

# INTERDISCIPLINARY MODELS FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS: EMPOWERING COMMUNITY, INSPIRING URBAN RENEWAL

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## KEYWORDS

Collaborative Design+Build Studios; Site-Specific Installations; Temporary Partnering Between Artists And Architects; Urban Renewal; Empowering Community.

## ABSTRACT

*This paper relates to the theme of Public Space and the Built Environment, exploring possible (interdisciplinary) worlds, where collaboration flows naturally and partnering between artists and architects delivers benefits for all participants involved. It contributes to the ongoing debate about temporary interventions in the urban context and the potential that such new collaborative experiences and interdisciplinary models can present for a local community. The paper discusses the potential that partnering has for creative interaction with a city's cultural (in this case, often derelict and left-over) fabric through informal urban interventions and the stimulation of urban renewal. How exactly can such collaborations between artists and architects trigger the transformative potential, fostering social well-being of communities? The paper introduces and examines a selection of site-specific installation works in Newcastle (NSW), Brisbane (QLD) and Berlin (Germany), which were the results of collaborative practices initiated by the author. These temporary works question our comfortable notions of life in cities as well as challenging our understanding of the roles of architecture and art, and their modus operandi in general. One of the conclusions is that, today, urban renewal of the post-Industrial city has to address and support social diversity and the changing requirements for public space, where the public domain is increasingly under threat to be transformed into privatised, controlled zones, and the need to find innovative ways to embed the arts in the urban regeneration process.*

## TESTING DIFFERENT MODELS OF COLLABORATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PRACTICE IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Our architectural world continually seems to be looking elsewhere (outside itself) for reference points, in order to define itself. This paper contributes to the ongoing debate about public art and interdisciplinarity, and discusses the potential for collaboration between architects and artists in interacting with the cultural fabric of the city (Lehmann, 2002). The temporary works of previous projects presented here 'provoked our comfortable notions of life in cities as well as challenged our understanding of the roles of architecture and art, and their modus operandi' (Hocking, 2005). We need to be able to operate in several domains at the same time, or as Wouter Davidts has put it: 'Disciplinary borders should be challenged and transgressed in order to critically re-assess them' (Davidts, 2005).

In their essay 'Does Interdisciplinarity Promote Learning? Theoretical Support and Researchable Question' (Lattuca, Voight & Fath 2004) the authors identify the following four models of interdisciplinarity:

- 'Informed Disciplinarity': In informed disciplinarity, instructors focus instruction primarily on a single discipline but call upon other disciplines to illuminate the course content.
- 'Synthetic Disciplinarity': In synthetic disciplinarity, instructors combine theories, concepts and perhaps even research methods from different disciplines, but contributing disciplines remain clearly identifiable.
- 'Transdisciplinarity': Transdisciplinarity mutes the disciplinary sources of theories and methods, applying them across disciplines so that they are no longer associated with a single discipline or field; transdisciplinary concepts, theories and methods are tested in one discipline then another.
- 'Conceptual Interdisciplinarity': Conceptual interdisciplinarity includes disciplinary perspective; it has no compelling disciplinary focus. Conceptual interdisciplinarity also accommodates poststructuralist, postmodern, and feminist forms of inquiry, which explicitly critique the disciplines and may contend that all questions require interdisciplinary answers. (Lattuca, Voight & Fath 2004)

I believe these models offer us a useful starting point when we address the question: What are the various models of inquiry in architecture that are specific to architecture as a discipline? And how are these models transformed in an interdisciplinary context? We found that architecture and art students are keen to be involved and highly motivated to make a difference to the world; they were very much prepared to engage in the design + built studio installation projects and cross-disciplinary teaching. These projects encouraged their self-esteem and responsibility, in other words, they connected and interacted with the community, by exploring how communities and artists can be involved in the regeneration of urban space. The most interesting strategies were activity-based, rather than object-based. The discovery of what the 'arts and healthy community' projects can do to a community has been quite revealing and transforming for the author's own understanding of discipline. We just start to understand that in future, collaboration skills and cross-disciplinary partnerships will be crucial for artists and architects (and graduates in these fields). It seems hereby that such future interdisciplinary investigations could be of many different types: For instance, they could be of processual, conceptual or interactive form, assuming a subversive, situational or committed position.

In response to the current times of rapid change, we have become increasingly aware of the need to look beyond conventional models of organisation and to develop more flexible cross-disciplinary studio models for architecture and art students (Franz & Lehmann 2004). To explore the idea of drawing together different disciplines, three studio models from the author's architectural teaching are presented here as a means of furthering an

understanding of collaborative environments. Each pedagogical model represents a way of creating specific learning situations in interdisciplinary design education. Such collaborative studios differ from the traditional studios in that they are cross-disciplined and, at the same time, embed a leadership role for the architecture discipline. Of course, there are many precedents for such interdisciplinary approaches. However, one of the advantages of collaborative studios is that they produce students who are highly motivated and who are rigorous in their thinking (Lehmann 2007). The three developed models with varying levels of cross-collaboration consisted of:

- Studio model 1: Students working side-by-side on the same project, each producing their own proposal ('transdisciplinary encounter model', Fig. 01), whereby the contributing disciplines remain clearly identifiable (as in 'Synthetic Disciplinarity').
- Studio model 2: Students working in multidisciplinary teams, encompassing architecture and visual arts students, to collaborate on joint individual projects ('real team collaboration model', Fig. 02). This model can be regarded as the closest to 'Transdisciplinarity' and was used for the exhibition projects presented in this paper. The author believes that applying sources of theories and methods across disciplines so that they are no longer associated with a single discipline or field is probably the most interesting, but also challenging way, to run collaborative studios today.
- Studio model 3: Architecture students invite students from other disciplines to come to the studio from time to time as external consulting experts ('interdisciplinary consultation model', Fig. 03). This model is probably closest to the standards of 'real' architectural practice, operating with 'Informed Disciplinarity', calling upon and utilising the expertise of other disciplines.

