I Am Not Tom Pope, You Are All Tom Pope

The Old Town Police Station

In an early scene of the film *Triple Cross* (Terence Young, 1966) about Eddie Chapman, English criminal turned double agent, played by Christopher Plummer, is approached in the bar of the Hotel de la Plage, St Helier by an interviewer from BBC Survey and asked: "Excuse me Sir may I ask your profession?" Chapman replies: "Financier, [he pauses] I handle other people's money." The interviewer then enquires "...and what made you choose Jersey for your holiday?" Chapman answers: "Well, they tell me friendships ripen quickly here [turns to observe young blonde woman walking by]." Eddie Chapman earned a reputation as a safe cracker for 'Jelly Gangs' in the West End of London before jumping bail and fleeing to Jersey in 1945. Pursued in Jersey for his crimes, the spectacle of Chapman evading arrest by jumping through the closed window of the dining room at Hotel de la Plage is magnified in a later scene in the film. Chapman's subsequent arrest, imprisonment in Jersey under Nazi rule and work as double agent, code named Zig Zag, is the stuff of World War II high espionage legend. And his activities as a spy bought him freedom and leniency from various authorities after the war.

Tom Pope, Arch*isle*: The Jersey Contemporary Photography Programme International Photographer in Residence also arrived in Jersey via London in 2015. While Pope was not seeking to evade the consequences of any criminal offence in the city, the 'performance photography [and film]' that he has produced in and around the Boroughs of Battersea, Kensington and Chelsea and elsewhere – *Weak Anarchy* (2014) *Fountain Bike* (2014) or *Scrumping in Monaco* (2012) for example - deliberately play with the boundaries of accepted social conventions and normative behaviour. Over the past ten years Pope's practice has deployed an absurdist brand of self-portraiture which frequently creates and records a spectacle of his own making. Such acts of 'weak anarchy' Pope says involve 'the idea that you can be naughty without breaking things...if I break a branch off a tree that's naughty, if I shake it until all the petals come off it's okay, that's just wrong but okay.' Increasingly, these acts not only engage audiences as observers, they seek to recruit people in the process of making photographs and films, often spontaneously, sometimes uneasily, in public spaces. Pope's plea of mitigation in erring or distracting the public from their routines in this way is humour; a facet that he says 'cannot be kept out of art.'

There is a long tradition of art institutions outreaching to engage new and more diverse communities and promote inclusion. Photographic education is certainly a cornerstone of the Arch*isle* Programme at the Société Jersiaise. Tom Pope has delivered over thirty workshops to a broad spectrum of participants as part of his remit as Photographer in Residence. Pope is clear about his own position on education which is strongly linked to his increasingly collaborative/participative approach. 'My practice' he says 'does not make artwork for a community, it creates a community through the act of making.' This approach, has certainly required 'friendships to ripen quickly' in Jersey, an island community which can in some respects be conservative. The making of *The Last Portage* a film which records the feat of pushing a boat from the east coast of Jersey to west coast in one day depended entirely on the participation of the community. Further evidence of collaboration is suffused throughout this exhibition.

Tom Pope is certainly not alone as an artist experiencing absurdist, playful and subversive impulses. He cites, for example, contemporary groups such as Space Hijackers (1999-2014). The spectre of Guy Debord and the Situationist International is ever present in his work, in particular, Debord's *Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play* (1958):

> The new phase of affirmation of play seems to be characterized by the disappearance of any element of competition. The question of winning or losing, previously almost inseparable from ludic activity, appears linked to all other manifestations of the tension between individuals for the appropriation of goods. The feeling of the importance of winning in the game, that it is about concrete satisfactions — or, more often than not, illusions — is the wretched product of a wretched society. This feeling is naturally exploited by all the conservative forces that serve to mask the atrocious monotony of the conditions of life they themselves impose.

In 2015 when Jersey played host to the Island Games and the population was briefly inflated by hundreds of competitive sportsmen and women, Pope was presented with an interesting arena in which to situate his artistic practice. His response was to stage limbo events, both within the 'games village' itself and elsewhere. In the series *Limbo vs High Jump* 'sports photography' of high-jumpers participating in adjudicated events is juxtaposed with photography of improvised limbo games within which no concrete system for the measurement of success exists. This inverted figuration of upward and downward bodily challenges enacts Pope's analysis of Debord's critique of play. The symbols for this preoccupation within the series are perhaps the poles around which the activities pivot. In the limbo images, painting his own stick to resemble a surveyor's range pole is the final visual pun.

