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Editors

Luisa Bravo, Maggie McCormick, Fiona Hillary

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ART AND ACTIVISM IN PUBLIC SPACE



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“Public space in cities is a common good, meant to be open, inclusive and democratic, a fundamental human right for everybody.”

Dr Luisa Bravo

The Journal of Public Space, *Founder and Editor in Chief*

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(from the statement submitted at the 26th UN-Habitat Governing Council held in Nairobi, Kenya, 8-12 May 2017)

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The Journal of Public Space is the first, international, interdisciplinary, academic, open access journal entirely dedicated to public space.

Established on a well-consolidated global network of scholars and professionals, The Journal of Public Space is committed to expand current scholarship by offering a global perspective and providing the opportunity for unheard countries to speak up and to discuss neglected as well as emerging topics that are usually sidelined in mainstream knowledge.

The Journal of Public Space is addressing social sciences and humanities as a major field, and is interested also in attracting scholars from several disciplines. It will perform as a scholarly journal but also as an interdisciplinary platform of discussion and exchange by scholars, professionals, organizations, artists, activists and citizens, whose activities are related to public space.

The Journal of Public Space will be enriched by hosting papers on design projects, art performances and social practices, fostering civic engagement and non-expert knowledge.

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Third sector
Decision-making process

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*Cover image: Just Keep Going_Sanctuary, 2018, Ryoko Kose, The Artists Guild in The Dockland District, Dockland, Australia, for the International Womens' Day, Documentation image.
Photograph: Ryoko Kose.*

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Fiona Hillary (2019). Fieldwork Series - <https://www.fionahillary.com/>

EDITORIAL

Reviewing and Speculating on Public Space Futures through a New Lens

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Abstract

This 'Art and Activism in Public Space' special issue of The Journal of Public Space reflects the dilemmas of the COVID-19 era and its impact on public space across the globe. While this issue's beginnings were pre-COVID, its publication was impacted by the pandemic both in its timeline and in how the portfolios and articles will be read through a new lens. This issue presents a collection of projects from across Estonia, Finland, Italy, China, United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, Mexico, United States of America, Colombia, Japan, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Poland, Egypt. The portfolios and articles assert the important role of multidisciplinary inquiry and the integration of practice and theory in the investigation into and the active creation of, the complex and changing state of public space. The experience of a global pandemic and the increase in digital networks has led to a reviewing of the role of public space and fostered speculation on new approaches to public space culture.

Keywords: multidisciplinary inquiry, integration of practice and theory, COVID-19 pandemic, public space futures

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As planning for this 2020 'Art and Activism in Public Space' issue began pre COVID-19, it did not set out to specifically address the impact of a pandemic on art, activism, and public space. At the time of this issue's publication, impacted on by waves of this pandemic and by extensive lockdowns, we are still experiencing COVID-19 globally. As such, the pandemic experience now shapes our perspective on public space and how the portfolios and articles in this issue are viewed.

The experience of the virus has focused our view firmly on public space by creating reflective spaces, facilitated by both windows and screens. On the one hand, as we looked out windows over empty streets and on the other hand, as we 'met' through vastly increased digital public space. This digital public space has kept us connected as global citizens and created the opportunity to re-think our relationship to public space and to investigate new answers to old questions as well as pose new questions.

- When public space is lost, what does society lose?
- When we return, to the new 'covid normal' public space, what will we have learnt?
- From our covid experience, how might we now re-think public space? For example: What happens when we consider public space not as a backdrop to our daily lives – but as an entanglement of relationships – human and non-human, as a complex living ecology?

Digital public space has been the platform for speculation on the potential of physical public space and how we might shape the new 'covid normal' public domain.

Such questions were taken up by The Journal of Public Space during the pandemic through the online initiative titled '2020: A Year Without Public Space Under the COVID-19 Pandemic', jointly developed by City Space Architecture and The University of Hong Kong, School of Architecture, co-funded by the RGC Fund Project: 'Built Environment and Planning for Healthy Cities' and curated by Luisa Bravo and Hendrik Tieben¹.

Universities, academics and artists from across the world were drawn together during the pandemic through a series of twenty webinars, from May to September, to share their experiences and expertise in thinking about the future, attracting 2700+ attendees from over 80 countries. One of the webinars was curated by the editors of the 'Art and Activism in Public Space' special series, Luisa Bravo, Maggie McCormick and Fiona Hillary, in association with Katrina Simon, Associate Dean, Landscape Architecture at RMIT University: 'Speculative Cities: thinking forward' under the 'Innovative Approaches and Creative Practice' section of the webinar series, explored speculative art and design practices and the role of speculation in re-imagining the future of public space². This mode of thinking takes a critical approach to the acquisition of knowledge through practice, to contribute to contemporary understanding of the times we live in, and will live in. It questions existing paradigms, asks 'what if', and seeks to imagine and create alternative futures.

The articles and portfolios included in this issue of 'Art and Activism in Public Space' alert us to a wide range of perspectives and possibilities. What are highlighted are existing

¹ The summary of the initiative is available on The Journal of Public Space - <https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/navigationMenu/view/covid-19-program>. The initiative included a special issue of The Journal of Public Space (2020) - <https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/issue/view/76>

² A summary of the webinar is available on The Journal of Public Space: <https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/navigationMenu/view/webinar6-summary>

public space dilemmas, which have now been brought into the spotlight through the COVID-19 experience. By drawing on perspectives and practices from across the globe, including writers, practitioners, and projects from Estonia, Finland, Italy, China, United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, Mexico, United States of America, Colombia, Japan, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Poland, Egypt, this issue serves as a snapshot of site-specific responses to place and societal issues played out across a richly diverse global public space - as a shared speculative space. A series of portfolios and articles by artists and academics emphasize the importance of integrating artistic theory and practice with theoretical investigation, as equal research tools and equal perspectives. These perspectives play an important role alongside those of urban planners and administrators, architects and engineers, designers, and landscapers, to create a deeper level of understanding of the complexity of public space from its practicalities to its poetics. Public space artistic practice sits close to everyday people, who make the space their own. It reflects their unity and diversity, their common goals, and conflicts. It stops us in our tracks, by creating question marks in our shared spaces. It makes us think ... and act. The writers in this issue present concepts that employ a wide range of socially integrated practices that utilise such actions as play, surprise and meditation to draw attention to the anomalies within public space and pose speculative possibilities. Photography, sculpture, film, and performance are amongst the practices employed.

Each issue of *'Art and Activism in Public Space'* features four artists who have undertaken the RMIT Master of Arts, Art in Public Space program. MAPS is a unique international degree with a focus on critical engagement with contemporary urban public space and culture by bringing together education and research as well as theory and practice and encouraging active collaboration between practitioners and the community. As such it draws together a cohort of those with skills in visual practice, performance, video, sound, creative arts, writing, design, architecture, fashion, and curatorial and cultural management fields in undertaking its practice based creative public space inquiry. MAPS is closely aligned with the RMIT School of Art's research group CAST - Contemporary Art and Social Transformation, as a hub for artistic practices that intersect with issues of equity, access and democracy and radical ways of knowing and being, with an interest in the public sphere, the intersection of human and nonhuman forces, global indigeneity, and the role of education as a change-agent. The four selected artists and projects featured in this issue reflect the MAPS approach and employ architecture, philosophy, textiles and playful performance to interpret 'activism' and 'public space' through the lens of their specific practice, experience, and cultural heritage – from Japan to Colombia to Vietnam to Australia.

Such art practice now complements a sharper public awareness that grew during the pandemic, of the spaces we share, the way we use, or do not use them, as well as what might be done in these spaces. In Melbourne for example many more people began to use roundabouts, nature strips and small patches of grassed areas that were usually not thought of in this way. In Italy, apartment balconies became re-defined as spaces connected by the sound of singing. While our movements were restricted, our appreciation of what we had lost, increased. As restrictions eased in some places such as Melbourne, parklets cropped up as café spaces occupying what were once viewed as sacrosanct car parking spaces. The public space of roads and streets is being re-claimed, as public spaces more generally are being re-thought. These 'new' places then become linked to ideas of community ownership

and begin to re-assert community action. Such small reviewing of the public domain potentially leads to greater societal re-thinking and action. One such example of the re-claiming of public space is the Parklet via Curiel 13/d in Bologna in Italy, implemented by City Space Architecture, as a temporary public space, for non-profit purposes and open to all. The parklet is located in front of the Public Space Museum, a brand-new venue for public space culture co-founded by City Space Architecture and Genius Saeculi, a for-profit company working on Digital Humanities, as a transdisciplinary opportunity for public space inquiry and practice through art and technology. The Museum was established during the COVID-19 pandemic through the renovation of an old supermarket.

Together with the 'Art and Activism in Public Space' special series of The Journal of Public Space, such initiatives play an important role in creating global networks and fostering interdisciplinary investigations into the crucial role played by public space within rapidly changing societies across the world.



Figure 1. The first-ever Parklet in the city of Bologna, in the Porto-Saragozza neighbourhood, via Curiel 13/d, in front of the Public Space Museum, the creative headquarters of City Space Architecture.

The parklet was designed by Luisa Bravo and implemented by City Space Architecture, as part of A-Place. *Linking places through networked artistic practices*, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. Read more: <https://www.a-place.eu/en/placemaking-activity/17>

Picture by Elettra Giulia Bastoni.



Figure 2 (top). The Public Space Museum in Bologna, established by City Space Architecture and Genius Saeculi, by renovating an old supermarket, during the COVID-19 pandemic - www.museospaziopubblico.it. The Public Space Museum is curated by Luisa Bravo. Picture by Elettra Giulia Bastoni.

Figure 3 (down). The Public Space Museum is enriched with the art-work of the well-known Italian artist Flavio Favelli, with a fresco on the ceiling named *Raffaello 500*, depicting in a giant scale the banknote of 500.000 Italian lira with the face of Raffaello Sanzio, recognized by the critics as the most spiritual Italian artist. This art-work is giving a permanent identity to the Museum and is adding value to the spatial experience, playing on imagination and enchantment. Picture by Marco Pintacorona.

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”.

ICOM (International Council of Museums) Statutes, adopted in 2007

"Museums have become key public spaces that, beyond hosting exhibitions, promote debates and dynamic activities for wide variety of publics".

Judy Wajcman, Professor of Sociology
at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE)



Figure 4. The Parklet in front of the Public Space Museum in Bologna.
Picture by Elettra Giulia Bastoni.

Acknowledgment

The ‘Art and Activism in Public Space’ editors would like to thank all the writers who have contributed to this issue that has emerged out of a challenging time for all engaged in public space culture.

Art and Environmental Action, One Bird at a Time

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Abstract

The environmental problems of climate change and species decline can feel overwhelming. Individuals are often at a loss, questioning what impact they can actually have. Through chART Projects, we have witnessed the dramatic effect of community-engaged art as a direct path to environmental action and impact on local ecosystems. During the 27th International Ornithological Congress, bird enthusiasts from around the world focused their attention on Vancouver, Canada. This article is a reflection on how chART took advantage of this assembly, creating an ambitious venture aiming for a sustainable effect on the public's relationship to urban birds. *As the Crow Flies* was a public art project bringing creative connections to urban birds directly into the hands of the public. Works included sited-sculpture, community-engaged interventions, projections, workshops, performances, and 6,000 ceramic crows.

chART's founder, Cameron Cartiere has been working with an interdisciplinary team to address the loss of pollinators through *Border Free Bees*. That research project used environment-based art to engaged communities to take positive action to improve conditions for pollinators, with tremendous success. *As the Crow Flies* took a similar approach to highlight the loss of bird species and actions individuals could take to improve the odds for their feathered neighbours.

Keywords: public art, social practice art, environmental art, community engagement

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I. Introduction

North America has more than 1.5 billion fewer birds than it did 40 years ago. Human activity kills millions of birds a year. Collisions with power lines, buildings and vehicles account for about 900 million bird deaths annually in Canada and the United States of America, while domesticated and feral cats kill another 2.6 billion – or about a quarter of the land-bird population. Loss of habitat to urban sprawl, farming and forestry is arguably an even bigger driver of long-term decline in bird populations. Scientists have noted that because of migration south, loss of habitat is an international problem – the cultivation techniques of coffee planters in South America can affect songbird flocks in Canada.

These startling facts and figures come from the comprehensive Partners-In-Flight study (Rosenberg et al, 2016) and concludes that urbanization, growth in agriculture and possibly even climate change have driven the decline in North American land-bird populations. The total number of continental land-birds stands at about 10 billion, down from about 11.5 billion in 1970. The study's authors (academic, activist and government bodies in Canada and the United States of America) list 86 of North America's roughly 450 breeding species as vulnerable, with some populations expected to be halved in a matter of decades. Soon our forests may be silent.

But birds do much more than keep our green spaces musical. Healthy bird populations provide valuable ecosystem services such as pollination and insect control. Birds are also a bellwether of broader ecological health. A generation ago, it was sickly birds who proved to be the early warning signs of the environmental damage caused by the pesticide DDT. This crisis was brought to public attention through the work of nature writer and former U.S. Fish and Wildlife marine biologist, Rachel Carson¹. So, in many ways, the status of our bird populations can indicate the status of our own health.

These dramatic losses signal the need to expand our thinking and take more individual action when it comes to ensuring the well-being of birds and our environment.

Provincial and federal initiatives across Canada have begun to take action to protect the Canadian Boreal Forest.² But government intervention and the work of conservationists is only part of the solution. New ideas, new models, and new partners are required to educate and engage the public on the importance and the wonder of the birds who share our cities and contribute to our environmental health.

It is usually at this point in discussions about environmental action (at the end of a long list of facts and figures and mounting bad news), that I start to see the signs of panic or dismay in the eyes of my potential collaborators. As an artist working in the public realm, much of my practice engages with environmental issues and I tend to work with numerous collaborators to realize large scale projects. However, the scope and scale of the environmental issues that we face can seem overwhelming to so many individuals. The National Audubon Society's *Survival By Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink* study (Wilsey et al, 2019) indicates that- that two-thirds (64%) of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change, but the study also concludes that if humans take action now we can help improve the chances for 76% of species at risk.

¹ Rachel Carson's 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, not only exposed the hazards of the pesticide DDT, but is often attributed as one of the leading texts that promoted public awareness of the vulnerability of nature to human technologies and interventions.

² In the 2018 federal budget, the Trudeau government committed \$1.3 billion towards the creation of protected areas in Canada.

But what actions? And how? For how long? At what cost (economic, social, political)? At what sacrifice? The list questions grow and so many people never make the first move because they are overwhelmed by what appears to be an insurmountable amount of problems and challenges. But it has been my experience, as someone working in public arts since Suzanne Lacy first coined the phrase, ‘new-genre public art’ (1995)³, that art can move both individuals and communities into action. This kind of ‘activism’ (Goris and Hollander, 2017) is where art serves as a catalyst for action and change. It is also a communicative approach that recognizes the power of art to transcend cultural, social, economic and linguistic barriers. The key is to find the starting place. The point of entry for an individual to visualize their own involvement – to see where their specific actions actually contribute to the larger collective effort.

I have used this method of working in my teaching as well as with my work in public art. When I teach courses in environmental ethics or collaborating with nature, I always begin by acknowledging the enormity of the problem. No one individual is going to solve all the varying issues that are creating the global climate crisis. But if we all start from a point of passion (What is the key issue that really motivates you?), we can be more effective. A class of thirty students will likely have twenty-five different environmental topics they would like to address. Team up those students with overlapping interests and the class moves forward with twenty different lenses to look at the challenges facing the environment and potentially twenty different art and design initiatives to contribute to the collective solutions. Working with the larger public, the challenge is sometimes getting people to ‘see’ the problem. It is not always enough to illustrate the issues – a drawing doesn’t necessarily move people into action. But to become involved in the actual making of the artwork, to ‘see’ through an immersive and physical experience – that requires people, even if only briefly, to become actively engaged.

2. A Bird in the Hand

As the Crow Flies was a community-engaged public art project, comprised of several artworks, that literally brought creative connections to urban birds directly into the hands of the hundreds of individuals living in and visiting Vancouver, British Columbia. The project began in 2018 and developed over seven months, culminating during the week of the 27th International Ornithological Congress (August 19-26). This huge convention occurs every four years and this iteration was only the second time that the congress was convening in Canada, and the first time in Vancouver. So, this was a unique opportunity to not only engage with local audiences, but also bird enthusiasts from around the world who were focusing their attention on British Columbia. The City of Vancouver even shifted its annual Bird Week (a host of bird related activities and events normally scheduled in May) to coincide with the congress.

In addition to focusing attention on the environmental issues impacting bird populations, one of the aims of *As the Crow Flies* was to connect a broad range of public spaces

³ My first significant encounter with public art was working with Suzanne Lacy at the California College of Arts & Crafts in Oakland, California. The 1994 event was a three-day symposium bringing together artists, curators, and writers from across the USA to discuss the expanding field of public art beyond sited sculptures and towards more socially-engaged art practices. The event, *Mapping the Terrain*, was the foundation for the same titled anthology.

across Vancouver. Looking at a city map, connecting the multiple artworks in a straight line (borrowing from the old moniker “as the crow flies”) created a virtual ten kilometre path that bisected the city and provided the public a unique perspective of important neighbourhoods and green spaces along the way: including Strathcona, Mount Pleasant, Queen Elizabeth Park, VanDusen Botanical Gardens, and the southernmost point of the new Arbutus Greenway.

For the last several years, prior to developing *As the Crow Flies*, I had been working with a team of artists, designers, scientists, conservationists, municipal partners, school groups, and volunteers to address the loss of pollinators across Canada through a SSHRC-funded⁴ collaboration called *Border Free Bees* (BFB). This award-winning research project used environmental-based art as one of the primary means for engaging a broad community to take positive action to improve conditions for native bees and other pollinators with tremendous success (Cartiere and Holmes, 2019). With the public art project, *As the Crow Flies*, I wanted to utilize some of the same creative methodologies to highlight not only the concerning loss of bird species, but also real actions individuals could take to improve the odds for their feathered neighbours.

For many in the city, the crow is the unofficial mascot of Vancouver. Every evening, the skies fill with the easily recognizable silhouettes of thousands of crows marking the daily migration across Metro Vancouver to the Still Creek Rookery in Burnaby. This rookery is one of the largest in North America, whose crow population fluctuates between 6,000 and 20,000 depending on the time of year. Scores of people come to view the nightly return of these birds to this peculiar strip of trees wedged between the Costco and the McDonald’s parking lots. Other people have mixed feelings about crows, from ominous tales of being harbingers of misfortune to the more practical concerned about being “dive-bombed” while walking down the sidewalk. Highly intelligent, social, resourceful and playful, crows are a fascinating species (Haupt, 2009; Marzluff and Angell, 2013; Savage 2015). Sometimes confused with the more mythologized raven, the crow is a ubiquitous bird across Canada and around the world. It is this commonality of presence in our shared landscape, the mixed feelings they evoke, and the overt attraction they stir within us, that makes the crow the perfect “gate-way bird” to open up a conversation about the shocking decline of birds in our environment. For this project, we turned to our native member of the bird family Corvidae. The Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*) is slightly smaller than its cousin the American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) and some scientists think that because of cross breeding, the Northwestern Crow is being genetically edged out of existence (Marzluff and Angell, 2007).

While developing the *Border Free Bees* project, we used the Western Bumble Bee (*Bombus occidentalis*) as our ambassador into the world of pollinators. Like the crow, bumble bees are easy to spot in the field and often have familiar associations. But the Western Bumble Bee, like the Northwestern Crow, is native to our region and while once very common, both bee and crow are becoming rare. To increase pollinator awareness and provide concrete environmental solutions, our collaborative team

⁴ *Border Free Bees* was funded by a Partnership Development grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in collaboration with Emily Carr University of Art + Design, University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO), the City of Richmond, BC, the City of Kelowna, and numerous industry partners. The principle investigator was Dr. Cameron Cartiere and the co-investigator was Associate Professor Nancy Holmes (UBCO). For more information see www.borderfreebees.com

created a series of exhibitions, public projects, earthworks, and community art events to engage people into the world of pollinators. The Western Bumble Bee introduced our audiences to the 800+ native bees that live in Canada, over 450 of whom are in British Columbia. Translate our methodology of community engagement to the world of birds, the Northwestern Crow became the ambassador for the 459 species in 46 different bird families in BC. With *Border Free Bees*, we created public art pollinator pastures and gallery installations with 10,000 laser-cut bumble bees from hand-made seed paper (each bee being a mini pasture waiting to be planted). For *As the Crow Flies*, we were inspired in part by British artist Clare Twomey's installation *Trophy* (2006) in London's V&A Museum.⁵ Twomey created 4,000 blue clay birds. Perched all over the ground and around some of the museum's most famous historic sculptures, these tiny blue birds were just asking to be taken home. Within five hours of opening, the public had "stolen" every single one of these birds. While this was the intent of the installation, no one formally invited visitors to take the birds home, people just followed the behaviour of others in the space. The installation was intriguing and certainly the sheer number of birds had a dramatic impact, but I wondered if such an approach could actually address our larger issue of bird decline and if the art objects, now in the hands of so many members of the public could serve less as decorative items and more as direct symbols of action.

Being well versed in the power of multiples (from 2015 to 2018 we have created over 18,000 bees for the BFB traveling exhibition *For All is For Yourself*) and involving community directly in the making of environmental artworks that dramatically increased the immediate actions individuals are willing to take to promote positive environmental change; my collaborative team (chART Projects⁶) developed three public art works within the *As the Crow Flies* project.

Our first community-engaged work was *Fledglings* (figure 1) – 6,000 baby ceramic Northwestern crows made in community workshops using clay, press molds, and simple ceramic hand tools. These figures, designed by myself and artist, Jess Portfleet were made over the course of six months in workshops held at community centres, public squares, and the public spaces at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

When we observe crows, it is usually the adult birds we see. One seldom sees chicks or fledglings in the nest, particularly in our city parks and street trees as urban crows make their nest much higher in the canopy than rural crows. The 'dive-bombing' activity crows display is often in protection of their nests (Marzluff and Angell, 2013; Savage 2015). The emphasis of this artwork was on the unseen inhabitants of the nest; to provoke an awareness of the vulnerability of the small creatures and to create a mindfulness of the host of other bird species trying to raise their young in our shared city. Our choice to use ceramics was intentional as the resulting birds would possess a degree of fragility reflective of the fragility of fledglings in our urban spaces.

⁵ <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/clare-twomey/>

⁶ chART Projects is not really a "who" but more of a "what" – a collective method of working cooperatively towards shared aspirations and objectives. Launched by Dr. Cameron Cartiere in 2010, the current focus of the collective is community engagement on environmental issues through art and ecology. To this end, the collective includes a broad spectrum of talented individuals who bring together a variety of skills and expertise including communication design, beekeeping, creative writing, project management, illustration, carpology, visual arts, community engagement, garden design, industrial design, strategic planning and ecology.

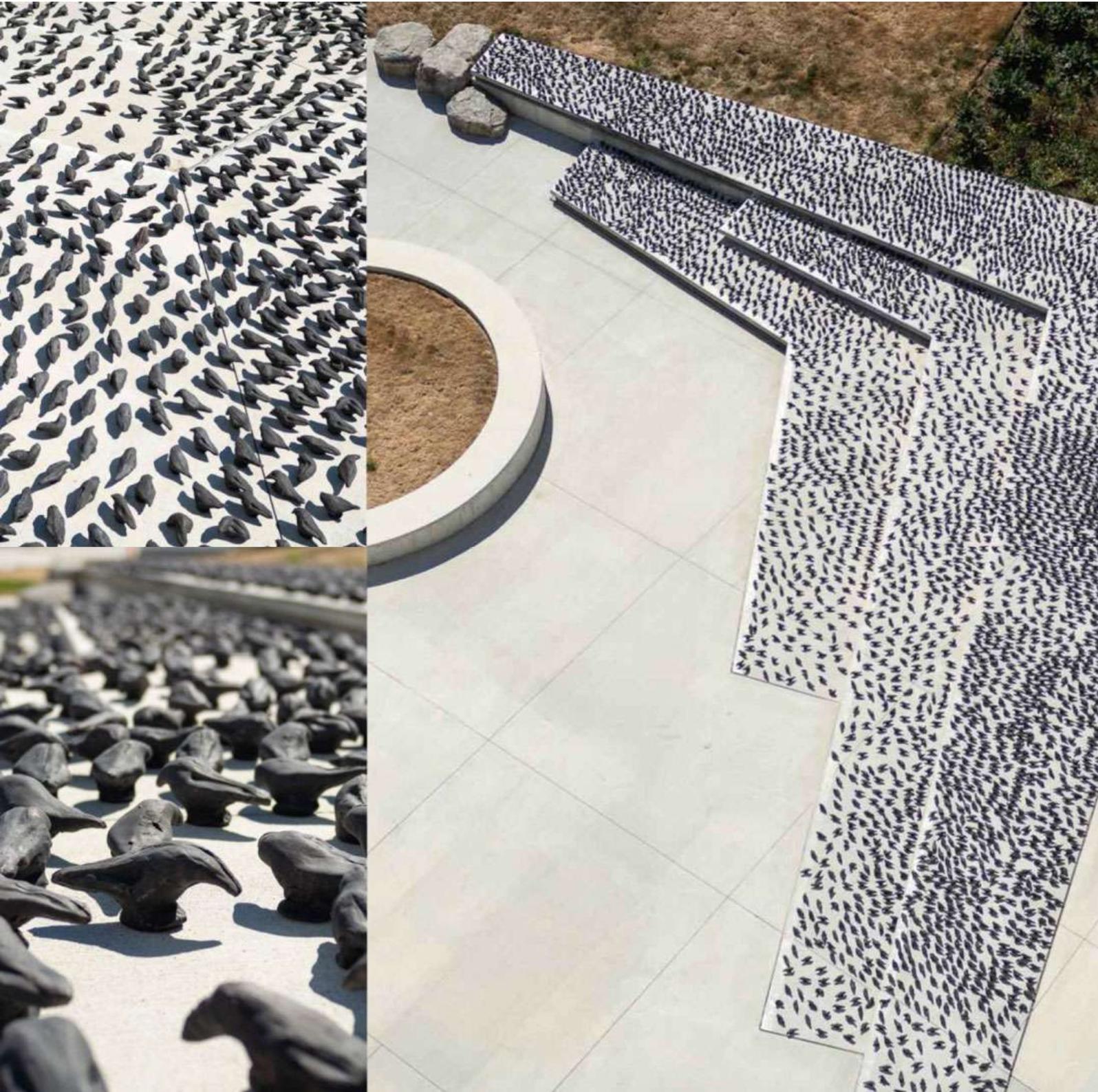


Figure 1. *Fledglings* Composite installation view, Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Ceramic multiples (2018). (Source: chART Projects, credit: Geoff Campbell)

The first-year mortality rate of crows in the Pacific Northwest is 50% (Link, 2005) and we were prepared for the possibility that over the course of our project, the percentage of our clay fledgling to reach completion might mirror that of the crows we were trying to represent.

Our crows all began their journey as 3.5 ounces of Sierra Red clay; cut from 25-pound blocks and weighed by one of our team before handing the lump over to a waiting member of the public. This ‘hand-over’ launched the production line process (figure 2) that allowed us to create so many birds in such a relatively short period of time. From that first touch of cutting and weighing the clay to the fired and finished figurine taking flight with its new owner, each bird was handled at least ten times – ten opportunities to be squeezed too hard coming out of the press mold, to crack while drying in the storage boxes, to chip while being glazed or stacked in the kiln, to explode in the firing process, to break while being unloaded and packed and transported and handed back to the public. In the end, we lost twelve -- a surprisingly small number. That is not to say that each fledgling came out of the process perfectly. The hands of a four-year-old will create different oddities as the clay is pulled from the mold and the rough edges smoothed off the form, then the hands of a forty-year-old. We had few rules in the production process. Try and keep the shape of the bird intact (there were four poses to choose from), don’t add eyes, leave the newly pressed fledgling with the artist team member at the end of the line for ‘banding’. At the end of the line, each bird was numbered by pressing a counter stamp across the underside of its tail. This served to keep track of the number of figures created, mimicked the practice of banding birds in the wild for research and monitoring purposes, and served as the artist signature.



Figure 2. *Fledglings* workshop detail view, Creekside and Strathcona Community Centres. Ceramic multiples (2018). (Source: chART Projects, credit: Nick Strauss)

Regardless of the age of our participants, no one seemed to be disappointed that they could not immediately take away the bird they helped create. We used a simple phrase in explaining the process. “You are making a gift for someone you never met, and they are making one for you.” Many of our participants took selfies with the raw fledgling after it was numbered, holding up #713 or #4493, knowing that the likelihood of finding that bird again during distribution was near to impossible. They would then hand the bird back to be tucked into the drying boxes for transportation back to the university.

After the birds were in the drying boxes, the rest of the production was in the hands of our team. Each bird may have only weighed a few ounces, but moving hundreds of them in wooden boxes, packing and unpacking and repacking as they proceeded through the process of drying, glazing, re-drying, loading into the kilns, unloading from the kilns, moving into 5-gallon buckets for easier distribution, and loading them in and out of cars – it is all heavy work.



Figure 3. *Fledglings* progress view, Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Ceramic multiples (2018).
(Source: chART Projects, credit: Cameron Cartiere)

But I found that the sense of community was ever present through this process. As the one team member who participated at every stage of the process, I literally touched every bird. I numbered over 5,500 of them (the collective agreeing that it was better if one person kept track of the counter), glazed 3,000 of them, and moved (and re-moved) more birds than I care to remember (figure 3). Along the way, certain birds would continually catch my eye and I would remember the person who helped to make it – the particularly ‘funky’ misshaped fledgling made at Creekside Community Centre by a very enthusiastic kindergarten-aged boy, so proud he completed the process by himself (#1451). The milestone birds such as #500 made by a Foundation year student from Nova Scotia at our first workshop at Emily Carr, #3000 made by a mother who homeschools her two children and returned to several workshops as an opportunity to combine art and science lessons, our final bird #6000, co-created by myself and a young

visitor to our university from the USA (figure 4). When those birds passed through my hands again, those makers were present with me in the studio. It was the final handing-over, however, that has stayed with me the longest.

Once the fledglings were complete, they returned to the community in two ways. During the week of the Ornithological Congress, half of the flock were installed in the lobbies of the community centres that hosted our workshops. One would arrive for a swim, to visit the library, or to attend hockey practice only to discover that 800 ceramic fledglings had 'landed' in the entrance lobby. You could simply select a bird and take it home. There were didactic signs about the project, but surprisingly, many centres felt the need to put up an additional sign to let the public know that yes, it was alright to take a bird. Many people would want to leave a contribution at the reception desk. Instead, we left instruction to encourage those people to actually take two birds and give one to someone else and share about the project and the information they learned about urban crows. Because that was the main goal of the project.



Figure 5. *Fledglings* making the last bird, Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Ceramic multiples (2018). (Source: chART Projects, credit: Nick Strauss)

Each fledgling was more than an art object. Each bird was also the conveyer of information. An opportunity to have a discussion (if even briefly) about the decline in bird species, how adaptive crows are, the mortality rate of fledglings, our shared environment. It was also an opportunity to hear peoples 'crow stories' – why they loved crows, or hate crows (there seemed to be few people neutral on the subject). These were moments when we could discuss why they might have been 'dive-bombed', what to do to avoid those situations in future, how to tell a crow from a raven, and the important role of crows as scavengers in nature (Link, 2005). We had these discussions during the making of the fledglings, but we also had these discussions with people when we were installing the birds back into the community centres, and when we distributed the birds at our other events in the project.

3. Weaving Through Public Space

Our second artwork in *As the Crow Flies* was *Nesting Nests* – a large scale temporary sculpture made by creating hand woven nests for the broad array of birds that are native to Metro Vancouver, from the Anna’s Hummingbird to the Bald Eagle. The nests were assembled together on a birch armature to create one large nest (4.5 meters in diameter) representing the range of habitats needed for birds to survive in our region. The sculpture was designed by myself, artist Jaymie Johnson, and industrial designer Christian Blyt. *Nesting Nests* expanded on Johnson’s previous BFB work, *Bumble Baskets*.⁷ A series of workshops were scheduled from March 2018 through July 2018 at community centres, parks, and other local sites for the public to weave the nests using coil basket techniques. These workshops were a unique opportunity not only for creative production, but also to continue our practice of engagement in environmental education, story-telling and community building. The materials for the nest building was harvested by our team in collaboration with the Vancouver Parks Department, through their invasive species abatement program. We harvested dozens of bags of English ivy, Scotch broom, and Periwinkle and prepared it for transformation into art materials. The weaving of each basket became an opportunity to talk about the 19 invasive plant species identified in Metro Vancouver, what this means for our common spaces like parks and berms, how and when ground nesting birds might be taking up residence in blackberry bushes, and why English ivy is probably not your best choice for ground cover.⁸

The giant nest was assembled to coincide with the opening of the Ornithological Congress and was installed on the recently acquired Arbutus Greenway.⁹ This pedestrian and bikeway corridor runs nine kilometres from the southern edge of the city, along the Fraser River in the neighbourhood of Marpole, northward to False Creek and Granville Island. This former Canadian Pacific Railway (CP Rail) line had been undergoing a considered transformation since 2016. The changes were occurring in stages, with testing different types of paving materials, active and ongoing community consultations (including a series of ‘design jams’), and temporary interventions such as seating, a little free library, and a pop-up pollinator garden. *Nesting Nests* became a part of that testing process. Prior to our 3-week installation, there had been no public art officially produced along the greenway. There were a couple of guerrilla activities including the person who painstakingly painted all seventeen electrical boxes along the greenway to resemble signalling flags.¹⁰ Through their own expense, they continue to maintain this series of mini-murals and the City unofficially accepts this contribution to the public realm by not painting over the boxes. But this type of unsanctioned art action did raise questions within the various departments who engaged in the commissioning

⁷ For more information on the Bumble Baskets project see <http://borderfreebees.com/terra-nova-pollinator-meadow/>

⁸ For more information on invasive plant species in Metro Vancouver see <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/conserving-connecting/invasive-species/Pages/default.aspx>

⁹ For more information on the history, development, and planning of the Arbutus Greenway see <https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/arbutus-greenway.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/events-and-entertainment/vancouver-resident-arbutus-corridor-boxes-1944042>

of public art across Vancouver. These various departments include the Public Art Department, the Graffiti Management Unit, the Parks Department, the Engineering Department, the Sustainability Unit, and the Library. Not surprisingly, these various departments are not always in communication with each other in terms of commissioning policies or following a comprehensive public art plan. Prior to our engagement with the Arbutus Greenway Design Unit, it wasn't apparent that the greenway fell outside of the City's Park Department, nor was it connected with the Engineering Department. The Arbutus Greenway project was forging new ground for interdepartmental collaboration as well as experiencing some cross-department confusion and miscommunication. At various stages along the way, our sculpture was approved, rejected, re-approved, re-rejected, and finally successfully installed. This experience helped lay the foundation for a public art policy for the Arbutus Greenway which has gone on to commission several murals and other temporary artworks. Public art has a long history of serving as a lightning rod for other issues, and our project certainly highlighted the need for an official commissioning process for the greenway, but the only complaints the department received about the sculpture was when it was gone. People up and down the corridor asked, where their nest went. The answer was, Port Moody.

From the beginning we knew that *Nesting Nests* had only a temporary home on the Arbutus Greenway and we wanted to ensure that the life-span of the work would be proportional to the collective effort of creating the sculpture. One of my previous municipal partners, who had worked with me on BFB, had moved over to lead the Parks Department at Port Moody. She contacted me to see if chART was doing anything for the Ornithological Congress. I discussed the various works within *As the Crow Flies* and our desire to have *Nesting Nest* settle into a more extended situation. While the sculpture was design to eventually biodegrade, the work had at least a three-year window before it would need to be recycled. Three years during which the work could be a focal point of activism. She was very enthusiastic about the design and asked if we would consider pitching the idea, to other department heads in the municipality, of moving the sculpture down the road to Port Moody after the installation in Vancouver was over. Having decades of experience working with public art, I know the hazards of simply moving a sculpture conceived for one site on to another. If the work is place-specific, connecting not only to the topography of a location, but also the people and histories of that location; how do you inspire those same connections for the community in the next site? The solution was found in the making – the community engagement involved in making the individual nests that helped to create the overall sculpture. So, while we held workshops in Vancouver to weave nests from invasive plants harvested in that city, we also held similar workshops in Port Moody with materials harvested by Port Moody's Parks Department (figure 6).

In addition to weaving nests, discussing invasive plant species, birds in the region and shared habitat, we also talked to people about the artwork that would be coming to their city. We explained how they, too were contributing to the creation of this work and that the nests they were making would be added to the sculpture once it was sited in Port Moody. In essence the sculpture would not be fully complete until it was installed in their park. This community connection helped to transition the work successfully into its second location. The work was not viewed as a 'hand-me-down' from the big city of Vancouver. Rather, people in our Port Moody workshops joked

how *Nesting Nests* was going to be having previews in Vancouver or how it was on loan. Our Port Moody participants were also keen on designing nests for birds that were specific to their region (the Purple Martin in particular, a red-listed species in BC¹¹).



Figure 6. Nesting Nests workshop, Car-free Day, Port Moody, BC (2018).
(Source: chART Projects, credit: Nick Strauss)

On the Vancouver end, regular users of the greenway were writing into the city to express their pleasure with the public sculpture, how it was the type of work they had been hoping to see on the corridor – work that was responsive to the environment. From my observation, it was not without a hint of glee that the officials at Port Moody denied the request from Vancouver to keep the sculpture sited on the Arbutus Greenway for an additional six weeks. The people of Port Moody had waited long enough for their sculpture and they wanted to welcome it home.

¹¹ For more information on red-listed birds and Purple Martin recovery efforts in British Columbia see https://www.georgiabasin.ca/PUMA%20publications/Cousens_et_al_PUMA%20recovery%20in%20BC%20ARC%2704.pdf

4. Animating an Environmental Action

The third and final component of *As the Crow Flies* was the collaborative animation project *On the Wing*. Following that conceptual-line we charted across the city, *On the Wing* consisted of three events featuring outdoor projections and live music. The animation was created by Associate Professor Martin Rose and four students from Emily Carr University. Continuing the theme of the crows' nightly migration across Vancouver's skies, the animation was designed in three parts. During the week of the congress, *Lift Off* took place at MacLean Park on Monday, August 20 (the northern point on the line); *Flight* occurred on Wednesday, August 22 at the Dancing Waters Fountain Plaza at Queen Elizabeth Park (midway on the line); and finally *Landing* was held Friday, August 24 on the Arbutus Greenway at 57th Avenue where *Nesting Nest* had been installed.

We also commissioned artist and musician David Gowman (known locally as Mr. Fire-Man) and his band, The Legion of Flying Monkeys Horn Orchestra, to produce a musical composition. The band played the piece live, utilizing both conventional and hand-crafted instruments, including long wooden horns fashioned from empress trees and royal paulownia. Gowman's studio was in the field house at MacLean Park where the first event occurred and he was well versed in the activities of the crows who regularly visited the park. The daily observations influenced the tone and pace of the musical score.

Often when one views animation it is connected to a device such as a smart phone, laptop, or tablet. Or it is projected in a darkened movie theatre with people in fitted seats in stationed rows. In short, it is a passive activity. But what happens when animation is moved outdoors, into public spaces and the chairs disappear and we lift our heads away from the screen? Can animation help animate public space? Certainly, there is a history of outdoor projections from the (nearly) by-gone era of the drive-in movie to the works of public artists like Krzysztof Wodiczko who since the 1980s, has been projecting videos onto historical statuary and monuments, transforming them into new platforms for the powerless in society. Through his projections, veterans of countless wars, Hiroshima survivors, mothers grieving their murdered children, and abused laborers have professed their personal stories from these public pedestals. With the use of Projection Mapping¹², a rapidly developing digital technology and art form that turns any three-dimensional object into an innovative canvas, public space has the potential to become a new kind of public theatre. However, not all artists have access to high tech equipment and large-scale productions. We wanted to bring a relatively low-tech solution to animating public space with high-level community engagement. For this we utilized five easily attainable components – a data projector, a portable battery, a laptop, a hand-crafted portable screen, and a tricycle (figure 7). Our mobile projection unit allowed us to illuminate the range of terrains that made up the three locations for our project.

The live music and adaptive score were also key elements for animating these public spaces. Gowen and his orchestra composed their performance to accompany the animation, but they also provided improvisational moments that responded to the

¹² For more information on projection mapping, also known as video mapping see <http://projection-mapping.org>

activities of the audience. If children were dancing along with the hopping crows on the screen or lifting their arms to imitate the flapping wings of the birds in flight, the musicians responded. So, each performance proved to be a unique experience and our audience grew as the week progressed and by the final event, we had to provide traffic control to accommodate all the pedestrian and bike traffic that culminated at our site on the Arbutus Greenway (figure 8).



Figure 7. *On the Wing*, Mobile animation tricycle, Vancouver. (2018).
(Source: chART Projects, credit: Geoff Campbell)

5. Realizations from *As the Crow Flies*

I mentioned previously that there were two ways that the public could ‘official’ attain one of our fledglings. The first, by selecting one from the hundreds of clay birds distributed to the community centres that hosted one of our workshops. The other way was by attending one of the animation events and having a member of the chART team present a fledgling to you.

But we weren’t just handing out birds randomly to the crowd. With each handover, we would read off the number banded on the bird. “This is number 3,210 of 6,000” and place the fledgling into the palm of the hand of the recipient. This gesture created the moment for an active conversation (figure 9). A conversation about the project, about ecology and conservation, about the power of art to move people into different ways of seeing the world around them. It was amazing to see how people responded to receiving a bird – specifically designed to nestle comfortably into the hand; to have just enough weight to feel substantial, but also delicate enough to convey vulnerability.



Figure 8. *As the Crow Flies*, three public artworks (*Nesting Nests*, *On the Wing*, *Fledglings*) come together on the Arbutus Greenway, Vancouver. (2018). (Source: chART Projects, credit: Geoff Campbell)

I teach an advanced seminar on social practice art and last year I tried a small experiment as a way of testing how subtle an activism gesture might be and still move an individual towards a new awareness. I had thirty fledglings left from the project. I was scheduled to present *As the Crow Flies* in the second half of the class. During the break, I ushered everyone out of the room and instructed them not to come back until I opened the door for them. I proceeded to place a crow at every other seat. At the end of the break, I opened the door and let everyone back in. Those who had a bird in front of them immediately picked up the fledgling to claim it. Those that didn't have a bird glanced around to see if they had missed it, followed by a look somewhere between confusion and disappointment. I presented on the project and at the end, I went to each student who had not been left a bird and presented a fledgling directly to them. "This is number 329 of 6,000. This is number 2,499 out of 6,000." Fifteen times I repeated this action. Everyone held a bird. I then asked how that felt – to find a bird versus to receive a bird? They talked about the delight of having a bird at their seat (aren't I the lucky one) and the disappointment (why didn't I get one) followed by the amazement of being presented with a bird and the subsequent disappointment by others who didn't experience that direct exchange. In this case the activism was the action of directly receiving the artwork from one hand to another. That gesture made the connection to the artwork more personal and by extension, the connection to the environmental issue became more personal as well.



Figure 9. *Fledglings* Composite view of community engagement at multiple sites in Vancouver. Ceramic multiples (2018). (Source: chART Projects, credit: Geoff Campbell)

As *the Crow Flies* was undoubtedly an ambitious vision, but as we developed the project along with our city, civic and creative partners, the potential for community engagement proved to be substantial. The virtual ten kilometre “art-line” between our sited sculpture and the interventions and public performances revealed an incredible opportunity to connect community and creativity with the plight of birds at key locations across Vancouver. The concept of this symbolic line encouraged the public to experience the diversity and beauty of the native birds of our city at multiple sites, both physically and emotionally. It is important to note that the three, interactive community-engaged art projects (*Nesting Nests*, *Fledglings*, and *On the Wing*) were driven by hours of creative production. These were labour intense projects and as such, the essential component was artist engagement. As environmentally driven art projects, the cost of materials was relatively low compared to the time and creative energy it took to transform those materials into inspiring and substantial artworks.

While our project certainly took advantage of the amazing assembly of scientists, conservationists, and advocates who ‘landed’ in Vancouver during the International Ornithological Congress, the main goal of *As the Crow Flies* was to have a lasting effect on the general public’s relationship to birds, beyond the attention focused on Bird Week and the arrival of the Congress. Two years on and I still receive notes from people who received one of our fledglings. It might be a photo of one of our little ceramic birds taken of on the subway in Helsinki or a fast train to Tokyo. It might be a request from a school teacher to explain how to safely harvest English ivy so they can use it in their classrooms as part of an upcoming ecology lesson on bird habitat. Or interest from Mexico to present the animation during a COVID-19 online arts festival. When I walk to the grocery store each week, I pass a garden fence where three black fledglings sit atop the railing. I don’t know who lives there but over the past two years I have noticed more bird feeders and more native plantings in the garden. The fledglings sit on the fence year-round, through rain and snow and sun. One has a chip missing from its tail, but otherwise they look the same as the day they came out of the kiln. You could easily pluck one off the top of the fence, but no one has taken them. I have seen passers-by taking notice, pointing the little birds out to a companion as they walk together up the hill. I wonder about their conversation. Are they a bit more aware of the bird calls around them? Do they look for that ground nest before cutting away at the bramble of blackberry bush that is taking over the back-garden fence? Will they be reminded to buy an extra bag of sugar to replenish the hummingbird feeder in the middle of January now that the Anna’s hummingbird is a year-round resident?

Activism can take many forms – marching in the streets, letters to government, online petitions, sit-ins, and boycotts. Art-and-activism is art-in-action. We certainly take notice of the grand gestures; towering murals, projections across museum facades, yarn-bombing an entire bridge – these are works that demand attention. But does that attention last when the work is no longer in view? Activism can also take more subtle forms – daily changes in behaviour and consumption, mindfulness and acceptance of differences, kindness as an act of resistance. Admittedly, 6,000 ceramic birds laid out all at once is a dramatic sight and we certainly went to the effort to stage that moment before we began the week-long process of sending those fledglings out into the world. But I think the real power of that piece was the “bird in the hand”. The individual connection to the making, the giving, and the receiving of that little bird. A daily reminder to consider one’s actions in a world that we share with so many others. An opportunity to shift the gaze from an anthropocentric view to a more ecocentric perspective. This is a social practice and public art methodology that could be applied to many environmental issues around the world. Regardless if one is addressing specific issues such as air pollution, plastics in the oceans, endanger species, or broader issues such climate change and global food security, the key is to start with the individual connection to the problem at hand. There are multiple approaches to environmental action and with *As the Crow Flies*, our way forward as an action to address our collective environmental crisis proved to be bird-by-bird.

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Play as a Player in Design. Rethinking a ‘Curious Practice’ for Co-designing Public Space

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Abstract

‘Move the Neighbourhood’ is a research project experimenting with co-designing playable installations for a public green space in Copenhagen through a design-based collaboration between children and design-researchers.

We employed a co-design process to investigate whether deconstructing the rules for both play and design could trigger new ways of conceiving and realizing playable spaces. The aim was to test a participatory process in order to identify what might be meaningful in relation to both play and designing for play, along a spectrum ranging from rules to collaborative improvisation.

In this article, we investigate how play can create agency, spark imagination and open up practices in both artistic and academic processes. Drawing on Barad’s concept of ‘intra-action’, we suggest design/play as a dynamic engine for exploring collaborative design practices as a dialogue between art, play and co-design. In our co-design approach, we seek to unfold what Haraway calls ‘response-ability’ to a ‘curious practice’, exploring the unanticipated in the collaboration as a potential for transforming space.

The metaphor of a ‘jelly cake’ from play-research helps us to activate the messiness of play and frames our methodological approach to collaborative design. We see play as a serious co-player that evokes collective worlds through productive fields of action that enable actors to engage in the co-design of playable public space.

Keywords: co-design, play, participation, children, urban design, public space, curious practice, polite visiting

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Figure 1. Visual abstract: design matters in an entangled materiality discourse. According to Solnit, artistic work can ‘open doors and invite in prophesies, the unknown, the unfamiliar’ (Rebecca Solnit 2006, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, p.5). Photos: Winge. Except photo of circles: A. Millar.

Introduction

In the research project ‘Move the Neighborhood with Children’, we worked with children to co-design visions for a playable space, and then materialized those visions in the design and construction of playable installations for a public green space in Copenhagen.

Over a three-week period in August 2017, we collaborated with 20 children (aged 11–15) from Rubinen youth club in the Sydhavnen neighbourhood. The aim was to revitalize the green lawn in a public park next to the youth club with playable installations developed through a series of co-design workshops. Five installations emerged from the collaborative design process that played out between children, design researchers and a team of carpenters. The children participated voluntarily, deciding

from day to day whether they wanted to join. The participants came from the same group of children, and numbered on average 15 per day.

The co-design workshops explored future scenarios for the community site. The outcome was five wooden figures set amongst the trees. Combined, they created a playable social space that included a rocking-boat, an oversized slingshot, a mirror star-gate, a tetherball totem and a line of disc-shaped goals (Figure 2). These became visual destinations that offer different possibilities for playful actions, inventing games or hanging out.



Figure 2. The playscape. Photo: Winge.

The playscape worked on several levels: as a sculpture park, a set of activities, and a site that encourages children and others to invent new rules for engaging with it over time. The figures are open for interpretation: The mirror star-gate reflects the landscape, like a tiny magic passageway that merges into its environment. Small children can crawl through it, or a ball can be fired through it at great speed from the slingshot. Children can climb the disc-shaped goals and try to get a ball through all of them in one shot. The tetherball totem invites users to hit the targets on the front with the tennis balls attached by elastic bands. On the rocking-boat, you can 'sail' the green lawn, across a sea of grass.

Our co-design approach

Participatory design can set the scene for alternative futures. Through collaborations with citizens, it can support democratic change and materialize visions in public, thereby

merging the production sphere with the public sphere (Ehn et al. 2014). Within participatory design, co-design is a particular approach, in which designers design with users, not for them (Sanders & Stappers 2008).

In co-design, what is being designed is not only the artifact, but also the process that enables participants to engage in designing the artifact (Robertson & Simonson 2013). When children take part in participatory design practices, their participation is significantly influenced by the physical spatial context, but also by the specific child-adult relationship in which the design takes place (Vaneycken 2020). As designers and researchers, we fulfil several roles in the collaborative process: we set direction by structuring and curating the workshops, we facilitate the ongoing interaction and decision-making, engage in design proposals and creations, and analyse and unpack what took place in the process.

As co-designers, we are aware of our ambiguous position when we invite children to explore the language of design through selectively curated workshops based on specific aims. We aim to address this position in a transparent manner and use it proactively in both practice and research.

In our approach, we see co-design as a way to engage and combine ‘telling, making, and enacting’ through various methods and collaborations, thereby ‘forming a temporary community in which the new can be envisioned’ (Brandt et al. 2012, p.145).

Participatory designers/researchers use various modalities for tracking and unpacking what happens in the design process, such as notes, photographs, drawings and artifacts. This is how we build stories and design, but they are also our empiric material and basis for research. This type of knowledge production is developed through active collaborative design processes (co-design) situated in specific design projects (Robertson & Simonson 2013).

Our material-based workshops play a central role. They constitute a ‘more-than-human world’ (Hackett & Somerville 2017) in which ideas, schedules, models, glue pistols and cardboard boxes interact. Maintaining an awareness of material-discursive relations (Barad 2007; Hackett & Somerville 2017) focuses our attention on the relational and transformational situations that take place in the process. To look at these agencies is to focus on ‘the codependency between humans and the more-than-human world, and understandings of the vibrational movement of humans and non-humans are central to this’ (Hackett & Somerville 2017, p. 379–380). Hackett and Somerville (2017) propose these movements as a ‘communicative practice’ that occurs as a complex entanglement of relations within more-than-human worlds. They assert that context and materials ‘ask questions’ of the children: ‘their [the children] gestures and movements in response to those questions can be understood as a worldforming communicative practice where words, story, imagination, movement and gesture are inseparable from the simultaneous actions [of context and material]’ (Hackett & Somerville 2017). In our case, these responses could also take the form of design, e.g. models and drawings or play.

This research approach draws on a material-discursive perspective, and specifically on intra-action, a theoretical concept suggesting that not only humans, but objects, and other materialities have agency, and are all capable of shaping our world (Barad 2003). The intra-action theory is based on mutually transformative interactions between human and non-human actors, and between discourse and materiality (Lykke 2008, p.231). Barad describes intra-action as a ‘mutual constitution of entangled agencies’ (Barad 2007, p.139), which means that discourses, matter, material, nature, subjects and

objects have agency – the ability to act – that emerges from within a relationship. Through intra-actions, new entangled agencies are constituted: ‘Individuals materialize through intra-actions and the ability to act emerges from within the relationship not outside of it’ (Stacey Kerr, S. et al. 2017). This way of thinking is of particular interest for design research, because it frames how our transformative ability emerges through intra-actions.

Co-design as a curious practice

Curiosity always leads its practitioners a bit too far off the path, and that way lies stories. (Haraway 2016, p.128)

According to the STS scholar Donna Haraway, ‘a curious practice’ requires that we as (design-)researchers train our whole being – not just our imagination – to explore: ‘calling as if the world mattered, calling out, going too far, going visiting’ and ‘to cultivate the wild virtue of curiosity, to retune one’s ability to sense and respond – and to do all this politely!’ (Haraway 2015, p.5). She states that ‘training the mind and imagination to go visiting [...]’ constitutes meeting the unexpected and establishing conversations; ‘to pose and respond to interesting questions, to propose together something unanticipated, to take up the unasked-for obligations of having met’. She calls this ‘cultivating response-ability’ (Haraway 2016, p.130). In co-design, ‘response-ability’ consists of being able to respond to each other via our senses and curiosity, thereby igniting a collective imagination through design actions.

We paid attention to cultivating response-ability in our engagement with the children’s ideas, inputs, and inner worlds. Here, children and researchers do something, and do it together. ‘They become-with each other’, as Haraway describes the inevitable entanglement of the observing researcher with the liveliness of the ones being observed (Haraway 2016 p. 128). In other words, when codesigning together we join a collective community of designing, in which the co-design approach affects both the relationships within this community, and the methods involved in creating new realities.

The design process was a messy pool of playing, creating artefacts, disruption and detours, and resembled what Haraway terms a ‘subject-and-object-making dance’, in which subjects and objects are in intra-action (Haraway 2015, p.6). In this process, the ‘subject-and-object-making dance’ constitutes the curious practice. It reflects an inductive approach to co-design practice, based on ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön 1983). For us, as both researchers and designers, a ‘curious practice’ meant caring about and exploring how knowledge and transformation was produced in the ‘subject-and-object-making dance’.

Play as the context and driver of the design-process

In the project, we decided to use the concept of play as a ‘player’ to challenge both the format and content of the collaborative process. According to the sociologist Caillois, play can be understood as situated between rules (*ludus*) and self-directed ‘free play’ (*paidia*), in which players define their own rules (Caillois 1961, in Vaneycken, Hamers et al. 2017). We designed the co-design process as an interaction between *ludus* and *paidia*. We tested whether the use of play to deconstruct rules could trigger new ways

of conceiving and realizing playable spaces, and develop open-ended designs that encouraged free play.

We curated the workshop-design to spark reflection on the relation between game rules and free play. Using a design vocabulary based on games and gameplay, we encouraged children to design artifacts and invent rules for play. We introduced the ball as a prop to illustrate and activate aspects related to ludus and paidia. These concepts became instrumental in curating the design process towards outcomes that pushed the boundaries for how we conceive spaces for play and a framework for opening up design activities.

Play can be a driver for escaping habits and cultivating openness in a collaborative design practice and in the exchange between children and design. Neither research, play nor design processes are linear. As designers and researchers, we sought to curate a co-design process that was structured, and yet open to playful thinking, spontaneity and irregularity. We thereby employed an inductive approach intended to open 'doors and invite in prophesies, the unknown, the unfamiliar' (Solnit 2006, p.5).

In the design process, we framed dialogue through playful making and testing. Play is not a structured methodological approach, but can appear messy and chaotic. Law (2006) advocates for research methodologies that embrace mess. This is an understanding of research that unfolds and engages with a messy world: 'We need to understand that our methods are always more or less unruly assemblages' (Law 2006, p.14). 'In practice research needs to be messy and heterogeneous. [...] because that is the way the largest part of the world is – messy, unknowable in a regular and routinised way. [...] Clarity doesn't help. Disciplined lack of clarity, this may be what we need' (Law 2006, p. 2).

The 'jelly cake' – Play as an opener of design

Play and design scholar Helle Skovbjerg defines play as an activity in which participants join and create a new 'universe of meaning' through actions. Play can open up new meanings and practices that might seem chaotic, but which reframe the participants' understanding of what constitutes a meaningful practice (Skovbjerg 2018). Here, parallels to co-design can be drawn. Vaneycken (in Hamers et al. 2017) connects the participatory elements in children's paidia with participatory engagement in co-design. Here, designing with children is a creative (empowering) process that enables children to reform or break rules, and to de-control predefined roles (Vaneycken in Hamers et al. 2017). While some participants consider this a messy experience, for others it is a developmental process. We see play as a potential opener of new practices, creating a 'new universe of meaning' within the collaborative practice.

Skovbjerg is concerned with the linguistic tendency to flatten the experience of play (Skovbjerg 2019). In her search for a poetic language to convey the sense of the phenomenon, she uses the 'jelly cake' as a metaphor for the ontology of play:

Imagine holding your hands around a jelly cake, not squeezing it too hard but still holding it, showing it to others, maybe eating it with good friends. That jelly cake is the type of language required here. (Skovbjerg 2018, p.6)

When writing about play, we must track our experiences (Skovbjerg 2019). The jelly cake is a metaphor for the fun and vibrant shared experience of play when we participate as active co-players. However, this is a 'slippery phenomenon', dealing with

something undefined (Law 2006), and therefore the metaphor also conveys the messy and playful experience of co-design.

When designing for play, we must question to what extent we are allowing a degree of uncertainty or supporting open-endedness (Skovbjerg 2018, p.19). Play can deconstruct the rules, and be both a disruptive and productive driver of design. The 'jelly-cake-ness' keeps attention on the vibrancy and experiential space that we explore through the play approach.

Design/play

In this section, we unfold our conceptual framework. Design/play draws on the described theories from fields of research around new materialism, play and collaborative design. We frame design/play as intra-action (Barad, Hackett & Somerville), based on an understanding of co-design as a curious practice (Haraway), and employing play as an opener of design (Caillois, Skovgaard, Vaneycken). Design/play applies a playful approach to both materials and dialogues within co-design. When co-designing, play and design 'matters' are entangled with materiality and the local spatial context.

We use design/play as a concept to understand the becoming of the playscape, and as a transformative phenomenon that informs and influences the co-design practice.

Investigating the co-design process through intra-actions and inviting play as a player opens up possibilities. Entanglements play out through the transforming dynamics and exchanges between design researchers, materiality, children, visions and the becoming of a playable space.

Using design/play as a lens, we can break down boundaries we forgot that we invented (Kerr et. al. 2017), and our ways of seeing the world of play as 'just play', and instead invite play as a co-player into the co-design process with the children. Design/play is a framework with which we see that design and play are entangled as entities that affect, transform and inspire each other. In design/play, playing with matters, materiality and senses affects the design process and the understanding of materiality.

In the following, we will investigate how design/play unfolds in practice. We propose that 'design/play' can enable a 'curious practice' in co-design. It is an entanglement between play and design that generates agency; 'When [...] different things are in relationships with each other our ability to do stuff changes, transforms or emerges' (Barad in Kerr, S. et al. 2017). The ability to act, make and transform, emerges from the design/play relationship. Design/play is the lens via which we explore the case, the agencies in becoming and the resulting design moves and manifestations.

Co-designing through design/play

In the co-design process with the children from Rubinen youth club, we designed the workshops as open-ended design/play activities. We set up specific aims for each workshop, in order to ask how new design interventions can activate play that promotes engagement with either the body or a ball.

Each co-design workshop led to specific design outcomes – models, actions or installations – that collectively fed into the final playscape design. The design/play iterations reflect a search for future potential interactions in the public space.

Throughout the process, the children tested designs by playing, and negotiated solutions through drawings, play and discussion: 'Is it fun? Is it a game? How can we engage with it?'

The design process

The co-design process was organized around five workshops:

- A. Making 1:1 mock-ups of playable installations from cardboard boxes, exploring design ideas and space with the body.
- B. Experimenting with rules for play through the improvisational art-game Spoon Ball (Haslund 2018).
- C. Designing and making models from old board games, imagining the lawn as a game board.
- D. Three weeks of designing, negotiating and constructing installations on site with carpenters.
- E. Celebrating, testing games and playing with the five new installations.

In the following chapter, we will trace how design/play enacted the figures and their becoming through co-designing and making. To understand events through the lens of design/play is to be aware of situations, small or big, in which design/play occurs: children playing 'designers'; the telling of playful stories that unfold the design; developing installations through playful activities; and testing through play.

We explore selected design/play events and trace the intra-actions that led to the design. We present how play intra-acted with space, bodies, and materials in the design process, and how design/play took place. We look at how design/play transformed the participants and the design, through material encounters and power-play in the space. In the following, we will unfold six examples from the co-design process.

Co-design events:

1. Designing and testing figures for play through world-making

Workshop A, which consisted of making 1:1 mock-ups, was a play/design investigation into how different figures can activate play. We used cardboard boxes to test and build ideas for installations that could be engaged using either a ball or direct bodily interaction. One group of boys played 'gaming', in which they interpreted the green lawn as a computer game space. Their designs activated characters inside the game with full-sized, portable suits referencing robots and Minecraft. The group wore and engaged with the cardboard mock-ups, becoming living game pieces on site.

In the design/play scenarios, we responded to this interpretation of 'gaming' by mirroring gameplay via tasks ('How fast can we paint this boat?') or motivating incentives ('completion will release a reward' (a cookie)).

Representing pieces in a computer game also became a direct inspiration for workshop C. This event involved designing with 'gaming' by making models from old board games and imagining the lawn as a game board. Children explored design/play through ideas for play installations based on board-game pieces. The children explored how the workshop materials could inspire ideas for obstacle courses, small characters and 'totems' with playful functions.

During the building stage, in workshop D, the playing piece models were upscaled and transformed into body-sized figures on the lawn, including the tetherball totem. This

installation is a playful hybrid translation of the cardboard characters and one boy's design of a 'totem figure' (Figure 3). In his world, the totem also resembled a character/avatar in a computer game. The completed totem installation was a tall figure with a functionality inspired by tetherball, featuring a target and tennis balls attached to long elastic bands. Play involved pulling the elastic taut and hitting the target with the ball.

The becoming of the tether-ball totem exemplifies the intra-action between children, materials and play, where the design/playing with figures and board game pieces transforms into a tetherball totem. The play with 'gaming' and board-game materials activated the children's world-forming design response through a material design/play dialogue.



Figure 3. The play and models that drove the tetherball-totem: a boy embodies the material: a character/avatar > a model of a living totem > the tetherball-totem.

The material matters, such as old games, changed and unfolded the design. Photos: Winge.

2. Exploring the entanglement of scale, ludus and paidia through art and play

To introduce rules as a driver of play, the scope of workshop B was framed by Molly Haslund's art piece *Spoon Ball* (Figure 4, Haslund 2018). This socially engaging art performance consists of a playing field and gigantic wooden spoons and balls. In this oversized and open-ended situation, players are encouraged to engage bodily and invent their own rules for *Spoon Ball*. *Spoon Ball* set the scene for play through artifacts. According to Haraway, it matters what stories and objects we use to tell stories; 'it matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories' (Haraway 2016, p. 12). *Spoon Ball* is a 'design-story' about engaging with playable design and understanding play as a phenomenon. We used it as a curatorial hack, to directly experience the relations between design, games (ludus) and play.

We introduced *Spoon Ball* with a story explaining how ludus influences the meaning of play:

If we don't know the rules of football, it might look strange to an outsider. If aliens looked at football from outer space, they would say: 'What are they doing down there?' (Winge 2017)

The children tested *Spoon Ball* through paidia. We set up a match with few rules – 'you die' if a 'spooner' throws a ball and hits you. Playing *Spoon Ball* was an inquiry into ludus and paidia. We tried to catch each other in unruly ways for which we had no name, and ended up getting confused and making rules (ludus) to structure the play. We

discussed how the design of the rules was essential to the play, and how surprising design (the oversized spoons) appealed to the players' sense of the fantastical. Spoon Ball showed that rule-making can inspire free play, and demonstrated how ideas can be negotiated through bodily gestures and the design of our physical surroundings. It helped the children understand play as a phenomenon, and established a relationship between ludus and paidia – play and design. The absurdly oversized spoons showed that figuration could stimulate play by itself, and that this 'game', through its tools, both referred to and opposed existing rules.



Figure 4. How playing with scale and rules led to playful thoughts in a more-than-human world: Spoon Ball played on-site > an oversized slingshot. 'Let's oversize something,' a boy said during the design process. This led to playful thoughts: 'If you oversize an object, you can interpret the children as being downsized. Does this understanding affect public space if the people are very tiny?' (Winge 2017). Photos: Winge.

Spoon Ball illustrated a more-than-human world (Hackett & Somerville 2017, p. 379–380), in which the relationships between humans and non-humans were central to the expansion of play. The design of Spoon Ball and the play with the enactment of rules were inseparable entities in their intra-actions. Later, it inspired the design of the oversized slingshot (Figure 4) that enacted the play with scaling up and down, a game world shooting and aiming at targets. This connection between scale and place played a role in the following workshop, in which the lawn was perceived as a game board.

3. Old games as matters to think new matters with

In workshop C, the research team set the table with a big pile of disassembled game boards, play pieces of all sorts, cards, and colourful materials. The aim was to cultivate ideas and test potential installations for the site through building models based on board games. While making small-scale representations of installations, the lawn was conceived as a game board (Figure 5). This continued the theme of design/play via paidia and ludus. The materials lent new associations to the design/play activity – 'it matters what matters we use to think other matters with' (Haraway 2016, p.12). These game materials inspired the design of new games. Seeing the site as a game board transformed us, the children, the trees and the future installations into upscaled game pieces. In the workshops, we explored how we could design objects that would lead players to intuitively understand 'the rules' for how to activate the designs through play.



Figure 5. The site from above and a comparison between two representations of the green space: a constructed board game depicting the lawn (left) and a map of the green space. The installations on the lawn were conceived as a board game. Photo: Winge. Map: Carroza.

One boy built an abstract model with five discs set in a row. He presented it as an 'obstacle course' with different levels, while he 'walked' playfully through it with two fingers to test how to 'play' them (Lamm 2017). On the lawn, the model discs were translated into an installation, and we added holes to open them up for play with a ball (Figure 6). Holes became a recurring theme throughout the design process: models with small holes for the bodily performance of a finger, bigger holes for balls, heads, eyes and bodies.

The models acted as miniature obstacle courses, with the pieces representing players on site. Some children discussed achieving different 'levels', as in gaming. Design/play with real space, through both imaginary computer games and the old game boards, took place via designing and playing with the models. The game pieces became personas – totems representing the children themselves. This entanglement of games and space allowed the children to understand the scale of the design and how the space would be transformed. The old board games generated a transformation, a designing of new matters. Here, design/play unfolded and changed the old game pieces into new design, with new rules of play.

Although the translation of small models into actual installations was very direct, this jump in scale, and from idea to reality, could be surprising. The boy who modelled the circular discs proudly said: 'Hey, this was my idea. I didn't know it would be like this. I didn't know it was this color' (Winge 2017). This drew attention to the children's understanding of scale (and being proudly surprised of being taken seriously), as playing with your fingers on a model obstacle course is an entirely different sensory experience than engaging with the body.



Figure 6. The relationship between the models and the final design. The disc-shaped goals were based on the model of a mini-obstacle course, utilizing the different holes employed both in play and in the models. Photos: Winge.

The everyday use of the disc-shaped goals shows how they inspire intuitive play, closely related to how play unfolded in the models. Through the transformation of scale, they invite the players to perform new actions: to get a ball through all of the holes in one single shot. The children tested this immediately after construction.

4. Counter-use – designing through embodiment

In workshop D, we allowed for a high degree of adaptation in the design activity in order to explore the construction process. This entailed a merging of the production and design sphere with the public sphere (Ehn et al. 2014), with both the children and the researchers being active on the site. We employed a playful, intuitive approach to learning how to build. Every day, we invited interested children to participate, and we built the installations over three weeks. The designs that were not yet ready for construction were enacted and realized with the carpenters on site. The construction process was both an investigative experiment and a bodily engagement with the design. The process of making the installations provided a space for testing rules and boundaries, in terms of the ‘right’ use of tools and materials, as well as an ‘embodied counter-use’. The embodied playing with the material as a sensory experience (Hackett & Somerville 2017) was an example of material design/play, which led to interactions and dialogues about what design could be. While painting the rocking-boat, the children also applied paint to themselves, thereby ‘transforming’ themselves – a playful engagement with materials, the site and the emerging objects, modulating their surroundings and their own bodies in space.

The construction of the design entangled with play, e.g. the use of power tools, was both empowering and a power play (Figure 7). It made the children feel competent, and they played ‘being builders’ during the construction process.

One recurring pattern was the children’s ability to step in and out of the construction process: one minute they were drilling, the next they were participants in an unrelated play activity elsewhere on the lawn. In this way, the making space was interwoven with playful on-site activities, which the children brought with them when they returned to the construction work. Some ideas evolved into messier, more ‘slippery phenomena’ (Law 2006). We had to train our minds to visit (Haraway 2015) the slippery things, to be open to what might emerge from or matter in the design/play process, even if this

meant taking seemingly unrelated detours. The children were designers at play – they were becoming the design; the design grew within the play. How could we dive into these ‘jelly’ experiences of play as chaotic (Skovbjerg 2018), messy and productive moments? A child could become a game herself, intra-acting within the design/play process. The girl with arrows on her forehead was an example of ‘jelly-ness’: she was playing with her eyes. We could play the traditional role of adults, and ask her to focus on ‘designing something buildable’. Or we could be curious (Haraway 2015): what if she was performing, in order to be a game herself? Was she exploring how her body connected with materiality, entering the design with play where we could not follow? Another girl played by poking her finger through a hole, teasing us and having fun. Her ‘performance’ resulted in the continuing investigation of holes, which led to the holes in the disc-shaped goals. During the design/play testing, bodies entered into dialogue with the installations, and brought them to life. The site was enlivened through dialogue between body and design. Here, paidia provided a means of escape from underlying expectations of the workshop format, and thereby contributed to the design itself, adding new perspectives on the design/play activities and ensuing themes. The painting of the rocking-boat continued into the painting of the children. When they ran out of surfaces, they painted themselves and each other, appropriating their bodies as playable figures on the lawn. Play involving the embodiment and sensory experience of materials resulted in new solutions, or in unplanned, chaotic steps that were valuable for the design process. Looking at design/play as play with materials, and the ‘jelly-ness’ it creates (Figure 8), we can see that the children’s engagement and entanglement with the materials was a step towards realizing ‘something you can use with your body’. The quest was for materiality as a productive trait, to make play productive in its own right. In other words, the engagement arises from playing with the material.



Figure 7. The enactment of capabilities for and decisions about construction. Power play with power tools: making your design together is empowering. Photos: Winge. Third photo: Lamm.

Figure 8 shows three examples of events that seemed ‘messy’ and ‘jelly-like’ in relation to the design outcome. The play itself did not offer any results, but suggested an ‘empirical mess’ or ‘slippery phenomenon’ (Law 2006). These events encouraged us to be curious (Haraway 2016) and see how the more-than-human world would play out, and therefore freed up the fieldwork. They cannot easily be described using the logic of

design and construction, but they functioned as playful triggers in the design process and informed our thinking about design/play.



Figure 8. Embodiment with materials: Arrows on a forehead, a finger emerging from a hole. Children engaging with the materials by painting themselves. Photos: Winge. Third photo: Lamm.

5. Design negotiations in practice – from water to mirror

The creation of the mirror star-gate (Figure 9) is an example of ‘polite visiting’ (Haraway 2015) through design dialogue. A design dialogue of transformative interactions took place between children and drawing. In workshop A, on 1:1 mock-ups, three girls designed a small bridge that also functioned as a seat. Beneath the bridge, they drew a stream, and imagined the sound of water – a poetic fishing opportunity, a place to sit with your BFF next to a watery reflection of a starry sky. The girls performed stories through their drawings.



Figure 9. The mirror star-gate and the co-design process of telling and enacting. Negotiations through drawing stories between Winge and three girls. Photos: Winge. Third photo: Wagner.

With our explorative approach in mind, we tried to be open to being lost in play. However, while we were immersed in the design process, what was happening was not always obvious: ‘I was not playful at all. I was occupied with logistics, being practical and “adult”. Even though we were connected by a playful, designerly dialogue, I insisted on something buildable’ (Winge 2017).

Now, revisiting the negotiations, we can see that we opened up possibilities by asking questions: ‘How can we build the water?’ (Winge 2017). The dialogues and actions that

produced the mirror star-gate exemplified the on-site breakout sessions aimed at realizing the children's specific design dreams and concerns. Such sessions were an important part of the process of refining the design solutions on the site. Specific objects, such as the mirror star-gate, were developed through dialogue between a researcher and a group of children who had concerns or specific ideas regarding the installation. These breakout sessions occurred away from the larger group, on nearby bench-and-table sets, which became an ad hoc outdoor design studio.

