

LANIAKEA — A POT OF POWDERED NETTLES

Massimo Pupillo & Daniel O'Sullivan

TOWER GARDENS ROAD WAS AN ISLAND SURROUNDED BY privet hedge and a rich wilderness out the back, around which the grime and grot of North London flowed, never penetrating. This fortress against the modern rush was shaped and transformed inside and out by the love and creativity of Ian Johnstone, gentleman satyr and Coil affiliate. Much of the house's interior was clad in dark stained wood, a dense menagerie of power amulets and the sidereal painting of Austin Osman Spare, the foliage outside filtering sunlight into a flickering green.

Over the years Ian Johnstone allowed those struggling against the high rents and broken loves of the capital to share his home. This generosity was repaid in the music that was created at 147 Tower Gardens, notably by Daniel O'Sullivan, who quietly foraged the sounds that made up albums by Ulver, Æthenor and Mothlite in a room with ornately barred windows at the rear of the house. For a while he was joined there by Alexander Tucker, with whom he recorded the transportive psychedelic pop of Grumbling Fur.

Ian Johnstone died in the spring of 2015, 147 Tower Gardens becoming a place of grief and remembering as his spirit departed. The sacred interior was gradually dismantled and abandoned, in the process of packing an immense cabinet of curiosities into cardboard boxes, Daniel was visited by his friend Massimo Pupillo of Zu. The pair had met when Guapo (another of O'Sullivan's collaborations) and Zu played some shows together many moons ago. The pair share a love of sharing the creative process, and outside of Zu Pupillo has played in the Ex, and improvised with everyone from Peter Brötzmann to Oren Ambarchi to FM Einheit. He spends six months of the year at his home in Peru, studying ancient wisdom and power plants with the ayahuasqueros.

It had originally been planned for O'Sullivan, Johnstone and François Testory (who provided the transcendent choral vocals

to Coil's cover of "Going Up", the theme to sitcom *Are You Being Served?*) to work together on a piece of choreography tentatively called *The Black Egg*. With Ian departed and Tower Gardens in a state of flux and closure, the remaining pair began work, and in the midst of a great grief sounds began to flow with little discussion, the purpose only to celebrate the artistic and human heritage of dearly departed friends through music.

Drawing on a rich tapestry of influences ranging from the plainchant of Hildegard von Bingen to Alice Coltrane's veldantic tapes to the monolithic bass frequencies of Godflesh, Laniakea evokes eternal vibrations devoted to living spirit in perpetual becoming. These four tracks of surging drone and melodic transcendence are cosmic hymns, atomised riffs slowed and stretched to unveil a pantheon of sound in particle form.

On Laniakea, O'Sullivan and Pupillo distill the dusty air and must of 147 Tower Gardens Road, capturing the life and energy, art and magick that Ian Johnstone brought to this quiet, neglected and tatty corner of the metropolis. As London increasingly becomes Dubai-on-Thames, there will be few places like this in future times. Laniakea is therefore an elegy both to that house, to Johnstone, and ways of being that are increasingly suffocated, stamped out, ignored. Back at the house, the garden has gone, ripped up, destroyed, sent into smoke atop a municipal pyre. No doubt coat after coat of beige paint is being applied to try and cover the dark warm wood inside, and the ivy has been ripped from the brickwork. Ian Johnstone's objects are scattered to the winds. 147 Tower Gardens was more than a home in a storm or an island in a dying city. It was Ian, and everyone he welcomed in, and all they created there. Laniakea is a final signal, yet an eternal vibration.

– Luke Turner



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