



This sheet takes its name from the novel by Italo Calvino. Over the pandemic with its numerous restrictions, our surrounding cities and countryside have often seemed as invisible as they have been out of reach. In *Invisible Cities*, the explorer Marco Polo comes regularly to Kublai Khan and describes far off cities he has seen. These descriptions allow Khan and us to visit these incredible places in our minds. I have quoted below from three texts with descriptions of cities. Have a go at making a drawing based on one of these short texts using any materials you like.

'When you have forded the river, when you have crossed the mountain pass, you suddenly find before you the city of Moriana, its alabaster gates transparent in the sunlight, its coral columns supporting pediments encrusted with serpentine, its villas all of glass like aquariums where the shadows of dancing girls with silvery scales swim beneath the medusa-shaped chandeliers. If this is not your first journey, you already know that cities like this have an obverse; you only have to walk in a semicircle and you will come into view of Moriana's hidden face, an expanse of rusting sheet metal, sackcloth, planks bristling with spikes, pipes black with soot, piles of tins, blind walls with fading signs...'

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (Vintage: London, 1997) p.105

'The nearest buildings were almost two miles away, and formed a low belt completely surrounding the Park. Beyond them, rank after rank in ascending height, were the towers and terraces that made up the main bulk of the city. They stretched for mile upon mile, slowly climbing up the sky, becoming ever more complex and monumentally impressive. Diaspar had been planned as an entity; it was a single mighty machine.'

Arthur C. Clarke, *The City and the Stars* (Gollancz: London, 2001) p.28

'From here too the sense of the city's circle was immediate, no map-maker's device. Spaced at intervals, the Stalinist buildings, the Vysocki, peg out the circle. Six Gothic Batman towers, like sentinels. You can make your mental journey between these, springing down from the Ukraine Hotel to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and on to the elite residence at Barrakadnaia; or you can take more intimate paths, walking from above the streets and alleys directly beneath, that you have trodden so many times on the ground.'

Liza Dimbleby, *I Live Here Now* (Firework: London, 2008) p.166-167

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