

INHABIT
STIRCHLEY

ARTIST'S STATEMENT : JANE BAKER

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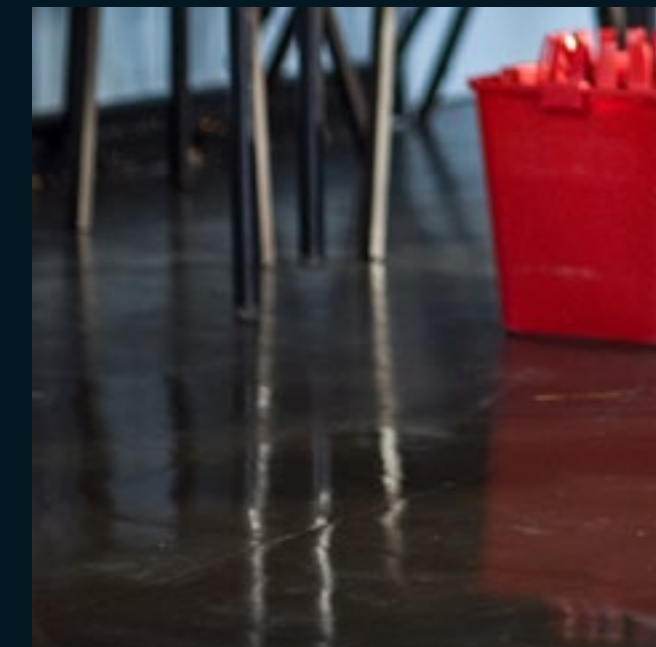
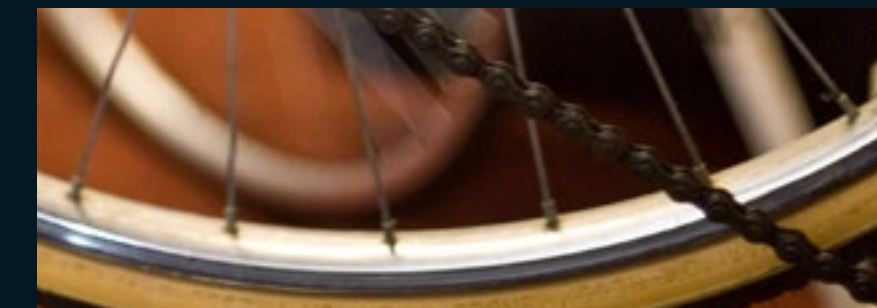
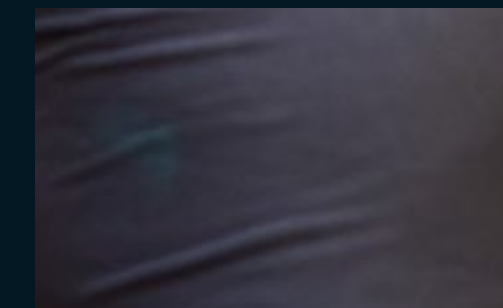
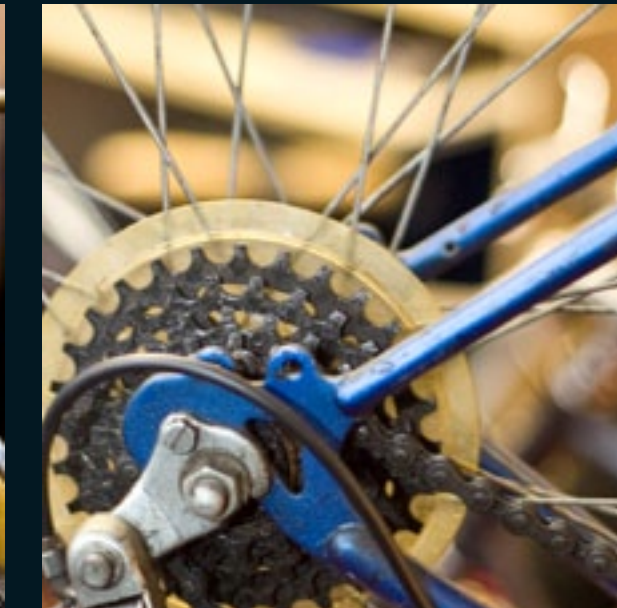
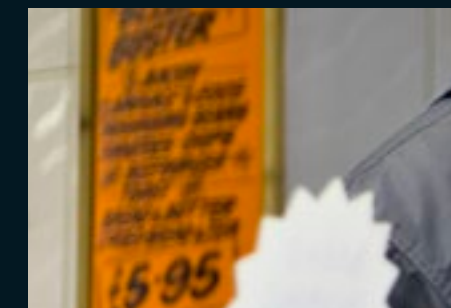
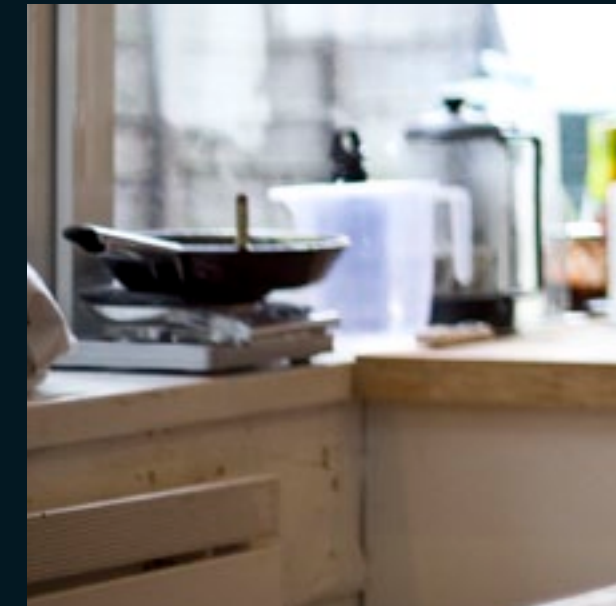
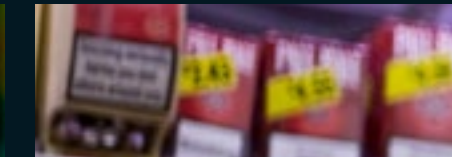
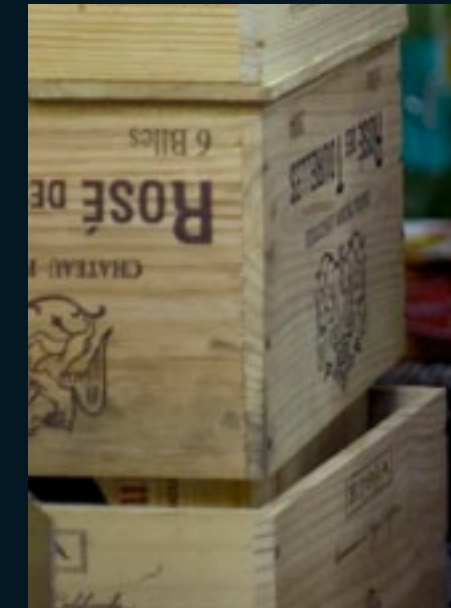
Stirchley's shops watch as the traffic races past along the seemingly endless Pershore Road, doorways numbered in their thousands (1474 temporarily the home of Inhabit) leading commuters towards the city centre and back. If they dare, passers-by take a rare parking spot and dart into a shop for a loaf of bread or milk before dashing back to join the queue again. Many streets are lined with terraced Victorian housing still proudly wearing name plaques made of stone. Some overlook the road, some the park, some the River Rea.

