

## **There was a wind** / Fiorella Angelini

### **A city tearing itself apart**

They would call it Mad Friday. A summer smog enveloped the city and everything in it. Six and a half weeks had passed with no cool breeze to soothe the tempers, egos and worries that were dangerously close to the surface, if not already on show. Despite the rubbish piling up on pavements and doorsteps, and the smell this ensued, I had taken to walking. Usually at dusk. Before curtains close and lights flick out, I am able to see directly into the lives of others with extraordinary detail. This takes my mind off being damp with sweat, and clung to insufferably by what little clothes I can stand to wear.

I take my usual route, panting as I reach the apex of a particular suburban street, a favourite of mine. The looming Georgian houses, once edifices in their own right, have since been split haphazardly into flats, where more profit = more bodies = more residue. My pace slows and I slouch sideways to catch a breath when I hear a crack ricochet all around. A dry branch has snapped underfoot as a couple tumble out of a doorway, through a small front garden and spill onto the tarmac before me. A saharan dust kicks up beneath them cartoonishly as they slap and scabble in the central reservation where three roads meet.

The pair shriek a cacophony. They grip each other with one arm and swing to jab with the next. One's teeth are sinking into flesh, while the other's fingernails hunt for bone. I blink once or twice to try to unsee it, but the vision doesn't budge. My brain doesn't even begin an attempt at translation either. It would be like translating birdsong. Only to be understood from the branches. As they dance, the earth comes up to meet them, to splinter a radius or slip a disc.

I'm reminded of the videos I've seen of buildings being demolished. The sharp inhale before irreversible destruction. Where floor by floor of cast concrete slabs shatter and drop, as the skeleton of rebar poles shoot higher and higher. There's no sense of which part is moving and which is static, just that it's all breaking.

Still in these final moments, I feel no instinct to pull them apart. To reason or debate, or to be the cool breeze that they so clearly need. Instead I surprise myself, I crouch down and let myself enjoy it. I let my mouth fill with saliva, dripping over my chin. It follows the trail of a shining asphalt join on the pavement beneath me and almost meets the writhing bodies. ‘Probably, windows are twitching at the three of us’, a version of me jibes, ‘stealing glances between ice and aircon’. Another version retorts, ‘probably everyone is dying to be out here, heaving and gushing and weeping, on the brink of tonight. At the edge of a city tearing itself apart’.

*This short text was written by Georgia Stephenson, a London-based curator and writer, specifically in response to the Angelini works on display in this room. Stephenson uses London as the setting for her text, drawing on motifs that are present in the “Después de todo” series, for example the discarded refuse on the pavement, and the curtains which sometimes frame the lens. She employs on her own first-hand experience of London, to produce a piece that is half-fiction, half-fact – some events occurred, others did not. The text explores what happens when a city is pushed to its limits, and when the edges begin to show. Stephenson likens this to the edges of Angelini’s camera roll, when the film glitches or a light leak interferes with the intention of the photographer. Control is a central theme in both the text and in Angelini’s wider practice, exploring just how far humans should push a system around them – be that ecological or societal – until it breaks.*

**Georgia Stephenson, 2024**