

Notes Inside a White Cube

Palmer, Isobel; Poole, Clemens

DOI:
[10.3828/mlo.v0i0.356](https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.356)

License:
Creative Commons: Attribution (CC BY)

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Palmer, I & Poole, C 2021, 'Notes Inside a White Cube', *Modern Languages Open*, vol. 1, 10.
<https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.356>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



Notes Inside a White Cube

ISOBEL PALMER
CLEMENS POOLE

**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article*

**SPECIAL COLLECTION:
SLAVIC STUDIES**

**ARTICLES – RUSSIAN &
EASTERN EUROPEAN
LANGUAGES**



ABSTRACT

The photographs in this essay document temporary “exhibitions” curated by members of the public in cities across Ukraine as part of the “Gurtobus” project, a mobile cultural center converted from a standard coach bus. In 2019 the project visited 25 cities in 14 regions of the country with cultural and educational events. The aim of the project is to support cultural decentralization, community networking and interaction of creative industries and local communities (for more information, see: <https://izolyatsia.org/en/project/community-culture-bus>). The essay reflects on this project and related discussions at “Slavic Studies Goes Public,” a workshop on Slavic Studies and Public Humanities held at the University of St. Andrews in January 2019.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Isobel Palmer

University of Birmingham, GB

i.m.j.palmer@bham.ac.uk

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Palmer, Isobel and Clemens Poole 2021 Notes Inside a White Cube. *Modern Languages Open*, 2021(1): 10 pp. 1–5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.356>

NOTES INSIDE A WHITE CUBE

ISOBEL PALMER AND CLEMENS POOLE

¹WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
SEEING AND LOOKING?

¹NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS SOMETIMES
CONFUSE THESE TWO VERBS.

²THE DICTIONARY TELLS US THAT
SEEING IS THE MORE PASSIVE OF THE
TWO: "TO PERCEIVE WITH THE EYES";
WHEREAS WHEN YOU LOOK AT SOMETHING
YOU "DIRECT [YOUR] SIGHT"—YOU "USE
[YOUR] ABILITY TO SEE".

⁴BUT WHAT ABOUT THE THINGS YOU
DON'T SEE UNTIL AFTER YOU'VE SPENT
TIME LOOKING? OR THE THINGS YOU
CAN'T SEE, PRECISELY BECAUSE YOU'VE
BEEN LOOKING AT THEM FOR SO LONG?



³FOR VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY, THE GOAL OF ART IS TO RESTORE OUR SIGHT: TO HELP US SEE THINGS AGAIN, AS IF FOR THE FIRST TIME. TO MAKE US NEWCOMERS TO OUR OWN EYES.

⁴BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REALLY ARE SEEING THINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME? WHEN WE ARE TRUE NEWCOMERS, AND THIS TIME THE SPACE IS NOT "OURS"? HOW DO NON-NATIVE EYES KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR? HOW DO NON-NATIVE EYES DECIDE WHAT'S WORTH LOOKING AT?

⁵CAN WE EVER SEE WITH COMPLETELY NEW EYES?

⁶DOESN'T EVERYBODY ALWAYS ALREADY HAVE A POINT OF VIEW?



⁷IS A POINT OF VIEW PORTABLE? IS IT IMMOVABLE? HOW DOES IT TRANSLATE?

⁸DOES TAKING A PROJECT SOMEWHERE ALREADY IMPLY PERCEIVED HIERARCHIES OF CULTURAL SPACE?



"HOW CAN WE AVOID "POINT OF VIEW"
BECOMING "COLONIAL GAZE"?

"AND EVEN IF OUR AIM IS
TO OPEN UP NEW, SHARED
ANGLES OF VISION, WILL
THESE INEVITABLY BE
SKEWED TOWARDS OUR OWN
TASTES AND VALUES?"



"WHAT IF WE LOOKED WITHOUT
TRYING TO SEE?"

"WHAT IF WE BYPASSED LOOKING
ENTIRELY?"

"WHAT IF INSTEAD WE ASKED:
"HOW DID THIS OBJECT COME TO
BE?"

"HOW DID THIS OBJECT COME TO
BE HERE? WHO MADE IT? WHAT
FOR? WHO RAN OUT OF USES
FOR IT, AND WHO FOUND NEW
ONES? WHO REMEMBERS? WHO
CARES?"

"HOW CAN WE ACCESS THESE
STORIES? WHAT WILL WE LEARN
IF WE DO?"

"IS AN OBJECT WHAT IT HAS
BEEN? OR WHAT IT COULD
BECOME?"





AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Isobel Palmer

University of Birmingham, GB

Clemens Poole

Artist, US

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Palmer, Isobel and Clemens Poole 2021 Notes Inside a White Cube. *Modern Languages Open*, 2021(1): 10 pp. 1–5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.356>

Published: 14 July 2021

COPYRIGHT:

© 2021 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Modern Languages Open is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Liverpool University Press.