



METHODS OF CONTEXTUALISING
WRITTEN RESPONSE

PROMPT 1

150-200 words Statement

Architectural Spikes



Once the object for the brief was chosen, it was important for us to share our subjective knowledge, understanding, experiences and political and cultural perspectives about homeless and hostile city design in the UK but also our respective countries, since the three members of the group come from three very different backgrounds.

Such sensitive subject influenced our mood and after careful discussion and research, we decided to come up with a positive, inverted response to the Architectural Spikes. As graphic designers, we are aware we can't change systematic problems, but we can use graphic design to create work that critiques and raise awareness.

The outcome, a campaign to raise awareness within communities by informing how to create a donation box and sharing resources to support local homeless individuals.

The following elements were collectively designed for the campaign:

▲ Logo, Stickers and Vouchers

▲ Small box, big impact leaflet

To raise awareness on how to support homeless individuals in the community and how to build a helpful donation box.

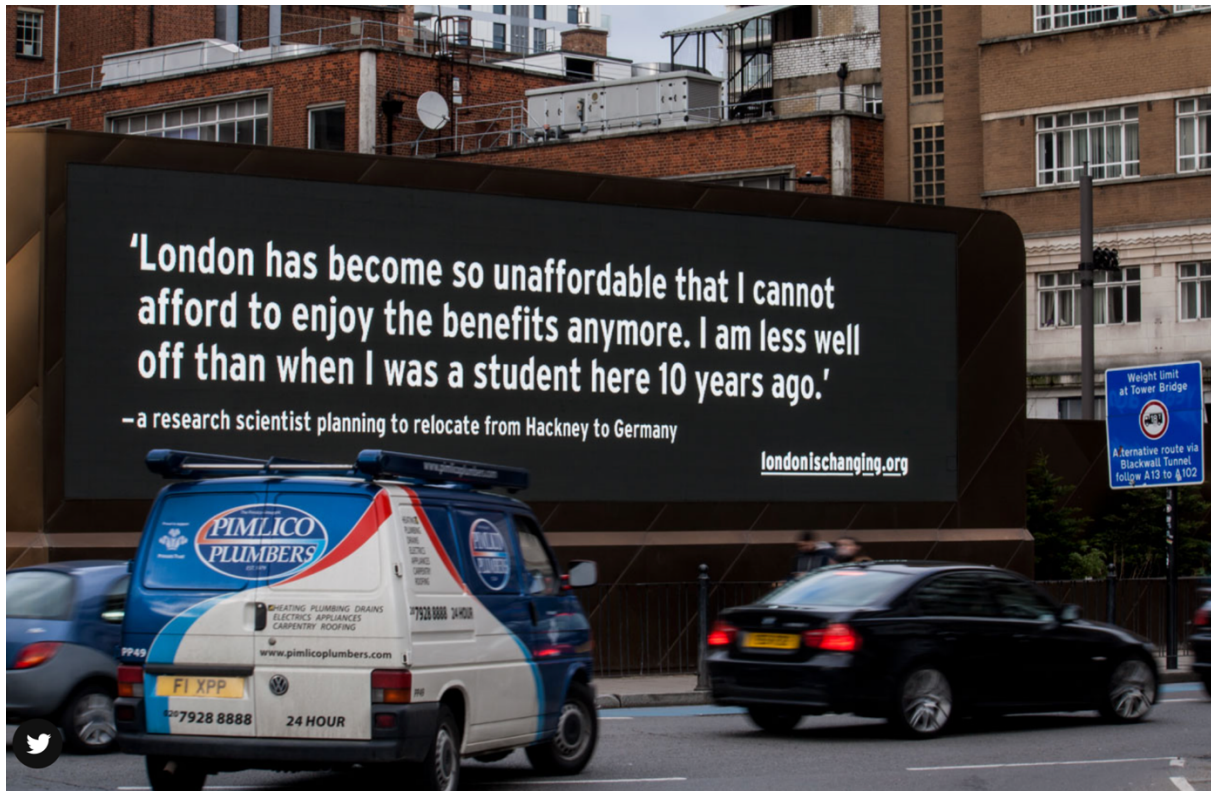
▲ Free resources leaflet

To inform homeless individuals where to find support and free resources available in their community or local area.

