

# BATHROOM PRIVILEGES





Type of output:  
Digital or  
visual media

by  
Ellie Land

*Bathroom Privileges* Film:  
<https://vimeo.com/362840622>  
Password: BP2019

[www.BathroomPrivileges.co.uk](http://www.BathroomPrivileges.co.uk)

Cover:  
Digital film still, Kemi in the  
bathroom with onlooker.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

Left:  
Digital film still,  
Ben in the water.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

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# SUMMARY

Establishing the public bathroom as stimulus for investigation, Land examined the politics of sharing through the lived experiences of contributors Ben, Kemi and Emma. The result is a five minute animated documentary *Bathroom Privileges*.

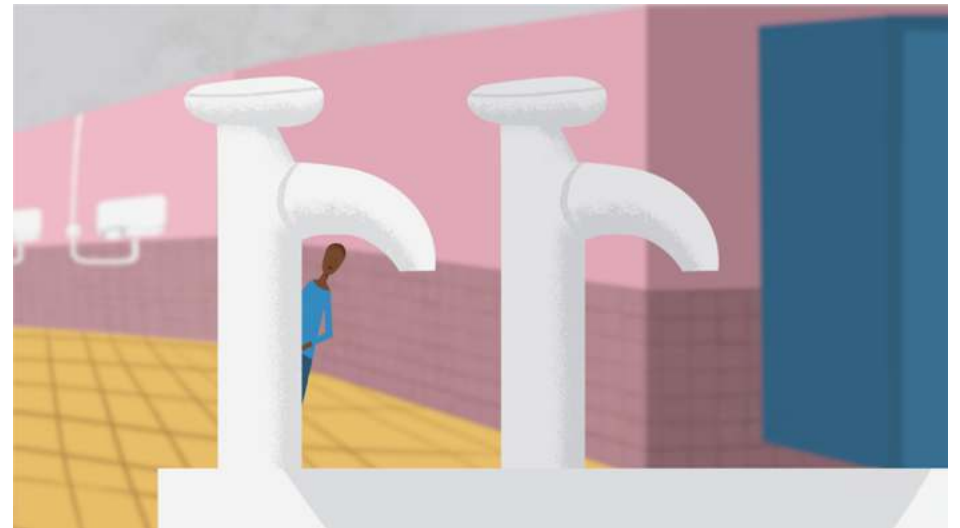
Historically, people of colour, people with disabilities, women and those who don't conform to a gender binary have had to challenge discriminatory legislation and a lack of adequate provision of toilets in public spaces. Land's research investigates the Othered body through the architecture and design of the public bathroom. Explored as a metaphorical space, architecture provided a narrative tool to absorb the ideas and feelings of the protagonists, creating fantastical elements in animation to expose, highlight and emphasize stories and emotions, in particular the unifying experiences amongst the contributors of not belonging and fear. The research exposed debates around the burden for disabled people sharing their limited spaces with others who do not feel comfortable in gendered toilets.

*Bathroom Privileges* was commissioned by the BFI Doc Society. Land collaborated with social worker Rupert Williams, who is the co-director of the documentary. The practice-based research involved a multi layered approach, including peer interviews, co-creation and animated re-enactment.

A distinct ethical approach was enlisted, inspired by Williams' social work and Land's experience of co-creation methods. The contributors were involved at crucial intersections of the design stages: semi-structured interviews created an intimate and trusting experience between the contributors and filmmakers. Character co-design workshops led by Land enabled the contributors to have co-ownership of the animated versions of themselves.

*Bathroom Privileges* was supported with funding from The National Lottery and the BFI Network. The film screened at international film festivals and is the winner of the AHRC Research in Film Award, Animation category 2020. Land featured on BBC Radio Three's Arts and Ideas podcast 'New Thinking: Films and Research'.

Right:  
Digital film still, Kemi feeling  
small in the bathroom.  
Photo credit: Ellie Land



# TIMELINE

2017	2018	2018	2019
<p><b>December</b> Land was approached by BFI Doc Society who had granted £12,000 to Williams and his documentary proposal <i>Bathroom Privileges</i>. BFI Doc Society asked Land to re-imagine William's proposal as an animated documentary.</p>	<p><b>January</b> Land pitched the animated documentary proposal and is selected to collaborate with Rupert Williams.</p> <p><b>March</b> Land is awarded 70% of the funding. The Research and Development Phase begins.</p> <p><b>April</b> Williams and Land develop their approach to working with the participants and find participants to interview.</p> <p>Land and Williams conduct co-creation workshops with the contributors.</p> <p>Land and Williams conduct interviews with contributors.</p>	<p><b>May</b> Land develops the visual style.</p> <p>Land and Williams conduct the edit of the interviews with Jonathan Long.</p> <p><b>June</b> Animation production begins with additional help from animator Zoe Llewellyn and Judit Pal.</p> <p><b>November</b> The film is completed.</p>	<p><b>March</b> Dissemination via film festivals. Dissemination is sporadic because of the onset of the global pandemic and its effect on the Arts and Cultural sector.</p> <p><b>November</b> <i>Bathroom Privileges</i> is the winner of the AHRC Research in Film Award for the animation category.</p>