We took the time to draw and redraw, revisiting the design process multiple times, being curious and critical of each other's ideas. The dialogue between children and researchers was a process of transformation through drawing and play through words, in which the participants imagined themselves playing on the future site. We materialized the designs together through these intra-actions of drawing-imagining-conversations, and the ability to act emerged within this relationship (Kerr et. al. 2017). These playful dialogues of telling stories (Brandt et al. 2012) unfolded the design: the water mirroring the starry sky became a mediator for mirroring the surroundings; the stairs to a bridge mediated the star, transforming the benches and creating the possibility of sitting on a star; the stars reflecting in the water slowly transformed into a mirror star; the sound of water became the sound of the wind in the trees; the bridge mediated a tunnel through which a ball could be kicked. In the end, these elements in the dialogue led to design choices that created an intervention that mirrored its surroundings, with more opportunities for play than we had anticipated: a seat, a platform to climb on and jump off, a tunnel to roll balls through. The most unexpected use was when a few children played on its surfaces and edges with finger-sized skateboards, returning the star to the world of miniature models, playing with scale and design/play.

6. To catch an idea and throw it back

In some events, design/play entailed the playful translation of ideas expressed through giggling 'jelly-ness'. Translating ideas into coherent designs, through dialogue and design/play inventions in groups, was a central part of co-designing. Two boys who giggled throughout the cardboard workshop ended up creating a tiny, moving model. Their giggling was a 'jelly-like' play/design approach to inventing a trigger that would surprise potential players. Everything was made in secret, and the design was conceived in whispers between the two boys.

When presenting their idea, they performed how to use it (Figure 10) by playing with their fingers, and giggled at how much fun it would be. Their model explored the idea of balance. Through play with a cardboard, finger-scaled model, they imagined game-play actions, and played out ludus and paidia through acts of balance. Playing it involved either balancing or falling off – rules immediately understood by the body. Here, playground safety regulations served as our 'shadow co-player'. We suggested a further refinements to their invention, in the form of the rocking-boat.



Figure 10. The boys play with their own balance-based invention. Players try to balance on the finished installation, the rocking-boat. Photos: Winge.

For the mirror star-gate, the dialogue took the form of a long negotiation conducted via drawing. For the rocking-boat, it was a quick ‘design ping-pong dialogue’, a reminiscent of good play of simply throwing and catching ideas.

Discussion: Design/play

The aim of this project was to explore whether new ways of designing playable spaces could emerge from a deconstruction of the rules for play and design. It revealed that the co-design process brought design/play into an intra-active sphere of collaborative, playful improvisation. We found that co-design, through telling, making and enacting on the site (Brandt et al. 2012), opened up practices in both the artistic and academic process, and through the entanglements of making and construction within the public sphere.

Design/play is one way (among many) of cultivating response-ability within co-design. According to Haraway, we cannot anticipate who and what we will visit. Diversity in play therefore opens up the participants in co-design to fun, dialogue and new potential. To discover what we are visiting, and how we are becoming response-able, we have to un-know why we are visiting. We acquire openness in the design process precisely by visiting the irrationalities of play. Un-knowing the design process is a curious practice. Our design/play events point to possible ways in which designers and researchers might act as polite visitors to facilitate co-design.

Just as rules were negotiated through play, the design and materials were negotiated through co-design enactments – the site, the participants, the artefacts and the design/play all intra-acted and drove the co-design and participants onward. Design/play nurtured creativity and connections in the participants, the design and the materials, thereby opening up intuitive decision-making and negotiations in the design process.

Supporting open-endedness

Did the method’s messiness implement the ‘jelly’ experience of play, and thereby translate both clear design ideas and ‘slippery phenomena’ into playable design? Yes and no. We invited the slippery phenomena into the co-design process. As such, ‘order’ – or identifying patterns – is a habitual act when designing. Translating ideas into

constructed design necessitated a process of ordering and gathering. Order emerged through ludus and designerly negotiations, such as the processes that enacted the rocking-boat and the mirror star-gate. However, we also had to 'get lost' in paidia, to explore new possibilities for playable design, e.g. the way the tetherball totem was inspired by the small-scale models and robot costumes, and to acknowledge the creative disturbance of counter-play activities.

While using play as a driver could be understood as instrumental for effective design, this was not our intention. To see design/play as an intra-acting concept is to understand that play affects the process of design. Looking at the quality of play itself and meeting the children at their eye-level helps us to think differently about our understanding of design.

Stories and materials as a stepping stone to design

When investigating whether play could trigger new ways of thinking about and designing playable spaces, we see that design/play expands our design thinking. Actions such as art performances and materials like old board games can inspire the design of new games and open up collaborative thinking in the design/play process. This also relates to our actions, such as playing through 'gaming', 'designing' and power-play. In multiple ways, these identifications, via the process of making, frame the design/play actions. The way in which we approach these stories within the design process itself creates new design: 'It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with' (Haraway 2016, p. 12). Stories, too, are players in the creation of poetic worlds through play. For example, the girls' playful dreaming of a world of water and stars was as real as the green grass and the drawings that negotiated the design. The imaginary world of playful stories becomes a driver of future design.

The joy of 'jelly-ness' contributes to an intuitive and responsive design practice – what we consider a curious practice. It supports an inductive way of opening doors, inviting the 'not-yet-known' to be part of design/play. By entering designerly dialogues in a spirit of openness, the participants commit to a mutual response-ability.

Agency and capacity to act

Despite our attempts to equalize the roles and power structures in the process, we recognize the role of other factors and circumstances, e.g. different decision-making capacities. Also, the installations were subject to certain inviolable safety rules. However, the openness to ambiguity within design/play enabled the children to destabilize some predefined roles and power structures, which is where play can have an empowering impact (Vaneycken in Hamers et al. 2017). The (adults') rules were deconstructed through play. Since play was a legitimate act of design, it was taken seriously, despite its unruliness, as part of the process of realizing design outcomes – one was conditioned by the other.

So who was playing with whom? Facilitating play and design, turning messiness into something buildable, was about being response-able, combined with the capacity to make decisions. It was a structuring of design/play. This foregrounded the adults as controlling the framing of play, and the children as doing the playing. We, the adult

researchers, liked to think that we were in control – or at least in control of being open to what might come.

Another perspective might be that the children were more response-able to openness while playing. In other words, it is possible that the children were playing with us, that they were the ‘trickster-choreographers’ of the ‘subject-object-making dance’ (Haraway 2015). ‘If we design this, what will the grown-ups do?’

Sum-up

This paper has illustrated some of the dynamics within design/play. The research design intra-acted with co-design, context and collective ‘reflection-in-action’. The design dialogues merged with collaborative play on site. The future public space and the discourse in the community entangled with new understandings of local playful activities through the transformation of the lawn into a playscape. We, the co-design researchers, paid – and played – the children a visit, and we visited the design process together. The introduction of objects such as old board games, art pieces and materiality functioned as participating tricksters that drove the ideas and the design thinking. We learned that response-ability is to the field what the mess and the jelly cake are to the description of the social experience of play.

The design/play process can be seen as a response-able approach to designing a playscape by exploring co-design as a dialogue between art, play and the design of public space. The playful negotiations and the final playscape can be understood through the phenomenon of design/play. We have unfolded the curious practice of design/play through what Haraway describes as a ‘subject-and-object-making dance’. This enabled design to benefit from play – but by looking at design/play as intra-action, we also see that it enabled us to visit play as a phenomenon, and to understand design through a play mindset.

By participating in the design of a public space and engaging through design/play, the children came to recognize their own agency. We did not know what the right choices were, besides openness. We played, we prototyped, we got a little lost – an act of ‘childhood roaming’ in which the participants developed a kind of ‘self-reliance, a sense of direction and adventure, imagination, a will to explore, to be able to get a little lost, and then figure out the way back’ (Solnit 2006, p.7).

As we reflect on the experience of getting lost, being open to messy matters, we realize that the play structured something for us. However, we could not see it at the time, as we were proactively disturbed by all that ... play.

Conclusion: Capturing the values of design/play

We played, and we built a playscape that played with us. The playscape unfolds new possibilities for actions and encounters in the locality, and is response-able through its design. The process revealed that designing for public spaces can be truly playful. It can be open to and benefit from intuitive experiments and collective, productive messiness. Through a co-design process, we explored how the deconstruction of rules for play and design can trigger new ways of designing playable public spaces. The design/play approach and its inherent openness prompted the children to engage with the design of public space, free from implicit preconceptions about what design is, how it develops

and what it looks like. In particular, the invitation to create new rules for free play in a public setting appealed to the children.

When we consider play and co-design, and how they relate and transform each other, it becomes clear that play opens up new ways of exploring, deconstructing and reassembling the design process. Design/play as an intra-acting phenomenon leads us to new imaginings and expands the boundaries of what a playable public space can be. Co-design as a curious practice is where participants (and design) become response-able to each other, and to implicit artefacts and design dialogues. The participatory elements, the determination to find meaning through play, are important qualities when designing public spaces with children.

However, a conscious and respectful treatment of the 'jelly-ness' of design/play is crucial. The aim of this paper has been to demonstrate how design/play can be methodologically productive in co-designing public spaces. Paradoxically, however, this playful productivity may be threatened if play is instrumentalized for a specific outcome. Hence, un-knowing the method – i.e. accepting the unruly, slippery parts of design/play – is important when we invite play into design.

When play becomes part of a curious practice and a conceptual tool for a response-able collaboration, our perspective shifts to the children's eye-level. We are connected with each other in the design process via an open field of possible actions. As designers, we learn to play by letting others visit us, by letting the design play with us, and by devoting ourselves to play and mess within the co-design of public playscapes.

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Disclaimer

All photos and research were carried out with the consent of both children, and children's parents.

Where's the "Public" in Public Art. Three narratives from documenta 14

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Abstract

This paper analyses five public art projects exhibited in documenta 14 in Athens in 2017 that redefine and interact with the public space and therefore, form three different narratives on public space. These narratives are outlined according to the different interpretations of 'public space', 'public sphere' and democracy by the various artists. Our argument is structured as follows; firstly, we present an analysis of public art and its basic features drawing from contemporary literature. Secondly, we provide a number of key facts regarding documenta and documenta 14, outlining the main reasons we selected it as a reference point. Thirdly, we describe the three narratives about public space that we came up with after our field research and interviews with the respective artists: Sanja Iveković, Joar Nango, Rasheed Araeen, Mattin and Rick Lowe. We then discuss the relations between them and develop a model that unravels the way artists explore the public domain, look for locations, and redefine public space and the lived experience in the city. To do so, we engage with theoretical approaches as well as elaborations on specific artworks that engage the shifts and changes of the lived urban experience through art.

Keywords: public space, neighbourhood, agency, adaptation, COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

Documenta 14 constituted an experiment between two cities, Athens and Kassel. According to documenta 14's artistic director Adam Szymczyk, the primary aim of that experiment was "learning to unlearn". Although it faced harsh and often fair criticism by the Athenian audience and a multitude of political collectives, documenta 14 admittedly initiated a form of public dialogue related to the role of modern art and the artist and their intertwining relationship with socio-political life on a local and global scale. Above all, as a 'glocal' event, documenta 14 brought up the necessity to reconceptualize (or at least attempt to do so) public art, public space and publics in general. As Erich Fromm stated in 1963, no society can be built upon the absence of shared artistic experiences (cited in Krensky & Steffen, 2009, p. 7). Art in its collective form is an integral part of everyday life. But if so, how should this collective art be made?

In the process of answering this question, new ones arise. Is the study of art in the public sphere able to lead us to a new understanding of public space and (counter)publics? What is the role of public art in the formation of 'the public' and everyday life of modern cities? How does art redefine the urban experience? More specifically, in what ways do international leading artistic events such as documenta (re)construct the notions of public art and public space? All the aforementioned questions inevitably lead us to a fundamental triad of questions; what public space means, what public means and, ultimately, what democracy means, as experienced and generated through art praxis, collective or not. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide vague answers to the aforementioned questions. We rather proceed to analyse specific documenta 14 artists and artworks that redefine and interact with the public space. By focusing on the latter, we explore the intense relationship between public art and the concept of public. The in-depth analysis of five public art projects exhibited in documenta 14 in Athens in 2017 leads to the formation of three different narratives on public space. These narratives are outlined according to the different interpretations of 'public space', 'public sphere' and democracy by the various artists.

Our argument is structured as follows; firstly, we present an analysis of public art and its basic features drawing from contemporary literature. Secondly, we provide a number of key facts regarding documenta and documenta 14, outlining the main reasons we selected it as a reference point. Thirdly, we describe the three narratives about public space that we came up with after our field research and interviews with the respective artists: The first narrative involves public space as a scene, the second as a spatial expression of the public sphere and the third as a spatial expression of alternative commons (counterpublics). We then discuss the relations between them and develop a model that unravels the way artists explore the public domain, look for locations, and redefine public space and the lived experience in the city. To do so, we engage with theoretical approaches –mainly with Cartiere's definition of public art (2008), Kwon's approach on the route from site-specific to community art (2002), McCormick's ideas on how art practice is re-territorialising public space (2018) and Bravo's outlook on how contemporary artists and artworks remake the image of the city (2018)-, as well as elaborations on specific artworks that engage the shifts and changes of the lived urban experience through art (e.g. Hillary, 2018; Briggs, 2018; Ammendola, 2019). As far as methodology is concerned, after deciding on the research field which revolves around the artworks presented in documenta 14 in Athens, we went on to select artworks that could be considered as public art pieces. Additionally, not being particularly

interested in installations or sculptures exhibited in public spaces, we focused on artworks involving performative elements. The physical proximity between the audience and the artwork allowed us to observe and analyse the evolving relationships (and their variations) among the people in the audience, between the artist and the audience and between the participants and the space in which they act and perform.

The artists interviewed as part of this research are Sanja Iveković, Joar Nango, Rasheed Araeen, Mattin and Rick Lowe. Aside from these interviews, we conducted participant observation both in Athens and Kassel as well as informal discussions with numerous artists and curators working for documenta 14.

Revisiting public art

The most frequent and accepted definition of public art is used to describe works commissioned for sites of open public access (Miles, 1997). However, Cameron Cartiere (2008, p. 8) claims that over forty years since public art was coined as a term, it has yet to be clearly defined in any art history text. She goes on to attribute this struggle of establishing a definition to the multiple forms of public art and the multiple segments and subgroups associated with it. Public art can be related to fields such as urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, cultural studies, political science, social sciences, public administration, environmental studies, history, feminist studies, geography, ethnography, anthropology.

Despite these obstacles, Cartiere attempts to construct a definition of public art as a form of art that takes place outside of museums and galleries and can fulfil the requirements of one of the following categories: a) it is located in a place accessible or visible to the public: in public; b) it is concerned with or affecting the community or individuals: public interest; c) it is maintained for or used by the community or individuals: public place; and d) paid for by the public: publicly funded (ibid, p. 15). In our understanding, this definition is the most comprehensive one and is employed for the construction of our model towards the end of the paper.

Over the last decades, public art has become more and more prominent in the contemporary art discourse. Thus, Claire Bishop considered this inclination as a social turn that would attach a more political orientation to art (2012, p.19). Going as back as the mid-90s, Lacy argues that public art has been popularised to the extent that it already constitutes a highly competitive alternative gallery system (1994, p. 172). Over the last few years, there has also been observed a turn in the public art discourse based on engagement that has been described as 'new genre public art' (Kwon, 2002, p. 105). Therefore, new questions on participation, artists' authorship, critique and ways of evaluation and aesthetics arise whilst engaging with input from geography, architecture, social studies and philosophy. Evidently, we are in need of a subtler and more challenging criticism on public art by bringing together the universes of both art and social discourse. As Lippard (2014) points out, when this kind of research on social belonging is incorporated into interactive or participatory art forms, collective views of place occur. The higher the degree of negotiation, the more public a space becomes. Through its multiplicity, public art can be a way to expose social conflict so that dialogue can emerge. In this sense, the political nature of public art is one of its most important aspects. According to Deutsche (1998, p. 1) discourse about public art is not only a site of deployment of the term public space but, more broadly, of the term democracy. If art has

the capacity to provoke interventions in the public domain powerful enough to interrupt the everyday social routines and initiate an instability solid enough to question perceptions embedded in the urban space, claiming it for the society of people who are the public space itself (McCormick, 2018), then (public) space is being mobilized and reshaped as a new materiality that is bound up with the social and cultural practices that surround it (Massey and Rose, 2003).

Documenta and documenta 14

Over the last sixty years, documenta has played an important role in the promotion of contemporary art. Not only is it an art exhibition taking place every five years but it also is a story about the political, cultural and common spaces/places created by and beyond modern art throughout the previous century. For many artists, curators and art theorists, no other cultural event in the world is as historically emblematic as documenta. The myth around the event is based on a dialectic of destruction and reconstruction, rupture and continuity in view of dictatorship, world war and cold war (Siebenhaar, 2017, p. 11). Even the name of the exhibition refers to the Latin term 'documentation', indicating that it was probably its founder's intention to express the contemporary historical context in art forms.

Adam Szymczyk's proposal for the 14th documenta was to develop the exhibition in two partially coincidental versions, involving the same artists and contributors, in two different cities: Athens and Kassel. Thus, on April 10, 2017, the 14th documenta event was inaugurated in Athens with about 250 participating artists, extending to 47 locations throughout the city. According to Szymczyk, it was a project in two acts that was initially met with mixed reactions from the audiences in both cities: the Kassel public opinion feared the effects of the uprooting of documenta while Athenians feared that documenta would turn out to be another major event without a sustainable benefit, as were the 2004 Olympics, which were followed by the country's gradual economic decline (Szymczyk, 2017, p. 21). It was obvious from the very beginning that the selection of Athens was made due to a symbolic positioning of the city as the centre of the global economic but also refugee crisis. On the other hand, the implementation of documenta 14 in Athens was severely criticised. 'Colonial disposition', 'dispossession', 'exoticization' of the crisis and 'profitability' were some of the quotes one could encounter in several magazines and public announcements by Athenian political collectives in the summer of 2017.

But how is public art framed in documenta? Every documenta since 1968 has marked the public space of the city of Kassel. Large sculptures, poetic, political and critical works, hidden installations with historical and political references. It is not uncommon one can still find them there, still at their original places. In general, the physical and imaginary space of the city merges with the history of documenta (Siebenhaar, 2017, p. 79) and so Kassel is also called the city of documenta. The exhibition and its perception of public art has been reformed according to the contemporary art discourse of the period. As the institution of documenta attempts to express the artistic avant-garde of each era, documenta 14 could only (attempt to) innovate in the field of public art. In addition to the many works of art that have been placed in the public spaces of Kassel over the years, there are many works that have renegotiated the artist-audience relationship, participatory works and works that attempt to involve a specific community within the city and beyond. In this framework, political art that refers to collective issues of our time

or specific claims of marginalised groups and communities in particular, is present in almost every event, more so in documenta 14.

One way or the other, documenta 14 reshaped the public space and public sphere of Athens, even for a short period, in the summer of 2017. In the making, documenta 14 gradually established a presence in Athens and it became visible through the multitude of events, and performances that sustained the continuum of the exhibition during its one hundred days. Spaces and places of documenta 14 in Athens included museums, cinemas, theatres, libraries, schools, university auditoriums, public squares, streets, shops, residential buildings, parks and paths - in short, all that comprises the great city in its density and richness. The documenta 14 Public Paper would come out fortnightly on Fridays in several spots around Athens, offering information on all documenta 14 events taking place at the time.

Above all, by joining a documenta 14 'Chorus', a walk in the city, visitors could create their own lines of inquiry, coming up with broader perspectives related to the sociopolitical and geographical contexts of the documenta 14 project. At the same time, the Parliament of Bodies, the Public Programs of documenta 14, emerged as an open space for discussion and reflection on contemporary social and political issues. As an institution-in-becoming and without constitution, the Parliament of Bodies inhabited sites of contested histories whose memories forced the public to question hegemonic and romanticized narratives of democratic Europe in order for the public to experiment with new forms of sovereignty beyond the norm.

Three narratives on the public within public art from documenta 14

Public space as a stage

Monument to revolution - Sanja Iveković

Sanja Iveković fundamentally reconstructed the Monument to the November fighting Revolution (1926) which had originally been designed by Mies van der Rohe for the German Communist Party. The new monument was divided into layers of bricks. The first layer was placed in Avdi Square in the centre of Athens establishing an open platform that operated as a stage, hosting a number of actions, presentations and events. The aim of this project was to reconstruct the foundations of the monument and, thus, question the relationship between revolution and commemoration. This way, the artist would catalyse debate around the construction and deconstruction of public memory. According to the artist, the monument became a pretext for new forms of political action, based on fidelity to historical struggles, while offering a stage for future events. It was both a cautionary reminder of the past, an object to be contested, and a material invocation (Majaca, 2017). During documenta 14, the stage hosted performances with strong political connotations. After the end of the exhibition and until today it is still in Athens, and it has changed form due to the interventions of local street artists. The stage was not activated again as part of a performance or such public event.



Figure 1: Iveković's Monument to Revolution at Avdi Square, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)



Figure 2: Iveković's Monument to Revolution at Avdi Square, July 2020 (authors' personal archive)

European Everything - Joar Nango

Joar Nango, originally a member of the Saami¹ tribe, dealt with the notion of the 'nomad'. He travelled from Norway to Athens by car and collected the necessary materials to build a facility on a patio at the Athens Conservatory. The installation, made with Saami tents, reindeer furs, wood and other materials, was a setting for action. Artists, in planned or spontaneous interventions, mixed physically with the audience and passers-by co-creating the final piece.

During the exhibition, the artist developed a performance on the installation. According to the artist, the play, performed atop the mobile stage of this traveling theater, reimagined the borderless state. The perpetual motion of the migrant and the Indigenous nomad was the basis for a proposed utopia. Not bound to any particular nation-state, this new world is formed precisely because of crossing national borders; culture is created from the ground up, and migration becomes the basis of belonging. Identity is birthed from lack, and coming to fill this absence are close connections made to land, language, and territory (Hopkins, 2017).



Figure 3: Nango's European Everything (I) at Athens Conservatory, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)

¹ The Saami people (also spelled Sami or Sámi) are an indigenous Finno-Ugric people inhabiting Sápmi, which today encompasses large northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula within the Murmansk Oblast of Russia. The Sámi have historically been known in English as Lapps or Laplanders, but these terms are regarded as offensive by some Sámi people, who prefer the area's name in their own language, "Sápmi".



Figure 4: Nango's European Everything (II) at Athens Conservatory, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)

Iveković and Nango make art in places that are accessible or visible to the public; in public places. They create a place for their performance, not retained for the community. For them the public space becomes a stage, an area facilitating their performance; an act specific in time and space. Admittedly, they seemed to have acknowledged rigid elements in their spaces, such as the marbles that frame Noar's scene, as much as elements subject to transmutation, thereby creating space through the action on the stage, as in Iveković's installation. In both cases an invitation was present. Artists and audiences alike were invited to perceive and interact with public space as a stage. In Iveković and Nango's artworks, space was defined both as a field where we are allowed to place our bodies (a Cartesian space) and as a relation in which space existed only through interaction with time, history, experiences, physical objects, human bodies and events (a relational space). Upton (1997) argues that the way in which places host human activity is linked to their symbolic meaning and the invisible processes of their production. By exploring visceral engagements with the environment performers and designers create space. Evidently, for Iveković and Nango space is a stage. Iveković placed a stage in a public square and invited artists to perform on it, creating a modern monument to the Revolution. What happened on stage was accessible to the public. The stage itself, the events taking place on it and the red wall behind it, all became part of the public space and were intertwined with the motion of visitors and passers-by who could stand, watch or pass by. Similarly, Joar Nango created a setting in the public space. An installation comprised of elements and materials gathered from another place, that created a scene. He invited performance artists to perform, while the public could observe, skip or get involved with the installation, sitting or moving on stage, being part of the action.

Iveković and Nango chose a specific place for their art pieces, which could not be situated anywhere else – they create in a site-specific way.

“My work is a public endeavor and therefore the public space I chose for its realization is a key element of the work. The fact that it is built in a public square means that this work could not be built in a gallery or a museum” (Sanja Iveković, personal interview to the authors, August 2017).

Nango, also, supports this opinion adding:

“For my work I rely on what space is producing and giving to me. There is an openness and a simplicity in the materials and the design that makes me land on the site. I think of it somewhat as an organic choreography of materials, people, time and space, not as something with a beginning and an end but as something that begins when you come into space and ends when you leave” (Joar Nango, personal interview to the authors, August 2017).

As Cartiere (2016) mentions, artists involved in public art produce works that interact with *specific* locations. They not only respond to the topography of specific locations (both natural and artificial physical landscapes) but each grapples with the unique history, political context and/or social condition of the places selected. This ‘organic choreography’ could be the movement of everyday life, which is magnified when it becomes part of a piece of art. Public art encounters produce lived experiences thereof and, depending on their level of criticality, inhabit the inviting potential to intently sense everyday life. (Zebracki, 2016, p. 66). Perceiving public space as a stage and placing artists’ work on it provides us with a framework within which human and non-human bodies also produce, reproduce, shape and assemble space and place. This follows a body-oriented approach, which considers human bodies as moving spatial fields made up of space-time elements with emotions, thoughts, preferences and moods but also unconscious cultural beliefs and behaviours. This approach initiates a dialogue around a ‘culture of space’. It is a process in which according to Low (2017, p. 7) space is created through bodies and the mobility of these bodies that resulted in renewed places and landscapes.

But what is the artists’ relationship with the audience? In the case of Iveković, the distinction between artists and the public clearly exists. In the case of Nango, a line is drawn between the performer and the audience, but the two entities might interact with each other. In his artistic context he invited the audience to interact with the art piece and the urban environment rather than attend passively. In this way, the particularities and characteristics of the urban space (or the city, more broadly) were experienced and expressed as the condensation of countless motions and movements, textures, rhythms and flows that came together to create an instinctive sense of place. In both Iveković and Nango’s pieces the spectators participated by engaging their bodies in an urban choreography, although their ability to foresee the progression of the respective art pieces was quite limited.

From public space to public sphere

Shamiyaana - Food for Thought: Thought for Change - Rasheed Araeen

Rasheed Araeen created an installation using large tents, drawing inspiration from the 'shamiyana', the traditional wedding ceremony tent in Pakistan. The installation was set in Kotzia Square, at the very centre of Athens. Under these canopies inspired by the shamiyaana, in a variety of vibrant colours and geometric patterns that appear in his recent work, the artist invited people to sit together and enjoy a free meal, while reflecting on possible scenarios on social change. Recipes from around the Mediterranean were prepared on site in collaboration with Organization Earth. During documenta 14 in Athens, two symposia were held per day with 60 people each. According to the artist, the project's location was selected to draw attention to the multi-faceted history of the city of Athens. Although the area has become increasingly deserted due to the recent decline of Athens' commercial centre, it has always been a vital meeting point for the city's inhabitants. Therefore, Araeen invites visitors to consider the present and historical dynamics of this public space and attempts to revitalise it on the basis of providing hospitality services to the audience (Ray, 2017).



Figure 5: Araeen's Shamiyaana - Food for Thought: Thought for Change (I) at Kotzia Square, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)



Figure 6: Araeen's Shamiyaana - Food for Thought: Thought for Change (II) at Kotzia Square, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)

Social Dissonance – Mattin in collaboration with Dafni Krazoudi, Danai Liodaki, Smaragda Nitsopoulou, Ioannis Sarris, Dania Burger and Eleni Zervou

In his project 'Social Dissonance', Mattin dealt with the estrangement and alienation within modern capitalist societies. Every single day, for the whole course of documenta 14, both in Athens and Kassel, four performers – sometimes with the participation of Mattin – presented the piece for one hour. Together, with the audience, they composed a 'social concert'. This kind of concert consisted of all the sounds in the room that were interpreted as the social soundtrack of our daily life. Performers and audience alike formed a group and used each other as instruments, who then hear themselves and reflect on their own conception and self-presentation (Bal-Blanc, 2017). Every performance was based on improvisation and evolved through discussions, often initiated by the audience's attempt to comprehend the concept of the piece and their supposed role in it. The performance involved physical interaction that the performers or a member of the audience initiated, sitting in a circle or imitating someone's movements, investigating the audience's social media profiles on a screen in the room, performers proceeding in provocative actions such as taking their clothes off, or even moments of silence and frustration.



Figure 7: Mattin's Social Dissonance (I) at Athens Conservatory, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)



Figure 8: Mattin's Social Dissonance (II) at Athens Conservatory, July 2017 (authors' personal archive)

Araeen and Mattin created a space for their performance and artistic expression which was more than a setting. Accessibility and publicity of space was not the key element to their art piece and their construction/use of public space and the public. The core of both

works lied in the audience's (as a community or individuals) opportunity, possibility and choice to have a decisive influence on the art piece and define its outcome(s). None of the two artists, accepts the notion of the 'audience'. They both refer to the people as participants, practitioners or co-creators. Araeen introduced the idea of 'food for thought' allowing participants to produce art pieces by eating together and engaging in conversation.

"There is no such thing as audience in my project, but participants who create the work themselves collectively. I initiate an idea and then that idea is carried forward by the people themselves; which is then becomes the basis of my relationship with those who carried forward the idea" (Rasheed Araeen, personal interview to the authors, August 2017).

The meal was the artwork. Mattin did the same. He composed a piece of music and developed a concert comprised merely of the interaction between performers and participants.

"The public produces the work since they create a situation together with all the others. There is nothing that is outside this situation. Even if someone sits silent, he or she still offers in building the situation. The whole work is about how we perceive ourselves and, in that way, just being in a place is in a way a presentation of yourself, it is a performance" (Mattin, personal interview to the authors, August 2017).

Both works were based on improvisation and interaction between artists, performers and audience through discussion and embodied presence on "stage". Participation was employed as a tool for reconstructing a society ruined by the capitalist order (Bishop, 2012, p. 1). Araeen and Mattin's pieces became public solely through the audience's participation and engagement. Therefore, they developed and practiced participatory artworks or dialogical projects (Kester, 2013, p. 123) that represented a practical negotiation (self-reflexive but nonetheless compromised) around issues of power, identity, and difference.

At the same time, they were not interested in the concrete, absolute space in which they placed their pieces. Araeen admitted that he did not select the setting where the performance would take place himself, while Mattin used a white room with as few objects as possible for his performance. Mattin also used a random web-space to broadcast his piece. The space may have been of little interest to him, but the social meeting was of great importance: Participants (had to) communicate, agree and disagree, move around and perform for the piece to be developed. That's why neither artist addressed a random audience of individuals or passers-by. The pieces involved a specific audience which was engaged in the work for a specific time, actively participating rather than passing by.

Araeen and Mattin do not perceive public space as a field of mere gathering, but as a canvas of social meeting. Therefore, following Deutsche's argument (1992, p. 39) the notion of public sphere replaces definitions of public art as art that occupies or designs physical spaces and addresses independently formed audiences with a definition of public art as a practice that constitutes a public by engaging people in political debate. Public space here is associational, it is a public space that emerges anywhere and anytime as Arendt (1968, p. 4) describes it, people act in concert, and it is where freedom can appear (ibid, p. 4). And as Butler (2011) adds, this acting together reconfigures what will be public, and what will be the space of politics. Any site can be transformed into a public

or, for that matter, a private sphere. Indeed, these two works invited the public to take part in a debate or controversy. In Mattin's case, this controversy was certainly political, as his composition raised issues regarding the construction of our identity in a capitalist society. He claims that by amplifying alienation in performance and participation we are able to understand how we are constructed through various forms of mediation. In the case of Araeen a political controversy had also arisen, as his work made indirect references to the notions of 'community' and 'human communication' in the contemporary societies of late capitalism.

Araeen and Mattin transformed public space into public sphere since the latter emerges when and where people act in concert. It is a space defined by any topographical or institutional means. A city hall, a square or a park is not a public space unless people come together, communicate, debate, relate and interfere. Evidently, the two artists attempted to create such a space. A place that could be better identified as a public sphere. An open field of political debate between the participants who created the work. In that sense, participation becomes a very important – if not the most important – element of the work. The place created becomes public because people act together and in relation with it.

From public sphere to counterpublics

Victoria Square Project- Rick Lowe

Based in the ground floor of the Elpidos 13 apartment building, in the multinational and multicultural neighbourhood of Victoria Square in the centre of Athens, Rick Lowe along with numerous local people or groups and other stakeholders (natives and immigrants) established a place for the people in the neighborhood to meet and creatively express themselves. He attempted to form bonds and initiate a dialogue that related art and culture with everyday life. His main collaborators were small business in the area and wide networks of immigrants and solidarity groups. From the very beginning, the aim of the project was to live on, even after the end of documenta 14, and be established as an integral part of the local community. More than three years after the end of the exhibition, the project still goes on, hosting activities such as collective readings, screenings, discussions, groups' activities and creative lessons. According to Lowe, the artist seeks a dialogue involving key initiatives across the fields of arts and culture, business, and higher learning, as well as support networks for immigrant and refugee groups. He invites everyone involved in the project to focus on the current situation in Victoria Square. This historic crucible of the Greek middle class has slowly transformed, since the departure of its opulent inhabitants to the suburbs of Athens in the 1970s, into a contemporary cultural crossroads (Szewczyk, 2017). "Walking in the square, one hears Greek, Arabic, Albanian, French, Farsi, Polish, Turkish, Swahili", Lowe mentions.



Figure 9: Lowe's Victoria Square Project (I) at Victoria Square, September 2017 (authors' personal archive)



Figure 10: Art workshops at Lowe's Victoria Square Project, March 2020 (authors' personal archive)

Lowe argues that "it is vital my artwork be considered as an ongoing process which has its own life even after I disconnect from it". Indeed, three years since the end of documenta 14, the Victoria Square Project space continues to operate as an important reference point in the neighbourhood. But how did the work start?

"To get started the easiest thing is to call artists to do stuff, although the target is that the community finds a place to express themselves. So, we started with artistic workshops. Later, we started hosting events, for example a Ukrainian collective did a fashion show, there were screenings, a concert from African women, performances etc. We also had meetings with shop owners that wanted to work with us to hold events on the square. We rented three apartments next to the place, so artists from all over the work can come and work with us" (Rick Lowe, personal interview to the authors, August 2017)

Lowe's art piece refers to a public space which is not only public and accessible but fully influenced and defined by the community in and around it. The piece itself creates the conditions for its total appropriation by the community. We could even assume that the community itself is the art piece. "I am not placing myself at the core of my work. The core is the people that live, work and create in the area where my piece is exhibited", Lowe argues.

Lowe's art piece is neither site-specific, nor audience-specific. "First of all, I knew I wanted to work with the refugee and immigrant community, and Victoria Square symbolizes very strongly this community the last years" he answers when asked how he chose the site of the work. Therefore, Lowe's piece is closer to what Kwon describes as community-specific (2002), an art that in a way sets the target to provide artworks that depart from promoting aesthetic quality so to contribute to the quality of life. The engagements this project requires and promotes, are transformed into a community-specific piece of art which is collaborated and co-developed.

Merlino and Stewart (2016) examine the position of the non-artist as a partner in a participatory artwork. They argue that the audience's participation in an art piece provides them with as many opportunities for expression as responsibilities that do not exist in the canonical artist-audience relationship. This renewed relationship is evident in the cases of Araeen and Mattin. But, in the case of Lowe there is one additional vital element; community. Admittedly, his goal is to involve everyone present in the community and at the same time normalize the conflicts and intricate relationships among them. Engaging the community in the art process from the very beginning constitutes an attempt to empower the community beyond mere mediation upon great art.

Although the concept of public sphere, as defined by Habermas (1991), seems to be struggling to construct an open arena for political bargaining, the 'publicity' it offers is influenced by other social issues as well. The social prestige attached to the various levels of education, the use of language and the financial situation of every individual who participates in the public sphere, cannot be easily overlooked. As Fraser (1990, p.63) argues, societal discrepancies might not always be present, but are not eliminated. It is exactly these discrepancies on the basis of which women and members of lower social classes were prevented from participating equally in civic life. Participatory parity faces informal impediments that can persist even after everyone is formally and legally licensed to participate.

Ultimately, is Lowe taking a step towards tackling this problem by attempting to define the separate communities in the area? Separate communities that share different kinds of interests and exist in an inevitable conflict. If we follow Fraser's standpoint, we may

identify that in class societies the public sphere is the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place (ibid, p. 68). We may also argue that the notion of public sphere brings up the question of the location of politics and the accompanying conflict(s) within. Lowe understands the problem of an authoritarian uniqueness of the public sphere and wants to stand against it. But to do so, he does not merely acknowledge that there can be unlimited collectives/communities. He tries to define them and study the relations of conflict and power between them. According to Lowe, public space is not just space, nor an open arena of controversy. It is an endless row of relationships between communities and groups that clash and intertwine. He seeks to integrate all communities, not with a spirit of reconciliation, but by recognizing the different identities and social dynamics that shape the public space around Victoria Square. His proposed way beyond and through the impossibility of community lies in bringing up the contradictions within it, rather than introducing total consolidation, wholeness and unity. Therefore, what emerges is the alternative commons, the counterpublics. It is nothing more than a parallel process, discursive arenas where subordinated groups invent and circulate counter discourses (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). These discourses, in turn, allow the participants to form oppositional interpretations (against the singular authority) of their interests, identities and needs. In this sense, subordinates may create their own public sphere, a controversial area where different groups could develop their own language, beliefs and interests. They are in constant conflict with the 'single' public sphere and aim to expand their multitude places by allowing different groups to participate in the social meeting(s) and dialogue(s).

Conclusions: the (re)emerging question of democracy

In this paper, we proceeded to explore the relationship between public art and public space. Ultimately, we determined that these two concepts can be related in a variety of ways leading to a relationship that is always reciprocal. We also concluded that it is not possible to talk about public art without being confronted with questions about public space, public sphere, the public and inevitably democracy. The aforementioned narratives on public space derive from the various perceptions of the public as expressed and performed by the artists themselves. Therefore, we observed the multitude of ways of perceiving public art, even though produced in the same time and framework, without one being superior, preferable or more correct than the rest. Accordingly, the many perspectives on what public intervention means have led to art pieces affecting public space and sphere in numerous ways.

During documenta 14 in Athens in 2017, these five artworks, did not only become radiantly visible in the Athenian public scene, but also proposed another approach to the notion of the public, by making alternative use of artistic tools and methods. The table below includes the characteristics that shape the three different approaches proposed and analysed in this paper. These characteristics lie between art and social discourse, both defining a different intake of the public. Our scope is not to quantitatively compare the three categories, but to understand their differences and discuss their interrelations and subsequent understanding and reshaping of the public.

Table 1: The characteristics of the three public-art categories (in relation to public space) according to our hypothesis

Categories according to our hypothesis	Artists from documenta 14 in each category	Specificity	Relation to the discourse	Participation	Following Cartiere's definition	Artists' authorship (intensity [3 the highest, 1 the lowest])	Design of space (intensity [3 the highest, 1 the lowest])	Time of engagement (intensity [3 the highest, 1 the lowest])	Public
1 - Public space as a stage	Sanja Iveković; Joar Nango	site	Site - specific art	Immediate audience	in a place accessible or visible to the public	3	3	1	space
2 - From public space to public sphere	Rasheed Araeen; Mattin	audience	Participatory art	Volunteers and performers	concerned with or affecting the community or individuals	2	2	2	sphere
3 - From public sphere to counterpublics	Rick Lowe	community	Community art	Collaboration and co-development	maintained for or used by the community or individuals	1	1	3	counterpublics

Thus, in the first category, artists perceive public space as the external and accessible space where the general public and random passers-by relate themselves, on a scale of commitment, with an art piece. We are allowed to assume that they perceive public space as a scene open for action. The public influences the art pieces by its continuous motion around the space as part of an endless choreography. The pieces are grounded in the reality of their location: geographical, psychological, political and philosophical borders as they intersect with individual and collective movement (Hillary, 2018, p. 151).

In the second category, artists make public art that is influenced by individuals. Their goal is to engage their audience in a political debate, in a social confrontation. Artists, in this context, perceive the public as a public sphere and create a political arena. The audience is committed to creating the experience itself, conversing with the "other" and thus gaining a better understanding of themselves. Artwork is merely a framework for the creation of a public sphere or a miniature of it. In this open framework, the artwork itself becomes a comment on either the political landscape or the social context of a particular place (Briggs, 2018). As McCormick (2018, p. 7) reminds us, today the public practice of most of the contemporary artists, whether they work as individuals, teams, collectives or community facilitators, in one way or another aims at engaging the public beyond the role of audience. Following this tendency, both artists in the second category, propose participation and not merely interaction, but as an activation of certain relations that is initiated and directed by them and do not happen incidentally (Milevska, 2016).

In the third category, the artist makes public art for the community of a particular place. For Rick Lowe, the intervention in the community is an art piece itself. At the same time, he seeks and invites the audience (which is the community or the users of a public space) to fully undertake his artwork. Hence, the public is structured and identified by the formed relations with the different "commons" of the public arena. What the artwork itself leaves behind is not necessarily a construction, but the process which is able to build up knowledge, consciousness, and trust (Ammendola, 2019). Specific characteristics are recognized in the subgroups of the community and in the relations between them. The impact on the groups involved is tangible, as the different communities in the area come closer through their participation in shared experiences. Their relationships are subject to change.

Through the different recruitments of public art, we end up with a number of different narratives on the public and the public space: Public space as a stage, public space as a spatial expression of the public sphere, public space as a spatial expression of different commonalities and interrelationships. Which, of all these, is (the) public space? Is it the accessible space open to all, composed of the erratic and unexpected choreography of random movements? Is it the result of the common action of the people, who, albeit individuals, commit themselves to a confrontation for their common interest? Or is this common interest non-existent, and in fact we must analyse the public sphere as a whole of alternative commons that form their own public spheres that are interconnected in a variety of ways?

These different narratives on the concept of public bring up, explicitly or implicitly, the question of democracy. Deutsche has repeatedly referred to the interplay between public art and democracy, understanding it as a reciprocation, which can be approached in more than one way. According to her, the emergence of this topic in the art world corresponds to an extensive eruption and diffusion of struggles over the meaning of democracy, in

political theories, social movements, and cultural practice (Deutsche 1992, p. 35). By the same token, Massey, in her famous article of the 1990s "A global sense of place" (1991) argues that the idea of places gaining their specificity, not by some long-internalized history but by "a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus".

Maybe the contemporary challenge is to think how that kind of radical re-identification of the sense of place that Massey proposes could be extended to the current conjuncture. In other words, what are the new concepts of 'place', 'articulation of local, interlocal and global dimensions, 'public place' and '(counter)publics' under the (analytical) lens of public art? We may not have a clear answer, but we attempted to contribute to the existing discourse by focusing on the artistic methods and tools used and how they reshape the concept of public. Our contribution, lies on the attempt to support the already existing bibliography on public art and public space theory by creating a model and an empirical study analysis available in order to research how specific artworks reshape the public space. We strongly believe that future works studying public art in this framework, can add to a re-conceptualisation of space including its political, social and democratic openness.

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The Hope of Something Different: Eco-centricity in Art and Education

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Abstract

Educational theorist Gert Biesta proposes that we need to be “in the world without occupying the centre of the world.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 3). This injunction provides a frame with which to interrogate the hybrid practice of ecoart. This practice can be characterised by a concern for the relations of living things to each other, and to their environments. Learning in order to be able to act is critical. One aspect is collaboration with experts (whether those are scientists and environmental managers or inhabitants, including more-than-human). Another is building ‘commons’ and shared understanding being more important than novelty. Grant Kester has argued that there is an underlying paradigm shift in ‘aesthetic autonomy’, underpinned by a ‘trans-disciplinary interest in collective knowledge production’. (2013, np). This goes beyond questions of interdisciplinarity and its variations to raise more fundamental questions of agency. Drawing on the work of key practitioner/researchers (eg Jackie Brookner (1945-2015); Collins and Goto Studio, Helen Mayer Harrison (1927-2018) and Newton Harrison (b 1932)) and theorists (Kester, Kagan) the meaning and implications of not ‘occupying the centre of the world’ will be explored as a motif for an art which can act in public space.

Keywords: ecoart, eco-centric, social practice, Gert Biesta, understanding

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Introduction

Rather than rehearsing the conventional geological or activist definitions of the Anthropocene, this paper will use Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, known as ‘the Harrisons’, framing of the environmental crises as ‘the Force Majeure’ to underpin our discussion of art and public space.¹ The Harrisons use this legal term for an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond control not for its connotation of loosening responsibility, but because it captures the conceptual shift required to understand that circumstances are beyond human control and we must now adapt. Their text ‘A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century’, the founding document of The Center for the Study of the Force Majeure, articulates the Force Majeure in the following terms:

We at the Center assert
That the Force Majeure, framed ecologically
Enacts, in physical terms, outcomes on the ground
All that we have created in the global landscape
Bringing together the conditions that have accelerated global warming

Acting in concert with the massive industrial processes
of extraction, production, and consumption
That have subtracted forests, and depleted topsoil
And profoundly reduced ocean productivity
While creating a vast chemical outpouring into the atmosphere
Onto the lands and within the waters
That altogether comprise this Force Majeure
Initiating what might become the sixth mass extinction

We of the Center are grateful for the opportunity
To join in this perilous conversation
Where the discourse in general
Concerns time, money, power, justice, sex, politics
Personal well-being and survival
In many combinations and recombinations
Attending somewhat to social injustice
And much, much less to ecological injustice

(Harrison and Harrison, 2016, p. 378)

The Harrisons’ say that we have reached the point where “everything we have created in the global landscape” is now the ‘form determinant’ of life.² The question is how to adapt? Gert Biesta, educational theorist, argues that we need to understand how to be, “...in the world without occupying the centre of the world.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 3). After providing some context on ecoart,³ we’ll explore its overlaps with social and place-based practices as well as its hybrid characteristics, before turning to the question of eco-centricity. ecoart is closely related to social practice, and some practitioners frame their work in terms of eco-social practices, including Cathy Fitzgerald who I’ll

¹ Some of the ideas in this paper were previously published on *A Restless Art* (Fremantle 2015)

² The ‘form determinant’ is the combination of heatwave, sea level rise and biodiversity loss.

³ ecoart is a neologism. It tends not to be capitalised to emphasise the ideas and work rather than the name.

return to later. However understanding the distinctiveness of ecoart, in Bateson's terms 'the difference that makes a difference' (Bateson, 1979, p. 68-9), is important for activist practices as well as for public space. I will take up Biesta's conceptualisation and explore how that reveals aspects of practices which can address 'the Force Majeure'.

The question of usefulness, as a particular complexity in art and public space, will also recur throughout the discussion. Art is often asked to deliver engagement, address ecology, work with other disciplines, generate activism, develop relationality, but all of these can be achieved through other processes too.⁴ Usefulness is questioned as a characteristic of art because it can easily 'overwrite' the value of art – the use value 'trumping' the art value. Claire Bishop (Bishop, 2012) makes this argument, as does Biesta. Usefulness, if left as a simplistic concept, stubbornly hinders understanding both social and ecoart and their value.

Hybrid practices of art and ecology

The Harrisons are pioneers of ecoart. They along with a number of other artists (e.g. Barucello, Beuys, Denes, Gilardi, Haacke, Johansson, Sonfist, Ukeles, and others) who have responded to the wave of environmental concern in the late 60s and early 70s by seeking to formulate a different basis for practice.⁵ Ecoart practices are often characterised in terms of the multiple environmental/ecological crises most of which affect and manifest public space. This includes global heating; waste and pollution in the many forms it is generated by extraction, production and consumption; biodiversity including the increasing rate of extinctions; as well as the impacts of monocultural approaches to forestry and agriculture particularly on soil but also on health; waters in every context including sanitation, plastics, etc. However the form of address is as much in terms of personal transformation as it is in terms of engagement and remediation. ecoart practices are often characterised by eco-centricity as much as any artform distinction. My intention is to explore what this means, and the implications for thinking about public space, particularly in relation to Biesta's formulation of an art that teaches a different way of being in the world.

The conceptualisation of ecoart is formed in part in the practice of artists (some noted above), but also in a series of exhibitions which set out to frame the field. *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*, curated by Barbara Matilsky for the Queens Museum in New York in 1992, is often cited as the first. This exhibition focused on the remediation and restoration aspect of the practices, and many subsequent exhibitions adopted this frame. Recently, with *ecofeminism(s)* at the Thomas Erben Gallery, the ritual and performative strands of early ecoart practices have been revisited. Curator Monica Fabijanska draws out key themes in her associated essay, noting,

...feminist artists still address the degradation of the environment by creating diverse responses to patriarchal power structure, capitalism, and the notion of progress. They invoke indigenous traditions in maintaining connection to nature and intensified [sic] the critique of colonialist politics of overextraction, water privatization, and the destruction of native peoples. They continue to employ social practice and activism, ... Whether

⁴ Thanks to my colleague Prof. Emeritus Anne Douglas for drawing this point out.

⁵ This paper focuses on practices which might broadly be understood to emerge from the visual arts tradition. There is another parallel and interconnected process of emergence in the performing arts.

the earliest or the newest, ecofeminist projects are often collaborations with local communities and scientists. (Fabijanska, 2020, p. 3)

Collaboration, participation, interdisciplinarity

If ecoart emerges both from practical restorative action and also recognition of multiple forms of agency, there are commonalities between an ecological orientation and social and community practices. Works often operates in both realms, sometimes seamlessly. Both are interested in different forms of relationality, particularly in sharing and negotiating authorship with communities and creating stories that serve interests beyond their own.



Fig 1: Students building the island structures, volunteers helping with planting (Jackie Brookner)
(Photo courtesy of the artist)

The words ‘collaboration’ and ‘participation’ occur regularly in the statements of both social/community and environmental/ecological artists, as highlighted by Fabijanska. The obituary of eminent ecoartist Jackie Brookner serves to highlight this multi-dimensional collaboration and participation,

Among her recent major projects were *Veden Taika* (The Magic of Water), consisting of three man-made floating islands in Salo, Finland. *Veden Taika* was a collaboration with local volunteers, regional science experts, the students and faculty of the Salo Polytechnic Institute, the Salo Parks Department and Office of Environmental Protection, Biomatrix Water and the coordination of Finnish artist Tuula Nikulainen. (Malen and Schor, 2015, n.p.)

This short statement highlighting characteristics of Jackie’s *Veden Taika* (2007-2010) highlights first working with local volunteers, second with scientists, third learners and then public and private institutions. Last but not least, it acknowledges the Finnish coordinating artist with whom Jackie, as a US based artist working in Finland, collaborated. It is very typical of social and ecological arts practices.

Although the works I’m discussing are public, Brookner’s practice was studio-based, concerned with sculptural issues focused by the body.⁶ Amy Lipton describes her underlying interests as, “...porousness and eradicating boundaries - between each other and between all living things, including the planet.” She goes on to say, “Her strength was an ability to bring social, environmental and scientific concepts into physical form while maintaining her strong training in formal sculptural principles.” (Lipton, 2017, n.p.)

Another of Brookner’s public projects is *Urban Rain* for Roosevelt Community Center, San Jose, CA. The brief was to detain and filter runoff from the roof, particularly stormwater. Patricia Phillips teases out a different set of relationships, this time in terms of landscape,

Brookner’s project “Urban Rain” (2008) strikingly connects the new building to its immediate site, as well as a largely invisible watershed. The artist uses stormwater as both a raw material to exploit and a problem to solve producing a fascinating feedback loop of aesthetic decisions and ecological imperatives. (Brookner, 2009, p. 58)

Phillips defines the project in terms of material (stormwater), but she also draws attention to one of the underlying characteristic of ecoart, the bringing together of aesthetic and ecological aspects. The “feedback loop” of aesthetics and ecology appears to be about problem-solving, but actually reconnects those who experience the work with the world around them.

Brookner’s *Urban Rain* project has a practical problem-solving dimension to it, in that it is part of the stormwater management system. However the work cannot be reduced to that. *Urban Rain* does not merely aestheticise the stormwater treatment, but opens up questions of ecological value and meaning.

...the original goal was to showcase stormwater treatment measures. What emerged was a design that featured stormwater treatment as truly integrated into the design, both form and function, for the building. The design swiftly exceeds all expectations as it conveys through art work literally and figuratively the not often seen story of how

⁶ See <http://jackiebrookner.com/> for documentation of the artists’ career and work.

rainwater connects us all to our creeks, rivers and oceans. (Brookner, 2009, p. 7)

The aesthetic experience constructed as part of the Community Center gives stormwater positive significance within the human environment. Users of the building have their attention drawn to water through the artworks in a way that is intended to shift perceptions, to make a downpour into an aesthetic event in the context of community life. The work expands the building to its catchment and demonstrates, at least in relation to stormwater, how a building can return clean water to the environment, rather than add pollution.

This opens up another key dimension of ecoart practice - the working with “regional science experts”. ecoart’s hybridity, and an aspect that brings it into proximity with SciArt⁷, is the consistency with which we see ecoartists drawing on and developing expertise in other fields. We might almost take the development of deep expertise in one or more aspects of ecological science; and/or environmental management; and/or specific practices (such as bee-keeping) as another key characteristic of ecoart. In relation to the ecological sciences, we only need look to the Harrisons autobiographical career survey where they name check more than 30 scientists with whom they have worked (Harrison and Harrison, 2016).⁸ Other artists have multiple qualifications at tertiary level, including in ecological sciences (cf Brandon Ballengée and Kerry Morrison).

Writing on this subject is rife with language of multi-, cross-, inter-, trans-, a- and post-disciplinarity (Saratsi, 2019). All of these formations attempt to nuance an understanding of different configurations of academic expertise working together to understand and operate in the world. The ‘disciplinary’ aspect of this language is sometimes the most problematic when we recognise, from the ‘deep ecology’ perspective, that every living thing knows stuff and uses that knowledge to seek its own well-being. If some dimensions of social and community practice are rights-oriented (Matarasso, 2019, p. 45-46), this is true for some ecoart practices too. One of the most fundamental rights is to have your understanding of the world recognised and valued. Where Sciart is driven by experimentation at the interface of arts and sciences, ecoart perhaps focuses on the need for different forms of knowledge in order to understand the world. Murdo Macdonald argues that every discipline has blind spots (Macdonald, no date). Basarab Nicolescu argues that knowledge is related to different levels of reality (Nicolescu, 1997). This understanding of ‘knowing’, and of the right to be recognised as ‘knowing’ is fundamental to the eco-centric perspective. We’ll come back to the difference between knowing and understanding in our discussion of Biesta’s theory.

These various aspects of participation, collaboration and interdisciplinarity address the first part of Biesta’s provocation, “...in the world...”, but also have the potential to address the second aspect, “...without occupying the centre of the world.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 3).

⁷ SciArt is another neologism usually defined in terms of collaborations between artists and scientists.

⁸ For a wider discussion of the Harrisons work with science and policy see Fremantle, Douglas and Pritchard 2020a and 2020b.



Fig 2: Bingham, Collins, Goto and Stephen. 'Nine Mile Run: Community Dialogues', 1997-2000
(Photo courtesy of the artists)

Tim Collins, writing about four years of team work (1996-2000) on *Nine Mile Run Greenway*, a major brownfield site in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, highlights the role of the work in relation to citizens of the area,

The project team intent was to transcend the role of primary authorship, instead initiating a citizen discourse, and a creative engagement in the definition, form and function of post-industrial public space. (Collins, 2001, p. 251)

And goes on to say,

The dialogue was intended to complicate the discourse of development, and create a space which would nurture creative citizen voices. (2001, p. 261)

Collins and partner Reiko Goto-Collins along with other key collaborators developed *Nine Mile Run Greenway* as a creative-discursive enquiry focused by opportunities to think differently rather than fix problems, attending to shaping the discourse as much as

restoring the ecology. The Nine Mile Run watershed in Pittsburgh was at once identified as a potential city park by Frederick Law Olmsted, but was actually used by the steel industry resulting in a slag heap 20 stories high. (Curating Cities, No date).⁹

It is critical that the purpose that the team set itself was initiating a discourse, and that they sought to complicate the conventional processes of urban development. As with Brookner, the 'material' focus, in this case slag heaps, is conventionally seen as a 'problem', but the artists open up questions of meaning and value.¹⁰

Theorists such as Grant Kester, Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Shannon Jackson have written about practices focusing on dialogue, collaboration and the politics of social and community practices. They have, in various ways, helped us to see that an aesthetics of process is the essential focus of artists working with diverse inhabitants and communities. But this isn't an 'aesthetics of facilitation', about 'performing' workshops. Rather it is a deeper interrogation of who has voice, authorship and agency.¹¹ Grant Kester argues that this is a 'paradigm shift', saying,

I do think there is a paradigm shift occurring, specifically in the way in which we understand aesthetic autonomy. This isn't simply a shift in the content of work, but in the underlying formal organization of artistic production. [...] These changes aren't occurring simply because artists are asking different questions about their own creative practice. Rather, they reflect a broader, trans-disciplinary interest in collective knowledge production. (Kester, 2013, n.p.)

On the one hand this can be understood simply as an aspect of the 'knowledge economy', but Sacha Kagan, one of the key theorists of ecoart, draws attention to the importance of the concept of 'commons'. Commons have become critical, on the one hand underpinning of collective knowledge production (e.g. Creative Commons licensing), and on the other an important counter to the increasing privatisation of public space. If the privatisation of space and information is in order to exploit them, then commons require a different pattern of behaviour, one that requires negotiation and care in order to enable productivity for the benefit of all.

The Harrisons offer another understanding of commons, particularly manifest in Newton Harrison's recent work *On the Deep Wealth of this Nation, Scotland* (2018), arguing that water, air, soil and forests need to be understood as commons because they underpin all life. To these material commons they add a 'commons of mind', a shared understanding of the value of the things that underpin life (Newton Harrison, 2018). This suggests that attention to the health of these commons, at this point conceiving of putting back more than we take out, will be repaid with abundance. Of course commons has another basic sense in this context which is to resist instrumentalization (WTM Study Group, 2017). In this formation commons is a verb, an activity of understanding how to move towards commons, to turn education and work into commons. This institutes a different regime of value, counter to the economic. After all the most problematic form of 'usefulness' is the usefulness to reducing costs, delivering more exploitable productivity and profit. Commons are a different form of value and meaning, emphatically shared and requiring care.

⁹ See <http://www.collinsandgoto.com> for full documentation of projects and publications.

¹⁰ The Artist Placement Group rubric, 'Context is half the work' is a key underpinning to these approaches and ways of working.

¹¹ The wider issue of whether participation means democracy is discussed in Harris and Fremantle 2013.



Fig 3: Newton Harrison, 'On The Deep Wealth of this Nation, Scotland', Taipei Biennial (2019)
(Image courtesy of the artist/Center for the Study of the Force Majeure and the Taipei Biennial)

Kagan highlights the way the Harrisons take the ecosystem in the places they work to be their client (Kagan, 2014, n.p.).¹² It is interesting to note that the Harrisons also don't sign their work allowing anyone to take up the ideas and work with them. The lack of a signature means that copyrighting and moral rights are not invoked. The Harrisons aren't afraid of their works being useful, in fact in this way they actively create the conditions for use. This is closely linked to the Harrisons' concept of 'conversational drift', their framing of the way that ideas can take on a life of their own within the wider story of a place. The Harrisons speak of places being the story of their own becoming, with all living and non-living things contributing to the process (Harrison and Harrison, 2004).¹³

More recently Collins, along with others, have developed a specific articulation of the value of arts-led discourse in relation to environmental decision-making (Edwards, 2016). Decision-making and how it is imagined is key to any form of being "...in the world without occupying the centre of the world". The authors argue that the role of artists in this framing is significant because, "By changing meanings and relationships, an arts-led approach has the potential to change structures and procedures, challenging extant patterns of decision-making." (Edwards, 2016, p. 326). This is significant in terms

¹² The Harrisons tell the arts organisations they work with that their role is to act as proxies on behalf of the local ecosystem, the Harrisons' 'real' 'client'. This is of course another flipping of a legal construction, not fundamentally dissimilar to the reinterpretation of the Force Majeure noted above.

¹³ For further analysis of the Harrisons' poetics, in particular on improvisation, see Douglas and Fremantle 2016a and 2016b.

of the forms of leadership artists can offer, often providing a distinctive frame for understanding, rather than specific policy or reproducible practice.

One complexity of ecoart is shared agency, sometimes shared authorship, even the rejection of ownership. The main examples I've drawn on thus far have been concerned with stormwater and brownfield, but ecoart has a much wider range of modalities. In a discussion of the recent development of art projects in relation to climate change (not explicitly ecoart) the authors of 'Raising the Temperature' enumerate 12 different 'things' that art can 'do' including, for example, "science communication", "embracing social-ecological complexity", and "shifting awareness and openness to more-than-human worlds" (Galafassi et al, 2017, p. 74). Actual projects often straddle several of the categories enumerated. However, the focus on climate change means that the swathe of work associated with remediation and restoration isn't fully represented. However, the question of usefulness is once again foregrounded.

Kagan's essay 'The Practice of Ecological Art' draws attention to other articulations, including that of Suzi Gablik who highlights the connective, reconstructive and ethical at the heart of these practices. In relation to the 'reconstructive' aspect Kagan emphasises the point that ecoart refuses the binary of useless/useful. It's worth bearing in mind that while the Anglo-American art world believes the 'axis of negotiation' is between the intrinsic and the instrumental ('art for art's sake' versus 'art that is useful'), those involved in co-production in the social realm understand the axis to be between the instrumental and the political (cf Turnhout, 2020). We might understand this in terms of, 'Is co-production useful to deliver services?' or 'Is it empowering users and communities to determine what services are useful?' In either case the process is relational, just as art is relational. However, in the latter the relationship is one where value and agency is opened up. Collins explicitly articulated this as the focus of the *Nine Mile Run Greenway* project saying the aim of the project was to transcend the role of primary authorship.

I have explored aspects of participation, collaboration and interdisciplinarity, and touched on aspects of ecological orientation. I've highlighted the multiple understandings of commons being used to challenge our understanding of public space. I've also offered a different axis on which to think about usefulness. I will now turn to eco-centricity.

Ecoart and 'deep ecology'

Andrew Patrizio, in his exploration of what an ecocritical art history might be, finds artist Ann Rosenthal's list of values to be "...extraordinarily helpful and comprehensive in articulating the kind of emergent properties we seek in art history..." (Patrizio, 2019, p. 46). He goes on to quote them in full,

1. Land Ethic – recognizing that we are members of an interdependent 'community' that includes not only humans, but 'soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land' (Leopold).
2. Systems Thinking – visualizing patterns and relationships across disparate information and knowledge systems; applying lessons of ecosystems to our human communities (Capra).

3. Sustainability – designing our lives, work, products, social systems, and relationships to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development)
4. Social and Biological Diversity – understanding that diversity among disciplines, cultures and species is a prerequisite for systems health and resilience.
5. Social and Environmental Justice – insisting that all species have a right to a clean environment that supports our health and the integrity of the ecological systems that sustain life.
6. Collaboration – bridging the boundaries between disciplines, communities, cultures, classes, genders, and species, respecting what each contributes to designing solutions that work for everyone.
7. Integrity – closing the gap between what we value and how we act in the world. (Patrizio, 2019, pp. 46-47)

Patrizio notes the influence of the ‘deep ecology’ movement manifest in the references to Aldo Leopold and Fritjof Capra. In this respect Rosenthal’s ‘eco-centric’ orientation is characteristic of ecoart practices, these authors being frequently cited. Broadly speaking the assumption that all living things (if not all things) have intrinsic value, and do not merely exist for human use, is a central tenet of ecoart. In Brookner’s *Urban Rain* stormwater becomes a thing in itself, rather than simply something to be managed by a building’s drainage system.

David Haley, another self-defined ecoartist, draws his definition for art from some of the earliest human writing, the Rig Veda. “Rta” is an Indo-Aryan noun/adjective meaning the dynamic process by which the whole cosmos continues to be created, virtuously (Haley, 2016). Haley understands art, in the widest sense of creativity rather than the narrow sense of the Western tradition, to be part of the ongoing dynamic process of development at an ecological as well as cultural level. For him true art is part of the world making itself, not merely a human product, a way that humanity can participate in the inherent creativity of the universe.

However the focus on the intrinsic value of ecological systems raises its own challenges. Art has traditionally focused on ‘the human’, and the prioritisation of the ecological does not immediately translate easily into subject matter. This is well summed up by Wallace Heim in her introductory essay to *Landing Stages*, when she says,

The complexities of human relations with environments and with the climate means overturning the historical weight of the imperturbable, tacit habit that the human subject and its actions amongst other humans are theatre’s sole interest. Other suppositions also showed their operation: that the environment or ecology was too materially ‘real’ for theatre, confounding the usual, more comforting combinations of reality and fiction; and that the conflicts and conditions were too stark to be shown on stage except as represented by activism or science. (Heim, 2014, p. 6)

I have already explored how ecoart practices go beyond representing science towards forms of integration. In terms of activism, the other adjacency highlighted by Heim, ecoart increasingly frequently engages with and in activism, just as those adopting an eco-centric position can also sometimes be activists. Joanna Macy’s three dimensions of

the great turning: ‘holding actions’, ‘Gaian structures’ and ‘shift in consciousness’ is a very useful way of conceptualising a set of linked modalities in which activism forms a dimension but is not the whole.¹⁴

The values articulated by Rosenthal and the challenges summed up by Heim frame the need for thinking differently about practices, rather than just incorporating ecology as a subject into conventional art forms. This double challenge, of our relationship with the world, as articulated by Rosenthal, and to the form of the arts as articulated by Heim, requires a transformation.

This challenge is also articulated in *The Great Derangement* (Ghosh 2016) which explores the capability of the arts, and literature in particular, to address the scale and multi-dimensionality of the climate crisis, saying,

“When future generations look back upon the Great Derangement, they will certainly blame the leaders and politicians of this time for their failure to address the climate crisis. But they may well hold artists and writers to be equally culpable – for the imagining of possibilities is not, after all, the job of politicians and bureaucrats.”

(Ghosh 2016, 135).

This looked for transformation is emergent in the practices of ecological arts including the recognition of agency by all (including more-than-human); and the need to understand how the world works in many dimensions (which has led to these practices being described as hybrid or interdisciplinary).



Fig 3: Ecosocial artist Cathy Fitzgerald marking a conifer tree to alert foresters to retain it as a permanent tree for continuous cover forestry management.

Photograph by Martin Lyttle 2015, courtesy of Cathy Fitzgerald

¹⁴ See <https://workthatreconnects.org/spiral/the-great-turning/> for a fuller description.

Kagan, whilst recognising the reasons for an eco-centric orientation, suggest that those practices which erase the human in their eco-centrism fail to recognise the value of autopoiesis (Kagan, 2014, n.p.). Autopoiesis, the self-creation in the development of all lifeforms, is a critical concept which can be traced back to ecological science (cf Maturana and Varela specifically and Lynn Margulis more generally). Elsewhere Kagan has developed the concept of autoecopoiesis as a way of understanding ecoart (Kagan, 2013). Kagan argues that ecoart is a process of self-making as much as it is a process of world-making (and he references Haley in this).

The configuration of practices that work with this double making of self and world is the subject of Cathy Fitzgerald's practice-led research. Cathy Fitzgerald has since 2008 been working on *The Hollywood Forest Story*, located in Co Carlow, Eire. She has used the ecosophy of Guattari to provide a theoretical frame for what she describes as her eco-social art practice (Fitzgerald, 2018). On the ground she has been working with communities, experts and with the small monocultural conifer plantation where she lives to co-create a flourishing and permanent, mixed-species forest.¹⁵ Cathy Fitzgerald's 'slow art' is not turning the forest into art in any sense, but rather using art's generative capacity to imagine the possibility of something becoming different – in this case a monocultural conifer plantation.

We might ask of this art made through participation and collaboration, informed by deep ecology and the agency of the more-than-human, are humans the only living things that appreciate the aesthetic of these works? Jackie Brookner's obituary goes on to say,

Emblematic of her work, the islands provide nesting habitat for birds and plant based filtration for improving water quality in the Salo Bird Pools, lagoons that were formerly used in the sewage treatment processes of the Salo Municipal Sewage Treatment Facility. Because an abundance of migrating and nesting birds now use the lagoons, the pools have been established as a EU-directive conservation site.

(Malen and Schor, 2015, n.p.)

Can we imagine that the migrating species, who obviously know huge areas of landscape, now value this changed part of their landscape? Does the fact that a sewage treatment facility is so much 'healthier' make it a more significant part of their landscape? Is a small forest becoming diverse significant to other living things? Is that a form of beauty? Do they have a 'Right' to this?

Kester has recently suggested that art 'offer[ing] the hope of something different from "the world as it is," is valued above all else,' (Kester, 2015, n.p.). A concern for relations, the connectedness of things, is not exclusive to the arts. As Kester argues, this change is a wider paradigm shift across many aspects of society.

The distinctive contribution of both community and ecological arts practices is in the sharing of authorship and the recognition of the authorship in others. Ultimately the question is whether the work (the art) can be taken up by inhabitants (or visitors) and used for their own eco-cultural well-being. What would it mean if we had to answer that request?

¹⁵ See <http://hollywoodforest.com> for a full account of this work.



Fig 5: Jackie Brookner, 'Veden Taika', Halikonlahti Bird Pools, Salo, Finland (2007-2010) Close up of Black headed tern chicks, Spring 2012 (with permission of the artist's estate)

I now need to turn to Biesta to understand more clearly how his idea of “...in the world without occupying the centre of the world.” (Biesta, 2017, p.3) and in particular the role of art, might have an eco-centric dimension or at least help us understand ecoart.

...in the world without occupying the centre of the world

Biesta's concern is with education and educational theory, and specifically with the education of the young. However, the primary text drawn on for this essay is *Letting Art Teach: Art education 'after' Joseph Beuys* (Biesta, 2017) in which Biesta explores how art and education share some challenges. He starts from the assumption that both art and education are suffering from being expected to be useful, and that the usual defence for art, in terms of its capacity to engender expressiveness, is dangerous in itself. The pivot of his argument is the phrase, “...in the world without occupying the centre of the

world.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 3) which he credits to Phillipe Meirieu. It is important to note that Meirieu’s use is positioned within the classroom and that Biesta is not developing his argument rooted in deep ecology, though he does address the issue of the limits of the world (Biesta, 2017, p. 58), and he does juxtapose his perspective with an ecological one (Biesta, 2017, p. 56). There are many forms of ‘centre’ that could be brought into question at many levels (artworld, patriarchal, normative) beside that of the anthropocentric and I am interpreting this phrase as indicating a scope which Biesta himself might not envisage.

The book is a juxtaposition of Biesta’s text with images from Joseph Beuys’ 1965 Action *Explaining pictures to a dead hare*. Beuys is an apposite foil for Biesta’ thesis not least because Beuys conceived of his life as teaching, saying,

To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is a waste product, a demonstration. (Beuys, 2005, p. 27)

Explaining pictures to a dead hare was a three hour performance at Galerie Alfred Schmela in Düsseldorf. Beuys, head covered in honey and gold leaf, one shoe with a felt sole, the other with an iron sole, carried a dead hare from picture to picture. The audience outside the gallery couldn’t hear what Beuys said to the hare, only watch as he touched the hare’s paw to pictures, whispered in its ear, and then sat cradling it, continuing with his monologue.

Biesta draws out a number of key aspects in which this particular performance exemplifies a key characteristic of teaching. Biesta focuses on the act of ‘showing’. ‘Showing’ is a fundamentally relational act made up of “someone showing something to someone” (Biesta, 2017, p. 44). This drawing of attention is critical and opens up questions about how we ‘get’ attention, and in particular of the need for the learner to be open to learning; of how attention needs to be of the head, heart and hands; and how this showing is a double showing, showing the thing and also showing the criteria to understand the significance or value of the thing.

Desire and its relationship with the world has a central role in Biesta’s educational theory. He argues that the purpose of education is that, “...the educated person is not a thing or a product, but a human being with an altered outlook.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 54). This altered outlook is one in which the individual has encountered the ‘resistance of the world’, manifest in the practical reality of what happens when we do things: they don’t always happen the way we desire. That resistance, e.g. of stone breaking the wrong way, brings us up against our own desires. Speaking of the way education, and in particular the ‘interruption’ of education is a practice in preparation for life, Biesta says education is also,

...offering resistance so that desires can become visible and can be encountered and the work of selecting, rearranging and transforming one’s desires can be taken on... (Biesta, 2017, p. 90)

Desire and the “selecting, rearranging and transforming” of desires is critical to the project of “...not occupying the centre of the world.” Biesta argues that failure to attend to the resistance of the world in relation to our desires has two forms. On the one hand failure is when, “...if we have too little consideration for the integrity of what we encounter, that our intentions and ambitions result in the destruction of what we encounter, the destruction of what offers resistance.” (Biesta, 2017, p. 64). Many would argue that the ecological crises are precisely the manifestation of this failure.

The alternative failure is that, "...the frustration of encountering resistance leads us to withdrawal. ... If the first response runs the risk of destroying the world, the second response runs the risk of destroying ourselves, destroying our very existence in the world, our existence as subject." (Biesta, 2017, p. 64-65). This latter argument is directly related to Kagan's argument against a wholly eco-centric position, losing sight of the human aspect of poesis.

There is a specific role for art, with its particular attention to meaning, value and subjectivity, in relation to desires,

Art can make our desires visible, give them form, and by trying to come into dialogue with what or who offers resistance, we are at the very same time engaged in the exploration of the desirability of our desires and in their rearrangement and transformation. (Biesta, 2017, p. 72)

Biesta's idea of 'in the world' is drawn from Hannah Arendt's political philosophy, and he specifically draws on her differentiation of knowledge from understanding. Understanding is distinct from knowing, the latter characterised by correct information and scientific forms of knowledge. Rather, understanding is existential, and concerned with the experience of being in the world (Biesta, 2017, p. 98-99). Biesta further develops this, and opens up the second part of the key phrase, the part about not 'occupying the centre' by arguing that understanding goes beyond sense-making, saying of Arendt,

...she pushes understanding towards the existential end of the spectrum, away from sense-making and interpretation, away from acts of cognition, away from the work of the head, and towards the lifelong task of trying to be at home in the world. (Biesta, 2017, p. 99).

