



Let me paint you a picture:

A presentation by Kypros Kyprianou for 'HECKLER' organised by Loughborough University School of the Arts' Lee Campbell and Mel Jordan in association with Trade, Nottingham.



Increasingly I have found myself being stopped by the police, due to my photography being deemed 'suspicious', or stopped from freedom of movement during public assembly. When this has happened, I feel like an audience member taking part in a performance that I haven't bought tickets for and where there's no exit sign. So I feel like I have little choice but to call time on the performance and the only way I can do that is to try and heckle the main act.

But in these situations is heckling -*'disconcerting others with questions, challenges or gibes'* - even possible? How do I attempt to create the space for effective heckling to take place? 'Let me Paint You a Picture' is a description of an attempt to carve out this space, and why.

It is 2008 and I am at a North London underground station. A large group of police officers arrive and set up a contraption at the top of the escalators and begin picking out young people and make them walk through it. It is an odd sight – like a timeslip into the future. I take a picture.



Young adults are picked out. The device appears to select people of a certain skin colour. When the device emits a beep they are searched. Whilst I'm there quite a few I can see are caught with drugs, they are taken to one side and 'processed'. What is this film I've stumbled into called?

It is the second '**Operation Blunt**', (or what should have been called 'Blunter'). According to the press release provided for all the major news agencies "*Police used metal detectors and stopped people using powers under Section 60 of the Public Order Act, which allows them to search targets under the presumption of reasonable suspicion*".



When I take this picture I am immediately approached by officers and asked to step to one side.

I am asked "Why are you taking photographs?" I reply that I am an artist and film maker and take another photograph to prove my point.



I am then informed that I am now being stopped and searched due to my "*suspicious behaviour under Clause 76 of the Counter Terrorism Act*" which the officer informed me was necessary "*In these times of escalated security, as I'm sure you'll understand*".

I attempt a conversation and point to the cctv cameras overhead that continually film and photograph us. I also point out that I am perfectly entitled to take photographs. I tell him that I don't think there is any need for his 'escalated security' – or a state of emergency. I am not hiding what I am doing and he is overstepping the law. I attempt to talk to him about the increase in state surveillance and the restriction of the right to take photographs in public ushered in by what was at that time being called the '*war on terror*'. The officer insisted that he '*can't talk about operational matters*', that he was '*just carrying out orders*'.

I was told that I had two options, one of which involved a trip to the police station. So my details are put through 'the' computer. I am searched. Later I find scalpel blades that I had bought days earlier in my bag. They should have put me through their metal detector.

So I've been stopped a few times since *Clause 76* was introduced and carried out. What the philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls this '*state of exception*' which is based on the sovereign ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good is pervading everything. A number of journalists and activists have had their camera files illegally deleted. They are being stopped from doing something perfectly legal. And furthermore, they are stopped from capturing actions that are illegal.

I am uncomfortable that Individual officers will not be drawn into any personal discussion about what is going on – they are just performing their duty, they don't see any wider problem. It is a logic that doesn't deprive citizens of their citizenship because It is necessary to relinquish citizenship in order to be protected.

Move along now, you're free to go.



In 2009. I am present at a small demo outside of RBS headquarters on Shoreditch High Street, London. The 'Forward Intelligence Team' are here photographing everyone and everything. For my part, I have come prepared to attempt to show the absurdity of who can photograph who.

I get in front of this particular Forward Intelligence Team officer with a pencil and my sketchbook, following him around, generally getting in the way. Despite attempts to catch his eye he studiously ignores me. I feel like we having a sort of conversation. He is unhappy with what I am doing. Other people are chipping in with what I have left unsaid. I am his shadow-performance in a sort of bricolage sous-veillance where the citizens cameras have been confiscated.



Later that year there is a G20 protest in the City. I am in the green arrow procession led by one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. We are going to the big bank in the City. The 'assembled public' are having a carnival performance in the hyper-performance space of the Corporation of London.



Everyone has bought tickets. Some of the audience - city workers- have dressed down especially for the occasion. The police have dressed up. I felt it would be a little bit over the top to wear a beret.

I am here to take part in the creation of a free space, to enact in carnival form a collective identity, a show of shared grievance, to be part of the oppositional frame. I also want to disrupt the binary of 'cops versus robbers', 'us versus them' through intimate engagement – to continue to have a conversation about *Section 76* as it is enforced on the ground. The headline writers for their part have already written out their story, something they will stick to for as long as they can, until video evidence surfaces after a bystander dies later that evening.