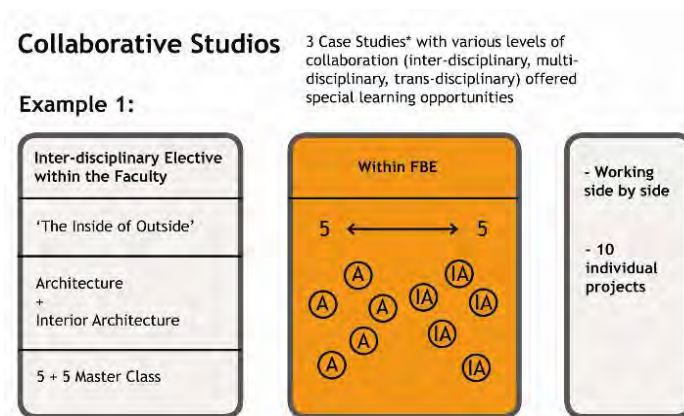


Fig. 01: Diagram of studio model 1: 'Transdisciplinary encounter model'.

## Collaborative Studios

### Example 2:

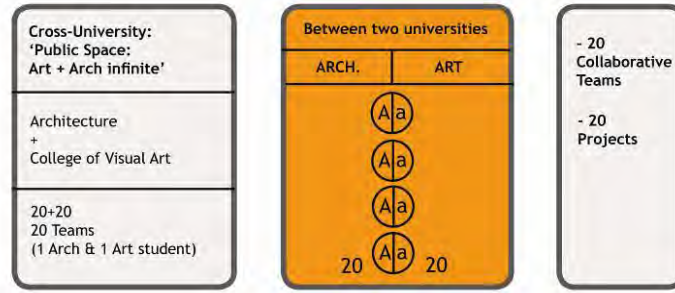


Fig. 02: Diagram of studio model 2: 'Real team collaboration model'.

## Collaborative Studios

### Example 3:

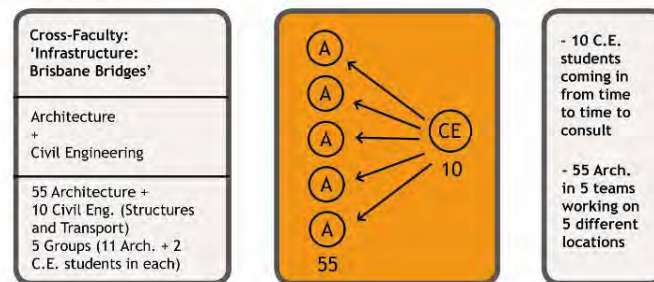


Fig. 03: Diagram of studio model 3: 'Interdisciplinary consultation model'.

## WAYS OF SHARING CRITERIA

One of the studio's starting questions was: Where does the responsibility of the artist begin and that of the architect end, and what are those shared or specific models of inquiry? The reciprocal relationship and the similarities between buildings and sculpture (both are creating space, dealing with scale and the use of materials, etc.) has been an intriguing phenomenon for a very long time. It is challenging to uncover each discipline's methodological differences, through the act of making. Investigations revealed interesting crossover practices, where contemporary artists started to produce architectural objects and space-engaging installations, while artistic tendencies such as Constructivism, Pop Art, or Minimalism originated in the arts but were quickly adapted by the architecture discipline.

The idea behind the exhibitions Rethinking: Space, Time, Architecture (Berlin), Art+Arch infinite (Brisbane) and Back to the City (Newcastle), was to bring together the disciplines by engaging artists and architects / landscape architects in a collaborative and exploratory discourse with each other. Therefore, the exhibition projects involved teams of both established and emerging artists, and students of architecture and art. We found that collaboration

thrives on differences as much as similarities, and that the resulting dialogues between the disciplines led to interesting new forms of collaborations, or ways to understand the urban context, thus demonstrating the potential of such reciprocal relationships. Working together with a common goal has clearly opened up new arenas of artistic exploration.

Today, more than ever, making architecture is an interdisciplinary adventure without defined, clear cut boundaries. Proportion, material, colour, surface: architects share with artists a whole range of criteria in their work, as well as some central elements of theory, planning and delivery. As noted by Helsel, 'the influence of works by artists such as Richard Serra, Donald Judd or Gordon Matta-Clark on architects and urban designers (such as on Peter Eisenman, Arata Isozaki, or Herzog De Meuron) is often evident, despite the radical alienation from architecture by these artists' (Helsel 2004). Crossing the boundaries into each discipline's *métier* is nothing new, however, the area between the two poles has always been charged with tension that can release artistic energies, as can be seen in the case of Matta-Clark, who introduced radically new ideas into the artist-architect relationship, and who is known for his dissections of buildings. 'Why hang things on a wall,' he asked, 'when the wall itself is so much more a challenging medium?' (Matta-Clark 1975). His installations transformed the notion of sculpture into bisected pieces of 'walk-in architecture'. This is more proof that art and architecture can define each other's respective domain on many levels, even in healthy cross-fertilisation.

#### **TOPIC BOX 1: COLLABORATION**

- Art is increasingly activity-based, rather than object-based.
- Interdisciplinary + Collaborative: Changing Art Practice through participatory processes.
- Benefits and Risks of creative Partnerships and Collaboration; the need for Agreements.
- Transdisciplinarity: What are the new emerging Models of Collaboration?

#### **TEMPORARY, SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Artists frequently walk the streets looking for nothing but the ephemeral reflection (and distortions) of things interested in the way one perceives the urban environment and particularly in relation to the lane as it draws us in and provides a perspective that is a magnification of the scale of the city street – like a real phonological experience. For a long time, the concept of the *flâneur* has become meaningful in art, architecture and urban planning describing those who are indirectly and unintentionally affected by a particular design they experience only in passing. German philosopher Walter Benjamin adopted the concept of the urban observer both as an analytical tool and as a lifestyle. From his Marxist standpoint, Benjamin describes the *flâneur* as a product of modern life in the urban environment, but different from the tourist. Benjamin's *flâneur* is an uninvolved but highly perceptive bourgeois dilettante doing a 'Spaziergang' (walk).