In *Limbo vs High Jump* Pope appropriates relevant images from the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive, the institutional collection hosting his photographic residency. Alongside this subject specific research, Pope has surveyed much of the photographic archive seeking out portraits, groups and views that caught his attention. Stand out images have been re-digitised and fashioned into wearable masks. In the installation *We Can Be Together* and the photograph *Players* new kinds of archival communities are created. In photographic archives people, places, things that never the twain shall meet, in fact, collide.
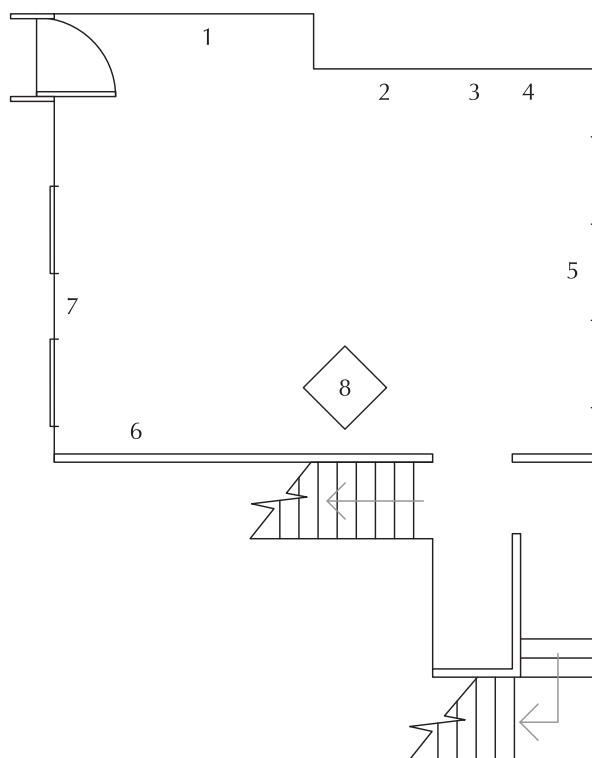
The Old Town Police Station

Pope's engagement with the photographic archive during his residency has been extensive. *Propositions* is a digital projection of 80 annotated postcards made from scanned photographs that have been distributed across St Helier; slipped into people's pockets or left in cafés in a homage to the German Occupation propaganda campaign of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. *Fragments* presents the remains of 12 photographs from the archive after a game devised by Pope has been played. In this game, players drawn together through various social groups are given a circular perspex chip and invited to flip it onto a photograph. Where the chip lands a disc is cut out and made into a badge which is given to the player to wear. *Editing (a game for one player)* is derived from Pope's question: where are the rejects from the archive? Working through a family photograph collection which had been rejected from the archive in paper format, Pope identified a trait where the photographer would shoot the same scene in multiples of three. Inspired by Duchamp's *3 Standard Stoppages* and Baldessari's *Choosing (A Game for Two Players): Carrots*, a concept has been developed where 29 triptychs (87 photographs) are dropped from a height of one metre onto a plinth and displayed where they land. This game of chance astutely questions the fact that archives are defined both by their content and what they choose to exclude in a period of too much photography (Parr, 2012). The photographs have now been digitised.

Certain theoretical perspectives directed at photographic archives have sought to interrogate the disciplining power of the archive as a system within which, once accessioned, photographs lose meaning by becoming abstracted from the networks of communication and use to which they were put before entering the repository (Sekula, 1986). But this reading of the archive as a terminal point after which photographs are separated from authentic use is over simplified (Rose, 2000). Photographs and photographic archives are not passive; they are dynamic ecosystems within which identities are defined and re-defined (Edwards, 2013). Tom Pope's interventions actively redistribute images from the archive in new networks of authenticity. As such they reveal the value of placing artist alongside archivist. Long shall these games be played!