Working on the Inhabit project in Stirchley has been an insight into the ups and downs of a local high street that still celebrates what was once a rich and vibrant shopping centre. Many have mentioned the word 'survival', some have spoken of easier times, but nearly everyone has talked about how friendly it is here. Shopkeepers and locals alike have opened up to tell me their stories, and welcomed photographs that record the goings on of the present day, soon to become local history.

Once Stirchley was rich with traditional family-run businesses; at least three butchers, a bakers, a post office, a sweet

shop and more. Memories of what once was are still strong. Celebrated by those who have lived here all their lives and kept real in old photographs collected by the local history and arts groups, displayed now on shiny new boards dotted in local places of significance.

Change is in the air here. I have seen glimpses of what is to come. Passionate locals, artisans, campaigners, dreamers, intent on restoring Stirchley to its former glory, whispers of supermarkets hoping to move in, new businesses taking on the challenge, and shops closing who can battle no longer. As the Inhabit tearoom closes its doors, it doesn't feel like an end for Stirchley but instead a beginning. Conversations started in and around the tearoom that are destined to continue, and ideas and dreams that may even take root.





TOM BAKER
ARTISAN BAKER, LOAF COOKERY SCHOOL AND BAKERY
(A COTTERIDGE HOME-BASED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
LOOKING TO MOVE TO STIRCHLEY)

I'd love Stirchley to become a model for the rest of the UK for how community can reclaim its high street, and that's an exciting place where everyone is engaged and working to improve the area for the better.





JANE MORRIS
SHOP ASSISTANT, MAGGIES MUNCHIES
(1422 PERSHORE ROAD)

When I was growing up Stirchley was lovely, there were shops, quite a few shops - shoe shops, clothes shops. You could come down here for a day out.

DEVON BONNER ▶
CUSTOMER ALSO WORKS AT
RAVENS TRADITIONAL BAKERY IN SELLY PARK





AMRIK RAJPUT
SHOP OWNER, STIRCHLEY WINES AND SPIRITS
(1535-1537 PERSHORE ROAD)

[In the future] I would like Stirchley to be similar to Stratford-upon-Avon, something very special with lots of different shops, where people see the cleanliness, good shop fronts and get the variety of [products and services] that they want.

▼ **KRISHAN RAJPUT**
SHOP OWNER, STIRCHLEY WINES AND SPIRITS





SKINNY AL (ALAN PHILLIPS)
TATTOO ARTIST, SKINNY'S INK TATTOO PARLOUR
(1276 PERSHORE ROAD)

When I was growing up Stirchley was busy, very busy. There were shops everywhere. It was a thriving community to be fair. The social clubs around the corner - they were always busy.

We're bringing more people to the area. With the tattoo industry, if you've got a good reputation then it spreads and people want tattoos by you because you're good at what you do.

(Customer, Carl Madden also shown)





NANCY LANGFELDT AND CHRIS TOMLINSON
BIRMINGHAM BIKE FOUNDRY
(A WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE LOOKING TO MOVE TO STIRCHLEY)

There is a lot more to Stirchley than this whole Tesco business, but it's kind of symptomatic of the problems that lead to an area being abandoned like Stirchley has been for so long. I suppose if people have some kind of feeling of affection for their local shops and for the local community then it might be easier to look after it. We really do want people to have control over their local area, and to take more control over their lives.





HABIB AHMED
OWNER, BITS AND PIECES
(1471 PERSHORE ROAD)

▼ **BILL READ**
CARETAKER, STIRCHLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH
(WENT TO SCHOOL IN STIRCHLEY IN THE 1930S
HE STILL SHOPS AND WORKS LOCALLY)

I originally came from the city in to Kings Norton in around 1935-6 as a youngster. I ended up in Stirchley School and finished there when I was 14.

By the church here, facing us, originally there was a greengrocers and a fish shop. The next one up was a sweet shop. It had jars of sweets all the way around. All his stuff that he made his sweets with, because they were homemade, went to the Black Country Living Museum.





SORAYA CALDICOTT
ASSISTANT, ASH TREE PHARMACY
(1534 PERSHORE ROAD)

GIRISH PATEL ▾
OWNER, ASH TREE PHARMACY

Stirchley was a thriving town centre about thirty years ago. So, there's no reason why we can't have that again.

People, I think, have given up on Stirchley and said 'well, that's it, it's finished', but I don't think so.

Stirchley has more to give, and it will, in time.





LISA GIRLING
OWNER, MIRROR IMAGE
(1418 PERSHORE ROAD)

I've worked in Stirchley for quite a few years, hairdressing. I think hairdressing is one of those things. The ladies come to have their hair done. You get loyal people and you get people who don't mind where they have their hair done.

