



## N°/4

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### ESTATE ANDREA LUKA ZIMMERMAN, LASSE JOHANSSON AND DAVID ROBERTS

A new feature-length film is being set in an East London housing estate.

For the last three years the Haggerston Estate has attracted the attention of national newspapers, television and the architectural community. Sited on the Regents Canal in Hackney it is scheduled for demolition later this year, due to be replaced by a new luxury apartment development, 'City Mills'.

In 2007 the council used orange boards

IMAGES: Photo Stills from the re-enactment scene depicting the hands of victims, a duel between Richardson's two heroines Pamela and Claire on the skyline of the new development rising alongside the Haggerston Estate.  
PHOTOS: Briony Campbell, 2012



to cover the windows of the empty flats in order to prevent squatters from occupying them. The remaining residents answered this institutional action by filling the boards with large photographs of their faces. As the portraits re-humanised the façade, they also materialized a critique to the council decision of demolishing the building. I am here was an action initiated by two long-term residents: the artists Andrea Luka Zimmerman and Lasse Johansson, who followed this project with the book *Estate constructed* around a photo essay of Haggerston's

empty flats.

The same residents are now working in collaboration with David Roberts, an architectural researcher at UCL, on a new project: the film *Estate*.

As David explains, 'Haggerston rose in the 1930s as a proud symbol of hope for slum dwellers in the East End. After decades of neglect, its handsome facade crumbled and it became known as 'the heroin capital of Europe'. The progressive decay of the building illustrated the decay of its social context. Now Haggerston's final block

stands alone awaiting demolition, as if demolition would be the cure for its social pathologies. What are the reasons that justify demolition? What impact does it have on the lives of current residents? Who are the residents? Do they need cure?

Capturing a moment of imminent transition, *Estate* addresses some of these questions as it reflects upon 'urgent matters of regeneration, gentrification and architecture; its reasons, possibilities and consequences'. As Andrea explains, 'it is a film about time and place, dreams and wonder',



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LEFT: Still from the documentary scene following residents on ship day, where they were invited to share out unwanted furniture before leaving the estate.  
Photo: Thore Henningsen, 2012  
BELOW: Photograph of Samuel House, the last-standing block of the Haggerston Estate, transformed in 2009 by the public art photography 'I am here'.  
Photo: Roman Griffiths, 2010



or as David describes, 'Estate opens public housing to scrutiny'.

Haggerston blocks were curiously named after the heroines of the English novelist Samuel Richardson: Pamela, Lovelace, Harlowe, Lowther and Samuel. Back in the 18th century, Richardson expanded the dramatic possibilities of the novel by his invention and use of the letter form (epistolary novel), which allowed him to explore characters and personalities. For example, in 'Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded' the story is told by the heroine herself, through her correspondence. By telling the story in the form of letters, Richardson allowed the reader to access the consciousness of his characters, their sense of class, gender, how they fitted in the dominant moral codes and how those conducted their behaviour.

Estate is a feature-length film part documentary, part fiction, where the residents of the Haggerston Estate will embody Samuel Richardson's characters. Just like in Richardson's novels, where the story was told by the characters themselves, here the story is told by the characters of the building: the remaining residents. Re-enacting the past characters of the novels, the residents will inevitably enact themselves today and their projections for the future.

A mix of archive material, documentary footage and fictional imagined scenes of the future of the community, the film will explore general assumptions about housing

estates as threatening environments and celebrate the diversity of its residents. Addressing the morality that guided the architectural design of the building, as well as the perhaps questionable moral intentions that justify its demolition, the film will record the life of the building up to its end.

The aim is to 'chronicle the curious moment of creation and destruction when this dilapidated estate confronts its future. The final block will fall this Autumn as a new construction rises alongside it. Past and future will meet for a moment', says Andrea.

We visited the team of artists at their flat

in Haggerston Estate, from where they're working on the film. The flat feels familiar and comfortable, objects witnessing their long presence there. Around it, other flats are being emptied; residents get rid of furniture and prepare to leave. Surrounded by the subject of the film, they live their last days at Haggerston depicting the estate's transition.

The estate will be included in Open House weekend this year, hosting a day of installations, tours, discussions and open-air film screenings. Visit [estatefilm.co.uk](http://estatefilm.co.uk).



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