

GREY LINE [TWILIGHT]

On Friday October 28th 2016, Mike Brookes and I, with the help of a dispersed group of international collaborators, performed the public broadcast work *Grey Line [Twilight]* (2016). The work had been developed over the preceding year, in response to a commission by Consonni - a public art production collective based in Bilbao, northern Spain - as a propositional intervention into their day-long international symposium and radio event LaPublika, to be held in Donostia / San Sebastian.⁵² The context and broadcast platform provided by LaPublika consisted of a fifteen-hour public symposium, and continuous live web and international radio broadcast, exploring 'the capacity of art to contribute to creating the public sphere [...] by considering artistic projects as an example of the different possibilities in which art can be formalized to develop a critical gaze on reality' (Consonni, 2016).

Through our performance of a series of live interpersonal connections, *Grey Line [Twilight]* tracked the sunset edge of the shifting shadow of night - as it slowly moved across the surface of the planet, throughout the day of LaPublika's symposium. The work's title references the 'grey line' or 'terminator', as this line of twilight that borders the shadowed and unshadowed regions of the earth's surface is more technically known (Astronomical Applications Department of the U.S. Naval Observatory, 2016, and dx.qsl.net, n.d.). The work followed the progress of that one day's sunset, and its passage, over a scattering of disparate and diverse locations across the earth, towards and over the event site in Donostia. As this thin line of twilight slowly and relentlessly travelled around the world - from the Pacific, across Asia and the Middle East, Europe and Africa, to the Atlantic - we opened a series of sixty-second live audio connections to personal mobile phones, held in the hands of people stood out on the earth's surface. By giving us temporary access to the microphones of their mobiles, these individuals attempted to allow us to eavesdrop onto whatever may or may

⁵² Consonni's LaPublika was co-produced and hosted by the newly opened international cultural centre Tabakalera, in Donostia / San Sebastian, as part of the city's European Cultural Capital 2016 developments and programme.

not be audible around them, as daytime passed into night, within their personal location and environment.



Images 4.2 and 4.3 Documentation images showing the stage and discussion table of LaPublika's public symposium and broadcast hub. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: **07 broadcast event images** - on disc: **Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)**.

Across the day and programme of the LaPublika event, *Grey Line [Twilight]* periodically interrupted the broadcast schedule to connect live to a series of ten participating individuals - as they each stepped out into their own landscape to watch the shadow's edge reach them. In turn, these individuals both occupied and highlighted an accumulating series of named geographical positions across the planet's surface - places selected as delineating points along the path of the progressively advancing 'grey line', and for the time periods within which their specific sunsets occurred. These ten previously unknown and unrelated individual collaborators themselves had been approached and engaged through our activation of an expanded network of personal and professional contacts - either through a series of approaches to 'friends of friends', and 'colleagues of colleagues', or simply through our direct approach to cultural and art organisations identified within the desired locales. The resulting provisional interpersonal audio connections opened moments of access out onto the relentless journey of this one day's perpetual sunset, and onto one of our planet's inevitable rotations - intervening into the ongoing public broadcast stream of LaPublika with fragments of broken or familiar sounds from other public spaces, or by simply offering a reflective minute of somewhere else's live silence.