Biesta's examples of resistance are physical, but Ernesto Pujol offers a different example of resistance, as well as suggesting a way to respond to resistance that seems to me at least in tune with both Biesta, but also Beuys. Pujol, in his short essay 'Walking Rejections' reflects on the rejection of proposals by curators and funders (Pujol, 2018, p. 124-5). Pujol in particular highlights curators rejecting proposals for walks because they don't fit current preferences and institutional politics. His response to rejection is to pause and to explore stillness. He says,

When someone rejects my walk, I do not cease to walk but I slow down to a pause. I see it as an invitation to pause reflectively. It may not be the invitation I wanted, but it is the one received. Therefore, by slowing my steps and reflecting, I begin to engage in a meditative stillness. (Pujol, 2018, p. 124).

This evocative response to the resistance of the world opens up a way of understanding the how to not destroy ourselves or the world. It is only one way in relation to one resistance, but it does correlate with Biesta's concern for understanding as being more than sense-making, highlighting the "What is this asking of me?" aspect of understanding. It is worth exploring this in relation to our earlier discussion of usefulness. There are aspects of ecoart that can be understood in terms of problem-solving (as was highlighted in relation to Brookner's *Urban Rain* project). Jeremy Till, writing on architecture and participation, reframes the role of design from 'problem-solving' to 'sense-making' (Till, 2005, p. 36). This is an important shift, not to be underestimated. But in following Arendt and moving beyond understanding as sense-making to

conceiving of understanding as the world asking of us, Biesta is fundamentally opening up agency to the more-than-human, thus also opening up the possibility that something else is 'occupying the centre'.

This is the interruption that is required by education, as noted above, which means that the learner must be willing to have their attention drawn, be willing to learn in terms of being taught. Hence Biesta argues that this goes beyond "How can I make sense of this?" and "What can I learn from this?" to "What is this trying to teach me?" (Biesta, 2017, p. 100).

Conclusion

In setting out to explore what a different practice in relation to public space might be and exploring how ecoart practice might be different, I've touched on its affinities with social practice; aspects of collaboration and the importance of the commons; focused on what eco-centricity might mean both in a general sense as well as in a nuanced reading that doesn't lose sight of the human. I've argued that Biesta's phrase "...in the world without occupying the centre of the world." opens up the potential for eco-centric theorisation.

It is important to note that Biesta doesn't fully take on Beuys' approach, including specifically Beuys' concern with the role of intuition as a form of rationality, or his wider concerns with the spiritual aspects. These are often manifest through the symbolic importance of particular animals (including the hare). Biesta also doesn't address the use of the absurd as a form of interruption intended to create space for understanding, so plainly evident in the performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare*.¹⁶ Biesta however is alert to the fact that Beuys' performance is to be perceived, rather than 'made sense of'. It is intended to evoke an understanding without knowing what it 'means' (Biesta, 2017, p.43).

The use of the symbolic is central to Beuys' construction of situations where we are forced to consider "What is this asking of me?", of situations where our desires are thrown into perspective and revealed to us. It is after all in the "selecting, rearranging and transforming" of desires that our relationships with the world as home can be transformed.

Beuys uses symbolism as a means to open up eco-centricity, to give agency to the more-than-human. Other artists use different approaches including particular ways of constructing discourse (Collins and Goto) or through giving voice to the web of life (Harrisons).

The Harrisons' construction of the Force Majeure is particularly salient because in effect it acknowledges that the combination of environmental crises occupy the centre of the world and we can only adapt. The Harrisons, in articulating the current environmental crises as 'the Force Majeure', are precisely framing an understanding of the current moment in terms of What does this understanding of the world ask of me?

In the Manifesto the Harrisons argue that personal interest takes precedence in most discourse, that social issues are somewhat attended to and that ecological issues are

¹⁶ I'm grateful to my colleague Prof Emeritus Anne Douglas for this important observation. Absurdity is an important aspect of the arts and is precisely used to create interruption for different forms of understanding to become possible, particularly forms of understanding that involve living with the limits of understanding.

less so. In another work, *Serpentine Lattice* (1993) concerning the Pacific Northwest Temperate Rainforest, they offer this meditation,

THEN
A NEW REVERSAL OF GROUND COMES INTO BEING
WHERE HUMAN ACTIVITY BECOMES A FIGURE
WITHIN AN ECOLOGICAL FIELD
AS SIMULTANEOUSLY THE ECOLOGY CEASES TO BE
AN EVER SHRINKING FIGURE
WITHIN THE FIELD OF HUMAN ACTIVITY¹⁷
(Harrison & Harrison 1993, pp 5-6)

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¹⁷ Parts of the work including a video can be seen on the Harrison Studio website <http://theharrisonstudio.net/serpentine-lattice>

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#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity From Digital Artivism to the Collective Care of Social Art in Public Space

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Abstract

Contemporary mobile media affords new insights into social and creative practices while expanding our understanding of what kinds of public space matter. With the continual rise of the social in contemporary art which sees relationships as the medium, smartphones have become important devices for individual political expression, social exchange and now contemporary art. This article draws on media studies and contemporary art theories to discuss #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity (2020), a socially engaged artwork engaging more than 300 contributors in a few short weeks within the online and physical spaces of RMIT University in the heart of Melbourne, Australia. This artwork was instigated during the initial February 2020 outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China in response to expressions of fear and isolation, travel bans, and growing racism targeting international students. It employed one of the most pervasive barometers of popular and public culture today, the selfie. Through its messages of care alongside signs of solidarity from Chinese students suffering anxiety and isolation, #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity moved individual selfie expressions of identity into the realm of socially engaged arts and public space.

Keywords: selfies, COVID-19, socially engaged art, digital activism, public space

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Figure 1. The first images created as an invitation for #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity

Today is the 36th day of my quarantine, and during these days, a significant feeling I have is that the mobile phone and related online spaces seem to integrate throughout and into my everyday life. When I wake up, I pick up my smartphone to read the news and send a message to check on the safety of my family and friends. At the beginning of the quarantine, almost all of the news made me anxious. What worries me most is the issue of 'Where am I?', since the outbreak of the coronavirus. The voice of regional discrimination and racism has filled our ears. As the pandemic grows and the confirmed cases found in different areas, our society is divided into separate elements, forming fragments.

Reflections from collaborator Ye (Sherry) Lui, 1 March 2020

In early February 2020, Ye (Sherry) Lui and her university lecturer, Marnie Badham, sent messages back and forth, checking in on each other's well-being and exchanging information about governments' responses to the rapidly growing coronavirus crisis. Lui was enrolled to begin her research at the beginning of the academic year in Melbourne, following a visit to her family in China. While the Australian government began to initiate international travel bans, RMIT University staff returned to campus to plan for the upcoming semester. Badham and her colleague Tammy Wong Hulbert collaborated to develop a participatory art project to extend their care to international students who were self-isolating in both China and in Melbourne, unable to join their peers at university. Global pandemic conditions had further heightened political tensions between Australia and China, impacting on the Asian diaspora in Australian—increasing public fear and anxiety due to travel restrictions and social isolation. These 'new normals' not only stimulated increased stigma and racism towards people of Chinese heritage but also has seen the rise of social media platforms as a crucial digital public space for creative expression and activism.

In the creative development of the project, conversations moved from the use of masks, to the observation of racism, and the employment of social media in socially engaged art. Ideas were tested through a series of selfie images by Wong Hulbert, who chose to wear a dust mask on her face that she had recently used for smoke protection from bushfires (see Figure 1). Her message of care was to be read by her social media followers: "This

mask has protected me from bushfire ash and now... Hoping all are well and safe. Tammy, Melb, Vic". While her handwritten sign reads like the back of a postcard sending well wishes from afar, her solemn face expresses serious concern.

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity was subsequently launched on social media platforms Facebook and also Weibo, a microblogging website, one of the largest social media platforms used in China. A flash flood of contributions was quickly posted online in response to the invitation for participation by students in Melbourne and across China, university staff, and their broader networks.

We are missing our international students—an important part of our community at the RMIT University, School of Art—many who are at home in China or Melbourne self-quarantined due to the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. Our students are feeling the emotional toll of this new global health crisis and the racism that has begun to emerge. The Australian Government has posed strict new travel restrictions on travel from China and there are more than 165,000 international students from China enrolled to start studying this semester at Australian universities.

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity project introduction, Facebook Group, February 2020

This article discusses *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* as a socially engaged art response to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing the selfie—one of the most pervasive barometers of popular and public culture on social media—this project utilises digital social media platforms as a collective public space, hosting hundreds of messages of care and signs of solidarity for Chinese students suffering anxiety and isolation (the common usage and overt repetition of the word 'we' in Figure 2 can be observed throughout the project). It speaks to the employment of contemporary mobile media to generate further understandings into critical, cultural and creative practices. With enhanced technological capacity to share content quickly and effectively, the smartphone is a highly collaborative tool for art projects that are process based, instructional, and designed to activate specific communities. More specific to *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity*, mobile media usage can achieve collective impact that importantly highlights the *immobility* of international students due to public health and related border politics. This is achieved through the social connection in and around the making of mobile media art where experiences of the everyday are brought to the fore. The amalgamation of mobile media and art continues to develop our understanding of how digital public space can be understood as a fluid and iterative creative activation, with direct reference to encounters based around screen mediation. However, the "shaping condition" (Bishop, 2012) of technological connectivity is also paradoxical and artists therefore need to acknowledge ethical considerations around privacy and surveillance by the increasing corporate control of social media platforms. Take for example, the first image of Figure 1, which illustrates the participants' choice to be masked rather than unmasked, using the psychology of the colour pink to highlight the need for calm thinking around scientific knowledge rather than the stigma of racism.¹ Sharing these often tacit forms of transmission, smartphones become creative co-conspirators in this inherently political artwork, enacting the collective role of sense-making by communicating with others through digital public spaces, and capturing how we move in and through the world. This experience provides evidence that through the lens

¹ For further examples, please see the project's [Facebook](#) group and [Weibo](#) page.

of the selfie, the subjective self is performative, multidimensional and complex. This article proposes that the contribution of the digital materiality of the selfie within socially engaged arts practice holds key affordances within networked public space. These qualities operate specifically within social media platforms and are driven by the cultural norms of communities who utilise social media platforms. These users can be understood to enact online behaviours that move away from narcissistic endeavours, and instead amplify the action of collective listening. As socially engaged art practice, #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity is offered as an example of such a community, and also adds to the important archive of belonging, for the onslaught of these contemporary pandemic times (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. Signs of solidarity

Mobile media and selfies as digital activism

Smartphones have become an intrinsic part of the creative toolkit—as a practice of methods, cultural probe, and mode of inquiry (Hjorth, 2016; Lanson, de Souza e Silva, and Hjorth, 2020). The ubiquity of mobile and social media usage inside and outside traditional art spaces has also influenced how contemporary art is received, represented and understood. It extends audiences into digitally mediated public space and enables dynamic growth of art and humanities projects related to self and identity politics. Online activity through networked digital publics have long pointed to social media engagement (van Dijck, 2013; Hjorth and Hinton, 2019), employing collective forms where “we are activated and sustained by feelings of belonging and solidarity, however fleeting or permanent those feelings may be” (Papacharissi, 2014, p. 9). With a practise of care and inclusivity at the centre, #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity sought to share forms of collective mobility through the selfie, via socially engaged and public art making.

Increasingly, selfies have been adopted as a form of social and political activism, using hashtag handles for collective and affective community engagement. As a mundane millennial practice of networked self-portraiture, the selfie is socially and bodily mediated by social media platforms, networked and layered with an entanglement of multiple meanings and subjectivities. Paradoxically, they provide documentation of social and political experiences through individual context whilst also being understood as a form of

self-portraiture which “opens up a number of unique opportunities for collaborations with others” (Palmer, 2017, p. 128). Selfies can also reinforce a more entangled approach that includes non-human agents such as, in this project, the mobile phone alongside the analogue materials of paper, pens, and the mask. Selfies, when activated through collective processes such as hashtagging, can affectively draw attention to identity politics providing visibility and access to a range of people that may be subject to inequalities based on race, gender or sexuality, as seen in recent projects such as #blacklivesmatters and #metoo movements.²

There is also the poignant example of #iamnotavirus, that also began at the onset of the racially charged phenomenon of COVID-19, instigated by the Asian diaspora around the world. This project was a form of online activism that was more generalised and geared towards opening up global dialogue around the increased acts of violence towards people of Asian descent. For #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity, the project was more localised, and specifically designed to show support for international students who were not only in social isolation in China and unable to travel to Australia due to travel restrictions and border closures but were also deeply affected by xenophobia from many Australian citizens (Fang, Renaldi, and Yang, 2020). As mentioned earlier, numerous selfie messages in this project underscored the more tacit forms of racism towards people of Asian descent.

Disrupting the reductive arguments of selfies being understood as networked narcissism and engendered preoccupation with the self (Marshall McLuhan 1964, cited in Wendt, 2014), Theresa Senft and Nancy Baym discuss the need to move away from a pathological approach, and diverse forms of moral panic around the consequences of selfie-making. They did this by expanding Erving Goffman’s thinking around self-presentation and face work, as a form of co-presence (1959), and the need for “deep, interdisciplinary, international, multilayered understandings of selfies and all that the discourses that surround them represent” (Senft and Baym, 2015, p. 1601; Senft, 2020). This thinking enabled a shift towards positioning the selfie as a socially mediated entity, where the entangled body (Barad, 2007) enables a complex and diverse performance of “online *and* offline connectivity and co-existence of images and bodies” (Warfield, Cambre, and Abidin, 2015, p. 3, *our italics*). The collective approach was important for #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity, in particular the staging of selfie posting and the physical pasting up of contributions within the entrance foyer of Building 2 in the School of Art at RMIT University. These actions generate visibility of the Asian body as key agent and make the unspoken experiences of COVID-19 and social isolation practices amplified through networked forms of collective listening.

In *The Poetics of Digital Media*, Paul Frosh contemplates the role of social media tagging beyond archival purposes. The entanglement of image, names, bodies and networks exist as a highly social and embodied performance—a continuous cycle of the making of communities, where tagging is “a profoundly poetic procedure for populating and disclosing worlds ... by continually assembling multiple others in the confirmation of one’s existence as a body” (2019, p. 95). The more collectively created hashtag alongside the tagging of individuals in digital imagery also assumes a stance where platform connectivity takes precedence over matters of personal privacy. This complicates our engagement with digital media—with social and highly networked collective activity comes

²See [Black Lives Matter](#) and [me too. Movement](#)

responsibility and ethical thinking around why we choose to do it, how we practice the *doing* of data and our perceived authority to do so.

Selfies, contemporary art, and digital citizenship

Mobile media has brought about an increasing ability to augment collaborative creative practice methods specifically for artists compelled to express political concerns regarding identity, but for those who also make social and community driven work. The performativity of the smartphone selfie allows many narratives to emerge, disappear, evolve, fail and succeed; a choreography of transformation. When discussing the relational aspects of making art with community, Badham states that “through an increased focus on social engagement and participation, some new forms of contemporary arts practices blur the boundaries between the fields of public art, contemporary art, new media practice and urban design” (2013, p. 100).

There are many artists today who are now utilising photography and social media platforms as gallery, and creating the selfie to generate forms of agency, critiquing the social and cultural backlash of the isolation of self. Cindy Sherman³ uses selfies to continue her thinking on the monstrous and grotesque—queering the space of gender issues, the body, the face, and aging populations (Sehgal, 2018). Through engagement with the performative selfie in social media, artists are using networked experience as a stage to perform the reconfiguration of the social and related selfhood. Diverse examples such as feminist protest punk rock and performance art group Pussy Riot’s⁴ well-known political activism and the parafictional Instagram performance work of Amalia Ulman (*Excellences & Perfections*, 2014), enhance our ability to logically connect social media and creative practice, thinking and performance activism to conceptually based street art projects—through participation, action, networked identity and the socio-political event.

French urban artist and photographer JR has combined street art and documentary photography to make art public. JR draws attention to people and place, by layering large black and white photographic street paste ups on the urban canvas including warehouses, rooftops and trains. In 2008, he launched *Women Are Heroes*, making visible the eyes and faces of women to underline the dignity of women who are the overlooked and oppressed victims of war, poverty, and violence. Other projects like *Inside Out*, according to the artist’s website, “is a global art project transforming messages of personal identity into works of art” (JR, *Inside Out* website, 2020). JR invites participants to make and upload digital portraits of people in their community. These images are made into posters and sent back to their community to be viewed locally (See Figure 3).

While artist Ai Weiwei⁵ is well-known for his activist employment of the selfie, a more direct precedent for #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity can be found within English conceptual artist Gillian Wearing’s *Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say* (1992–1993).⁶

³ See [Cindy Sherman](#)

⁴ See [Pussy Riot](#)

⁵ See [Ai Weiwei](#)

⁶ See Gillian Wearing’s [Signs project](#)



Figure 3. Inside Out Wuppertal, Germany, Daniel Schmitt (2014). Image courtesy of JR.

By interviewing and photographing hundreds of participants with handwritten signs of their innermost thoughts—encounters with strangers on the streets of London—Wearing amplifies the disconnect between public and private personas within the everyday experience. Finnish artist Iiu Susiraja hijacks the selfie to capture the abject humour in mundane domestic experiences.⁷ By objectifying her private self within this public realm, Susiraja's work engenders private forms of self-expression into a publicly heralded feminist world, serving as disruption to the cultural identity of the selfie. This creative and politicised interactivity can be seen as an extension of the avant-garde intellectual political art movement of the Situationist International in Europe.

⁷ See [Iiu Susiraja](#)



Figure 4. Future thinking for present problems

This movement in art history from the late 1950s to the early 70s began with social catalyst artist and initiator Asger Jorn, Michele Bernstein and Guy Debord focusing on social, cultural and political issues of concern (Plant, 1992). Debord's technique *dérive* was developed as an unplanned journey, drifting via psychogeography, a playful mapping of the psychological onto place, a subversive exploration of the social. Their technique of *détournement* (meaning to creatively hijack) was simply put, a misappropriation of well-known media to create a new artwork with a different message. When working with the selfie, both *dérive* and *détournement* are interesting ways to think about mobile media activist projects such as #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity. Consider Figure 4, where the participant utilised a kind of contorted, playful irony, perhaps as representative of the need for more future thinking to solve present problems and invigorate more collective thinking. Further, through performing the making of a selfie *without* featuring the face creates an emphatic response, one that performatively signals the need to turn our collective backs on the upsurge of overtly racist and political responses that are rife in Australia and beyond.

Through concepts of selfie citizenship, Adi Kuntsman recognises the political agency in visualising intimate forms of citizenship, ethnicity, and performative affect through the socially networked phenomenon of the selfie (2017). Kuntsman discusses innovative new ways in which activists are using mobile cultures like social media to question the politics of normalisation, ensuring different ethnicity, citizenship and ideologies are shared and therefore included within cultural conversations. As Grant Bollmer further notes:

Selfies provide a means for a 'citizenship' that comes from placing photographs of intimate spaces and private bodies into the public spheres, reshaping who (and what) can enter into 'the political' through images that document and announce one's presence to another. Selfies, in visualizing and displaying a self, is a hailing of the unknown, networked audience, producing an encounter in the circulation of a photo, opening and remaking the possibilities of 'private' bodies to enter into public visibility (Bollmer, 2020, p. 187).

The idea of the networked audience speaks broadly to the performatives around networked society, as defined by Manuel Castells (2004). Castells introduces this idea of a society of communication technology, where "the organizational arrangements of humans in relations of production, consumption, reproduction, experience and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture" (p. 3). This interconnectedness changes the framing of what it means to be a community in public space—there is a doubling effect, in that the internet "may hold as much promise for reconnecting people to communities of place as it does for liberating people from them" (Hampton, 2004, p. 217). The role of the socially driven artist moves through this network, providing more explicit commentary, reminding us of the dilemma individuals and communities face when their personal data is held by the powers of surveillance capitalism, and also perhaps opening up dialogue around future alternatives for being in the digitally mediated world.

Socially engaged selfie art and collective aesthetics

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity was an invitation for creative exchange, collective forms of listening and performance in response to a particular contemporary political moment that is now archived as history of the COVID-19 pandemic through more than 300 selfie images. As an artwork created and presented in both digital and public spaces, the work can be read through the lens of socially engaged art "in a manner that resembles political and social activity, but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility" (Lacy, 1995, p. 19). Socially engaged art is an ideology that relates to process-based, community-oriented artmaking (Helguera, 2011) employing a range of artistic forms and public engagement strategies which can be described as relational, situational, or participatory. While theorists have been unable to define a particular style, form or aesthetic, like other art disciplines it is driven by particular principles and ethics (Goldbard, 2006). These forms of cultural production are typically underpinned by values of democracy through human interactions, interventions in public space, and also antagonism towards structures of power.

Socially engaged artists appear to function like ethnographers, community organisers or radical pedagogues working in responsive and open-ended ways to identify and draw attention to particular local social issues in real world situations.

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity was not simply focused on communicating the expected public health messaging; rather, the motivations of organising the artist-researchers grew quickly in creative response to make visible the direct concerns of international students. Like many contemporary art theorists, curator Nato Thompson has attempted to map this expansive field citing a range of precursors such as 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud, 2002), 'dialogic art' (Kester, 2004) or Joseph Beuys's 'social sculpture' (Jordan, 2012). Socially engaged art also crosses over to other disciplines such as education, housing, or

health taking art into everyday life in very visible ways. Educator Pablo Helguera suggests the resultant disciplinary ambiguity enables unexpected possibilities for social transformation to emerge (2011).

As socially engaged artwork relies on the contributions of others (typically from outside of the artworld), this collaboration did not have a predetermined outcome in mind. Rather, the form of 'selfie' was offered as an invitation to create and participate in a wide social network initially online and later in public space through a paste up wall on campus. *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* can be analysed through a range of artistic and affective frameworks; however, we pay particular attention to what Swedish curator, Maria Lind, describes as "collaborative aesthetics". She has argued a collaborative turn is enacted by artists to manoeuvre around the instrumentalising effects of both the commercial and the publicly funded art market (Lind, 2007, p. 176).

Rather than analysing or evaluating the resulting artworks, it focuses on methodologies of artistic collaboration. These kinds of collaborations can occur both between people involved, who are often, but not always, artists and between the artists and other people [...] a pronounced affinity with activism and other current ways of getting together around shared concerns, as well as a marked interest in alternative ways of producing knowledge (ibid., p. 16).

As Helguera argues, socially engaged art is a methodology not an outcome. The resulting aesthetic outcomes are typically and purposefully not individual as socially engaged artists propose a framework and methodology acting in response to a particular situation inviting individual expression within collective actions. Like socially engaged practice, mobile media has influenced art to shift away from the traditional gallery construct (Iverson and Sheller, 2016) to a more dynamic participation within an everyday sociality brought about by digital connectivity. *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* also embodies this collectivist approach, reinforcing that social media platforms play host to an increasing number of arts projects, and function well as digital public art space

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity was motivated by the need to publicly show meaningful support of international students caught in the crossfire of strict new COVID-19 related travel restrictions imposed by the Australian Government, which at the time was estimated at 100,000 Chinese students enrolled in Australian Universities (Perpitch 2020, n.p.). On the first day of February 2020, the Australian Government announced a travel ban prohibiting all Chinese citizens travelling to Australia to limit the virus from spreading across 'our borders'. The Chinese nationals who arrived in Australia in advance of these restrictions were required to self-quarantine in their homes for two weeks.

At RMIT University, the concern for Chinese international students led to many staff reaching out to affected students. Reports from international students in Melbourne and abroad included the expressions of loneliness and fear, while others relayed stories of experiencing racism in public space. International students were enrolled in Australian universities as early as 1923; however, it was not until the Colombo Plan of 1951 that Australia began to fund approximately one fifth of students from the Asia Pacific region (Horne, 2020). This funding strategy was originally designed to counter the influences of

growing communist ideologies in the region. It would seem that little has changed, with continuing political disputes between Australia and China in recent months. Education was recently reported as Australia's fourth largest export at \$37.6 billion in 2018–2019 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and universities have been estimated to lose \$3–4.6 billion in revenue from international student's fees alone in 2020 (Horne, 2020). These increasing numbers reflect China's rapidly transforming economic status over the last three decades, which has led to the mobility of a large middle class, who highly value an international university education.

The artist-researchers who instigated *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* invited participation through two simple actions. The first action was a call out to post a selfie alongside messages of care to the public Facebook Group created on 11 February 2020. Within a few days, there were over 100 selfies posted alongside messages of wellbeing, care and solidarity, which quickly grew into hundreds of individual posts. The second action was the physical paste up wall for the selfies in the busy foyer of a School of Art building, an affective haunting of the missing international students and their supporter's messages of care via the collective selfie project. Both actions generated public engagement and community conversations in online and offline public spaces, further enhancing the importance of activating relationships of care. Together, these two actions effectively extended the online digital space of the selfie to become an artistic and socio-political intervention in public space.

During *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity*, the team discussed the use of the term 'mask' in the title of our project, as to mask or not to mask was a contentious issue in Australia. Students from mainland China were already in the practice of wearing masks as mandated by the Chinese government, where the normalisation of mask wearing was seen as an act of protecting society and individual from the spread of viruses. In Melbourne, students wearing masks shared their feelings of being displaced and stigmatised, as many onlookers presumed the students to be unwell. To 'unmask' became a mode for revealing the true self, illuminated by the messages written by participants. The selfie collection shows a range of masked and unmasked individuals, reflecting these ongoing debates. Additionally, using masks as performative objects within *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* was seen as careful practice of protection for participants in relation to everyday data privacy and surveillance. Many who wished to protect themselves from facial surveillance, especially Chinese participants, chose to create a masked selfie. In light of COVID-19, it was reported that facial recognition software used in China has now further developed its AI capacity to provide a "full range of epidemic prevention information such as body temperature, mask-wearing status, and employee identity" (Li, 2020, n.p.). However, when thinking metaphorically, although many contributed selfies were indeed 'masked', the situated action of participating in our collective project could very well be seen as visible enough.

Many patterns were discovered within the choices which participants made in relation to both the messages and the selfies created. Janis Jefferies notes, "Patterns as device encourage us to think in terms of multiple perspectives and mobile subjectivities, of forging collaborations and alliances and juxtaposing different viewpoints" (Jefferies, 2012, 125). As selfies were posted online throughout the project's duration, interesting themes were revealed. The importance of more-than-human feelings of care within the home was highlighted as many participants chose to share their selfie moment with their pet companions (See Figure 5). Animals are recognised as an important part of the home

dynamic where “humans and their pets are entangled in various forms of intimacy and kinship, often in digitally mediated ways” (Hjorth, Richardson, and Balmford, 2016, n.p.), it makes sense that pet relationships are a type of reciprocal care. To perform and share selfies with a pet—or even ‘help’ our pets create selfies—heightens well-being during periods of social isolation, and forefronts feelings of care in the message.



Figure 5. More-than-human acts of care

Katrin Tiidenberg understands the selfie to be a material object and draws on Science & Technology Studies theorist Lucy Suchman’s usage of the word ‘configuration’ to describe the ways these objects connect with cultural systems (Tiidenberg, 2018, p. 18). Throughout *Selfies: Why we love (and hate) them* (ibid.), Tiidenberg argues the selfie to be a rich site for the study of collective cultural values and social norms. The selfie phenomenon is now often utilised as ironic and/or a metaphor for various types of political agency (or lack thereof) “facing new challenges of forced mobility, uneven mobility, and disrupted mobility ... and the movement of unpredictable risks” (Sheller, 2014, p. 795). This resonates with the current Australian border closures influenced by COVID-19.⁸ Understanding the various forms of mobilities involved in mobile social media practice helps to understand how the *doing* is performative, where “selfies gain their meanings in practices, which are context specific, situational and interactive” (Tiidenberg, 2018, p. 131). This focus on relational aspects for #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity helps to create greater understandings when moving through a technologically mediated world. Yet how can a public art and social activist treatment of the selfie space help to augment these digitally mobile and networked experiences? Like our sense of identity and place, the social atmosphere around the assembled selfie object is constantly in flux, where such an affective ambiance actively creates its subjectivity. It became difficult to utilise social media platforms primarily as a creative canvas for a project about the coronavirus without considering the ethical implications of third-party conditions, platform restrictions, and modes of surveillance and data privacy. Certainly, it has become common knowledge that affordances of social media platforms

⁸ See Australian Government Department of Health: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for international travellers](https://www.health.gov.au/health/alerts/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-international-travellers).

“have demonstrated their important role in constructing consensus, establishing community, and mobilizing action beyond the online discursive world into the physical space of the streets” (Tierney, 2016, p. 81). The challenge of making public art projects using online spaces is the necessity to acknowledge the privacy and surveillance contradictions within social media spaces; as noted by Jan Fernback, “Facebook is a mechanism of surveillance, but its own actions – its algorithms, its classification metrics, its distribution techniques – remain opaque” (2012, p. 19). Cathy O’Neil warns of this opacity and the errors of misguided automated data collection that are “harvesting spoken language and images and using them to capture information” (2016, p. 154). Here the role of socially engaged artmaking via social media platforms becomes two-fold, by making heard the voices of those being discriminated against during the pandemic, there is also the potential to unveil these invasive forms of machine listening. The use of masks in the project engenders darker meaning.

#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity offers a more complex, playful and nuanced counter to these prejudiced perspectives by creating a public platform for individual exchange, with students and the broader community expressing themselves and respected for their independent views. They expressed the desire to be viewed as individuals beyond racial stereotypes. The project captured the early stages of this difficult period of COVID-19 by working on a local scale with the university community of students and staff while also reflecting a national crisis impacted by greater international relationships. These early personal, emotional expressions was a signal of what was to come, with entire countries making radical changes in relation to everyday movement, such as social lockdown.



Figure 6. Messages of care from international students in China via Weibo and Facebook

Forms of participation and collaboration

From photographs and paste up walls to performative monuments, socially engaged artists employ a range of aesthetic and social methods for public participation. Ranging from the ideation of a work to the mediated and sometimes delegated labour involved in its creation and consumption, these artworks typically seek to draw attention to a particular situation or local issue and by doing so, affect participants and audiences to act on social change. Thompson explains, “Numerous genres have been deeply intertwined in

participation, sociality, conversation, and ‘the civic’” (2012). This interconnectivity reveals a peculiar historic moment in which these notions aren't limited to art, instead they include “various cultural phenomena which have cropped up across the urban fabric” (ibid., p. 18).

In *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011), Helguera discusses four different modes of participation in social artworks. This enables an opportunity to extend and apply this thinking to socially engaged operating within the public spaces of the digital realm.

Collaborative participation—Following initial creative development between Marnie Badham and Tammy Wong Hulbert in Melbourne, alongside Ye (Sherry) Lui participating from China, direct invitations were made to other artist-researchers working on related photo and social media activist projects. Klare Lanson is a performance poet, sound artist and writer who investigates selfies, digital activism and collective forms of DIT (Do it Together) creative knowledge making; Isabella Capezio is an artist, photographer and lecturer with a key interest in socially aware photography (pictured in Figure 6); and Chun Wai (Wilson) Yeung (centre, Figure 1) leads a curatorial collective with Jan (Wing Ting) Sze and Rosina Yuan. Members of this team share authorship for the project and are responsible for the contributions to the Facebook Group, Weibo account, translations, social engagement and installation of the paste up wall, further exhibitions of the work, and critical reflection on this iterative project. This collaborative participation depends on shared responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work.



Figure 7. Early contributions from international students in China

Creative Participation—In the form of a ‘Welcome Lunch’ at the start of semester, an open invitation was sent to online participants to gather and show solidarity for international students both present and absent. Similar to other places around the world, news media reported that Chinatown restaurants had lost business, so a large number of dumplings were ordered, delivered and eaten together while more selfies were playfully facilitated. Consultation with technical staff enabled the decision to use the south interior wall of the entry as a ‘paste up wall’. As aforementioned, paste ups are typically associated with street

art and more recently street activism, where wheatpaste is used to adhere prepared posters and artworks to outdoor walls in alleyways or building sites (see Figure 8).

I have always been interested in alternative modes of publication and how mediums can communicate and carry meanings. The performative aspects of projects can encourage dialogue with publics, and the physical nature of pasting something on a wall at any scale can invite participation. When small gestures become materialised and exaggerated in scale their collectiveness can speak to the need for community; both on and offline in times of dislocation and isolation. It feels important to have constant visual reminders of the struggles of others and for those who are on the margins of any society to see and hear messages of hope and solidarity.

Extract from collaborator Isabella Capezio, 1 March 2020



Figure 8. Paste up wall installation, School of Art, RMIT University

Directed Participation—As selfie responses from our international students grew, a wider community responded by sharing messages of care and empathy, creating an online dialogue, also accumulating into a physical wall of a fleeting but significant moment in time. A well-known example of Directed Participation in which the visitor completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work is Yoko Ono's 1996 *Wish Tree*, where participants write their thoughts on a piece of paper and tie it to a tree in the gallery.⁹ In the same way, both digital and public space visitors of *#unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity* may also accept the invitation to contribute their own selfie to the project through very simple instructions on the project Facebook page.

⁹ See [Wish Tree](#)

Nominal Participation—Finally, Helguera describes Nominal Participation as a viewer’s contemplation of an artwork “in a reflective manner, in passive detachment that is nonetheless a form of participation” (Huelguera, 2011, p. 14). Here, while unable to observe the audience directly as one might in an art gallery or viewing public artworks, it can be imagined that Facebook ‘friends’ of participants scrolled through posts, liking and commenting on particular works. While the campus was still open, students and staff stood in the entry of Building 2 consuming the images pasted on the wall that now serves as an important archive. In this threshold space, they may step closer looking at the details of some representations and glance past others. They may imagine what message they would write and if they would wear the mask to cover their face in the photograph.

Towards a digital activism and a culture of care

At the time of writing this article, Melbourne residents are emerging out of their second strict lockdown and there are over 46 million confirmed cases of the virus globally and over 1.2 million deaths (John Hopkins University & Medicine, 2020). These conditions halted the physical return of the local student community to Australia and although the university sector has been lobbying for concessions in the return of international students, calls to create safe pathways have been complex and delayed. The hashtag metadata of #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity acts in support of these political efforts, by humanising the impact Covid-19 has had on higher education’s future generations, in both playful and meaningful ways. Socially engaged art projects that are small, responsive and localised underline the importance of collaborative and participatory global practice. Using public art spaces such as digitally networked communities on social media platforms also provides evidence of the iterative nature of future problem solving. Practices of care performed within everyday experience becomes key to building pathways of recovery—as we have learnt through the physical streets of Gillian Wearing’s socially activated art making in the 1990s, and now through the use of social media platformativity. Interestingly, the #freethearts activist campaign of 2015 pivoted creatively into *The George Brandis Live Art Experience* which framed the misappropriation of Australian federal art funding through the *détourning* of famous artworks, daubed and posted on social media as Brandis ‘selfies’, a project which rapidly transformed “from a self-styled ‘guerilla protest’ to a social media campaign” (George Brandis in-art in pictures, 2015, n.p.) on Twitter and Facebook, going viral within weeks. This form of daubist activism can also be understood as reflective of a hybridity in specific relation to the role of the digital in art history. As Claire Bishop asserts:

We are currently in a hybrid moment where non- or pre-digital materiality is sustained alongside a digital way of thinking: an approach to information in which sources are decontextualized, remixed, reorganized, and archived (2018, p. 128).

More recently the Australian arts response to government funding support decisions in relation to COVID-19 activated the #CreateAustraliasFuture campaign, instigated by the National Association of Visual Arts (NAVA). A one-day event was activated early April, where “leading Australian creatives such as Sally Smart, Julia Zemiro and John Bell are

speaking directly to the public and government via social media using the hashtag #CreateAustraliaFuture” (Anatolitis, 2020, n.p.).

Accordingly, when activating Lind’s 2007 concept of ‘collaborative aesthetics’—which incidentally was conceived the same year as the birth of the iPhone—these contemporary social activist projects in relation to the arts industry and education are not only using mobile phones and the social media hashtagging ‘instrument’ to amplify an awareness of the causes they are activating, they are essentially engaging in what is becoming rapidly defined as ‘digital activism’. A blurring of art and activism within selfie making on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Weibo used in #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity allowed for the private bodies currently in COVID-19 lockdown mode to be heard and to gain visibility around the affective atmospheres of social isolation. Known as activism—being the fertile merge of art and social activism which takes full advantage of our social and digital world—Tanya Toft frames it as a form of resistance, “often considered in relation to a model of conflict” (2016, p. 61).

Artivism is motivated by a performative turn, in the sense of the ability to respond to stimulus in the world, which is causing both an actual and perceived reciprocal influence between humans and environments with new media (ibid.).

Yet forms of socially engaged art which employ selfies can also be framed as *digital artivism*, also including genres of memes, audio recordings, online videos including Tik Tok’s latest K-pop takeover (Lorenz, Browning, and Frenkel, 2020). We have argued that mobile social media based digital activist projects like #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity further strengthens social connectedness and mobilises creative practice into more socially aware public space.

Returning to the collaborative structure of the project, the RMIT Curatorial Collective (RCC), reflects on their contribution to the project as an expression of care—for self, for community and for practice.

Members of the RCC share Chinese cultural heritage and live and study in contemporary Australian society. We started to realize that many students were worried about their health and their relationship with friends and family. They have been under tremendous pressure and the outbreak has triggered ‘deteriorating’ criticism of the Chinese community, which is considered the origin of the epidemic and is usually regarded as people in Asian communities wearing masks in public. We explored the term ‘curator’ which comes from the Latin word *cura* and means to ‘take care’. The role of a traditional curator is responsible for cultural institutions and collections; however, in #unmaskedselfiesforsolidarity, we learned that curators not only manage artworks but also bring ‘social attention’ and ‘community involvement’ into art activities and exhibitions. The idea of ‘curator-as-art activator’ describes our intention to participate in the project.

Reflections from Wilson Yeung, Jan (Wing Ting) Sze, and Rosina Yuan) 21 June 2020

Despite the anxiety and fear COVID-19 pandemic has engendered, this crisis has also created a moment for reflection and the imagining of ideal futures—a return to relational social economies, a local and collective sensibility, and a timely interest in creative solutions to real-world problems. What began as an assembled online public of participatory art transformed into a collective listening network, a force driven by digital

activism and one that proclaims feelings of connection and solidarity whilst incidentally attempting to shine a brighter light on the darker rhythms of data surveillance. As we continue to reflect on #unmaskedselfiesinsolidarity a few months on at the time of writing, Melbourne is only now coming to the end of its second round of lockdown restrictions, some of the strictest in the world. What previously hosted busy foot traffic where students and staff of all nationalities moved through buildings and meeting spaces, in November 2020 RMIT University is now only just starting to open its doors to teaching and research. It is hoped that soon the impromptu corridor meetings, where the physical social networks expand, where the work gets done, where conversations start, where new introductions occur, are also returned. The anticipation of this localised social engagement is heightened as the opportunity to view the project's physical paste wall-cum-historical archive heralds the amplification of future possibilities. We argue that socially engaged mobile media art practice is one which operates effectively by bridging online and offline experiences as public space, activates social and aesthetic experiences of care, and drives the performative turn in contemporary art into our 'new normal' ways of being.

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Film Intervention in Public Space. A Phylogenetic Spatial Change

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Abstract

Cinema has taken up the role of a social agent that introduced a variety of images and events to the public during critical times. This paper proposes the idea of using films as a tool to reclaim public space where a sense of belonging and dialogue restore to a meaningful place. During the January 2011 protests in Egypt, Tahrir Cinema, an independent revolutionary project composed of filmmakers and other artists, offered a space in Downtown Cairo and screened archival footage of the ongoing events to the protestors igniting civic debate and discussions. The traditional public space has undergone what Karl Kropf refers to as the phylogenetic change, i.e. form and function that is agreed upon by society and represents a common conception of certain spatial elements. Hence, the framework that this research will follow is a two-layer discourse, the existence of cinema in public spaces, and the existence of public spaces in cinema. Eventually, the paper seeks to enhance the social relationship between society, spaces, and cinematic narration – a vital tool to raise awareness about the right to the city.

Keywords: public space, outdoor screening, phylogenesis, revolution, cinema

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Introduction: January 2011 was the Starting Point

The global debate on public space has occupied a different angle of perception since the Arab Spring¹ in 2011. The protests that took place across several regions in the Middle East defined an advanced level of understanding of mass usage of public space which, according to Mitchell (2012), represents anonymity and emphasizes micro-resilience over individualistic charisma. Referring to it as 'the rhetoric of space' (Abaza, 2014, p. 164), Tahrir square became the phenomenon of negative occupation, a space of fullness and abundance, typically characterized by the refusal of describing the world it wishes to create, rather it foregrounds its socio-political and intellectual presence. While the square has successfully become the most recognizable spatial icon associated with the Egyptian revolution, it has certainly put forward conceptions of "decentering of knowledge and power" (Abaza, 2014, p. 167). The visibility patterns that conquered the square introduced novel urban attempts of mass resistance and highly artistic public expressions. These have included musical performances, street graffiti, monumental caricatured sculptures, and street films.

In this sense, political space and public art became the dominant spatial lexicon for Tahrir square. Political space is highlighted through Hayward's interpretation of power and freedom (Hayward, 2000). Power is the notion of creating boundaries around a specific urban setting, deciding what kinds of actions that take place within, who is allowed access, and which interests are accepted. Freedom is the citizens' ability to effectively participate in shaping social limits and directing the conditions of their collective existence. On the other end, public art has become associated with civic participation, coming hand-in-hand with contemporary artists, perfecting itself as a raw material for addressing socio-economic issues to the general masses. Hence, public art, being more than just mere gazed objects, has come to fully identify itself as giving access to local communities who transform landscapes and question traditional assumptions. Tahrir Square was a landscape of artistic movement, among which was cinematic intervention in its urban spaces. The intertwined relationship between the socio-political framework of the square and the clashes taking place between protestors and security forces were captured by independent filmmakers, who later previewed the raw collected footage to the public. During the summer of Tahrir square sit-ins, these filmmakers created the Tahrir Cinema Project, a revolutionary media project that documented and exhibited the events of the January uprising to the public. For 3 weeks, till it was forcefully dispersed by the Egyptian military police on August 1st, the project laid the foundation of Mosireen (English: We are Determined), the world's largest video archive of the Egyptian revolution. The project has redefined mass intervention within public space encompassing a major impact in its physical transformation via the exchange of value and ideas. However, Tahrir Square was not the first case study. The literature review in this paper reveals historical examples from the early 1920s in New York till present-day public screenings in Germany, all of which redefine public spaces produced through collective actions and performances. These practices are considered novel ways to imagine and practice democracy associated with public visibility and imagery. Most importantly, these practices reveal different perspectives of spatial change. Urban theorist Karl Kropf, around which this research work revolves, puts

¹ The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s, including: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

forward the notion of evolutionary conception of change of the built environment. He describes the movement from one morphological period to the next causing long-term transformation of features defining a culture as periodic change (Kropf, 2001). In other words, the revolution spotlighted a new theory of urban form inviting a different perspective of social and cultural organization.

The main core of this paper is a thorough analytical outlook on such transformation revealing the potential role of cinema as a revolutionary catalyst in reclaiming public space. The paper sheds light on Karl Kropf's conception of the phylogenesis of urban space which is then mapped on the phenomenon of public gatherings during the screening events. The proposal in this paper is not intended for a national-scale perception, but rather a more effective small-scale application that may lead to similar ideas in other areas.

The Intervention of Films in the Social Framework

The Egyptian film industry has been critically involved in contemporary politics, offering foreign viewers dynamic character, form, and structure of Egypt's identity. The Nasserist regime², however, was perceived as the beginning of disassociating cinema from society, shifting towards "the most blatant plot lines, and a surrender to smugness, [which] marked them along with cou-cou songs, delirious oratory full of unnecessary gesticulation, false smiles and flashing glances, floods of tears, greasy multi-colored artificial make-up, all of which combined to create an image of complete mindlessness" (Sheria 1970, cited in Baker, 1974, p. 400). With a few exceptions of filmmakers who made individual films of social and political importance, the film industry in Egypt witnessed a sheer decline in quality and civic awareness. Furthermore, being enclosed within dark rooms as a capitalist's commodity, it has replaced and diminished the role of public spaces in expressing local voices. With the Sadat and Mubarak regimes³, the films produced during this span were given limited access to political and historical criticism avoiding the negative image of the superior bureaucrats.

The metropolitan city, being accumulated with inequality and uneven access to services, successfully showcased the effective role of public spaces. Tahrir Square became the central subject of the 'who-owns-the-city' debate. Not only the square became synonymous with socio-political events, but also witnessed the artistic intervention of a variety of artists transforming it into a cultural environment. Extending its intellect from the physical street level to the virtual world, Tahrir Square became a spatial metonym of modern society seeking interactions between humans and the surrounding environment in an era of commodity and globalization – a semi-protagonist semi-antagonist phenomenon that blurs the line between publicness and privatization. It was this vagueness that mobilized artistic civic initiatives to revitalize the "terrains vagues"

² Nasserism is a socialist nationalist political ideology, which began in the mid-1950s, based on the thinking of Former President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, combining elements of Arab socialism, republicanism, nationalism, and anti-imperialism.

³ Former President Anwar El-Sadat defined a new economic shift in the nation – 'De-socialization' – that emphasized liberalization and foreign investment during late 1970s. Following his assassination in 1981, Former President Hosni Mubarak continued the policies, and had altered the Egyptian political structure. His regime was highly criticized for political censorship, restrictions of free speech and arbitrary detention.

(Morales 2003, cited in Binder-Reisinger et al, 2011, p. 89), i.e. the empty spaces between buildings representing spatial forms of transition. The decision to make use of such spaces poses novel questions about the current time and culture reflected in the setting of the space itself.

Aligning with this reading, past scholars have identified the outcome as the creation of the spectator's engagement with the physical space coinciding with the notion of the spectacle. The spectator's spectacle in space via existential intervention, then, becomes the main core of spatial analysis, translating Paul Klee's quotation, "now the objects perceive me"⁴ into a dominant spatial tool. Here, Klee's interpretation of the visual entity is embodied as an intellectual machine that is capable of recognizing shapes and analyzing complex environments. On the other end of the spectrum, Guy Debord overviews a more advanced stage of the spectacle, i.e. social relations mediated by images (Debord, 1967). He defines the spectacle as the means for societal unification, a vital part of our modern social fabric. The visual landscape in Egyptian cinema can be described as being observer-oriented, i.e. representation is more subjective, which coincides with the enclosed, womb-like physical space of Cairo (Khatib, 2006). The Egyptian filmic landscape is a site of contradictions and conflicting spatial practices, presenting a unified image of the notion that is plagued by socio-political and economic differences. Egypt's cinematic representation of informal settlements is a vivid example that draws on this scale of the spectacle, highlighting micro-resistance of informality through the domination of physical space starting from the 1990s till the 2010s. Contrasting to the theory of phylogenesis, the spectacle here defines itself as the objective reality materialized by globalization and modern consumption. With the embeddedness of the observer, urban space becomes more than just a visual creation. Cinematic intervention within civic movement is usually addressed as a bottom-up 'guerilla act'. Binder-Reisinger et al (2011) highlight the spatial interactivity between the film screen and the site of the film projection. On one hand, the film influences the site, and on the other, the site influences the film. Hence, the site of projection is the point of departure for the urban analysis of socio-spatial relationships. Furthermore, the article highlights two German initiatives, *A Wall is A Screen* and *Hit & Run*⁵ in Hamburg and Berlin respectively, where public screens ignited mini-tours for the public through hidden spaces of the city (Figure 1). The analytical discourse associated with these public screenings reinforces the notion of film's contribution to the re-appropriation of space by the normal pedestrian. The active viewing transforms the audience from mere spectators to participants highly aware of their rights to the city (Binder-Reisinger et al, 2011). On a parallel analytical note, Dell'Aria (2016) proposes that public screenings can allow us both to understand how artists generate meaningful economic spatial exchanges in public spaces and redefine our perception of mass spectacle in general. Additionally, scholars have further explored and developed the term 'public art'. Stephens (2006) claims that public art is a successful participatory model that encourages informal community-based learning. Furthermore, she states that the core of participatory public art is the integration of visual arts into the daily lives of the society acting as a catalyst that addresses socio-political, cultural and, economic issues.

⁴ See Chapter 5 in Paul Virilio's *The Vision Machine*, p. 59.

⁵ The *Hit & Run* cinema in Berlin is no longer operating. According to one of the frequent audiences, viewers had to be sneaky about reaching to the 'secret locations' where the films were shown. Finding Berlin, September 7th, 2010.

The theoretical discourse of public screenings acting as public art is illuminated within a metaphorical setting by Casetti (2013). He outlines three aspects in this case: the monitor, referring to the screens' attempt to closely surveil and analyze movement in urban space – mainly to keep it under control; the bulletin board or blackboard, where the physical texture of the world, e.g. signposts, determine certain behavior in space; and the mailbox or scrapbook, which is an alternative platform for the audience to construct a story reflective of their characters rather than second-hand associating themselves with a fictional timeline. In a nutshell, Casetti (2013) brings together the detailed components of the operative behavior of screens in public space. Articulating the connection between cinema and movement in public space, Bruno (2002) explores the phenomenological experience of the body's relationship to the public screen, transforming the mere spectator to a liberated active participant.



Figure 1. Locals gather at a movie screening initiated by A Wall is A Screen in Hamburg.
Source: A Wall is A Screen

While scholars have explored the spatial behavioural context of public screenings, this paper aims to explore the spatial product resulting from a two-level analysis: moving images within public spaces and public spaces within moving images.

The Social Role of Public Screenings & Revolutionary Filmmaking: A Brief Historical Outlook

In June 2017, the small town of Schoharie, New York, was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first commercial outdoor movie preview (Fox, 2017). Schoharie residents would watch movies projected on a sheet stretched across lampposts in front of a courthouse. The first film, *'The Awakening of Helena Richie'*⁶, was shown at the height of World War I to boost the soldiers' wartime morale. According to Carl Kopecky, the Old Stone Fort Museum's director which showed archived pictures of outdoor truck screens, the residents came for the social aspect, as seasonal attendance reached 100,000 by the end of the 1920s.

Initially, the Board of Trade had to pool in an amount of \$600 for a projector that stayed open until midnight to stimulate sales (Fox, 2017). Eventually, the social dimension of the outdoor screening was the main engine for the cultural imagery of Schoharie. What was intellectually captivating about this case is the idea of shifting from the general abstract model of spatial change, i.e. the induction of mobile cine-vans into space, but the meaning and socio-cultural value of change that occurred. In his revised manuscript, Kropf (2001) reveals the literature gap concerned with addressing the process of change. The tendency to adopt theories of biological evolution was Kropf's main aim in his research work, adding to the philosophical perspective of architectural theory of seeing cities as living organisms embedded with long-term activities that, as a result of historical collectivism, become labeled as culture.

On a similar cultural frequency, in the small district of Bermondsey in South East London, the local municipality used cinemotor vans to screen films to the working class as part of a health campaign entitled *'Education of the Public Hygiene'* (Lebas, 1995) (Figure 2). By the mid-1930s, the local council had produced more than 30 films that have successfully improved the working-class conditions. To promote the significance of the campaign, the films previewed to the local community avoided the use of cinematic luxurious imagery and tended to appear as raw as possible, mixing documentary with newsreel footage. Space was not just a mere subject of civic speculation, as in the cases of the Lumiere Brothers' silent cinema, but rather a "quotidian landscape of life... [being] a representation of the fantasy energy by which the collective perceives the social order"⁷. Space has become induced with meaningful existence fostered by the fusion of human and the natural order, a significant catalyst to our immediate experience of the world.

A similar manner operates within revolutionary filmmaking. In May 1968, protests in Paris sparked French filmmaker Philippe Garrel's most radical period of political actions in association with students. Alongside several other filmmakers⁸, Garrel took to the streets documenting a collection of spaces in the city that became embroiled with strikes. His efforts, in addition to others as well, resulted in a short real-time document

⁶ Originally based on a 1906 novel and a 1909 Broadway play, The 1916 picture still survives incomplete in the Library of Congress.

⁷ See Chapter 4 in Brian Larkin's *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, p.126. During the 1930s in Nigeria, cinema vans – called *Majigi* – drove across different regions where several national developmental projects were taking place to be shown to the audiences.

⁸ The 1968 protests in May received significant attention from prominent filmmakers of the French New Wave movement, including Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, and Philippe Garrel

of the upheaval known as *Actua One* – characterized by the layering of political speeches over raw footage of the revolution (Brody, 2008). Through the collaboration between Garrel's 35mm and film students' 16mm, *Actua One* was an early testimony to the poetic revolutionary voice of the French cinema at the time, and was interpreted, in Godard's words, as "*Une camera à la place du Coeur*" (English: A Camera instead of the Heart) (Le Cinema Club, 2018). The film ignited a change of perception on the city of Paris as a transformational zone from the Bourgeoisie to the Left, as well as experimentation. On the other end of the spectrum, the third cinema movement⁹ that started in the 1960s in Latin America emphasized the importance of militant cinema in making an intervention that implies a social response, hence the political participation of the viewer (Chanan, 1997). One of the most prominent films of the era was the 1968 picture *La hora de Los Hornos* (English: The Hour of the Furnaces) – an experimental film that was shot semi-clandestinely in conjunction with members of organized resistance (Chanan, 1997). The film prompts intertitles posing questions that allow for discussion and debate – in other words, designed to disrupt the normal passive relationship between the viewer and the screen.

Kropf highlights the concept of spatial phylogenesis as the collective expenditure of societal physical and mental energy capable of changing and redefining the built environment. His Lefebvre-ian¹⁰ analytical outlook conveys a three-way interaction between humans, ideas, and the environment, the ideas are fundamentally social that emerge through the continuous communication of shared cultural habits. In the case of Bermondsey, urban space was the main core of political and civic engagement empowering informal autonomous technicalities away from the mainstream conservative medical profession. The significance of the interaction between the community and the mobile screens further empowered their sense of right not just to public health and suitable living conditions, but also to their access to use the space for debate and social exchange of ideas and thoughts. Similarly, the intertitles used in the case of Latin American third cinema, which opposed the Hollywood model of cinema as mere entertainment of making money, emphasized the power of micro-resistance when facing social constraints, expending physical and mental energy in changing the surrounding environment. In other words, phylogenesis occurs within the spatial hierarchy of power shifting towards a more democratic setting. At the same time, the display of raw footage on the moving screens made it intellectually accessible to the wider audience, where the cinematic imagery of space was reinterpreted and redefined to provide physical space a social collective embodiment of culture and history.

What Happened in Tahrir Square?

What happened in Tahrir Square was the emergence of an autonomous city within the greater city of Cairo (Figure 3). It encompassed the basic features of any living environment: informal gates that allowed the entry of citizens only when showing their

⁹ The term 'Third Cinema' was put forward in filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's manifesto which is meant to be non-commercialized, challenging Hollywood's model

¹⁰ French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* points out the embodiment of the mental and material constructs in the social emergence of space. Within the concept of everyday life, Lefebvre coins the expression *Urban Environment* as the space generated by society rather than the technological physicality of the city.

ID cards, a cluster of housing tents fixed within the central space, scattered mobile street vendors selling food and drinks, health care units for the wounded protestors, a few outdoor barbershops, spontaneous scattering of ambulant clothing salesmen, and, most importantly, the stage. In terms of geographical representation, the stage is divided into two regions: the virtual region that allowed access to hundreds and thousands of inspiring and creative artworks, short films, songs, and comedy circulating a wide range of active spectators, and the canvas region which showcased on-the-spot visualization of the events and the action that occurred during the 18-day sit-in. The canvas region was a direct portrayal of the power of public spaces that exerted civic force on authoritarian parties. It did so through the implementation of a unique visual culture that attracted the urge to document, film, and archive the revolution (Abaza, 2013).



Figure 2. Local citizens of Bermondsey gather around a cinemotor that screens a public health footage.
Source: Southwark Heritage Blog

Within the boundaries of such novelty, there existed an informal intellectual hub of collectiveness changing the socio-political dimensions of Tahrir Square, what I refer to as the hidden sages. This was the first time that Egyptian history witnessed a mass mobile resistance at a larger-than-conscious scale, which led several scholars to trace the significant symbolic position of public spaces in general, for example, Taksim Square

during the Gezi Park movement¹¹ and Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street movement. It was a historical and intellectual milestone that put forward the idea that space is the foreground political player rather than having a main public leader. Hence, it was not similar to the French Revolution or the Bolshevik revolution that encompassed direct political and economic reasons, but rather it was a pure architectural urban uprising which, directly and indirectly, triggered the issues of society's daily living settings (Shinjo, 2013).

For a better comprehension of the iconic spatial position of Tahrir Square, it is better to provide a brief background of the historical collectiveness of the space, and how it comes to provide a meaningful and vernacular context for mass movements. Said (2015) provides an insightful article on how Tahrir Square came to be a prominent image of resistance in Egypt. He outlines three forms of the historical significance of the square associated with the 2011 uprising. The first is 'known target', which depicts the historical popularity of Tahrir Square as a site of resistance, the earliest known event being in 1919 against the British Barracks¹²; the second is 'source of strategies', that is considered the main reference of the 2011 protestors on how to stage an occupation, referring to previous sit-in occurrences¹³ that were quite rare for the area; and the third is 'site of meaning' providing spatial symbolic inspiration for the 2011 revolution. Hence, it is not surprising that Tahrir Square in 2011 was the core of mass resistance imagery in Egypt. Being a central visible gathering point, the historical timeline of Egyptian politics proved that whatever happens in Tahrir Square immediately becomes a national concern (Frag, 1999). Factor into the whole process the advanced speed of digital communication, be it Facebook or Twitter, the square's vital role has become a global inspiration. It was a defining moment for all sectors of society, including artists, public performers, filmmakers, and musicians, to out-loudly express and reflect on the sense of place and solidarity. Towards the end of the Mubarak regime, artists and filmmakers were breaking boundaries of space and censorship. They moved away from the enclosed traditional form of the exhibitiv space into a public space accessible to a wide range of civic members.

The artistic intervention in Tahrir Square revealed it as the metaphorical representation of the decomposition of neoliberal policies and the decrease of privatization of collective consumption and urban spaces. For the 2011-2013 period, the square maintained itself as the autonomous, city-within-city establishment and space of opposition against both the Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood regimes. The square became *de facto* the space for contestation, triggering a new visual culture via being a spot to film and be filmed, to see and be seen (Abaza, 2014). Creativity flourished

¹¹ The Gezi Park movement was a wave of demonstrations in Istanbul to contest the urban development plan for the city's Taksim Gezi Park. Very similar to Tahrir Square's context, there was no centralized leadership and social media played a vital role in the mass organization of the protestors. For 3 months, more than 3 million citizens took part in 5,000 demonstrations across Turkey.

¹² In 1919, Egyptian mass protests rose against the British occupation. At the time, the square was named Ismailiyya Square – having named after Khedive Ismail in 1865 – while the name Tahrir Square (Liberation Square in English) was used informally. The name 'Tahrir' was officially used after Egypt became a republican nation during Nasser's era.

¹³ Prior to the 2011 revolution, Tahrir Square witnessed mass sit-ins three times: January 1972 against lack of an equitable social justice system under Sadat; March 2003 against the Anglo-American war on Iraq; and March 2006 against the persecution of judges under Mubarak. Each one spanned for roughly one day.

through the enhancement of visual language, on one hand, via graffiti and filmic spaces, and textual languages, on the other, through the public display of jokes. Such sense has generated a space of effervescent carnival attracting a variety of socio-political backgrounds, as well as citizens of the informal economy, i.e. street vendors. The different elements of innovation transformed a traditional vehicle-oriented roundabout into a contested symbolic space of ongoing battles with the ruling forces. Referring back to Kropf (2001), he highlights the nature of human senses in spatial phylogenesis as being capable of analyzing and responding to differences – differences of status, image, and association. The space within which society was gathered was the main reservoir for the different points of view exchanged across the fourth space¹⁴, as mass protestors became empowered by the urban space itself. The existence of public screens “address[ed] the public’s right to reclaim the streets...to strengthen the community by bringing them together” (Abdel-Ghani, 2017, p. 404) (Figure 4). While spaces are represented on screens, stories are generated and realities are unfolded.



Figure 3. Tahrir Square was considered a city within a city, with all the basic features of a sustainable living environment. Source: Drawing Parallels

¹⁴ In Urban Sociology, fourth space is an analysis of place as a vital actor in bringing up people’s lives in certain ways and allowing us to understand hidden aspects.

Filming Space

The urge to document the events in Tahrir Square made 2011 a heyday for all forms of artistic intervention in the social realm. Such an unprecedented phenomenon emphasized the importance of archiving the expressive artworks as a catalyst for media revolution (Baladi, 2016). Egyptian-Lebanese artist Lara Baladi initiated 'Vox Populi', an archival project consisting of data related to events taking place around the world since January 2011. It is also comprised of a series of artistic projects that include installations, sculptures, and filmmaking. The first project that merged from Vox Populi was Tahrir Cinema. According to Baladi (2016), the impulse behind Tahrir Cinema was the essence of sound more than images – for Egyptians prefer loud and anxious noises. The sound of the street was angry and people gathered yelling out their political opinions in microphones. Activists and journalists screened their share of personal experiences of the revolution, especially the 'No To Military Trials' campaign members who, at the time of the Tahrir Cinema project's initiation, were the first to showcase tons of documented testimonies of the army's violence on civilians¹⁵.



Figure 4. A raw film footage taken during the events of 2011 is screened in front of a crowd of protestors in Tahrir Square. Source: Egyptian Streets

¹⁵ Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power following Mubarak's resignation on February 11th, 2011 till June 30th, 2012, when Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi took over.

The Tahrir Cinema project foregrounded collective cultural memory. It triggered yet another online project 'Filming Revolution', founded by documentary filmmaker Alisa Lebow who interviewed more than thirty filmmakers, artists, activists, and archivists about filming during the time of the revolution. The thematic topics included using film as a weapon, the power of film images to write history, and revolutionary cinematic language (Lebow, 2018). Having a tool documenting the violent acts of authoritarianism remains a powerful physical medium for resistance. Palestinian filmmaker Samaher Al-Qadi recalls her experience with sexual harassment in Downtown Cairo when she decided to film the harassers, and so they got repelled and left her in peace. Actor and video activist Khaled Abdallah questions the nature of the weapon used to participate in the battle against the regime. Is it documentary films? Is it documenting footage from Tahrir Square? Is it production companies? Is it creating a certain space for other works to be showcased? Part of the answer can be found in the interview with feminist filmmaker Aida El-Kashef who recounts the battle of the camel¹⁶ and how her camera became an important asset to record the events of that day. To El-Kashef, this was the epicenter of the revolution, and bringing film images to the streets tears the system down gradually. Film images have the power to bring both romanticized and realistic change to the community. Yet, this process of rewriting history has its limitations. Artist and filmmaker Jasmina Metwaly points out that the direction towards which the camera is pointing may give the audience a certain truth, while the real story might be happening right behind the lens. And this moves us to the notion of how authentic cinema language can be when documenting the revolution. 2011 was indeed the heyday for documentary films about the Egyptian revolution, ones that included *Tahrir 2011: The Good, The Bad, and the Politician*, *In Tahrir Square: 18 Days of Egypt's Unfinished Revolution*, and *Reporting...a Revolution*. Yet, there is always this concern of producing more documentary films, one after another, to the point of creating clichés and, in most cases, false images. Filmmaker Nadine Khan claims that production films did more harm to the revolution than good, as they degraded the powerful language of documentation of immediate series of events. This issue is concluded through the words of young filmmaker and curator Alia Ayman that revolutionary films do not necessarily have to encompass the revolution as a topic. The footage taken during the 18 days was not trying to be truthful or establish an ideology, rather they were sending impulses about resisting the status quo (Figure 5).

Other examples of public screening initiatives included *Kazeboon* (English: Liars), one of the most popular campaigns that posed a counter-narrative position to Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) exposing the violence of the army's torturing and killing (Abaza, 2013). *Kazeboon* was carried out either with people's equipment or equipment borrowed from other members of the campaign. The screenings were shown on the walls of the presidential palace and the state TV building as well as residential buildings (Mollerup & Gaber, 2015). Unlike the raw footage produced by *Tahrir Cinema*, *Kazeboon* adopted editing techniques that were learned by different organizations in different ways. Their videos gained so much popularity from YouTube and circulated the whole nation. *Aqwa Aflam El-Mawsim* (English: The Most Powerful

¹⁶ On February 2nd, 2011, a number of Pro-Mubarak thugs riding camels and horses raided through protestors killing 11 and wounding 600.

Films of the Season), initiated by YouTube video maker Monatov, where she exposes the hypocrisy and lies of the media's coverage of the uprising. These initiatives complemented the philosophy of phylogenetic change through the repetition of visual forms as part of a newly-born cultural habit. Novel ideas dominated the centrality of urban space during the revolution which followed a circular life-cycle rather than the well-known linear one (Kropf, 2001). In other words, Tahrir Square was a direct transformation from individualism to collectivism, later to be referred to as collective memory.

What is captivating about these campaigns is how they created space that was not just a container of activism but a constitutive of it (Said, 2015). Space was foregrounded as an active participant against the regime using film images as a weapon to rewrite and redefine its socio-political role to emphasize the citizens' rights to freely access and use public space. Bayat (2010) tackles the complexity of street politics in the Arab World, claiming that the Arab Street is an expression of the 'Political Street'; where modes of articulation have undergone notable changes. Just as the time when Jean-Paul Sartre delivered a speech to French workers striking at the Renault factory in Boulogne-Billancourt 40 years ago, Tahrir Square extended what Bayat refers to as the 'spatiality of discontents'; "how particular spatial forms shape, galvanize, and accommodate insurgent sentiments and solidarity" (Bayat, 2010, p. 162).



Figure 5. A street graffiti illustrating the power of the camera as a weapon against the regime.
Source: IBRAAZ

Conclusion

The events' have established a point of no return within the psychological mindset of Egyptians. The cultural sphere of Tahrir Square has opened new visionary paths that will be quite difficult to suppress. The main idea in this paper was clarifying the nature of cinematic intervention in public space, i.e. public screenings. Historical timelines have proved the significance of public screenings in igniting a sense of belonging and attachment within the socio-political realm. Today, Tahrir Square stands as one of the most documented public spaces in the digital era. This paper set out to explore Tahrir Square as a visual cultural hub that enabled access to filmic images as a catalyst for mass informal expressiveness. By adapting the theoretical work of Kropf, the spatial phylogenetic change of space, the reader can comprehend the formation and transformation of Tahrir Square during the public screenings of archived footage of the events taking place. Bringing together the different sectors of society, who have shared cultural habits and economic goals, has redefined traditional forms and usage of public space, which was in turn reinforced through installing moving screens in the square. Eventually, the paper gives space for further studies about reinterpreting the right to the city, or the right to access to public space, by taking a closer look at the intersection between real film images and semi-documented semi-produced images. Similar to the activists' urge to document the square, the intellectuals' contribution is vitally needed.

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It's (Red) Hot Outside! The Aesthetics of Climate Change Activists Extinction Rebellion

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Abstract

From 2011's Occupy movements to the Umbrella Movement Hong Kong to the recent Climate March in September 2019, typified by Extinction Rebellion's performative acts of resistance, there's been an exponential increase in protests around the world. People move together *en masse* to challenge economic inequality and political ineptitude; they demand racial justice and action against climate change and Indigenous land rights. Ideally, protests and forms of direct action generate new ideas where the use of bodies in space become conduits to spark debate, bring awareness, with the hope to change the discourse about urgent issues. The visual power of many bodies speaking both to each other and to a larger public offers a space everyone can safely participate in the social imaginary. This paper considers Extinction Rebellion's graphic and performative aesthetics.

Keywords: Extinction Rebellion, aesthetics, performative

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Introduction

From 2011's Occupy movements to the Umbrella Movement Hong Kong to the recent Climate March in September 2019, typified by Extinction Rebellion's performative acts of resistance, there's been an exponential increase in protests around the world. People move together *en masse* to challenge economic inequality and political ineptitude; they demand racial justice and action against climate change and Indigenous land rights. Ideally, protests and forms of direct action generate new ideas where the use of bodies in space become conduits to spark debate, bring awareness, with the hope to change the discourse about urgent issues. The visual power of many bodies speaking both to each other and to a larger public offers a space everyone can safely participate in the social imaginary.

Black masks, red robes, pink pussy hats, and umbrellas of every colour connect bodies as they occupy public spaces—flowing through streets, crowding intersections, and populating parks—forming new publics who confront normalized social structures, power relations, or forms of authority. On display are signs, slogans, selfies, symbols, humour, graffiti, sometimes violent and sometimes kind gestures, and even libraries. These traces comprise the textual, material, affective, and performative residue of cultural participation that turn the ordinary into something unexpected as choreographed bodies move through and occupy urban public spaces. Their temporality gets extended through social media. The colours, materials, disruptions and corporeality constitute the aesthetics of protest, which “are performative and communicative, constituting a movement through the performance of politics” (McGarry et al. 2020, 15); forming and enacting essential pillars of democracy. The semiotics of aesthetics contribute to the increased visibility of global protest, and for Nicholas Mirzoeff, they are part of “visual culture to create self-images, new ways to see and be seen, and new ways to see the world” (2015, 297).

Protest, according to Judith Butler, challenges “the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political” (2015, 9), and stems from discontent; actions arise from perceived exclusions and inclusions, injustices and inequalities in society or against political power. The history of protest can be traced back to well before the American and French Revolutions to the 20th century's postcolonial struggles, civil rights and women's rights, to the current wave of protest for racial justice and Indigenous sovereignty and to upend white supremacy. As Stephen Duncombe points out, “In the English language the words “protest” and “demonstration” are often used interchangeably; it is a revealing slippage. For people use protest not only to act against power in the here and now, but also to demonstrate a different model of power, and an ideal of the world, they would like to bring into being in the future (cited in Rogger, et al., 2018, 94). In this context, protest extends beyond vocalization and blockades with demands for action through demonstration, to performance, sound, image, and sign. These forms of direct action, disruption, and protest may offer social tipping points for urgent issues, but increasingly protests have become very mediagenic.¹ To what extent do protests in public space become just a visual enactment of democracy, a spectacle that is tolerated because voice, opinion, and dissent are contained yet structurally, nothing changes? How can the aesthetics of protect and direct action disrupt our sense

¹ These terms are distinct, I understand, but for purposes of this paper, I will speak about protest as well as disruption, keeping in mind they are acted and interpreted across different social and political registers.

of what is possible and what can be done and seen in public spaces? For McGarry et al., “When people assemble in a public space they challenge the idea that the state alone has the authority to determine how it is to be used, whether for ritualistic pageantry or as an expression of state power...the public square acts as a theatre where the individual and collective identities of protestors are performed, as it communicates ideas of democracy, including specific demands and grievances” (2020, 24). McGarry et al **state** “performance of protest not only questions and subverts ideas of where politics is done, but constitutes a rupture to the existing political order by its enactment” (2020, 26).

Performances of disruption, creative forms of direct action, non-violent civil disobedience are art practices that challenge prevailing structures, intervene to reimagine how we learn about issues, how we might respond, but also what can be changed. And importantly, for these artists and activists, the question becomes, how can you embody and then express your cause? With bodies central to these actions, how can we see them as part of the aesthetic dimension of protest? What forms of protest galvanize our imagination and how are visual codes and performances—the aesthetics—used to subvert or support power, and importantly inculcate publics into the cause? There are many types of protests and there are many ways to consider aesthetics—visual signs, materials, and symbols are one way. The other is the more performative protest, what we might call a social art practice that responds/resists/and embodies a particular issue, increasing visibility and amplifying the issues at hand; in other words, doing and enacting politics differently.

James Aulich describes the aesthetics of protest as Janus-faced:

There is the aesthetic form of the protest in its present: the crowd, banners, posters, speeches, chants, songs, and actions of protestors and police. Then there are the aesthetics of the trace of the demonstrations in analogue and digital media, in the imagination and memory, and in their systems of distribution and wider cultural contexts. The ‘phenomenon’ and its ‘image’ are in an entangled relationship, each feeding the other to embody a collective act of protest (in McGarry et al., 2020, 272).

Both are critical interventions into dominant representations and forms of political visibility; it is critical to understand how we might understand how this aesthetics and their *a*/effect on witnessing and participating publics, as well as the activists themselves. This article considers the aesthetics of climate change activists Extinction Rebellion whose communication design features vivid graphics and branding, and whose performative protests have blocked traffic, enraged onlookers, and given a new sense the power of movement, corporeality, and the colour red.² I am interested in how the performative aesthetics of Extinction Rebellion intervene in more common articulation of protest and aesthetics and how they bring awareness to climate change. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière (2004) defines aesthetics as a “specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing

² I am broadly referring to socially engaged art practices, or creative forms of activism, because I believe in their potential. That being said, the urgency of the times in which we live necessitates direct action, and I acknowledge the social movements big and small who have been working in this space for decades.

and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationship. In other words, aesthetics (specifically the interdisciplinarity of contemporary art practices and creative forms of activism) is being ever more called upon to provide both insight into politics itself and the stimuli for social change. Rancière uses the “aesthetic regime” (2006) and “distribution of the sensible” to speak to the relationship between art and politics in terms of relations between visible/invisible, participant/observer, and consensus/ dissensus. He looks to art in relation to politics because he recognizes that politics is ultimately a platform for determining social realities, and this is essentially manifested as and by aesthetic practices. Art and the aesthetic experience are already inherently political for Rancière, and “the political” needn’t be isolated into content driven art forms nor political dissent into direct action and street demonstrations. In this reconfiguration aesthetics becomes much more than beauty, judgement, and taste but is tied up with politics and the ability to shift perceptions on the world through art work or performative actions (Coombs 2014). Extending the traditional Kantian aesthetic of detached judgement to consider these works not only for their aesthetic forms—materials, form, line, patterns and repetition reveals how those aesthetic forms disrupt the ways in which we relate to the world and “conceiving aesthetics as a practice, a resource, a choice with instrumental and expressive components... its materiality and visual dimensions, its silence, its vocalization, and its rhythm” (McGarry et al. 2020, 17).

Extinction Rebellion

Rebel for life. For the planet. For our children's children's futures.