# RESEARCH CHALLENGE

How can the public bathroom be a space to understand the experiences of people from marginalised communities?

How can animated drawing demonstrate hidden social and cultural constructions, instigated by the architecture and interior design of public bathrooms in the United Kingdom?

Land aimed to include a variety of experiences depending on differences of race, gender and disability.

To ensure a rigorous approach to ethics, Land worked with Williams to interrogate documentary film making practice within the principles of social work practice.



Left:  
Digital film still, Emma waiting  
for the disabled persons' bathroom.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

# CONTEXT

Land is an award-winning animation practitioner. Her work is screened internationally at film festivals and exhibited in galleries. Land is at the forefront of animated documentary practice.

*Bathroom Privileges* contributes to Land's on-going body of research in animated documentary. The research builds on Land's previous work on social identities of the female body (*Centrefold* 2012 and *Breach* 2015) and progresses to include Othered bodies in the area of disability, non-binary gender and race, intersecting the body with the architectural design choices of the public bathroom.

The toilet encourages society to deal with attitudes toward the everyday functions of the body and its products, sometimes stimulating feelings of disgust, shame and anxiety. The notion of dirt is an 'offence against order' (Douglas 1966). *Bathroom Privileges* expands on this famous anthropological insight by exploring the fear of the Other within the confines of the rules of order in the bathroom.



Top right:  
Digital film still, Corridor.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*



Right:  
Digital film still,  
Kemi in the stalls,  
Swiss Cottage.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

Bathroom design promotes boundaries and enforces segregation (Barcan 2010), reinforces gender binaries (Greed 2019) controls the sexualised gaze (Serlin 2010) and stimulates surveillance (Skeggs 2001) thereby creating a set of social codes that society is obliged to take part in when needing to pee. Land reimagined the design of the public bathroom in 2D animated worlds to communicate spatial metaphors of fear, surveillance and the negotiation of power, expanding the reality of lived experience to fantastical elements that only animation can bridge.

The work contributes to discussions on the politics of sharing in the public bathroom by social scientists, architects and designers (Molotch 2010, Douglas 1994, Bichard 2011) and issues of documentary representation (Nichols 1991, Renov 2004). Land's work is conversant with other animators who explore the body and social identity (Noce 2018, Leaf 1991, Scarpelli 2018, Lingford 1998).

Land is the co-convenor of the Animation Practice as Research symposium for the Society for Animation Studies and she is on the editorial board for the peer-reviewed journal *Animation Practice, Production and Process*.

Below: Silos Character Sheet.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*





# METHODS

## Data Collection: Semi-structured interview and peer interview

Land conducted semi-structured interviews with contributors Ben, Kemi and Emma. The aim was to investigate the key research questions and record the outcome.

Land facilitated peer-to-peer interviews between the collaborators. Land noted that the outcome provided richer conversations from which to create content but was ultimately harder to edit due to the dialogic nature.

Land transcribed and edited the interviews into a five minute long narrative using Adobe Premiere. This formed the narrative structure for the animatics.



Right:  
Ben Character Sheet.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

Right:  
Ben and Kemi Peer Interview.  
Scene omitted from the final edit.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*



## Co-creation character design workshop

Land conducted a co-creation workshop with Ben and Kemi with the aim to develop the visual design of the characters. Emma was unable to make the workshop but was involved in the design of her character through email exchange.

The collaborators drew how they would like to be represented, however they were somewhat inhibited by the act of drawing. Land talked with them about how they would like to be represented, what their core values were and noted these on the paper, alongside their drawings.



Right:  
Scans of the character design  
sheets produced in the workshop.