The intervention of *Grey Line [Twilight]* began at 10:05 Central European Time (CET), as the LaPublika programme in Donostia opened, when we interrupted the event's initial introductions to connect live to the mobile of Maki Nishida in Nagoya, Japan - where the sun was already setting. From this beginning, the structure and accumulation of *Grey Line [Twilight]* became progressively embedded within the conventions and discussions supported by LaPublika's continuous programme and radio stream, across a cumulative series of periodic interruptions - each requiring a pause or cut away from the present symposium proceedings to connect live to a named individual, in a named location, where the sun was currently setting. These periodic one-minute interruptions broadcast the fragmentary aural data reaching the event site as a result of our open person-to-person mobile connections, and marked the passage of twilight's 'grey line' across each of the ten participating individuals in turn. These connections continued with our call to Han Lu in Shanghai, China, at 11:09 (CET); Cauvery Chu in Hong Kong at 11:48 (CET); Alyson Simon in Singapore at 12:51 (CET); Kaori Imai in Kathmandu, Nepal, at 13:38 (CET); Fatima Shamoon in Kuwait City at 16:05 (CET); Fawaz abu Aisheh in Hebron, Palestine, at 16:54 (CET); and Ida Spagadorou in Athens, Greece at 17:30 (CET). At 19:04 (CET), as the shadow of night reached the host site in Donostia, we connected live to the mobile of Olaia Miranda - as she stood on a familiar sunset-facing stretch of the city's beach, a short distance from the LaPublika event venue itself. Our performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]* ultimately concluding with a final connection to Ana I. de Lara, walking out in the closing dusk of Bamako in Mali, as the twilight line of sunset moved on, having passed the symposium's hub in the Basque Country of Spain, and reached her in West Africa, at 20:07 (CET).

In response to this particular context, and for the first time within our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series, the place of intervention entered by our work was not the pedestrian street-level environment offered by the host city but the public radio broadcast resulting from the event as a whole - a communication system and media network that in LaPublika operated through both analog radio technology and digital internet streaming. In their outline framework of their intentions for LaPublika, Consonni proposes the radio as public space. More specifically, they propose radio as a mechanism through which we might consider and manage what is common amongst us - such as

‘language, rites, norms, collective aesthetic processes’ (Consonni, 2016, p. 29); as a medium to make things public, and as a metaphor for the public sphere (Consonni, 2016, p. 35). Drawing from the works of Rosalyn Deutsche and Thomas Keenan, Consonni’s perspective in their considerations of the public is very much linked to discourse - as a constituent and constitutive of the public - and to language, as a counter-model for the visual regime often seen as prevalent within the arts (Consonni, 2016, pp. 32-35). Within the radio broadcast context proposed by LaPublika, and drawing from Benjamin’s writings on radio,⁵³ the voice seems to be particularly central in Consonni’s articulation of the public (Consonni, 2016, p. 35).



Images 4.4 and 4.5 Documentation images of one of LaPublika’s public discussions in progress; in this case a conversation between Rosalyn Deutsche and Richard Huw Morgan. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: **07 broadcast event images** - on disc: **Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)**.

In this context, and holding to the interventional approaches at the root of this work, we began to shape an intervention that we hoped might contribute to and also disrupt the dominant logics of the discursive mechanism proposed by LaPublika - and of their considerations of the public sphere through language, voice, and the human. We hoped to introduce other elements of operation within this specific construction of the public and the common, and therefore of the social. More specifically, our intention was to propose and perform a work that could expand the context of an event primarily articulated discursively; and importantly, to shape a work that might propose that expansion through its

⁵³ See *Radio Benjamin* (Rosenthal, 2014).

actioning - as something done, rather than something said or spoken. In this sense, we were seeking to articulate the performance of a simple action that could directly enter into the conversations, talks, interviews and presentations that constituted the radio event of LaPublika. And in doing so, we hoped that we might widen the context and considerations of the public and the common within the development of that conversation, beyond the dialogues and activities that would already be performed within the room of LaPublika's symposium, and beyond the overtly human focus at its centre.

