

### **In Summary:**

"Circles+Orbits+Spirals" is about the story of Wakefield and how through sound, we might be able to recognise the shape of it as a means to change it.

Originally created to collect stories surrounding the Wakefield City Bus, the project expanded to include the larger ideas of what 'journeying' and 'waiting' on transport could be about in the most magnified sense of the terms:

"Journeying" went from bus travel to the myth of Wakefield's journey. "Waiting" grew from acting as such at a bus stop to considering the privileges of not needing to wait to tell a story, or to own a story at all.

Statistics are often raised about the subject of Wakefield, (in particular, its high unemployment rate) and so mapping Wakefield's story/mythology began with examining Wakefield's State of the District, and how this document shapes Wakefield's story through socio-economic qualifiers. Google Maps was used to map the locations of the stories told by the Wakefield community and shapes began to appear. Through experiencing the sounds and stories of this work, we begin to see the myths and stories of Wakefield take a visual shape in our minds:

We may begin to wonder how we need to alter the shape of the story, and what we may want to change to alter it.

The recordings were left unaffected. There are no edits from clicking the recorder on and off. The visuals made of places from places mentioned or muses from the artist explode into lines, into possible trajectories for the new stories to shape.

### **Original Description of the Project:**

*"Sonic Artist James Wilkie will be riding the Free City Bus (WCB) through Wakefield City Centre, recording the commuters and surroundings of each stop and abstracting these into musical soundscapes. Processing the commuters' voices through the sounds of Wakefield-one playing through another, becoming a sonic, experience to be shared around the stops."*

## **Initial Process**

The project circled around asking WCB commuters why they use the service towards unfurling a story from them. Urban spaces, and how to engage a sense of community ownership and responsibility within them, was of key interest as an outcome to this project: Ownership as a matter of place owned, desired, or rightfully the community's to feel as such about the place. Ownership, would be explored through sound.

Later, the project came to shape itself around the "journey" and the act of "waiting". The project became less about shape and space, it became about stories in lines: What thoughts did waiting produce in the commuter, what did journey imply?

## **Shaping Practice**

The original intentions of the process fell apart on account of the reticence of many of the commuters, and the difficulty of speaking with anyone on the bus and terminus.

Wakefield like the bus circuit appeared as a closed loop. How could these stories about journey and waiting, about leaving, and waiting to leave, unlock the larger story of Wakefield.

An interview script was devised:

I am an artist working for the **INDEX Festival**.

**This is not a survey.**

I am recording stories about "**leaving**", and turning these into a podcast for the festival.

**I'd like you to be a part of this:**

Tell me a story of the journey you are leaving on now, or from anytime in your life - it could even be a journey you wished you could take or the one you loved most.

It could be your thoughts on leaving.

**All contributions will be anonymised**

### **The Privilege of Owning a Story. The Privilege of Telling One:**

The recorded stories began outlining a dark matter: a much larger mass of untold stories was revealed as much through the stories gathered as by the manner in which many refused to tell theirs “not for me, luv”; “That’s nice, but i’m not in a place to be able to do this”, “I’m a very private person”. Almost every story which was recorded involved distant travels and unusual circumstances of work (through a high level of education) or social position (financially above the poverty line). I considered that owning a story in the first place might be a privilege.

The privilege in telling a story appears in the track “Sanctuary City” where an asylum seeker has plenty of want and need to share his story, but is prevented on account of his political status.

### **Story and Mythology - “Storytelling for Earthly Survival” - Feeling The Shape of Wakefield’s story: to Create our Own.**

The problem germinates from what we qualify as being a story in the first place (a certain shape).

One story shape (the arc) does not fit all, it fits only certain people

Consider for a moment any fable, any fairytale’s story (socio economic situations of the protagonists aside, for now) but rather, the story arc and how it is produced. As Vonnegut points out in his dour fashion, there are only so many - but they all involve travelling a distance, encountering new characters.

Wakefield holds many components of the fable:

Ruins are the empty units in the city centre, the ancient ruins of the mines. Adversity as unemployment - The issue being, that Wakefield is already the place of “other” that one travels to, to obtain a story- I myself (with the greatest irony) have come away with a new story, but what has the community been left with? The community is already inside the story, inside the loop:

*"I'm not real. I'm just like you. You don't exist in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights. You're not real. If you were you'd have some status among the nations of the world. I come to you as a myth, because that's what black people are. I came from a dream that the black man dreamed long ago".*

- Sun Ra

And we might wonder the same about Northerners - their myth was imposed upon them and they have endured it, endeavoured to uphold it.

In "Storytelling for Earthly Survival" Donna Haraway explains that we must redefine our myths and stories - these no longer suit the times. It could wonder how little they suit Wakefield.

So we need to grasp the shape of the myth to change it:

The traditional structure of storytelling must be adapted - Wakefield's story is not linear and wandering like a fairytale, nor is its current circular form helpful at the moment - if anything, it could be vertical (miners).


### **The Legend: Mapping Out the Myths:**

Discussion around Wakefield is synonymous with figures and statistics. Looking at Wakefield's State of the District. About 1/4 of the Wakefield population is unemployed or on the poverty line. How many of these individuals might have stories to tell about a journey as the ones recorded?

Kurt Vonnegut describes the story arc upon a graph: "(x axis) Good Fortune, ill fortune - sickness and poverty down here, wealth and boisterous good health up here". Vonnegut goes on to use only five shapes to describe the entire western canon of storytelling across a timeline.

This is exactly how the Wakefield's state of the district is categorised, exactly.

The mapping out of the stories became thought of as directed listening: how might one direct an ear to listen for what isn't there, to the dark matter of the recording? Using the categories from the State of the District, the listener is asked to contemplate the specific aspects of the story:


 Health/Well Being

 Economy

 Property

 Safety

 Able Bodied

 Education

Contemplate the aspects of this story when listening to them, and imagine this against ¼ of the population of Wakefield. Could they own this story too? Which categorical elements in their lives might be preventing them from doing so.

### **The Videos**

It would be necessary to conceal the identity of the speakers, but the opportunity was also taken to use the visuals as another layer of commentary: the audio interacts/creates the visual animations, turning frozen images of a place or person from the interviews. The audio splits the imagery into lines and possible paths as much as blurring the world of commuters' voices with an image of Wakefield or an image of where their story unfolds.

### **In Light**

The shape of Wakefield's myth appears as a circuit, or spiral - the shape of an orbit about a decaying star.

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