▲	▲	▲	▲
Via	Via	Via	Via
methods of investigating, we drew on the concept idea of the campaign.	methods of cataloguing, we catalogued items and resources to share.	methods of translating, we transformed the spikes visual meaning.	methods of iterating, we designed a variety of campaign elements.

PROMPT 2
Annotated Bibliography

London is Changing by Rebecca Ross, 2015.



London is Changing, this is not only the title of this project by the graphic designer and programme director Rebecca Ross, but a statement of an always evolving city. However, this doesn't mean its changes have always a positive impact. Some changes such as gentrification and the rise of cost of living can have a negative impact to most members of communities. Londoners are faced to decide if to move out the city or pay extortionate amounts of rent or mortgages. Many people stop being able to afford their life and are forced to move out or lose their home. This happened to me when the landlord almost doubled the rent of my studio flat in Dalston overnight. I lived in Dalston, East London, for twelve years and over the course of that time, my experience in the neighbourhood changed from having young like-minded artist as neighbours, to having neighbours that play golf on the weekends with beggars on the street.

The city is populated with people living similar or worst experiences and it is not surprising the amount of people moving out the city or people losing their homes are increasing. As of January 2023, one in every 58 Londoners is homeless, figures by Shelter say (Lindsay, 2023).

At the same time, however, as the homelessness crisis rise across cities, there is also a rise on hostile design as a response. One of the most obvious examples of hostile design might be the Architectural Spikes, which started to show up in London outside buildings, store entrances and under bridges.

**Are We Human? by Beatriz Colomina & Mark Wigley, 2016.**

“A well-designed object is one that does ever more good to ever more people. An ambition to social reform is embedded in each seemingly modest project. Nineteenth century arguments about the morality of design still infuse contemporary design discourse today - along with all the complications, contradictions, and barely suppressed violence that comes with any such declarations of a moral high ground. ... Good design is “an ethic rather than an aesthetic,” as the British architects Alison and Peter Smithson put it in the 1950s.”

(Colomina & Wigley, 2016)

The above text from the Chapter Good Design Is an Anaesthetic is relevant to this project because it explores philosophical branches of inquiry about “good design” that the Architectural Spikes inspired me to question from the beginning of the project. From the six major philosophical inquiries, The Architectural Spikes proposed me to question not only the ethics of the design but also the political, logical, metaphysical, and aesthetic aspects of it.

To my point of view, the Architectural Spikes is an artifact designed with an intention to address an issue. They are a product of design with the ambition to “Defence” and address unwanted social experiences. What might have perhaps started as a modest, but morally wrong design project, it exposed social complications and implied a level of violence that qualified to be a “*bad-designed*” object. It doesn’t do good to more people.

Design: The Rise of the Silently Hostile City by M.Teo on Azure Magazine, 2018.

“This isn’t bad design; it’s discriminatory design, conceived specifically to be un-inclusive. The two sides to these designs, Savic says, is “being pleasant to the ones that deploy it, and being unpleasant to the behaviour or group of people it is used against.”

(AZURE, 2018)

Which the article published on Azure Magazine discusses at length enhancing my understanding of the object and answers one of the questions I wondered at the start of the project. If I was asked to solve the problem of homelessness as a designer, what would I do? Plus, what would be my values and beliefs If I agreed with the design and use of these kind of artifacts?

“We could say that people who honestly employ unpleasant design principles are interested in a certain kind of utopia. There is a belief that by reducing the opportunities for mischief and misconduct, that will lead to a reduction in mischief and misconduct. In this logic, when there are no benches to sleep on, homeless people would have to resort to more sustainable measures, like going to a shelter, improving their lives, et cetera.”