*“Handling hecklers is an exercise in group dynamics and you must get the audience on your side.” -
Manner of Speaking: How to Handle a Heckler (Toastmasters International)*

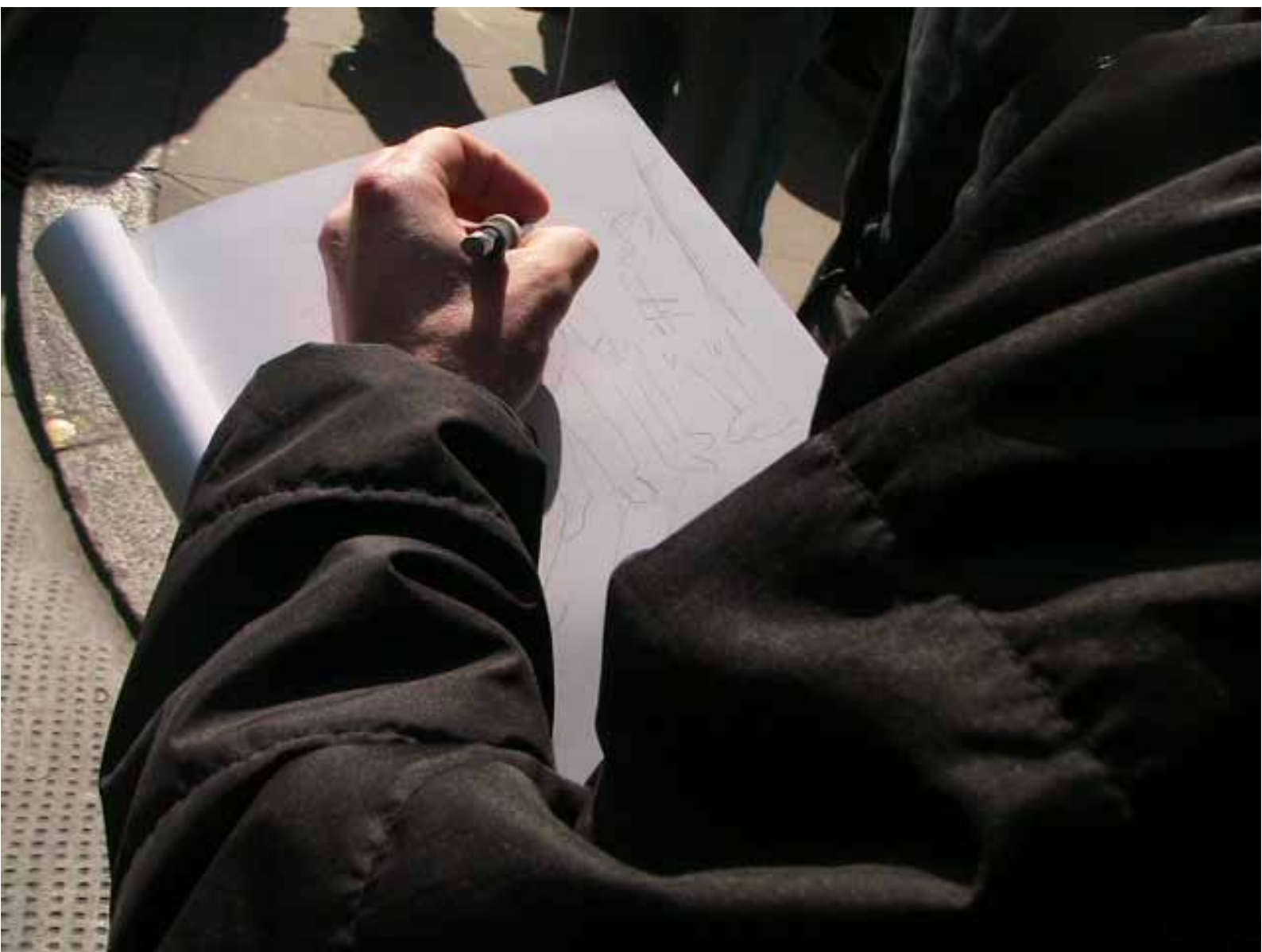
*"We will facilitate your protest where possible and advise you on the best way to manage it"
(Metropolitan Police – Total Policing)*



It has been widely trailed that 'kettling' will be taking place. The kettling performance starts up almost immediately. Looking pleased at their practiced manoeuvre, I manage to hang back and step aside. They were going to be there all day anyway. I want to wander about to see what else is going on.

When I come back I am facing the outer part of the two 'kettling' cordons. Already there are people trying to get through the double cordon, shouting. Strategy Maps are out. Photographer come and go.

I get out my pad and begin by drawing a picture at some distance. I am there for a while. I sense some officers becoming curious. I am being asked what I'm doing. I believe I am indulging in 'suspicious behaviour'.