In regard to architecture's ephemeral practice, Rifkind writes: 'While Vitruvius maintained that *firmitatis* – strength or durability – was a key condition of architecture, it may well be that our discipline's most enduring moments are its least permanent' (Rifkind 2006). Today, the notion of temporality plays an increasingly important role in the revitalisation of leftover urban spaces. Hence, the three prerequisites for the project proposals were: collaborative, outdoor, and temporary. At this point it is helpful to briefly recall the transformation process in the long historical partnership between artists and architects, and how interdisciplinary work was paramount in the

Arts and Crafts movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the differentiation first made by Immanuel Kant between 'art as a pure art (ornamentation)' and 'architecture as an applied art' (Kant 1790) became widely adopted by the arts community itself and was further formalised by the Bauhaus group. Architecture absorbed art and marginalised the artist in the 1920s, when architects like Theo van Doesburg or Le Corbusier understood themselves as the artists. The industrialisation of the building process finally removed art from architecture and, in the 1950s, had reduced art to decoration (as frequently seen in the decorative murals and mosaic works of this period), where the artist has been viewed by the architect as a decorator. A turning point came a decade later when, around 1968, artists increasingly started to engage the public in site-specific installation works, generating interesting ideas and receiving new 'content' in return. Miwon Kwon recognized that 'along with the spatial expansion of art – out of the gallery – there has been a parallel expansion of sites of knowledge on which art might draw to emphasize the site specificity of a work' (Kwon, 2002). Understandably, several avant-garde group formations of the 1960s and 70s consisted of a combination of artists and architects, for example in Europe, the Situationists, Archigram, Cobra and Archizoom groups. This is an observation discussed in length at recent conferences on the relationship between art and architecture, in Helsinki and Hobart, in 2005 and 2006.

The term 'spatialisation of art' was probably first coined by art historian Rosalind E. Krauss in 1983; however, around the same time, several theorists were pointing to shifting philosophies. Installations by artists Dan Flavin, Walter de Maria and Daniel Buren, which produced an 'institutional critique' of the gallery, marked a significant departure from the standard treatment of exhibition and gallery spaces, towards site-specific installation. 'A working process with reference to a particular location or situation can be called in situ. It means borrowing from architecture', as described by art historians Krauss and Rorimer. (Krauss 1983; Rorimer 2001) Since the early 1990s, the new art form 'Media Art' has become widely known through the documenta exhibitions in Germany, exhibiting conceptual works that show an influence of video and computer games, the Internet, surveillance cameras and other digital devices. Tribe and Jana have called it the 'Epoch of the art in the age of digital distribution', pointing out that this new digital art is often produced collaboratively, by larger teams including computer programmers, musicians, and so on. (Tribe & Jana, 2006) Media Art, also sometimes called 'Interactive Installation Art' or 'Digital Art' is rather a generic term used to describe art work created with technology and made widely available, often exploring the new aesthetic possibilities through mass media, video, the computer and the Internet.

## **DESIGNING AND DOCUMENTING THE TEMPORARY WORKS**

Probably for too long, artists and architects have performed in their separate communities. Prior to the exhibitions, the interaction between practicing artists and architects in Newcastle and Brisbane was limited or, rather, accidental. In Berlin it was limited to a small group.

In order to improve this situation, the projects were conceived to realise site-specific installations at different locations in the city – outside, not inside a museum or gallery space. Malcolm Miles had previously pointed out, 'such temporary character generally allows one to take greater risks, since the installations are not meant to last for a long time in the public space' (Miles 1997). These ephemeral installations were exhibited for a period of one month and documented by photography and video. The areas of intervention were focused: in Berlin to the district 'Mitte' and, in Brisbane and Newcastle, to the Central Business District. For each of the exhibitions a book with critical essays was produced.



*Fig. 04 a/b/c: Three books: Absolutely Public. Crossover: Art and Architecture (2005, Images Publishers, Melbourne), documenting the exhibition project in Brisbane. Rethinking: Space, Time, Architecture (2002, Jovis Publishers, Berlin), documenting the exhibition project in Berlin. Back to the City. Strategies for Informal Urban Interventions (2009, Hatje Cantz, Stuttgart).*

## THE POTENTIAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY CROSSOVERS AND NEW FORMS OF PARTNERING

The notion of ‘working conceptually’ is crucial, since this method relates directly to working methods in architecture as well as in the visual arts. Through the collaborative process, architecture and the arts willingly or unwillingly have become ‘accomplices’ in working together in the construction of space.

Why is it that the conventional ‘Art built-in’ process rarely produces innovative outcomes? Perhaps the answer is that the artwork is only successful if it is conceptually and physically integrated with the architectural approach. ‘Art built-in’ (Keniger, 2006) or ‘art as a reflection of architecture’, however, was not the focus of these projects; the real focus, instead, was on temporary installations that strongly depended on their public location and their ephemeral intervention as outcome of a genuinely collaborative effort.

The groups involved soon realised that the culture of temporary use and temporary installations can be an important urban resource, with the potential to make significant contributions to city life. Most importantly, the temporary exhibitions resulting from these projects demonstrated the potential of interdisciplinary crossovers in urban spaces, while the installations themselves managed to create a new awareness by mirroring, revealing or complimenting the unique characteristics of the chosen sites. From the beginning, the aim of the project was to investigate such crossovers between disciplines, as well as testing and experimenting with new forms of collaboration. It turned out that the existing rigid boundaries between disciplines were both artificial and counterproductive, and that the borders between the various disciplines were actually quite arbitrary.

Other benefits of such interdisciplinary collaborations are the creation of diversity of outcomes, and the personal growth of the individuals involved by being exposed to new knowledge and insights from another discipline. Thus, the collaborations produced interfaces between the disciplines that were both innovative and mutually reflexive. However, it is important to mention that such collaborations cannot be forced to happen; they must find their own cause naturally and arise out of a desire on the part of the participants.