As previously outlined within my initial descriptions of the *Just a little bit of history repeating* project, we had already engaged the possibilities of radio broadcast technology within a number of our previous works.⁵⁴ In *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* (2010), we had used radio as a mechanism to intervene, and activate an additional and unauthorised layer of use, within the private and commercially operated space of an amusement arcade; the broadcast intervention being made accessible to anyone entering the arcade with a small personal radio device, while remaining otherwise 'invisible' and inaudible to all others. And in *Dark FM* (2008), we established a live radio broadcast link to open a portal between two places using a familiar, and analog, technology - structuring our use of that technology to most directly enable a meeting, 'as a specifically and succinctly structured proximity, between two physically distant places' (p. 24). Our use of broadcast technology in *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand* had enabled our intervention and alternative occupation of a space within which we had been granted no physical access to work. While in *Dark FM*, the broadcast we established, and the connectivity it performed, came to constitute the work itself - that is, the work performed and became manifest as a connection, that opened live and uninterpreted access to a place from where we were currently absent. Now, within LaPublika, the broadcast itself became the site of our intervention; as an evolving and negotiated space emerging from the performance of multiple connections and interactions - established, and made public, during the developing symposium as a whole. This context provided us with an active public broadcast environment into whose connectivity we could intervene. This, in turn, offered me an opportunity to further question and

⁵⁴ See Chapter One 'Aesthetic Roots' for previous descriptions and considerations of our radio works *Alexandra Gardens Bandstand*, pp. 41-42 and pp. 48-51; and *Dark FM*, pp. 23-24.

develop my engagement of scale, proximity and connectivity within my considerations of the construction of social space and place. In approaching the interactions and data transmissions that constituted LaPublika's live and continuous broadcast stream as site, I could explore its inherent behaviours and conventions through a further consideration of use and shared occupation. I could then more fully explore, within our negotiated shaping of the temporary social and collective space of that broadcast environment, how an interventional art work might be conceived and function entirely through and as our performance of that environment's inherent connectivity.



Images 4.6 and 4.7 Documentation images of the technical equipment and broadcast operation centre of LaPublika's public symposium and broadcast hub. These images feature me, and show the position from where I established the international telephone calls within the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Tabakalera, Donostia, Spain. Photos by: Lluís Brunet (Consonni), 2016. A higher resolution copy of these images, and the full image set from which they are taken, are included in folder: **07 broadcast event images** - on disc: **Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)**.

The key propositions of *Grey Line [Twilight]* - as both an interventional public art work and as the concluding phase of the arc of this research - are perhaps most usefully recognised in our intended expansion of the work's public context. At its root, *Grey Line [Twilight]* considers a wider lived landscape, through a shift of perspective that allows the work to address its own performance across the full scale of that landscape. At its simplest, in performing across an expanded topography, the work then tangibly locates itself - and locates all those engaged within it - within the broader situation of that chosen topography. Through a conscious expansion of my previous considerations of scale and proximity as performative spatial practices, the work engages a shift of viewpoint, that may then reveal a wider planetary context - as a broadening

physical and social context that extends out from, and includes, the immediate gathering and physical hub of the LaPublika event. This shift of view, inherent within the work's performance, then inevitably expands to include everyone and everywhere that *Grey Line [Twilight]* then connects - from the immediate conversation and host site of the symposium, to those participating in the work at distance, the wider international listening public, and the shared geographical environment that supports the work as a whole. The pragmatic task and act of *Grey Line [Twilight]* is then seen to inhabit and operate across that wider geographical landscape - through the specific connections that it performs, and in which it becomes manifest. Through our recognition of a distant named individual, the mutual act of our shared telephone call, their specific attempt to share an aspect of their locale, and our choice to listen, these performed connections link us directly to other physical positions - not only perhaps locating us all within the wider landscape of the work, in the present, but also perhaps allowing a wider social attentiveness to each other across its inherent distances.