Visual signifiers of climate change protest vary from group to group, yet Extinction Rebellion (XR) defined their own unique language through the use of familiar cultural signs and symbols, sometimes appropriated or reinterpreted, and which are easily recognizable to the public. These visual and material forms connect bodies and ideas as they flow through streets, crowded intersections, and populate parks.

XR is an international movement that promotes non-violent civil disobedience and direct action in an effort to compel governments to take notice and for the public who encounters to take urgent action in climate change. They have three demands: TELL THE TRUTH- Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change. ACT NOW-Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025. BEYOND POLITICS- Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice (Extinction Rebellion, nd). Included are artists, activists, scientists, academics, all unified under a certain aesthetic; leaflets, posters, and other visual communication are downloadable for free from their XR's website. Since 2018 the decentralized groups have been active in the UK and have since spread worldwide to 69 countries with 1134 groups. XR became quite visible during 2019's bush fires in Australia, demanding urgent action as the continent burned.



Figure 1a, b. Examples of XR's logo

What is interesting about XR's strategy is that they anticipated the mediagenic component of protest with consistent visual communication strategies. In other words, they are on brand. Their visual language is bright with a defined palette of colors, a snappy font and woodcut illustrations of skulls and nature made by collaborator Miles Flynn. The "millennial pink" greens and slightly crooked font are consistent and straight forward borrowing from the playbook of the Situationist International's 1968 posters where design played a pivotal role in the French general strike that in May 1968 and which nearly toppled the French government. SI's posters not only conveyed the important message that things could be different, but, importantly, getting people to read them with recognition. According to Clive Russell, who designed the font and worked with XR founder Roger Hallam, it was important not to reproduce a hippy or punk aesthetic, but to be new and fresh, and to welcome others in. They inverted the familiar hippy aesthetic common to environmental movements from the 1970s onwards. Such visual representations are crucial to both social movements and protesters who wish to communicate their identities and their messages to wider audiences and to the general public. Images do not merely supplement news but, as Machin and Polzer (2015, 1) argue, they "form part of the ideas about the world, concepts and attitudes that are communicated." XR's logo has become recognizable on placards, leaflets, and recently as it projected onto buildings. Created by UK street artist ESP, the stylized hourglass in a circle denotes that time is running out to act on climate crisis (Morris 2019). "Time's Up, Act Now" and "Tell the Truth" framed the hourglass logo as a projection onto the Tate Modern's gallery's chimney in 2019.

XR are not the first but they might be most visible climate change activists right now. They take advantage of their strong visual communication and circulate their image and message through diverse media outlets, and transmit them in new ways, on buildings for example. Arguably, their campaign has been successful because their symbols and cultural narratives simplify complex ideas and then relate them to familiar forms of visual culture. An engaging and provocative presentation of ideas becomes crucial for

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persuading individuals to internalize those ideas and then act upon them. By tapping into the power of media their urgency can circulate broadly, and contribute to the process by which the values they are advocating become normative and legitimized.



Figure 2. XR's Principles and Values, Melbourne 2019.
Photo credit: Takver, Wikimedia Commons

One of the most arresting visuals of XR are ghostly-white figures cloaked in scarlet-red, drifting gracefully down roads, through lines of police, weaving through crowds of demonstrators, and walking on beaches into the sea. From above they look like arteries of blood pumping, contained and with a mission to circulate. Their look is unforgettable. The Red Brigade, also known as the Red Rebels, demonstrate the calm, restrained, and silent. These theatrical elements of protest and measured delivery of information augment XR's visual communication by through a corporeal experience. Inserting these performative actions into public space raises visibility to be sure, but it also allows the public to witness protest on a different register. That is, they are received as a performance troupe before they are seen as protestors. As such, the public art component of their work opens the imagination to new ways of experiencing protest. The Red Brigade grew out of a Bristol street performance troupe, the Invisible Circus (Hardman 2019). The resemble human statues, forming a tableaux silent witnesses, standing to take notice, providing a unifying message. They appear gentle, arms outstretched and often interlocked. The group say the red signifies blood that we all share across species. The white faces also create unity and allow for expressions to be more pointed. Their goal is to evoke empathy through movement and expression, much

like the tradition of Butoh dancers. These dramatic flares of red resemble interlocking chains and demonstrate the interconnectivity of all beings and the measured steps needed to address climate change, and each body carries a story, which allows a certain vulnerability. Their slowness and deliberation is precisely the cutting intervention needed. Slow down. Slow down. Learn. Subvert compassion fatigue or even empathy fatigue to give way to the accessible, meaningful, new visions that art can provide. They are thoroughly planned, organized, and choreographed with military precision.³

Founder Doug Francisco reflects on the group's goal: "We wanted people to almost empathically feel and understand our message, which is the power of art" (cited in Heardman 2019). During protests multiple crowds form: media, onlookers, participants, allies, police, and so to confront the now familiar signs and banners, marches and soap boxes. Anthropologist Michael Taussig (2012) acutely describes how many protests engender fatigue, and that often-times the protesters' tactics really offer nothing new, so a group in red robes might puncture this fatigue. These forms of disruption don't just point to an issue like you see in many protests but the tactics work to shift the issue through this type of embodiment.

The crimson robes and choreographed movements connect the performers and publics bring attention to their cause. They are immersive experiences in which visual patterns and communication form a background to the participants' bodies, evoking a sense of confinement. By its publicness, whether on the street as a part of or as a spectator, we enter into a relation as we participate and bear witness. This materialization, these counterpublics form around a shared purpose (Warner 2002), and as Butler states, "If the people are constituted through a complex interplay of performance, image, acoustics, and all the various technologies engaged in those productions, then "media" is not just reporting who the people claim to be, but media has entered into the very definition of the people" (2015, 20). Protest plays out as a phenomenon and reaches into multiple performative fields and received through multiple registers (social media, mainstream media, on the ground reportage, etc.) and through movement, gesture, and bearing witness.

³ Other notable performative protests for climate change include Laresa Kosloff's *Radical Acts* (2020), a short film featuring the humorous tactics of climate change scientist; and Culture Declares Emergency procession in London 2019. Perhaps most significantly is the work of Liberate Tate, and as a contrast to XR's aesthetics in public space, Liberate Tate employs similar strategies in a museum space (foyers and galleries) most notably in the Tate's foyer for *Human Cost* (2011) when a performer and charcoal, laid down while two people poured what was perceived to be oil all over the performer (it was sunflower oil and charcoal). Visitors stopped, took note, moved on, and some ignored the performer all together. What expectations or organizing principles are in a gallery or a museum? There's a certain code of behavior, even upon entering the space. Some of these social codes include being quiet, contemplative, or to take a certain path to follow, lots of reading, contemplating, and quiet meditation. Yet, what happens if you confront a non-sanctioned somewhat disruptive performance as you enter? Would you think it's part of the gallery or museum programming? Because those codes are already in place, you might watch, listen, and interact because you are in the site already. Liberate Tate wants to take power away from oil companies. This performance took place on the first anniversary of the start of the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster. It lasted for 87 minutes, one for every day of the spill. LT's has as its focus the body in space (that can be used as a tool of resistance) and non-violent direct action. Their actions have weakened normalized institutional structures by bringing problems into view and charting a new way to question and act within the hallowed halls of a museum.



Figure 3. Red Brigade: Extinction Rebellion, Berlin 11.10.2019
Photo credit: Benno Kirsch. Wikimedia Commons

XR brands themselves successfully and have used their visual communication becoming recognizable by coordinating their visual communication, what brand names do as part of a capitalist toolkit to sell consumers their wares, and increasingly their ideas.⁴ Yet, as Morris (2019) points out, XR's branding tactics and "in your face" public disruptions connect with a consumer culture interest in sustainable capitalism where instead of ideas being sold, the message and spectacle are disturbed. No matter what this might mean in terms of capitalist appropriation or co-optations, it is critical to cut through spectacle with spectacle, and arguably works like EX do so.

XR have also been called out for their "urgency" which eclipses the long-time experiences inflicted on Indigenous community through settler colonialism, with many communities worldwide on the for front of climate change. Activists working in the

⁴ As a precedent to such fashion branding early in the 20th century, see the Suffragettes's who used purple green and white to signify loyalty and dignity, white for purity, and green for hope. Members were encouraged to wear the colours "as a duty and a privilege." See for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2015/oct/08/suffragette-style-movement-embraced-fashion-branding>

space have suggested the group's myopic sense of urgency needs to delve more into the racialized history and violence and those who have been advocating for environmental justice. He states, such measure needs "bringing past emergencies into proximity with present ones, connecting them through their complex disjunctions and equally their continuities" (Demos, 2020, 19).

There are limitations and even dangers of relying on highly aesthetic visuals and performance. The risks members of XR take for their creative acts of civil disobedience are a privilege. The group's emphasis on disruption, with tactics asking protesters to allow themselves to be arrested, excludes the groups that are more likely to be mistreated by police, in particular, people of colour. Despite their goal to disrupt and have people take notice, business owners get affected by the road closures, people struggle to get to work or get children to school, taxi drivers' livelihoods are affected, and so on. Those who are caught in the "inconvenience" are potentially alienated, not to mention the increased emissions of idling cars makes an easy target for those irritated by the group (for example, Australia's conservative Courier Mail has been very critical of the group). T. J. Demos' outlines a more sustainable way forward: "intersectionalist ecology demands a corresponding activism of alliance building across identities of difference, starting from a disidentification from oppressive dominant hierarchical formations of white supremacy, colour-blind liberalism, and speciesist anthropocentrism" (2020, 20).

These limitations aren't limited to XR's tactics or aesthetics but to most forms of activism in public spaces or to highly mediagenic visual communication. Yet, it remains important to ask if these forms of disruption engender agency amongst the public and/or audiences, or in the case of Extinction Rebellion offer enough of a spectacle to bring attention to these issues brought on by the climate crisis. Do XR's forms of protest galvanize our imagination by employing visual codes and performance to subvert or support power? Is it art, is it activism, is it a spectacle? Yes, probably all three, but definitions are less important than what they can do in the world and to those who encounter them. To better consider these questions, I will return to Jacques Rancière's configuration of art and politics, phenomenology and "intra-action" to interpret and understand their function in the world and how they produce alternative subjectivities.

The Body and The Encounter

How do these aesthetic strategies in the form of public art performance produce political subjectivities and reorient relationships amongst participants, with each other, and in response to social and political concerns?

XR's performances take conceptual frameworks to the streets, creating performative displays that support and help expand the cultures of local communities in urban life. These temporary occupations of space, conscious of people and the relations they engender points to a "condition [that] situates us in an enunciative and performative relationship to the world (and to art), where meanings *take place*, in what theorist and curator Irit Rugoff calls "the where of now," by making a form of location through inhabiting temporal duration" (cited in Douglas 2011, 57). Indeed, once we consider the body as the site of our encounter with the world, enmeshed in multiple relations with myriad bodies in varied contexts, it follows logically to think of corporeality as a vital nexus of

physical struggle and virtual communication” (Kraidy cited in Peeren et al., 2017, 120).

XR’s performance actions are relational acts. They require recognition, witness, and response from publics. They visually mediate self, other, and the world, producing a “social aesthetic as the embedded and embodied process of meaning making which, by acknowledging the physical/corporeal boundaries and qualities of the inhabited world, also allows imagination to travel across other spaces and times. aesthetics alerts us to the creativity involved in routine social practices” (Olcese and Savage 2015, 724). Their actions become a mode of experiencing the world itself, a phenomenological encounter. In public space Kraidy notes “creative insurgency cannot be understood through a mind-body dualism, but rather constitutes an embodied joining of the mental and the physical, the symbolic, and the material” (Kraidy 2016). Seeing these disruptions from a phenomenological perspective, focused on the body as the primary interface between individual and world—an essential instrument of perception and the locus of lived experience— makes significant contributions to our understanding of embodied contestation. This “being in the world” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 84 cited in Kraidy). For Kraidy this means: “being-in-the-world is tantamount to being engaged— in the sense of involved but also enmeshed— in the world” (Kraidy in Peeren et al., 2017, 122). We witness how performance reimagines what can happen or be felt in public spaces and become a focal point around which social awareness and proximity increase, and reposition individuals and newly formed publics towards aspects of cultural life often overlooked in our crowded visual sphere.

Feminist theorist Karen Barad describes this as “intra-action,” (2007) as a way to expand a phenomenological encounter and offer another facet to Rancère’s dissensus and distribution of the sensible, discussed below in more detail. While these may seem like different epistimo-ontological positions, I believe it’s illustrative to consider them together all as they help articulate how aesthetic encounters can shift or create new political subjectivities based on the interactions between the material, the affective, and the experiential in public spaces—as performers, allies, or passer-by. James Aulich cites Barad’s “intra-action” to understand how protests and their audiences or publics might be affected and is worth quoting at length:

The action of the protestor, the greater cause and its mediation are not separately determined. Their relations or intra-action determine their boundaries and properties, they are not there to be found as if they were pre-existent, the ‘object’ and the ‘agency of observation’ are inseparable” Citing Barad is useful here, as it reinforces the relational ontology of moving through, observing, or protesting in public spaces. The inextricable connects between body and performance. Entities, agencies and events ‘are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements’ (Barad 2010, 267, note 1 cited in Aulich 273).

Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible” (2006) frames how we perceive and that which regulates the perception of our social roles and our subsequent affective response. Challenges to “the sensible” identify how people’s experience of the everyday world gets reoriented, and the normalised forms of being and acting in the world are

subverted, producing a “disruptive aesthetic” (Markussen 2011). What is encountered as an “activist” performance in public space becomes “art as dissensus” which then breeches “the boundaries between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical (Rancière 2007, 267). The dissonance or uncertainty acts on the public’s senses, perception, and subsequently their emotions and interpretations of their urban experience, or even arguably what activism can look or feel like. These actions disrupt existing paradigms of shared meaning (the distribution of the sensible, and values and then purposes new ones. It is this aesthetic dimension and intended affect of the performance and their insertion into cultural processes that they can contribute to a reimagining of urban life. One more example of such a redistribution for Extinction Rebellion comes with its projection and performance; we can now all imagine a different type of performance as disruption and a different way idea can be communicated in public space, an alternative to cooperate ownership and marketing in public space. Eliciting Rancière helps to broaden the scope to reception; an approach might provide a productive reordering of how we engage in these types of performative protests and their reception in urban contexts. Indeed, their potential may rest in symbolic realm, but can still have an affective response. The encounters might produce unfamiliar, disorienting and unregulated. Ultimately, they disrupt our sense of the contemporary world, our understanding of what can happen in public space, who and what can be highlighted in that space, and what can be said in that space. The political potential of performative activism remains in their capacity to engage the general public and to generate broader political and social transformations. Here, the protest creates an “disruptive aesthetic” that eludes the regimentation of life and work promulgated by corporate capital and its instrumentalization of human creativity. The works discussed demonstrate that urban public space can have a multitude of functions and is indeed far more flexible and fluid than otherwise conceived; and more, that it is a living and creative space that expands the possibilities of experience through the participatory practices of all participants (Coombs and O’Connor, 2011). Rancière describes this as “establishing an element of interdeterminacy in the relationship between artistic production and political subjectivity” (2007, 257).

Conclusion

The visuals and corporeal experience contribute to a cacophony that engages our interest, seduces our feelings, produces our reality and demands responsibility in action (Aulich in McGarry et al., 2020, 271). These disruptions resist typical definitions of public art and subsequently typical notions of social and political engagement. These performative activisms are collective in nature; that is, they context and outcomes are produced together with audiences or publics. They forge the way towards these new cultural forms in a world that needs innovative ways to encourage institutions, people and communities to challenge the inequities presented to them, and experience something different. The interactions with the activists and/or the mediating objects can shape our perceptions and encourage psychological self-determination at a time when many people feel powerless in the face of the growing political and environmental injustice enacted upon individuals and communities globally.

There may be some blind spots to XR's visual communication and performances, but overall, they do elucidate how public space, democracy, and aesthetics interface with climate change on a collective level. Several different scholars' words can be instructive here to illustrate the power of collective action in the context of climate change aesthetics, and I mention only a few here. Philosopher Jodi Dean sees the "crowd" in this context group of performative protestors, as a new way of thinking against individualist or leader lead politics, but as a collective state and that such momentary equality might unleash, "the basis for a new political composition" (2016, 25). Yet, as a cautionary warning to this political efficacy, she reminds us that "dominant power always allows for the carnivalesque" (2016, 158). Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai sees the imagination as a "collective practice"; the future can only be formed together (2013, 87). Appadurai's "ethics of possibility," finds "thinking, feeling, and acting increase the horizon of hope, that expand the field of the imagination, that produce greater equity in what I have called the capacity to aspire, and that widen the field of informed, creative, and critical citizenship" (2013, 295). Giles Deleuze's 'fold' (1988; 1993) also comes to mind: the folding of the interior to exterior world. The art and activist experience does not transport the public away from the world but reworks the stuff of the world, producing new combinations, new ways of folding the world "into" the self, making space for new subjectivities to emerge and action to take place.

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Making Space. Singapore, Artists & Art in the Public Realm

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Abstract

In recent times Singaporean artists have undertaken audacious artistic performances, actions and interventions in public space, highlighting the role of artists as provocateurs of debates around public space and their engagement with issues related to ethical urbanism. Between 2010 – 2020 artists working in diverse fields of artistic practice including visual art, street art, performance art, community arts and new genre public art begun to locate their artwork in public spaces, reaching new audiences whilst forging new conversations about access, inclusion and foregrounding issues around spatial justice. In contesting public space, artists have centralized citizens in a collective discourse around building and shaping the nation. The essay documents key projects, artists and organisations undertaking artistic responses in everyday places and examines the possibility of public art in expanding concepts of ‘the public’ through actions in Singapore’s public space, and demonstrating the role of artists in civil society.

Keywords: public art, public space, community empowerment, creative intervention, ethical urbanism, spatial justice, social engagement

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In recent times, a number of young Singaporean artists have undertaken audacious artistic performances, actions and interventions in public space, highlighting the role of artists as provocateurs in catalyzing discussions about the politics of space, and the role of art in civil society. *Making Space: Singapore, Artists & Art in the Public Realm* documents artistic projects over the decade from 2010 – 2020 through interviews and field research conducted during an Asialink curatorial residency in Singapore. The artistic projects outlined in the essay include diverse and democratic approaches including theatre, artistic interventions and programming by arts organizations. These initiatives are united by their engagement with public space as a way to raise questions, concerns and disrupt hegemonic politics through artistic praxis. The French philosopher Jacques Ranciere in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* argues that dissensus suspends the 'naturalness' of the rules that govern art the way cities are produced and ordered. (Ranciere, 2010) The potential of aesthetics to affect the perception of the sensible creates new meaning and spaces emerges as a method to critique the commercialization of public squares and plazas, and the rezoning, and demolition of public space, heritage places, and sometimes, people's homes.

Whilst Singapore boasts an impressive collection of public art works, including commissions by leading international artists such as Anish Kapoor, Henry Moore and Fernando Botero, these monumental pieces are mainly relegated to traditional zones for public art such as corporate or retail environments in the business and commerce district of Singapore. In contrast, many of the artists highlighted in this essay have created public art interventions located in everyday spaces such as Housing Development Board (HDB) blocks. Artwork in Singapore's so-called 'Heartlands' (concentrated areas of public housing) reflects the role of art as an act of citizenship that provokes questions of belonging, place, heritage, and identity. As artwork transcends the confines of the gallery, and the concept of public art moves beyond sculptural works to artists collaborating with citizens to critique and activate their urban environment, public art offers possibilities for participatory action. The interaction, and spontaneity of these activities adds vibrancy to the everyday urban environment and is an appealing option for positive engagement with art.

There are approximately 10,000 HDB blocks on Singapore Island that accommodate over eighty five percent of the population. The public housing model was established in the 1960's in response to the need for low-cost housing to accommodate a growing population. Today, HDB apartments are the primary housing options, with blocks of apartments and ground floor public space environments familiar to the majority of Singaporean residents. HDB are governed by protocols that regulate the use of space and the surrounding environment, including personal expression inside shared spaces such as corridors, staircases, and void decks are ubiquitous vacant ground floors of Housing Development Board apartments, which are designated for communal activities, and sometimes include small provision shops.

They are used for functions, weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies as well as informal spaces for socialising. Artists and arts organizations are increasingly engaged with the HDB environment with activities that highlight the common ownership of these spaces. The interest in engaging with the HDB as public space for civic debate is reflected in the widespread public interest in Priyageetha Dia's *Golden Staircase* (2017), which stirred a mainstream response to notions of shared spaces in the HDB environment. (Chang, 2020, p.1).



Figure 1. Martin Pasquier, A view of Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats in Lavender, Singapore, seen from Block 805, King George's Avenue, 2014.



Figure 2. Project Manhattan The void deck of a block of Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats, 2014.

For *Golden Staircase* Dia applied 400 sheets of delicate, chiffon thin 21karat gold paper to an eight- step staircase in the Jalan Besar HDB apartment block, where she was raised. Dia performed this artistic intervention with some trepidation ‘The process was an invigorating one though I was apprehensive of the consequences I may face,’ Dia states (Dia, 2018). ‘At the end of the five-hour long hushed deed, the intervention of the gold finally reverberated against the ever lifeless and grey architecture on the 20th floor of my block,’ she explained. (Dia, 2018). In photographs that capture Dia’s completed artwork, the gold has a radiant, sensuous quality. The juxtaposition of this material against the concrete staircase and walls creates an immediate impact as Dia’s artistic intervention shines with presence and beauty. This charismatic artwork emerged from her identity as both a resident and an artist. Her personal identification and intimate understanding of HDB spaces reinforced questions about individual autonomy over shared public space, whilst in her role as an artist Dia raised questions about who has the right to alter, change, and design public space. In doing so, Dia asserted a sense of ownership over public space that regenerated her.

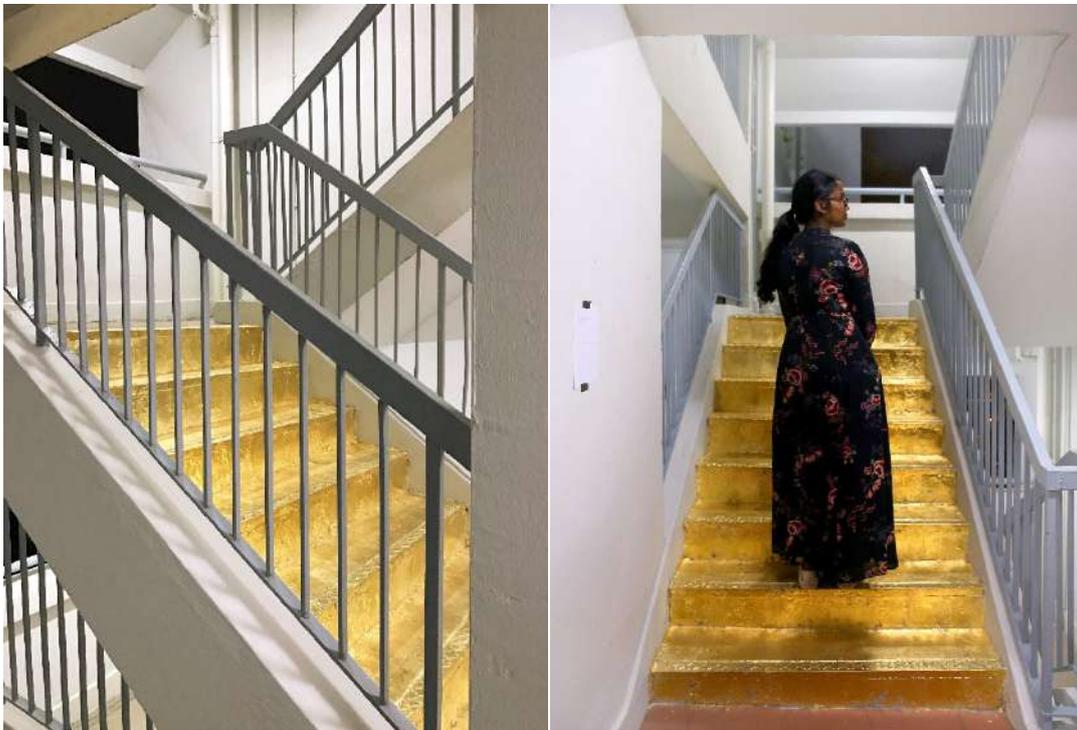


Figure 3. Priyageetha Dia *The Golden Staircase*, 2017.

The transformation of a staircase which is a vernacular site in the HDB provoked the widespread general public engagement as a familiar context transformed through an artistic context. The circulation of the image was facilitated through the platform of social media, rather than an exhibition format, highlighting the intersection of physical and the online public realms. The democratization of the art intervention created a range of engagement with the artwork after Dia’s neighbor took a photograph and posted an image of *Golden Staircase* on social media. The anonymous user name *pm_me_your_kukujiao* appeared on REDDIT, the social news and discussion site, posing the question: *Why did someone cover these stairs in gold foil?* (Dia, 2018). In the

networked and urbanized city-state, the online interest was rapid and within hours a debate had escalated about whether *Golden Staircase* was art or vandalism, and a range of threads that questioned the artists' motivation, and rationale. The responses ranged from vitriolic and violent threats to the artist, as well as praise for the intervention. Ultimately, *Golden Staircase* raised questions about what kind of freedoms for personal creative expression should exist in the HDB environment and revealed how multiple histories, identities and desires converge in the shared public spaces of the HDB environment.

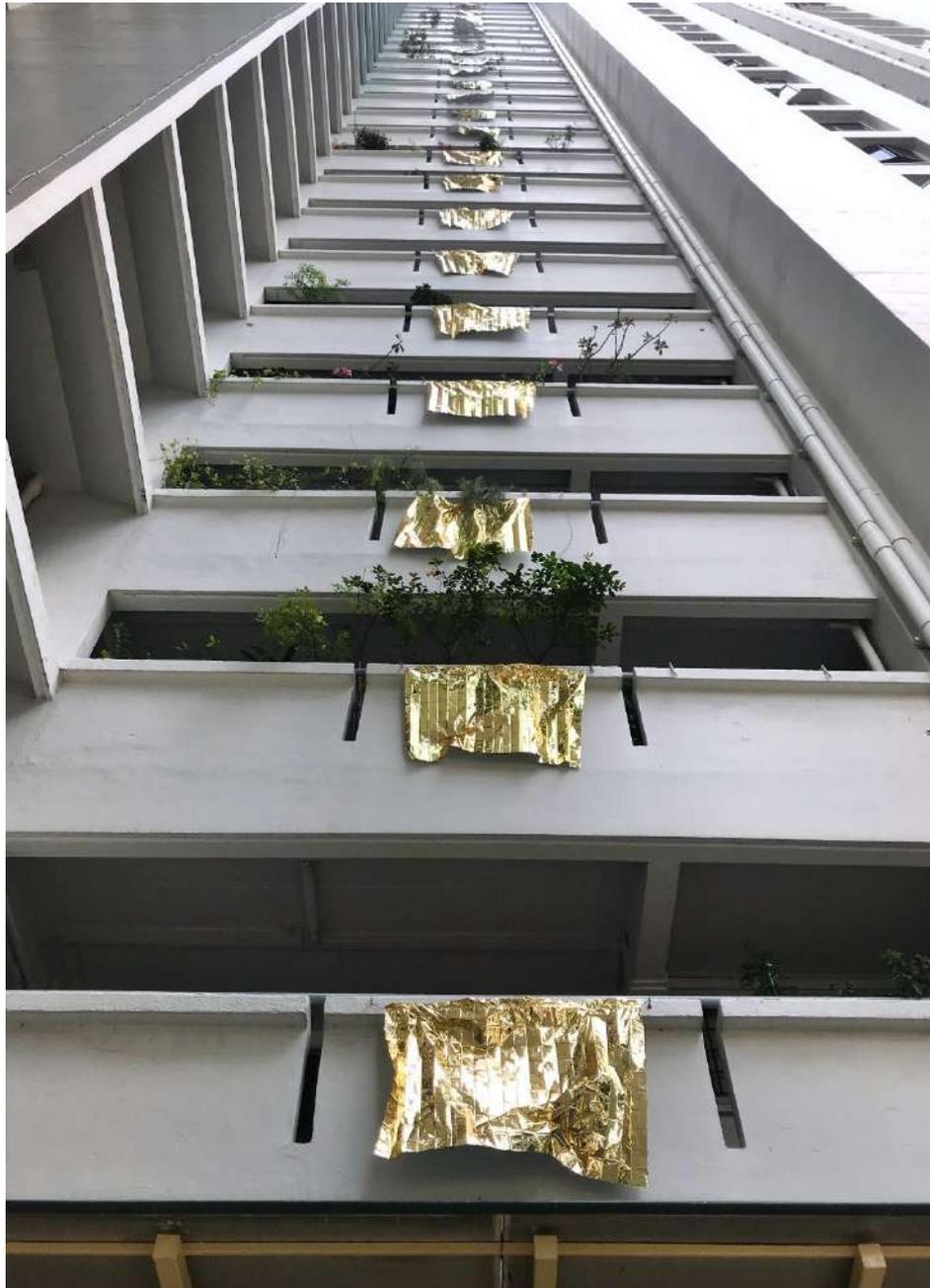


Figure 4. Priyageetha Dia *Absent — Present*, 2018.

The Golden Staircase effectively highlighted how the internet and social media can animate and enliven civic concerns demonstrating its potential to expand audiences for artwork, and the range of people engaging with political issues raised by effective public art interventions. The relative anonymity offered by these platforms empowered citizens to assert their views and opinions on a range of issues, including the ownership of public space in HDB apartments. Singaporean Architect, Professor William S.W. Lim, founder of the Asian Urban Lab advocated for online mass communication as an inclusive platform for promoting spatial justice and amplifying conversations around ethical urbanism in the development of the city-state. As Lim writes in *Public Space in Urban Asia* the internet is a way for citizens to actively participate in how public space is shaped, and to reimagine public space in Singapore (Lim 2014, pp. 240 – 241). ‘The struggle over geography and place is not new to Singapore,’ Lim writes. ‘It is just that the Internet has made it harder to ignore the voices of those who are embracing their right to shape the environment they live and work in and those who recognise the value of conservation and the necessity of sustainability. This has resulted in renewed vigour in urban spatial contestations. Contestations of public spaces should not be viewed as antagonistic anti-establishment actions but opportunities for ordinary citizens to present alternatives as stakeholders. The sense of common ownership is enhanced when citizens become responsible for crafting the use of public space.’

The Jalan Basar Town Council, the body responsible for managing her HDB block made a statement that Dia’s act was not permissible and commanded its removal, whilst also acknowledging her desire to enhance her surroundings. ‘Eventually, I removed the work, as a voluntary act in the middle of the night,’ Dia recalled (Dia, 2018). ‘My arms ached for the next few days. I did it at 2am because I didn’t want the media people to document me removing the work, because I found it to be such a depressing act, going from gold to grey.’ (Dia, 2018). Dia left a tiny gold square as a memory of her intervention in public space, and has followed up this first artistic action with another intervention in her Jalan Basar HDB apartment block with her installation work, *Golden Flags* (2018) in which she placed golden mylar blankets on each level of the Singapore National Day flag hooks for each level of her 24 story HDB to create a glimmering and kinetic installation. This artwork was not permissible and Dia removed the flags following criticism from the local municipal government. Yet, once again, Dia had produced a temporary liminal space through a public art intervention, asserting that public space can be fluid, dynamic, and contestable rather than a space that is fixed, immovable and irrefutable. Dia’s series of art interventions highlighted a desire for visibility, and the complexity of identity for citizens of HDB apartments in which the politics of private and public space are contested.

In seeking to manage and provide a governance structure for artists who pursue temporary artistic interventions the Singapore government developed a framework for artists wishing to create works in public spaces under The Public Art Trust (PAT) initiative established in 2014. PAT provides funds to generate new public artworks through commissioning and presentation opportunities through two programmes. The ‘Public Spaces for Art’ and ‘Practice Spaces for Street Art’, provide a ‘preapproved list of 49 spaces for temporary artworks for artists who want to explore ideas for the public realm.’ (PAT, 2019). Zong Qi Koh commented in *Spacing Beyond the Lines: Graffiti’s Place in the Singapore City State*, that managing the activities of street art through urban planning is a strategy of containment and a way to control subversive activities

through bureaucratic regulation (Zong Qi 2018) 'In a nation that prides itself on being clean and green, graffiti has traditionally been seen as intrusive, disrupting the pristine and organized aesthetics of his urban city, and urban planning has been a means of controlling and even eliminating it.' Whilst rules around graffiti ensure the prohibition of illegal street art, the opportunity to create artwork in public spaces continues to operate as an emancipatory gesture, mobilizing dissensus as a tool to critically reflect on how citizens interact and engage with everyday spaces. In Singapore, artists are embracing their role in contributing to improving the urban environment through opportunities for creative expression in public space that can enhance the everyday environment for ordinary citizens.

Whilst most Singaporean street artists maintain legal activity, there have been artists such as SKLO or Samantha Lo, commonly referred to as Sticker Lady who have transgressed the legal limits of creative expression in public space.



Figure 5. Samantha Lo, *My Grandfather Road*, Circular Road for Circular Spectacular, 2016.

In 2012, Samantha Lo was arrested for vandalism and charged for mischief after spray painting a public road, as part of her *Champion Colloquial* project. The project was conceptualised as a way to assert a distinctively Singaporean identity on the city landscape through direct intervention. SKLO has closely aligned her aesthetics and visual references with international street art and draws from the visual signifiers of punk culture to represent an act of protest. She spray-painted the words 'My Grandfather Road' on a number of roads around Singapore, and pasted stickers on various pedestrian crossing buttons, CCTV cameras and bins with humorous satirical phrases such as, 'Press for Nirvana' and 'Press Once Can Already'. In selecting these public locations, Lo directly tackled tensions between development and heritage, identity and belonging with her homage to 'Singlish'.

The PAT Initiative was launched two years after Lo's arrest and since this time, she has completed a 170 metre long 'My Grandfather's Road' piece along Singapore's Circular Road commissioned by Singaporean arts organization Hyphen Arts. The piece mimics the original artwork for which she was arrested and demonstrates policy reform that facilitates opportunities for artists to be engaged with active participation in the transformation of public space that resonates with a distinctively Singaporean narrative and sense of place. Rather than being viewed as threatening or negative acts of guerilla art, these artists can make meaningful contributions to the formation of identity and the progress of the nation state. Lo is regularly engaged by the Singapore Government to participate in arts festivals to perform activities for which she had originally been arrested. Government policy frameworks such as PAT re-contextualizes the spatial politics around public artwork and demonstrates how disobedience and subversion are channeled into the development of creative spaces around the city where artist's activities receive government funding and resources, amplifying their voices in the urban environment.

The methodologies and strategies of visual art interventions in public space are distinctive from the artist Seelan Palay, who was jailed in January 2019. Palay's charge was not for performing an illegal artwork but rather, for partaking in a public procession without a permit as result of his performance art piece. The charge resulted from his October 2017 performance art piece, *32 Years: The Interrogation of a Mirror* (Performance with paint marker on mirror, three books, investigation letter, heat engraving on acrylic sheet, and acrylic on cotton). The performance was a tribute to Chia Thye Poh. According to Amnesty International Poh is Singapore's longest serving political prisoner (Amnesty International, 1998). 'Chia Thye Poh, a former Member of Parliament representing the opposition Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front - a breakaway faction of the PAP), was arrested on 28 October 1966 for participating in demonstrations and strikes. He was detained for twenty-three years without trial under the ISA (Internal Security Act). On his release in 1989 Chia Thye Poh was placed under restriction orders curtailing his freedom of movement, expression and association, in order to "prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of Singapore".' Poh has been a subject of Palay's previous 2013 work, which mimicked a missing persons poster and read 'MISSING YOU'. Palay printed 200, A4 photocopied flyers that he has distributed.

Although Palay studied painting with drawing his preferred medium, the performance genre provided a purposeful approach to an activist art statement. Performance art is politicized in Singapore due to its history as a form of protest stemming from Joseph Ng's performance *Brother Cane*, performed at Artists' General Assembly at 5th Passage, Parkway Parade, Singapore. The work was undertaken on 1st January 1994 as a comment on the arrest and caning of twelve homosexual men. Ng snipped his pubic hair before a small audience as a symbolic protest and was fined \$1,000 for committing an obscene act, and prohibited from future public performances. *Brother Cane* led to a 10- year restriction on the licensing and funding of performance art in Singapore (M. Wong, 2016).



Figure 6. Courtesy, Seelan Palay being arrested during his performance
32 Years, The Interrogation of a Mirror 2019



Figure 7. Courtesy, Seelan Palay at Hong Lim Park with banner during his performance
32 Years: The Interrogation of a Mirror, 2019.

32 Years: The Interrogation of a Mirror began in Hong Lim Park, commonly known as Speakers Corner, a designated public place in Singapore for permanent residents and citizens to lawfully demonstrate, hold exhibitions, and performances with the

appropriate permit and registration with the authorities of their intentions. The online footage shows Palay unrolling a banner stating *PASSION MADE PROBABLE*. The slogan is a satirical response to Singapore's tourism slogan 'Passion made possible.' Palay asks the question, 'Can a liberated human mind be constrained by a state sanctioned space? A space in which you were contained, in that regard, can a liberated work of art be contained within a state sanctioned space? Do you know the answer to both of these questions? I will show you.' (Palay,2018). He then packs up his belongings and proceeds onto the streets. Palay explains that after Speakers Corner he first walked to the National Gallery of Singapore (Palay, 2019).

'When I concluded the first part (at Speakers Corner), I picked up the mirror and I walked out of the space, then I proceeded to the National Gallery of Singapore which used to be City Hall and is now the Supreme Court of Singapore. I draw symbolism from the relationship between the highest institution of state and law, and the highest institution of art, as both lack self-criticality.'



Figure 8. Courtesy, Seelan Palay outside the National Gallery of Singapore during his performance *32 YearsL The Interrogation of a Mirror*, 2019.

At the steps I drew the entire façade, the pillars, the doors. I picked up the mirror and I walked up to the middle door, which I knew was locked. I stopped at the middle door, showed the mirror to the gallery without entering it, then turned around and proceeded to walk to Singapore's Parliament House. I drew the last drawing of the façade of the entire parliament house with flag on top. I showed the

drawing in the direction of Parliament and I was prepared to stand there until 5pm, but I was arrested at 4.15pm.'

Palay was charged and convicted under the Public Order Act, revealing how his performance art piece confronted the boundaries of citizen activity in the public realm and the streets as a place to enact authority. In this temporal intervention, Palay contested control over the public realm, revealing that the city and urban space is not neutral. The appropriation of public space for performance art engaged critically with hegemonic structures and highlighted how artists open discourses that embrace multiple perspectives.



Figure 9. A view of walking group along the railway tracks from an overhead bridge near Blk 10, Ghim Moh Road, 2011.

In Singapore, artistic approaches for engaging with public space and creating a dialogue driven by civil society also include projects that examine intersections of environment, culture and community. *The Migrant Ecologies Project* conceived and developed by educator, art writer, and artist Lucy Davis in 2009 combines research, adopts a collaborative framework and provides a platform for practice-led artistic inquiries into questions around community, public space, culture and nature. *The Railtrack Songmaps Roosting Post 1* (2018) is an iteration of *The Migrant Ecologies Project* and

explores the existing relations between humans and birds along the railway tracks of Tanglin Halt, an area which has flourished as public space that demonstrates how meaningful opportunities to shape, occupy and transform the public realm engages and delights citizens. However, the area is subject to social and environmental change as housing blocks are demolished and low-income residents are relocated elsewhere. (L. Davis, 2021).

The recording of bird calls undertaken by Davis is inter-twined with layers of song, story and images that also express the experiences of people and community living and using this area as told through interviews, films and text. Tanglin Halt is one of the first public housing development estates in Singapore. It runs along part of the former Malaysian railway tracks, which have been adopted for formal and informal activities including ecological walking and hiking, as well as, community gatherings, informal shrines and bird clubs. The tracks date to the British colonial period and comprise a major link between Singapore and Malaysia over many decades. The government opened the area for public use in 2011 yet, commercial re-developments are beginning to encroach on the citizen led and activated area.

For *The Railtrack Songmaps Roosting Post I* (2018) Davis collaborated with an interdisciplinary team that included sound artist Zai Tang, video artist Kee Ya Ting, biologist David Tan and Tanglin Halt community members in partnership with the Nature Society of Singapore bird group. (Davis, 2018) *'Our search compiled over years of listening to birds and developing conversations with humans, reveal a rich seam of interspecies communications, projections, memories and songs.'* Davis explains, *'Together with the Nature Society of Singapore Bird Group we compiled over 105 species of birds, resonating from what might appear on the surface to be an unremarkable patch of degraded, urban scrub.'* *Railtrack Songmaps Roosting Post I* was presented in an HDB block of the Queenstown Residents' Committee Centre. This venue continued to broaden the opportunity for engagement by local residents with the project as active stakeholders, contributors and partners in the project, reflecting the positive ethos of community driven, citizen-led activated public space.

The possibility of community art projects to facilitate positive engagement between citizens is underpinned by the location of events, activities and exhibitions in public spaces. The performing arts company Drama Box, is a community theatre increasingly working in the public realm with community-based, arts driven approaches that are developed and presented in HDB buildings in partnership with Arts-wok Collaborative, a community development organization that harnesses art as a catalyst for opening up dialogue about difficult issues. Together they developed *Both Sides Now*, where artists develop long-term iterative projects in partnership with HDB residents around end-of-life issues. In addition to participatory and collaborative arts initiatives, the project organises puppet shows and other modes of theatrical and visual presentation that relate to issues about aging, death and dying, often in public spaces of HDB blocks. A recent iteration of this multi-year project was a public installation in the void deck of Block 7, Telok Blangah Crescent with spatial designer Wendy Chua and artists Alecia Neo, anGie Seah, Shirley Soh and Jasmine Ng who developed artwork with residents through transforming the void deck into a studio for video portrait workshops. Activities present a participatory platform for communities to share and interpret their concerns and stories. These events bring people together in everyday public spaces as a way to expand and strengthen understanding and connectivity to their environment and,

each other. At the same time, they enliven and animate public spaces through grass-roots activities that enhance the collective qualities of the void deck. Initiatives such as *Both Sides Now* illustrate how void deck public spaces are ideal for encouraging connectivity between diverse groups, and encouraging active citizen participation. Drama Box, shares many characteristic of new genre public art, a term developed by the artist Suzanne Lacy to distinguish it in form and intention from ‘public art’, which is often used to describe sculpture and installations in public places. (Lacy, 1994)

‘Unlike much of what has heretofore been called public art, new genre public art—visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives—is based on engagement.’ Lacy argues. *‘Not specifically painting, sculpture, or film, for example, new genre art might include combinations of different media. Installations, performances, conceptual art, and mixed-media art, for example, fall into the new genre category, a catchall term for experimentation in both form and content. Attacking boundaries, new genre public artists draw on ideas from vanguard forms, but they add a developed sensibility about audience, social strategy, and effectiveness that is unique to visual art as we know it today... ‘Art cannot be fully realized through monologue, it can only come into its own in dialogue, in open conversation in which one is obliged to listen and include other voices.’*

Through engaging HDB residents in their homes and in the public spaces of the void deck, artists are finding ways to more fully engage the public in their immediate environment and participate in activities that also give them a voice to share their experiences and concerns. This work continues, and builds upon the tradition of informal activities occurring in these public spaces across Singapore.



Figure 10. Drama Box *Both Sides Now*, *Hello Parties* at Telok Blangah, 2019.



Figure 11. Drama Box Last Dance, Participatory Performance Telok Blangah, 2018.



Figure 12. Drama Box, Closer - Public Art Installation, 19 September - 6 October 2018 at Chong Pang.

Over the past decade, the future of land use in Singapore has led to public debate and interest in issues of spatial justice, and with the backdrop of ongoing redevelopment of the city, Singaporean not for profit spaces are leading engagement with themes of heritage, public space and ethical urbanism. Since 2017, The Substation, Singapore's first independent arts centre has engaged artists, thought leaders, field professionals and academics in a programme of exhibitions, events and discussions around the politics of power in the city intersect with public space, architecture and design. As part of The Substation's curatorial initiative, *Discipline the City*, the organisation produced the publication 'A Public Square' edited by Adeline Chia in which she asserts how public space in Singapore is been threatened by privatization. 'The spaces around us, the pavements and the parks, the air-conditioned underground pedestrian linkages that are in fact extensions of malls, are all about power—vested interests of corporate interest and state control,' Chia writes. (Chia 2017, p, 6) This observation is shared by Professor William S.W. Lim who cautioned against the dissolution of genuine public places that hold collective heritage, identity, memories and meaning. In his essay *Public Space Today* Lim foregrounds the impacts of losing public space for citizens. (Lim, 2014, pp.12- 13).

'With growing privatization such as themed shopping malls and corporate high rise offices and hotels many urban centres become luxury commodities that compete with each other by intense competition to attract foreign investments as well as the local and global cosmopolitan elites,' Lim writes. 'These developments severely damage existing complex public spaces as they inevitably destroy much of the sensitive social linkages and heritage of gap spaces and the sites of critical deep histories that lie in the materiality of traditions.'

The importance of public space in preserving a collective sense of identity and role in sustainable development has been foregrounded in The Substation's 2018 exhibition *Death-song*, part of the 2018 curatorial framework, *Cities Change, People Die, Everything you Know Goes Away* an artistic investigation of a city where traces of the past constantly vanish and where conservation, identity and a sense of place are unstable. The exhibition highlighted the complex relationship between heritage, nostalgia and the narrative of progress, with works such as *Triptych of the Unseen* an installation and performance about Bukit Brown Cemetery, a site that became the subject of protest and civic engagement on issues of development and heritage after the Singapore Land Transport Authority approved plans to build an eight lane highway through the Cemetery, destroying an expansive area of nature and one of Singapore last primary forests, and at the same time exhuming 5000 tombs. This artwork and the public defense campaign of Bukit Brown highlights the high level of citizen engagement in concerns around spatial justice and the value ascribed to sustainable values around heritage and environment. The installation and performance *Triptych of the Unseen* (The Substation, 2018) occurred in three parts and with the help of cardboard goggles the audience joined spectral spectators to watch a performance by the Ghost, Activist and Bureaucrat, as three characters bound together through moral contradictions and entanglement in the contestation for space in the city.



Figure 13. *Bukit Brown Index #132: Triptych of the Unseen* Courtesy The Substation, 2018

Triptych of the Unseen was part of a broader project on Bukit Brown Cemetery initiated by the independent cultural and social enterprise, Post-Museum, founded by Woon Tien Wei and Jennifer Teo. The artists became intimately involved in the battle to retain Bukit Brown, first as part of the advocacy group SOS Bukit Brown, and then through their *Intro to Bukit Brown* a series of two hour afternoon walks that they conceptualized to engage visitors with the environmental and socio cultural heritage significance of Bukit Brown. The activity highlighted how artistic actions provide spaces for citizens to deepen their participation with the urban environment in a way that builds collective identity and historical connection. Post Museum produced a series of exhibitions including a wall documenting the names of exhumed and unclaimed grave sites which had to make way for the highway through Bukit Brown. This artwork was handwritten with assistance of volunteers and members of the public. For the artists Bukit Brown was a struggle over Singapore's soul, not only a sentimental conservation effort. (Tien Wei and Teo, 2016)

The transition from a model of individual authorship to one of collective relationships where art is collaboratively enacted in public space contributes towards diversifying audiences and creating new publics.



Figure 14. Citizens protesting as part of SOS Bukit Brown, Singapore

The case studies and projects described in this essay demonstrate the possibilities for a community of practitioners working across different mediums and disciplines, yet united by the common purpose of expanding notions of public space through artworks that are alternately activating, controversial and provocative, and delight and engage. Many art works offer new, exciting ways for connecting citizens, diverse communities and publics in activities that forge meaningful identity and belonging. Art in the public realm can create opportunities for forging conversations around spatial justice and highlight the value and benefits of genuine public space for citizens. The process of access, collaboration and engagement through artwork, and art activities in the public realm has created new pathways for the public to engage in positive acts of citizenship. In creating dissensus, the artists identified in this essay have an important role to play in expanding public spaces in the urban environment.

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When Modern Monuments are an Act of Autoplagiarism.

A Case Study on Objects from Lesser Poland (2017–2018) to Observe Reworking Public Space onto State Agenda

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Abstract

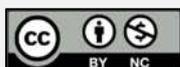
This paper discusses the autoplagiarism of monuments as a system for the reworking structure of the public space in the interdisciplinary meta-analysis. The research rises the problem of blocking art and art activism in the region. The theoretical part focuses on Polish legislation (acts of 1994, 1997, 2003, and 2016), the opinions of historians on the division between the terms “places of memory” and “places of gratitude” (Ożóg 2011; Czarnecka 2015; Jach 2018), and an overview of the classification of monuments in artistic theories (Krauss 1993; Lacy 1995; Kwon 2004; Ranciere 2004; Walsh 2013; Taylor and Altenburg, 2006; Bellentani and Panico, 2016). Insights into psychological theories related to aesthetic judgment are also presented as supportive statements (Ishizu and Zeki 2013; G. E. Vaillant, M. Bond, and C.O. Vaillant, 1986; Reicher 2003; Le Bon 1929). The research covers six case studies of erected and removed monuments in the area of Smaller Poland during the period from the end of 2017 to the first part of 2018. All samples are related to the stakeholder's reactions to the past Soviet presence in the area and their current aims. The conclusions suggest strategies which could be helpful to strengthen the public space and classification for the autoplagiarized monument.

Keywords: monuments, system, society, legislation, autoplagiarism, strategies, public space, contemporary Poland.

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Introduction

From the second half of the 20th century, monuments were quite often seen by post-modern art historians and theoreticians as objects of power of the state (Kwon, 2004: 30-31). Scholars often based their ideas on theorems of the Freudian idea of fetishism to build “a backup theory,” resulting in the aesthetic object ‘independence’ (Walsh, 2013). For Krauss (1993:, 244-245), that independence lies in non-functional and non-figurative dimensional objects founded on the artists' aim to stand beyond aesthetical functionalism. Furthermore, Ranciere (2004: 41) expanded on the approach described above and openly discussed aesthetics as a form of political oppression. It would also be reasonable to mention also Foucault (1967) and his utopian and heterotopia concept of public space. In the post-modern era, monuments recognized as quasi-figurative transformations of human personifications with devoted symbols such as guns, helmets, and hammers have become contradictory to “real art” objects (Kuspit and LeWitt, 1975: 45). Therefore, in a way, the discussion on monuments in the Polish background has become utterly divided into two groups: those looking for a relationship between social realism as a function of the state and those who simply do not bother. The first group has become strongly analytical and occupied with the fundamental question about the “value” of the monument in the context of its message. The writings of Ożóg and the actions of Szarek involved in saving sculpture by Władysław Hasiór, the Organs, from the aggressive populists could be presented as an example (Ożóg, 2011: 39). The monument was reclassified as sculpture after the earlier attempts by populists to remove the object from Snożka Pass. Redefining the sculpture resulted in the monument existing longer than it might have otherwise. On the other hand, the historical works of Czarnecka (Czarnecka, 2015: 84) and Krüger (Krüger, 2016: 81) focused on the “product placement”—if we may call it that way—of the monuments during the “NATO vs. CMEA” era. The thesis on ‘Pomniki wdzięczności’ Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej I w III Rzeczypospolitej’ by dr Czarnecka was written to overcome some parts of the agreements between Poland and Russian Federation on ‘places of memory’. The purpose was to inject a new term: ‘monument of gratitude’ as non-artistic, non-educational and non-commemorative physical objects. The IPN (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Institute of National Remembrance) uses her work to target the objects for removal, although in the opinion of some lawyers like Adriana Jach has no legislative right to do so. The classifications used by Czarnecka differ from the classifications by Ożóg. She used territorial and functionalist aesthetics in the responsive mode to the political background, where the subject what was ‘Soviet’, or what was “totalitarian” was declared *per automata* as a non-Polish object of culture. There is no place for consideration about tendencies regarding responses by using arguments on the fluid reality at that moment. Such an approach would only end with a logical fallacy defined as an argument for moderation. The point is that we speak about two areas of structuralized knowledge: the language of aesthetics and language of history. Both are non-falsifiable in their taxonomies, and they may not guarantee such a level of saturation that would allow us to speak about a Popperian waypoint toward refutable knowledge (Popper, 1963). Rather, what is left seems more intriguing, particularly the following question: When does a monument start to be a monument, and why is a monument not the same as a public sculpture?

This inquiry began in the context of physical placement and codification of the object called a ‘monument’ before the aesthetic judgment was made. To this end, the following

section contains an overview of the following aspects: ownership of the idea, ownership of the physical space, a realization process, and a contextualization process. Sources from the legislation on public monuments serve as a basis for a specific taxonomy. The subsequent section juxtaposes information from those sources with case studies of removed monuments and newly commissioned ones. In conclusion, the contradictions are summarized to present the possible solutions to avoid autoplagiarism in the process of realization or removal of modern monuments in Poland.

Legislative taxonomy of monuments in Poland

Monuments—in the context of the Polish legislation when it comes to building or removing one—do not exist as “sculpture.” Merely mentioned in the Building Law Act of June 7, 1994: (Ustawa) z dnia 7 lipca r., [1994: 2 and 36] Kancelaria Sejmu, the monument is classified simply as ‘building construction . . . in the context of construction works on the territory of Holocaust memorials’. The topics include assignment to the land as a building, an artificial object, and that object’s assignment to history. The second topic requires more attention: history does not mean “memorization,” although, in the first moment, we may be deluded by the subjective context around the term “places of memory” in *Umowa między Rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a Rządem Federacji Rosyjskiej o grobach i miejscach pamięci ofiar wojen i represji*, Kraków, 22 Feb 1994 *Dziennik Ustaw* Nr 112, Poz.543, [2012]. We speak about an aesthetic “waypoint” that is used only as a relation between at least two sets of abstract concepts related to the subject of time. Does this law is responding to aesthetical needs? According to Ishizu and Zeki, when it comes to aesthetic judgment, we rather speak about an irrational decision-making process (Ishizu and Zeki, 2013). That process may be related to risk-taking and predictions regarding the future in the context of survival. Finally, it was worthy to mention the subject of the whole palette of defense mechanisms: the structures in a mind that lead to “conscious” decision making. (Vaillant, Bond, and Vaillant, 1986: 786–794). Therefore, what we see becomes related to the previously implicated knowledge set related to what we may predict about the experienced object. An example worth mentioning is the concept of the monument proposed by Hansen, Jarnuszkiwicz, Pałka, and Kupiecki for Auschwitz in 1958 (Pietrasik, 2010: 45-47). In this research, the conceptual monument *The Road* moves from the definition of a monument related to the memory of the place. The concept turns the attention of the viewer from the aesthetics toward the focus on the place where it is built. That “in-site” project might give the impression that responders were not in the past for the organized genocide. They could be “in” Auschwitz as it is, beyond past and future. In that sense, that anti-sentimental concept of site relation differs from the definition of the places of memory. Politically innovative, *The Road* ran out of historical capital and was finally rejected by of ex-prisoners of the camp as not representing their own experiences. Hence, the survivors wanted to tell their story, while organizers of the commission wanted to give a warning signal for the future generations.

Therefore, when the monument is recognized as the place of memory, two documents warrant attention: the *On the Prohibition of Promoting Communism or Other Totalitarian Regime by the Names of Organizational Units, Auxiliary Units of the Commune, Buildings, Public Facilities and Facilities, and Monuments Act* from April 1, 2016: *Ustawa z dnia 1 kwietnia 2016 r. o zakazie propagowania komunizmu lub innego ustroju totalitarnego przez nazwy jednostek organizacyjnych, jednostek pomocniczych*

gminy, budowli, obiektów i urządzeń użyteczności publicznej oraz pomniki, Kancelaria Sejmu, Dz.U. [2016] poz. 744, as well as "256 Article" of the penal code from June 6, 1997, on Promoting Fascism or Other Totalitarian System or Inciting Hatred: Dz.U.2017.0.2204 t.j. - Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r. - Kodeks karny. In both of those acts of Polish Law, the texts lack a strict and clear definition of communism, fascism, and totalitarianism. That opens the door to deviate of the law and, subsequently, subjective definitions of places of memory. It can be noticed already on that level of investigation that the subject of the "monument" is no longer a matter of site but of the historiosophical definition given to that site, what means after Voltaire (1765), a philosophical approach to the historical circumstances and occurrences related to each other. Therefore, both acts of law require the incorporation of the strategies based on the opinions of the specialists: mostly historians who define who or what might be related to the subjects described in those acts. The second option is to understand those acts to refer to the common act of law and follow to the *vox populi*. However, is it safe after Le Bon to take the risk and claim that custom is always contradictory to rational decision making? The tendencies of the crowd change rapidly. Le Bon stated, that the crowd needs religion or ideology. The crowd does not like changes to their customs (1929: 116-117). What could be considered as the "customary" definition of communism by the mass population? Both acts are in the state of interior conflict regarding their taxonomy. The conflict between that naturalist and positivist approaches to the monument in law on the abstract level did not start in 1997 or 2016 when those acts of the law were implemented. It could be even suggested that communism never existed. Hence, the idea of "Communism" as a certain target was directly engaged by the leftists. Besides that, the NEPs - New Economy Policy formed by Lenin in 1921 - did not resolve the problem of monetary exchange in the period of revolutionary Russia (Panasewicz-Deryło, 2015: 81-88). International exchanges of iron with the US-based on lend-lease agreements declassified USSR as just "communists" (Harrison, 1993). We can be only sure about a political strategy, where such ideas were used for military purposes (Kołakowski, 1970: 175). Such strategies are used today in certain forms of subversion (Iwasiński, 2015: 25)(Poisel, 2013: 110). The classifications of the monument concerning the public space are not aesthetically justifiable. Paragraph 3 of "256 Article" of the penal code clearly states that anyone doing artwork or educational work about communism or fascism is not breaking the law. That document, in the comparison with Act from April 1, 2016, formed to 'ban on the promotion of communism', states that monuments are not the objects of art or education. They are only "historical places." That situation creates a certain type of legislative paranoia: in the context of the cultural grants held by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the subject of the "history of a place" is widely exposed. The monuments commissioned by the art commissions in the Orońsko Sculpture Center and held under the auspicious role of the same ministry are considered to be culturally innovative (www.rzezba-oronsko.pl, 2018). In that sense, the monuments commissioned by the former political power are artistic objects, whereas the monuments constructed under the People's Army and Peasant's Battalions re not, although both sets of monuments stem from the emanation of power by the state. Another issue coming from that juxtaposition of Polish acts of law is the fundamental "73 Article" of the Polish Constitution. The article stands for freedom of artistic, educational, and scientific acts of the citizens. Again, the Act of April 1, 2016, stands as avoiding the subject of artistic

merits compared to the aforementioned article of the Polish Constitution. First, the Article 5b point 1 of the Act of April 1, 2016, states that the Voivode (local governor in Poland) knows the definition for any monument. Second, the decision of the IPN is requested to confirm or reject the decision of the Voivode. The decision on the monument is made without any public interference. The Act of April 1, 2016, imposes and limits the process of the research conducted by any type of interested party to the authoritarian decision of one political body: the IPN. Such a situation stands openly against the basic rule of the law, which holds that the judgment must be made on the case. Therefore, in this particular option there is only a decision-for-decision process (Jach, 2018).

Back in the Building Law Act from June 7, 1994, there are two suggestions regarding the monument. Point 12 of Article 29.1 of the Act of June 7, 1994, states that certain types of temporary construction objects do not require special permits to be built, including objects of cult and so-called minor architecture objects, such as statues. That potential limitation for temporary minor architectural objects opens the practical use of the public space for the monument. The definition of “cult” is not specified. The subject of “statue,” from one side, limits the aesthetical possibilities and, from another, simply provides a certain possibility for a successful implementation. Once implemented, it must be noted that the space of implementation changes in terms of its value and quality. The responsibility for that place, the target, and the time processes related to that location all change. It seems that subject of “intention–action” has somehow escaped the attention of urban planners. The Society of Polish Urban Planners (TUP) website provides a comprehensive definition of the public space-based, among others, on Article 2. of the Planning and Spatial Development Act of March 27, 2003 (Ustawa z dnia 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym) states that public space is a significant place for the satisfaction of the needs of its users (www.tup.org.pl, 2018). The TUP developed a certain logical fallacy by further development of that thesis as a fundamental argument. The Public Space Card (Karta Przestrzeni Publicznej) brought by the TUP in 2009 does not stand against 2 Article of the Act from March 27, 2003. The document is a collection of *pro bono* affirmations toward the better management of public spaces. However, the overall argumentation fails to address a fundamental issue: What existed before that public space? What was that physical space before it was used to fulfill the urgent needs of the public? The argument that significant space always existed and we only remodel that space by adding or removing objects like monuments is a fallacy. We may speak about an owned space that becomes multi-purposed and shared by its users, but still, the owner remains the owner. Therefore, the fundamental issue lies in the focus on who owns that space before and after it is called “public” (Lacy, 1995: 23).

Here, we reach the next factor significantly related to the process of the happening of the monument, which is the act of commission. The process of building (or buying) the monument, by the nature of the law, must be stated by the owner of the space (not exactly the public one). The Public Commission Act of January 29, 2004, is probably one of the most overused legislative acts in the process of building monuments in Poland (Ustawa z dnia 29 stycznia 2004 r. Prawo zamówień publicznych). The origin of that abuse may come from the copycatting of the term “building” related to the monument. If the commissioner wants to use the Public Commission Act as a formal basis, then a single potential sculptor has almost no chance to even successfully compete. All that is

required to prevent a potential artist from taking part in the competition for the commission is to formally ask for the bail by referring to Article 36.1 subpoint 8 of the mentioned act. It is difficult to find a single artist who can invest a potential sum of several thousands of Polish złoty (PLN) to take a part in the commissioning process. Another possibility would be to announce the commission in a short period with a requirement of a complicated visualization of the monument. All that could be needed as bid-rigging, is to illegally inform the potential winner to prepare the visualization before the commission will officially begin. Non-cartel participants may be unable to respond on time, or rejected on any other reason. The problem with transition of secured information on conditions of public commissions had been described by Miąsko (2019: 76, 86) in his analysis on methodology of economic crimes in Poland. Although the wide observation of the problem by specialist in economic law in Poland (Molski, 2009: 68-69; Szostak 2018: 60-61) and the direct actions of EU against cartels in case of public commissions (EU Directive nr 5201/PC0896; KOM/2011/0896; Article 30 point 2b), the similar acts happens (Rybak, 2016 et.al.) The subject of pushing ethical barriers in commissioning of monuments is not new in Poland and was already in the eye of the Supreme Court in the case of commission of Monument of the Warsaw Uprising by defending the statement of critics against the commissioners, by stating, that the criticism in such cases is necessary for the greater public good (LEX nr 9043, case CR 436/90, 1990). According to Paul Van Slembrouck from the Traction Interactive Advertising Agency, the preparation of general visualization takes a minimum of three weeks (www.quora.com, 2018). That suggestion is related to the agency where the team is focused only on that task. In the case of competitions for monuments in Poland, it is not likely that the potential creator will focus only on one commission proposal for a minimum period of three weeks. The average period for presentation of the visualization with a potential maquette of the monument in Poland is between two to three months (www.zpap.pl, 2018). The Public Commission Act states, in Article 4d.2, that it is not required to refer to the legislative commission procedures if the commission is related to “cultural acts.” Next, in Article 4.3e, it is stated that research and development services are not subject to start special commission procedures. Here, the subject of the monument jumps off the aesthetic criteria again and holds to the Public Commission Act only—and only as building construction. Technically, it is not required to follow the articles of the Act of January 29, 2004, in the commissioning process if the monument is defined as a cultural act. The problem of quality to commission procedures related to sources and timing in that particular case should take actions toward better and compulsory commissioning procedures (Ziółkowska, 2014: 4) Moreover, the process of implementation of the monument should start from the research and become a form of development of the public space. However, using the Polish Public Commission Act in the process of implementation of the monuments literally and legally declassifies those objects from the generally understood area of culture. Monuments are not, in any way, objects of development of public spaces but building constructs without a relation to the site. Again, we meet a lack of clear language: Usually, a commissioner urges for the development of the existing public space through the construction of the monument. However, using the procedures from the Public Commission Act structurally declassifies that potential monument into some sort of building construction. Therefore, in Poland, only the “private” commissioner who directly follows the definition of the ownership law and asks for the monument to be

considered as a cultural act without setting up a competition is acting logically according to the letter of the law (Ustawa z dnia 23 kwietnia 1964). The final passage on the letter of the law in the context of the monuments is an insight into Article 261 of the Penalty Law, which defines the situation where the monument can be insulted (Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r). According to this law, a poorly sculpted monument of a person in the aesthetic sense is not an insult of that person. However, any action toward the monument can be used by the state as an attack on that state but not exactly the public space, (www.wyborcza.pl, 2018).

Public space or public good in the context of IPN performances with the monuments

There were several attempts to improve the public spaces through a referendum, but all were a failure (www.referendumlokalne.pl, 2018). Due to the insufficient level of interest of the local communities in the engagement to directly govern their urban areas because less than 30% of the population took part in the voting. In Polish Act from 1995 on referendum (Dz.U. 1995 nr 99 poz. 487), if less than 30% of population took a part in referendum (in some cases more than 60% is required) then is considered as non-binding. Moreover, the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland holds the decision that a local referendum cannot be a legal way to make decisions about urban planning (www.rp.pl, 2018). However, that information may not mean that the strategy regarding the reduction of the auto plagiarism of monuments in public spaces is not possible. Simply stated, we do not have enough information on the possible involvement of the administration and local communities in the sharing of urban spaces. That analysis must come before any decisions on the urban space are made by a financially independent legal body-related directly under the coverage of the state based on free speech. In that context, it is difficult to separate the term “public good” from the term “public space.” However, it is illogical to state that both of these terms always refer to the same type of location. The ideas can be discussed but cannot be judged the same as human deeds. General accusations about removed ‘Soviet’ monuments are, that the carriers of the ideas, like ‘communism’, is the idea. However, monuments classified by the IPN are not objects of art for that institution and do not extend any form of living culture. Any monument named in Polish law is not an art object and does not have any cultural impact for the local community until that community reclassifies that object for its own sake (e.g., the monument for fallen Łemkos). The abuse of term “communism” by the IPN is at least equivocal in the context of political relations, as the relationship of the IPN, Voivode, and political dissidents in the context of the Act of April 1, 2016, demonstrates. It seems on the contrary that the IPN does not publish any official list of monuments to be removed. IPN did not respond to any emails since 2016 to present the full list of monuments to be removed. In the telephone discussion with one of IPN representatives in 2017 the information was given, the list, does not exist and decisions are made on the basic data provided by Czarnecka in her thesis which was sponsored earlier by the IPN.

The Monument as the Object of Autoplagerism

It is required to mention a specific condition the research was taken when speaking about found and chosen theoretical sources. The sample was taken from the population

different from the population in the UK or the USA – generally considered as the ‘global West’. When speaking about some last findings of monuments and memory, we may spot on certain general directions: it is a usually figurative or transfigurative aesthetical act of the official culture sponsored by the state to establish moral attractors (Jezernik, 2012: 182); transgenerational discourse over group identity (Hamilton, 1990:103-104); an act of external, collective memories whom may vary in own perception causing even serious conflicts (Christian, 2012:5) or racial – capitalist transgressions (Mitchell, 2003:727-728). All those sources are based on philosophical interpretations of the authors, on how probably the monument and memory are linked together. Moreover, most of the sources will give the State a certain position. The trace linking them all is the solid view on the role of the State in the production of the monuments, fundamentals of the public space (Habermas, 1962) and the same rules in methodological research. Meanwhile, speaking about the modern Polish condition it is hard to contribute does the decisional process of removal/implementation of the monuments is driven by the interest of the State or what the State for the Poles could be. Many factors are referring to that situation. Perhaps observations made by Evans on the subject of public space and aesthetics in the context of post Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries in Central Europe (Evans, 2018) may explore the problem bit closer. Evans pointed out, that philosophers like Ranciere, Derrida, Heidegger, Sartre, Benjamin, Lyotard, Lefort, Badiou are dealing with, what he called 'space' where the monument is put on/removed from and there are still more questions than answers. That state required to keep democracy in the Global West might be not even developed yet in the area of Poland. Evans noticed, that post-Eastern Block still has not too many local theoretical sources on the subject, and not enough practical applications. Indeed, there is no representative institution of the Arts Council in Poland, or one percent for art scheme (Krzysztof, 2018). Therefore, comparing the removal of Soviet monuments in Poland with the removal of e.g. Serra work from Federal Plaza in New York (Kwon, 2004:13-14), or detachment of Confederate generals' monuments (Mitchell, 2003) would be a fallacy. Therefore, looking at the sources by the Polish authors, the reader might deal with re-worked sources which originated from the West or deal with personal opinions about the public space, e.g. Jakub Banasiak on Althamer work 'Brzoza' dealing with a reception on memorization processes around aviation catastrophe in Smoleńsk from 2010 (www.magazynszum.com, 2018). It is worth to add, that first, translations of Rosalind E. Krauss work *Sculpture on Expanded Field* (Krauss, 1979) with her other essays become published in less a decade ago in Poland thanks to individual work by Monika Szuba in 2011 (Krauss, 2011). Therefore, this paper on monuments in that, population and has nothing to do with terms of post-postmodernism or post-social realism - although many theoreticians in Poland would like to have such a relation to express how 'European' that country is. I would recommend at this moment to look at Hofstede indexes (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, 2011) were for Poland uncertainty avoidance compared to the USA and UK is the highest among those three and individualism is the lowest. In Hofstede's observation, Poles have a low certainty index and that links to their views on the future. What is consistent with observations of Lasch (Lasch, 1991:21), that described by him narcissistic attitudes in the high-rate consumption societies are equally not interested in their future as in their past. Please take under consideration as well, that some sources used in Poland could be plagiarized texts from the West (so-called copyfraud) and universal typology is literary, not possible for now with plagiarism widely visible at the

Polish universities (Wroński, 2018; Heitman, Litewka, 2011). In that context, Foucault's 'dystopia' as the term could be justified but, what we could do with similar sources at that moment? Global West is not Poland and we should be aware of it, especially if we would like to search for universal typologies.

The legislative subject has been limited to the most significant examples. The procedural aspects of Polish law in the context of monuments can stand separate from the taxonomy about their function. Professor James E. Young, in an interview by Adi Gordon and Amos Goldberg, stated that monuments may also serve as counter-memorials in the way Mai Lin's work was produced (www.yadvashem.org, 2018). However, he did not mention the buzz about Hart's work on the same subject commissioned independently by Vietnam war veterans (Wolfe, 2000). Young divided the memorial-monuments of past regimes such as the Soviet Union from memorial monuments made today to commemorate the victims of those totalitarian systems on a political basis (function) but not an aesthetic one. Young noticed that the forms of the modern monuments often fall into schema and copycats of quasi-totalitarian aesthetics. Yahaya Ahmad, in his research about heritage, pointed out that the concepts "tangible" and "intangible," in the context of the memory of the site, are not globally structuralized. The guidelines by UNESCO and International Council on Monuments and Sites - ICOMOS - developed over the last 40 years include the subjects of "cultural heritage" and the physicality of the space (Taylor and Altenburg, 2006:299). Simultaneously, the views on heritage by UNESCO, ICMOS, and TUP present consistent patterns, and come from appeals that public space always "was there." However, starting from Habermas we should talk about the evolutionary process of the public space (Habermas, 1962) 'to happened or to be lost', where artistic object will always be a political statement (Mitchell, 1990:889). Therefore, the preservation of public space by institution like those mentioned, may turn to the act of attack against them although their best intentions just because of the existence of any institutionalized perseverance to protect the public space in our modernity (Bauman, 2000:42-60). Researchers such as Julieta M. Vasconcelos Leite go back to the socio-spatial concepts of the 1960s to structuralize both the memory and monument onto one semiotical area. By referencing the non-scientific theories of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs, Vasconcelos Leite focused on justification of the value of the public space to raise its significance (Leite, 2007:27). However, Billig, in a critique of so-called "common sense" in-group dynamic theories, pointed out that externally observed object-memory relation is not enough to constitute a scientific proof (Billig, 2015:703). It rather seems that a subject of the monument in its memorial aspect lies beyond the issue of the site and belongs to the area of the temporal probabilities related to risk-taking (Reicher, 2003:186-187). Therefore, the whole strategy of implementation of the monument is based on the aspects of interpretation, ownership, and function. For Federico Bellentani and Mario Panico, the process of interpretation is the most significant in the meaning-making process for the monument. The researchers proposed that re-classification of the monument as a concept may be the key to better incorporation of the object into public space structures (Bellentani and Panico, 2016:40-41). Therefore, it could be stated that terms such as "site-specific" or "memory-based" monuments are nothing more than a semiotic construct through which attention is given by the actions toward the object in the past. If the same interest group would copycat not the idea but the purpose for the monument, then it could be stated that we witness an act of autoplagerism of the monument. Such an act would be recognized as repetitive intention to push own agenda by possessing the land

first and finding aesthetical and ideological attribute in the form of the monument to justify that possession second. Therefore, the autoplagiarism of the monuments is not straight related to propaganda. It is rather reasoning for manipulation with history, by repetitive actions starting by changes in the law and land ownership where the voice of the artists or the viewers are limited to legitimate that act on the end of the process.

The Monument Cases for Kraków for 2018—A Case Study

The table below presents some of the newly established memorial monuments erected in 2018 or the process of eventual realization in Kraków. The table includes the name of the monument, allotment (parcel) ID, the former status, eventual mortgage registration, the author of the monument, realization, the commissioner, and the legislative body issuing the building permit. The data on the allotment, mortgage status, and the former situation were gathered with Internet tools: mapy.geoportal.pl; znajdzksiege.pl and googlemaps.com.

