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**Time  
Travel**

# twentyfourzero

Steph Fletcher

*twentyfourzero* was a collection of small performances, participatory activities and a short film, which formed part of Steph Fletcher's ongoing investigations into the increasingly precarious nature of modern work and its impact upon everyday life. Exposing the fragmented experiences of time, social alienation and disrupted daily routines, resulting from contemporary employment practices such as 'zero hour contracts', the project considered the ways in which dispersed and alienated workers struggle to utilize traditional methods of protest – which rely on collective action. Pondering the place (and future) of the lone, isolated and anxious protester/worker, Fletcher employed the humble house/office plant as a recurring motif in her work. A token workplace gesture towards nurture and nature – purported to make employees 'happier, more productive and less stressed' – such plants are perhaps also a reminder of our eroding sense of 'natural' circadian (24 hour) rhythm, and diminishing sense of belonging to traditional places of work.

Steph Fletcher is an artist, writer, activist and project curator based in Preston. In 2014, she co-founded The Birley artist studios and project space in Preston city centre. She is also editor at Twigs & Apples Zine Publishing and the Lancashire Free Press activist newsletter.

Steph Fletcher's creative practice explores the hybrid role of the artist/activist through drawing, writing, print-making, zines and public space interventions. She explores themes of work, time, urban travel, alienation, protest, the city and nature; through anarchist theory and absurdist philosophy. In particular, Steph is interested in our relationship with working life and the increasingly precarious nature of modern employment.



# Time Travel

Elaine Speight

Within the collective imagination, urban environments are conceived in predominantly spatial terms. We tend to classify cities through their physical occupation of the earth – the size of their geographical footprints, altitude of buildings, population density. Consequently, urban politics is often regarded as a politics of space. Media images of recent spatial struggles – such as the tent villages of the global Occupy movement, and violent confrontations between Gezi Park protestors and police in Istanbul – have come to symbolise the imbalance of power within our cities and the wider erosion of democratic rights. And yet, cities are as much about time as they are about space. Shaped by the patterns of our collective routines, they are the products and producers of flows, which generate their own forms of freedom, entrapment, comfort and distress within individual urban lives.

An acknowledgment of the temporal nature of cities is one of the main connections between two artworks developed by Steph Fletcher and Cherry Tenneson as part of the In Certain Places 'artist in residence' scheme. Fletcher's *twentyfourzero* and *Outward journeys must not be in the past* by Tenneson examine the role and effects of time upon the aesthetic, political and social experience of one particular place. Developed over an eighteen month period, through individual explorations and collective conversations, the artworks address the changing nature of urban experience by attending to the rhythms of Preston – a small city in the northwest of England. Through quiet performances, urban interventions and the re-appropriation of imagery, the artists expose hidden aspects of the city – abandoned futures, forgotten pasts, invisible lives and experiences – and encourage us to find new ways to occupy time as well as space.

Despite its mill town heritage, Preston was a settlement long before the arrival of the Spinning Jenny. Reliant on the yields of the land, and later of cottage industry, life was ordered by the cycle of the seasons and the human, albeit toilsome, pace of labour. The mechanisation of the Industrial Age transformed time, along with human bodies, into an exploitable resource. Forced to endure the hazards and hardships of the mills for up to seventeen hours a day, workers realised that their only political currency was the withdrawal of their time. Yet, as a monument in the centre of Preston by the artist Gordon Young attests, this too could be suppressed. Unveiled in 1992, the sculpture commemorates the shooting of striking mill workers during the so-called 'Plug Plot Riots' 150 years before.