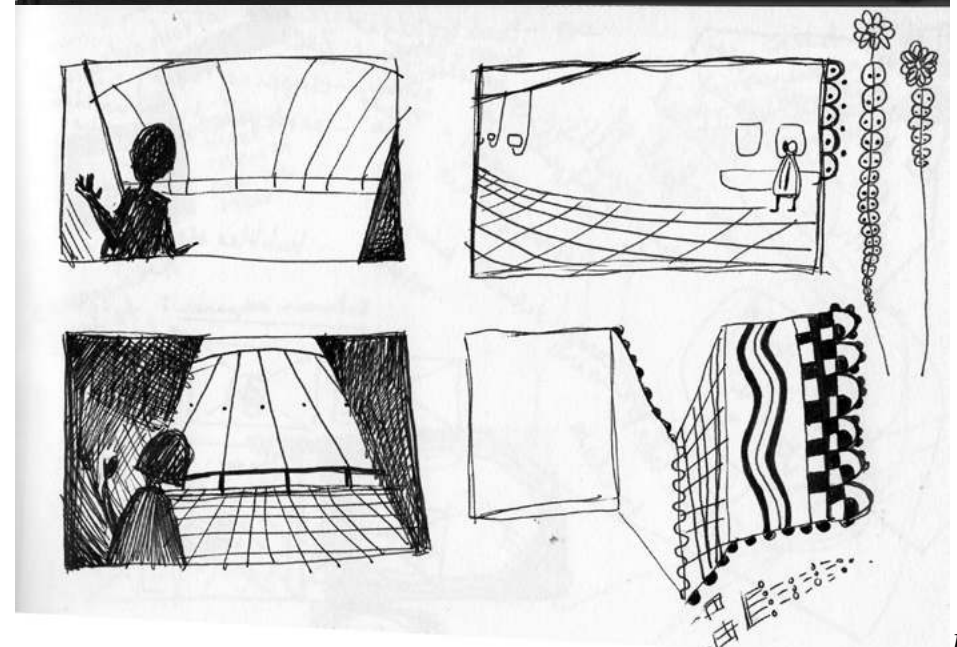
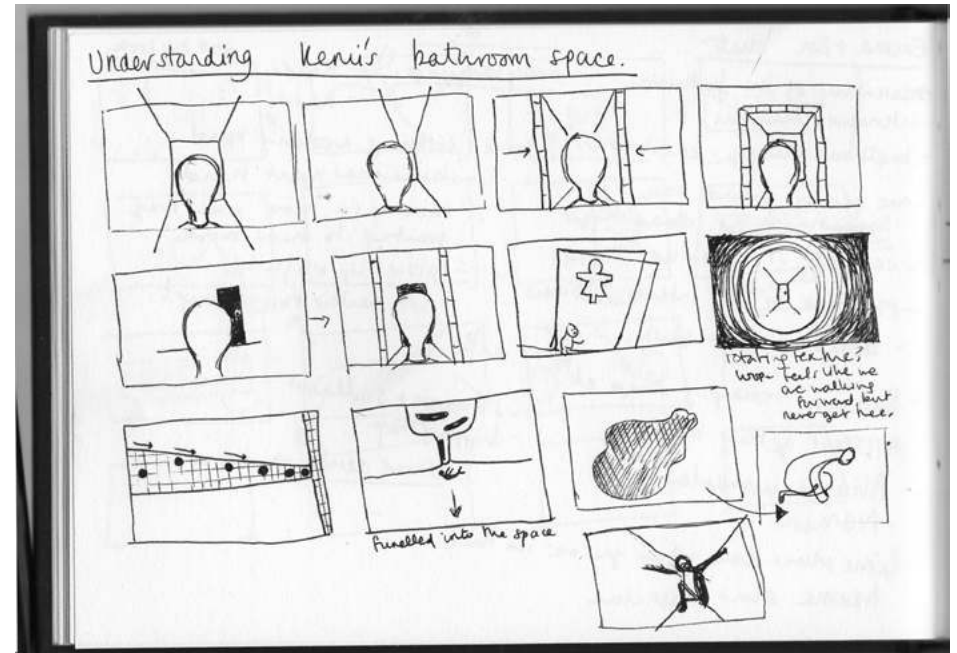
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

## Design

Land produced a visual language for the film. A process of iteration between Land and Williams ensued until the design of the animation was agreed.

Land created a document that laid out the design rules for the animation.

Land kept a sketch book to note down visual ideas from the design discussions and also to note down visual ideas that came out of the research, ideas that would inform the narrative and specifically the animated reconstruction.



Right:  
Scanned pages from Land's Sketchbook  
exploring the metaphorical space of the bathroom  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

## Framework

Land and Williams created a structure to facilitate the filmmaking process, consider ethical implications and influence the creative decisions of the film's content.

Inspired by Williams' social work practice and Land's previous experience of co-design, they were guided by the Global Definition of Social Work (International Federation of Social workers).