#### TOPIC BOX 2: URBAN REGENERATION:

- Urban Renewal of the Post-Industrial City.
- The changing requirements for Public space.
- Development of Public Space into privatised, controlled zones.
- Engaging and empowering community: Allowing interim-use of vacant buildings in the city centre.



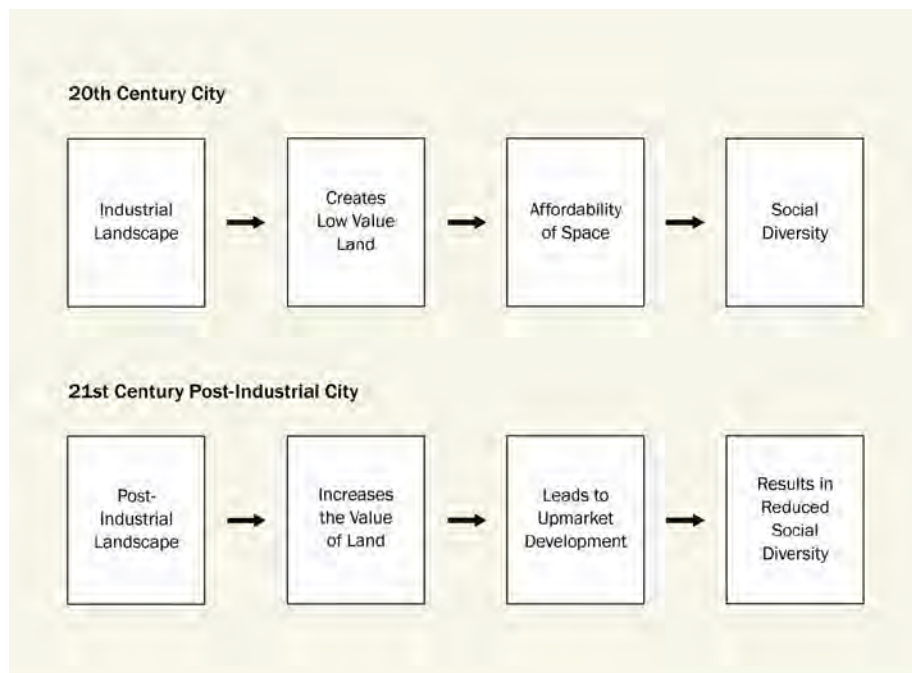
*Fig. 05: The disused site of an industrial park is revitalised by a team of artists and architects as a sustainable community resource, with a swimming pool, gardens and a museum. IBA Emscher Park, Duisburg (2000 – ongoing). (Photos: P. Latz)*



## THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY TRANSFORMING ITS PUBLIC SPACES

Such temporary, informal urban interventions reflect a search for the undiscovered or disregarded potential of leftover public spaces and the potential to transform existing urban situations – some of the reasons why there is such a huge interest now by artists in abandoned places in the city. The author's initiative 'Renew Newcastle' (2008/09) is one of the outcomes of the earlier exhibition project, where community-based initiatives receive rent-free space in vacant buildings in the CBD. (For more information, refer to: [www.renewnewcastle.org](http://www.renewnewcastle.org)). Most of these abandoned disused shops could be easily transformed into community-based spaces for creative initiatives, gallery displays in shop fronts, and artistic interpretation of all kinds of types. The temporary installations help to reclaim derelict buildings and land, to generate a sense of local ownership and a distinctive cultural identity.

However, the shift from the industrial landscape of the twentieth century to the twenty-first century post-industrial, knowledge-based condition is not without risks and brings along some challenges, for instance: How to keep affordability and social diversity – both prerequisites for healthy communities? How to avoid the decline of the city centre? On the urban and social regeneration, Evans and Shaw pointed out, that 'these temporary installations can make a great contribution to health, social regeneration, education and crime reduction, to the resilience of a community, to the economy, to urban renewal and to the city's general well-being' (Evans and Shaw, 2004).



*Fig. 06: Diagram explaining the shift to the post-industrial city: The revitalisation of the disused post-industrial city and its inner-city brownfield sites brings along the risk to loose affordability and social diversity, replaced by a mono-culture of luxury apartments.*

## **URBAN AND SOCIAL REGENERATION – BUILDING COMMUNITY**

The contribution of architects and urban designers in creating culturally active communities should not be understated: It is probably fair to say that the arts play an increasing role in the social wellbeing and self-esteem of communities. Social inclusion is frequently facilitated through arts projects, which are now acknowledged as an important component of all future community planning.

The potential of small-scale interventions to revitalise and regenerate the city in a sustainable way is surprisingly large. Jaime Lerner, urban planner and former mayor of Curitiba (Brazil's seventh largest city, with 1.7 million population), has written about such interventions in his book 'Urban Acupuncture'. Such projects are proof that clever ideas can be done even with small budgets, nevertheless with a huge effect to revitalise the city, improve mobility and reduce urban poverty: simultaneously efficient and affordable creativity starts when you cut a zero from your budget.' (Lerner, 2003) He is convinced that urban change cannot be enacted by central governments but must come from a municipal level. He introduced a series of pinpoint urban interventions that caused a ripple effect throughout the city of Curitiba, hence his concept of 'urban acupuncture'. As the word suggests, pinpoint interventions can be quickly accomplished by local people. Importantly, when working with local teams, Lerner points out that he 'never underestimated the innovative capabilities of the community, which is crucial if you want to get something done that really makes a difference.' There are plenty of grassroots projects which show that a healthy community with self-esteem can do everything. For projects like 'Back to the City' it's important to define the people of the community as 'contributors to the project'. Our greatest assets are probably the talents and skills of our local people, their networks, stories and local identity. Accordingly, Evans and Shaw identified that 'These installations make a contribution to health, social regeneration, and education and crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy, urban renewal and to the city's well-being. They help to reclaim derelict buildings and land, generate a sense of local ownership of town centers and develop a distinct cultural identity' (Evans and Shaw 2004). However, such urban renewal conditions are fragile and can sometimes lead to unexpected outcomes: In Beijing, we can currently observe the phenomenon, how '798 Space', a cutting-edge place for artists in the 1990s, is advancing as a major tourist attraction, and in this process losing its sub-cultural 'edginess'. The former industrial complex symbolizes China's contemporary art scene, but is now suffering the same destiny as previously London's Soho or New York's Greenwich Village (I say more about such effects of urban revitalisation in my essay 'The Commodification of Urban Culture' in Back to the City 2008).