Table 1. The erected or in-process monuments in the Kraków area for 2018

Name of the monument	Allotment identification	Former status	Land and mortgage register	Authors	Realization	Commissioner(s)	The agreement is given by
Kukliński Monument on Jeziorański Plaza	126105_9.0007.325/5	Erected in 2018	Lack of evidence	Czesław Dźwigaj and Krzysztof Lenartowicz	Megabud Kraków (Owner: Krzysztof Lenartowicz)	Stowarzyszenie im. płk. Ryszarda Kuklińskiego, Henryk Pach and Henryk Lassota; established on 04.01.2009	Uchwała Rady Miasta Krakowa z 4 listopada 2009 r and ZIKiT
Ribbon of Memory Home Army	126105_9.0003.160/2 or 179 (two different cadasters. The identification should end with number '179')	In progress (2018)	Lack of evidence	Alexander Smaga	Not established (2018)	Budimex, RedisBad, Ribbon of Memory Foundation (fundacja wstęga pamięci) Alexander Smaga; established on March 8, 2016	City Council Act (signed by Stanisław Rachwał) May 26, 2010, ZIKiT)
Monument of President Julius Leo	126104_9.0013.529/2529/2	Erected in 2018	Exist (Józefińska street)	Karol Badya and Łukasz Podczaszy	Karol Badya and Łukasz Podczaszy	Gmina Miejska Kraków, Zarząd Infrastruktury Komunalnej i Transportu w Krakowie, SARP	ZIKiT, August 2017 (specific date not indicated)

Kukliński Monument on Jeziorański Plaza (allotment: I26105_9.0007.325/5)

The time to present the proposal for Kukliński's monuments was six weeks. The former plan of the commission included making the maquette. Eight months before the commission was opened, the Kukliński Society was established by Piach and Lassota, the ex-Mayor of Kraków (www.mojepanstwo.pl, 2018). Architect Lenartowicz and sculptor Czesław Dźwigaj won the competition. Lenartowicz's company was later the main investor in the realization of the object (www.gazetakrakowska.pl, 2018). The first concept for Kukliński Monument by Dźwigaj was revealed in August 2009 and had nothing in common with the final realization of the 2018 concept. The ultimate destination for the concept of the monument by Dźwigaj was Rose Alley in Nowa Huta (www.krakow.wyborcza.pl, 2018). Of 22 members of the jury, seven were politicians, three were members of SARP, and the Kukliński Society was represented by Henryk Pach (Załącznik nr 2 do zarządzenia nr 2562 /2010 Prezydenta Miasta Krakowa z dnia 14/10/2010:11). There were no consultations with the local community. Both Lassota and Dźwigaj belonged to the Bractwo Kurkowe (www.bractwokurkowe.pl, 2018) (see fig.1). Politician Bogusław Kośmider was one of the judges for Kukliński and had professional and political contacts with Dźwigaj before 2009. In 2006, Dźwigaj was chairman of the Program Council for the 750th anniversary of the location of the Capital Royal City of Kraków. During that meeting in 2006, Lassota was also active with his contacts with Dźwigaj (Komisja Głównej Rady Miasta Krakowa, 2006). The monument presents a large, bow-shaped metal construction, in which one end stays in the air over metal tables.

Ribbon of Memory Home Army (allotment: I26105_9.0003.160/2)

The decision regarding the AK monument in the designated site was made on May 26, 2010. The text of the act signed by Stanisław Rachwał (head of Kraków's planning commission) urged the mayor of Kraków to agree on the location of the monument. (Rada Miasta Krakowa, 2010) On March 8, 2016, the Ribbon of Memory Foundation was established with the CEO Alexander Smaga, an architect of Polish origin residing in Vienna (www.wstegapamieci.com, 2018). Smaga also designed the aesthetic form of the memorial. According to a *Gazeta Prawna* article from April 19, 2016, the crowdfunding action brought the sum of PLN 310,000 (www.gazetaprawna.pl, 2018). Thus, in approximately eight weeks, a group of investors was found. The average rate of crowdfunding in the EU for heritage was 1% in 2013–2016 according to the European Commission (de Voldere, 2017:51). That would mean that the significant sum of money for the monument was gathered in extremely rare conditions. The main investors for the monument presented to the public opinion were the companies RedisBad (a producer of clothing using pro-nationalist symbols in a product placement manner) and Budimex—the main investor in housing development in Kraków. On the website of the foundation, it is proposed to carve the names of the main investors in the Numerical Control Machine (CNC) made plaquettes. According to the sum invested, the size of the plaquette varies. According to Smaga himself, there was a three-stage competition to win the build of the monument (www.krakowniezalezny.pl, 2018), although Aleksander Gurgul from *Gazeta Wyborcza* noticed, that Smaga did not win the competition (www.krakow.gazeta.wyborcza, 2018). At the beginning of 2018, the maquette of the monument was incorporated into the area. In the consultations for the

monument made in the early summer of 2018, a total of 1,100 citizens had a negative opinion about the location of the monument. Simultaneously, the organizers of the action for the monument, including the Ribbon of Memory Foundation, brought between 3,300 and 3,400 signatures in support of building the monument. The signatures mostly came from the readers of the pro-nationalist *Gazeta Polska* newspaper. A further investigation done by the city council found that the exact number of signatures could not be confirmed (Urząd Miasta Krakowa, Miejskie Centrum Dialogue, 2018:13). Moreover, after the first decision of the commission announced by ZIKiT on July 10, 2018 (ZIKiT, 2018), there were no responses from construction companies (www.tokfm.pl, 2018). The plan of the monument was based on the map of the eastern frontier of Poland from the years 1918–1939 and included the 500m-high light illumination.

President Juliusz Leo Monument (allotment 126104_9.0013.529/2)

One of the participants had to be an architect (The co-organizer of the commission was SARP.). The competition organizers only invited the following artists to take part: Prof. ASP, Dr. hab. Karol Badyna, Prof. Wiesław Bielak, Prof. Adam Myjak, Prof. Jerzy Nowakowski, Prof. Bogusz Salwiński, and Prof. ASP, Dr. hab. Jan Tutaj. The closed-form of the competition for the commission was based on Article 11. 8 of the Public Commission Act of January 29, 2004 (www.zikit.krakow.pl, 2018). The competition was won by Karol Badyna—a sculptor and professor from ASP in Kraków—and Łukasz Podczaszy, an architect and the owner of the PPA company (www.krakow.pl, 2018). The secretary for the commission was Wojciech Kasinowicz, an architect and member of SARP. The monument stands on the allotment 529/2, which is the whole Józefińska Street on Podgórze quarter in Kraków. It is the only allotment from the pilot studies with the land and mortgage register for monuments erected in Kraków after January 2018. The monument is a classical bronze statue.

The Monuments Identified for Removal in Lesser Poland for the end of 2017 and 2018—A case study

The table below presents some of the monuments classified as “communist” by the IPN that were removed or reclassified in 2018 and very late 2017 for the region of Lesser Poland (Małopolska). The table includes the former status of the object, ID, mortgage registration, basic information about the local landlord, the legislative body requesting removal, and the current classification. The list is incomplete and was based on political significance and allotment identification. The data on the allotment, mortgage status, and former situation were studied with Internet tools: mapy.geoportal.pl; znajdzksiege.pl and googlemaps.com.

Table 2. Monuments for removal in the region of Lesser Poland between the end of 2017 and 2018.

Name of the monument	Allotment identification	Former status	Land and mortgage register	Author(s)	Landlord	Decision for removal	Classification
Gen. Karol Świerczewski	121105_2.0002.189	Destroyed in 2018	Exists; defined as agricultural parcel	Franciszek Strynkiewicz	Nadleśnictwo Baligród	IPN	Place of memory/Monument of gratitude
Formerly the monument of gratitude for fallen Łemko	20510_2.0018.265/6	Exists; Classification changed in 2018. Classification before 2018: The fallen volunteers of the People's Guard, Soviet Army, and the Polish Army from the Lemkos region in 1939–1945 who were killed in the fight against the invader.	Exists; type of land is not specified	the date of erection is not provided by the city officials to the public	Ujście Gorlickie	IPN	Changed into a religious monument commemorating Łemkos ethnic minorities
Memorial monument. Original text on the monument 1962–1985: <i>To Honor and praise the fighters who died in the struggle for People's Poland. Society of Wadowice.</i>	121803_4.0005.5041 and 1KDX.3 and PP.1.	Removed in December of 2017	Does not exist	n/n erected in 1962	Kalwaria Zebrzydowska	City council pledge to IPN	Classification changed in 1985: <i>Forgiving the Parisian Cross for the town in the name of partisans fighting against German occupants</i>

Gen. Karol Świerczewski Monument (allotment: 121105_2.0002.189).

The Gen. Karol Świerczewski monument was removed and destroyed on February 21, 2018, after an order by the IPN issued at the end of 2017 (www.nowiny24.pl, 2018). The monument existed on an agricultural parcel belonging to the Baligród Forestry Department, which made no objections to removing the monument. Subsequently, a small kebab bar was established near the monument's former location (see fig. 2 and fig 3.) Close to the allotment, there is a tourist camping area, and a parking lot was built in

front of the monument's former location. The monument was erected in 1962 close to the place General Walter was shot during the operation Wisła campaign. The author of the monument was sculptor Franciszek Strynkiewicz. The sculpture consisted of a half portrait of the general carved in the obelisk-shaped stone structure. On the pinnacle of the obelisk, the Piast's eagle (without a crown) made from tank steel was exposed. After the destruction, the monument was taken by the IPN decedents to Rzeszów.

The Monument of Gratitude for Fallen Łemko (allotment: 20510_2.0018.265/6)

The monument currently called *In Memory of the Łemkos* (ethnic minorities) was named before: "Those who died in the fight against the invader—People's Army, volunteers of the Soviet Army, and Polish Army from the Lemkos region, 1939–1945." The monument was not mentioned by name in any document in the local plan of revitalization for the region in the years 2011 and 2016 written by the city office in Ujście Gorlickie (Rada Gminy Ujście Gorlickie, 2017:26). However, after an order by the IPN to demolish the artwork, the local mayor Dymitr Rydzanicz decided not to follow the execution. According to his words, the local community of Łemkos claimed that the monument presents their story: They were forced to join the Red Army or be removed to Siberia. After a discussion with the IPN, the classification of the monument was changed from a gratitude monument (in the opinion of the IPN) to a place of memory for fallen Łemkos (www.gazetakrakowska.pl, 2018). Please note, that Google maps list the place as a "religious object". The monument is shaped as a vertical obelisk with an inscription in stone (www.polskaniezwykla.pl, 2018).

Memorial Monument from Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Allotment 121803_4.0005.5041)

The monument which stood in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was originally erected in 1962 as a memorial of gratitude without a specific title. The table on the monument in the years 1962–1985 was as follows: "To honor and praise the fighters who died in the struggle for People's Poland. Society of Wadowice." In 1985, the table was changed: "For the participation of residents in guerrilla warfare with the German occupant. By a resolution of October 16, 1985, the Council of the People's Republic of Poland granted the Kalwaria Zebrzydowska the Parisian Cross." In January 2017 (www.kalwaria-zebrzydowska.pl, 2018), the IPN gave support to the opinion of Voivode Piotr Ćwik and political dissidents Tomasz Baluś, Jerzy Rojek, and Major Augustyn Ormanty from the City Council of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska—an opinion for the removal of the monument (www.polskieradio.pl, 2018). The decision of the IPN was full of illegalities, such as the statement that the monument was in "promotion of communism" or in "promotion of diversion" (ibid.). Major Ornaty stated that, after discussion with the local community, the plaza would be re-modified into a meeting place (www.gazetakrakowska.pl, 2018). The monument was made from a three-part stone element. The main part presented a group of men in simplified poses (perhaps alluding to Dunikowski's Saint Anna monument). On the side of the monument, the table with an inscription was placed (see fig.4 and fig. 5).

Conclusion

The research was based on information from the years 2017 - 2018. There were two focus groups: one group with monuments established and the second group with monuments to be removed in the same period of 2017-2018. In the limited amount of both groups, we can speak about the transitional process. That will include the case with Ribbon of Hope case and Monument of Gratitude for Fallen Łemko's. By using the strict language, it is difficult to name Ribbon of Hope as the monument while being only a 'maquette'. Similarly, in the case of Monument of Gratitude for Fallen Łemko's we speak about the change of classification. Regarding the issue of the research good practice in the context of chosen sources, it has been noticed that a wide range of them are internet-based. It is hard to evidence the limited amount of six cases in total for the area with the comparison to the other sites in the Global West with a similar amount of population. However, most of the data about monuments in Poland is available only by internet sources. Another difficulty is the lack of universal language in the publications regarding legislation on monuments in Poland. It should be considered that for a population of Lesser Poland the amount of actions towards monuments is in fact, low and focused on other subjects than aesthetics or local community needs. However, even with that data compared to gathered information on legislative taxonomy of monuments in Poland with a theoretical problem emerged since the complex idea of the Road by Hansen, Jarnuszkiewicz, Pałka, and Kupiecki and in the context of the subject what aesthetics would mean in psychological terms it could be suggested to find the subjects of monuments as the missing area to classify in the public space of Poland. Meanwhile, looking from the context of the Global West, the discussion on monuments by provided here theoretical sources like Bellentani and Panico; Young or Krauss (not to mention all sources from this text), focus on the knowledge exchange. Meanwhile, in Poland, we probably may deal with a force toward legislative strictness to make a monument a solid statement with simultaneously leaving any self-responsibility to a citizen. While as in the process to avoid autoplagiarism the researchers try to focus on expanding knowledge, contradictory, the cases of the monuments in this paper present rather reusing legal statements to obtain the public space or land by the groups of influence.

Therefore, it is worth identifying a certain direction toward the extension of the term "autoplagiarism" in the context of public monuments in Poland over the recent decade. Not as the matter of aesthetics, but the matter of self-replicatory purpose to overtake the public space. The paradigm of autoplagiarism in the monuments of that case study is based on replicative structures in planning and the attitude toward action based on several basic fallacies: the argument from authority (e.g. only the State know what the monument is), bandwagon, and dogmatism (e.g., we all should know what communism is or was), fault analogy (rejection of aesthetics as a part of a formal judgment on monument), and glittering generality commonly used in Polish monument historicism (as the connection of all the above). In the end, we should consider a question, is the matter of ideology what the monument stands for; or rather, it is what stands for the monument in the context of its owner.

Note from the Author

The data exposed in the process of research on the case studies was not to point any accusations toward the third parties. The research was done in a good manner to hold an open discussion.

Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



Figure 1. Website of Bractwo Kurkowe.
Avalable at: http://bractwo-kurkowe.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wystawa_prof_czeslaw_dzwigaja_brata_kurkowego.htm



Figure 2. Area of the Gen. Karol Świerczewski monument in 2017. Map data ©2017 Google Map data: Google, Maxar Technologies

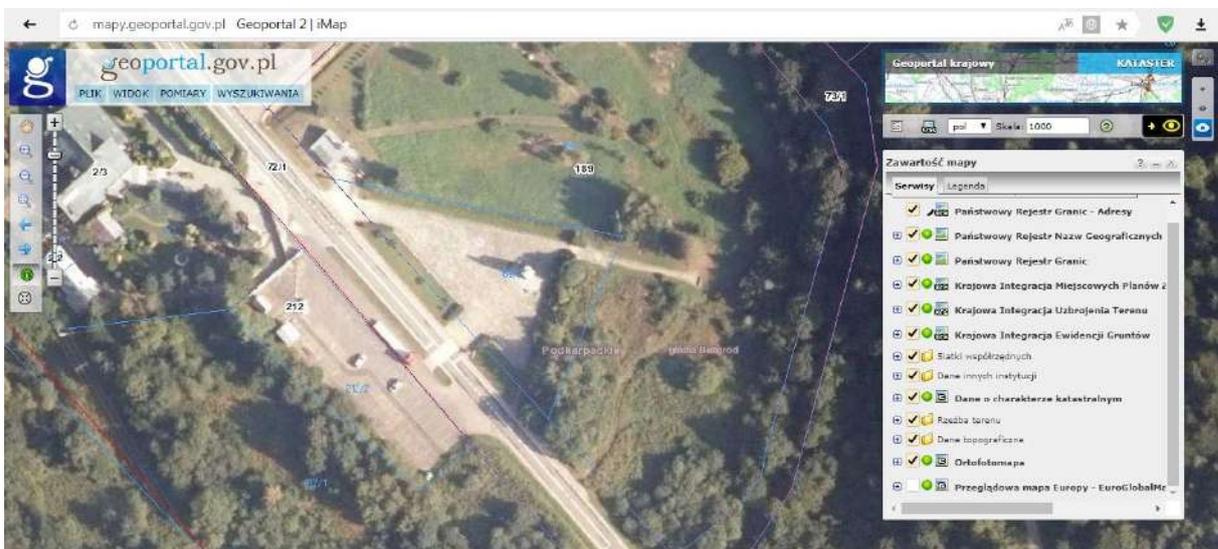


Figure 3. Area of the Gen. Karol Świerczewski monument in 2017. Although the kebab bar was on another allotment, the area of the monument had water, gas, and electricity connections. Source: Geoportals.gov.

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Figure 4. Area of the monument on the marketplace in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Status for the summer of 2017. Map data: Map data ©2017 Google Google, Maxar Technologies

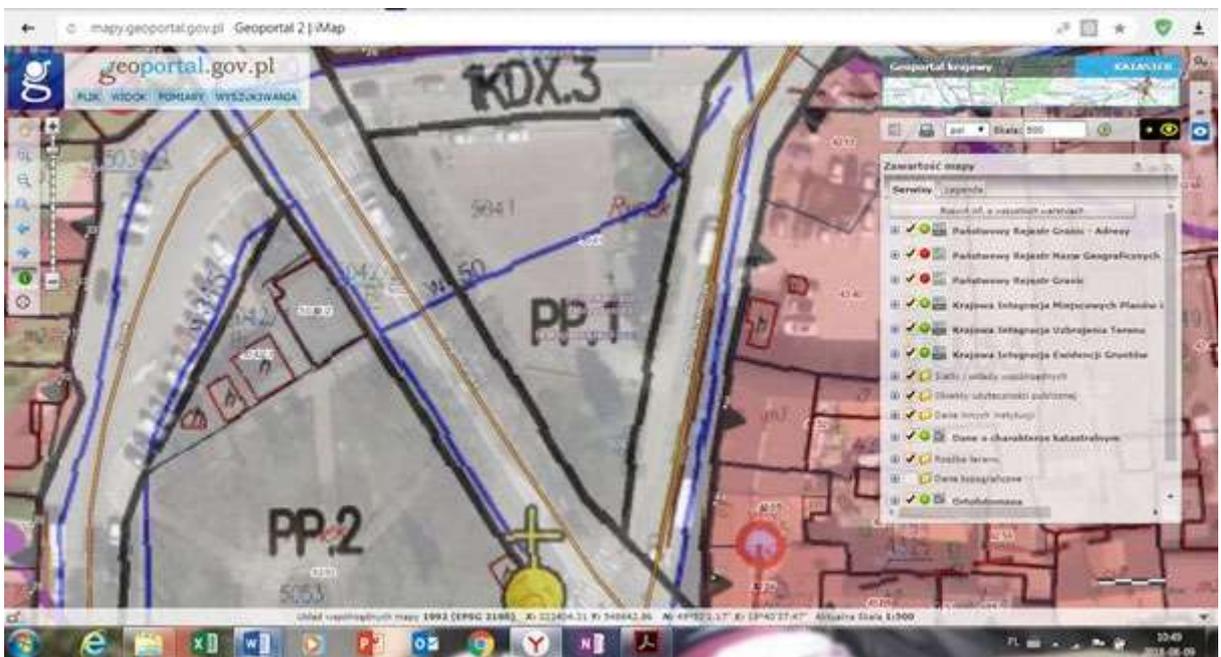


Figure 5. Area of the monument on the marketplace in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Please note that the allotment is not equal to the locally provided mortgage register: IKDX.3 and PP. I. Source: Geoportal.gov.

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Photographing Moments to be Seen: Edith Amituanai's Little Publics

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Abstract

The photographic work of Aotearoa New Zealand artist Edith Amituanai generates the confident self-assertion of publics that potentially shifts misperceptions of people and place for both subjects and their audiences. A belief in service, a characteristic legacy of Amituanai's Sāmoan family background has led her to document people, particularly diverse diaspora communities, in the western suburbs of Auckland city where she also lives, and to documenting people more broadly in their neighbourhoods or personal environments. Her images have enabled largely unnoticed and hence provisional publics associated with disregarded public spaces to see themselves presented in mainstream society in art galleries, publications and social media, thereby potentially shifting the stereotypes of people and local places to aid a more complete depiction of a society beyond the dominant European settler demographic. Amituanai's images of youth, family, cultural and interest group communities and those connected with educational institutions convey the multiple associations that connect individuals. While these associations can be aligned with Grant Kester's concept of politically coherent communities' or Michael Warner's 'counterpublics' I argue that the people visible in Amituanai's work or who take agency to respond to her photos are making themselves publics on their own terms, creating publics that are equal to any other public. The activation of public identity that claims shared space has occurred during the institutional exhibition of Amituanai's images where subjects and visitors respond to photographs in demonstrations of their own agency.

Keywords: Auckland, Edith Amituanai, photography, little publics, Pasifika community

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Introduction

Before leaving art school Edith Amituanai had resolved to make a practice of photographing people in her local area of the western suburbs of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) in bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand (2020, *pers. comm.* 3 July). A city of nearly five million inhabitants according to Statistics New Zealand (2020), Auckland has undergone waves of significant demographic change as is common with most colonial settler nations. European (*Pākehā*) arrivals initially displaced the Māori inhabitants beginning from contact in the mid-17th century. Since the 1960s immigration has flowed across the Pacific into Aotearoa, mostly from islands that had been former colonies, subsequently followed by an ongoing wave of migration from East and South East Asia. Auckland is the largest Polynesian city in the world. The suburb of Ranui where Amituanai has lived since the early 2000s has a larger proportion of Māori and Pacific peoples than in central Auckland city: 40.9% Pākehā (Auckland 53.5%); 21.0% Māori (Auckland 11.5%); 26.1% Pacific peoples (Auckland 15.5%); 26.8% Asian (Auckland 28.2%) and 3.7% other ethnicities (Auckland 3.4%) (Rānui totals add to more than 100% since people could identify with multiple ethnicities, New Zealand Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Pasifika scholar Damon Salesa (2017, 10) has described the uneven settlement of Pacific peoples in Auckland as having generated a 'Pacific archipelago' made up of "islands" of neighbourhoods, suburbs and institutions such as churches that became 'unabashedly Pacific places.' These 'islands' have shifted suburbs across the decades with new arrivals and inter-marriage, as Salesa notes 'genealogies connect tangata whenua (the people of the land) with other tangata o le moana (as one might say in Samoan) – the many peoples of what is now called Polynesia' (2017, 9). Amituanai's family background is Samoan, the most prevalent of Pacific residents in Aotearoa at almost 50% or 144,138 people, yet Samoans are a minority representing less than 3.6% of people identifying as an ethnic group in New Zealand (New Zealand Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Census Ethnic Group Profiles: Samoan and, Demographics of New Zealand's Pacific Population). Ethnic profiles and terminology reinforce the stereotyping and negative implications for national identity that Pacific peoples have yet to overcome in New Zealand (Grainger, 2009). Recently the New Zealand government has officially recognised that terms such "Pasifika" used to describe people migrating from Pacific islands emphasise broad generalisations about people who are extremely diverse, leading to the integration of more fine-grained perspectives (Chu, 2016 and Thomson, Tavita & Levi-Teu, 2018). General understanding has largely ignored the fact that Pacific people align themselves variously and at different times along ethnic, geographic, church, family, school, age/gender, island or New Zealand born, occupation or a mix of these (Anae, Coxon & Mara, 2001).

The invisibility and marginalisation of Pacific peoples in Auckland goes beyond concerns of oversimplification and the geographical condition of Salesa's 'Pacific archipelago' to issues of persistent inequality in education, health, employment and home ownership associated with the fact that more than half the Pacific population live in the most deprived areas of Aotearoa (Sorensen & Jensen 2017, Daldy, Poot & Rokskrue, 2013 and Spoonley, 2011, 2018). Despite attention to inclusion and increasing the representation of tangata o le moana and other non-Pakeha residents in all city and national public institutions, the issue of Pasifika invisibility was regrettably personally bought home to me when I commenced as Principal Curator at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 2013 in a visitor survey that recorded the comments of a local Pacific

family who had not seen themselves in any of the on displays. Living and working in part of Auckland's 'Pacific archipelago' Amituanai's attention to people far from the central city provides a visible identity for individuals and groups in gallery and media spaces. This paper argues that each stage of Amituanai's process – the taking of photographs and their public presentation – can support the production of micro publics, that is necessarily far from theoretical models of the ideal public sphere in bourgeois democratic societies that were proposed by Jürgen Habermas (1962). Based in the presumption of freedom of speech, space for public assembly, and equitable cultural and social status of the public, the essence of Habermas' definition was noted by critics as being inevitably compromised by state and market powers, the mass media and other inequalities. Today neo-liberal capitalism is understood as refashioning the public in its own image (Arden, 2014). Applicable to the context under discussion are the ideas of theorists such as Rosalyn Deutsche (Deutsche, 1996, 279-90) and Grant Kester, following the philosophy of writers including Nancy Fraser and Chantal Mouffe, who understand the notion of democracy as a site of contestation, a struggle about the definition of the people. Amituanai has developed a practice that embraces the challenge of gaining people's trust to be photographed in public space, creating work with a public which is necessarily provisional and also unappreciated in the perception of many other New Zealanders.

Photographing Community



Figure 1. The Amituanai Family Lotu, 2005. Photo: Edith Amituanai.

Concerned to document 'What's ... right under my nose, just next door to me and down the street' (The Big Idea Editor, 2009), Amituanai's embeddness in her Ranui neighbourhood and her Instagram social media photographs are a means to establish trust with people that she approaches on the street in an impromptu way. Her early series taken in the homes of her extended family in Ranui, such as *The Amituanai Family Lotu*, 2005 or *House of Tiatia*, 2007, had introduced her interest in images that evoke the complex cultural code underlying Samoan life, 'fa'a Samoa' or the Samoan way. Dress, behaviour and possessions can signify a sense of the overarching values and protocols of fa'a across all aspects of life and are closely associated with honouring one's family and generating respect and social cohesion within the Samoan community. Amituanai's photos of Sāmoan and other diaspora families – particularly the Burmese refugee Lai family in *La Fine Del Mondo* 2009-10 in which the lives of children predominate – in western Auckland made 'visible what dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate' in Chantal Mouffe's understanding of publics (2007, 4 in Desai & Darts, 2016).



Figure 2. House of Tiatia, 2007. Photo: Edith Amituanai.

The people and interiors in the photos support understandings of the complex social and cultural associations of the subjects, and that individuals can hold allegiance to multiple and overlapping communities (Delanty, 2012, 1–12; Graves, 2005, 25). Amituanai's reflection on home as 'both personal and political, cramped yet uninhibited, secure and unfixed, cultural and constructed' (The Big Idea Editor, 2009) underlines the multiple conceptualisations of "community" that are relevant to the people she photographs in their associations with nationality, culture and its diasporas, religion,

family, work, identity, education and interests, including the tensions arising between communities.

Amituanai's work does not achieve Grant Kester's (2004 150–51) idea of a coherent community that is based in a political solidarity initiated around an experience in which he includes class, race or sovereignty, as the collective experience of marginalisation or resistance to external forces rooted in specific historical moments and particular constellations of political and economic power. For Kester communities are activated by the artist in contrast to “the grain of a dominant culture” or unfold “against the backdrop of collective modes of oppression” (Kester 2004, 150). By contrast, Amituanai's immediate way of working in public space, having to work quickly to capture individuals she identifies as ‘moments to be seen’ (2020, pers. comm. 3 July) is distinct from Kester's cohesive “politically coherent” community (Kester, 2004, 137, 150–151) that he proposes emerges through a process of dialogue and consensus formation. Rather, I interpret Amituanai's work as generating counter or little publics of youth, who are often antagonistic or resistant to concepts of community, as well as publics based in family and community associations.

Public Moments



Figure 3 (left). Girls outside the library, 2016. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.
Figure 4 (right). Pasifique and friends get bikes, 2015. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Since 2015 Amituanai has developed *Edith's Talent Agency ETA*, an ongoing photographic series of young people snapped performing their lives in public space. Amituanai has been an interloper into the domains of youth where she has established their trust through the proximity of living and working as arts coordinator in the neighbourhood and showing her credentials as an art photographer. The *ETA* images show gatherings in parks, shopping centres and in the street where young people are actively creating their own worlds. I would argue that these images of single subjects or small groups gaining visibility in *ETA* support the argument by Anna Hickey-Moody (2013, 19) that youth can perform or enact important forms of citizenship through being recognised as ‘little publics’. Space is often occupied in a gendered way as in the bodies of the *Girls outside the library, 2016* or *Girls at Starling, 2017*. The ownership of a bike enables the ebb and

flow of male groups seen in numerous images such as *Pasifique and friends get bikes*, 2015. School uniform or codes of dress and behaviour associated with street culture indicate purposeful or shared identification. A key interest group is evident from a number of boys with sirens on bikes, including *Roberto from the Mimika Boys*, 2017.



Figure 5. Roberto from the Mimika Boys, 2017. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 6. Tups hits the human flag, 2016. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

These immediate images taken as a response to Amituanai's observations of the subject convey the sovereign identity of the individual as they desire. Some kids are snapped as they exceed codes of conventional public behaviour such as in *Tups hits the human flag*, 2016. Every photo is responsive to the subject; for Amituanai 'every picture needs to be based in 'a connection' (2020, pers. comm. 3 July).



Figure 7. Treynar, 2017. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Her method has been refined to maximise people's engagement with the image; she uses a Medium Format Camera that enables face to face conversation with her subject over the top of her equipment (Dunn, 2019), gives people their own photo and invites them to its exhibition. Immediacy is often established through time spent "on location", for example, she waited years to approach her subject in the casual looking portrait *Treynar*, 2017. Amituanai's 'talent agency' appear as little publics who find public space a safe place to express themselves.

By contrast, counterpublics have been generated when Amituanai's photos were publicly presented. As a project for the Whau Arts Festival 2016 curated by Whau the People and the Moveit Holiday program, Amituanai's photo of Houstyn became the billboard for a 40ft container. During the Festival people crammed into the container to watch a projection of a lip sync video made by kids from Ranui in a holiday program.



Figure 8. Houstyn with billboard. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 9. Watching the Ranui 135 video in the container. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Watching the way they had defined themselves in the photo and video, the individuals depicted and their friends cohere as a political identity defined by the status of otherness, close to Michael Warner's (2005) conception of counterpublics. Warner posited an argument that gendered, feminist and queer publics can comprise discursively formed and socially distinct "counterpublics" (or sub-publics), which he described as "the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" (Warner 2005, 90). The 2016 Festival exhibition of Amituanai's work facilitates the assertion of a sub-publics who mediate their own real and poetic world-making in opposition to dominant social forms of family or social life.

Another sub-public was evident during the event *Urbanesia*, 2017 when a number of Amituanai's *ETA* photos were reproduced in bus shelters and billboards in Henderson and Avondale (lower and middle class suburbs in west Auckland). This little public was visible travelling on a train with local musicians from Henderson to Avondale for the opening event and in an impromptu dance party on the streets of Avondale. Celebrating the people in Amituanai's photographs as they were displayed on the street was an act of claiming some agency over public space and connecting people to place while countering invisibility and unfamiliarity.



Figure 10. Amituanai photos on street billboards in Henderson, part of *Urbanesia*, 2017.
Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 11. Street dance, Urbaneisa opening, 2017. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 12. Father and child with Amituanai billboard, Tups hits the human flag, 2017, part of Urbaneisa, 2017. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Creative Community

Amituanai's work facilitates counterpublics or Hickey-Moody's little publics to be visible as subjects, audiences and photographers in ways that also deliver Warner's theoretical possibility for the political potential of transformation of public thought and life. As photographers, the children in Amituanai's *Keep On Kimi Ora*, 2017 project demonstrated ownership of their representation. Additionally, youth audiences of Samoan background or interest groups who visited her survey exhibition 'Double Take', 2019 generated a public presence in response.



Figure 13. Joseph in his hut by Roger Hohepa, part of *KeepOnKimiOra*, 2017.
Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Keep On Kimi Ora was the outcome of a partnership between Kimi Ora Community School (Years 1-8) in Flaxmere, Hastings and Hastings Art Gallery that provided Amituanai with a six week residency at the school, which at the time had a student demographic of 65% Pasifika and 32% Māori (Brownson, 2018, 10). During the residency she taught students how to represent each other photographically and lent them her camera to take photos at school and at home. In order to address perceptions of Flaxmere as associated with poverty and crime in the media (du Fresne, 2016), Amituanai purposefully ensured that the 55 photos exhibited at Hastings Art Gallery in *Keep On Kimi Ora* (17 June – 3 September 2017) showed both home and

school scenes. The photos depict moments of school life, such *Joseph in his hut* by Roger Hohepa (Year 1) or domestic life as in *Javan* by Jason Naea (Year 7). The students hosted the opening and in the public talk proudly claimed the photos as their own, according to Amituanai (2020, pers. comm. 3 July).



Figure 14. *Javan* by Jason Naea, part of *KeepOnKimiOra*, 2017. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

In uniting around this project and creating their own presence in public, individual students, families and the school community formed counter or little publics in Warner's and Hickey-Moody's terms.

Audiences who are not depicted in Amituanai's photographs have also created a public space of their own within the white cube art gallery. Amituanai's extensive survey exhibition *Double Take* curated by Ane Tonga in 2019 was at the Adam Art Gallery, on Victoria University of Wellington campus. The groups and individuals drawn to the exhibition on the grounds of their cultural and social connection to her work, including a Samoan language preschool group (the first preschool for this gallery) and Victoria and Massey University's Pasifika students, shared their knowledge and experiences related to the photos and in so doing formed counter publics. One student was observed by Amituanai to be keeping her mural scale image in the front window company, leading to inviting him to bring his siren car crew from greater Wellington to play at the opening, an exceptional event on campus.

The closing of *Double Take* generated a temporary public presence comprising students performing spoken word and traditional Samoan and urban dance moves, siren car broadcasts and the singing of White Sunday School songs (a Samoan church celebration of childhood) amongst other responses. The gallery space became part of Salesa's shifting archipelago, a place inhabited by young audiences who showed respect for both 'fa'a Samoa' protocols and performed the contemporary codes that youth employ in their adopted homeland within their own little publics.



Figure 15. Victoria and Massey University fashion students respond to Double Take, closing event, Adam Art Gallery, 2019. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 16. Mason at the Adam Art Gallery window prior to Double Take opening, 2019. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.



Figure 17. Siren cars, Double Take opening, Adam Art Gallery, 2019. Photographer: Edith Amituanai.

Conclusion

The photographic practice of Edith Amituanai has demonstrated that photography including its exhibitions can be a potential platform to enable individuals and specific little publics to become visible and participate more fully in society. Amituanai's photographic method of responding to the actions and moments of tension in public space produces images in which participants see themselves singularly and collectively acting as an intimate member of their publics, in neighbourhoods that constitute the shifting archipelagos of Pacific cities. Working in short duration with the photographer these groups of youth, students, families and others have demonstrated behaviour that is associated with Warner's counterpublics or more closely connected with Hickey-Moody's little publics in demonstrating pride in sharing the associations held in common with each other. Generating multiple little publics in her photos and in audience responses, Amituanai's practice both respects and questions ideas of collectivity and community whilst also encouraging the agency through which people can create their own public worlds.

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Why Alice is not in Wonderland? Countering the Militarized *status quo* of Cyprus

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Abstract

Why Alice is not in Wonderland? Countering the militarized status quo of Cyprus is a narrative, part of the author's diary. It is a reflection on a critical spatial practice, a performative event, titled "Alice in Meridianland... or the counter-militarization action", part of the Buffer Fringe Performance Festival, Nicosia, Cyprus, 2019. The critical spatial practice comments on Cyprus' actual militarization status by offering alternative urban imaginaries for the urban commons of an island without armies. It has taken place along a loop of streets and public spaces both in the north and the south parts of divided Nicosia. "Alice in Meridianland" is a camouflage tactic to conceal its anti-militaristic nature while crossing the guarded checkpoints into the city's north part. Two tricycles, pulling 3-meter-long banners, have followed the loop in opposite directions, three times. They met at designated areas and formed instant spaces of playful interaction. The narrative unpacks the entanglements between the performative event and the city's users of the streets and public spaces. It unfolds how the event has generated new associations between the public spaces and the feelings of the participants and of the author. How it readjusted their mental maps and urban imaginaries. The narrative is a reflective tool for critical spatial practices in producing situated knowledge.

Keywords: critical spatial practice, counter-militarization, narrative, mental maps, urban commons

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“Why?” a six-year-old Syrian boy is asking me. He is standing by the two tricycles that pull the three-meter-long banners-on-wheels with “Alice...in Meridianland”¹. He is following us along Ledra street, all the way from Eleftheria square, located at the south edge of the old city of Nicosia. He is on foot and his buddy on a tiny bike. “Why can’t I come with you?” He is persistent. We are situated in the old city center, next to the Republic of Cyprus checkpoint. We are heading to Ataturk square, the historical central square of Nicosia. It is five minutes bike ride away from where we are standing. We are forming a procession. One biker at the front, one tricycle following, and a biker at the end. Just a few minutes before, we occupied the newly designed Eleftheria square. It is the main square of the south part of Nicosia, a bridge connecting the new with the old city, designed by Zaha Hadid. It is very much contested by the city’s inhabitants and well-guarded by private security. We formed space between the two banners-on-wheels and placed blue color cushions on the floor, reclaiming the square. Two o’clock in the afternoon on October 26th and it is still unbearably hot in the shadowless public space.

¹ Project Team: Laboratory of Urbanism University of Cyprus (LUCY) and AA & U for Architecture, Art and Urbanism (project leader: S. Stratis). <http://www.aaplusu.com/en/projects/alice-in-meridianland-or-the-counter-militarization-action-2019/57>



Figures 1 and 2. Alice in Meridianland, at Eleftheria Square, 2019. Photo AA&U (critical spatial practice agency AA & U for Architecture, Art, and Urbanism).

A spinning wheel is on one of the two banners facing each other. It is Alice's spinning wheel with numbers from two to ten. It is a sort of dice to help the players move along the path of a ladders & snakes game printed on the same banner. The winner is the player who does not arrive first to No 100, but the player who collects the biggest amount of daisies' stickers along the way. There are twenty-six spots along the game board path, which correspond to a reciprocal number of boxes depicted on the second banner-on-wheels, located a few meters away. "You spin the wheel and you wait until it

stops...”, Well, our newly constructed wheel is frictionless....We forgot to put a deceleration device.

The camouflage project, that of “Alice in...Meridianland” has gotten life on its own. It is lovely to see how the kids have become unexpectedly our biggest fans during our performance. They just love watching the wheel spinning, not caring when it stops. Unlikely to their parents who are getting utterly impatient. Yet, they cannot leave. The Alice’s spinning wheel, the ladders & snakes game in combination with the sticky daisies have become the agents for the undeniable popularity of our project. Grown-ups would stay in a distance observing their kids playing. They help them sticking their daisies’ trophies on the right spot of the brown color leaflet handed out to them by the volunteers. I hope they will read the information on the leaflet when they return home. The kids would keep asking for more sticky daisies. They would spin the wheel once more while their parents are begging them for their departure.

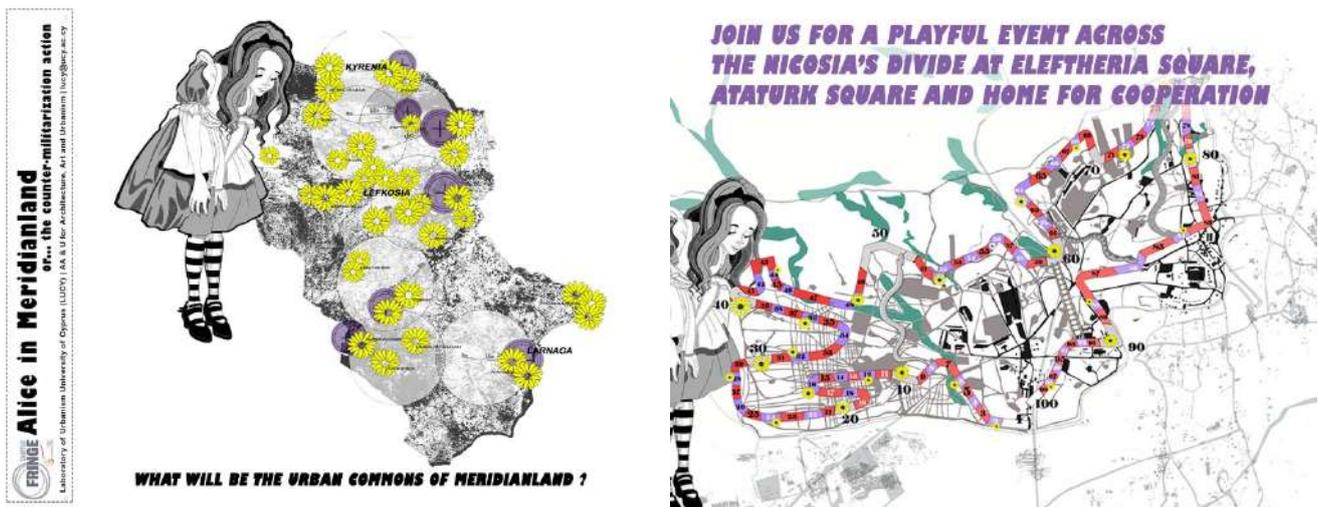


Figure 3. Alice in Meridianland, at Eleftheria Square, 2019. Photo AA&U.

“6!!!” The wheel stopped at number six”, exclaims a seven-year-old young girl. “There is a daisy at number six!”. She is collecting a sticker with a yellow daisy’s image printed on it. She sticks it on threefold brown paper, on a circle corresponding to the box no 6. The two Syrian boys had to make some space for her since they were playing already for fifteen minutes before her arrival. They are competing who is spinning the wheel faster.

“No 6: Costa Rica with no armies is ranked first on the Happy Planet Index”. Half of the twenty-six boxes are devoted to Costa Rica. A country with no armies since 1948, after many decades of civil war. The rest of the boxes are populated with images from the University of Cyprus students’ 2018 urban design projects. “A Guide to Counter-

Militarization” was the theme of the Urban Design Studio. The students were invited to envision co-production economies. To design a network of infrastructures that support the commons of the “Meridian” city after the island’s reunification under Federal Cyprus. “Meridian” city has become “Meridianland” for our “Buffer Fringe Festival” contribution. They are equally imaginary. “Meridianland” is roughly the territory that runs along the 33rd Meridian crossing the island. It starts from Kyrenia, at the north coast, crosses Nicosia, and ends at the southern coastal city of Larnaca. What if Federal Cyprus is demilitarized? Then, we will use the former military infrastructures of all armies parked on the island, as a network of territories for the Meridianland’s urban commons. The students’ projects focused on a couple of Turkish military camps in the north part of the island.



Figures 4 and 5. Alice in Meridianland, Images on the banners, 2019. Photo AA&U.

We are patiently waiting for the policemen to make space for us to cross the checkpoint of the Republic of Cyprus into the buffer zone headed to the “TRNC” checkpoint to the north part of the city. They are polite and curious since only pedestrians cross the Ledra street checkpoint and not tricycles with banners-on-wheels. The Syrian boy continues to ask to continue the promenade with us. An oversized image of Alice is printed on the banner is overlooking both the Syrian boy and the printed map of Meridianland, full of images of yellow daisies. I almost cry when I tell him that he cannot cross the checkpoint with us. Impossible to explain to him the reasons. His question and my impossible explanation condense the heart of the Cyprus conflict. “Have you thought of the safety of the participants when you are in the north part of Nicosia?” the curator of the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival, asks me. “Well, not really”, is my answer. My will to change our split imaginaries as regards the isolated parts of Nicosia, cut by the UN buffer zone, has overshadowed the ground reality and any issues of safety. The reality is that Nicosia is about two cities, lying next to each other, with minimum contact between their inhabitants. “You know”, she continues, “the headquarters of “Grey Wolves”, the fascist Turkish political party are located by Ataturk square. They are hostile to your messages”.

“Why Alice is not in Wonderland?” is a question posed by one of the Eleftheria square’s users. “Alice in Meridianland...or the counter-militarization action” is the camouflaged project’s title. It is written in big bold head letters on both sides of the two banners-on-wheels, at the top. Alice’s oversize image printed on the banners and the spinning wheel devoted to her are all also camouflage tactics to cross the “TRNC” checkpoints to the north part of the city. To keep away any unfriendly to our message, people. “What is the project about?” another passer-by is asking us. “It is about peace in Cyprus” is the easy answer addressed to the people along our trajectory. “It is like Alice in Wonderland...it is a game, part of the Buffer Fringe Festival” is the carefully stated answer to the Turkish Cypriot policeman at the checkpoint. He has already received the approval for our crossing from the “TRNC” Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanks to the Festival’s organizers. Each time, we cross the checkpoint at Ledra street, a “TRNC” policeman takes a picture of the images on the banners, with his smartphone. Will he identify the site plan of the enormous artillery camp, next to Kythrea printed on the banner? A camp, three times the size of the walled city of Nicosia. The artillery exercise trails marked on the ground, are covered with the images of the game’s snakes and ladders.



Figure 6. Alice in Meridianland, crossing the check point from the north to the south part of Nicosia, 2019. Photo AA&U.

Our action is a symbolic canceling of the UN buffer zone, criticizing its use as the only meeting place for Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Each of the two tricycles pulling the banners with a leading bike forms a loop procession that traverses the divide across two checkpoints. The two-loop processions run simultaneously in a clockwise and an anticlockwise direction. They are scheduled to meet in the Buffer Fringe Festival grounds as well as at the two major squares of the south and north Nicosia.

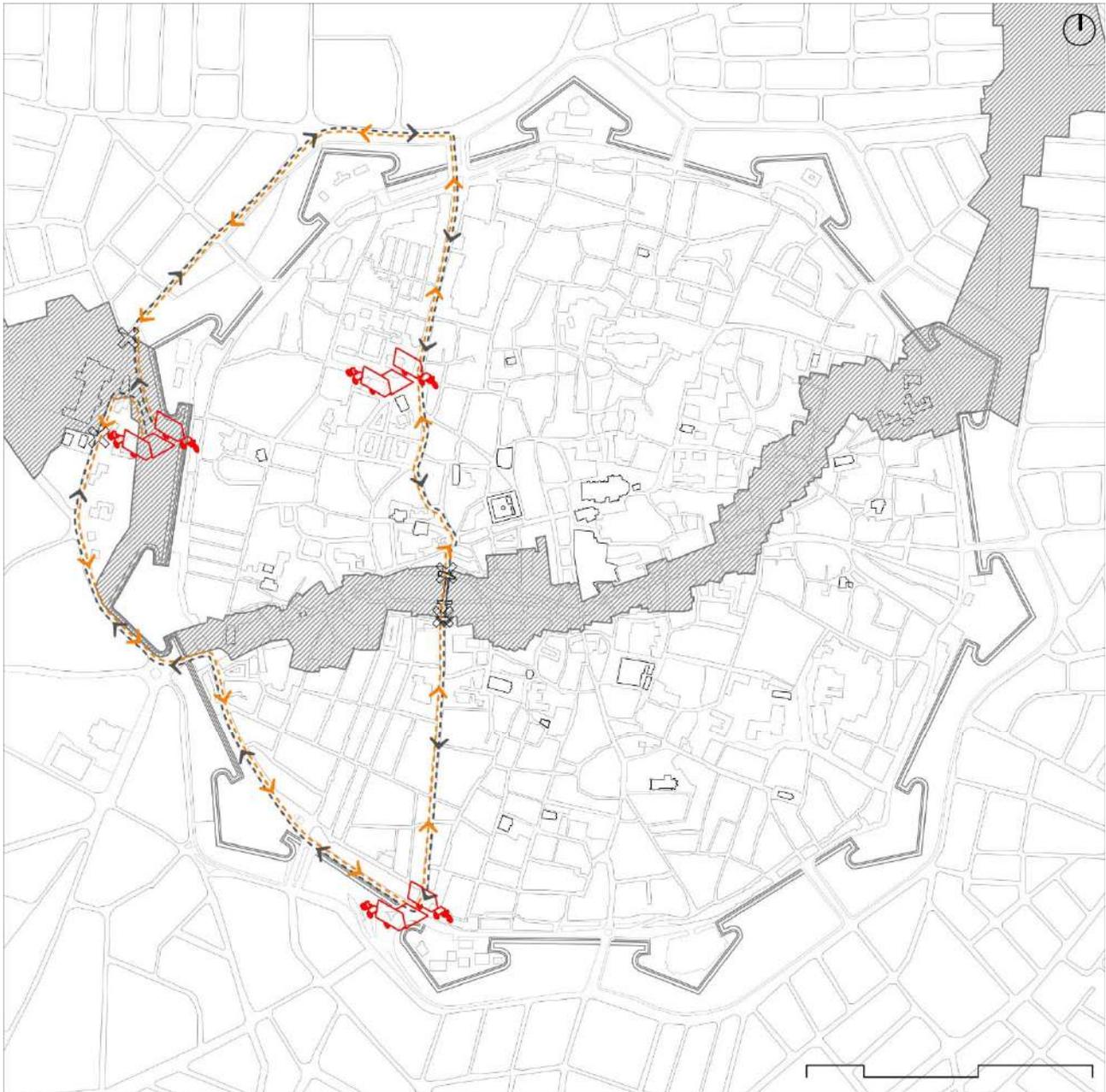


Figure 7. Alice in Meridianland, Nicosia map with the loops of the performance trajectories, 2019.
Photo AA&U.

The Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival organizes for the last few years, a weekly event in October. It uses the Home for Cooperation as a touching stone. It is a beautiful meeting place for people coming from the two sides of the divide. It is located by the UN buffer zone, in front of a former hotel, Ledra Palace, actually used for accommodation for the United Nations soldiers. One of the Buffer Fringe Festival's activities is an open-air one-day event that takes place in the moat of the old city walls, part of the UN buffer zone, just behind the Home for Cooperation. For 2019, the organizers invited practices, universities, and NGOs that deal with peacebuilding. They

invited them to share their work with the visitors by installing a pavilion in the event space. We use our “pavilion plot” as one of the three spaces where the two tricycles with the banners-on-wheels would park.



Figure 8. Alice in Meridianland, in the UN buffer zone by Ledra Palace, 2019. Photo AA&U.

The process of going to these three places as well as departing from them gets a ritual take with a highly symbolic significance. The banners-on-wheels create an in-between event space, a playful interaction for the visitors and passers-by. The first meeting place is at Eleftheria square. Andy and John² are the drivers of the two tricycles. They are followed by many volunteers on foot. Andy is a young volunteer in his late twenties. He comes from Nicosia. During the trip, he confessed to us that in his whole life, he crossed the checkpoint only once when he was a kid, with his parents. He is worrying whether he will find his way in the north part of Nicosia. He has no clue where he is or how to move around. Andy is not an exception. Many young people, part of the majority of the Greek Cypriot population, rarely cross the divide.

The first checkpoints opened in 2003. From 1974 until 2003, it was impossible to cross. In 1974 Turkey invaded the island after a Greek coup d'Etat. The Cypriots were displaced to the south and north parts of the island depending on their ethnicity. 200,000 Greek Cypriots out of 800,000 were displaced to the south. 45,000 Turkish Cypriots out of 100,000 were displaced to the north. The displacement started in 1963 with the bi-communal conflict with Turkish Cypriots confined in ethnic enclaves in the major cities. The UN cease-fire demilitarized zone was established in Nicosia in 1963 and extended along the stretch of the island in 1974. In 1985, the Turkish Cypriots founded the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”. It is a non-recognized country but by Turkey. In 2003, many displaced Cypriots crossed the checkpoints to visit their home left behind in 1974. Since then, a few continue to cross.

² The names of the participants are altered.

Mental maps are deeply deformed in divided cities. Visitors coming to Nicosia find it very hard to understand how Nicosians get lost during their visits to the “other” part of the city. It takes hardly 15 minutes to walk the diameter of the perfectly round old city of Nicosia. Yet, it feels fifty years when you finally decide to take the stroll. While riding the tricycle in north Nicosia, Andy is impressed that many people are sitting in cafes along the sidewalks. Streets are empty of people according to his mental map.

Our second meeting place is Ataturk square. The two processions converge after completing the predesignated loop trajectories. Sadly, we left the Syrian boy and his friend, behind. Ataturk square was the ground zero during the British colonial rule. It is the point from where the British measured the distances to the rest of the Cypriot cities. It is the historic central square of the old city deprived however, from the Greek Cypriots inhabitants since the late 1950s.

“It feels like a foreign place for me. Yet, it is utterly familiar due to the British colonial public architecture and its limestone materiality. Thanks to the modernist architecture of the 1940s, the scale, and density of the city, due to the vegetation, I confess to Andy. “It took me 39 years to walk a ten-minute long path”, I continue. “I was 39 years old when I visited the north part of the city, an ethnic enclave since 1963. I went to a high school, ten minutes’ walk from here”, I add while waiting for the second procession to arrive.

In the Ataturk square, there are young Turkish men, most probably soldiers, part of the 40,000 troops of the Turkish army, parked on the island. They are having their Saturday afternoon off. They see me going around shooting pictures of the banners-on-wheels. Three of them ask me if I took their picture. I decline.

We park the tricycles with the banners just next to a large circular bench that marks the center of the square. There is no participation during the forty minutes of our stay. Yet, our method for each of the three spaces is the same: we start playing among us. We are around 10 to 15 people, volunteers that follow the two processions. The passers-by may get curious, but first keep their distance watching us playing and spinning the wheel, and sticking sticky daisies on the banners. Then, they may feel at ease to join us. Yet, the Turkish Cypriot young volunteers enjoy playing ladders & snakes with the rest of the volunteers, collecting sticky daisies.

John’s mental map of the north part of Nicosia is no different than Andy’s. The mental maps of the young students and volunteers of the group are equally distorted. Today, they have decided to leave their comfort zone and interact with the “other”. It is undeniably, part of the success of the event. A collective leap of faith is taking place. We have put aside our fears, insecurities, and sense of injustice to our ethnic community. We have put aside an attitude of indifference, common to a lot of Cypriots.

The initial structure of the banners-on-wheels was used for the “Urban-a-where?” event back in 2012³. The banners are made of thick paper structure to be as light as possible.

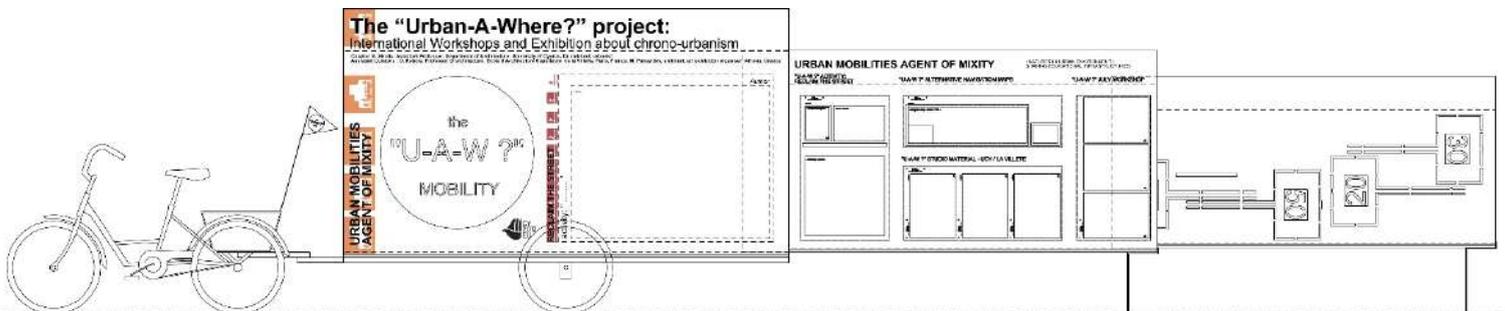
³ The “Urban-a-where?” project <http://www.socratesstratis.com/en/curatorials-list>

The aim of the “Urban-A-Where?” project (the “U-A-W?” project), is to bring to the surface in a creative and critical manner the processes of making the urban and the need for public engagement. The “Urban-A-Where?” project contributes into the construction of an active urban society. “Get playfully public engaged” is a method that allows to teams of architects, artists and urbanists from Cyprus and other European countries, to assist and criticize everyday processes of making of the urban in Cypriot and other European cities. Curator: S. Stratis

Why Alice is not in Wonderland? Countering the Militarized status quo of Cyprus



Figures 9 and 10. Alice in Meridianland, at Ataturk square, 2019. Photo AA&U.



Figures 11 and 12. The 'Urban-a-where' project 2012. Photo AA&U.

Their triangular section gives them their robustness. Additionally, it allows for stowing of our pillows and accessories in the hollow section of the banners. The tricycles run on electricity which makes it much easier to pull the three-meter-long banners along the city's streets.

Our third destination is the Festival's site located on the moat next to Ledra Palace in the UN buffer zone behind the Home for Cooperation, (H4C). The H4C is literally and metaphorically space in-between. Thanks to the opening of many check-points, especially that of Ledra Palace in 2003, H4C has become a home for many peace-building NGOs. A meeting place for people living in the two parts of the island who cannot cross to the other part, or don't want to.



Figure 13. Alice in Meridianland, at Home for Cooperation, 2019. Photo AA&U.

To my surprise, the pavilions hosting many of the festival's events are military tents handed over by the United Nations forces to the festival's organizers. I am so familiar with such a warlike atmosphere. Yet, I sense a mismatch for hosting a peacebuilding initiative. Our "plot spot" is empty and ready to have our equipment parked and unfolded. We place the banners-on-wheels vertical to the main circulation road, just below a tree. A familiar tree, located on a two-meter higher earth level by the road, running between Home for Cooperation and Ledra Palace. I am bonded to the location of this tree. In 2005, we had our first mobile exhibition, long before the opening of the H4C. The "Call # 192"⁴ was the name of our action, part of an international exhibition entitled "Leaps of Faith". Instead of banners-on-wheels placed side by side, we had two buses parked side by side. We had managed to borrow them from the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot municipalities of the north and south parts of Nicosia.

⁴ The "Call #192" project <http://www.aaplusu.com/en/projects/the-call-192-project-2005/19>
The CALL # 192 project is a nomad exhibition space defined between two parked municipal buses, borrowed from the two municipalities of Nicosia, exhibiting mental maps of the other part of the city as created by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot users during a public bus ride.
Project Team: Socrates Stratis, architect, urbanist / Maria Loizidou, visual artist / Charis Pellapaisiotis, photographer.



Figures 14 and 15. The 'Call #192' project, 2005. Photo AA&U.

Mental maps were the content of that project. Mental maps of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots while navigating in the other to them, part of the city, by public buses. Mental maps about the unfamiliar. Mental maps are part of the hidden program of Alice in Meridianland action.

The audience of the festival is quite tuned and ready to consume the exhibited works of the one-day event. We get our first impatient visitors before we manage to park both the banners-on-wheels. We have to kindly ask our last visitors for a break since we need to move to our next stop.

We are returning to the same spot after our next stops at Eleftheria and Ataturk squares, completing our loops across the divide. There is a rather big international audience related to the United Nations Forces. There are quite a few Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots who support the reunification of the island. Many of them are young. I am hopeful. There are many families with their young kids, strolling around the pavilions in army tents. Some of them come from Puerto Rico, others from the Netherlands and Cyprus. Yet, looking at the UN soldiers in their formal uniforms, the

military tents, and the foreign audience, I sense for a moment that it is not a Cypriot celebration. One of the United Nations in Cyprus, perhaps.

The audience at Eleftheria square consists mostly of immigrants. They use public spaces as their breakout space from their tiny and overpopulated apartments of the old city. A few Greek Cypriots are passing by. In Ataturk square, the audience keeps itself in a safe distance. The shop-owners, the café users are observing us. “What are you advertising?” is their question to the volunteers. “Peace” is our answer.



Figure 16. Alice in Meridianland, in the UN buffer zone by Ledra Palace, 2019. Photo AA&U.



Figure 17. Alice in Meridianland, in the UN buffer zone by Ledra Palace, 2019. Photo AA&U.

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Artistic Acupuncture Missions: Penetrating the Public Space

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Abstract

9 places in Europe, 9 artists and collectives, 9 hosts (European Festivals of Art in Public Space) and one multi-layered artistic framework and methodology –the acupuncture– to respond to specific challenges related to urban renewal, social justice or cultural identities. The IN SITU Network has developed this ambitious project in collaboration with its partners between autumn 2018 and the end of 2019. The artists have explored different territories and got to know their specific challenges by engaging in conversation with a wide range of stakeholders. After a short residency period the artists come up with their imaginative proposals, based on a fresh look and inquiry. Built on the analysis of the 9 artistic acupuncture missions, this portfolio aims at focusing on the innovative methodology and strategies employed by the artists in different and complex contexts. The text explores how the artists, in collaboration with their hosts, have developed their creative missions and interpreted the changing meanings, values and functions of public space.

Keywords: artistic acupunctures, public space, urban renewal, social justice, cultural identities

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Introduction

The diverse characteristics of public space, for its own mutable essence, are in a constant process of development and change. Public space needs, structures and dynamics vary according to, among others, the geographical, climatic, cultural, technological, political and economic differences that we might find in any place and time.

Since the start of the new millennium, and since the widely shared experience of globalization, we could find several definitions that have been applied to public space, with the clear purpose of exploring its traits and highlighting its virtues, features and functions. Among the most interesting views and reflections that emerge from the sphere of political analysis, we can stress the meaningful link between public space and the development of human rights.

In the 2019 report prepared by the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune, we find that: “Public spaces are conduits for realizing human rights for all. The human rights framework should be applied to the design, development and maintenance of public spaces in urban, rural, natural and digital spaces. If States, international organizations and the international community do not take the issue of public space seriously and fail to understand it as a basic question of human rights, it will be impossible to fulfil cultural rights, and indeed many other universal human rights” (Bennoune, 2019, p. 21).

A public space where human rights can be realized is a space of interdependencies and one where different models of coexistence can be imagined and practised.

Contemporary studies about the role of public space point out these fundamental aspects related to the search for equality and the recognition of citizens' rights.

According to the *Charter of Public Space*, adopted in Rome in 2013 as one of the main outcomes of the *Biennale Spazio Pubblico*: “Public space must be the place where citizenship rights are guaranteed and differences are respected and appreciated” (*Charter of Public Space*, 2013, p. 4).

Echoing the spirit of the *Charter*, the architect Pietro Garau asserted that: “In public spaces we are all equal, in the sense that we can all exercise our shared right to the city without having to display our social status” (Garau, 2014, p.6).

The attention and reflection towards public space are currently at the top of the agenda of several UN agencies (e.g. the UN-Habitat), and other international organizations like the UCLG (worth mentioning the work done by the Agenda 21 for Culture), which are all focusing on its key role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹

A recurrent approach asserts that public space should facilitate a dynamic environment for the expression of cultural diversity and cultural values, but, as observed by Jordi Baltà Portolés: “Beyond the notion of ‘access to culture’, which may often entail passive reception of cultural works ‘produced’ by artists, the more active notion of ‘participation’ should prevail. (...) In addition to taking part in specific cultural activities

¹ There is a growing literature about the links between public space and the SDGs. See, among others: UCLG, (2015). *Culture 21: Actions. Commitments on the role of culture in sustainable cities*. Available at: http://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/culture21-actions/c21_015_en.pdf; and: Kristie Daniel (2016), *Public Spaces: A key tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*, HealthBridge. Available at: https://healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Final_Electronic.pdf [Accessed 10 September 2020]

such as, for example, the creation of new narratives and works, the right to take part in cultural life requires active involvement in decision-making and in the management of cultural processes and activities” (Baltà Portolés, 2019, p. 119).

Participation, collaboration, social and community engagement, enhancing citizens interactions and synergies, recognizing interdependency, developing new models of horizontal design and governance, processes of listening and co-creating, are therefore among the different notions and understandings currently being used to analyse public space and its complex ecosystem.

Then, if we move from a theoretical to a more practical approach, what are the methodologies to penetrate into and analyse the challenges of public space and its multidimensional ecosystem? What are the tools to engage with a mutable and evolving context in which a set of very diverse agents and stakeholders operate and interact? From the artistic, architectural and creative field, the IN SITU Network has approached an existing and inspiring methodology and practice that opens up other formats to penetrate into the different layers of public space and its multiple challenges: the acupuncture.

Drawing on a process which started in the field of urban planning and social participation,² and conceptually linked to an ancient oriental therapeutic practice originating in China, the acupuncture methodology focuses on locally oriented interventions, with different strategies aiming at involving citizen participation in the ongoing inquiry and transformation of public space.

As described by the artist Jeanne van Heeswijk: “[Artistic interventions in public space] are a form of urban acupuncture (hit and run tactics) that will allow the sensitive places in our society to emerge and the blocked relational energies flow again” (Van Heeswijk, 2011).

By imagining the artist as a needle that can activate and connect multiple points in the body of public space; and by imagining the artistic process as needles that can stimulate and provide a different reaction and understanding about a specific problematic in public space, the IN SITU network has conceived and developed the project Artistic Acupuncture in Europe. Nine different members of the network, located in the different countries involved in the project [La Strada Festival, Austria; Lieux Publics, France; Artopolis Association – PLACCC Festival, Hungary; Teatri ODA, Kosovo; Fira Tàrrega, Spain; Provinciaal domein Dommelhof, Belgium; 4+4 Days in Motion, Czech Republic; Oerol Festival, Netherlands; Østfold Internasjonale Teater, Norway] have taken part in the process and have invited a specific artist –chosen for his/her own creative vision and practice- to explore its context and territory and to respond creatively to a local problematic.

Focusing on three main topics – social justice, cultural identity and urban renewal – *Artistic acupuncture for places in Europe* is an attempt to show how foreign artists, coming from different European countries, can bring a renewed, relevant understanding of societal issues. It is asserted that their observations can create new meaning and shift the perspective on key topics endemic in contemporary societies.

² See, among others: Jaime Lerner (2014). *Urban Acupuncture*, Island Press; Darren O’Donnell’s (2002). *Social Acupuncture*, Coach House Books; and: Helena Casanova and Jesús Hernández (2015). *Public Space Acupuncture. Strategies and Interventions for Activating City Life*, Actar.

A European journey through the Acupuncture missions

A group of different artists, between autumn 2018 and the end of 2019, prepared their luggage and began their journeys to their short and intense acupuncture missions. With a traveller's approach and gaze, they set out to singular and mostly unknown territories, ready to explore and dig into them, and counting on the support of the IN SITU members that were acting as their 'local guides'.

Focusing on a deep research process, developed by connecting with the multiple agents and realities of each local ecosystem, the artists were asked to come up with a creative response, adopting the imagination of an utopian artistic project.

Graz (Austria), Marseille (France), Budapest (Hungary), Pristina (Kosovo), Tàrrega (Catalonia), Genk (Belgium), Prague (Czechia), Terschelling (Netherlands) and Moss (Norway) are the 9 cities, the 9 different contexts – with very diverse challenges, landscapes, languages, social dynamics and cultures – in which the Acupuncture missions took place. Equipped with their sensitivity, imagination, vision and creative tools, the artists travelled around the hidden corners of each place, meeting with people, engaging in conversations and trying to enter deeply – and through alternative entry points – into the veins of the specific situation and problematic related to each context. The development and the innovative approaches and strategies of the acupuncture methodology have opened new spheres and layers of practice, research and contemplation, enlarging and deepening the field, the function and the understanding of art in public space.

By designing a European journey – reaching and touching multiple and diverse points of the body of the continent – through which the artists and the members of the network have engaged profoundly in an exercise of fruitful encounters, explorations and conversations, the whole Acupuncture project gave way to unexpected processes and discoveries. Focusing on the importance of the artistic process itself – beyond its possible results – the acupuncture missions triggered an inspiring dynamic in which the artists investigated the relational ecosystem of each public space, connecting and discussing with a wide range of citizens and stakeholders, by means of an ethnographic and cartographic methodology.

According to James Moore, curator-producer at Østfold Internasjonale Teater, representing the IN SITU member in Norway: “The systematic approach to investigating a particular question/theme/place with a foreign artist enables and obliges encounters and interviews with a broad spectrum of individuals. By interviewing people from both public sector and the civil society, with different professional fields, and with different perspectives and/or positions regarding the topic, we gained a rich and dynamic overview. This relates first and foremost to the mapping character of the Acupuncture exercise”.³

Throughout this multifaceted as well as tailor-made process of research and creative practice, we can identify a number of specific elements and concepts useful for envisioning the current and future challenges in the field of art and activism in public space. We will try to summarize them in the following points:

³ Interviewed by the author. 25th May 2020.

- **The future of cities and the cities of future**

Urban planning and city development should no longer be an issue for only a few stakeholders, but the citizens-residents' views and perspectives must become essential components that need to be taken into account. As stated in the UN report previously mentioned: "Authorities must establish specialized, cross-disciplinary professional teams responsible for the design, maintenance and conservation of public spaces that are welcoming for all and create mechanisms for citizen participation in the management of such spaces" (Bennoune, 2019, p. 23).



Figure 1. *Artistic Acupuncture, Graz – Reininghaus. Danae Theodoridou.*
Photo ©La Strada Graz/ Nikola Milatovic

In the visionary *Artistic Acupuncture* developed by Danae Theodoridou in the area of Reininghaus in Graz; in the exploration of the post-industrial district of Csepel, Budapest, realized by Nada Gambier and Mark Etchells; or in the creative analysis of the urban renewal landscape in the city of Moss, carried out by Sjoerd Wagenaar; all the artists have addressed the challenging topic of urban regeneration, stimulating new ideas and perspectives.



Figure 2. *Artistic Acupuncture, Budapest – Csepel.* Nada Gambier & Mark Etchells. ©Nada & Co. Photo by Etchells/Gambier



Figure 3. *Artistic Acupuncture, Moss.* Sjoerd Wagenaar. Photo © Terje Holm

A shift in public space design requires a creative approach: “Designing public spaces also means taking into account alternative and creative practices based on new techniques of communication and urban usage” (Charter of Public Space, 2013, p. 8), as well as a process of reversing the strategies: “Planning with a focus on public space means reversing this order and starting, rather than from the ‘private city’, from the ‘public city’. It is the concept of public-space led planning” (Garau, 2014, pp 17-18).

- **The right to the village**

It is time to claim the right to rural public space for a sustainable future, and it is important to consider the emergence of rural space beyond the simplistic discourse of contrast between centres and peripheries. Fostering urban-rural linkages; questioning models of production, distribution and consumption; reclaiming a new space for ecology and for environmental consciousness; and preserving the cultural spaces in rural areas, are some of the urgent matters to take into account related to this field. As demonstrated by the acupuncture mission of Deirdre Griffin in Tàrrega and its surrounding depopulated area, behind a curtain of distance, abandonment and depopulation, the rural areas unfold a deep wealth of knowledge, experience and values that need to be preserved.



Figure 4. *Artistic Acupuncture, Tàrrega. Deirdre Griffin.* Photo © Maria Capell Pera

- **Refreshing and resignifying the concept of heritage and monument**

The different components of history and heritage, their representation, meanings and functions, are neither static nor neutral issues, but also depend on shifts in economic

and political power. For the acupuncture mission developed in Prague, the artist duo zweintopf (Eva Pichler and Gerhard Pichler) addressed the controversial question of political statements in public space and the role of con(temporary) monuments. Public space has always been identified as the main stage for the performance of political power, and monuments and sculptures are some of its most astonishing instruments.



Figure 5. *Artistic Acupuncture, Prague.* zweintopf. Photo © zweintopf

- **Culturally diverse, plural, inclusive, safe and utopian**

As previously analysed, public spaces have a fundamental role in the accomplishment of human rights and equality, but unfortunately, beyond the positive will and statements, we also know that many public spaces are the embodiment of the lack of justice, of fear and anxiety. With that in mind, the artist Maria Sideri developed her acupuncture project focusing on the place of women in public space in the city of Marseille.



Figure 6. *Artistic Acupuncture, Marseille.* Maria Sideri. Photo © Sideri

As stressed in the UN report about safe public spaces: “When women and girls are not safe walking on city streets, selling their goods or shopping in marketplaces (...) it has a massive impact on their lives. Both the threat and the experience of violence affect their access to social activities, education, employment and leadership opportunities” (UN Women Report, 2017, p. 1).

- **Sharing responsibilities and fostering co-existence**

Linked to the previous point, we can find different artistic approaches that emphasize how the public environment is a space of rights and duties and a space where different generations and communities co-exist in contemporary intercultural society.



Figure 7. *Artistic Acupuncture, Genk.* Francesca Grilli. Photo © Grilli



Figure 8. *Artistic Acupuncture, Prishtina.* Morten Traavik. Photo © Traavik.info / BESA Project 2020

Francesca Grilli, through her acupuncture mission in Genk, focused on issues related to the hybridity and the shifting cultural identity of the Belgian city. Morten Traavik explored the challenging frameworks of visa regulations, borders, mobility restrictions, immigration and integration issues in the EU, in the specific context of Kosovo.

- **Public space as the bridge between the local and the global**

Permanent inhabitants, temporary residents, transient and fleeting passers-by and visitors often walk through and share the same public space. Who does public space belong to? What are the mechanisms to bridge different needs and uses of the public space? How does the cultural identity of a place change due to the encounter between the global and the local? In her Acupuncture mission in Terschelling, Joanne Leighton interwove stories and experiences, focusing on the particular condition of this tiny Frisian island, which is both home to a small and permanent local community, and host to a huge influx of foreign visitors.



Figure 9. *Artistic Acupuncture, Terschelling. Joanne Leighton. Photo © Joanne Leighton.*

Conclusions

The different reflections that emerged from the Artistic Acupuncture missions, the analysis of its importance as a methodological tool, and the different challenges that were pointed out, lead us to make some final observations about this experimental

methodology aiming to connect arts and the civil society and to tackle issues that our contemporary society faces.