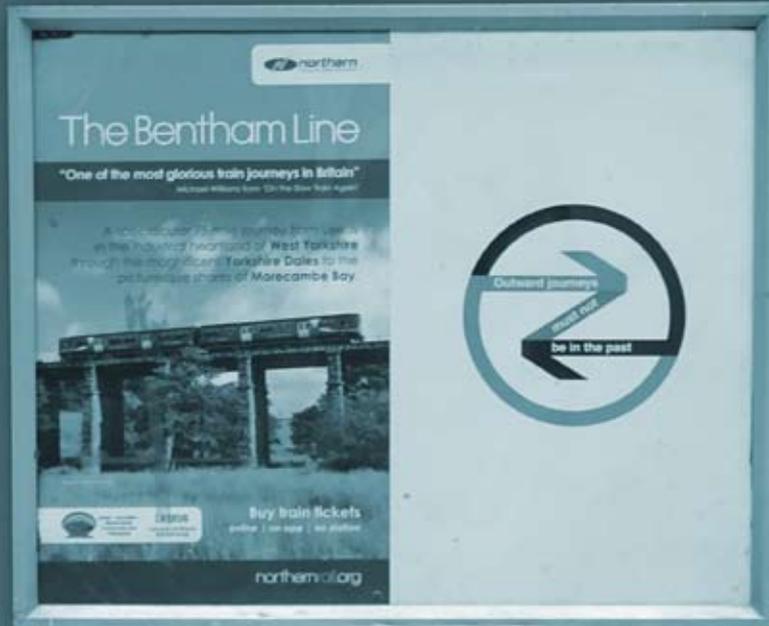
While the post-industrial Preston of Steph Fletcher's video installation *twentyfourseven* lacks the overt exploitation of former times, it reveals a much more insidious form of political suppression, which is achieved through the fragmentation of social time. Wandering the city's nocturnal streets and transport hubs, Fletcher's lone activist personifies the alienation and dislocation felt by people whose routines and relationships have been disrupted by 'flexible working practices', such as 'hot desking', 'remote working' and 'zero hours contracts'. Yet, the artist's outlook is not entirely bleak. A means for the self-employed and other 'precarious workers' to re-connect with one another, Fletcher's *Anxious Workers Club* rejects society's obsession with productivity in favour of a playful, yet political, embrace of time wasting as an emancipatory practice.

In Cherry Tenneson's work, the city's transport infrastructure – both an enabler and bi-product of contemporary working

patterns – is cast as a living monument to unrealised and unforeseen futures. As a professional sign writer, Tenneson focused her attention on the aesthetics of information display within Preston's Victorian railway station and 1970's bus terminus, and researched the city's historic role within the development of motorway signage. The resulting body of work both laments and finds humour in the distillation of Modernist topography inside Preston's transport hubs, and the failure of the utopian ideology which informed it. Her posters, which combine modernist design with contemporary corporate branding, feature snippets of found text – 'Scheduled departure points are subject to diversions', 'Outward journeys must not be in the past' – which, out of context, read like spiritual mantras, or motivational slogans for today's hyper-mobile workforce.

As an extension of the artworks, Tenneson and Fletcher have each produced publications, which are also concerned with time. Designed to expand upon their individual projects, they are also starting points for future actions and debates. Alongside new work by the artists, texts by Eddy Rhead and Ivor Southwood provide additional perspectives on issues of labour, time and mobility. Conceived by the artists as manuals or handbooks, we hope that they will encourage readers to find new and creative ways to disrupt their own places and routines. To quote an Anxious Workers Club slogan, let's reimagine our cities and 'let's reclaim time!'

# Preston



*Outward journeys must not be in the past* was a series of signs and posters, installed in Preston's transport hubs, which examined the city's significant relationship with modernist transport information design from the late 1950s to late 1960s. The artworks reflect Tenneson's fascination with the prevalence of modernist signage in the city, such as the original Swiss influenced signs in the bus station; the railway station's still-prevalent British Rail corporate identity signs; and the standardised motorway signage originally developed by Jock Kinneir and Margaret Calvert for the M6 Preston Bypass – the first motorway in the UK. Named after an error message on the National Rail website, the project emphasised the conflicting styles and messages which have developed in the city over time, and explored the role of typography within everyday urban experiences.

Cherry Tenneson's work explores redundant, authoritative language and its relationship to place. She particularly focuses on language within public information graphics that has been rendered redundant due to human error, perceived misinterpretation or through the passage of time.

Tenneson's training and employment as a sign writer is a central influence on her practice and her own sign making errors often feature in her work. She is interested in the responsibility and authority she may or may not have as a trained sign writer, alongside the 'inclinations' of an artist.

Works to date include site-specific projects and site interventions incorporating handmade signs, posters and diagrams, many of which reflect on the redundant information that accumulates in the artist-sign writer's studio.

## Outward Journeys Must Not Be in the Past

Cherry Tenneson

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*Time Travel* was a collection of artworks and urban interventions by Steph Fletcher and Cherry Tenneson, informed by eighteen months of research in Preston city centre during 2014/15. Their individual projects – *Outward journeys must not be in the past* and *twentyfourzero* explore the tensions between individual agency and authority, and question the continued potential for collective forms of action in today's neoliberal city.

*Time Travel* was commissioned by In Certain Places – a programme of artistic interventions and events, based at the University of Central Lancashire, which examines how artists can contribute to the form and functions of a place, by exploring new approaches to art, culture and urban development.

[www.incertainplaces.org](http://www.incertainplaces.org)