'Rewiring Brutalism: A Return to Spatial Futures Through *Musique Concrète'* is a collaboration between Photolanguage (myself and N G) and the sound artist collective the Langham Research Centre (represented by I Chambers and R. Worby), and is a return to architectures encountered in Photolanguage's production of the *Brutalist Map of Paris* for Blue Crow Media in 2017 (D.Lamberton). The map featured around 40 different buildings, most of which were beyond the Parisian *Peripherique* in the new towns of urban expansion. Here we are returning to just a select few with particular potentialities for further imaging and sonic responses.

Photolanguage is collaboration that has been active since the late 1990s and evolved out of a shared interest in photography as a medium of art practice and as urban and architectural documentation. We have been repeatedly drawn to the legacy of modernity, and among the projects we have worked on in the past was a major documentation of the post war reconstructions of Calais in N France and, more recently, the legacy of modernism in the county of East Sussex, from its coastal architectures to the modern infrastructure landscapes of its inland reservoirs. Overtime we've evolved different strategies for the integration of text and image, and an experimental working of the photographic image. Our exhibitions and publications conduct, what we would call, a *utopic* return to the physical remains of modernism in order to reactivate new narrative possibilities within them, to re-imagine, and to allow our 'documentations' to hover productively on the borders of fact and fiction.

This project, which was initially commissioned as part of the Barbican Centre's *Life Rewired* programme, focuses on Brutalism as a particular moment in the evolution of architectural space as a form of technology. Parisian brutalism of the 1960s-late 70s, involved a diverse and complex set of spatial expressions through which the new cities of the post war urban expansion in Paris were to evolve, and new forms of public space/ collective space were proposed, invested with concepts of participation and encounter (often informed directly by Marxist critiques of urban realm and social anthropology).

We understand Brutalism to represent a contested phase in the technological drive of modernity, one which still holds relevance for our current moment. Brutalism represents in part a continuation in the onward domination of life by technology and the machine, but which also attempted to reassert a material poetics, valuing qualities of the 'as-found' and the hand-made, and which desired to establish platforms for new forms of human relations and communication. In returning to this moment we bring questions to bear on our present, about the spaces we inhabit collectively, our perceptual response and our role as agents within them.

What you will see and hear this evening is not so much a *tight* coordination of collaborative activities between us and the Langham Research Centre, but more like a parallel positioning of two practices with a similar set of interests in Brutalist space and in acts of recording and re-presenting urban spaces. In returning to Paris, Nigel and I have largely focused on the work of Jean Renaudie and Renée Gailhoustet in Ivry-sur-Seine and Cité Rateau, La

Courneuve in N.E. Paris. Iain visited Ivry, but Robert also made recordings at other sites that he selected from the map, such as Le Corbusier and Lucio Costa's Maison du Bresil at the *Cité Universitaire* and Niemeyer's Labour Exchange or *Bourse* at Bobigny.

So here is an assemblage of impressions and expressions about brutalist space, rather than a singular, coordinated response. And this prompted a particular curatorial approach: the visual work is presented *as if* it were fragments of a bigger archive of experimental research about these spaces. This registers that the project is, by definition, incomplete; but makes of its lacks, gaps and absences an ordering and aesthetic opportunity, a frame for the presentation of the work as an open-ended process and set of questions. We've used improvised 'archival' folders, old library cards, and zoned the display into different categories of recording activity.

This archival impulse follows on from strategies of presentation that Nigel and I have used previously. We are also showing here a series of 10 'fabricated' journal covers produced for an exhibition at the *Institut Francais* South Kensington, to accompany the launch of the Brutalist map: an imagined graphic evolution of the invented architectural journal, *La Revue Générale Brutaliste* over 2 decades (and inspired by the design of the covers of the real journal *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui* over that period). We've also added a new example for this exhibition, an edition cover on Renée Gailhoustet's Spinoza housing block in Ivry.

Gailhoustet is the only female architect that we found to include on our Brutalist map, a prolific architect of the second half of the 20th century who worked alongside Renaudie at Ivry and independently at other sites in Paris, such as at the Ilôt St Denis and Aubervilliers.

Renaudie developed the incredibly complex architecture of the 'combinatory' system, that you will see mentioned in the text and represented photographically throughout the exhibition, and which finds its most dynamic and expansive expression in the reconstruction of Ivry-sur-Seine town centre: which is often referred to as *Les Etoiles d'Ivry* (the stars of Ivry): a multi-phased development over three decades, in which a principle of 'difference' was applied; that is, every apartment is spatially different, its uniqueness facilitated by a fastidious working and reworking of star shaped plans, stacked, rotated, spliced and stretched, and all of course drawn and imagined in the pre-digital era.

In a previous return to Paris, Nigel and I were able to visit a number of apartments within the early, Jean Hachette phase of Ivry. But for this project we were interested to engage and re-present, not the domestic interior (which, of the ones we saw, are successfully inhabited and valued spaces) but the rather the more uncertain sites of the thresholds and circulatory spaces that connect and transition between these new citadels of advanced spatial speculation with the more normative spaces of the surrounding city. The public threshold spaces of Ivry and Cité Rateau are well-traversed, and yet are also subject to the effects of withdrawal and uncertainty as urban spaces. They are highly wrought spaces of architectural authorship, of extreme spatial deliberation, but also of contingency and decay, and a programmatic hybridity that defies easy assimilation.

In a few final comments, I would like to extend out a little from the two fragments of quotation from Renaudie over here on the side of the table: 'Communication in every direction … the stirrings of a refusal'.

The notion of the city as a combinatory, complex organism underpinned Renaudie's thinking about how architecture and urbanism needed to be holistically combined, fully integrated. He wrote in an article in *L'Architecture D'aujourd'hui* (1968), 'The city is a combinatory where, on every level of organisation, one encounters phenomena of communication operating in every direction'. And it was against the tide of the capitalist model of the redevelopment of Paris that Renaudie proposes a new combinatory urbanism, as, literally a form of revolt / revolution through the production of space, as the 'stirrings of a refusal' against 'banality and despoilation'

Iréné Scalbert observed 'that Renaudie's revolt was not just about the terms of politics or the social, but concerned 'the totality of our preconceptions'. He writes, 'Spaces in his buildings are purposely disconcerting. They are only partially segmented and closed; they include transitional areas with no prescribed function. Collective spaces … are uncommonly generous … They describe constellations set within the larger constellations of the apartment, the building and the town centre, and they host what Renaudie called, in opposition to the more obviously functional uses, the '*abstract content'* of our lives'.

So, through our rapid journeys into Parisian brutalism we re-present here through sound, text and image a sampling from these spaces of 'abstract content'; a proposition to re engage the latencies of these spatial legacies, to look and listen harder toward that essential 'refusal of banality' on our own terms, and in our own times.