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By Kristin Koptiuch

Koptiuch@asu.edu <http://urbanvignettes.com/articles/get-out-of-shoreditch/>

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One gray day in London in late May 2014, an oversized billboard caught my eye on the corner of Shoreditch High Street and Great Eastern Street. GET OUT OF SHOREDITCH, it screamed in mighty letters visible from far up the hipster-tinged High Street. This bold imperative command obscured the intricate 19th century architecture three full stories above the Corner Savoy curry & *shawarma* grill. Up close, the fine print assured would-be Shoreditch evacuees, “Yes, it is actually possible.” The billboard was ostensibly an advert for a minicab company. But in the context of tremendous redevelopment transforming this City-fringe area at a bewildering scale, the billboard’s louder message seems unambiguously directed at those deemed not well-suited to the rarified high-life envisioned for an evolving upmarket Shoreditch.



GET OUT OF SHOREDITCH is just down the street from the can't-miss-them-yellow construction hoardings of Principal Place—The Un Square Mile, whose self-promotional tag-line—“Where the City Meets Shoreditch”—evokes a borderline that has become as malleable as the “Creative Flexible Work Space” proclaimed for this planning-approved 51-floor Norman Foster-designed residential tower and office complex.



Somewhat contradictorily, Principal Place asserts that it is “Building Sites Everywhere,” casting its dispersions amid several other megaprojects heralding what [Londonist](#) aptly dubbed “the ‘Canary Wharf-isation’ of Shoreditch” (no doubt: epithet to some, paean to

others).



Exactly who, then, are those hailed by the billboard, the apparently undesirables of Shoreditch under command to GET OUT? Who are those “Neither Booted Nor Suited” imagined by Brookfield Development to be the ideal denizens of this up-and-coming London quarter? As if in a visual rhythm of call-and-response, a nearby poster by SaVaNT plastered on the ever-entrancing Shoreditch art wall declares, “We are all ‘undesirables.’”



But is the net cast by this pronominal “we” truly so broad? Or does GET OUT address more specifically those front-line settlers who braved the disinvested urban wilderness beyond the edge of London Underground fare Zone 1 to create urban livability via art spaces and graffitied walls, vintage cache and hipster hangouts? Shabby chic colonization of Shoreditch is evidently complete enough to lure big-boy developers whose luxury megaprojects incrementally spill City into “un square” fringe. In this prime psychopathic

space charted by the clever discourse on developers' hoardings, the legacy of the settler-colonial efforts of ironically self-proclaimed "undesirables" is grotesquely transformed into picturesque urban props whose creativity and diversity seemingly minimize the urban violence to come. No longer needed in person, undesirables may as well GET OUT OF SHOREDITCH (astronomical price-points on the new skyscraper digs will in any case be well beyond their means). The signifier has slid again; this time irony collapses into the literal, into the Real of displacement, and into snarky stage-set marketing ploys to impending profitability at an unfathomable scale never dreamed by erstwhile gentrifiers of the classic kind. Something decidedly more exclusive and ruthless is now going on in the neoliberal global city, and its news is legible to all who care to critically read-all-about-it by deciphering the discourse of psychopathic urban space.

Readers may want to check out a cool Tumblr further illustrating this topic in London, [Development Aesthetics](#).

Kristin is an urban ethnographer and cultural sleuth investigating psychopathic space in London and other cities.