(Customer, Theresa Goldingay also shown)



NIKKI KAUR
ASSISTANT AT MIRROR IMAGE
(1418 PERSHORE ROAD)

INHABIT IS A PROGRAMME OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY TO RE-INVIGORATE LOCAL HIGH STREETS AND RAISE COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE IN LOCAL SPACES. IT AIMS TO SUPPORT LOCAL AREAS DURING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, REVIVING SHOPPING CENTRES BY TRANSFORMING VACANT SPACES INTO VIBRANT PLACES.

INHABIT IS BEING DELIVERED BY HYBRID – A CATALYST ORGANISATION THAT ENGAGES IN CROSS-SECTORAL AND INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATIONS AND RESEARCH. WE HAVE BEEN PRODUCING COMMUNITY BASED ARTS WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS SINCE 2001.

IN 2010/2011, AROUND 13% OF THE SHOPS IN THE UK ARE VACANT. IT IS THOUGHT THAT ONE IN FIVE MAY NEVER BE USED AGAIN. THE EMPTY SHOPS INITIATIVE AIMS TO HELP NEW BUSINESSES ‘START UP’ ON THE HIGH STREET, BRING VISITORS BACK TO THEIR LOCAL HIGH STREET AND HELP THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TURN PRIVATE SPACES INTO PUBLIC PLACES.

BY THE CLOSE OF INHABIT, FOUR TEAROOMS WILL HAVE TRAVELLED ACROSS BIRMINGHAM REACHING LADYWOOD, HANDSWORTH, STIRCHLEY AND BROMFORD. THE TEAROOMS PROVIDED INVITING SPACES FOR OVER 2000 PEOPLE TO MEET, TALK, PARTICIPATE IN CREATIVE WORKSHOPS, REINVENT THEIR LOCAL HIGH STREETS AND ENJOY SHOPPING LOCALLY.

THEY WILL ALSO HAVE PROVIDED AN ENORMOUSLY DIVERSE RANGE OF ARTS AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS AND OUTPUTS. EACH OF THE TEAROOMS HAS BEEN HOST TO A CROSS SECTION OF ARTISTS, OFFERING A WIDE RANGE OF ARTS FORMS AND APPROACHES.

INHABIT: STIRCHLEY WAS OUR THIRD TEAROOM AND WE OCCUPIED THE SPACE FROM JANUARY 2011 UNTIL MARCH 2011, WE THEN MOVED TO OUR FINAL TEAROOM INHABIT: BROMFORD FROM FEBRUARY 2011 UNTIL APRIL 2011. HUNDREDS OF CUPS OF TEA WERE MADE AND DRANK, CAKE WAS EATEN AND STORIES WERE SHARED. WE’D LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO VISITED OUR TEAROOMS. WE HOPE THAT YOU ENJOYED HAVING US, AND FOUND THE TEAROOM SOMETHING TO REMARK UPON – SOMETHING REMARKABLE. THIS ALBUM FORMS PART OF

THE HISTORY OF OUR STAY IN STIRCHLEY AND BROMFORD AND OFFERS A SMALL PORTRAIT OF TWO LOCAL BIRMINGHAM HIGH STREETS.

INHABIT IS FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND. IT WAS COMMISSIONED BY BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL AS PART OF THE ‘CULTURE ON YOUR DOORSTEP’ STRAND OF BIRMINGHAM’S CULTURAL STRATEGY.

INHABIT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE GENEROSITY OF OUR LANDLORDS. LORRAINE MOORE AND IVY GUYAH WHO GAVE US THEIR FRESHLY REBUILT SPACE AT 1474 PERSHORE ROAD AND TIM EVANS AND PAUL WRIGHT IN BROMFORD WHO OPENED UP WORTH UNLIMITED AT 146 BROMFORD DRIVE FOR US. THE PAVILIONS SHOPPING CENTRE ENABLED US TO EXHIBIT ALL OF THE WORK AS A RESULT OF THEIR ON-GOING SUPPORT FOR ARTS AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN AND AROUND THE CITY.

**SAMINA ZAHIR
DIRECTOR, HYBRID**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INHABIT, PLEASE VISIT HYBRID’S WEBSITE AT WWW.HYBRIDCONSULTING.ORG.UK