## **AGREEMENTS, DISAGREEMENTS, AND RESOLUTIONS: THE INTERACTION BEHIND THE SCENES**

The exhibition projects involved the collaboration of teams of at least one artist and one architect. Of particular interest were the organisational process and the interaction behind the case study: how the curator was able to get the different groups to be involved and to work together on the installation projects. There were a large number of stakeholders involved, and they all had their own motivations. Stakeholders included: The University, the Institute of Architects, a local developer, the local gallery scene, the various architects' practices and individual artists, City Council, the local alliance of businesses in the city centre, the Public Art agency of State Government, and in Brisbane the Brisbane Festival (with which the project became associated), as well as the Year-of-the-Built-Environment Committee. Intensive, regular meetings ensured a coordinated interaction between these organisations and that they worked together with a clear focus on the project. It also meant a fortnightly encounter between artist/designer/curator with those institutions and bodies that seek to control activity in our cities.

It seems that collaboration frequently means different things to architects and artists (for instance, collaboration goes clearly beyond a superficial adopting of a cliché role of what is thought the other discipline might be). While the roles played by architects and artists certainly vary from project to project, and while it is impossible to generalise about their relationship, old stereotypes need to be challenged and new forms of partnering explored.

Firstly, the author looked to gain the City Council and a local developer as main sponsors of the exhibition works. A call for participation was published in several newspapers, and submissions from interdisciplinary teams were received. Secondly, the involvement and support of the local gallery scene was sought, and their input on suggestions for suitable artists for installations in public space was incorporated into the method. From time to time, the curator had to assist in order to identify compatible partnerships and to facilitate team communication, but several architects had already approached the concept with their preferred artists. The area of intervention was limited to the inner-city centre. Most of the teams were quick in selecting their sites. The curator established creative discussion within the teams, acting as facilitator and mediator between artists and architects when required. The preparation period was hampered by difficulties in liaising between overpowering architects and egocentric artists, when observations and concepts were at risk of being compromised. It became clear that there was no 'ideal' way for artists or architects to perform, and there were some expected differences between what was supposed to happen and what really did happen. Surprisingly, most of the artists acted more like architects, whereas 'the architects started to approach the design task suddenly in the way as expected by the artists.' (Baron, 2000) There were endless discussions about 'placement' and the precise siting of the works. Usually, crucial discussions were made at unrecorded sessions at on-site meetings, where tense negotiations about the most appropriate location of the artwork were at the top of the agenda.

During this critical phase, it was important not to water-down ideas through long procedures, but to give full reign to risk-taking ideas. This phase revealed the varying levels to which individuals were able to work across discourses and to accommodate different perspectives. As noted by Nicolescu, 'interdisciplinarity concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another, similar to the borrowing of techniques' (Nicolescu 1997). Such teaming-up, of course, is generally not so new for the architectural disciplines, which have for a long time recognised and responded to situations in practice where collaborations with consultants from various disciplines have become a common standard. Unfortunately, in the past, this has too often been piecemeal and has not been explicitly informed by theory, substance or method. The author realized that discussions between architects and artists involved in innovative collaborations required changing roles in terms of agreements, disagreements and resolutions. Furthermore, it seems that the architect is frequently unable to experiment with the same degree of freedom as the artist. It often seems that 'the question of assumed disciplinary rights, namely that of form-giver and space-maker, bothers architects more than it bothers artists' (Drew 1986). The Holocaust Memorial designed by the collaborative team Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra is an interesting case in this regard. As Philip Drew remarks, 'the artist frequently appears to be at liberty to develop a new means quickly and inexpensively with an ease that the architect can only envy'.

### **TOPIC BOX 3: TIME**

- Non-Permanent: Time-based, temporary Interventions.
- Ephemeral artworks: evolving over time (4th dimension), where questions of Speed and Process become essential.
- Post-Situationist models of art practice.



*Fig. 07: Temporary installation of slides in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall, Carsten Hoeller 'Unilever Series' (London, 2006/07). (Photo: S. Lehmann)*

## **STRATEGIES FOR ART INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACES: TRANSFERRING TECHNIQUES**

How did the teams of visual artists and architects deal with the complexity and diversity of their urban surroundings, and how did they transform their various environments? And, in turn, did these installation projects alter our perception of the city, e.g. did we come closer to being seen as a creative place in the sense of a 'Creative City' context (as propagated by R. Florida)?

The earlier exhibition in Berlin led to a wider understanding of contemporary art and its appropriate venues, and even to an advancement of architectural knowledge. In some way, the Brisbane and Newcastle projects developed from the experience with the Berlin exhibition and were a continuation of these aspects. Importantly, the method of working ensured that the art was always a part of the whole, not simply a later application. Thus, these types of projects have the potential to open up a much broader discourse about public space. However, it seems that art in public spaces – with a focus on situation, activity and spatially related strategies – has always endured a harder time than object-based art, which is installed inside buildings, protected in museum rooms and entrance lobbies, where the artwork is directly linked with the building itself. Because of the sometimes challenging works by talented artists such as Liam Gillick, Rachel Whiteread, Ernesto Neto, Olafur Eliasson, Jorge Pardo, Carsten Hoeller, or Andrea Zittel, the task of art and architecture, with regard to public space, will not be reduced to decoration without content, critical thinking and spatial engagement within the cityscape.

In all three cities, the participating teams used prominent places and locations for their interventions, such as city gardens, squares, inner city parks, busy thoroughfares, as well as little known, hidden spaces such as laneways and alleyways off the central business district, under-croft spaces along the river or harbour, and lesser-known corners of the city precinct. Typically, such often-overlooked spaces evade description or have outlived their former usefulness.