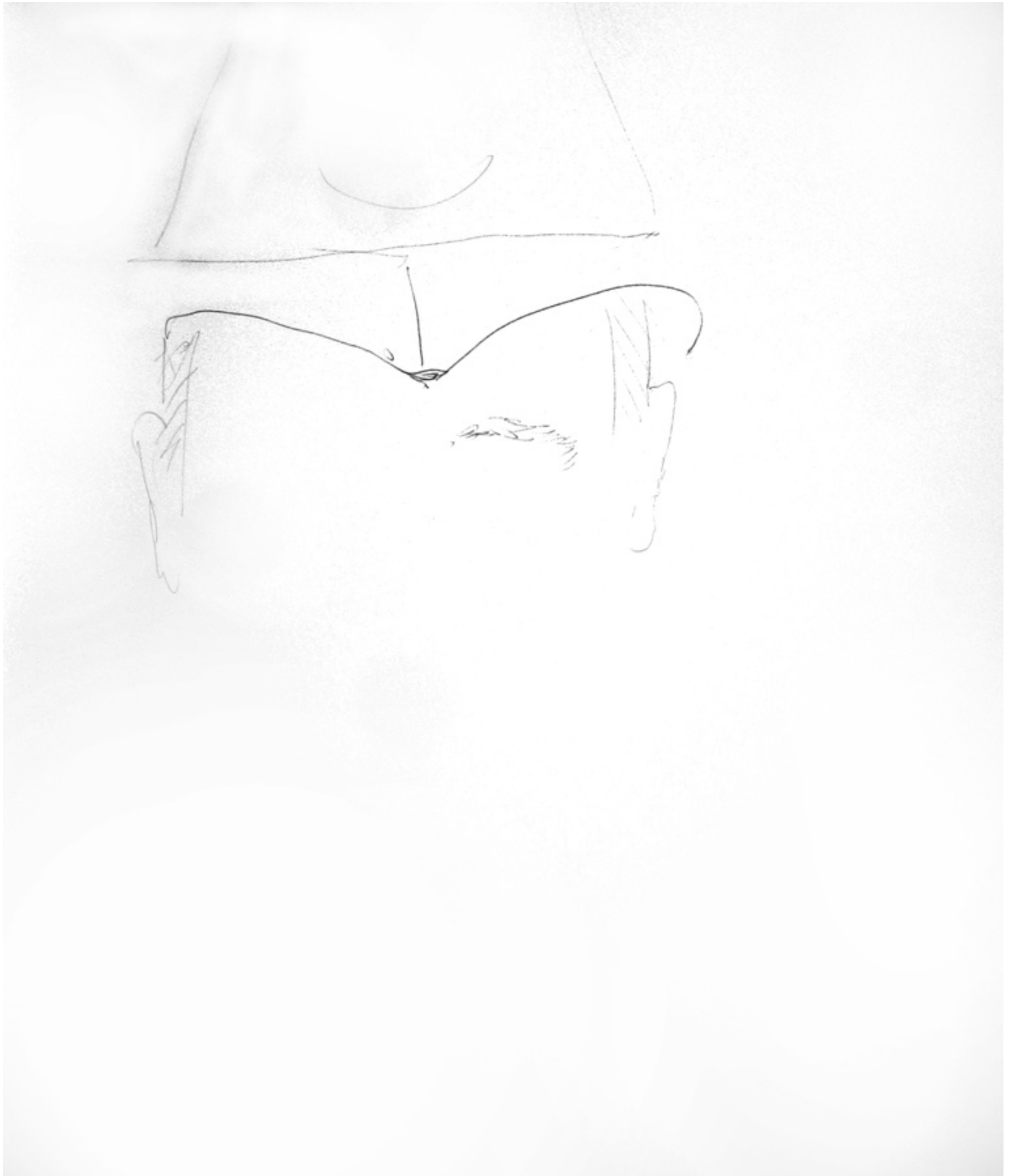


I move closer for a group portrait, then finally for an individual portraits along the line. There's a discussion to what's going on between them. Someone twigs, laughing. I'm asked to show them the sketch. I ask him to stand still as I haven't finished.



They begin to ask me questions. Why am I doing it? I reply with. Why are you doing it? I talk about *Section 76* about the legality of kettling, and being stopped from photographing and thought this would be a good way to bring up the subject. There is a mixture of curiosity and relief from the boredom. *'You've made his nose piggy'*. To *'You're not very good'* I reply *'Neither are you'* – pointing to someone coming out of the cordon injured.

This one policeman I am drawing, quite close up gets very annoyed, says “ *I’ve had enough*’ and breaks rank. Other officers laugh. Is he blushing? Perhaps I should have brought my coloured pencils.



We talk about materials, about recording, and the difference between photography and drawing. One officer realizes they are still lives. *'It's like we're bowls of fruit, isn't it?'*

I talk to them about bricolage – using the tools ‘at hand’ to talk about *Section 76* and the (il)logical conclusion that they are colluding in. I play on my amateurishness - I am now a dispossessed film maker, but that the point isn't the end product, something to be put in a gallery as ‘critique’ but the conversation we're

having here and now.

All the while I'm mixing what is art / what is protest / what is legal / with talking about the lines of their face, how they have aged, or how well they're turned out, how good their shaving is, whether their nose comes from their mum or their dad, all the while quite close up and intimate.



This is Del from Edmonton nick. I spent quite some time with him. I get personal responses to the job that he's doing, to the hierarchy of decision-making. The group around him vocalise criticism at political decision making, tactics etc. They ask about the protests, I talk to them about 'growth', about alternatives to the system. About their overtime.

So my heckling is intimate, attempting to occupy a space in which dialogue is opened up about the actions that are taking place in the here and now. Whilst standing in front of this wall of policemen, the ground has shifted somewhat beneath our feet.

I've had a good carnival. Armed with only pencil and paper, I am in no-man's land, mixing conversations about 'performance' with 'law' personal responsibility and the particular qualities of their face.

When I tell him I'm going, Del asks if he can take a picture of my drawing with his phone. As I leave, he shouts after me *'I get it, you know'*.