By giving an important weight to the process, carefully avoiding the pressure to achieve rapid, concrete results, the Artistic Acupuncture in public space opens up new fields of practice and research through a rich and multi-layered approach. The main values reside in this constant process of inquiry and exploration; in the development of strategies of involvement and collaboration; in building fruitful interrelations between artists, cultural professionals, local authorities, citizens and communities at large; and in a practice that gives much value to the meaningful and constructive dialogue and exchange between people and places.

The Acupuncture missions are tools to interrogate an emerging landscape, crossed by diverse and difficult challenges that need to be addressed through different perspectives. The artists act as therapists – connecting again with the curative origin of the term acupuncture – by intervening in situations which are often blocked and need a fresh new gaze on them.

The participatory aspects of art and many other elements discussed are not new in the field of contemporary art, but the focus on public space through the acupuncture methodology does certainly provide alternative visions and strategies to operate from, beyond the more established canons in a highly complex and fast changing ecosystem. As expressed by Pierre Sauvageot, artist and director of Lieux publics: “It is urgent to invent new modes of exchange”.⁴ Art in public space is therefore the field in which we can explore the deeper reality of collaborative, participatory and relational practices. By way of including and relating, this specific art field provides expanded practices that bring together many actors in a process of constant re-contextualization.

Along this experienced journey, the Acupuncture projects have opened the way to a more integrated approach in which artists connect with different layers of civil society. In this process, as stated by Jeanne van Heeswijk: “We need to think about how to break the artistic persona into a multiplicity of being as well, to unlearn the ways of inserting our skills, in order to ensure that people don’t just become service ‘users’ of another kind, but rather that they are part of the building process, and thereby become true co-creators” (Van Heeswijk, 2016, p. 50).

Taking care of public space requires a system of new alliances with a plurality of perspectives and, if public space is a space for caring, we should therefore look at the whole world as public space. There is no doubt that this will be better shaped by the visionary contributions of artists.

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Monuments of Compassion

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Abstract

The term 'monument of compassion' is introduced to describe the essential features of the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn, as well as other animal monuments. Installed in Hartsdale Pet Cemetery in New York, The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn is unconventional in its representation of a marginalized group (farm animals), its challenge to dominant cultural narratives concerning this group, its interactivity, and its atypical location. It is an artist-driven, dialogic monument of dissent, offering cemetery visitors the opportunity to consider the suffering of farm animals in the same space that they mourn their beloved companion animals. The monument extends compassion to farm animals and affirms their value as individual beings, worthy of a full and natural life. Visitors who resonate with the monument's message are invited to leave a stone at its base. As the stones accumulate, they will be collected and used to create another monument of compassion for typically unmourned animals.

Keywords: monument of compassion, animals, Hartsdale, pet cemetery, anti-monument

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Introduction

On October 26, 2018, a long-term project of mine was realized when the installation crew from Presbrey-Leland Monument Company arrived at Hartsdale Pet Cemetery in New York to install the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn. Funded by individual donations and multi-year grants from the Culture and Animals Foundation, the monument was over four years in the making. It now stands in middle of Hartsdale Pet Cemetery, near the 1923 War Dog Memorial. Hartsdale Pet Cemetery is the oldest pet cemetery in the United States, its origins dating back to 1896. It is home to over 80,000 animals, including dogs, cats, horses, reptiles, birds, and humans (petcem.com). Known as the Peaceable Kingdom, Hartsdale Pet Cemetery is open to all species; yet until recently, there was no monument recognizing farm animals there.

The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn seems both in and out of place among the thousands of companion animal graves that surround it at Hartsdale Pet Cemetery. Its traditional appearance blends unobtrusively with the existing gravestones in the cemetery. But its subject disrupts and unsettles, asking visitors to consider their relationships with farm animals in the same place that they mourn their beloved pets. The aim of this paper is to describe the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn, its strategic placement in Hartsdale Pet Cemetery, its symbolism, and its interactive potential. While it shares features of the contemporary anti-monument (Clark, 2017; Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley, 2018; Young, 1992, 1996) and neomonument (Clark, 2017), the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn is perhaps more aptly described as a *monument of compassion* (E. Greene 2019, pers. comm., 5 November) as it recognizes the suffering of billions of farm animals and acknowledges the reality of their individual lives and deaths.

I begin by outlining a working definition of *monuments of compassion* and presenting a few examples of animal monuments that might be described as such. I follow with a detailed description of the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn, its key features and strategic placement.

Types of Monuments

Traditional

Traditional monuments are familiar to almost everyone. Towering structures of bronze or stone, they are the focal points of myriad public parks and town squares. Often heroic and self-aggrandizing, traditional monuments celebrate the ideals and triumphs of a nation, state, or city (Young, 1996, p. 135). Traditional monuments are often figural statues commemorating generals, commanders, presidents or famous battles. They typically convey the discourses of dominant social or political groups.

Counter-monuments, Anti-monuments, and Neomonuments

In recent decades, the terms counter-monument, anti-monument and neomonument have been proposed by scholars to describe public works that significantly depart in style, meaning or form from traditional monuments (Clark, 2017; Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley, 2018; Young, 1992, 1996). Nontraditional monuments began to emerge with increased frequency during the latter part of the twentieth century, as artists sought new ways to address the realities within which they lived. In post-World War II Germany, artists began to design Holocaust memorials using alternative techniques, materials and approaches. These and other *counter-monuments*, as James Young (1992,

1996) originally described them, “challenge the conventional premises of the monument” (1996, p. 240). In his 1992 essay entitled *The counter-monument: Memory against itself in Germany today*, Young describes examples of contemporary counter-monuments, emphasizing the characteristics of impermanence, public engagement, disruption of public space, and negative form.

Drawing on the work of Young (1992), Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley (2018, p. 772) have proposed the term ‘anti-monumental’ to describe monuments that differ from traditional commemorative works in the following respects: subject matter, form, location, visitor experience or meaning. Unlike traditional monuments, anti-monuments convey the narratives and discourses of under-represented groups. Often temporary or ephemeral, anti-monuments are constructed from a wide range of materials. Rather than being located in prominent public spheres, anti-monuments are often located in unexpected spaces. Anti-monuments encourage an active response from the public. While traditional monuments are explicit in their meaning, anti-monuments are more likely to be ambiguous or open to interpretation.

Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley (2018, p. 718) also propose the term ‘dialogic’ to describe a specific type of counter-monument that has been installed in close proximity to an existing monument, providing a commentary or critique of the existing monument. As an example of a dialogic monument, the authors cite Henry Moore’s *Goslar Warrior*, installed in 1974 in Goslar, Germany. Moore’s monument serves as a counter-monument to the World War I Monument, *Goslar Hunter*. Both monuments are installed along Goslar’s defensive wall, with each offering a different narrative concerning the war and its effects.

Clark (2017) proposes the word ‘neomonument’ to describe conceptual art works that challenge the public to think more deeply about subjects of concern. He asserts that neomonuments are artist-driven, rather than being responses to the prerequisites of larger public or private organizations. Neomonuments “come from an artist’s desire to highlight a politically directed question in a way that uses their creative talents to give impact to that question” (p. 71). They are statements of “reasoned dissent” that prompt thinking (p. 10). Examples of neomonuments include Tue Greenfort’s *Diffuse Einträge* and Marc Quinn’s *Alison Lapper, Pregnant* (Clark, 2017, pp. 77-113).

Monuments of Compassion

I define ‘monuments of compassion’ as public works that respond to the suffering of others and seek to promote a shift in perspective, attitude, or behavior. Flexibility is needed in classifying monuments of compassion, since the circumstances and intentions surrounding certain monuments may not be fully known. Like neomonuments, monuments of compassion can be artist-driven responses to social, political or environmental conditions (Clark, 2017). Like anti-monuments, monuments of compassion may depart from traditional methods of representation in terms of subject matter, form, location, visitor experience or meaning (Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley, 2018). I use the terms ‘counter-monument,’ and ‘dialogic monument,’ to describe monuments that have been strategically installed in the vicinity of other monuments in order to suggest a contrasting narrative (Clark, 2017; Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley, 2018; Young, 1992, 1996).

Animal Monuments of Compassion

One of the earliest known examples of an animal monument of compassion is the Brown Dog Statue, by Joseph Whitehead. The statue was commissioned by anti-vivisectionists and installed in 1906 in response to the inhumane treatment of a laboratory dog by a professor and his colleagues at University College of London (Cain, 2013). The original Brown Dog Statue featured a lifelike bronze terrier sitting attentively on top of a public drinking fountain. The monument was installed in the London Metropolitan Borough of Battersea, with a plaque bearing the following inscription:

In memory of the brown terrier dog done to death in the laboratories of University College in February 1903 after having endured vivisection extending over more than two months and having been handed over from one vivisector to another til death came to his release. Also in memory of the 232 dogs vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and women of England how long shall these things be?
(Lansbury, 1985, p. 42).



Figure 1. Original brown dog statue (1906). Source: public domain

The original Brown Dog Statue, an unequivocal monument of dissent, was tremendously controversial, triggering numerous riots. The statue was “an indictment of the way humans had misused nonhuman animals, particularly those defined as possessing qualities of loyalty: dogs” (Kean, 2003 p.361). In 1907, outraged medical students reportedly stormed the monument in an attempt to tear it down (Mason, 1997). The ongoing violence and disruption led to its removal in 1910. In 1985, 75 years after the removal of the original Brown Dog Statue, a new memorial to the brown dog was installed in Battersea Park where it remains today (Cain, 2013). Both the original (1906) and the new (1985) Brown Dog Statues are the products of artist-community collaborations.

They are explicit in their protests against vivisection and in their expressions of compassion for animal victims.

Ongoing concern with the suffering of animals in medical settings is evidenced by the placement of a monument dedicated to laboratory animals in Hartsdale Pet Cemetery in New York. Installed in the 1990s by the American Fund for Alternatives to Animal Research, the inscription reads, “In memory of the millions of animals whose lives are taken in research and testing.” This simple monument of compassion is now located adjacent to The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn.



Figure 2. Monument for laboratory animals in Hartsdale Pet Cemetery, NY. Source: Linda Brant

Contemporary monuments of compassion may take less conventional forms, such as temporary installations in public spaces. The Black Bear Memorial, which took place at Lake Eola Park in Orlando, Florida in 2015, is one such example. The installation served as a protest against a black bear hunt that was held in the state. During the hunt, approximately 300 bears were slaughtered in the Florida forests, a third of which were lactating females (Large crowd gathers, 2015). The installation featured interactive gravestones, encouraging attendees to write personalized messages in chalk. Visitors lined up to place flowers, pictures, and other symbolic objects in an open coffin representing the hundreds of bears that were killed by hunters. The installation recognized the suffering of the slain bears, activated public engagement, and encouraged expressions of anger, sadness, and grief.

Monuments of compassion can be permanent or temporary, located in urban or remote places, portray a range of subjects, and take an almost infinite variety of forms. They are often unsettling or disturbing to the viewer, because they shine a light on the underbelly of a culture, mirroring the inevitable flaws in prevailing social systems.



Figure 3. Coffin as ephemeral monument of compassion, Black Bear Memorial, Orlando, FL (2015).
Source: Linda Brant



Figure 4. Interactive gravestones as ephemeral monuments of compassion,
Black Bear Memorial, Orlando, FL (2015). Source: Linda Brant

Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn

The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn is a monument of compassion that shares features with traditional monuments, anti-monuments, and neomonuments. An artist-driven monument of dissent, it is constructed with traditional materials – granite and bronze. Created in response to the unimaginable suffering of individual farm animals, the monument calls attention to a category of animals that is effectively invisible and rarely memorialized. The monument also departs from tradition in its interactivity, and its placement in Hartsdale Pet Cemetery.

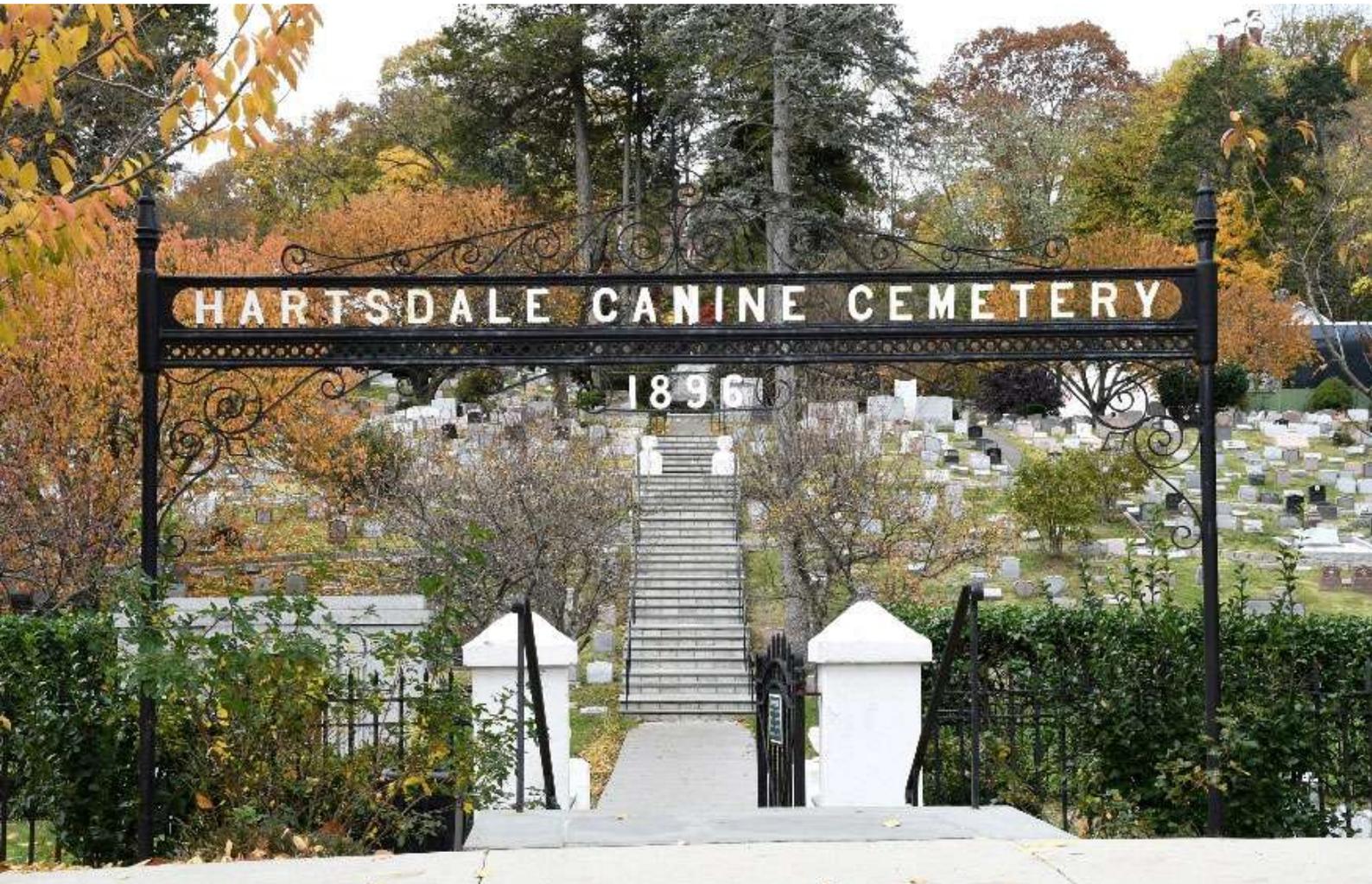


Figure 5. Hartsdale Pet Cemetery (2018). Source: Edward Watkins

A dialogic strategy was used in the selection of Hartsdale Pet Cemetery as the installation site for the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn. What better place to put a monument for unmourned animals than in a cemetery that is full to the brim with monuments for treasured companion animals? The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn represents a contrast to the existing gravestones at Hartsdale Pet Cemetery and points to obvious discrepancies in our perceptions and treatment of different types of animals. The monument communicates a simple yet disturbing reality, representing

and revealing the hidden presence of the billions of animals that are killed in slaughterhouses worldwide (Kean, 2011).

The monument's durable materials (granite, bronze, crystal) stand in contrast to a throw-away society and the commonly held view that the lives of certain types of animals are disposable. Made of bethel white granite, the monument features a gently curving upright tablet with a cast bronze cattle skull in the middle. A hand-faceted quartz crystal is carefully placed in the position of the skull's third eye. In Eastern traditions, the third eye represents wisdom and perception beyond ordinary sight (Song, 2002).



Figure 6. Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn (2018). Source: Edward Watkins



Figure 7. Plaque for Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn (2018). Source: Edward Watkins

The Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn reveals a painful irony in its critical placement of the crystal. When cattle are slaughtered, they are first shot between the eyes with a captive bolt stunner, leaving a characteristic hole in the skull. Paradoxically, the site of this injury corresponds with that of the metaphorical third eye. The quartz crystal functions as a symbol, transforming the place of pain into a call for compassion. Because the monument faces due west, the rays of the sun pass directly through faceted crystal in the skull each morning at sunrise, creating a brilliant glow.

A hand carved crack runs down the middle of the monument, denoting injury and echoing a similar crack in the skull above it. A curving thread leads the viewer's eye from the skull to the base of the monument where an etched needle and four carved

stitches suggest the process of mending a wound. This 'sewn' portion of the monument represents the work that must be done to extend the range of human compassion to farm animals. The top of the bronze skull is 55 inches high, which is approximately the same height as a young cow or steer at the time of slaughter. In front of the monument, a bronze plaque reads, 'For the many individual farm animals whose lives and deaths typically go unnoticed.'



Figure 8. Visitor leaving stone at base of Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn (2018)
Source: Linda Brant

Visitors who resonate with the monument's message of compassion can demonstrate solidarity by leaving a stone at the base of the monument. The custom of leaving stones on graves dates back to ancient times and is most strongly associated with the Jewish tradition. Leaving a stone on a grave is a tangible act of remembrance of the deceased, showing that the individual is not forgotten (Reik, 1964). Similarly, leaving a stone on the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn is an expression of the visitor's compassionate presence. As the stones accumulate, they will be collected and used to create another monument for unmourned animals.

Conclusion

The term 'monument of compassion' was proposed to describe the essential features of the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn, as well as other animal monuments. While traditional in appearance, the Monument To Animals We Do Not Mourn is unconventional in its representation of a marginalized group (farm animals), its challenge to dominant cultural narratives concerning this group, its interactivity, and its atypical location. It is an artist-driven, dialogic monument of dissent, summoning viewers to consider their views of farmed animals in a landscape full of companion animal graves at Hartsdale Pet Cemetery. Visitors have the opportunity to express their compassion and participate in the making of a future monument by leaving a stone at the monument's base. The monument recognizes the lives and deaths of farm animals, affirms their value

as individual beings, and seeks to inspire a shift in perception, attitude and behavior with respect to these individuals.

Acknowledgments

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Treegazing: How Art and Meditation Connect Peripatetic Practices as a Form of Subtle Activism

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Abstract

Treegazing was a public walking event held in the Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne, Australia in 2020 inviting the public to lift their gaze and be mindful whilst acknowledging the garden's aesthetic design and history. This walk created a temporary community of strangers who co-experienced the majestic arboreal canopies of trees and plants, reducing 'plant blindness' (Schussler & Wandersee, 1998). Acknowledging the importance of 'what stories are told' and 'making-kin' (Haraway, 2016), this article explores collaborative visions between meditation practitioner Amanda Hawkey and artist Heather Hesterman. The act of mindful walking aims to connect the body to green spaces; to provide an embodied experience of nature. How might fundamental practices, as humans walking together in public space be potential acts of transformation, of mindfulness, and environmental awareness - even subtle activism? We argue that encouraging an engagement with nature via haptic and ocular modes of art practice and meditation may facilitate a deeper engagement with plants. Treegazing invites the walkers to become part of a connective- fluidity that enacts space not *within* as participants, witness nor viewers but offers a shared collective experience of both mobility and stillness *with* the landscape, a subtle activism that looks up and treads lightly to 'conspire – with nature.'

Keywords: public garden, walking, perception and senses, interdisciplinary, politics

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet, the Boon Wurrung (Bunurong) and Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation. We recognise that sovereignty of this land was never ceded. We pay our respects to elder's past and present and acknowledge all First Nation peoples.

Staying alive- for every species- requires liveable collaborations. Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die.'
– Anna Tsing¹.

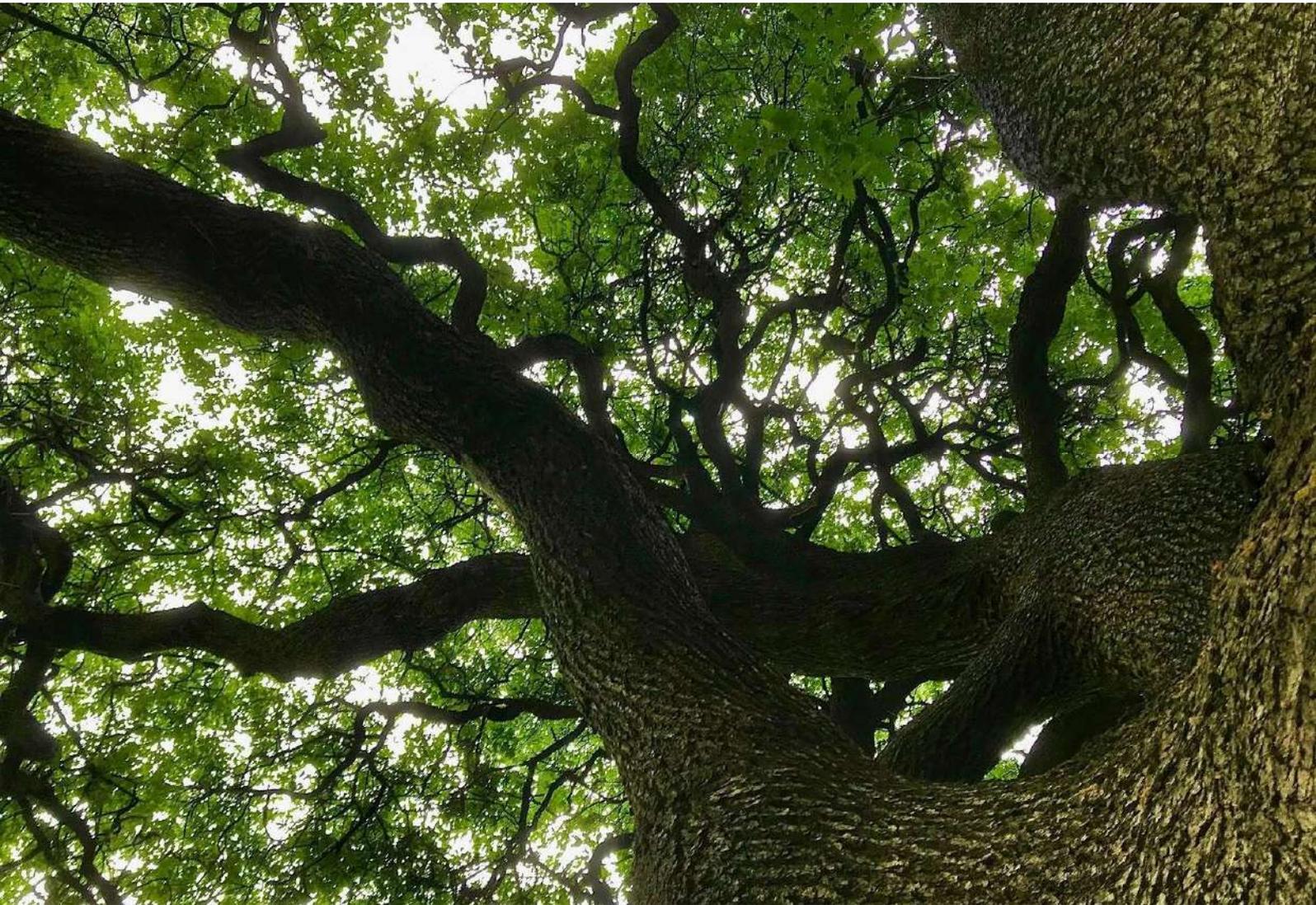


Figure 1. Arboreal canopy. 2019 Image credit: Heather Hesterman

¹ Anna Tsing writes that 'to learn anything we must revitalize arts of noticing and include ethnography and natural history. But we have a problem with scale. A rush of stories cannot be neatly summed up. Its scales do not nest neatly; they draw attention to interrupting geographies and tempos.'p 37. Our intention was to touch upon the histories of the garden as we knew, offering stories that attempted to reveal the layers in a non-linear narrative.

Treegazing was a collaborative project for Melbourne Design Week 2020 by Amanda Hawkey and Heather Hesterman formed through our shared interests of trees and walking. We wondered if the intersections of our practices could be shaped and shared with others as a mode of exploring our connections to the living world. The interstitial space between our practices is messy and complex. However, from our collaborative composting (Haraway, 2016) new forms and awareness may arise.

Treegazing offered free walks starting from the Treasury Gardens located at the edge of the busy Melbourne Central Business District through to one of the oldest gardens in Melbourne's Central Business District, Fitzroy Gardens. The subtext was to draw attention to 'living' collaborations with species 'more-than-human'(Head, 2014).

Treegazing was not intended as a garden tour but rather through an interweaving of our practices, an alternative method of engagement with the landscape, particularly via the acts of 'noticing'. Our walk drew upon art, meditation and landscape design practices in a new hybrid form that offered contemplative directives focusing on both internal and external landscapes.

Treegazing was a political form of subtle activism.

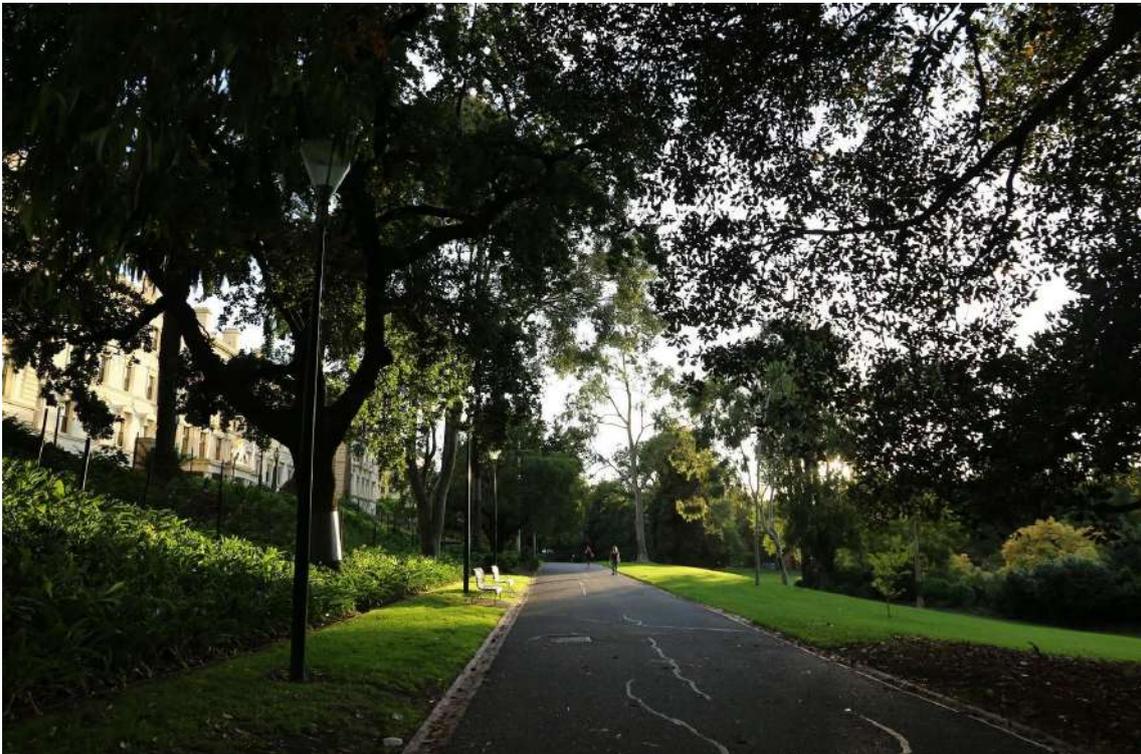


Figure 2. Walk from Treasury Gardens to Fitzroy Gardens. 2020. Image credit: Heather Hesterman

The walks were carefully curated to establish a route, pace and scripted information. We outlined a framework introducing guidelines of silence; mindful walking; 'noticing' attention and invited participants to mediative actions. This information gave walkers the 'shape of the walk' so they are aware of what to expect and to put them at ease.

Treegazing

Walkers proceeded to follow more-or-less in a single file. With pre-determined methods, the walker is able to 'relax into' the walking experience, with space for sensory experiences.

We invited walkers to observe silence, for the duration of their time in the gardens. Silence is a technique employed by Contemplatives to quieten the mind and direct attention to sensory experience as stated by Pema Chodron (2020):

“If you don’t fill up your time with your discursive mind, with your worrying and obsessing, you have time to experience the blessing of your surroundings. You can just be there quietly. Then maybe silence will dawn on you, and the sacredness of the space will penetrate.”

This is a silence in action where the ego is not present. In the process of uniting with an activity we can forget the self and can become more intimate with the vividness of the present moment. We have a choice to step away from past conditioning and be fresh and alive in a moment-to-moment awareness (Rosenberg, 1998).

One of the meditation practices that was employed was the Buddhist practice of Mindfulness. Mindfulness can be described as, “an open-hearted awareness of our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and environment in the present moment” (Bunting & Kearney, 2016). The Buddha guided that Mindfulness could be practiced in four postures, walking, standing, sitting and lying down.



Figure 3. Melbourne. 2020. Image credit: Scarlet Sykes Hesterman

We invited walkers to leave the busy-ness of their occupations and obligations, to leave the noise and drama of the city behind and walk with us. A slow mindful walk offers an opportunity to 'give attention to' the landscape space, and the sensory experiences of the body: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. When attention is practised with clear understanding it can allow us to skilfully engage our attention and stay present in the now. Without attention we are lost in thinking, worrying about the past or planning for the future (Bunting & Kearney, 2016).

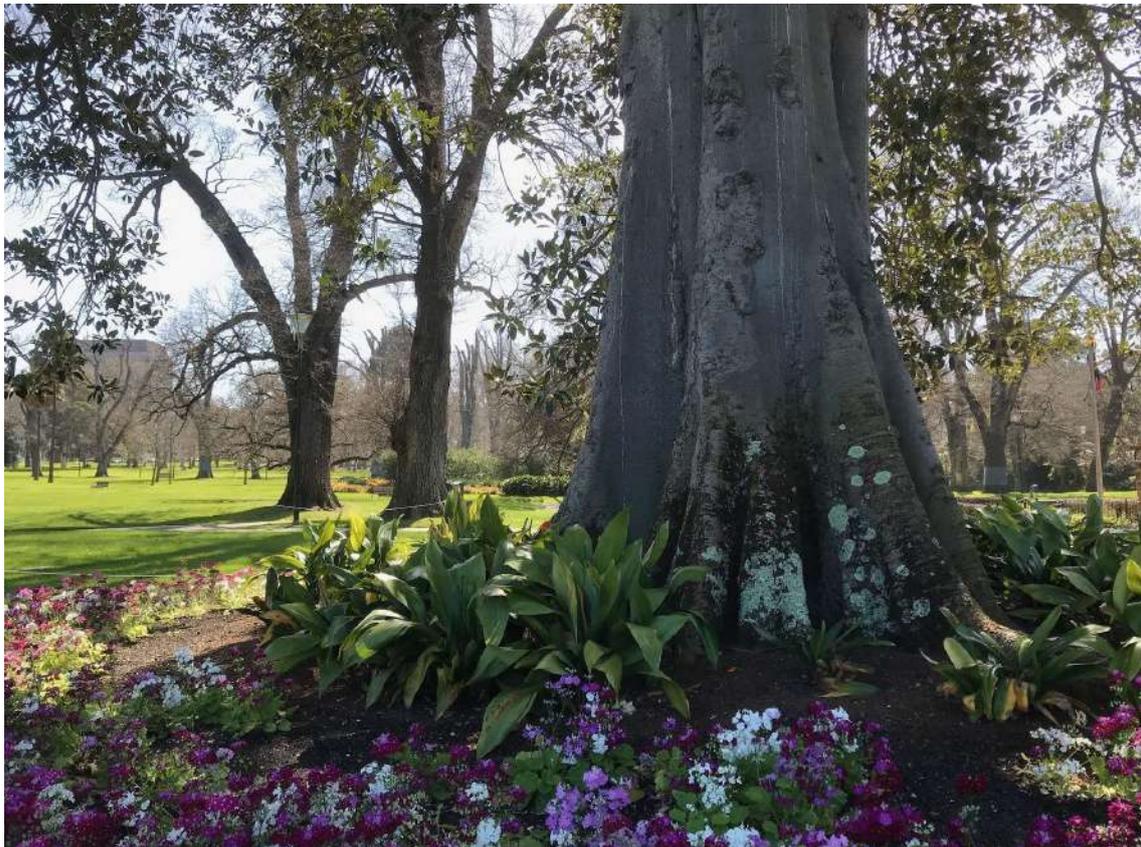


Figure 4. Colourful garden bed border at the base of a Ficus. Fitzroy Gardens. 2020.
Image credit: Heather Hesterman

We asked walkers to notice. The act of 'noticing' is a form of giving attention to something (Ryle, 1949; Reich, 1995). Walkers were guided to notice surrounding colours, forms, textures, light and spaces created by the plants, design and pathways. 'Soft-fascination' is where the attention effortlessly rests on things that are 'fascinating' to the viewer. Stephen and Rachel Kaplan, who have researched restorative experiences suggest 'soft fascination' is an important element to enjoying the restorative aspects of nature: the view of trees; flowers and green grass can be viewed with little effort. As well, patterns in nature: clouds; motion of leaves in the breeze easily hold the attention. People find these views and patterns aesthetic and pleasurable (Kaplan, 1992). The notion of 'plant blindness' was introduced. Botanist Elizabeth Schussler and James Wandersee coined the phrase 'plant blindness', as "the inability to see or notice plant's in one's own environment". (Schussler & Wandersee, 1998). One of *Treegazing's*

Treegazing

considerations was to highlight ‘plant blindness’, noting how the modern society has ‘devalued plants’ (Mancuso 2018). To develop deeper connections and understandings, plants must be viewed as complex organisms with ‘sophisticated capabilities’ (Mancuso, 2018). To consider vegetal-beings we need to “cultivate a thinking *about* plants, as well as *with* them and consequently, *with* and *in* the environment, from which they are not really separate” (Marder,2013).



Figure 5. Golden Elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Lutescens'), Fitzroy Gardens.2020.
Image credit: Scarlet Sykes Hesterman

After walking through avenues of established trees we paused beneath the canopy of a Golden Elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Lutescens'). Our community of strangers were asked to consider the root systems of this tree, its canopy and root capacity hidden beneath the soil. Walkers were invited to gaze upwards with ‘soft fascination’. In communing with trees in this way there is an opportunity for a reciprocal relationship with species ‘more-than-human’ (Head, 2014).

At the Moreten Bay Fig Trees (*Ficus macrophylla*) walkers were invited to take a seated meditative posture amongst the buttressing roots of the fig or, lie on the ground looking upwards. A meditation was offered guiding the gathered human-beings to co-breathe with this expansive tree. Here human-beings could experience a relational collaboration, a mutualism with tree-beings.



Figure 6. Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). Fitzroy Gardens 2020.
Image credit: Scarlet Sykes Hesterman

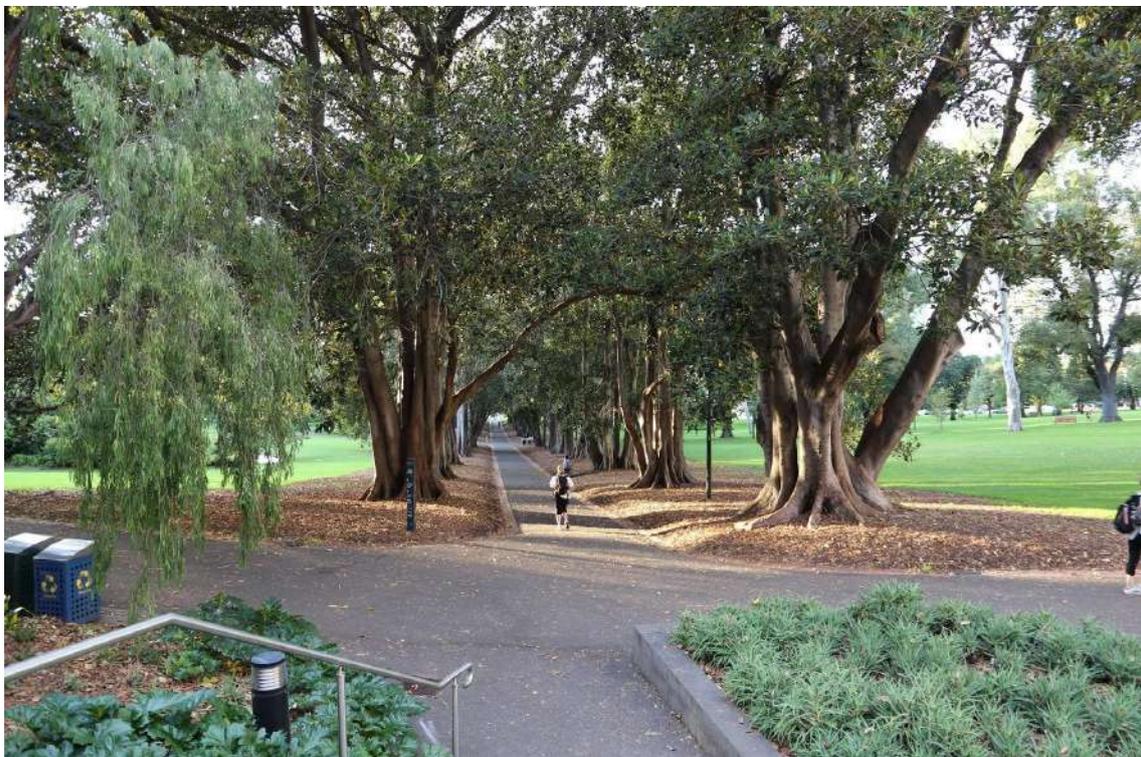


Figure 7. Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). Treasury Gardens 2020. Image credit: Heather Hesterman

We invited walkers to view the garden through multiple lenses. In viewing the gardens through the lens of horticulture and landscape design, we invited participants to be conscious of pathways and adjacent plantings. As seen in figure 7, The Moreton Bay Fig Trees are planted either side of the pathway. Planting the same species and form, creates a vegetal verticality that acts as a counterpoint to the horizontal paths with repetition forming a pattern that both directs the viewer whilst aesthetically calming. Water features within Fitzroy Gardens were noted. Fountains, waterfalls, rhylls and pools provide a dynamism of movement and sound, as well as having calming and cooling effects. By stopping and inviting walkers to listen to the sound of water we drew attention to water as a precious resource. This is a poignant reminder of living in a dry continent.

We also asked walkers to reflect upon multiple narratives. Ideas from philosophy and anthropology invite us to re-look at the narratives and history of the site. The complexities of the space are evident in the garden's many built features as well as the design of garden beds that also reflect colonial and present fashions through plant selections.

Fitzroy Gardens exists because city planners recognised the value in establishing free public gardens and parks for health and recreation purposes. The idea that parks and gardens are beneficial to health was in the 1800's largely intuitively based. The gardens evolved over time with increased lawn areas evoking sweeping vistas in a Gardenesque style. Gardens are highly cultivated spaces whereby nature is domesticated via a hierarchy of power. Human interests are always at the forefront in the garden.

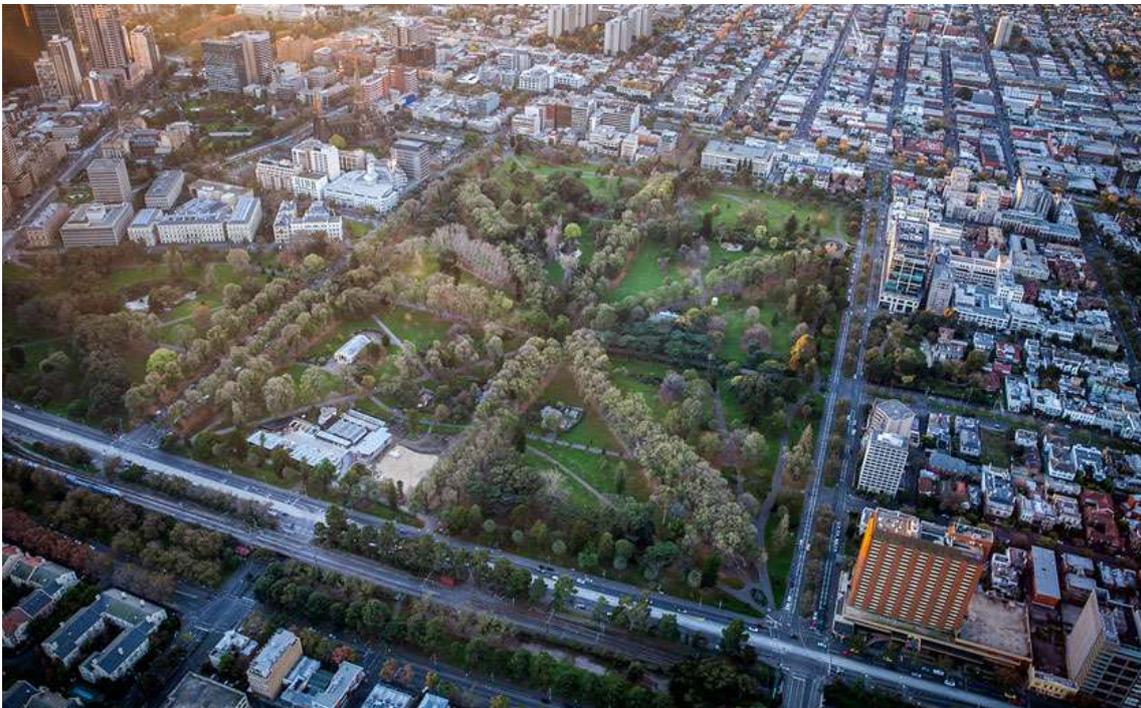


Figure 8. Aerial view of Fitzroy Gardens- Note radiating tree avenues references the Union Jack Flag. Image credit: Melbourne City Council. <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/fitzroy-gardens/waterinmelbourne/pages/fitzroygardenswater.aspx>



Figure 9. Treegazing walkers, Fitzroy Gardens. 2020. Image credit: Scarlet Sykes Hesterman

Treegazing shares a political agenda, a model of generosity that aims to shift modern society from ‘consumption to contribution’ (Sheldon, 2019). The transition from the ‘selfish’, a form of ‘greed economy’ (Sheldon, 2019) to a community that has enough. To promote more holistic thinking and actions towards nature and confront colonial and capitalist desires of our urbanised existence (Myers, 2018).

“Subtle activism” describes how consciousness-based practices like meditation and prayer can be a subtle form of social, environmental or political action. (Nicol, 2015). Taking time out to walk and meditate in public space operates as a form of subtle activism on many levels. In viewing walking as an aesthetic practice, artist Hamish Fulton describes walks as a kind of pilgrimage, a symbolic environmental gesture employing text and photography. Fulton believes the only thing you should take out of the landscape are photographs and the only things you should leave are footprints (Auping, 1987).

We were informed by Fulton’s philosophy, seeing walking as a form of environmental care and a demonstration of subtle activism.

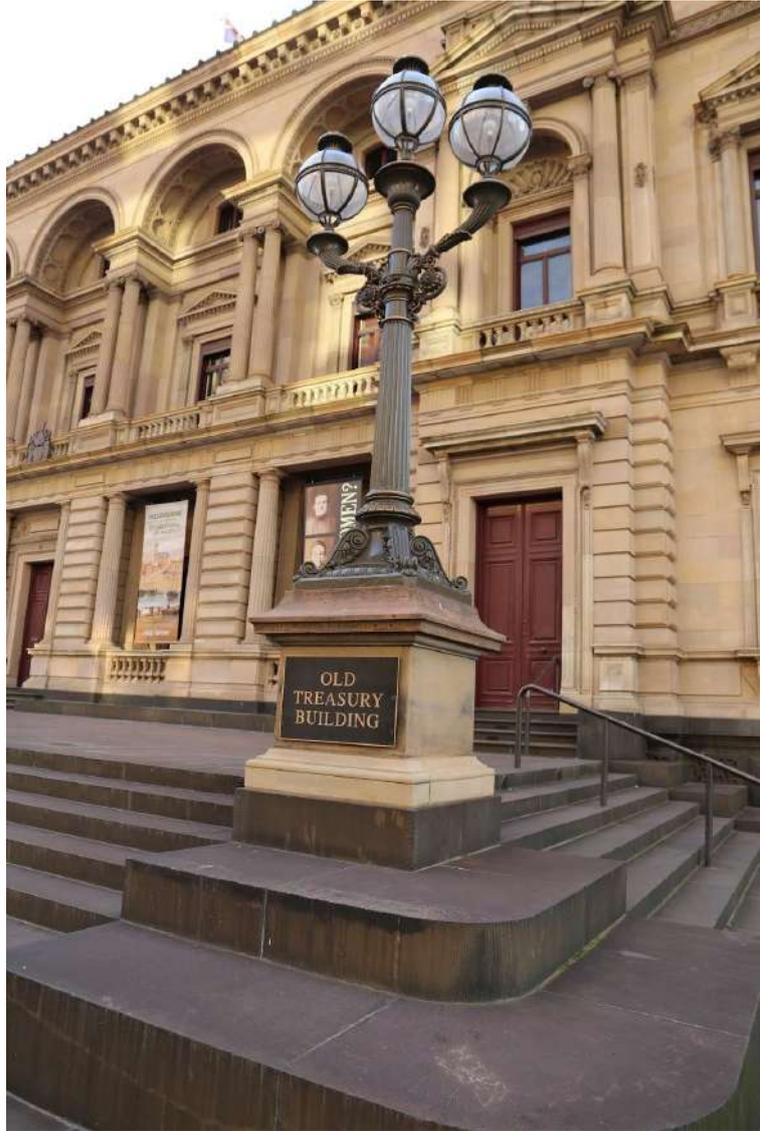


Figure 10. Old Treasury Building, Melbourne. 2020. Image credit: Scarlet Sykes Hesterman

We consciously began the walk at the Old Treasury Building, a colonial seat of power, with quarried bluestone. This site was specifically selected to reference the built environmental history and politics of Melbourne. This location has also been utilised for peaceful protest and social action rallies. We offered an ‘acknowledgment of country’ (this is a short greeting showing awareness of, and respect to, the Traditional Owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held).

As white women we have benefited from the colonization of this country.

Public Gardens are the botanical and political legacies of colonization. ‘Clearing’ land involved removal of trees and readying it fit for farming or agriculture. We chose to conclude the walk at a remaining scar tree, a River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). It is a visual reminder of Indigenous peoples’ ways of life as well as of colonial and settler occupations.



Figure 11. Indigenous Scar tree, Fitzroy Gardens. 2020. Image credit: Heather Hesterman

This exemplifies a history where there has been an erasure of First Nations people by the dominant colonising culture. In this garden where numerous narratives are so clearly signposted there is cursory notation to the Indigenous, Traditional Owners of the land the Boon Wurrung (Bunurong) and Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation. Fitzroy Gardens exists at the cost of the removal of a whole integrated way of life. An embodied approach whereby Indigenous people lived collaboratively *with* rather than separately *on* the land.

Treegazing was an act of generosity and mutual trust from both ourselves and the walkers. This act embodies and weaves the individual with the other in a relationship of mutual respect and friendship. It suggests an environmental consciousness, a subtle activism whereby the economic self-melts away revealing a 'vibrancy of matter' (Bennett, 2012). Where at a cellular level verdant-beings, elemental earth and everything is connected.



Figure 12. Fitzroy Gardens. 2020. Image credit: Heather Hesterman

As a result of this project, we suggest that ‘walking in a landscape’ offers more than photos. The effects of nature stay with us restoring and nourishing our minds and bodies. We composted mediative, landscape design and arts practices together. Critical theories informed our collaboration. Weaving together the complexities and features of the site illuminated multiple narratives. We specifically chose the start and end of the walk, to highlight a history of colonization. As part of this walk, we were committed to acknowledging Indigenous connections to land. *Treegazing* was designed to: give participants a temporal space; to notice the sensations of the body; to experience and connect *with* vegetal-beings and to come together as a community of strangers. In this moment of time Covid-19 has caused us to live in radically different ways, whereby walking has new significances. We might reconsider how we connect with the world around us, how walking can be an act of subtle activism and how rethinking our relationships to everything might lead to more collaborative ways of ‘living and dying well’ (Haraway, 2016).

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Alfombrismo: Ephemeral Art Utopia

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Abstract

The way in which we experience public space is closely related to the sociocultural and environmental conditions of the context. Like the garden – in the strict philosophical sense – Traditional Tapestry ephemeral art represents a utopia; it stands for an aesthetic theory of beauty and a vision of happiness. Traditional ephemeral art is conceptualized as a utopian space where diverse elements, people, as well as a wide variety of activities converge; those are the ones who transform reality through cultural expression, exploring habits and values which pursue a common goal in a livingly way, and improve social coexistence. Tapestry ephemeral art temporarily and actively transforms their surroundings. It is in that public space where it is embraced that a dialogue is modelled; a dialogue where not only formal appearance but also designing constructive one converges, as an artistic, philosophical, and spiritual expression of its community itself. Such artistic intervention allows physical proximity; in a whole overview vision of urban context, design displays Mexican art values and transforms public space. The greater the proximity, the greater the change in the scale of the work, therefore, it is possible to feel immersed in the piece and identify the natural material, which in its arrangement and place, reveals the garden utopia – symbol of harmony between itself and the atmosphere portrayed in a living work of art.

Nowadays, the isolated streets in many different parts of the world reflect a universal reality which urges a re-connection with the natural environment to which we belong, as well as a transformation of the sociocultural interactions that emerge from responsibility, equality and the common good. As a Master Tapestry artist, José Alejandro Lira Carmona explores these ideas through the Traditional Tapestry of Ephemeral Art from Huamantla.

Keywords: experience public space, utopia Traditional Tapestry ephemeral art, cultural expression, social coexistence

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Huamantla's Traditional Tapestry Ephemeral Art

The way in which public space is experienced is closely related to the sociocultural and environmental context. Since ancient times, Tlaxcala has been the scene of the groups settled in this area, who have developed a society and culture with a strong relation to the natural environment. A widely recognized element was the great mountain, which they called *Matlacueytl*, and means "the one with the blue skirts". From this mountain flows the river of life, whose source provides what is necessary to subsist. The mountain was considered a living deity to whom the community offered up in a cyclical way, determined by the period of rain and the irrigation of the crops, thus *Matlacueytl* was kept present as a member of the community (Torquemada 1615).



Figure 1. Matlalcueytl landscape. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

With the Spanish colonization, the cult of the mountain became the veneration of the Virgin Mary of the Assumption, known by the people as "La Caridad" (Charity); who is celebrated in August, the time of year when the crops have grown and the field flourished. The community transforms them into offerings that over time, ingenuity and creativity gave rise to the Huamantla's Ephemeral Carpets and Rugs.

Huamantla's Ephemeral Carpets and Rugs

Carpets

From the social organization and central urban structure made up of neighbourhoods; the worship to the Virgin of Charity was organized throughout the month of August; in this way, each neighbourhood or group of people was allowed to have a space for their offering. These offerings were made with flowers and fruits from the fields and the natural environment in the month of August, with time these offerings became what we now know as Carpets.

The carpets are figurative compositions with a central image representing the Virgin, a scene or another religious icon; They are made with earth, gravel, sand and seeds that are framed with floral borders. The carpets are exclusively contemplative and are changed night to night during the 31 days of August.



Figure 2. In the filigree. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 3a. The tradition comes. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 3b. Offering. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

Rugs

The location of the City of Huamantla has great advantages due to its proximity to the forest and agricultural production areas, but it also poses risk of flooding as it is in the direction of the runoff and the mainstream of the mountain. Oral tradition recounts the event that originated the procession of the Virgin of Charity around 1888, in which the city was threatened by a storm that did not cease. The population of Huamantla in a gesture of survival, rang the church bells and improvised a procession with the Virgin of Charity through the streets to avoid a catastrophe, it is said that after this action, the rain stopped. Since then, the image of the Virgin of Charity goes out in procession on August 15th, and the community, in an act of gratitude, organizes by streets the path through which the procession will pass. This gesture is what will give rise to the traditional ephemeral rug that, together with the carpets, are the maximum expression of collective ephemeral art, known as "The night that no one sleeps."



Figure 4. Procession between lights and songs. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 5. The turn. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 6. Weaving fraternity. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

The rugs are decorative and are made with sand and sawdust in a wide range of colours, forming abstract shapes and various motifs. They are made along the streets and are characterized by being even more ephemeral and fragile than rugs, they last only a few hours and will be undone when the procession passes over them.

Tapestry Ephemeral Art and Community

The carpets and rugs are manifestations of Huamantla's cultural identity, they are artistic and collective expressions in which the entire community participates. The works are materially ephemeral, but they are permanently registered in the collective ideology and spirit of the people, it is what we call Tapestry Ephemeral Art.



Figure 7. Making. Night that nobody sleeps. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 8. Sowing. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

Tapestry Ephemeral Art is a dynamic expression of social inclusion in which the community organizes and generates consensus to achieve a common goal: to transform public space into an act of faith, gratitude and generosity, which, like a tree, regenerates cyclically.

The Tapestry Ephemeral Art of Mexico has been forged historically in Huamantla; it has evolved along with the history of the city and its inhabitants.

In chronological order and starting from the organization of the community, the activity of Tapestry Ephemeral Art has formed a structure, which we can represent in an analogous way as a tree with 4 large roots that support tradition. These roots are: 1) Environment, 2) Spirituality, 3) History and 4) Culture or tradition.

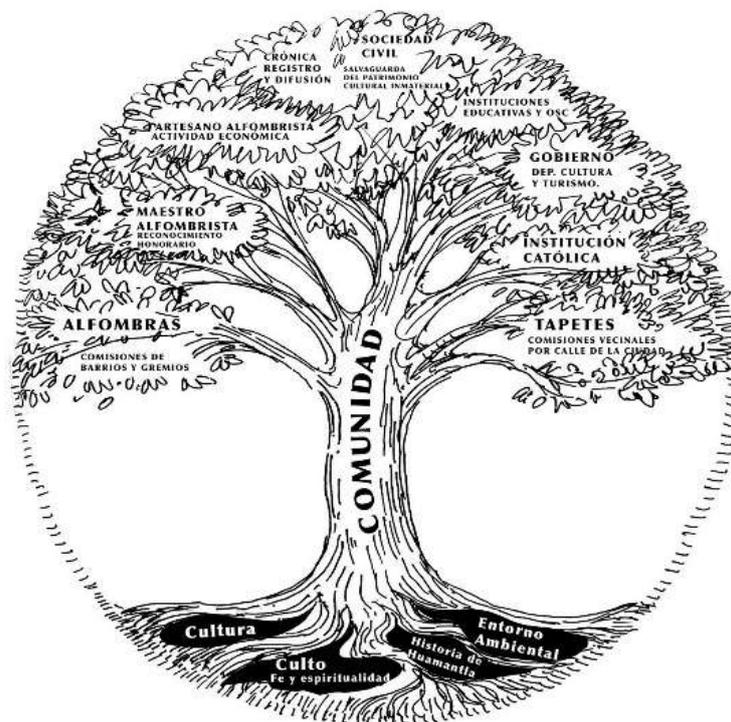


Figure 9. Tapestry Ephemeral Art like a tree. Image: Alejandro Lira

Like a tree, Tapestry Ephemeral Art represents balance, diversity, integration and interconnection; it is like a living being that grows and brings benefit to itself and its environment. Each element that makes up this structure has an autonomous definition and personality, but always in bond and complement with the others.

Carpet is an inclusive cultural manifestation, individuals in their diversity can contribute and integrate from the creative process to the artistic culmination of ephemeral carpets and rugs. As a consequence, it is a current tradition that is in constant transformation and innovation, it adapts, takes the form and resources that the community has at a given time. Although Tapestry Ephemeral Art has a material or tangible purpose, its significance lies in the immaterial nature of the practice; in other words, the immaterial is everything that gives us a feeling of identity and that promotes respect for human diversity and creativity (UNESCO 2020).



Figure 10. Small hands. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 11. Algarabia. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

Tapestry Ephemeral Art and Public Space

In the streets of the historic center of Huamantla and in the atrium of the Basilica of Our Lady of Charity, is where the carpet traditionally occurs; These public spaces model a dialogue in which both the formal and constructive aspect of urban design converge, as well as the artistic, philosophical and spiritual expression of their community.



Figure 12. Generations, 13. Mold. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

This artistic intervention is experienced on more than one scale and promotes the physical approach of the viewer. In a visual experience that includes the urban context, the design exhibits the values of Mexican art and transforms the perception of the public space of daily use. The closer a spectator gets, the scale of the work changes, it is then possible to feel immersed in the piece and appreciate the natural material, the colors and textures that, in their arrangement, reveal the utopia of the garden - a symbol of harmony with the environment - embodied into a living work of art.

Thus, carpets temporarily and dynamically transform their environment, they are conceptualized as a utopian space where diverse elements, people and activities converge. Carpets, through cultural expression, transform reality, experientially exploring habits and values that promote good common and social coexistence. Currently, the health security that characterizes the year 2020 has become a historical moment that directly affects the way we experience public space, communicating and the oldest cultural expressions, tapestry ephemeral art is one of them.

The deserted streets in various parts of the world reflect a universal reality, which demands a reconnection with the natural environment to which we belong, and a transformation of the socio-cultural dynamics based on responsibility, equity and the common good. The Huamantla community, in the absence of rugs in the streets, made a gesture at home to offer their rugs of ephemeral art, with the intention of preserving their traditions without putting their health at risk and complying with distancing restrictions.



Figure 14. The forms. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

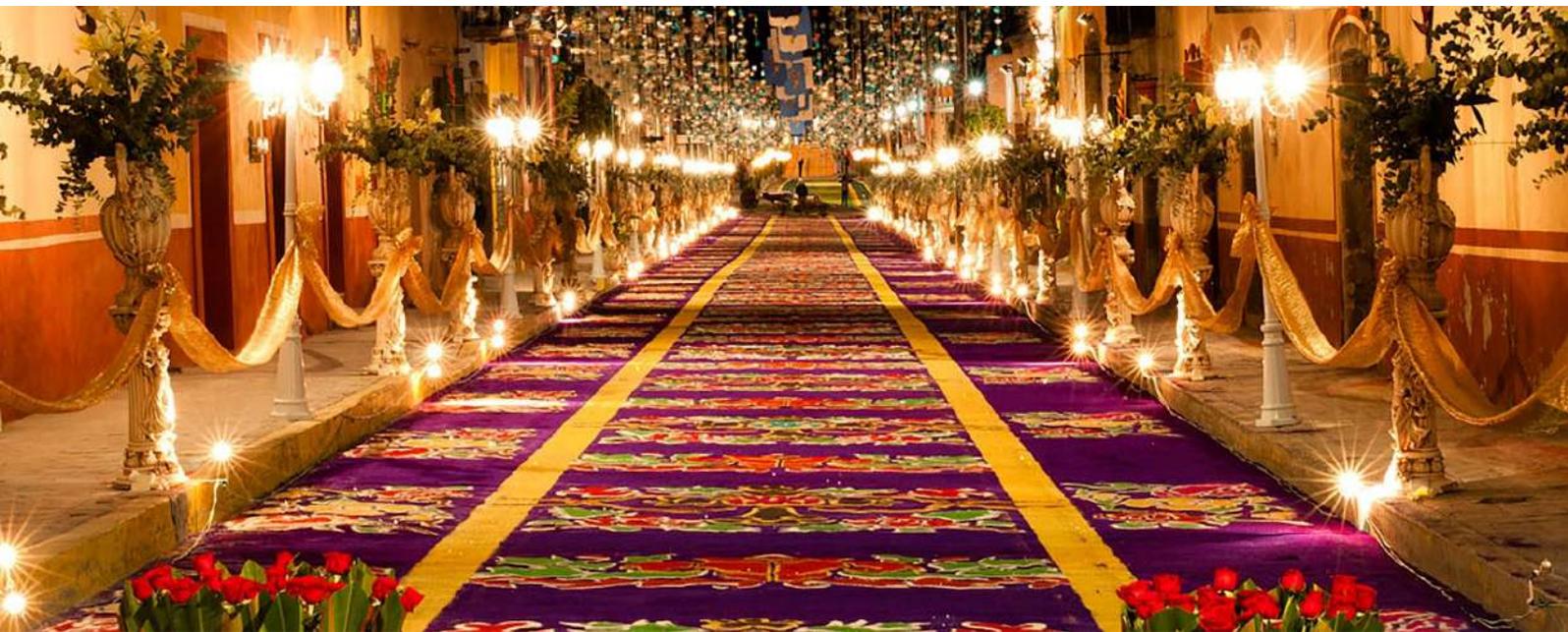


Figure 15. Light to the horizon. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño

Huamantla community through their carpets build a utopia "an ideal garden that summarizes their desires", ephemeral in character but that regenerates the social fabric of the community with total respect for diversity and allows them to relate cyclically to their means of survival, their own your environment (Beruete 2016).

Based on this principle, Huamantla's tapestry ephemeral art has values that strengthen the community and its individuals, contributing from culture to counteract social and environmental issues and enable us to assume culture as a commitment to the challenges of society, coexistence and peace, quality of life, human rights and the recognition of the environment as a vital support for humanity (Lara Plata 2016.).



Figure 16. Stellar. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 17. Strength. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño



Figure 18. Maker. Photo: Eduardo Avendaño.

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In-Between Windowscapes: A Curator's Perspective on Collaboration as Artistic Activation in Public Spaces

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Abstract

This paper emphasizes that curatorial practice and site-specific art are essential aspects of the transition from artistic collaboration to collaborative curatorial practice and discovers the new potential of 'curator as collaborator' practice to cultivate community-based, collaborative and engaging cultural projects in public spaces. By examining the curatorial residency of my participation in Public Space 50 at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia in 2017, this-portfolio investigates how I, as a curator, explore art curation locations and methods to enable students to actively work collaboratively to plan, facilitate and produce public art projects. It asks how to turn public spaces into laboratories; how can student artists work together in public space; how to empower a creative student community through artistic collaboration and how artistic activation can be developed among creative participators of different cultures and backgrounds?

Keywords: Public Space 50, artistic activation, curator as collaborator, windowscapes, curatorial in-between practice

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Public Space 50 (PS50) is a street viewed exhibition space in the RMIT Building 50 supported by RMIT's Master of Arts (Art in Public Space) program. It takes the form of public window spaces, the street space in front and the lane running down the side of Building 50, and a projection space on a wall opposite to the building. PS50 is viewable 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It creates a significant experience for RMIT student artists to present works to a passing audience and provides them with an opportunity to develop new practices.

From August to November 2017, I participated in the PS50 curatorial residency program. I curated three site-specific art projects with seven international RMIT student artists that extended the artists' creative practice to encompass curation and management skills. The artists were Estefanía Salas and Agustin Moreno Garcia from Spain, Tim Siteng Wei, Tin Liu, Saki Wang and Farrah Fa Zhang from China, and Enytha Buntoro from Indonesia. As a visiting curator, my goal was to activate the PS50 exhibition spaces and turn the public space of windows, streets and walls into a 'laboratory' (Bishop, 2004, p. 51). By curating a series of monthly experimental art activities, I aimed to encourage student artists to extend their practice to develop collaborative models in the university environment.

Artistic Activation

At the beginning of this curatorial residency, the first challenge was how to initiate art exhibitions to activate the PS50 exhibition public environment and engage university communities and the public. Traditionally, visiting art galleries is a passive act of participation with defined roles for curators, artists and the public. Unlike passive white wall gallery spaces, PS50 was an opportunity for active engagement through curatorial activities that involved various partners who were engaged in the exhibition production. To set up this laboratory model, I first considered how the role of a curator could enable artists to build their power in exhibition production to use art to stimulate the vitality of the community. I propose that changing the traditional role of curators may be a way to encourage greater creativity. After working in white wall galleries for ten years, I am no longer satisfied with only curating in a dedicated art space. Instead, I craved to explore how curators can collaborate with artists in art productions itself within non-conventional public sites. In the PS50 project, I was eager to find a 'true collaboration' (Kelly, 1996, p. 139) with artists beyond the concept that 'today, curating as a profession means at least four things. It means to preserve, in the sense of safeguarding the heritage of art. It means to be the selector of new work. It means to connect to art history. Moreover, it means displaying or arranging the work' (Neuendorf, 2016). I think there is the fifth 'in-between' way to curate exhibitions. My curatorial practice considers collaborating with artists to create art, plan and produce exhibitions. My role is not limited to a curator but also a 'collaborator' among artists, creation and exhibition production.

When developing the new curatorial strategy for PS50, I used social and cultural analyses to investigate the relationship between creative practitioners, the public and creative spaces. I created an ongoing public program or action called the 'Curatorial Collaborative Laboratory' to enable emerging curators, creative practitioners and students to test new ideas and strategies to expand the public audience. As a curator who cares about the social practice and art collaboration, I rearranged the PS50

exhibition environment, especially in the interior and exterior spaces of the windows, to develop a series of active and dynamic art practices and productions. The purpose of these actions was to help artists from different cultural backgrounds to establish collaborative relationships with artistic creation.

Windowscapes

Spatial practice is one of my primary methods for curating exhibitions. The main exhibition space of PS50 is a window view area of approximately 3m x 1.5m. How to activate this window display space between internal and external spaces or between private and public spaces was my next curatorial task. When I think of windows, it reminds me of the book 'Windowscapes' by Tokyo-based architect Yoshiharu Tsukamoto. His book explores the behaviour of discussing and analysing windows, providing ideas about the charm of windows and how windows can help create positive and negative spaces in buildings (Tsukamoto, 2010). Tsukamoto's practice inspired my curatorial strategy to explore the possibilities of 'windowscapes' inside and outside the PS50 area.

PS50's 'windowscapes' format brings a large-format feel to the street media. It provides a significant opportunity for student artists to display their works and create experimental art exhibitions in the public sphere, thereby leaving an unmissable impression on the public. 'Windowscapes' can 'create unique cultural, urban and social spaces and stimulate activities such as rest, relaxation and revival' (Tsukamoto, 2010). After completing my first site visit to PS50, the biggest challenge I faced in this project was how to collaborate with artists through site-specific artworks. Using these 'windowscapes' to curate art exhibitions was a turning point in my curatorial practice, from guiding me to plan art exhibitions in white cube galleries to organizing art activities in public spaces. It was also a testing ground for me to understand that 'curatorial practice' is about people, not just about art exhibitions – curators, artists, space and viewers – and the dynamics between them.

Another challenge was how to activate these 'windowscapes' to curate artistic collaborations with artists on specific sites. The method of British theatre director Peter Brook motivated my curatorial practice. 'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged' (Brook, 1968, p. 11). Brook defines 'empty space' as any space where the theatre is located. Based on the same point of view, I considered that any empty space could be an exhibition space when someone watched the artists' creation. Following this inspiration, I divided the space around PS50 into five interconnected parts, including the windows, projection walls, laneways, performance areas and co-working spaces.

In-Between Collaborative Practice and Public Space

After formulating a curatorial strategy, selecting artists for collaboration and planning the exhibition program were my next tasks. I sought out artists who were open to exploring new ways of exhibiting through collaborative practice. I designed some requirements for recruitment: artists needed to fully engage in the production process of the exhibition and participate in the PS50 artist-in-residence program for two weeks.

The reason is that when looking back at the history of the PS50, I found that many previous exhibitions only displayed artworks behind the windows, rather than artworks that have a special connection with location and public space. The purpose of this request of participating artists was to select artists who had enough time and energy to collaborate on the exhibition site to develop and produce artworks, to explore the methods and significance of ‘true collaboration’.

Conventional wisdom aside, true collaboration among artists and architects [or curators] rarely happens ... What passes today for collaboration tends in fact to be a frustrating process of compromise and concession. (Kelly, 1996, p. 139)

How can ‘collaboration’ be curated? This question was what I investigated during the residence. After selecting potential artists, I curated three exhibitions. Each focused on artistic collaboration and experimentation in specific locations in different ways and included installation art, performance, projection art, murals and interactive workshops. Seven student artists participated in these artistic collaborations, mainly international graduate art students, including two from Europe and five from Asia. Under this multicultural structure, artists were divided into three group exhibition projects based on their shared interests, field similarities and practical methods.

‘Accompanying’

In the first project, I collaborated with two Spanish artists, Estefanía Salas and Agustín Moreno García, to create an art installation and performance project titled *Rip My Flesh* (2017) [Fig. 1.] and explored the ideas of improvisation, encounter and occurrence in the process of art production. This site-specific artwork integrated spatial and performative actions within the windows, walls and streets in and surrounding Building 50 on Orr Street, Carlton. Based on an earlier collaboration with Salas and García in *The Space Between Us* (2017) in RMIT’s First Site Gallery, we had established mutual trust in artistic collaboration. Therefore, in this PS50 project, I adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude. ‘Collaboration is a process of mutual transformation in which the collaborators, and thus their common work, are in some way changed. Most importantly, the creative process itself is transformed in a collaborative relationship.’ (Kelly, 1996, p. 140) During the art production process, I did not take the initiative to make a comment and interfere with the artists’ creation. As a curator I have always been an ‘accompanying person’ (Liu, 2013) to assist artists in meeting artistic needs and in addressing the on-site creation. I realized that in artistic collaboration, curators and artists must have a certain degree of trust so that everyone can freely try their own and each other’s artistic concepts. Besides, this freedom of collaboration could encourage us to curate something new, which we did not know when we started to collaborate. As exploring the expansion of artistic practice from indoor spaces (PS50 exhibition space and art studio) to the public space was one of my curatorial intentions, I considered that ‘windowscapes’ is an essential medium for connecting these two spaces. This is because its transparent materials allow light to pass through, and also allow the PS50 art studio to establish a visual connection with public areas. Windows are not only tools for enclosing or dividing space in pure architecture, but also provide unique opportunities for artists and me to explore the internal and external places.

This idea appeared in the performance of Salas and Garcia, which took place on the street in front of 'windowscapes' [Figure 2]. In addition, we also projected a short art video on the wall opposite to Building 50 [Figure 3]. Through this expanded artistic practice in public space, I observed that the window is a gateway that follows the building and can be connected to another unknown world outside the building. I realized this kind of 'in-between' relationship that establishes connections between different worlds is the same as exploring unknowable creations with artists in my curatorial practice. In the process of activating the performance, I learned that the role of the curator is not only the commander of the exhibition; sometimes, the curator can be the 'accompaniment'. This investigation reminded me of what Obrist said, 'I really do think artists are the most important people on the planet, and if what I do is a utility and helps them, then that makes me happy. I want to be helpful' (Roberts, 2009).



Figure 1. Rip My Flesh (2017), installation art. Photo provided by the author.



Figure 2. Rip My Flesh (2017), street performance. Photos provided by the author.



Figure 3. Rip My Flesh (2017) wall projection. Photos provided by the author.

‘Giving and Taking’

In the second project, I collaborated with three Chinese artists, Siteng Wei, Tin Liu and Saki Wang, to create installation art, projection art, and performance works. Wei was dedicated to transforming Chinese landscape painting into contemporary jewellery. Tin Liu and Saki Wang focused on exploring performance art and happenings in public space. As these student artists were new in creating art installations, during the curatorial experiment, I encouraged them to explore their artistic practices through different media in the exhibition. For example, during the artist-in-residence, I worked closely with Wei and suggested he use his jewellery manufacturing technique and knowledge to create installation art on the ‘windowscapes’ [Figure 4]. We tested different artistic methods, such as hand-made, wax loss casting, Chinese ink painting and hand-painted drawings, to conduct experiments on acrylic plates and windows. Through these experiments, I realized the value of the exchange of professional knowledge in artistic collaboration and learned that the art of ‘giving and receiving’ (Garvin & Margolis, 2015) is one of the essential elements for establishing ‘true collaboration’.



Figure 4. The public viewing Siteng Wei's landscape painting installation on the 'windowscapes' (2017).
Photo provided by the author.

The act of 'giving and receiving' reminds me of a theatre idea of 'give and take', which aims to help performers and audience to understand the idea of when to give focus and when to take focus. 'As the culture of give and take between stage and audience is established and the level of trust in the process increase, the conductor may invite a fuller story' (Chesner, 2008, p. 44). I saw that the roles of conductor and curator are the same role in creation. The idea of 'giving and taking' was very beneficial when starting creations related to our site-specific art practice. As an outcome, Wei and I set up a 3-meter-long panoramic installation art in the 'windowscapes' and linked this to a public theatrical event on the opening night of PS50 exhibition [Figure 5]. We turned the lane behind building 50 into an open-air theatre to perform Liu's Chinese shadow puppets plays and Wang's happenings [Figure 6, 7, 8, 9]. The idea of 'giving and taking' assisted me to establish a collaborative curatorial method with artists in public space through artistic activation.



Figure 5. Different views of Siteng Wei's landscape painting installation (2017).
Photos provided by the author.



Fig. 6. Saki Wang (L) and Siteng Wei (R) projection artworks on a wall opposite to the building (2017).
Photo provided by the author.