#### TOPIC BOX 4: SITE

- Place Memory – Urban Decay – Renewal.
- Revealing the Hidden – Challenging Public Space.
- Outdoor, dealing with the Urban Fabric – Response to Site.
- Site-Specific: Is Site still important?





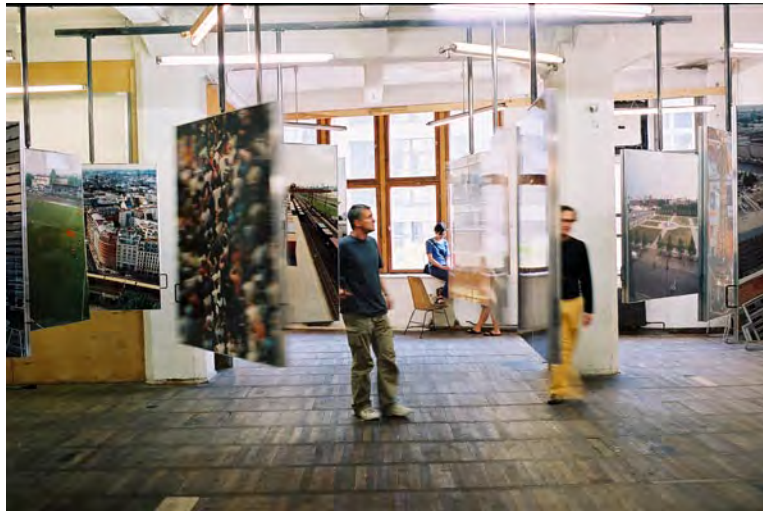
*Fig. 08: Permanent work by Antony Gormley: The 'Angel of the North' in Gateshead, a 20m high and 54m wide work, became the symbol of urban renewal of a region with high unemployment in North England (1998). (Photo: C. De Aragon)*



*Fig. 09: Permanent collaborative work by Cida de Aragon (art) and Steffen Lehmann (arch): 'Women Suffrage Memorial' in Brisbane's city centre, commemorating 100 years of women's right to vote (2007/08). (Photo: C. Hamilton)*

## THE CASE-STUDY: SOME WORKS FROM BERLIN AND BRISBANE

Many of the installations were driven by the varied histories of the sites and the private speculations of the teams. The following pages show a selection of eight works. However, it is very difficult to capture the true essence of such installations from viewing an image; the installations worked with their surroundings, and several of the installations used sound as part of the concept.



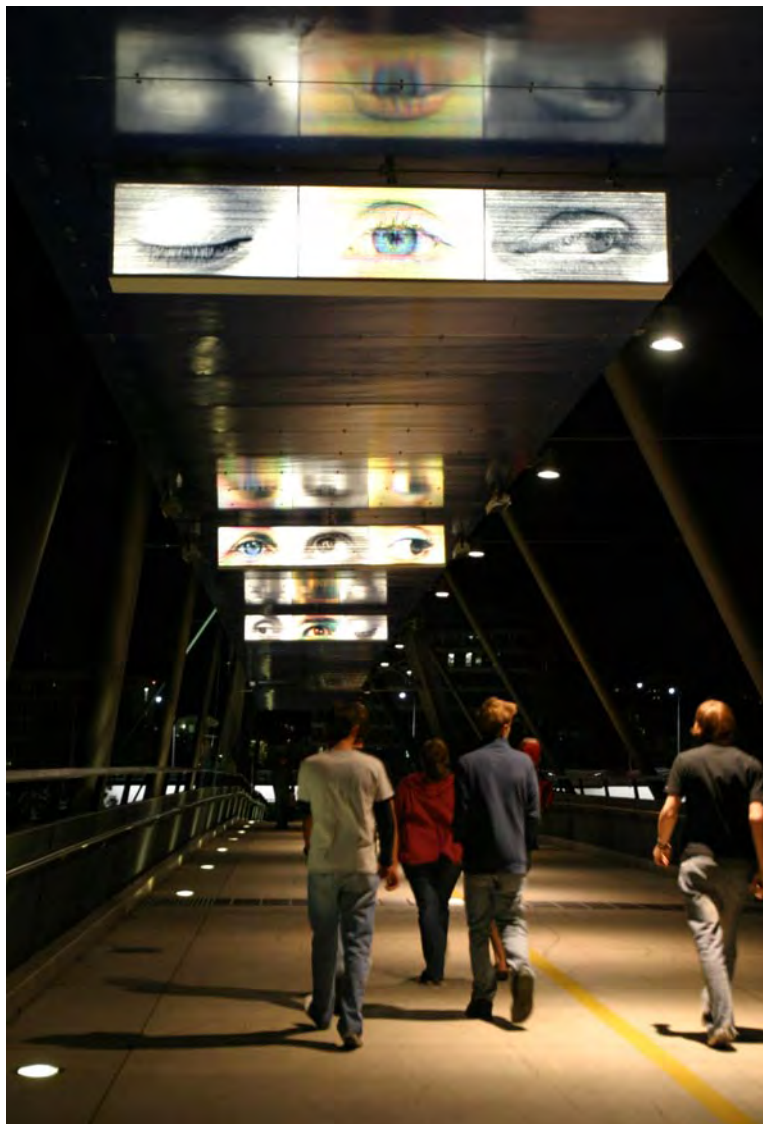
*Fig. 10: 'Where is Bolk?', Berlin 2002. Art: Florian Bolk. Arch: Philip Wehage. The installation comprised of turning panels with photos of macro and micro views. Part of 'Rethinking: Space, Time, Architecture'. (Photo: F. Bolk)*



*Fig. 11: 'Marking Time and Territory', Berlin 2002. Art: Colin Ardley. Arch: Hermann Scheidt. A large, object-like ramp was inserted into a ruin of a church by K.F. Schinkel. Part of 'Rethinking: Space, Time, Architecture'. (Photo: F. Bolk)*