Image 4.8 Mobile panoramic snapshot of the view of Kathmandu, from where Kaori Imai stood to receive our call during the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo: Kaori Imai, 2016. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, are included in folder: *05 camera-phone location images* - on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

Equally key here is the liveness of these performed connections. As I have previously discussed at length, in relation to our work in Salina most specifically,⁵⁵ this work becomes manifest in and as the situation of its mutual performance. In performing a wider use and activation of that situation in the present, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might then reveal our mutual occupation of a place within which the sun is constantly setting, for some of us, here and now - within

⁵⁵ See Chapter Two pp. 98-102 for my discussions of performance as place in relation to the work *Greetings from Salina / Crossroads of the Nation*.

a shared space where we are all operating simultaneously. In this sense - and enabled by the shift of perspective engaged by the action and operation of this work - we might perhaps redefine and re-delineate the social context and public situation of LaPublika through the performance of additional interpersonal connections at a global scale. Importantly, these additional individuals 'join us' in the present, and from a position within our shared planetary environment that marks the current position of twilight in its passage across the earth's surface. The resulting re-delineation of our current location progressively expands its boundaries to include those individuals who now acknowledge us, in their attempt to help facilitate the wider ongoing task of the work. Their individual contributions not only performing their own direct engagement and inclusion within the considerations and gathering of LaPublika, but also including everyone present within the hub and wider broadcast environment of the symposium, in our and our collaborators' collective attempt to mark and reveal the ongoing rotation of the planet. And here perhaps, for those spectators and participants engaged within the work, the reflective social situation both proposed and actualised by the performance of this collective act - and by this specific use and inhabitation of the planet's telecommunications and broadcast network - might then reveal its broader shared landscape, through an experiential recognition of our broader interconnectedness, and therefore of our broader social space.

Adhering to the formal attitudes and approaches shaped across this interventional project series and inquiry as a whole, *Grey Line [Twilight]* manifests a critical exploration of its context through the focused performance of existing uses and behaviours. Again, we explore the place we are considering through our performance of that place - seeking to offer a refreshed perspective, and opening a space of proposition and reflection, through our actioning of possibilities that are already available. Within *Grey Line [Twilight]* - as within all the previous works across our *Just a little bit of history repeating* series, and as an overt intervention into the discursive frame of LaPublika specifically - these approaches again propose a critical attentiveness to place through use and action. Perhaps more clearly and overtly than in any other work across this series, the proposition and critical functioning of *Grey Line [Twilight]* both rely on being manifest as and through a 'thing done' - and in that 'doing',

in the activation of the connectivity implicit in its task, the work finds a form for the performance of what it proposes and considers. In this sense, the immediacy and tangibility of the mechanisms we employed to facilitate the interpersonal connections at the heart of this act are also inherent to its functioning. While not tactile or overtly physical, these connections are real and live. There is no physical movement or ‘bringing together’ of the disparate and event-specific collective of individuals that gather through the attempted task of this action. Similarly, no additional discursive content is applied or communicated across these connections once they are established. It is simply the establishment and experiential recognition of the connections themselves, that brings the work and its intentions into being.



Image 4.9 Mobile panoramic snapshot of the street view in Hong Kong, from where Cauvery Chu stood to receive our call during the performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*. Hong Kong, China. Photo by: Cauvery Chu (PARA-SITE), 2016. A higher resolution copy of this image, and the full image set from which it is taken, are included in folder: *05 camera-phone location images* - on disc: *Disc 3 Grey Line [Twilight] (2016)*.

Our choice to call an individual’s personal mobile phone, from our position within the room and broadcast hub of the symposium, allows us direct access to them, wherever they may choose to be within their own locale - across an existing infrastructure available via devices we already carry in our pockets. The act of that connection - and more importantly, the daily familiarity and ease of a mobile telephone call - reveals our potential connectedness and proximity, and a shared occupation of place. Our shared occupation being merely highlighted by the work, as a precondition of our choices to overtly make contact with each other or not. Ultimately, it is the self-evident ordinariness and ambivalence of the series of person-to-person telephone calls we then perform that not only enables the work to be done, within the context and network environment offered by LaPublika, but that also allows the wider task and intentions of that work to remain in focus.