Gareth Syvret

References
Debord, G. (1958) 'Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play', in *Internationale Situationniste* #1. Translated by Reuben Keehan.
Sekula, A. (2003) 'Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital', in Liz Wells (ed), *The Photography Reader,* London: Routledge: 444.
Rose, G (2000) 'Practicing Photography: an archive, a study, some photographs and a researcher', in *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26/4: 555-571.
Parr, M. (2012) *Too Much Photography*, http://www.martinparr.com/2012/too-much-photography/ Accessed, 16 September 2015.
Edwards, E. (2011) 'Photographs: Material Form and the Dynamic Archive', in C. Caraffa (ed.), *Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History*, Berlin: Deutscher Kunsrverlag: 49.
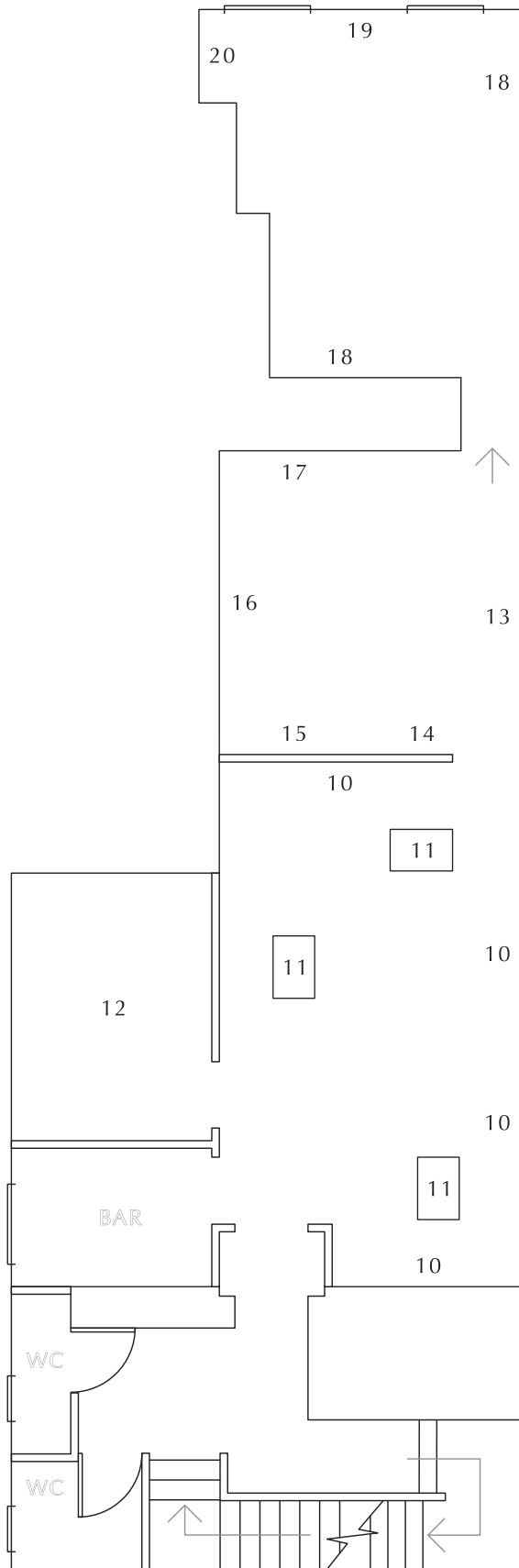
GROUND FLOOR
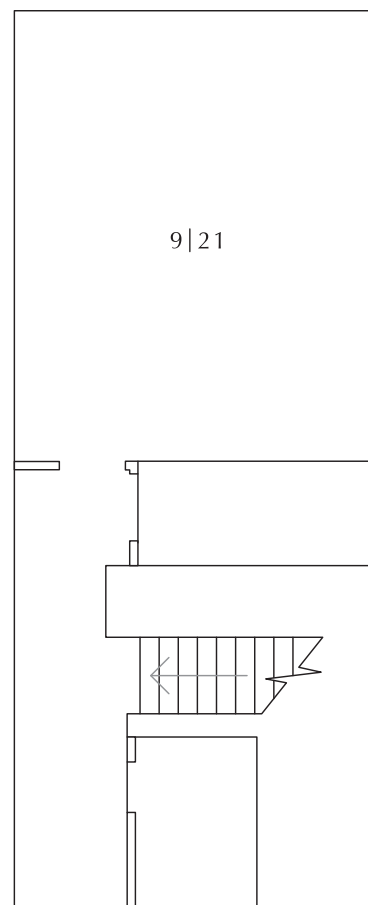
VAULT

The Old Town Police Station

19

20

18

18

17

16

13

15   14

10

11

11

12

10

10

11

10

BAR

WC

WC

I Am Not Tom Pope, You Are All Tom Pope

The Old Town Police Station

LIST OF WORKS

1 – Duchess
16x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1050

2 – Best Practice
20x20 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1200

3 – Spring/Summer 15
11x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£900

4 – Escape Route
11x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£900

5 – World Record Attempt
20x20 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1200

6 – Come Play Me
20x20 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1200

7 – Tower
Film
Duration: 34.44 minutes
Edition of 5 + 2AP
£1200

8 – Editing (a game for 1 player)
69 rejected photographs from the Société Jersiaise
Photographic Archive on plinth (arrangement of
photographs variable)
Edition of 5 + 2AP
Price on application

9 – The Last Portage
Short Film
Duration: 20 Minutes
Edition of 5 + 2AP
Price on Application

10 – We Can Be Together
16 wearable face Masks made from portraits in the
Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive
Each Mask sold individually
edition of 40 + 5AP
£50

11 – Fragments
16.5x23.3 inches
12 Photographs and corresponding badges
Display on 3 plinths
Each photograph sold separately
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£950

12 – Propositions
Slide Show of 80 photographs from the Société
Jersiaise Photographic Archive scanned and
distributed across St Helier
Edition of 5 + 2AP
Price on Application

13 – I am Not Tom Pope
11x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£900

14 – The Lesson
20x20 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1200

15 – Players
20x20 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£1200

16 – Pitting the Olive
Film
Duration: 13.09 minutes
Edition of 5 + 2AP
£1200

17 – The Rebellious Gardener
11x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£900

18 – Low Vs High
Series of 9 photographs
Variable sizes
C – Type Prints
Edition of 9
10x10 inches – £600
10x13 inches – £650
10x15 inches – £700

19 – Jeffrey's Leap (Best of 12 attempts)
Unique Plywood and photographs
(hanging on the wall)
Price on Application

20 – Naughty Naughty
11x16 inches
C – Type Print
Edition of 7 + 2AP
£900

21 – The Service
Performance event with resulting film and photos
£50 to destroy a Martin Parr photograph