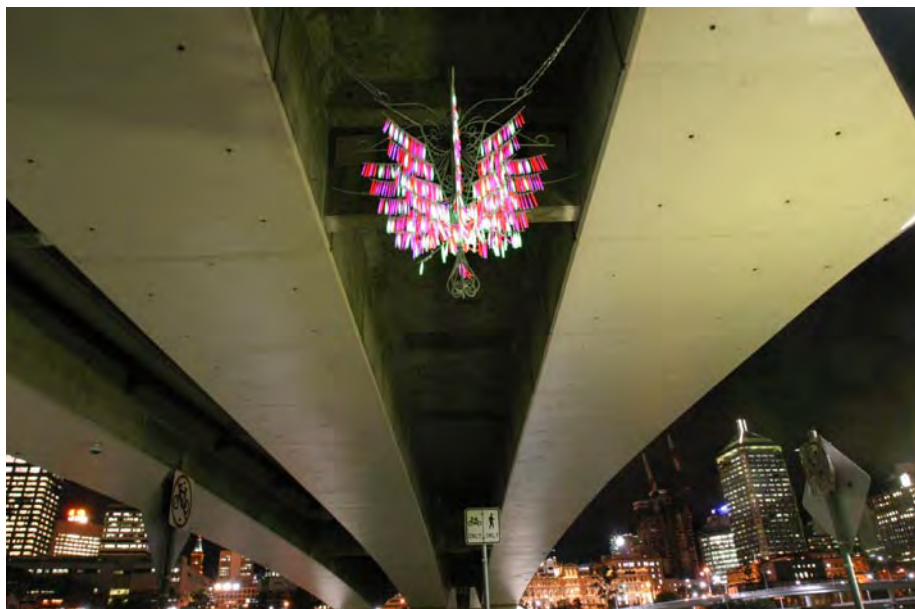
*Fig. 12: 'Walden-Project', Berlin 2002. This project was the archetypical Walden hut at the Potsdamer Platz site; Art: Tobias Hauser; Arch: H.D. Thoreau (collaboration post mortem). Part of 'Rethinking: Space, Time, Architecture'. (Photo: F. Bolk)*







*Fig. 13: 'Surveillance 1', Brisbane 2004. Art: Cida de Aragon. Arch: Phil Heywood and Steffen Lehmann. Sound: C. McCombe. Large eyes and whispering voices indicate a climate of fear: post 9/11 paranoia, security systems and control of space. The danger is that too much control diminishes the public realm. Ironically, surveillance has appeared as a form of entertainment in reality shows on TV, such as 'Big Brother', based on around-the-clock voyeuristic observation by the public. Part of 'Absolutely Public: Art+Arch infinite'. (Photo: C. de Aragon)*



*Fig. 14: 'Dining Room', Brisbane 2004. Art: Simone Eisler. Arch: Andrew Stern. A large chandelier is suspended from underneath a bridge, playing with the irony of opulence, and offering a dining room to the homeless. It offers a delicate image of the city as a place that could be furnished and decorated as you would a domestic interior. Part of 'Absolutely Public: Art+Arch infinite'. (Photo: M. Cullen)*

## TOPIC BOX 5: URBAN TRANSFORMATION

- Revitalising the existing City Centre. Renewing Public Space.
- The artists' interest in the abandoned places.
- Lack of government money for public space.
- Empowerment of community.

### INTRODUCING 'BACK TO THE CITY' IN NEWCASTLE

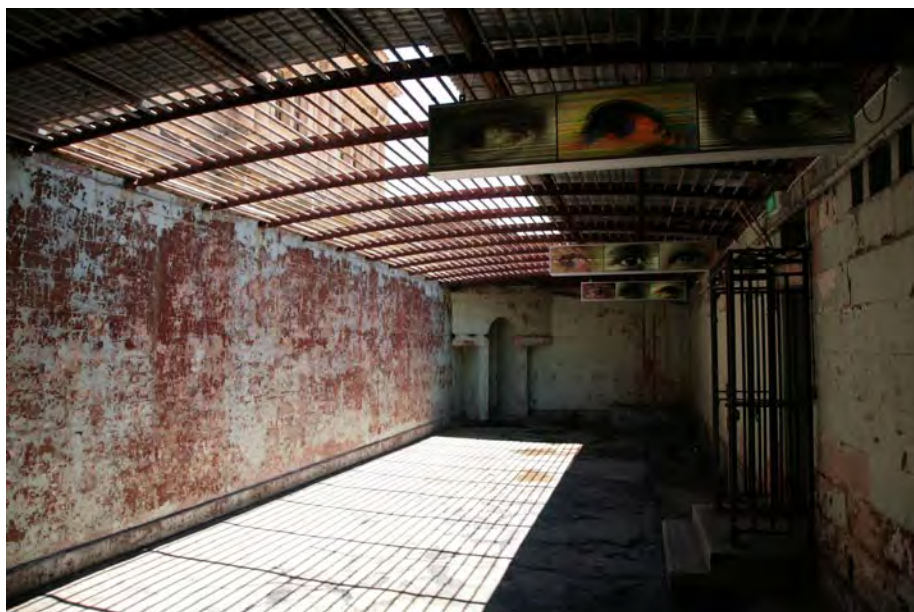
With its interesting layers of history and leftover spaces in the city centre and along the post-industrial harbour edge, sites just waiting to be reinvented, the city of Newcastle is a perfect location for artistic experiments such as the 'Back to the City' project. In a curatorially risky way, the exhibition brief was kept open-ended to enable a diversity of approaches. Several teams proposed installations dealing with the topic of climate change in an artistic way, which is a feature that some five years ago was not on the radar. Officially, the following curatorial themes were formulated: Reclaiming Public Space, Mapping the City, Mobility along the Water Edge and Cosmopolitan Urban Lifestyle. At the same time, participants were asked to respond to the following six relevant exhibition topics: Collaboration, Urban Regeneration, Time, Site, Climate Change and Urban Transformation. An independent and interdisciplinary selection panel was formed to choose the most convincing proposals from over fifty submissions (involving over 150 creative collaborators). Generally, the standard of submissions was very high, and it was no easy task to identify the ones for funding and construction. Seven teams were pre-selected and nine teams selected from the submitted proposals, so that in total 18 teams received funding to build their intervention. Architecture critic John de Manincor observed that 'the curator and selection panel have been rigorous in selecting works that are directly connected to their sites, temporarily reinventing its place.' (De Manincor, 2008. For more information, refer to: [www.backtothecity.com.au](http://www.backtothecity.com.au))



