

Mark King & Dr John Marsden discuss Look on me and be renewed Transcript

0:06 Mark King

My name is Mark King, and I am a Barbadian visual artist. My interest lies in the interplay between the built environment and the human mind. I'm looking out for patterns, sharp angles, patterns within the environment that I can flip and rotate and turn into a repeating pattern. A lot of things are going through my mind.

0:31 John Marsden

I'm John Marsden. I'm an English psychologist based here in London. And my job is to help people recover from addiction. And I use a very new, for our field, approach based on trying to help people attain cognitive control over their urges, and emotions that are pulling them towards drug use.

0:57 Mark King

UP Projects and Science Gallery London invited me to submit a proposal centred around collaborating with the researcher. And I hopped on the King's College London website, and I was looking through the department and reading some papers - thousands of times, that's just the abstract to get an idea of trying to understand to understand it, and I read a couple of your studies and spoke with you via Skype. Yes. And we found that we had these parallels that we were both kind of exploring, yeah. How does the exercise of documenting the environment through photography, through seeing, how does that benefit your patients?

1:40 John Marsden

We give our patients a little disposable camera, and we just say, look, take some pictures of places that reminds you of using, they're often external shots. They include street corners, pubs, park benches, bus stops, stairwells, front doors, hallways, kitchens; point of view, looking out the window, for example. And we just lay it all out, I guess it's the idea that we've got a - we've got a representation of the built environment, that's, that's been captured by this person, they are able then to use that image as a springboard. So if it's, say an image of them, of what it's like to look through their curtains down on the street, it might be a conversation about what would you normally be thinking, as you look at that scene? How often have you done it? Are there any thoughts that come to mind while you're doing that?

Any other images, any other memories? And it just becomes a really rich log of the sorts of possible targets for therapy.

2:58 Mark King

Yeah, and that's an interesting word you used there - targets. Because when I create patterns, what I'm doing is I'm imbuing them with meaning they're there to empower, they're there to remind.

3:10 John Marsden

With a pattern that you've - you've sort of drawn from the environment manipulated or something, what didn't happen, it's sort of DNA, a memory of where it came from?

3:20 Mark King

Yes, a little nod to where it came from. And a recontextualization of that nod as well. Work with patterns, shapes, colour, they allow me to transport the viewer, the person who's in this environment to a new place, and it is a way of more importantly, it's a way of communicating very quickly.

3:44 John Marsden

What were you hoping to get from the kind of workshop? Can you give me an idea of what well, what how it worked and what was the sort of plan?

3:56 Mark King

The first workshop involved a custom garment. Yes, making and just a little preview as to how I make patterns, and how they can put their own spin on pattern making. I'm actually collaborating with a Dutch designer, Bregje Cox on a capsule collection of men's garments, and the collection and brand name is "enclothed cognition". So, bringing that into the fold, and empowering the participants to create surface patterns on an already available resource. The second day was a field day in London Bridge where they paired off and I handed them disposable cameras with 27 exposures. And what was very rewarding to me was, without any prompting, they were already looking for patterns. They were fully engaged, and they are in an area that they did not spend any time in any significant time and before are taking their time. Yeah, yeah, all your space. And they were looking at the details. So that led to the third day where you came in. And we laid out all the photos that were printed.

5:12 John Marsden

Absolutely, I didn't know what patterns and images would be captured. I also didn't have any expectation that there would be personal meaning in a way. But what I thought was absolutely fascinating was the number of times one of the participants could point to a picture taken, and through just some friendly conversation, to hear that that image had reminded the person of a memory from early childhood. And I thought we had a really interesting conversation with the participants about that sort of personal connection.

5:54 Mark King

Essentially, this serves as source material for the patterns that go back into the environment, I knew that you would be able to draw meaning. And a lot of just gems from their thoughts on the photos, and what they photographed. But I just was not expecting that just constants traded awesomeness. I have no other words, to use for that, yes.

6:24 John Marsden

By taking a picture, you almost change the environment, you make that place significant, you almost freeze in time that place, which will forevermore be on that picture. And it's quite a, it's a very cool thing to do.

6:42 Mark King

And that's what brought me to this in the first place. In my research, the seeing how our brain on the cellular level constructs, the environment that you're in, so we're all seeing and experiencing it differently.

6:57 John Marsden

Yes. Say the group we've worked with, in this experience so far? What would your hopes be for the participants in terms of how they sort of engaged with the built environment, you know, going forwards in the next month or so?

7:14 Mark King

Just pay more attention to the details. think more about their place, and their power within the environment, and just step outside of their, their bubble.

7:28 John Marsden

Do you know what's amazing? What you just said, is exactly what I might say about my own patients? No difference. How about that? [*laughter*] For me, I know that what I'm going to take away is a renewed curiosity. I'm now sort of supercharged with ideas of how I'm going to ask people to, in a way to look for patterns to look for light and shade. And to have a sense of wonder, because in a way, it's fine. It's important, you know, but helping someone deal with intrusive cravings, you know, the strong desire is fine, but what are we going to replace that with? And it seems to me that, you know, coming towards you, what I'm seeing is an opportunity to just have this sense of wonder and to be to feel in a way around us that this is enough. This is this is good. This is meaningful.