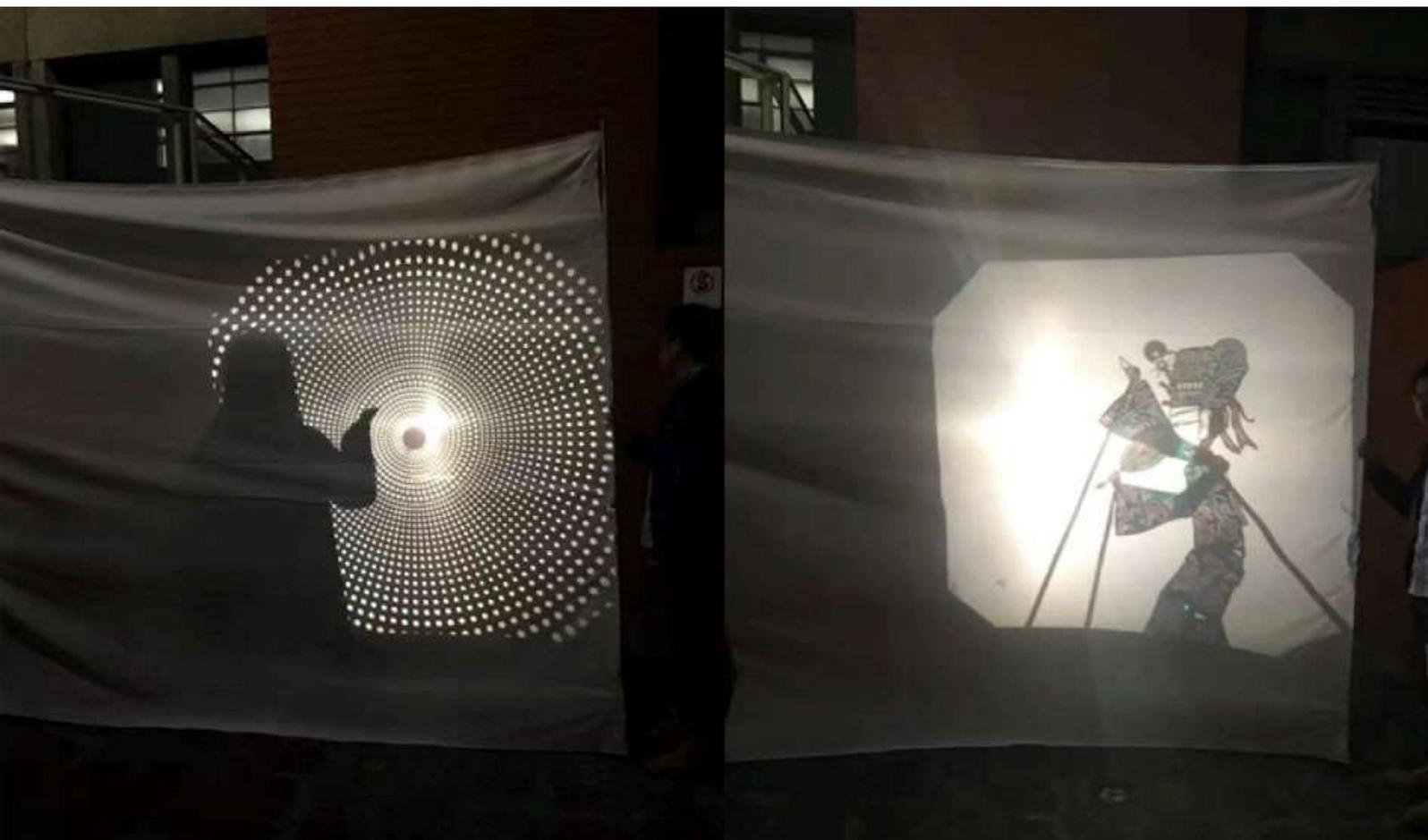


Fig. 7. Tin Liu's Chinese shadow puppets play in the laneway (2017). Photo provided by the author.



Fig. 8. Saki Wang's performance work on the street (2017). Photo provided by the author.



Figure 9. Saki Wang's group performance work in the PS50 studio (2017). Photo provided by the author.

‘Sincere Communication’

In the third project, I invited Fa Zhang and Enyth Buntoro, two public art graduate students from China and Indonesia, to participate in the final curatorial experiment created by openly recruited artists. Through this artistic collaboration, I understood the importance of caring for others in exhibition production. I find that curators and artists from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations for each collaboration. Exploring everyone’s expectations is a necessary process, because after clarifying everyone’s needs in the production, the meaning and structure of collaboration may change. In my previous curatorial experience, I have collaborated extensively with artists, from a joint decision made by the team to projects that the artist fully controls. I am aware that if there is no sincere communication between collaborators, collaboration can sometimes be out of balance.

‘Every collaboration is unique—composed of a distinctive combination of people in a specific context and is generally understood as raising fundamental questions about the nature of creative labour and the complexities of the authorial voice.’
(Mabaso, 2016, p. 3)

When I collaborated with Zhang and Buntoro to create a mural on PS50’s ‘windowscapes’ [Figure 10, 11], I found that we have different ideas about the display format of the mural, which is a good thing. However, since we tried to satisfy everyone’s expectations for the project and the voices of the authors, we did not truthfully express our ideas about the artwork in our collaboration. Therefore, during the production, we lost the tacit understanding and encountered many coherent misunderstandings. Communication problems are important reasons for project failure. The lack of methods to evaluate project communication performance hinders the project communication. Sometimes curators and artists have much self-awareness in creation. If the collaborators cannot communicate truthfully, it will harm the production process. These negative emotions will stifle creativity in artistic collaboration. From this experience, I realized that collaborative curatorial practice not only involves creating exhibitions but people’s mutual care and sincere communication.



Fig. 10. The working process of Zhang and Buntoro’s mural on PS50’s ‘windowscapes’ (2017).
Photos provided by the author.



Fig. 11. The final draft of Zhang and Buntoro's mural from the view of PS50 studio (2017).
Photos provided by the author.

Conclusion

From the above public space art curatorial experiments, I learned that collaboration is an open concept that provides artists and curators with multiple ways to activate and produce arts in public space. Based on 'accompanying', 'giving and taking' and 'sincere communication', artists and curators can realize the mutual benefit in artistic collaboration. In most art exhibitions, curators only determine the background, framework and content of the exhibition, while the artists usually lead the process and development of artistic creation. Therefore, it is worth exploring how to make the curators and artists carry out 'true collaboration' further in actual exhibition production processes. The role of the curator can be turned into a 'collaborator' so that collaborative methods in public space can be adopted to activate the organicity of artistic creation. Following this residency program, in early 2018, several students and I co-founded a student-led initiative named RMIT Curatorial Collective (RCC), which aims to provide student artists with opportunities to collaborate with interdisciplinary creative practitioners and the public, from art and social theories to curatorial practices.

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A Tram Ride You Would Talk About

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Abstract

As an artist and researcher for the project “Public Transport as Public Space,” my aim is to understand atmospheres on urban public transport and the ways in which they can be changed through performative public art practice. Indefinite yet powerful, atmospheres, which emerge in the relation between a perceived environment and perceiving bodies (Böhme 2017), can be created deliberately through aesthetic work and used as a tool for shaping certain experiences and behaviours in public space (Allen 2006). For instance, visually attractive public artworks permanently integrated into the public transport environment may create atmospheres of safety and comfort, navigating passengers through this regulated public space. On the other hand, on public transport, where unacquainted people must travel shoulder to shoulder, different atmospheres emerge not only through material modifications but also through unexpected encounters and events (Bissell 2010). In this sense, performative public art interventions can intentionally “drum up the ambience” (Thibaud 2015) and imbue the atmosphere of commutes with elements that are surprising and out of the ordinary. This paper outlines some of my art projects, which aim to carefully disrupt casual rides on public transport by creating moments of strangeness and humour.

Keywords: public transport, atmosphere, public art, public space

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Introduction

After starting off as a painter, I expanded the scope of my artistic practice to organizing exhibitions, participatory installations, and situations in public space. Similarly, my interest in public transport has grown from on-the-spot sketches to performative interventions at transport stops and on vehicles. These interventions have become a method in my doctoral research in the frame of the project “PUTSPACE: Public Transport as Public Space” at Tallinn University, Estonia, and Abo Akademi University in Turku, Finland. Using these creative methods, I investigate what the atmosphere is on public transport and how and to what extent it might be transformed through artistically initiated situations such as performative interventions.

Public transport is more than just an engineering system to be judged by its efficiency and utility. Likewise, it is more than just a means of sustainable urban development. Public transport can also be approached as a social and cultural phenomenon. Aspects of public transport that go beyond the purely technological are conceptualized within the new paradigm of mobilities. This has broadened the understanding of mobility beyond a mere transition from A to B to meaningful socio-cultural activity (Cresswell 2006). Through the lens of mobility studies, the mundane experience of using public transport is seen as a spatio-temporal event that is crucial for the formation of the self, the understanding of others, and the perception of the built environment (Jensen 2009). Furthermore, public transport is not only a public good and a means of accessing other public places; it is also itself a mobile public space (Paget-Seekins and Tironi 2016). However, unlike other urban public spaces such as squares or cafes, public transport is a strictly regulated and physically constrained space of intensive movements. In turn, such a confined and ordered space provokes different social interactions — from verbal conversations to a dispassionate blasé attitude — between unacquainted people who have to travel shoulder to shoulder. In other words, public transport is characterized by “extraordinary intimacy with others and intense materiality, where bodies are pressed up against each other, seats are shared, and personal boundaries are constantly negotiated” (Wilson 2010, p. 635). These features of public transport as public space — physical confinement and close proximity alongside regulated intensive movements — create various atmospheres.

Atmospheres are ambiguous entities balanced between subjective perception (they are sensed in particular places) and objective conditions (places generate particular atmospheres). As something “between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite” (Anderson 2009, p. 77), atmospheres are relational and emerge in a combination of impersonal affects and personal emotions. As affects, they flow, instantly filling the space, and evoke an emotional response in those who are absorbed into them. Engaging all the senses, atmospheres act on the pre-cognitive level (they are felt before they are understood) and can powerfully impact experiences and behaviours in public space (Allen 2006). Moreover, atmospheres can be made intentionally by setting up specific conditions in which they may emerge. Due to such conditions, which are set up though a broad range of aesthetic work, spaces can be *tuned* with specific atmospheres (e.g., through manipulations of light and sound, stage designers charge the theatre space with the atmosphere attuned to the performance [Böhme 2017]). Beyond the theatre walls, this task is taken up by urban designers who are responsible for the “setting of ambiance” in various public spaces and can “endow the territory with a certain character, a specific

mood, an emotional and existential value” (Thibaud 2015, p. 42). Furthermore, such ambient effects on public spaces can also be created by public artworks (e.g., the spatial public art installation turns a city lane into an immersive space, creating a sense of safety and increasing communication between strangers [Hillary and Sumartojo 2014]). Due to the intensity of traffic and the flow of passengers, atmospheres on public transport are always in motion: they coalesce and dissipate, mix, and supersede one another. They are shaped by many factors: sensory and material characteristics of transit space, the time of day of the commute, events, and encounters (Bissell 2010). While some atmospheres may arise naturally (e.g., the irritation caused by unpleasant smells or unexpected delays), others can be engineered by the design of transit spaces, which often become a site for various public artworks. Whether permanent or temporary, these artworks are physically integrated into the transport environment and often aim to make it visually attractive as well as to guide passengers, enhancing their feelings of safety and comfort (Abramson 2010). However, some of these spatial public artworks may act as aesthetic disruptions of the regulated flow of passengers, provoking changes in behaviour and eliciting social interactions in transit (Martin et al. 2013, p. 148). A similar disruptive effect can be achieved by performative art projects on public transport, including socially engaged programs, performances, and artistic interventions. Thus, while some public artworks *keep up the ambience* — that is, maintain a certain vibe on public transport as a backdrop — others can *drum up the ambience* “thanks to occasional, exceptional, extraordinary events” (Thibaud 2015, p. 46). However, to what extent should the atmosphere of such a specific public space as public transport be artistically drummed up?

Unexpectedly encountered outside conventional art places like galleries or museums, artistic elements can transform atmospheres on public transport by creating a moment of enchantment or “the sense of magical serendipity” (Young 2014, p. 148). In turn, by interfering with casual behaviours on the move, such moments of wonder can prompt passengers to talk to each other. In other words, artistically enchanted atmospheres can act as a powerful tool to boost social interactions in transit. For example, *Tram Buskers Tour* (2016), by the Czech artist Kateřina Šedá, aimed to turn trams into “a meeting place where passengers can experience *something out of the ordinary* and share it with others” (Šedá n.d.; emphasis added). Furthermore, by creating such extraordinary moments, artists can encourage passengers to “register their passage as a complex activity, simultaneously public and private, and culturally, socially, and even morally loaded” (Wilkie 2015, p. 17). However, many passengers use public transport not only by choice but also out of necessity — and sometimes their commutes take considerable time. Some of them use this liminal time-space between home and work for reading, studying, or simply daydreaming; in other words, they curate their passage, deciding what they want to do in transit (Bissell 2018). In this sense, artistic interventions may violate passengers’ right to be left in peace during the ride. Moreover, the confined space on public transport vehicles makes artistically tuned atmospheres hardly avoidable and potentially disturbing for those who prefer to concentrate on their own thoughts. Therefore, understanding the power of artistic disruptions, in my art practice I try to be attentive to the particular conditions in transit and accordingly modulate the intensity of an atmosphere I can create through my actions. Thus they may vary from collective dinners and creative workshops on tram stops (*Keep Your Ticket with You*, 2017) to almost unnoticeable manipulations with household objects on board a tram (*Tramwarm*,

2019). My public works reveal that in terms of creating an atmosphere, subtle performative interventions on a smaller scale might be as powerful as loud and festive actions. Even small, slightly out-of-the-ordinary artistic gestures may transform a familiar passage, such as the simple question “When does the tram arrive?” when it is asked far away from tram tracks (*Waiting for the Tram*, 2020). Such minor gestures respect the right of passengers to be left alone with their own thoughts but, at the same time, create a situation in which artistically charged atmospheres can be *potentially* experienced. In other words, by carefully intervening in casual public transport rides, I intend to create the *potential* for passengers to experience unusual atmospheres, offering them a ride they would talk about.

Keep Your Ticket with You (2017)

Together with the research project “Gorod Inache,” I organized a performative public art project to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the tram service in my hometown of Irkutsk, Eastern Siberia. Under the title *Keep Your Ticket with You* (taken from the standard announcement on the tram), eight performative interventions took place on the stops along the oldest and longest tram line in the city. Each performance was thematically connected with the name of the tram stop (e.g., reading aloud poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky at the stop named after him). Some interventions were hardly noticeable (e.g., the beeping sound of the congratulations encrypted in Morse code). Others were open for participation, such as the origami-bird workshop at the Seagull stop or the dinner at Griboedov (which literally means “eating mushrooms”). Additionally, those who kept their tickets could exchange them for the cards from my previous project *City Tram Line: A Graphic Diary* (2016), which bore sketches I made at each of the 30 stops of the given tram line.

This one-day action was not commissioned by city or public transport authorities. However, as organizers, we informed the officials beforehand in order to avoid potential conflicts. Moreover, the official permission provided good media coverage that attracted an audience who does not usually use trams—some of them took a ride specifically to attend the performances. Nevertheless, we tried to retain the playful, experimental spirit of the self-organized artistic activity and make our performances surprising but not disturbing to tram users. By staging unexpected situations along the tram line, we intended to offer passengers unusual artistic experiences as well as to remind them of the tram anniversary in an unobtrusive manner.

Thanks to Gorod Inache and Elena Korkina, Vadim Melnikov, Artem Mors, Victor Ryabenko, Elena Terpugova, Sveta Khairova, Alexandra Timofeeva.

Performers: Julia Fadeeva, Evgenia Skaredneva, Rinat Ishmukhametov, George Ionin, Nadezhda Prokopenko, Katerina Karelina, Daria Khomyakova, Nastya Rubtsova, Maria Korotkevich, Igor Zakharyev, Ksenia Vlasova.

Photo credits: Svetlana Khairova.



Figure 1. "Healing" the pavilion



Figure 2. Curious passengers on buses passing by



Figure 3. Receiving a card



Figure 4. Origami workshop



Figure 5. Reading Mayakovsky's poetry



Figure 6. Dinner at the end of performances

Krasnostudensky Passage (2017)

Built in the 1930s, a beautiful pavilion stands at the Krasnostudensky Passage tram stop along one of the oldest routes in Moscow, tram line 27. In autumn 2017, the pavilion was in bad condition—the windows were boarded up, and the interior contained litter. One day, I went to the stop and talked to people while they were waiting for the tram. In a play on the title of the stop, which literally means “red student,” I was dressed in red and, holding my student ID, asked people to take a photo of me with the pavilion in the background. My request sparked conversations—people shared stories about the pavilion that ranged from tall tales (“It was built by Peter the Great”) to regrets about its poor condition.

My intention was not only to learn more about the history of the pavilion but also to create a situation that someone could potentially recognize as an artistic gesture. However, even if the action was not exposed as a performance, my question could potentially direct passengers’ attention to the pavilion and their tram journeys. Furthermore, my seemingly casual choice to dress in red may have raised questions in the minds of those who noticed this reference to the name of the stop. However, today it would not be surprising to be asked to take a photo at this tram stop, because the pavilion was restored as an object of cultural heritage a year after my intervention.

Photo credits: Aleksandra Ianchenko.

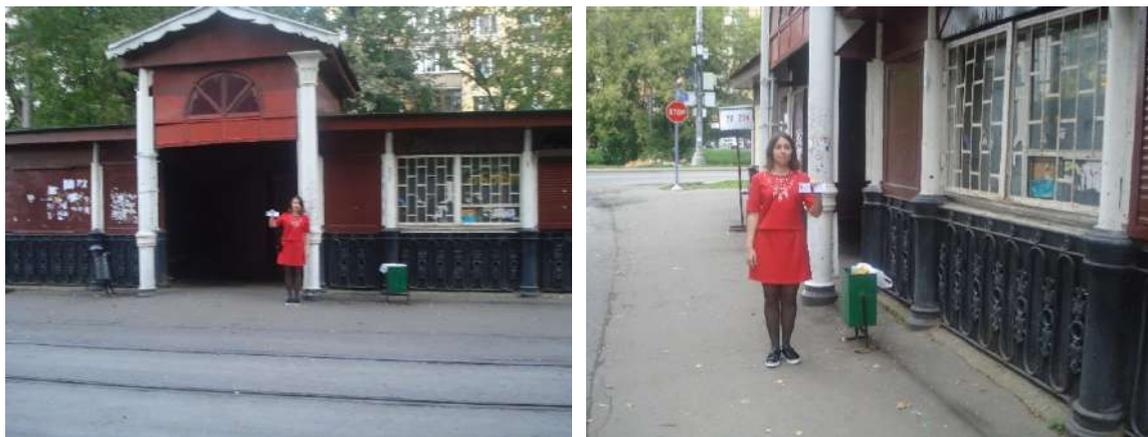


Figure 7-8. By the end of the action, I collected around 30 photos taken by passengers.

Tramwarm (2019)

This experimental performance on the tram in Tallinn I directed together with Estonian artist Erki Kasemets (Polygon Theater) and his class of five first-year students at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

To examine the line between the public and the private, students carried random household objects (such as a carpet, footstool, mirror, and folded chair), which they (re)assembled into mobile installations at the stops and on board the tram. These installations were activated by performative gestures (e.g., reading a book, sitting on the chair, etc.). In this sense, objects also became active participants and revealed their presence through *ekstases*, “tone and emanation... the atmosphere radiated by things” (Böhme 2017, p. 63). Furthermore, reflecting on public transport as an ordered system,

the choreography of the performance was based on the tram schedule, when students got on and off the tram one after another at different stops, challenging the perception of commuting as transiting from A to B.

While on board a tram, the students acted as if they were casually transporting furniture, merging their actions with the ordinary. However, by skirting the edge of being recognizable as art, these actions subtly invigorated the atmosphere of the tram ride with strange, *unheimlich* elements. Moreover, some passengers did notice these elements and—perhaps feeling the change of atmosphere on board—reacted with a smile. Eliciting such reactions was our intention. As one of the students said, the action was successful if at least one person then went home and said: “Hey! You’ll never guess what I saw on the tram! There were some people, someone was reading a newspaper, and another one put a carpet on the tram floor...”

Curators: Erki Kasemets, Aleksandra Ianchenko

Performers: Aleksandra Ianchenko, Milla-Mona Andres, Linda Mai Kari, Anita Kremm, Kristel Zimmer, Liisamari Viik

Photo credits: Tauri Tuvikene.



Figure 9. Gathering on the back of the tram

A Tram Ride You Would Talk About



Figure 10. Reading a newspaper



Figure 11. Installation on the tram stop



Figure 12. Emanating homey atmospheres



Figure 13. Traveling with a private chair

Waiting for the Tram (2020)

Inspired by the tram infrastructure partially completed in the 1970s to connect Lasnamäe, Tallinn's most populous district, with the city center, artist Anton Polsky and I created a temporary tram stop on one of the bridges over Laagna Road. While the tram itself is not operational, the infrastructure intended for it is still visible; several bridges and stairs to stations have been completed. On one of these, we placed a sign indicating that the imaginary tram would stop there. This became an ad hoc fake station where we asked local passers-by a simple but provocative question: "When does the tram arrive?"

This question produced the effect of triangulation, a process in which strangers are prompted to talk to each other (Martin et al. 2013), and interrupted the regular passage of pedestrians on the bridge. Many of them shared their thoughts about the unbuilt tram line, admitting that they still hope for it to be completed, even though an efficient bus service already exists. Although it did not take place directly on public transport vehicles, this action encouraged people to imagine what it would be like if the tram line were operational. Finally, the action not only prompted people to talk about their potential rides on the imaginary tram but also sparked public discussions in the local media (Delfi 2020).

Photo credits: Tauri Tuvikene.



Figure 14-15. Temporary tram stop on Saarepiiga Bridge over Laagna Road

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Build Art, Build Resilience. Co-creation of Public Art as a Tactic to Improve Community Resilience

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Abstract

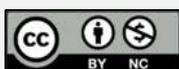
Temporary urbanism practices are forms of appropriation of the public space by the citizens. They can be a powerful engine for urban regeneration and social innovation, empowering local communities to take ownership of urban spaces, promoting positive urban change. In particular, the collective creation of temporary art installations in public spaces can foster a sense of belonging and define new forms of civic participation, including unrepresented voices, and re-activate the public realm. The portfolio narrates the development of the “Co-Creation of Temporary Interventions in Public Space as a Tool for Community Resilience” (University of Portsmouth) project, which promotes and develops a series of tactical, small-sized, co-created, temporary interventions in public spaces, bringing together various local actors and underrepresented groups. Temporary urbanism initiatives can be very powerful tools; while the change they bring may be small at first and incremental, the varied ways in which such initiatives affect the city and its citizens lead to an extremely meaningful and long-term impact.

Keywords: co-creation, public space, temporary installation, social innovation, community resilience

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Spatial Justice

Finding its roots in the political movements of the sixties and Lefebvre's notion of the "right to the city" (1968), a vast literature focuses on the importance of the role of public space practices in the dynamics of spatial justice. Henri Lefebvre (1968) argues that all citizens and users of urban spaces have collectively and historically produced a series of "urban values", and that, as a consequence, they all own a certain right to them. David Harvey (2012) contextualizes Lefebvre's ideas to the present, and articulates that "The right to the city is ... a right to change and reinvent the city ... The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is ... one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (2012, p. 4). Both Harvey and Lefebvre consider the right to the city not as mere access to its resources, but as a radically inclusive concept that encloses the right to participate in the making of the city. Starting from this philosophical and political framework, we will consider the role of temporary initiatives in public space as instruments of democratic expression and participation of the citizens to the city-making process. The "right to the city" of urban communities can be seen, now as never before, in a proliferation of temporary urban practices, which, while lacking the combativeness and ideological rigour of the political movements in the late 1960s, are nonetheless revolutionary. This is well captured by the term "hands-on urbanism" (Krasny, 2012) which has been used to connote those projects where the appropriation of urban land has been an occasion for community groups to express their rights and become aware of the rigidity of urban policies and governance.

In recent years, we are witnessing a phenomenon of radical change - in both intensity and modalities - in the practices that invest urban spaces. This new type of urban activity, well defined by the term "Temporary Urbanism", is leading to a substantial rethinking and investigation of temporality within the planning processes of the public realm. It encapsulates a range of types of urban activism practices such as pop-up, acupuncture, guerrilla or tactical urbanism. Courage (2013) recently defined tactical urbanism as a global phenomenon that "aims to enhance the urban lived experience through incremental strategies of improvement" being "often temporary, low cost, quick to install and dismantle, informal, spontaneous, participatory and driven by community issues".

According to Lehtovuori and Ruoppila (2012) "temporary uses are ... becoming central and strategic components of urban planning, development and management". The role of temporary practices towards the improvement of the social sphere is grounded in a solid consensus among theorists such as Madanipour (2014), Rapoport (2005) and Zebracki (2018), practitioners such as Carmona (2019) and Gehl (2011), and activists such as Sadik-Khan (2017), Lydon (2014), and Loukaitou-Sideris (2009). In their study of temporary uses in Berlin, the Urban Catalyst Studio suggests that temporary colonisers of space, or "space pioneers", are "evidence of a trend to greater social commitment, to more participation, to active networks and the desire to try out something new" (Overmeyer, 2007). All these projects and the growing body of positive experiences of temporary urbanism are creating a critical mass, originating a new dynamic, flexible, adaptable type of urbanism with collective spaces as the centre of its concerns (Bishop and Williams, 2012).

Nevertheless, although widely practiced by urban activists and analysed under many lenses in the literature, the role of temporary urbanism in enabling a right to the city

remains contested and only partially understood. The interpretation of temporary practices as tools to give voice to unrepresented groups has not been given enough attention, as the widely recognised positive results are still overlooked by traditional planning systems.

The Urban Living Lab in Portsmouth, UK

In 2015, The Urban Living Lab of Portsmouth launched a “Co-creation of Temporary Interventions in Public Space as a Tool for Community Resilience” project, which promotes and develops tactical small-sized co-created temporary interventions in public spaces, bringing together several agents of the city, such as local institutions, councils and universities, third sector local organizations, architecture students and community groups. It builds on the assumption that, in cities, there is an abundance of under-used spaces and a lack of citizen participation in the city-making process. The research project develops a long-term strategy comprising several sites across the city. It subsequently attempts to measure quantitatively and qualitatively the impact of co-creational practices on the community and the quality of public urban life. The project aims to define a clear methodology to improve the quality of urban public space through social engagement and investigates to what extent this can be sustainably mainstreamed.

During five years (2015-2020), the project has built 6 main installations, amongst a few other unbuilt designs: *I Don't Roll* (2015); *The Secret Garden* (2016b); *#IHeartPompey* (2016a); *The Sound Garden* (2017) (That's Solent TV, 2017); *The Edge Pavilion* (2018) and *The Chatterbox - Multicultural City Pavilion* (2019). They represent our case studies, as year after year the methodology of work has been progressively updated and improved according to the experience gained. A variety of collaborations brought specialized expertise to the process, generating creative synergies and competent solutions: Dr Matt Smith (Applied Theatre), Dr Jacqueline Priego-Hernández (Social Psychology), Dr Charles Leddy-Owen (Sociology), Prof. Alessandro Melis, Dr Antonino di Raimo, Miss Nicola Crowson, Dr Silvio Caputo and Dr Phevos Kallitsis (Architecture), Dr David Begg and Dr Nikos Nanos (Engineering). The urban strategy comprises several sites around the city, weaving a network reaching various neighbourhoods and community groups. The sites are selected within deprived socio-economic areas; for our purpose, we look for marginal, redundant, neglected and somehow forgotten spaces, in physical proximity to local community group territories (Fig. 1).

The project began when a western red cedar tree of the Whitelands Project woodland had to be cut to let more light to reach the ground and allow other flora and fauna to prosper. According to the woodland manager Jonathan West and the Forestry Commission and Butterfly Conservation, the tree was affecting the habitat of the Duke of Burgundy, a protected butterfly. The woodland manager decided to gift the tree to the Portsmouth School of Architecture. A group of 25 students was taken to the woodland to build a small timber canopy and several other timber objects (Fig. 2), spending an entire day in this collective process. The experience was very positive for all those involved, and we planned to bring the timber to the main courtyard of the Faculty of Creative Industries, so that the entire university community would be able to engage with it.

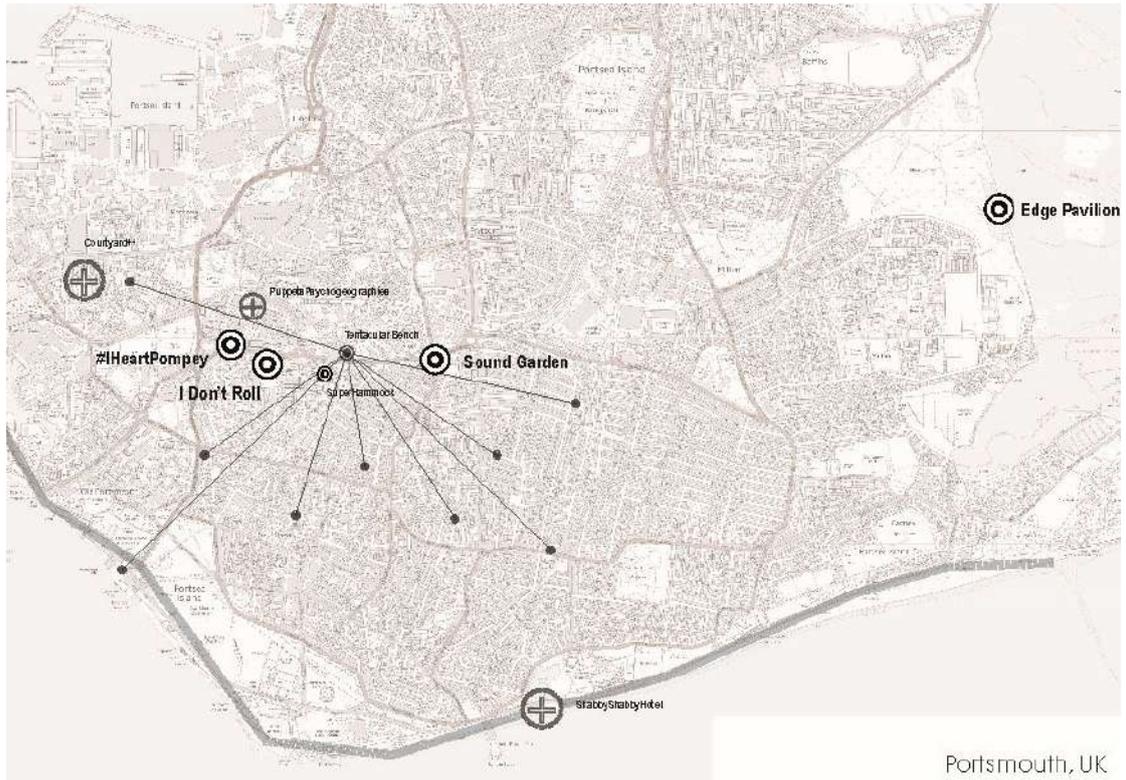


Figure 1. Network of Temporary Interventions in Portsmouth. Source: Guido Robazza



Figure 2. Small timber canopy at Whiteland Woods. Photo credit: Guido Robazza.



Figure 3. I Don't Roll: workshop and final installation.
Photo credit: Guido Robazza, Nicola Crowson.

That was the moment in which *I Don't Roll* came about (Figure 3). *I Don't Roll* is a spherical installation built with a reciprocal frame structure of 3 meters of diameter and made of 400 linear meters of square timber posts. Built by approximately 20 students throughout 4 days of intensive workshop, it resulted in a powerful and enriching experience. It generated unexpected success and delight within the community of staff and students and, although initially meant to stay in place for three months, we decided to keep it - it is still in place to date (2020). This experience led us to question whether bringing our practice to the city public realm, involving the citizens, would have a similar positive impact.

The *#IHeartPompey* project (Figure 4) prompted a clear research question: how can the collective endeavour of producing and crafting new urban places generate a feeling of ownership, a “right to the city” nurturing community resilience? *#IHeartPompey* was co-created with a youth club located in a deprived area of town. Several months of creative workshops engaged young people in the process of imagining new uses for the urban spaces, producing conceptual ideas but also a series of clay artworks and a big urban sculpture. The project remained in place for a few years and became an iconic landmark for the city centre and for many local people, as well as for the community of university students (Leddy-Owen, Robazza and Scherer, 2018).

The Secret Garden (Figure 5) presents a slightly different experience, as it was built abroad, in a small town in the south of Italy. The pavilion was designed as a space for locals to share books and for the local municipality to stage exhibitions of local artists. This project saw a group of 25 students travelling from Portsmouth and engaging with local people in building a garden pavilion in the central square of the town of Campi Salentina, Puglia. The four days of workshop brought a refreshing wind of international energy to this small town; old and young local people came to have a look and observe our work.

In the following year, the ULL promoted *The Sound Garden* (Figure 6), another co-produced pavilion positioned in an underpass of a deprived neighbourhood. The installation aimed to provide a space for local children to play music together. The pupils from a local primary school actively participated in the co-design and the construction of the structure.

The use of creative participatory methods engaged the pupils in intense activities, from crafting musical instruments with reclaimed materials, to mock the space with small-scale construction models, to wrapping trees with colourful fabrics, sawing, hammering, drilling and playing music. Genuine collaboration and unbounded creativity dominated the process through workshops and a one-week residency. This installation is still in place, making music and marking its presence in the city.

In 2018, we challenged ourselves with the *Edge Pavilion* (Figure 7) project, an installation developed with state of art parametric design tools and rapid prototyping. Working with a bird-watching organisation, the plan was to locate the installation in a protected green urban area nearby the seashore, a bird migration hotspot. The project highlighted how difficult and convoluted the planning process can be when seeking the right permissions for an unregulated type of activity. Reflecting on the flexibility needed to see the project through, we transformed its place and purpose, and it became an open exhibition space for students' work in the university courtyard. We were granted permission for one year, and thereafter the pavilion was gifted to the organisation Artecology in the Isle of Wight.



Figure 4. #IHeartPompey workshop and final installation.
Photo credit: Guido Robazza, Richard Williams, Joshua Brooks.



Figure 5. The Secret Garden workshop and final installation.
Photo credit: Ciprian Selegean, Francesca Maria Fiorella.



Figure 6. The Sound Garden workshop and final installation.
Photo Credit: Matt Saxey, Guido Robazza.

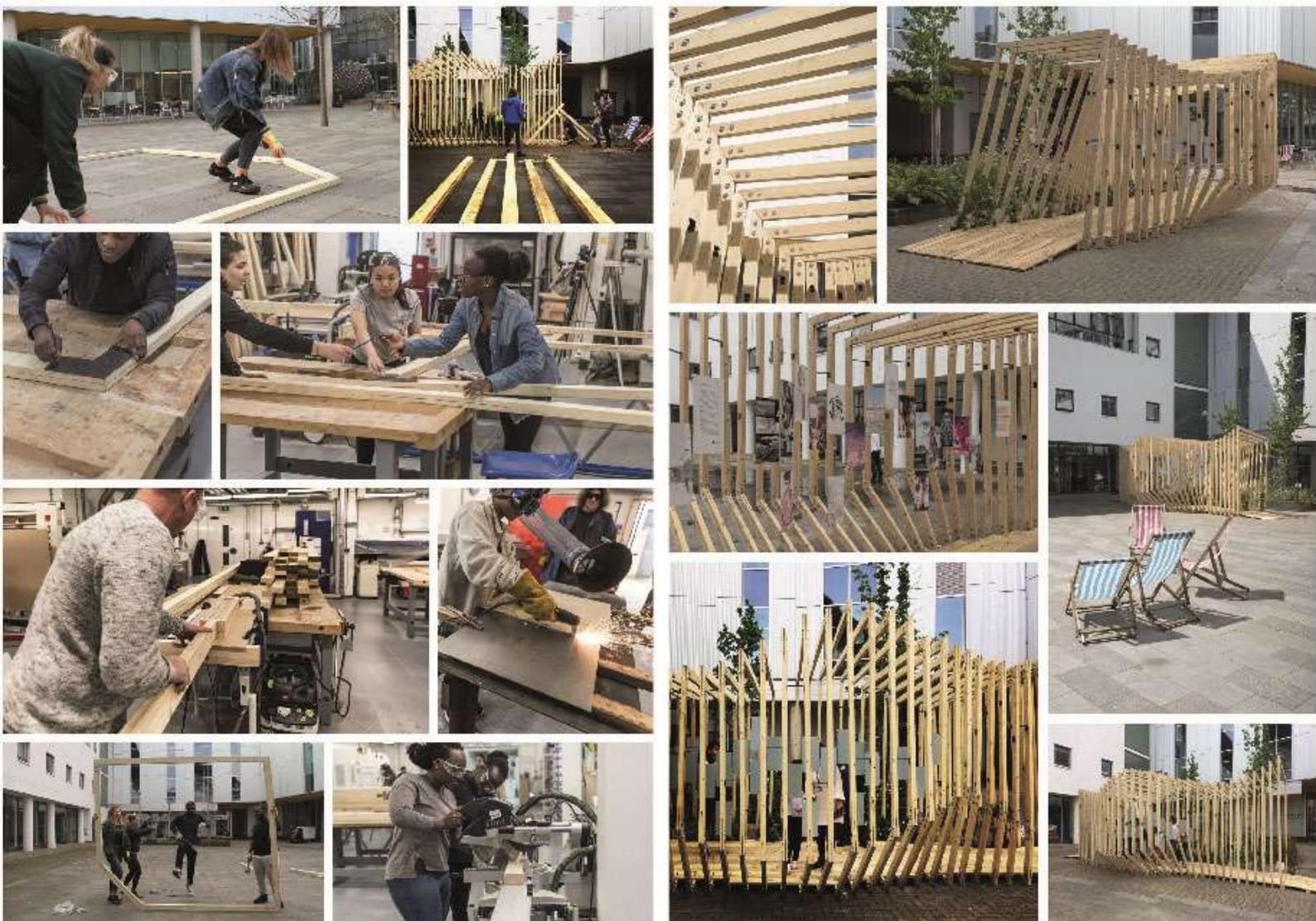


Figure 7. The Edge Pavilion workshop and final installation.
Photo credit: Roger Forman, Guido Robazza.



Figure 8. Chatterbox - Multicultural City Pavilion workshop and final installation. Photo credit: Guido Robazza, Pepe Sánchez-Molero, Helena Kranjc.

Finally, *The Chatterbox - Multicultural City Pavilion* (Fig.8) can be considered the most accomplished project in terms of co-creational practices, thanks to the application of what was learned during previous experiences. This pavilion aimed to create a new public space promoting multicultural integration, celebrating diversity and local urban culture. A central neglected space was turned into an accessible, user-friendly space with the creation of an interactive, inclusive and playful installation. The project was developed with a BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) group, who decided the use and purpose of the space, developed the concept, co-designed the installation down to the details and fabricated it. The process offered an opportunity for them to integrate in the city through a complex production activity, which required interacting and liaising with many other urban

Methodology

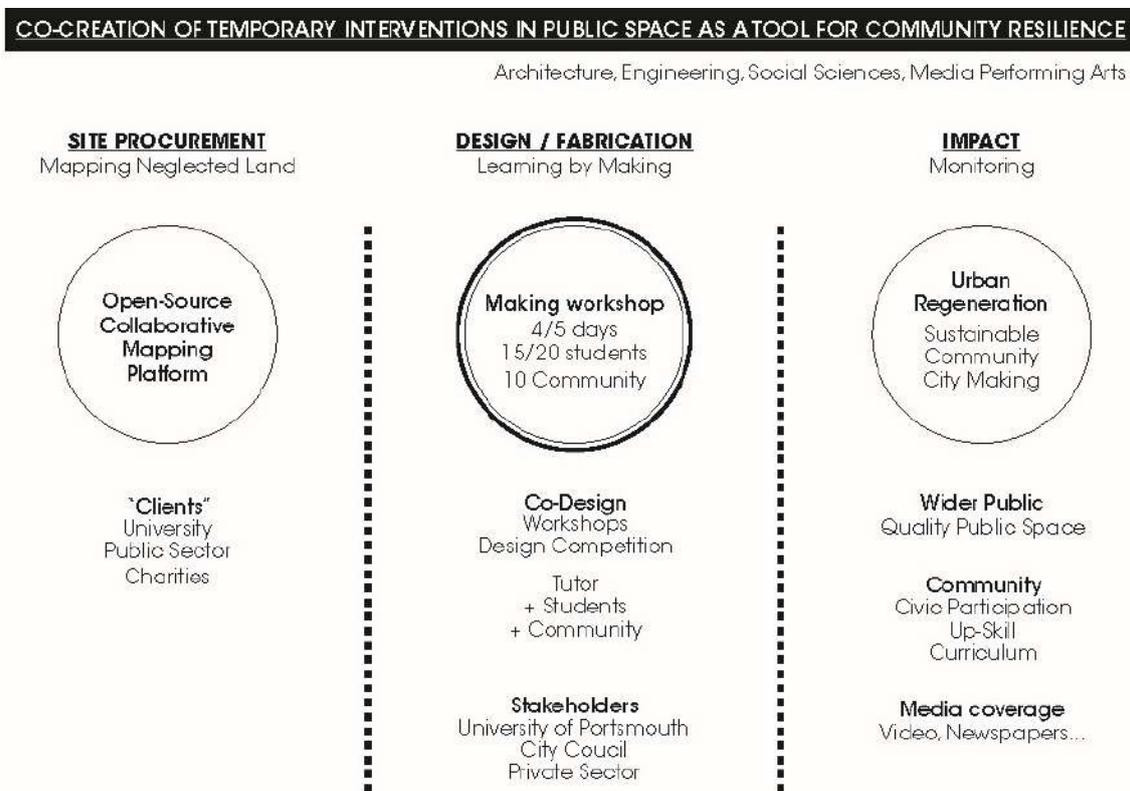


Figure 9. Methodology - Key phases of the process. Source: Guido Robazza

The project has been able to structure a very clear methodology around three key phases (Fig.9). The first phase is the decision of the site, proposed via a process of crowd mapping, and through an online participatory platform where citizens can identify neglected spaces and desires (Fig.10). Secondly, we bring all participants together in a workshop-residency, culminating the collaborative-design and building process and promoting a joyful environment. Finally, it is important to monitor the impacts

generated by the activity, both on the participants directly involved in the project and on the perception of the wider public (Fig. 11).



Figure 10. Online Participatory Platform diagram. Source: Guido Robazza, Phevos Kallitsis

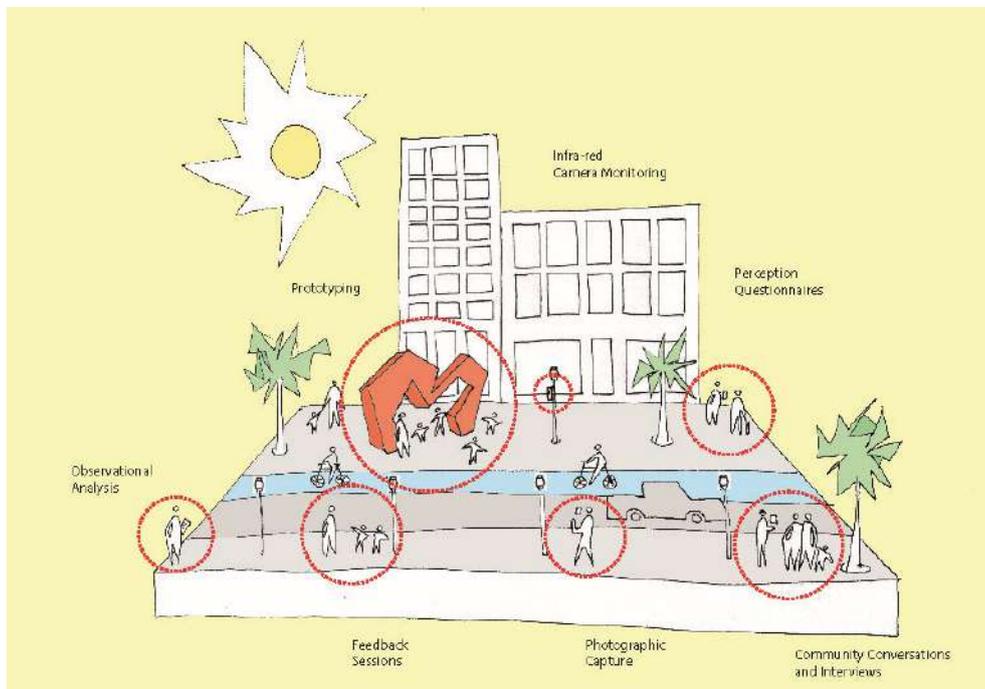


Figure 11. Methodology to monitor the impacts generated by the activity. Source: Guido Robazza

To date, the project has encouraged four different local community groups from socio-economic deprived background to take ownership of marginal urban spaces, deciding on their use and taking action. More than fifty vulnerable, marginalised people from a youth club, a primary school and a BAMER group were involved in the project. Through community conversations and focus groups, it emerged that the vast majority of participants deeply benefited from the creative process of designing and making urban installations collaboratively.



Figure 12. Creative co-design workshops. Photo credit: Guido Robazza.

Creative co-design conversations, model making, clay making workshops, junk playing activities, painting and timber construction sessions are the type of activities that enabled the groups to think about public space design and channel their creativity through active making (Fig.12).

Bold actions in the public realm, such as public art installations, contributed to the integration of the beneficiaries in the decisional process of the future of urban public spaces, allowing them to have a voice on the use of crucial spaces in the city. This process has reactivated the public realm through people's appropriation, contributed to define different forms of civic participation and engaged individuals and groups to it (Fig. 13). Project participants actively contributed to adding ideas and tangible applications to improve the quality of public spaces in their city. The result has encouraged awareness of public life and active citizenship.



Figure 13. Celebratory events in public space for I Don't Roll, #IHeartPompey and The Sound Garden.
Photo credit: Matt Saxey, Guido Robazza, Andrew Whyte.

Discussion

Temporary urbanism lends itself to experimentation and failure, because it is temporal, and carries a real possibility of a more active and meaningful participation of the citizens in the design process. This is fertile ground for more risky co-creation and co-

production between expert and non-expert designers (Manzini, 2015). This is a key formula for the integration and inclusion of all citizens in the city-making process. So, the positive consequence of the temporary nature of the project means also an increased participation in the decision making.

In terms of impact on the wider public, the project contributed to the improvement of the overall perception regarding the liveliness, safety, caring, image, and sociability of some public spaces in the city. The research recorded - via extensive surveys - dramatic shifts in attitudes towards the space following the construction of the installations. The overall perception of the quality of the spaces have substantially improved from before and after the installation of public art objects.

The project, by iteration and constant improvement, has developed a robust methodology of work. This procedure has been shared with local groups and governmental bodies and it is now being adopted by them. The local council is aiming to use co-creation of public art as a form of consultation for public projects, with the aim of improving the level of accessibility of public consultation process by the citizens. The project has also influenced local stakeholders (Maker's Guild; ArtReach; Journeys Festival International) to develop a series of parallel public space participatory activities, contributing to creating a critical mass that is attempting to deliver public space awareness in the city.

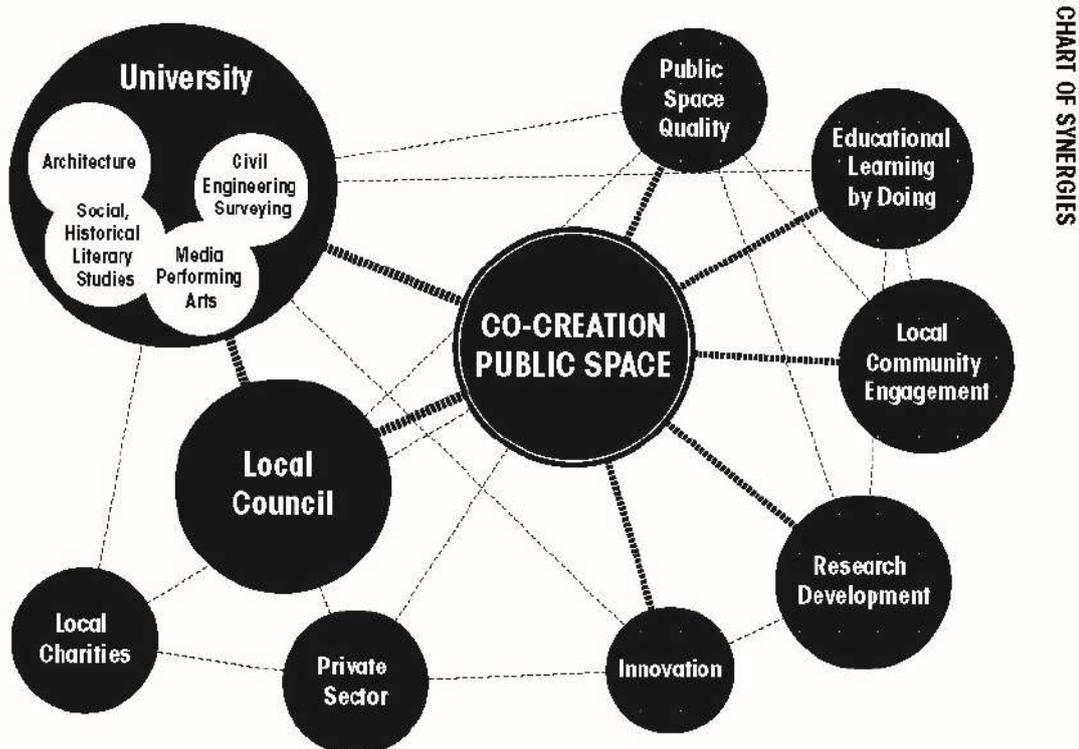


Figure 14. Chart of synergies between local actors. Source: Guido Robazza

The process proved to be an excellent way to bring together many different agents in the city and create opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between key local institutions, such as Universities, Local Councils and the third sector (Fig. 14), enabling the

creation of a dynamically evolving synergic relationship, mutual interests and generating a combination of positive outcomes for all the parties involved. Public bodies will benefit by key outcomes such as public space liveability improvements, generation of cultural activities, community engagement, civic participation, learning opportunities for students, development of research and innovation projects, fostering network-building between different groups, learning new skills and empowering vulnerable groups. The entire process demonstrated how a simple “collaborative making” process can build a unique synergy between several actors that come together, creating a strong mutual and reciprocal benefit.

Conclusion

Temporary art initiatives in public spaces have an important role in the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process and in the spatial production of the public realm in our cities. Involving citizens in proposing and evaluating spatial solutions for their city, but also producing the spaces as part of the process, can be an effective tool to raise awareness, inspire citizens and turn them into active agents of urban transformation. Reflecting at a grassroots scale, participation in the design of public spaces can promote an effective direct democracy by including often underrepresented voices. This might also tackle inequalities and reduce differences, provide valuable rights to the most vulnerable groups and significantly contribute to the well-being of urban dwellers. Finally, these processes have a fundamental role in contributing to build community resilience. While the effects of these projects add small, incremental contributions, they demonstrate how the Small Change approach (Hamdi, 2013) can work. Small, practical and mostly low-budget interventions must be considered as tiny drops contributing to a wider impact; such initiatives, if carefully targeted, will act as catalysts for bigger, long-lasting change (Burnell, 2013).

Note from the author

At the Portsmouth School of Architecture, we approach architectural design as a practical, ethical and socially responsible approach. We focus on architectural design, practice, history and theory, and explore developments in various areas, including sustainable and low carbon design. Employability is built into our teaching. Students work on projects and with clients through our Project Office. Our research focuses on strategic thinking, sustainable design, and community engagement to answer some of the key challenges and matters of concern facing society. Our teaching and research activities inform each other to produce innovative projects and insightful students. We hold the Athena SWAN Bronze award for gender equity.

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六/6: Finding Meaning. The Expanded Exhibition and the Post-Pandemic World

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Abstract

How will artistic exhibitions function in the post-pandemic world? Visiting museums and galleries is a health hazard. 六/6: *Finding Meaning* is an attempt to offer an alternative. It embodies a novel exhibiting format called the *expanded exhibition*, which inhabits an expanded public space, between the physical and the digital. 六/6 shows us that, once liberated spatially, exhibitions can be effective tools of meaning-making and social change even in a post-pandemic world. By exploiting the interplay between the digital and the physical domains, expanded exhibitions such as 六/6 can build alternatives of cultural production that can cope with social distancing, while being participatory, democratic with respect to access, and politically transformative by displacing the colonialist hierarchy centre/periphery.

Keywords: museum, digital exhibition, participatory art, street art, periphery

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Introduction

What is the future of cultural production and consumption? Traditional exhibition venues such as museums and galleries are public spaces designed to bring people together, and often in great proximity to one another. For this reason, they are perfect places for virus spreading, which amidst the explosion of the COVID-19 pandemic have been generally shut down (Solomon et al., 2020). In the foreseeable future, their use will be likely restricted. Moreover, limitations on traveling will make it difficult to visit the most important artistic hubs such as the *Venice Biennale* or *Art Basel*.

As a consequence of these changes in accessing post-pandemic public spaces, there is a nagging question about the future of art and its experience: How will artistic exhibitions function? 六/6: *Finding Meaning* is an attempt to answer that question in practice (Fig. 1).¹ Developed and realized in collaboration with Pietro Rivasi, students from two of my classes at Nanjing University, and an international group of artists, it is arguably the first specimen of what I shall call the *expanded exhibition*, that is, an exhibition inhabiting an expanded public space, between the physical and the digital.



Figure 1. A Detail of the homepage of 六/6: Finding Meaning. Screenshot by the author.

六/6 shows us that, once liberated spatially, exhibitions can be effective tools of meaning-making and social change even in a post-pandemic world. In effect, by exploiting the interplay between the digital and the physical domains, expanded exhibitions such as 六/6 can build alternatives of cultural production that not only can cope with a need for social distancing, but that are also participatory, democratic with respect to access, and can be politically transformative by displacing a center/periphery hierarchy. These exhibitions can offer an extended forum of reflection, which in the case of 六/6 was

¹ <https://findingmeaning.art>

meant to facilitate processing our pandemic trauma, while possibly challenging exclusionary trends in cultural production and consumption.

Finding Meaning in Grief

The story of 六/6 started in the early March 2020, when I was teaching online. A few days before a class held via Zoom, I read about an official Chinese project to collect mementos and artifacts from the country's battle against COVID-19 (Fig. 2). It inspired me to rethink my students' final assignments: Rather than write another term paper, I had them curate an exhibition dedicated to the pandemic, a kind of collective personal diary of those difficult months. After some brainstorming, we came up with a theme: 六/6: *Finding Meaning* — a reference to the stages of grief we were all experiencing.

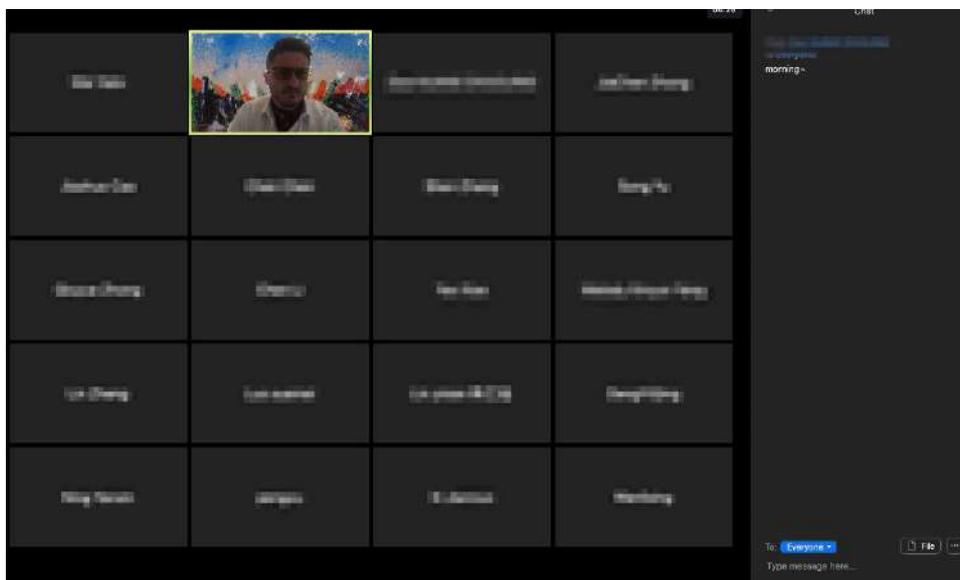


Figure 2. Online Class during Spring '20. Screenshot by the author.

Kübler-Ross (2005) introduces the seminal theory of the five stages of mourning: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Within the literature, Kübler-Ross's theory has been linked with death. Yet, as long-time Kübler-Ross collaborator David Kessler emphasizes, life gives us many reasons to grieve, from a loss of normalcy or economic difficulties to simple isolation. We face loss also when we experience “the end of a marriage, the closing of the company where we work, the destruction of our home in a natural disaster” (Kessler, 2019: 10).

Kübler-Ross's theory of grief became our exhibition's organizing principle. One of the virtual rooms, “DABDA” (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance), consists of objects that, in the experiences of my students, connect with one of those stages, helping us express our suffering (Fig. 3). The possibility of bottom-up design and content creation is one of most interesting possibilities unleashed by the spatial liberation that digital technologies unleash. Students here, scattered all across China and very far from

my location, were capable to tell their own stories, with a level of creative freedom that is difficult to imagine in more traditional settings.

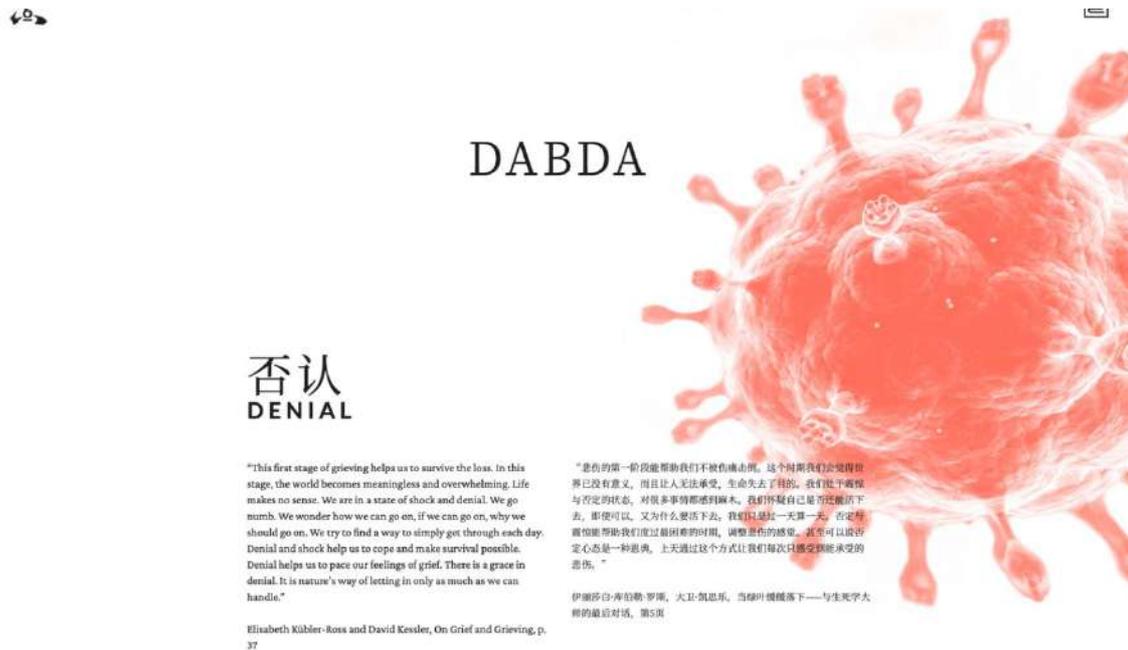


Figure 3. The landing page of “DABDA.” Screenshot by the author.

Students did not merely describe their circumstances, but – in some cases – spontaneously created artworks that were instrumental to express their complex emotional states. This is true, for instance, for Wan Lixing, who created a collage and an installation to articulate in the medium of artistic transformation her own anger. The collage is a repetition of the same picture capturing her annoyance at virtual reality’s inauthenticity (Fig. 4).

The installation expresses her frustration against those who did not wear facemasks in public spaces (Fig. 5).

To the usual five stages of grief, Kessler (2019) adds a sixth one, which was crucial to our plans: meaning. Dissatisfied with the idea that acceptance is the end of the healing process, Kessler was convinced that to become whole again we must first find meaning in the darkness that envelops us. At a time like this, that could be as simple as realizing not all is lost, and that we can still express agency. We called our project *六/6: Finding Meaning* as a reference to Kessler’s final stage of grief, but the repetition of the Chinese and Arabic numerals – besides creating a graphic sense of universality and inclusivity – also echoes the Chinese expression *liuliu dashun*: “May everything go smoothly.”

The artists involved in the project donated some of their works, which were explicitly designed for this occasion and sometimes involved the participation of our students (Fig. 6) or that of visitors (Fig. 9).



Figure 4. Wan Lixing's collage. Screenshot by the author.



Figure 5. Wan Lixing's "facemasks" installation. Screenshot by the author.

六/6: Finding Meaning

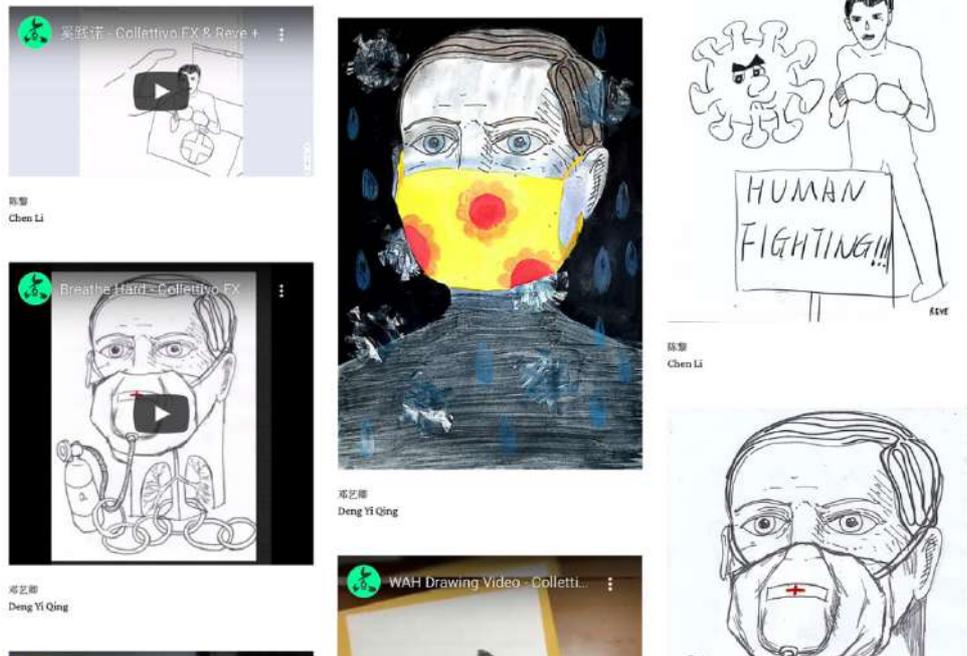


Figure 6. Detail of Collettivo FX's and Reve+'s page in "六/6" presenting their participatory project DisegniComuniCanti. Screenshot by the author.

We collected artists' donations in a virtual room called "六/6," a space where we can metaphorically and metonymically conquer our pain and find meaning in our suffering through the medium of artistic transformation (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. A Detail of the landing page of "六/6." Screenshot by the author.

There is another room: “Emotional Timeline.” Here, a group of students, in collaboration with Italian duo Biancoshock & Rolenzo, artistically re-interpreted the timeline of the pandemic. It consists of a reproduction of this year’s fluctuations in the Shanghai stock market, manipulated to reflect students’ emotional states during that time. Before the pandemic, economic forces could seem laws of nature. But COVID-19 showed how something as small as a virus can upend them.



Figure 8. Detail of "Emotional Timeline." Screenshot taken by the authors.

The peculiarity of 六/6 is, as mentioned before, its expanded nature. In other words, what I have described so far focuses primarily on its digital side. However, the project is designed to make a ripple in the physical domain through a series of further developments, which are open ended and partially ground its socially transformative possibilities.² In the following section, I discuss why we opted for the expanded model.

Expanding the Exhibition’s Space

In response to national lockdowns, many cultural institutions – including very prestigious ones – have turned to the world of the internet to keep feeding viewers’ aesthetic hunger, while avoiding risks of contagion. Digital exhibitions have since then taken the podium. Though some welcome this trend without qualification (Pogrebin, 2020), others are more cautious: Virtually visiting a digital exhibition seems to lack of *something(s)* that we experience when physically engaging with art.³ In developing 六/6, both artists and students expressed their skepticism about traditional format of digital exhibitions. Their perceived incapacity to restructure how we use public spaces and live our lives was the main object of criticism: “virtual visits resemble too much video games,” many artists and collaborators were lamenting.

² A press intends to publish a book including the content of the exhibition.

³ https://www.debatingeurope.eu/2016/03/31/viewing-art-online-diminish-experience/#.Xte7TsZS_Y0

Visiting a physical exhibition, in effect, does not merely stimulate our senses. It also modifies, among other things, how we practice metropolises, cities, towns, villages, etc. This in turn has also an impact on travelers' routes, influencing when, where, and how we travel. Attending the opening of a physical exhibitions, for instance, can also structure community building by somewhat guiding the people we meet, the friends we make, and the people we fall in love with. Contrary to what Modern theories of art want to tell us, experiencing art at exhibitions does not disengage us from our daily concerns, but rather opens up new possible scenarios of everyday life.⁴ Exhibitions therefore enter the domain of human action by re-describing uses of public spaces while shaping how we act, think, and feel.⁵

By being incapable of affecting how we practice public spaces, digital exhibitions seem to structurally lack in that transformative aspect, that is, in its capacity to shape our daily lives. By drawing on Lopes (2009) one could plausibly argue that an event is a digital exhibition just in case (1) it is an exhibition⁶ (2) made by computer or (3) made for display by computer or other digital device (tablet, smart-phone, e-reader, etc.) (4) in a common, digital code. As such, a digital exhibition does not take us physically anywhere: It allows us to surf the virtual realm and, at best, introduce us to online communities.⁷ Surely dominant models of digital exhibition suffer from the limitations just highlighted: Both what I shall call the *documental exhibition* and the *virtual tour* cannot significantly shape how viewers practice public spaces, thus failing to touch upon their everyday lives (Champion, 2014). On the one hand, documental exhibitions take as their model archives, and present a combination of pictures of artifacts combined with text – or other explanatory add-on.⁸ On the other hand, virtual tours create game-like immersive experiences, which can become very realistic through the use of VR technologies (Bekele et al., 2018).⁹ Both categories of digital exhibitions can surely afford some value(s), but they offer surrogate experiences that are self-contained within the boundaries of the virtual domain, failing to have a deep impact on our non-digital identities.

六/6 was designed to contrast these limitations while still profiting from the advantages in terms of accessibility, participation, and social distancing that documental exhibitions and virtual tours afford. Those difficulties follow primarily from thinking virtual and material spaces as essentially distinct. But this is far from a necessity. There is no ontological separation between virtual and material spaces. They can stand in a symbiotic relationship creating the conditions for the emergence of an interplay between the digital and the physical domains, and our project intended to exploit those possibilities.

But how to create such an interplay? 六/6 as an example of expanded exhibition looks at street art as an inspiration. This urban art kind produces meaning and shape our lives – among other things – by exploiting the interaction between the virtual and the material

⁴ I am broadening a claim defended in Baldini (2016)

⁵ Here, I am suggesting that exhibitions are akin to *real metaphors* (Feagin, 1996; Summers, 1991).

⁶ The question of what is an exhibition raises concerns that I cannot consider here. For a pertinent discussion, see Ventzislavov (2014)

⁷ As far as I know, major digital exhibitions or museums do not generally offer services of online community building.

⁸ For an example, see <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-j-paul-getty-museum?hl=en>.

⁹ For an example, see <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-british-museum>.

(Baldini, 2020). Since the mid-2000s, street artists have begun to use the internet, and in particular that of social media, in ways that significantly links it with material reality. Street art does not simply provide its aficionados with virtual galleries of interesting visual artefacts, but it restructures how we practice spaces. It invites us to explore neglected parts of the city in search of the latest graffiti (Rivasi, 2017). In some cases, street artists can even reshape routes of global tourism (Morgan, 2020).

In 六/6, we followed three principles in establishing the connection between the virtual and the material space that we see in street art: (i) expanded conceptualization; (ii) democratic digital access; and (iii) localized materialization. Let me discuss them in turn. First, expanded conceptualization requires from both curators and artists to think about the exhibition and the individual artworks as ontological hybrids jointly inhabiting the digital and the physical spaces. 六/6 realizes this principle by being imagined as a digital exhibition with physical manifestations *and vice versa*. This in turn has forced both Rivasi and I to envision certain spatial hierarchies and arrangements of content that would have not emerged if thinking only in terms of a digital or traditional exhibition. By forcing artists to create an ontological hybrid, this requirement has showed new creative directions. For instance, Biancoshock and Rolenzo have reimagined their digital project *SoCoD-19* (Fig. 9) in the expanded space as an artist book including the pictures and texts that users have uploaded and written in the original website.

socod19.com



Figure 9: Detail of Biancoshock's and Rolenzo's page in "六/6" presenting *SoCoD-19*. Screenshot taken by the author.

Since the beginning, we laid out a proposal that we shared with artists according to which *Plastique Fantastique's MOBILE PPS for Doctors* (Fig. 10), a "bubble" designed to protect visitors from getting infected, would offer the spatial framework for physical instantiations of the exhibition. In early 2020, we expect to have exhibitions in Modena (Italy) and Nanjing (China), thanks to the efforts of our partners *Associazione Culturale Støff* and *Nanjing University*.



Figure 10. Detail of Plastique Fantastique's page in "六/6" presenting Mobile PPS for Doctors. Screenshot taken by the author.

Second, the democratic digital access is instrumental in promoting inclusivity, while counteracting exclusionary tendencies found in traditional exhibitions. 六/6 uses a basic technology. Artists' works have also favored accessibility over fancy digital tricks. For instance, in creating *Chaos del Tri per uno* (Fig. 11), Italian artist Gerardo Paoletti has decided to limit his tarots' interactivity as to avoid excluding users with older smart-phones. Third, localized materialization deals most directly with the approach to the transubstantiated side of expanded exhibition. It is an approach that wants to displace the hierarchy center/periphery and its colonial implications by promoting a plurality of instantiations (Kaps and Komlosy, 2013). This in turn is the most critical and socially transformative aspect of 六/6 and the expanded exhibition. It deconstructs in practice the myth of the artist and the curator, dissolving their authorities by materializing without the on-site intervention of the original creative team. This approach empowers local communities, which can create everywhere an exhibition. In doing so, they question the need for established artistic centres, which usually are global metropolises such as New York, London and Shanghai – while effectively coping with travel restrictions. In 六/6, local materialization meant going fully modular. For artists, the main challenge has been to envision works that can be assembled on-site without their direct

supervision. For instance, Marco Barotti's *Plant* uses a design that can be recreated by any suitable expert in robotics (Fig. 12).

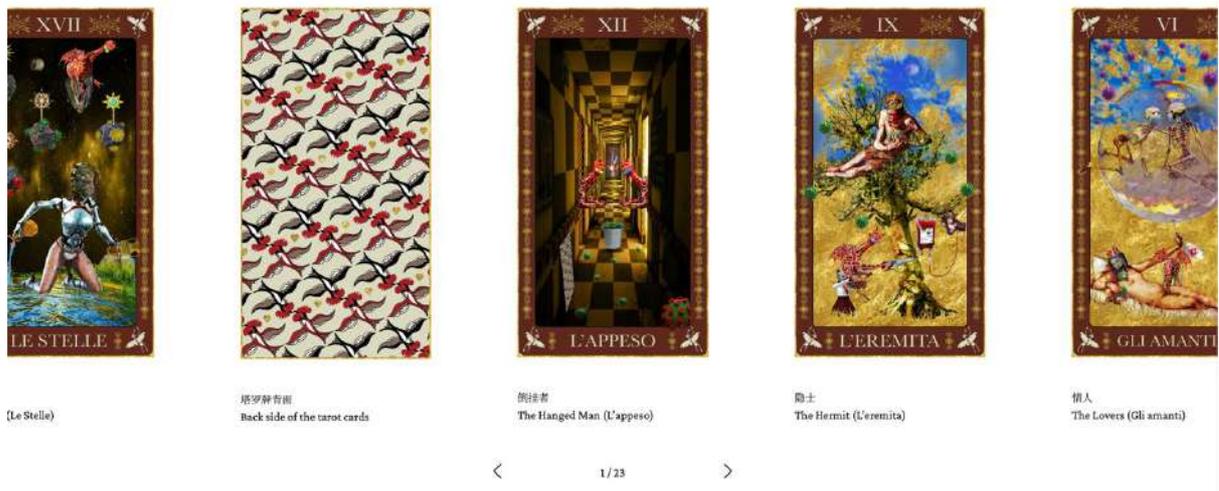


Figure 11. Detail of Gerardo Paoletti's page in "六/6" presenting Chaos del Tri per Uno. Screenshot taken by the author.

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 RESEARCH: TECH DEVELOPMENTS, DATA TRANSLATION, SONIFICATION

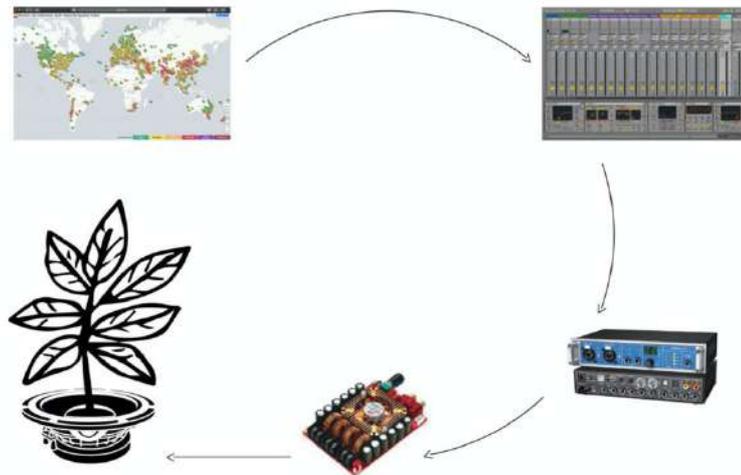


Figure 12. Detail of Marco Barotti's page in "六/6" presenting The Plant. Screenshot taken by the author.

