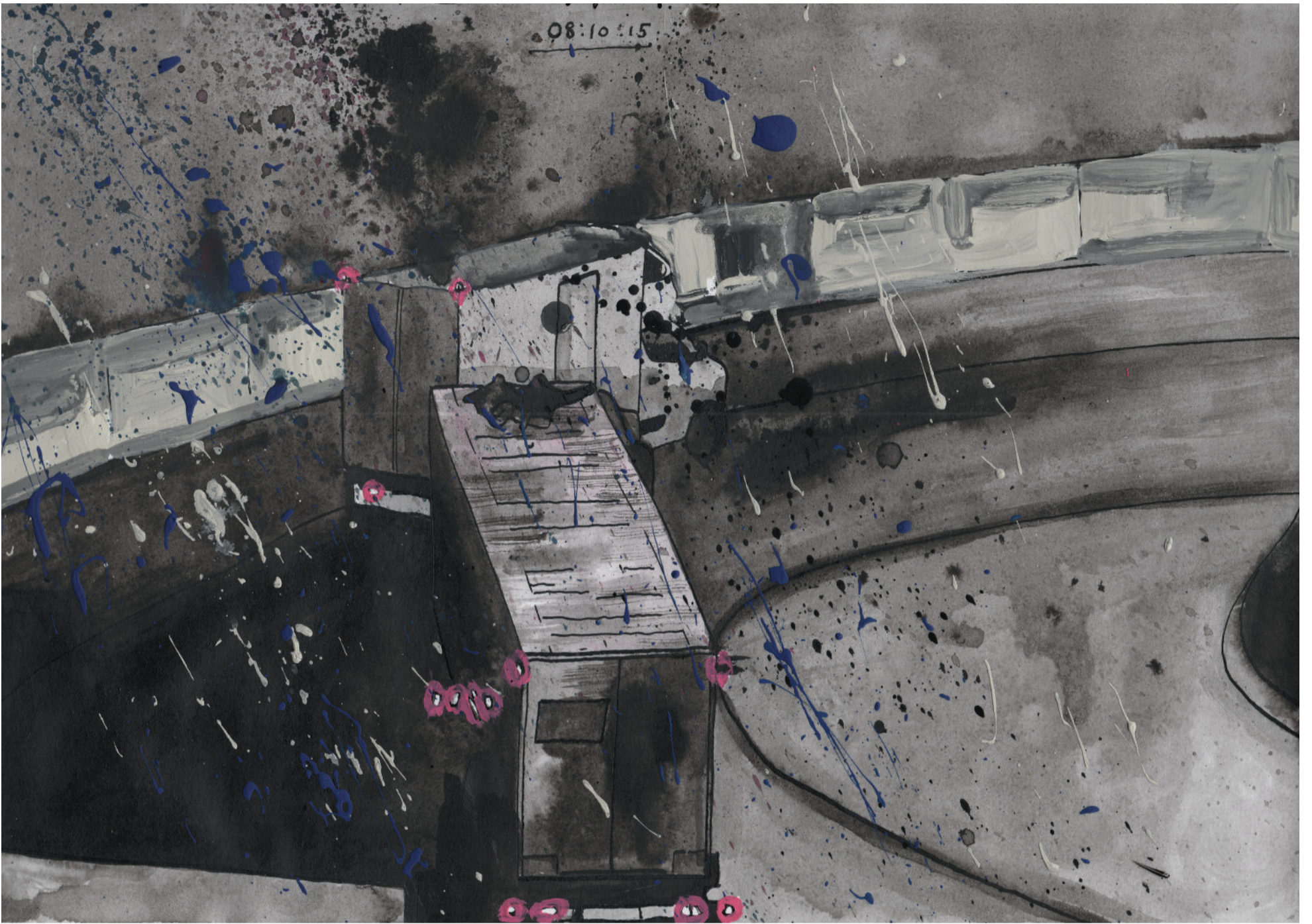
[5] From an epigraph by John Berger for 'The God Of Small Things' Arundhati Roy

[6] John Dewey

Bruce Davies / BasementArtsProject 2015



Examining The Bomb Scene 2015



Eurotunnel Terminal 2015



27:07:15 (Gunshot) 2015



Israa Abed 2015



Crossing the Tracks 2015



Border Fence 2015



British Art Show 8

At



Leeds inspired



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Bombed Tower Block (Syria) 2015