*Fig. 15: 'The Living Room', by Victoria Lobregat and Josephine Vaughan: A replica cosy domestic setting is transplanted onto Hunter Street as a bus stop. Complete with furniture, artwork and objects reminiscent of the family home. This intervention creates an inviting, comfortable space for enjoyment and contemplation while waiting for the bus.*



*Fig. 16: 'Surrogate Trojan' by Richard Goodwin, Adrian McGregor and Russell Lowe: Placed directly opposite the grain silos on the harbour, a container of the Trojan mother ship sits on the water edge, filled with genetically modified canola seeds. Inside the container a short film (a computer-generated animation) is screened, revealing broader national environmental concerns.*



*Fig. 17: 'Surveillance 2' by Cida de Aragon and Steffen Lehmann: Three light-boxes keep watch over the invisible prisoners' exercise yard at the lock-up police museum, the city's former gaol. The intimidating, omnipresent eyes remind us of the excessive control of space in prisons and draw our attention to broader issues of surveillance and detention. Ironically, surveillance has appeared as a form of entertainment in reality shows on TV, such as 'Big Brother', based on around-the-clock voyeuristic observation by the public.*



*Fig. 18: 'Look-out' by Rebecca De Haas, Timothy Griffith, Catherine Parkinson, Alan Proud and Dot Thompson: This installation of six slanting, orange pavilions with peepholes, on the viewing terrace at Newcastle Beach, interrogates a contested site of private development and public space. In particular, the team explores the idea of the Panopticon with its associations of power and observation. The installation includes several structures that provide refuge from the corresponding apartment buildings that overlook the beach.*



*Fig. 19: 'Train of Thought' by Jason Elsley and Marc Blight: This project responds to a little used and remnant corridor space below a rail overpass. The work is a direct criticism of the fracture created by the rail corridor between the harbour and the city. The site is used to pronounce the underutilized and derelict spaces along the rail corridor with a series of plywood profile human forms attempting to reveal displacement and detachment.*

*(Photos 15-19: Allan Chawner)*



*Fig. 20: The stranded ship Pasha Bulker on Nobby's Beach, during the storm in June 2007, was probably the largest, ultimate temporary installation in Newcastle ever, a truly unexpected intervention in public space. (Photo:*

*Cida de Aragon)*

## **SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS: AN EVOLVING NETWORK OF COLLABORATION**

The involvement of established artists and architects side-by-side with students from different disciplines in the presented projects created a valuable pedagogical model that resulted in a particular type of learning situation. Skills to collaborate will be increasingly important and expected from our graduates entering an interdisciplinary

profession. The author suggests that this applied collaborative model was successful in engendering an interdisciplinary attitude as well as achieving creative energy and new awareness of public space. From the feedback received from students and colleagues, it can be noted that for an educational purpose the projects were highly successful. Following the exhibition, the projects were used as a theoretical basis for the further development of an interest in cross-discipline design + build studios that could deal with the revitalisation of the city centre.

To understand the real benefits of such 'partnering', we have explored the way in which the different disciplines were teamed up. Both disciplines have a lot to share; however, collaboration thrives on differences as much as similarities. Architecture is constantly used as a vehicle to fundamentally rethink the way artworks are displayed on both the micro and the macro level. Today, it seems that the typology of the museum of contemporary art would like to transform itself from a static repository and institutional space into a 'dynamic workshop' engaged directly with the cityscape and the artist's ever changing strategies of production. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the public, outdoor and temporal nature of the presented projects has allowed works to appear that were unlikely to have resulted from permanent works or to have been conceived in the 'white cube' of an art gallery. Here, contemporary, transitory and ephemeral art and architecture indulges in the truly public domain by being, literally, in public space. Most of the time, convincing art is temporary rather than permanent. The culture of temporary use and temporary installation can generate and encourage new activities in an easier, more direct way, and can therefore make significant contributions to city life. Interestingly, such interventions can be small scale; they do not need to be large of scale and budget.

Questioning the values of ephemerality and permanence in architectural practice has led to important insights, such as the exploration of the relationship between permanent, commemorative architecture (memorials) and temporal constructions (installation works). Despite earlier suggestions that art and architecture are closely related, they seem to constitute two distinctly different cultures, where artists and architects are expected to design in different ways. It appears that artists make decisions not necessarily more intuitively (as most people would have assumed beforehand), and vice versa, the cliché that architects make theirs in a more analytical way. Are architects genuinely better able to take a reasonable and systematic approach and to defend it? This question cannot be answered in a general sense. However, neither side can expect their position to simply be accepted by those within another profession. It is appropriate to conclude that, despite the differences, forms of behaviour and decision-making within art and architecture are, most of the time, based on sound reasoning. The exhibition projects have clearly improved and triggered more collaboration between the artists and architects in all three cities. The next project is currently in preparation for Sydney CBD: 'Laneways By George – Hidden Networks' will further explore the questions of interdisciplinarity and temporary interventions in public space (Laneways 2009/10).

The architecture and art students involved in the projects were highly motivated to test this new ground, and most of them confirmed afterwards that they wanted to do more work with the other discipline in the future. Vibrant and active networks have evolved out of the projects. Clearly, these collaborative programs offer a useful model for adaptation to other architecture / art programs. All the works explored the uniqueness and the scope of topics brought together within the fields of art and architecture, and explored the contradictions inherent in the relationship of architecture, as an art form in itself, to the forms of life that it serves.

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