Right:

A photo of the newly renovated female public toilet at Whitley Bay, Spanish City.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

## Process

### Animatics and iterative process

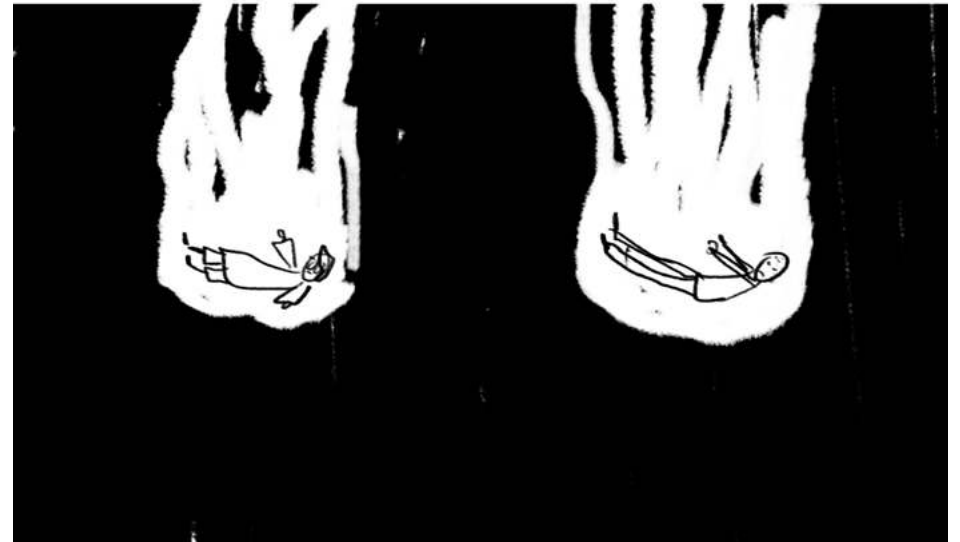
Land introduced animatics to Williams and the contributors. Animatics are used widely in industry and research. They are an animation-specific method that communicates production elements such as narrative, design and sound in a simplified format. These are crucial in a production scenario as they enable teams to understand the vision of the director, without involving large amounts of resource.

Creating the animatics deepened the conversation between Land and the film's stakeholders. It also enabled an iterative process to ensue and opened up opportunities for dialogue.

Link to Animatic segment:

<https://vimeo.com/489350781>

Password: BPanimatic



Right:  
Digital still from an  
early animatic segment.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

# DISSEMINATION

## Outcomes:

5 minute film Digital 1080p.

Link to the film: <https://vimeo.com/362840622>

Password: BP2019

## Screenings and Events:

March 2020 World Premiere BFI Flare LGBTQI Film Festival London – moved Online.

October 2020 [St Johns International Women's Film Festival](#), Canada.  
Online screening Geo-locked to Canada.

October 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 [Queer Film Festival](#), Bremen, Germany Cinema Screening.

November 2020 [Interfilm Berlin](#), Germany. Special Programme Queer Fever Cinema/ Online Screening.

November 2020 [Aesthetica Film Festival York, UK](#). Programme: Reclaiming Space; The Seen and the Unseen BAFTA qualifying. Online Screening.

November BFI Doc Society Local online event East Anglia UK.

December 2020 [London International Animation Film Festival](#)  
Programme Six International Competition Animated Documentary.  
Online Screening.

BBC Radio 3 Arts and Ideas, New Thinking; Films and Research  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08yvsf2>

## Awards

Winner AHRC Research in Film Award Animation Prize money £5000

Viewing Figures March – December 2020: 560 people

## Articles:

Zippy Keyframes European and Independent Animation  
<https://www.zippyframes.com/index.php/shorts/bathroom-privileges-by-ellie-land>

Sqwigly Online animation Magazine  
<https://www.skwigly.co.uk/bathroom-privileges-nominated-for-2020-ahrc-research-in-film-awards/>

AHRC winners profiles online  
<https://www.ukri.org/news/ahrc-research-in-film-awards-2020-winners/>

Right:

Research in Film Award 2020  
at Land's home.

*Photo credit: Ellie Land*



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Skeggs (2001) The Toilet Paper: Femininity, class and mis-recognition. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Volume 24, Issues 3-4.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rupert Williams  
Emma Parsons

Right:  
Photograph of a hand dryer in the  
female toilets, Rendezvous café,  
Whitley Bay 2019.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*

Back cover:  
Digital film still,  
Emma, Ben and  
Kemi in the water.  
*Photo credit: Ellie Land*