(AZURE, 2018)



This shed some light on my understanding about how this kind of “bad-design” ended up actually being created and installed. I find it understandable that people try to find solutions to complex problems, nobody likes to see people struggling around them. However, to my point of view, the Architectural Spikes were a band-aid solution to a serious systematic problem. A problem which I thought it needed to be approached with sensitivity and empathy.

Beneficence and Contemporary Art by Barbra Bolt, 2015.

“Contemporary artists, propose that art’s beneficence may necessarily incorporate provocation and discomfort in order to illuminate the important ethical issues of our epoch.”

(Bolt, 2015)

The sentence above proposed me to ask: Could we consider the Architectural Spikes as a contemporary artistic response? perhaps one could interpret as such as they ended up at the V&A. The Spikes highlighted issues about ethics in design, provoked discomfort and illuminated issues in our society.

At one point in early stages of the project, we considered creating an interactive installation as artistic response, however that might have hindered our intentions of creating a beneficent project. Besides, other artists had already done similar responses to what we were thinking at the time the spikes were installed on the streets of London.

After contemplating several ideas, we decided to create a campaign to actively invert the concept of the Spike, transforming it into something positive. The spikes resembled coffee pods, chocolates made of steel and North compass arrows. We liked the idea to change the spike from a concept of hostility to a concept of compassion and direction to support in the community.

What is Emotional Design? By Y.D.P. Design, 2020.

“Don Norman defines three levels of emotional design that are largely interconnected and have a great influence on design. The three levels of emotional design are as follows:

- 1. Visceral Design*
- 2. Behavioural Design*
- 3. Reflective Design”.*

(Y.D.P. Design, 2020)

After reading the “What is emotional design?” article, it occurred to me that all design is emotional. I believe this thought is because the target audience of all design are humans, and humans are emotional creatures. Then it inspired me to reflect on the differences between the three levels of emotional design of the Architectural Spikes versus “Compack”, our project.

**▲ ARCHITECTURAL SPIKES****Visceral Level:**

One might not know what they are out of context, but they look cold, hostile, and unfriendly. Once in context, they rise feelings of disgust and a strong unpleasant reaction to people.

Although arguably someone could say they bring “peace” to those that employ them, but in my opinion, the Spikes are like guns, they create more problems than solve.

Behavioural Level:

The spikes are designed to be durable, uncomfortable, and extremely effective to push people away.

Reflective Level:

The impact of the Spikes is negative one, not only for the people, which is directly addressed too but for everyone, as they make areas a worst place for everyone to live in.

◇ COMPACK**Visceral Level:**

The Compack campaign elements (box, guides, leaflets, stickers, etc) are intended to look friendly and inclusive, as well as to rise feelings of community and support.

Behavioural Level:

Compack is designed to inform and educate as well as to share resources and build a supportive community. Intended to bring people together, to share, to support, be kind.

Reflective Level:

The intended impact of Compack is a positive one, as it increases the amount of act of kindness in the communities, making areas a better place for everyone to live in.

LYOLYA Homeless Muscovite by PLATON.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend this year's talk by PLATON, however my groupmates told me about the story PLATON shared about this specific photograph of a Homeless Muscovite called Lyolya.

At the first glance of the picture, I wasn't hugely surprised to see the homeless woman in the picture seemed to have very poor health but perhaps shock would be a better word. I was aware that homeless people have a lot of health issues due to their living conditions. My understanding is the lack of hygiene, proper rest and nutrition have severe impact to our longevity. That's why life expectancy was much shorter back in history.

Nonetheless, the picture shocked me, bringing a lot of emotion and sadness because Lyolya was only 28 years old when this picture was taken, but at first instance, I thought she was a much older woman as her face and hands looked swollen and battered.

This project took me on a very unpleasant, upsetting, and emotional research journey where I learnt that not only homeless people have poor health due to their living conditions and die sleeping, but also, they are often victims of human trafficking, modern slavery, and sexual abuse.



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