If this final phase of my work across this inquiry is rooted in the actioning of connectivity, its specific approaches may then be further recognised in the attentiveness and mutual acknowledgement that our collective performance of these connections might both require and provoke. Our activation of these connections acknowledges a series of otherwise unknown individuals, as they choose to make themselves 'visible' to us, in an attempt to reveal a wider function and fact of our shared environment. These individuals each connect to us directly, and indirectly then to each other; and in the moment of each connection we expand our present situation to include these distant named individuals, and the places where they stand, in our understanding of the here and now. Our recognition of each other is facilitated by the structured act of the work - within which we knowingly performed together, and knowingly for each other. The focal points within our connectivity - selected because of their geographical location on the planet's surface, and momentarily connected by a mutual attempt to perform the task of the work - reveal and acknowledge each other within the same act. And it is as a sustained event, revealed through the accumulation of the connections we establish - and ultimately through the continuous planetary rotation that our connections follow and track - that the broadening of our situation, and our attentiveness to our mutual performance of that wider situation, might become increasingly tangible.

In a direct performance of multiple and simultaneous shifts in scale, that perhaps again brings to mind Martin Creed's *Work No. 232* (2000) - in which large neon letters spell out the statement 'the whole world + the work = the whole world' - the act of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, including the work's collective participants and audiences, and the rotating sunlit planet whose shifting surface shadow we chase, are all potentially combined. As the work intervenes into the unfolding situation of the room of LaPublika's symposium, it attempts to reveal its wider occupation of the room plus the broadcast environment, of the room plus the broadcast environment and listeners, and ultimately of the room plus the broadcast environment and revolving planet as a whole. In my personal performance and experience of the unfolding event of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, these multiple spheres of operation became momentarily active and visible within, and as, the same situation of occupation and use. Through the particular structural and performative choices that shaped *Grey Line [Twilight]* - and for

the first time within my ongoing development of these ideas and approaches across this inquiry as a whole - the work is perhaps then seen to operate, and to allow reflective views, at all these scales simultaneously. And it is the simultaneity of these scales of operation, and the resulting layered perspectives, that the work proposes and performs - and on which its intended functioning and proposition rely.

Through an acknowledgement and performance of connectivity then, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might be seen to momentarily concretise a collective of otherwise disparate individuals who in working together for the purpose and duration of the work are, and are revealed to be, simply 'aware of the appropriateness of their co-presence and assume it as a means to an end' (Delgado, 2008). In their acknowledgement and momentary attentiveness to each other this collective may then begin, geographical point of occupation by geographical point of occupation, to delineate a mode of shared inhabitation that might both reflect and also circumvent Latour's identification that 'it is now the mythical sites of local and global that are hard to locate on a map' (2005, p. 205). They consciously perform, and plot, their own positions within personal, interpersonal, local and global spheres of operation simultaneously to manifest a shared occupation of both geographical and social space. A space seen here to emerge through the performance of connections directly, and through an act of occupation that might also highlight the extent to which the resulting social space is not configured simply as a combination or accumulation of the points or things being connected, but rather, as Latour suggests, through the actioning and act of their connecting, in and of itself (2005, pp. 34-38). In our performance of *Grey Line [Twilight]*, at its simplest, we had hoped to consider and reveal the planet as the landscape on and in which all those engaged within the work were stood. We aimed to reveal that physical ground and landscape of operation through simply performing our mutual occupation of it, across its wider surface. Equally directly, we had hoped to explore how such a global recognition and connection of others, if achieved, may allow a fuller sense of 'being at once there and here', as Butler puts it, 'accepting and negotiating the multilocality and cross-temporality of ethical connections we might rightly call global' (2012, p. 138). Ultimately, and most importantly, *Grey Line [Twilight]* might be seen to shape an act that, in daily and self-evident ways, could at least begin to operate

with and within the physical facts of the planet to open a reflective situation, at multiple scales of engagement and interaction, where 'ideas like world and here', as Morton suggests, 'begin to look not like big abstract concepts but rather small, localized, human flavored' (2016, p. 32).