

# DRIVE TIME SAMUEL PADFIELD

**8-23 OCTOBER 2022**

HARVEY CENTRE | GIBBERD GALLERY  
HARLOW, ESSEX

**A site-specific exhibition explores the very idea of landscape in the context of Harlow New Town. As a social democratic experiment, Harlow promised a better way of life enriched by public art, but has been in a constant state of development since its pioneering postwar beginnings. *Drive Time* uses sculpture, painting and radio to ask questions about where we've come from and where we are going.**

During his year as Sculpture Town Artist-In-Residence, Samuel Padfield has worked closely with young people in partnership with the Harlow Art Trust, Pearson Education and Harlow College. Local voices are inscribed into the project through a participatory audio piece created in collaboration with Pervilion, and new writing by Essex-based critic Rose Cleary.

Installed in Harlow's main shopping centre and its main visual art space, *Drive Time* encourages visitors to walk a route through the town centre, encountering modernist works by John Piper and Henry Moore. To the thousands of people passing through the Harvey Centre daily, two cars on the ground floor may seem like they've taken a wrong turn, as if GPS has led them up the garden path. A drive time radio show, hosted by Essex radio DJ Paul Lovett, plays in both locations, connecting passers-by and dedicated art audiences. It refers to an era when listeners were united in transit – when people drove to work, with analogue channels catering to particular audiences.

The cars are covered in residue, possibly from rainfall. Outdoor scenery appears in soft horizontal streaks across the windows, suggesting the motion blur of digital imagery captured from a moving vehicle – almost abstract. The glass serves as a metaphor for the lens through which we see the world. As our primary senses are overlaid with our digital footprint, the miraculous ability to be in multiple places at once can lead to ruptures in the relationship between where we are and what we are looking at. In the nearby Gibberd Gallery, a car window is isolated from the bodywork and wall mounted; its concave curve suggests we are looking out.

The audio piece probes the emotional and psychological states of travel through the medium of a drive time radio show, a platform for dialogue on air. It features track requests via a dedicated hotline and guest interviews, including Harlow-born editor-in-chief of the *New Statesman*, Jason Cowley and Harlow MP Robert Halfon, besides voices from the arts, retail, education, volunteering, and Essex Traffic Control. The continuous looping gestures to a radio genre in flux, as we may now curate the soundtrack to our journey from endless digital media, in an increasing individualisation of space.

*Drive Time* creates a direct route to Harlow's optimistic legacy of social space coupled with public art. One of the cars repurposed for this installation belonged to architect John Graham, who designed the Harvey Centre, channelling his original intentions for the mall to be a congregation space, embellished with sculpture. It was the mission of Harlow's visionary chief architect Frederick Gibberd (after whom the Gibberd Gallery is named), to have the 'finest works of art' on permanent display in the streets and estates, dignifying working people's lives, along with green space and cycle paths. Cars are endemic, but it was never meant to be this way.

Interviewed for *Drive Time* radio, Jason Cowley says:

*Sometimes I just drift around Harlow in my car... I'll go to places I once knew, looking for how the town has changed but also what I missed when I lived there. What was it I didn't see but that I see now?*

In a text commissioned for the exhibition, Rose Cleary writes:

*Travelling – as a time and a space – presents a buffer zone. The in-between where you are no longer that person at home, not yet that person at work. ... In transit, I am nothing. What a relief.*

**Samuel Padfield** (b.1987 London) has an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art. On graduating he was awarded the Sculpture Town Artist in Residence Award from the Harlow Art Trust. In 2020 he was a finalist in the Ashurst Emerging Artist Prize, London, and in 2021 a finalist in Manifest's International Painting Annual in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2021 he was included in group exhibitions at the Saatchi Gallery and the Freud Museum, both London, among others, and completed a major commission from Christie's, London.

**Paul Lovett** is a celebrated radio broadcaster in Essex, UK. His radio credits include Essex FM, Mercury FM, Dream 107, Southend Radio, Chelmsford Radio, Radio Essex and currently BBC Essex.

**Rose Cleary** is a writer from Essex, UK. Her writing has been published by Southend's Twilight Worlds, Hyperallergenic, New Socialist and Focal Point Gallery, among others.

#### **Harlow Art Trust & the Sculpture Town Artist In Residence (STAIR) Programme**

Harlow Art Trust is a registered charity founded in 1953 to commission and care for public art in the post-war new town of Harlow. The Trust oversees a collection of over 100 sculptures sited across Harlow's civic, residential, and open spaces. It includes works by internationally renowned sculptors including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Elizabeth Frink. Throughout the 1950s and 60s Harlow Art Trust gave artists just out of art school opportunities to create permanent public artworks for Harlow New Town, resulting in works such as Ralph Brown's Grade II listed Meat Porters. To continue this legacy, Harlow Art Trust works in partnership with the Royal College of Art (RCA) and Pearson Education Publishing to award one graduating RCA sculpture student a 12-month residency.

**Pervilion** produces art in unusual places.

For more information and images contact [pervilion@gmail.com](mailto:pervilion@gmail.com)

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Curated by **Dorothy Feaver**

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With thanks to the **Harvey Centre, Harlow College, Rose Cleary** and **Paul Lovett**

The Harvey Centre  
Harlow CM20 1XR  
Mon-Sat 8am-10pm  
Sun 10am-5pm

Gibberd Gallery  
The Water Gardens  
Harlow CM20 1WG  
Mon-Sat 11am-4pm

Free, no booking required