How will artistic exhibitions function? I suggested an answer that sees cultural production in post-pandemic world as taking place in the expanded space, that is, a space in between the digital and the physical domains. When exploiting their interplay, expanded exhibitions will shape how we practice the everyday in ways that could also counteract exclusionary tendencies that often afflict traditional cultural consumption and production. The space of culture needs to be expanded, not simply replaced.

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RMIT UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF ARTS (ART IN PUBLIC SPACE)

Temporary Text(iles)

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Abstract

Temporary Text(iles) is project led research which investigates the destructive power of words and language. The artist combines text and experimental textiles to produce installations that are both performative and ephemeral. These spatial interventions are activated within contemporary art contexts and public spaces such as the RMIT University City Campus, Altona beach and Campbell Arcade, all located in Melbourne, Australia. These experimental sites offer a gentle disruption to people's everyday routine as well as a space for critical reflection and conversation. In this chaotic time of global grief and tension, the author commits herself to understanding how her artistic interventions, using the medium of text and textile, could respond to pressing social issues. These issues investigated include discrimination and sexual violence against women, the environmental crisis and the racial mistreatment against Asian Australian refugees and asylum seekers. Three works are discussed within *Temporary Text(iles)* to describe the different spatial interventions in the research project and to analyse its effect in relation to these major social issues.

Keywords: text, textiles, ephemeral, social activism, public space

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Introduction

Crisis evokes fear which elicits the weaponisation of language to demean, suppress and divide community. This practice-led research interrogates the harm caused by labels and political rhetoric. Additionally, it explores how creative practice might intervene into this space. *Temporary Text(iles)* is a multidisciplinary practice which creatively merges textiles, art, and Australian government policy to form installations. With the intention of reaching an unsuspecting public to spark curiosity and dialogue, the installations are not only exhibited in galleries but also as staged public performances. This article comprises of two parts, both of which describes artworks produced from this research. The artworks are personal and derived from lived experience as well as narratives from familial relationships. The first part of the article investigates the inadequacies of written government policies. *Drip* (2019) will highlight the political rhetoric within the Australian legal framework. Similarly, *words in water* (2019) aims to capture the urgency of the environmental crisis by exposing empty promises of much needed political action. The second part of the article investigates the violence of labels through the lens of Asian Australian refugees and asylum seekers. *Adrift* (2018-20) offers an example of how creative practice can encourage the rejection of labels and the damage that it carries.

Methodology

Text and textiles share etymological roots and also have cultural and historical similarities (Andrew 2008). This relationship is a point of intrigue and establishes the basis of these artistic interventions. This practice led research draws on different garment archetypes and experiments with Polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) fabric to pattern make and construct concept led clothing. PVA fabric is a synthetic fabric that is non-toxic and water soluble. By embracing the ephemeral nature of this fabric, it rejects the formal commodification of clothing and also opens up possibilities of exciting and interactive performances. In the following installations described in this article, text is written or sewn onto the PVA fabric. In these performances, the fabric is subjected to water at different exposure levels, literally erasing the text written onto them and symbolically stripping words from its effect and affect. This technique is applied to the installations which explores political rhetoric, labels and the manipulation of language.

Washing words

The research project stemmed from deep self-reflections of my lived experiences as a cis-gendered woman to explore issues of discrimination and sexual violence against women in Australia. It is important to note that as the issue of discrimination and sexual violence is explored in this project, it is only one perspective of womanhood. I acknowledge that Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders and women with transgender experiences are much more susceptible to violence (Our Watch n.d). The general laws which were established to protect the rights of women in Australia overlook the needs and complex challenges of women experiencing intersectional discrimination. For example, migrant women have different layers of oppression which may inhibit them from fully accessing the rights described in The Sex Discrimination Act of 1984. A thorough investigation into this Australian document also shows that there are limitations in responding to systemic discrimination. One example of this, as noted by

Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, is the ever-persisting gender pay gap (Australian Human Rights Commission 2017).



Figure 1. Drip exhibited at First Site Gallery. Photographed by Morgan Carson.

Drip (2019) is a response to my findings and takes on the form of a raincoat that is sewn from PVA fabric. Excerpts from the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Australia were laboriously transcribed onto this fabric as an artistic query into the effectiveness of the current legal framework created to protect women's right to be free from sexual harassment and violence. Just as a water-soluble raincoat is ironically ineffectual, so may be the written laws as a guarantee safety net for all Australian women. It proposes that wearer is adorned with a false form of protection. The artwork questions whether the legislative and administrative appearance of equality from the Australian government, is reality. It recognises that change in the behaviours, attitudes and structures that endorses inequality, is pivotal to progress. Furthermore, it pushes for the values promised in these written laws to go beyond mere formal equality and that there

should be more considerate development of initiatives to encourage community acceptance of these anti-discriminatory values (Australian Human Rights Commission 2005). Figure 1 and Figure 2 is documentation of the first public viewing of this artwork at First Site Gallery at RMIT University. The following year, it was exhibited again at Counihan Gallery in Brunswick amongst 80 artworks for the *Moreland Summer Show*. *Drip* (2019) was awarded the 2019 People's Choice Award, suggesting the issue of women's rights and safety is current, and one that resonates with members of the Moreland community.

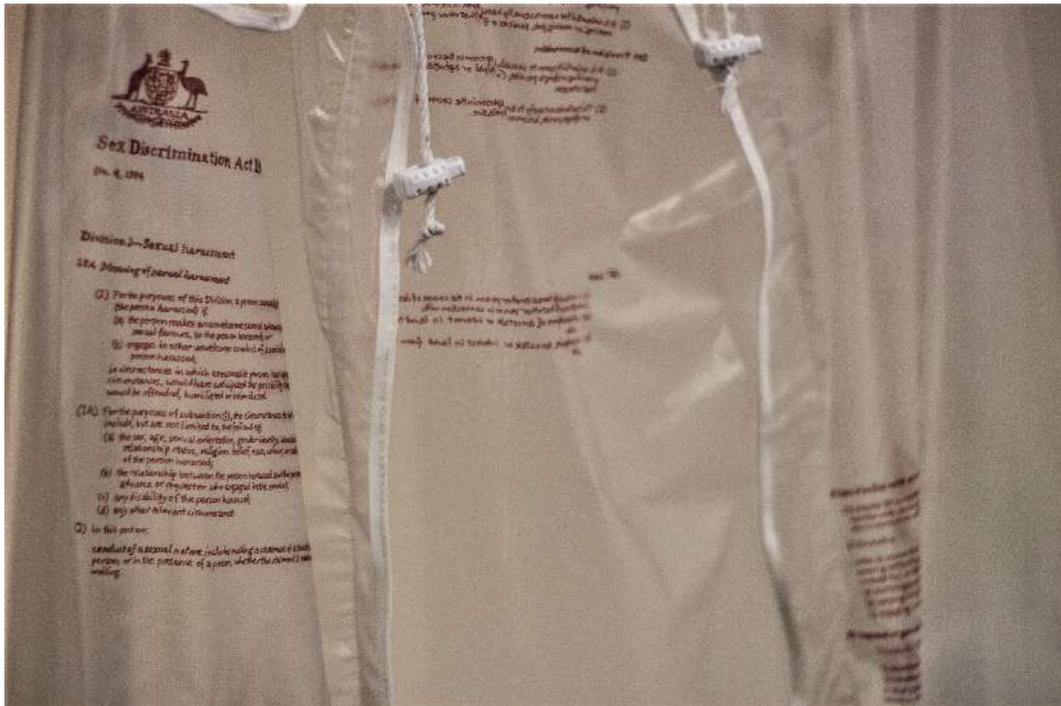


Figure 2. *Drip* exhibited at First Site Gallery. Photographed by Morgan Carson.

Shortly after the presentation of *Drip* (2019) in a gallery context, the artwork evolved from a static installation to a staged performance in a public site. The raincoat was a key component in a collaborative artwork with poet and performance artist, Trixi Rosa. In an event that took place on the grounds of RMIT University and as part of the *Her Boundaries* art festival hosted by the Public Art Collective, the performer wears the raincoat and slowly drenches her body with a portable shower. As she performs acts of washing and cleansing, the water tears at the raincoat, the bloody red ink of the words stain her skin. It was a performance of liberating oneself from the words that are ineffective in protecting all women from sexual violence and discrimination. This first exploration into the negative effects of political rhetoric relates to the proceeding installations.

Next page:

Figure 3. words in water installed at Altona beach, Victoria. Photographed by Morgan Carson.

Figure 4. Blown and wet PVA fabric of the words in water installation at Altona beach, Victoria.

Photographed by Morgan Carson.

Words in water

words in water (2019) was a durational performance that was installed in the tides of Altona beach in Victoria, Australia.



The artwork focussed on the event in which Australia signed a global agreement that aimed to respond to the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Projections provided by the Australian government (March 2019), shows that Australia is not on track to achieving the target it agreed to in The 2016 Paris Agreement. Pieces of the PVA fabric was laboriously inscribed with articles and promises from The 2015 Kyoto Protocol and The 2016 Paris Agreement. As the tides of the ocean come in, the fabric slowly submerges into the water and each line of these global contracts disappear, highlighting that the words are just empty promises unless backed with measurable actions. The ragged remnant of the installation is a reminder of the urgency for much needed action against climate change. The residual outcome of this performance, as seen in Figure 4, was a messy, tattered and barely intact piece of red and clear fabric. This sculpture was then installed in the fortyfivedownstairs gallery space for a group exhibition titled *1.5 degrees*. In contrast to *Drip* (2019), this artwork is a public performance which was then re-presented in a gallery context. Interestingly, a key image from the documentation of the performance was also developed into a lightbox as part of RMIT University's LIGHTSCAPES program. Hoisted high on the walls of Rodda Lane, the image faintly glows on the people who enters this public space.



Figure 5. words in water image installed as a lightbox at Rodda Lane.

A poetic gesture to combat the violence of labels

adrift (2019) is the last intervention of this practice led research project. It is an interrogation of the violence of labels and how poetic gestures can be symbolic of a reclamation of the negative language imposed onto the Asian Australian community. The derogatory slang 'Yellow Peril' from the late 19th century was used to oppress

Chinese workers who had legally immigrated to Australia. Similarly, the aftermath of the Vietnam War in the 1970s saw the arrival of the first wave of boats carrying people seeking asylum in Australia. This event introduced the term 'boat people' into the Australian vernacular (Phillips & Spinks 2013). This term has been brought into effect again with former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott's aggressive 'illegal boats' campaign in 2013 (Davidson 2013). The Liberal's campaign focused on painting a negative image of refugees and asylum seekers and had purposefully employed loaded language as a tactic to achieve this. The use of the labels has the capability to control the narrative around refugees and asylum seekers and consequently, the way in which these individuals are perceived, rejected and accepted by the public (Lee & Nerghes 2018). 'Illegal boat people' was a term that was littered in manipulative mass media during the election and demonstrates the big role language play in shaping the public's attitudes towards asylum and migration and influencing anxiety about immigration across Australia (United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees 2015). In populating discussions around asylum policies with labels such as 'boat people', it highlights the biased frame for evaluation of the same issue (Lee & Nerghes 2018). The protection framework for refugees and asylum seekers is undermined by the criminalisation and vilification that these labels encourage (Sajjad 2018). These label hierarchise human worthiness and simplify narratives to deduce those people seeking refuge to that label- that one characteristic- a singular descriptor. The violence and effects of labels opens a window of opportunity for artistic interventions to provide commentary and offer a space of critical reflection on this social issue.

adrift (2019) is a site-specific performative and ephemeral installation which aims to respond to the labels placed on refugees and asylum seekers. In the front courtyard of Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, three transparent workers shirts made from PVA fabric were hung, held together by a red yarn which is embroidered onto the shirts to form the words 'alien', 'boat people' and 'illegal'. The yarns anchor the installation to the nearby fire hydrant cage and electrical pole and as the wind blows through, gives an abstract impression of a makeshift clothesline on a boat. In this participatory installation, three people were given garden watering sprays to hose down the shirts. As the water touches the fabric, it begins to transform. The reaction of the PVA fabric to the water causes the structure of the installation to collapse with the words unravelling until there is nothing but loose yarns piling onto the floor. This action is a poetic gesture to offer individuals the tools to reject the negative labels imposed onto them. Through unravelling the negative connotations of those labels, they are no longer the object of the language. This small artistic intervention has created a world in which words are reduced to nothing. The seemingly impenetrable language system, that is often used to categorised human worth, could indeed be challenged through artistic actions in public sites. Supported by Creative Victoria, an iteration of this installation was realised at Campbell Arcade in the City of Melbourne. The work was installed in Capsule, a cabinet and window which sits in the underground concourse from Flinders Street Station to Degraes Street. The decision to activate this installation in this site was to reach an unsuspecting public audience in the commuters who routinely uses the underground concourse. In the duration of 4 weeks, the artist had revisited the space multiple times to gradually spray the shirts with water.



Figure 6 & 7. *adrift* installed at ACCA's foreground. Photographed by Ceri Hann.

adrift (2019) became a phased durational performance in which the commuters witnessed three stages of the installation- three different phases of decay. Throughout the exhibition of the artwork, several members of the public had shared images of the work, circulating the narrative in the digital space. The public speculations on the meaning and intention behind the work was collected. One notable response to the artwork was from a person with immigrant parents who resonated with the fragmented words 'boat people'.

Conclusion

In the global pandemic, there is an undisputable and unnerving racialisation of disease. This racialisation of diseases by our print media and politicians causes a physical, mental and emotional impact on the Asian communities and is further evidence of how language weaponised in the media filters down into Australian society. Racism is revealed in Australian print media and their choice words are an attack on the Asian Australian population. Australian publication, The Herald Sun published a headline that referred to the "Chinese Virus Pandamonium" (2020), while The Daily Telegraph highlighted "China kids stay home" (2020) in their headlines.

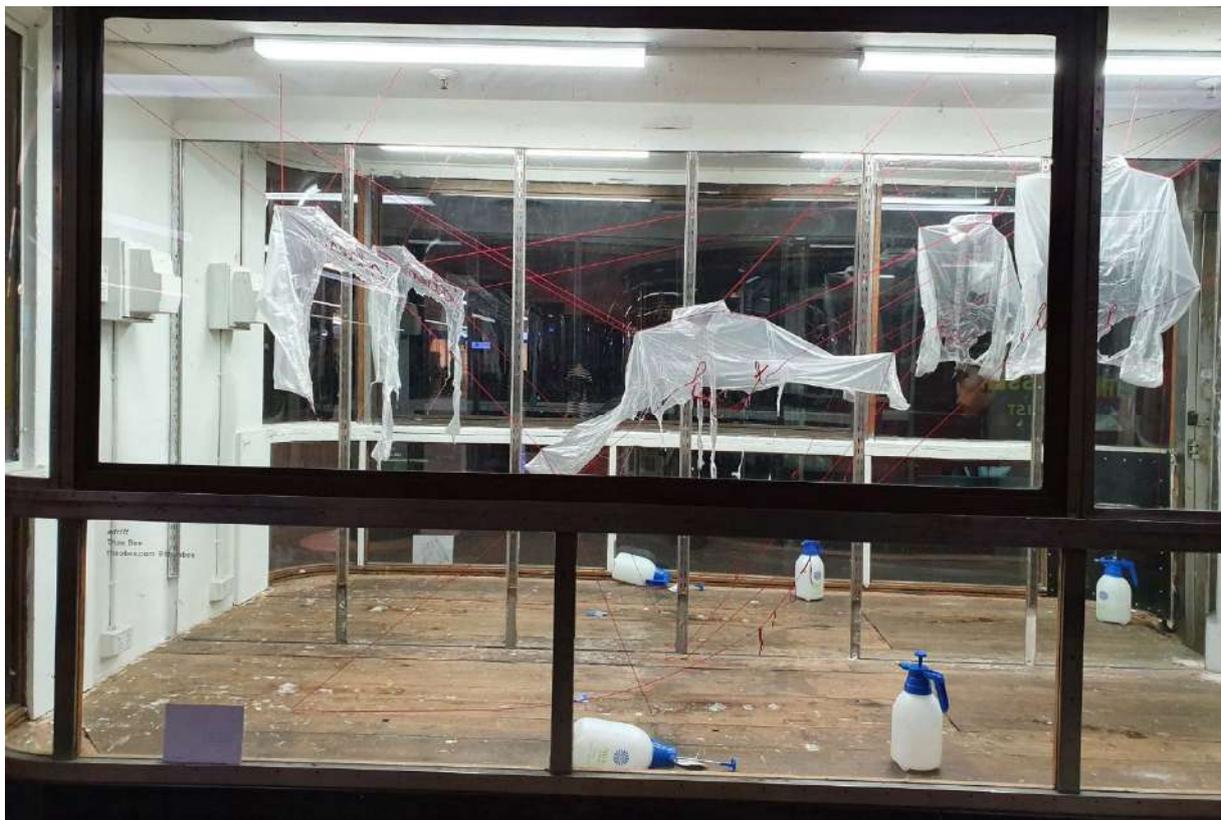


Figure 8. adrift installed at Capsule space in Campbell Arcade.
Figure 9. adrift installed at Capsule space in Campbell Arcade, after the first performance.

COVID-19 has increased the weaponisation of language to degrade the Asian communities. Racial slurs amplified by crisis is nothing new and just an iteration of what has been happening for years. For instance, the hysteria of SARS from 2013 evoked an aggressive anti-Asian mentality, equipping racists with labels to stereotype Asians. *Temporary Text(iles)* is a practice led research project which aims to hijack this cycle. In this research, the role that language plays in the inferiorisation of marginalised groups has been investigated. The findings of the project have evolved into interactive public performances and art installations. Times of crisis and elevated racism opens up the opportunity for artists to interrogate the violence of labels, the fallacies of language and to put pressure on leaders in Australian politics and Australian print media to curtail racism. *Temporary Text(iles)* is one humble example of how artistic practice can intervene into this space.

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RMIT UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF ARTS (ART IN PUBLIC SPACE)

Just Keep Going – Polyphony. Gentle Activism for Collective Survival

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Abstract

This portfolio examines the possibility of my project ‘Just Keep Going’ series to nurture resilience for those experiencing uncanniness during periods of change and re-organization in the aftermath of extreme experiences.

Experiences in an action-oriented non-verbal polyphony environment that prioritizes the uniqueness of a holistic self while accepting the existence of diverse individuals who are participating in collective survival could foster that resilience.

My practice-led research aims to explore an expanded application of my Ikebana practice to my public Spatial Neural-Architectures while exploring a new way of understanding security, survival, and wellbeing. My research informs my art practice that includes the practices arising out of my life experience as an international voluntary evacuee to Australia from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan.

My portfolio shows the transformation of my artwork and my everyday-life. I investigate how my art-practice could offer a therapeutic experience as well as new cultural framework by examining the methods of Open Dialogue, the Biophilia Hypothesis, Ikebana Philosophy, and Sand-play Therapy. These methods open up new possibilities for a socially-engaged practice that addresses collective traumas in the midst/aftermath of global crisis and the social changes necessary for collective survival.

Keywords: survival, Ikebana, trauma, polyphony, connectedness

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Figure 1. *Just Keep Going_Departure 2018*, Ryoko Kose, Curumbin Beach, Gold Coast for Swell Sculpture Festival, Australia. Installation view. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

Introduction

Revising our own narratives is important for wellbeing, especially those who are at turning points in their lives and for those in the aftermath of extreme experiences such as personal, natural, and human-made disasters. When people adapt to new environments, they have no choice but to transform their previously established background identities that were destroyed by the incident/s. Developing new narratives plays a key role in transforming new identities by encouraging reconnection into the continuum of lives followed by problem-solving and then integrating the beginning of new personal and social changes. This process usually needs a 'safe' environment and empathetic encouragement because facing new realities, confronting new customs, and finding one's own voice often is the cause of tension, fear, and trauma. To revise different individual narratives, it is also important to reinforce individual uniqueness by accepting the uniqueness of others.

However, in periods of extreme uncertainty, access to 'safe' environments in which to explore the personal search for physical and emotional survival is very limited. Extreme incidents often force examination and revision of many kinds of daily life frameworks developed long before the incident/s happened. Physical survival requires changes in ways of thinking that lead to lifestyle changes. In addition, it is necessary to interact with groups of individuals with various values, as well as varied physical and social needs. Difference is revealed dramatically. This can lead to huge emotional affects arising out of all of the conditions described above. The more dramatic the adaptation, the stronger the confusion and grief experienced as consequences of the event/s.

In this time of confusion and grief, there is a need for alternative ways of understanding the situation that is alternative and additional to language-based reflection.

In my experience, this is because emotional trauma can be exacerbated by confusing relations arising from language-based reflection making it very difficult to examine oneself honestly. Language-based reflection is likely to invite short-cuts to emotional understanding in order to rationalize what happened and what must change. This places language-based reflection before full inspection of emotions. From my personal experience, in a disaster and extreme uncertainty, emotional understanding must come before intellectual language-based understanding.

Drawing on my experience, I have found that there is a sequence to addressing and healing traumas. In the first stage, there is no need to understand one's emotions because the trauma is first trapped in the body. The entrapment is at the level of the unconscious. Seeking to uncover trauma with language-based reflection can block some things in the unconscious that need to be revealed as they rise to consciousness from the unconscious.

My project begins with a search for personal emotional understanding through art processes. In this portfolio, I examine the therapeutic aspects of my project in order to nurture my personal resilience. I describe my project first, followed by the background of the projects, and then I present the transformation of my artwork and private life through revelations in my art processes.

My project and background

In my Master of Arts (Art in Public Space) research at RMIT, my interests combined with my lived experience of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and my domestic and international 'voluntary' evacuations. I have lived in a margin between political systems, with on-going daily-life survival in uncertainty in the aftermath of that incident for about nine years.

I lived in Tokyo when the disaster occurred and I had several big radiation exposures there in the first year of the accident. The accident is currently ongoing nine years after it began because the solution to settle the unstable reactors down has not been found. Radiation has been distributed all over the world, especially in the areas near Fukushima such as Tokyo where the fall out of radioactive materials is observed every month since the accident. Soon after the accident, the radiation exposure started affecting my health. Then I found that my apartment in Tokyo and all the items inside were too contaminated to live in and with, which made me decide to become a 'voluntary evacuee.' The disaster has affected not only my physical life but also my internal life. My identity and understanding of the external world have become confused by my domestic

and international evacuation, which dramatically changed my way of living and my understanding of security and survival.

Throughout my nine-year evacuation, I have tried to untangle the enormous complexity of the issues I have experienced. My project arose out of the complexity of the nuclear accident and its aftermath, caused by the character of radiation; invisible, intangible, difficult to measure and quantify as energy. In addition, its profound effects on all human and living life in the ecological system are yet to be fully examined in evidence-based science.



Figure 2. Just Keep Going, 2017, Ryoko Kose.
Detail of the material.
Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

After Fukushima, my art practice proved to be a coping mechanism for my everyday life adversity, as an ‘invisible’ environmental refugee without any access to political and social supports. Transcultural ‘voluntary’ evacuation and being a mother have forced me to adapt to whatever is available to me.

My art practice has enabled me to process grief by revealing what happened to me. It also has encouraged me to revise my narrative constantly. I adapt and then share that with an audience through my art practice, primarily in public venues. This has resulted in transforming my practice toward a gentle activism for those living in uncertainty for both their daily-life and life-long survival.

My art practice has helped me manifest through materials my internalized experience and my understanding of the external concepts and issues relevant to my practice. The installations in my master’s research aimed to represent life in flux. These works turned

out to be precise re/presentations of my physical and mental situation when I created them.

In my practice, I have found it remarkably interesting that the artwork changes in advance of my life. I can say that my way of thinking, or way of committing to society and/or myself, manifests changes arising from the art practice. I find that those changes and subsequent realizations then give me a chance to change my actions and my conceptual framework and which, in turn, change my style of life. Through my practice from a Master's to a PhD, my artwork 'told' me that my interests have been transformed from individual survival to collective survival.

Transformation of my work and life

The first work of the 'Just Keep Going' series was created in 2017, Three years after I moved to Australia. In that year I enrolled into Master of Art- Art in Public Space in RMIT on a two-year visa. Until then, I was physically busy with parenting my three young children and had no time to reflect on my situation and myself.

I created a test work in public as an intervention for self-reflection. Moving hands as an exploration of an artwork forced me to open something in my body. This first work revealed my trauma from the Fukushima nuclear accident and my evacuation. I also recognized that this work was created by applying Ikebana Philosophy, an element of which aims for self-reflection in order to connect the inner self to the outside world.



Figure 3. Just Keep Going_ Look up in the Sky,
2017, Ryoko Kose,
Testing Ground, Melbourne, Australia.
Installation view. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

'Just Keep Going' was originally developed as an installation to create a safe environment to encourage self-reflection. This work was inspired by two elements of Ikebana practice. The first was the equilibrium between forces of all living creatures in the universe, inanimate objects and artificial things in a specific time and space. Nothing is definitive, everything is in flux and connected. Second, my activation of spaces with simple interventions is similar to Ikebana practice by using lines and negative-space to create a composition. Characterized by extreme minimalism and discipline, Ikebana requires that the practitioner intensely study the specimen to ascertain how to best emphasize its form. Furthermore, Ikebana maximizes the potential not only of flowers and vases but also of the place where the artwork is installed. I believe Ikebana is a site-specific practice that aims to achieve harmony with the environment. Simple but strong composition has the power to make space a place without assertiveness.

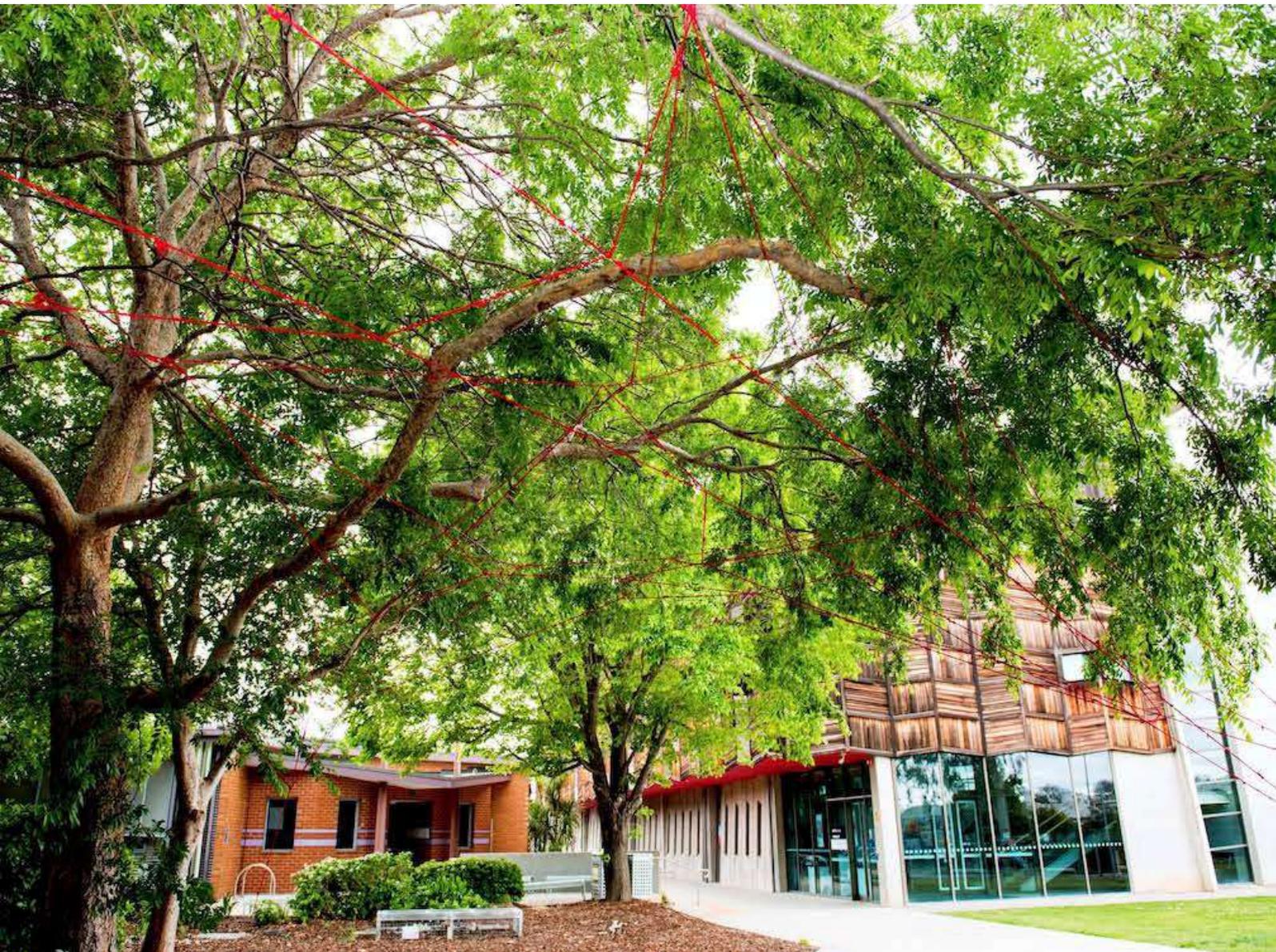


Figure 4. Just Keep Going_ Encouragement, 2017, Ryoko Kose, RMIT Brunswick Campus for a public art event 'Artland', Brunswick, Australia. Installation view. Photograph: Olivia Blackburn.

My artwork 'Just Keep Going' is a 3D line-drawing installation/performance series with projections. Crocheted hemp yarn is directly applied to various structures in a range of sites across Australia. The yarns are then re-used in consecutive sites, bringing all the experiences and memories from one site to another. I engage playfully with each site I work in using neither nails nor hooks for attachment. The composition of the woven yarns represents lives that exist in rhizomatic ways without structures or hierarchy. The composition moves beyond language and culture to build connectedness. The yarn has no beginning and no end. (Deleuze & Guattari 1987 cited in Colebrook, C., 2003) The work transforms depending on the point of the view of the person who comes to it implying that we all are living different lives, each with different values developed by different cultural, political, religious, racial, social, generational and gender backgrounds. Audiences, space, materials, textural elements, and the life that inhabits each site coalesces in a process of constant 'becoming.' Identities are transformed by mutual encounters. These aspects are folded into a specific time and place

Since then, my creations have led me to interesting and useful reflections. For example, the bright red colour of the yarn is used in our culture for the celebration of new-born babies, coming-age, long-life and so on. It represents 'celebration of life' and hope to just keep going. Installation views at night gave me another reflection. All the colours of the work including those in Nature are banished, which reminded me of the negativity in my body. For example, fear of death and sickness caused by radiation exposure, or that in the darkness, I was ignorant of radiation contamination when I was exposed. Installing yarn in public for a certain amount of time shifted my practice to the concept of process as an artwork. I installed artwork as a residency, in the gallery and public areas around a shopping mall, always accompanied by my 2-year-old, 3-year-old and 5-year-old children. We spent the whole time in the Gallery. Weaving together, going for a walk, exploring to the mall, painting, embroidery and so on. This changed my concept of artwork from something created on a special occasion to something that emerges from everyday life.

At this stage, I was also challenged to represent my experience of disaster and struggle of displacement to the public. I found, however, that those works created a boundary between artwork/myself and the viewers. Viewers felt no relation to them in their daily lives. Yet, the uranium in the Fukushima nuclear reactor was exported by Australia, and in Australia, there are those who are suffering radiation sickness due to that mining. My experience was completely objectified and understood as a representation of a historical disaster.

I learned ikebana practice from my grandmother, who practiced with materials from her natural surroundings. In my practice, the yarn travels from site to site bringing all the memories and experiences of all the places where it had existed previously. This is the metaphor of life. Once we move into a new place, we start to explore, to find, and build connections to others. We sometimes take wrong directions, then stop or return, sometimes we come to a dead-end, sometimes we go too far away then come back to our life.

Through time and space, the yarn transformed after being uninstalled from various sites by being untied and untangled carefully. The choice of material instead of flowers derives from my fear of contaminated land. The displacement of yarn from site to site represents my unsettledness due to my visa situation.



Figure 5. *Just Keep Going_Sanctuary*, 2018, Ryoko Kose, The Artists Guild in The Dockland District, Dockland, Australia, for the International Womens' Day, Documentation image.
Photograph: Ryoko Kose.



Figure 6. Just Keep Going_Sanctuary, 2018, Ryoko Kose, The Artists Guild in The Dockland District, Dockland, Australia, for the International Womens' Day, Documentation image. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.



Figure 7 (left). *Just Keep Going_Disaster*, 2018, Ryoko Kose, Testing Ground, Melbourne, Australia. Installation view. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

Figure 8 (right). *Just Keep Going_Displacement* 2018, Ryoko Kose, Monash Law Chambers, Melbourne, Australia for the public event by Monash Gender, Security and Peace 'Displacements : From Everyday Experience to Global Policy', Documentation image. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

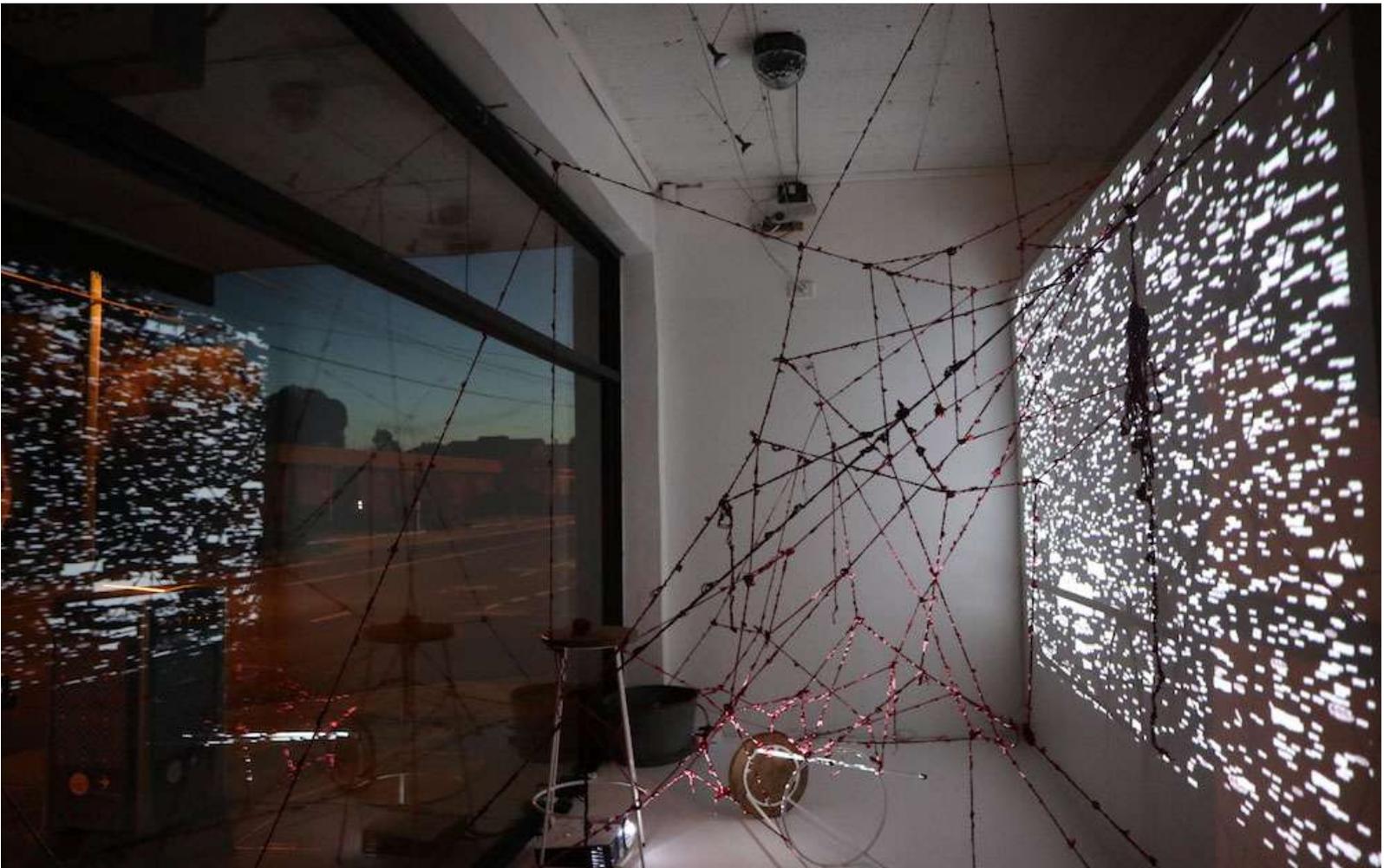


Figure 9. *Just Keep Going_Layers of Life* 2018, Zeljko Radic and Ryoko Kose, Post Industrial Design for West Projection Festival, West Footscray, Melbourne, Australia. Installation view. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

So, next, I tried to represent the constraints between people with positive meanings. This became a unique celebration in order to accept the concept that we are living together in this time and place by affecting each other.

In the next site, while the yarn was installed by the sea, it became partly covered with salt from ocean, the sand from the beach, and a lot of fresh spider webs from the ground. This means all the elements in the site such as the yarn, the people, the trees, showers, the fence, the grasses, the sea, the sand, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, the life that inhabits the site are part of the artwork and create a little universe.



Figure 10. Just Keep Going_Departure, 2018, Ryoko Kose, Curumbin Beach in Gold Coast for Swell Sculpture Festival, Australia. Detail. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

Then a trickster visited me. In uninstalling the yarn, I had to cut all the yarn applied on the structures on the site so I could quickly get on the flight back home. I did that with a bit of hesitation but enabled me to refresh myself dramatically. I thought the cut yarn on the ground looked like it was bleeding and detoxifying.

Three months after this work, I experienced a very strange drama just after I finished my final presentation for Master's study. I accidentally discarded all the yarn I had grown up with and brought with me instead of a collection of my children's old clothes. Another trickster arrived. I was very shocked and felt great loss at first. However, gradually I came to feel that accident seemed to remove a bit of burden from my shoulders. After that, I received an offer for PhD study in RMIT, followed by another temporary visa that secures my stay in Australia for a maximum of eight years.



Figure 11. *Just Keep Going_ Departure*, 2018, Ryoko Kose, Curumbin Beach in Gold Coast for Swell Sculpture Festival, Australia. Installation view. Photograph: Ryoko Kose

At the start of my PhD I developed a combination of installation and performative works that involved five representative actions: knitting to reinforce, weaving to connect, cutting to destroy, sleeping to recover, and untangling to revise something previously felt or known. These works represented me trapped in my internalized thoughts and situations enclosed in my chrysalis. After this, I started to explore collective survival in order that I could survive.

I developed a participatory collaboration with the visitors to a public sculpture festival in the Gold Coast¹. The participants were invited by written instructions on site to make something representing their unique connectedness to others. This time, I just stayed and worked by myself in the site and facilitated participants as sometimes required. The participants creating their own pieces were very calm and inspired by each other. The developed installation could be described as being ‘a worship of the uniqueness of life.’

Note

¹This project was developed as a commissioned work and not included in Ryoko Kose’s PhD research.



Figure 12. Just Keep Going_It Is Like Something, 2019, Ryoko Kose, RMIT Gallery for 'Bruised: Art Action and Ecology in Asia' a part of ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2019. Documentation image. Photograph: Atong Atem



Figure 13. Just Keep Going_Elements, 2019, Ryoko Kose, Curumbin Beach in Gold Coast for Swell Sculpture Festival, Australia. Documentation image. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

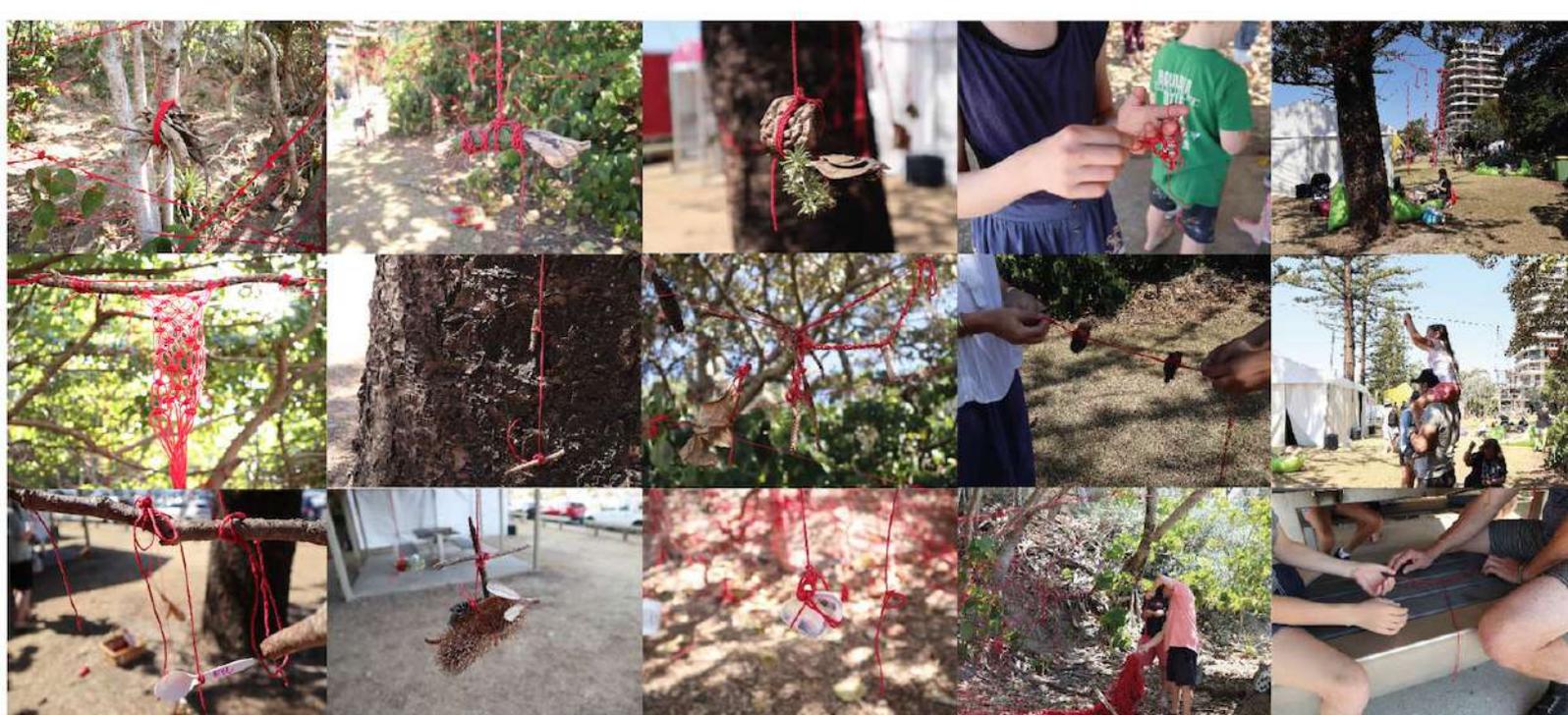


Figure 14. Just Keep Going_Elements, 2019, Ryoko Kose, Curumbin Beach in Gold Coast for Swell Sculpture Festival, Australia. Detail of the art pieces. Photograph: Ryoko Kose.

Therapeutic aspect of my work and Conclusion

In this portfolio I have explored the motivations, projects, personal transformations, and therapeutic elements of my practice. I have demonstrated how aspects of Ikebana practice can nurture resilience. In my practice, I found four critical factors that identify social-ecological systems, resilience during periods of change, and reorganization: (1) learning to live with change and uncertainty; (2) nurturing biological and cultural diversity; (3) combining different types of knowledge for learning; and (4) creating the opportunity for self-organization (Folke et al. 2002).

Through the projects, I enjoyed 'polyphonic' (Anderson & Goolishian 1988, cited in Seikkula, J. & Olson, M.E. 2003) relationships with the elements of sites. The animate and inanimate objects become multifaceted aspects of myself. This makes me feel like I am having a dialogue with them in my whole body. All my feeling, thoughts, and reflections are affirmed and celebrated by the environment. This revelation led me to prioritize the uniqueness of a holistic self and to accept the diversity of individual ways of adapting to uncertain situations. These notions come from Ikebana Philosophy developed from Japanese indigenous concepts. I observe similar adaptations in people with non-Japanese backgrounds that could be explained with E.O. Wilson's Biophilia Hypothesis. Through art practice, we have the potential to access the three Open Dialogue principles: tolerance of uncertainty, dialogism and "polyphony in social network" (Seikkula et al., 2001) when we try to connect to Nature and natural environments.

Open Dialogue focuses on process itself, not achievement. Similarly, indigenous Japanese perspectives on therapy tend to emphasize finding internal peace through process and adapting to one's circumstances in productive ways (Enns and Kasai, 2003). Sandplay Therapy, known as Hakoniwa Therapy in Japan, has similar effects to Ikebana practice. It focuses on artistic, holistic, non-rational, spiritual, and nonverbal aspects of knowing (Kawai, 1996). Both allow us to act out internal reality, experience transcendence through experimentation, and prepare ourselves for productive action that arises out of acceptance.

My action-oriented practice promotes revision, transformation, and adaptation of personal narratives. By experiencing and examining connectedness to others, this practice can accommodate diverse individual resilience in post-crisis contexts that can in turn lead to and foster resilience at broader social-ecological scales. Nurturing this cultural-framework is critical in order to face issues in front of us, make decisions, and take actions for collective survival. This chain of processes opens up new possibilities for a socially-engaged practice that confronts collective trauma in the midst/aftermath of global crisis and encourages social change for collective survival.

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RMIT UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF ARTS (ART IN PUBLIC SPACE)

Third Way Interventions in Public Space and Urban Design

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Abstract

As epitomized by the famous rivalry between Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses in the '60s New York, city planning and the understanding of public space has mainly oscillated between two opposing poles: the tidy and organized city planned with a top-down approach by architects using geometry to shape it, on one hand; and the messy and disorganized city, shaped with a bottom-up spirit, lacking planning and allowing the traces of its inhabitants to take place, on the other. This article explores a Third Way in-between these two poles. Analysing different ways how those opposites have appeared in history and different endeavours undertaken to tear them down, it examines projects developed under Stan Allen's concept of infrastructural urbanism, where we explore at Pontifical Xaverian University innovative approaches to urban and public space design that empower inhabitants to shape their own city (bottom-up) whilst maintaining a sense of order and composition through designed structures (top-down) that challenge Leon Battista Alberti's foundational criterion of architectural beauty: you can neither add nor subtract any element without destroying the harmony achieved.

Keywords: infrastructural urbanism, public space, innovation, bottom-up, urban design

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Introduction

When real estate developer Robert Moses proposed a road through the Greenwich Village in 1955, he met with opposition from one particularly vehement resident: Jane Jacobs (Paletta, 2016). This was the beginning of a decades-long battle that opposed Moses' ambition to create a New York full of big infrastructure works and rationalist and standardized building towers with Jane Jacobs' defence of a neighbourhood life that favours variety and change, consolidating one of the most famous rivalries in urban planning, urban design and the public space of the 20th century.

Oppositions in history

This opposition of rational and ordered forms against free forms that seem to be generated spontaneously and with a certain lack of order, is anything but new in the history of western culture. The first time it appeared was in the opposition between *mousikē* and *technē* back in archaic and early classical Greece. As part of the Dionysian rites, the *mousikē* was a ritualized fusion of poetry, music, and dance that was supported by divine inspiration¹. The gods would whisper words to poets, songs to musicians, and movements to dancers (Parcell, 2012, p. 22-23). Contrary to what happened with the concept of *technē*, *mousikē* was supported and supervised by the muses and directly inspired by the gods: that is, *mousikē* was not something that could be learned (Ibid.). On the contrary, *technē* is defined by Paul Oscar Kristeller precisely as that which can be taught and learned (1990), that whose rules can be understood in a rational way and which therefore can be passed on from generation to generation. While *mousikē* is the materialization of the intentions of gods, *technē* is the materialization of human reason. This is the reason why, when the Pythagoreans discovered the rational rules –translated into numbers– behind pitch intervals and harmony of music, their countrymen ended up tremendously disappointed (Parcell, 2012, p. 38).

However, as centuries passed, that rationality would acquire prestige and moral implications. In the 5th century, for example St. Augustine would declare that evil is within what lacks limits, divisions, and order (Boone, 2020 p.35; Tzonis & Lefaivre, 1986, p. 24). The limits of the rational –that give shape to Euclidean figures– will also be fundamental for Kant in the 18th century, making explicit the opposition between the beautiful and the sublime: the beautiful refers to the form of the object consisting of its definition, what calms and comforts; the sublime to what has no form, that which does not have clear limits and which excites and agitates (Žižek, 1989, p. 202). The word sublime from its very etymology, is directly related to the concept of limit, and specifically to its negation, that is, with the limitlessness or infinity (Meillet & Ernout 2001); and also, to the forces of nature and the of Dionysian (Doran, 2015, p. 8). The importance of limits would be taken up again in late 19th century by Heinrich Wölfflin in what would become one of the most important oppositions in the history of art. For him, the “unpainterly” architecture is defined by the pleasure of the “clearly

¹ Although there might seem to be a distance between the sublime creation of the inspired artist within a Dionysian rite and the informal configuration of neighborhood life, they both share the same structure: they all operate in an analogous way to nature. As explained ahead, the Dionysian, as well as the sublime are intimately related to nature, and Hernández, Hernández and Niño (2012) show how nature is also related to that city life Jane Jacobs advocated for.

conceived, precise and limited" form (1968, p. 95). While the "painterly" one had something completely unique, "it was capable of giving the impression of the sublime" (Ibid., p. 93).

Wölfflin, would consolidate an effort started by his professor Jakob Burckhardt, who was also a professor of Friedrich Nietzsche's, who in turn would use the very context of the Greek Dionysian rites –from which the very concept of *mousikē* arose– to establish an analogous opposition: that between the Apollonian and the Dionysian (Nietzsche, 1999). The Apollonian, referring to Apollo, god of the sun and a symbol of forces of logical order and sobriety; and the Dionysian, referring to Dionysus, god of wine, instincts, nature, and emotions.

Wölfflin's opposition, however, will take place, in a different historical context: The Renaissance and the Baroque. For Wölfflin, Renaissance –the unpainterly architecture– corresponds to a rational order with clearly defined and multiple parts, evoking stasis; the Baroque –the painterly architecture– on the contrary, corresponds to that whose parts become an indistinguishable unified entity, where masses protrude, giving the impression of movement and emotion (1968, p. 29-39).

This opposition of Wölfflin's has been commented on, taken up, expanded, and reinterpreted by several important authors. Karsten Harries, for example, uses the opposition extracting connotations: Renaissance forms defies time through its stasis, becoming eternal but without changes, therefore evoking death; the Baroque, on the contrary, celebrates time, movement and change and therefore evokes life (1998, p. 221-225). From a very different perspective, Harries ends up getting to the same opposition that Jacobs identified in the title of her most important book: "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1992). Bruno Zevi for his part, will extend Wölfflin's analysis by applying it beyond the original historical boundaries that Wölfflin set to himself, stating that the entire history of architecture evolves in an oscillating movement between the rational Euclidean forms and the romantic organic ones; an idea he illustrates with a helicoid where history ascends from the past to the present showing the different styles in the history of architecture as belonging either to one opposite or to the other (Zevi, 2008, p. 214).

Third Way approaches in history

Others, however, will recognize the opposition only as an invitation to tear it down. Such is the case of Charles Jencks, who in 1997 wrote: "A totally ordered and disordered art, a completely regular and chaotic environment, are naturally produced by our economic-cultural system. What we want today in architecture and art is something between and, as we will see, at right angles to these extremes" (1997, p. 35). Jencks advocated for a Third Way whose benefits for human well-being are being corroborated by recent studies in the field of cognitive architecture (Ellard, 2015; Sussman, 2014; Urist, 2016).



Figure 1. Rendered image for project “Infrastructure for Urban Transformation and Adaptation: Strategies for the Potentiation of Bogotá Art District” developed by Maria Alejandra Peña under the author’s supervision. Source: Maria Alejandra Peña.

But just as the opposition itself is not new, this call for the exploration of a Third Way is not new either.

As early as the 18th century, English garden designers tried to overturn the opposition between the beautiful and the sublime with the concept of the picturesque²²; which in turn would help Auguste Choisy understand the configuration of Greek urban ensembles (1899-2015; Etlin, 1987), from where he ended up influencing Le Corbusier’s concept of promenade (Etlin, 1987) and through this, also to a number of important architects of the late 20th and the early 21st centuries. Iñaki Ábalos would explain this phenomenon in a very clear way by declaring about the theoretical body of the picturesque that “its texts often describe better the interests of many contemporary creations than all modern treatises” (2009, p. 7). Ábalos goes further in his analysis and dates the beginning of the resurgence of this picturesque spirit: 1973, “the year that

²² 18th Century foundational theorist Uvdale Price writes : “the picturesque has a character not less separate and distinct than either the sublime or the beautiful, nor less independent of the art of painting” (1810, 1:39). The picturesque quits the search for a totalizing geometric order to undertake one for a cinematic experience in space-time, shifting the view of the designer from an aerial one of floor plans to that of the landscape painter: the pedestrian’s. For analysis on this concept see also Macarthur, 2007, Bois, 1984, and Marshall, 2002.

marks (...) the abandonment of the attitudes, topics, languages and goals of modernity” (ibid.). He chooses this year as a milestone that represents the end of the validity of modern ideals –those defended by Robert Moses– as it corresponds to the beginning of oil crisis. But another paradigmatic fact has become a more famous symbol of that tipping point: Pruitt-Igoe implosion in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972; which Jencks would call the death of modern architecture (1977, p. 9). This milestone marks a clear triumph for Jane Jacobs and the beginning of the consolidation of the reflection on dwelling in architecture. Dwelling –understood as the possibility of leaving a trace (Benjamin, 1999)– is alien to the pure and closed forms of the rationalist pole precisely because of its immutability. In this new context, and parallel to the picturesque ideals mentioned by Ábalos, architects such as John Habraken will emerge, consolidating another quest for a Third Way that had been forging since the 1960s.



Figure 2. Rendered image for project “Infrastructure for Urban Transformation and Adaptation: Strategies for the Potentiation of Bogotá Art District” developed by Maria Alejandra Peña under the author’s supervision. Source: Maria Alejandra Peña.

Habraken’s approach was very clever: it played with the very essence of classical architecture. The closed order of classical Greek architecture –a *technē*– was made up of two fundamental elements: *schema* and *taxis* (Tzonis & Lefaivre, 1986, p. 9, 18, 27, 28). The first one refers to the form understood as a whole: as a complete and defined mental image. The second one to the relationship mediated by mathematical and geometric rules between the different elements. The Combination results in a clear, but also tremendously closed system. Alberti, in Renaissance, would put it very clearly when explaining his concept of beauty:

“I shall define beauty to be a harmony of all the parts, in whatsoever subject it appears, fitted together with such proportion and connection, that nothing could be added, diminished or altered, but for the worse.” (Alberti, 1726-1955, VI, ii, p. 113)

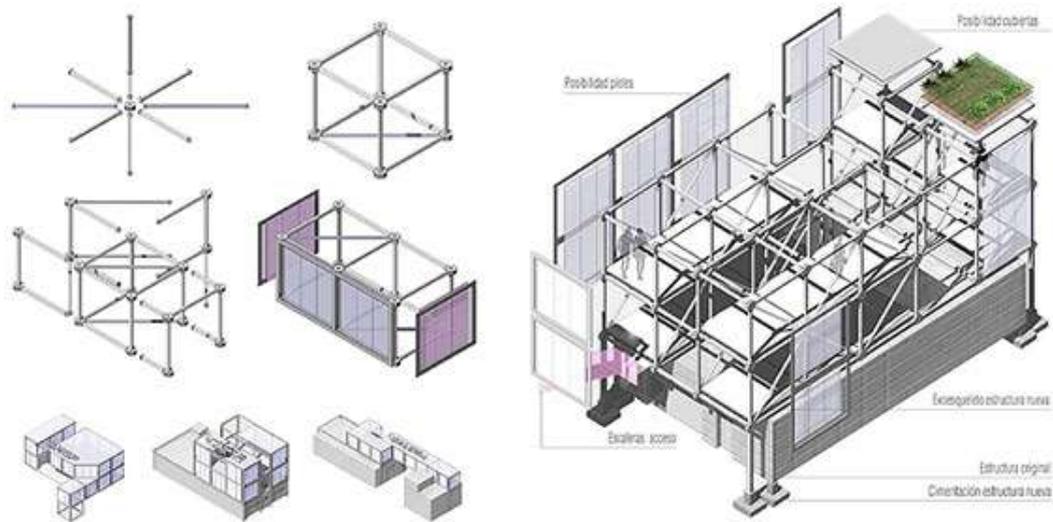


Figure 3. Design development drawings for project “Infrastructure for Urban Transformation and Adaptation: Strategies for the Potentiation of Bogotá Art District” developed by Maria Alejandra Peña under the author’s supervision. Source: Maria Alejandra Peña.

Habraken is going to attempt to make of architectural structures, habitable ones –that is, structures able to be affected by the user–; opening the system of classical architecture: maintaining the *taxis* and getting rid of the *schema*. He will explain it using language as an analogy:

“The need for a prior image is most keenly felt when we do not trust the form as something to work with. There is nothing wrong with having such an image, but it is not a prerequisite and may be a hindrance. When we speak with other people we need not know what the end result of the conversation will be either. We may come out of the conversation with a better sense of the issue; in fact, we may have changed our mind. When we are concerned about “doing our own thing” and feel we must be on top of the form all the time we cannot relax and trust the process”. (Habraken, 1987, p. 6)

This recognition of the importance of a two-way communication and not simply "doing our own thing" will also be highlighted by Zygmunt Bauman quoting Rosenweig:

“(Speech) does not know in advance just where it will end. It takes its cue from others. In fact, it lives by virtue of another’s life”. (Bauman, 2008, p. 125)

Humberto Maturana, along the same lines, is going to be more explicit by taking that sense of conversation out of the scope of the word-based language. For Maturana, language appears there where a living being coordinates its behaviour with others. The classic example to understand this, mentioned by Maturana himself on several occasions, is the scene in which an observer stands behind a window and sees how two people (whom he cannot hear, but only see) communicate. For the observer, these

people are clearly communicating, but that is not determined by the use they make of a certain symbolic system, since while the visual plane prevents us from capturing such a symbolic system, it is not crucial to determine that they in fact are (Maturana, 1978; Ortiz-Ocaña, 2015). Maturana raises communication beyond the spoken and written language, to understand it as an interaction between two beings, as a mutual soaking through: a mutual leaving a trace.

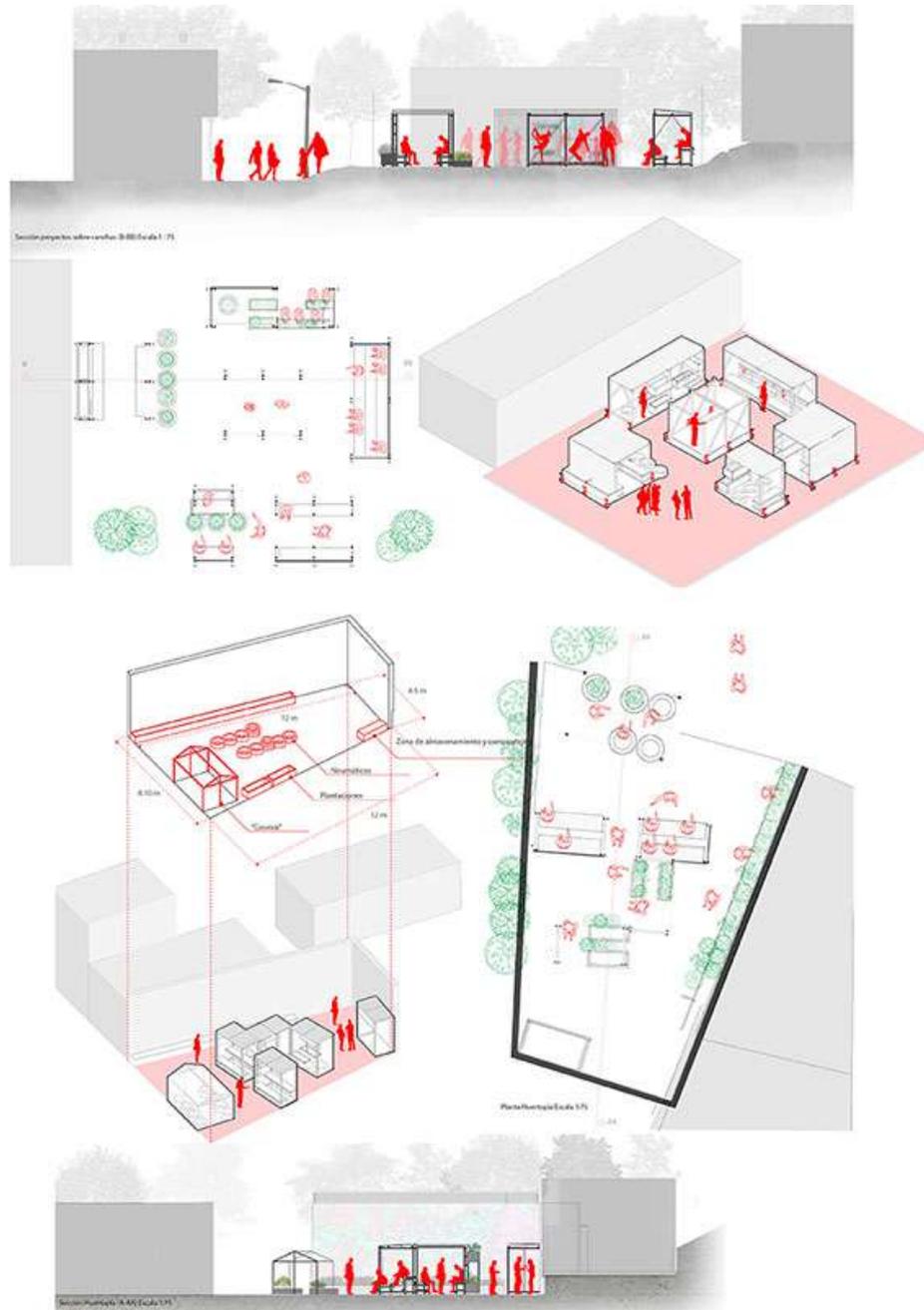


Figure 4. Design development drawings for project “Platform for cultural practices in the popular habitat: Los Laureles, community use and appropriation” developed by Juan Martin Castañeda under the author’s supervision. Source: Juan Martin Castañeda.

Habraken is then going to favour an architecture that opens up to a dialogue through fostering communication between the subject and the object - literally - where one affects the other, where one leaves its trace on the other: although maintaining a clear set of rules of formal configuration.

This form of Third Way will have an important role in contemporary Latin American architecture. Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena (Pritzker Prize laureate in 2016), will create formal structures that become support for future informal modifications of the inhabitants, for example, and Colombian architect Giancarlo Mazzanti will generate a set of rules that articulate the different elements of a composition which behave as modules to be configured according to the specific needs of each particular project.

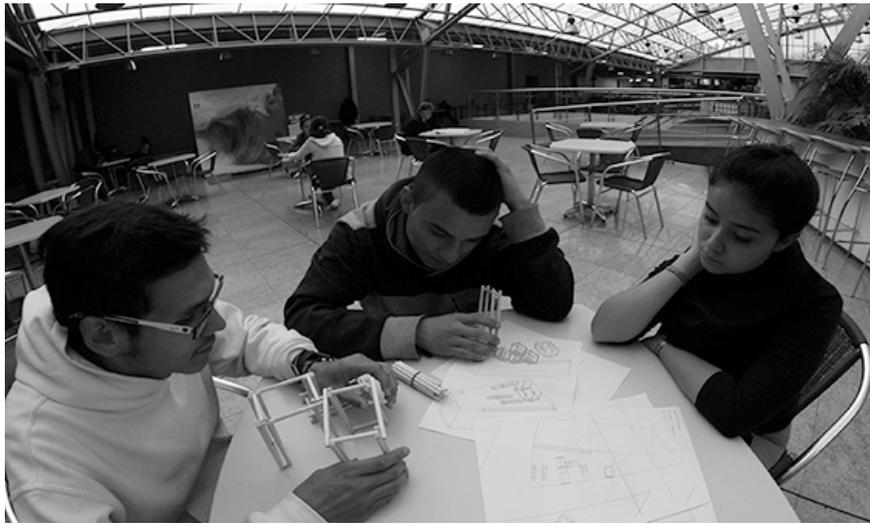


Figure 5. Photography of participatory process for project “Platform for cultural practices in the popular habitat: Los Laureles, community use and appropriation” developed by Juan Martin Castañeda under the author’s supervision. Source: Juan Martin Castañeda.



Figure 6. Photography of construction process for project “Platform for cultural practices in the popular habitat: Los Laureles, community use and appropriation” developed by Juan Martin Castañeda under the author’s supervision. Source: Juan Martin Castañeda.

Third Way Explorations in Public Space and Urban Design

Along these lines, at the Pontifical Xavierian University and within the framework of RIBA II final degree projects, we have been exploring how this idea of spatial configuration systems with clear rules but without a limitation or specific formal definition allows us to address different complex problems commonly found in contemporary Latin American cities; armed with Habraken's concepts, but also taking as a framework another form of Third Way approach: Stan Allen's infrastructural urbanism (1999).



Figure 7. Rendered image for project "Operational Chimeras: The Trace of the Fold in Urban Landscape" developed by Maria Camila Santos under the author's supervision. Source: Maria Camila Santos.

Placing himself a few curves above within Zevi's helicoid, Allen will stay the middle of the opposition between modernity and postmodernity to attempt to refute it. He will defend the importance of the materiality of modernity inherited from the Bauhaus and

the Werkbund, but he will criticize the creation of autonomous, closed objects: “The second claim is for a practice engaged in time and process, a practice not devoted to the production of autonomous objects, but rather to the production of directed fields in which program, event, and activity can play themselves out” (Ibid., p. 52); moving also away from the preconceived form: “material practices deploy an open catalogue of techniques without preconceived formal ends” (Ibid., p. 53).

Quoting Robin Evans paraphrasing Lyotard –and continuing with the analogy of language free of constraints Habraken began– Allen goes on to affirm that introducing architecture to the world of things produces a “volatile, unordered, unpoliceable communication that will always outwit the judicial domination of language” (Ibid., p. 52). Taking as a model the regular and static infrastructure that Moses defended, Allen will turn it into a support for the variety of the unexpected that Jacobs paraded for. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, Allen will defend “the capacity of certain structures to act as a scaffold for a complex series of events not anticipated by the architect - meanings and affects existing outside of the control of a single author that continuously evolve over time” (Ibid., p. 54).

It is under these parameters that we have developed a series of projects that tackle problems that require mediation between opposing forces such as formality and informality, emergency and planning, appropriable and ordered public space, and linear and dislocated urban narrative.

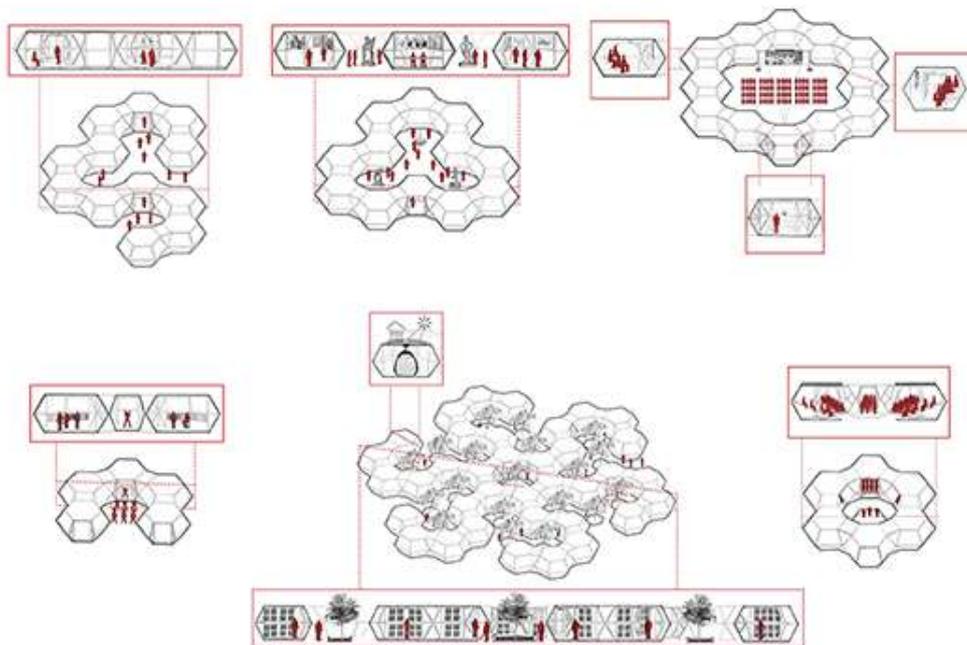


Figure 8. Design development drawings for project “Square as Scene of Shock: Urban Architecture + Cinematography” developed by Sebastián Mejía under the author’s supervision.

Source: Sebastián Mejía.

Developed under my supervision, the projects “Infrastructure for Urban Transformation and Adaptation: Strategies for the Potentiation of Bogotá Art District”

(completed 2016) developed by Maria Alejandra Peña (Figures 1, 2 & 3), "Platform for cultural practices in the popular habitat: Los Laureles, Community Use and Appropriation" (completed 2016) developed by Juan Martin Castañeda (Figures 4, 5 & 6), "Operational Chimeras: The Trace of the Fold in Urban Landscape" (completed 2014) developed by Maria Camila Santos (Figure 7), and "Square as Scene of Shock: Urban Architecture + Cinematography" (completed 2017) developed by Sebastián Mejía (Figures 8, 9 & 10), all make use of Third Way approaches that have as a theoretical framework Allen's concept of infrastructural urbanism and Habraken's concept of support and infill.

Peña's work (Figures 1, 2 & 3), explores an in-between of the opposing forces of emergent requirements against preconceived planning. Aiming at strengthening and contributing to the development of the consolidating Bogotá Art District, the challenge of the project was to intervene in an area of spontaneous generation of galleries, cafes, and restaurants in a neighbourhood that is in the process of consolidation as a new art hub in Bogotá, and where former residential structures were converted into improvised spaces for cultural and commercial uses. The proposal consisted on generating modular structures of 'bars and joints' type that would climb like a virus on top of the existing houses providing adequate spaces for the new uses. These structures, although had a permanent character, could be removed and moved according to the changing needs that happened to arise at every specific time and they were program free, so that users would adapt them to whichever use they would give them.

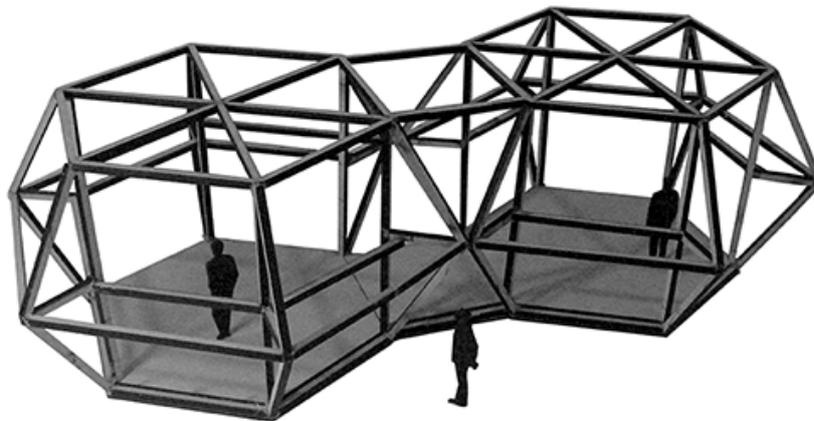


Figure 9. Photography of model for project "Square as Scene of Shock: Urban Architecture + Cinematography" developed by Sebastián Mejía under the author's supervision.
Source: Sebastián Mejía.

Castañeda's work (Figures 4, 5 & 6) addresses the opposition between formality and informality, tackling the question of how to implement interventions in public space within an informal context understanding the particular way how popular communities inhabit their own public space and fostering community cohesion. Developed alongside members of the popular neighbourhood Los Laureles in Ciudad Bolívar, an impoverished district of Bogotá –where it was implemented– the project consisted on the creation of a neutral platform that materialized in a system of easily replicable and low-cost self-construction modules built in guadua, developed with the participation of

young members of the community (Figure 5). The platform, either as a single element or as multiple combined modules, could house multiple and changing uses. The different elements of the system were designed to be built and managed by the community itself and an actual module was implemented and inhabited by the community.

Santos' work (Figure 7) tackles the opposition of appropriable against ordered public space, mediating between the emergent forces behind inhabitants drive to leave traces in the city and the institutional duty of fostering a sense of order. The project consisted on regular elements with in-built mechanisms that allowed them to be moved by the citizens. Lit from the inside and designed to be painted it was designed to become graffiti-friendly structures that celebrated rather than repelled urban art.



Figure 10. Photography of model for project “Square as Scene of Shock: Urban Architecture + Cinematography” developed by Sebastián Mejía under the author’s supervision.
Source: Sebastián Mejía.

And Mejía’s work (Figures 8, 9 & 10), addresses dislocated urban narratives in the city as opposed to linear narratives where there is no offer of surprises, exploring the relationship between architecture and cinema –with the help of Bernard Tschumi’s concept of shock– to explore ways to generate revitalization in urban spaces. The project consists of a system of modular devices, that appear unexpectedly in different public spaces of Bogotá, combining in different ways, creating different urban niches and housing different uses.

Challenging the closed definition of beauty that the rationalist pole inherited from classical architecture, but acknowledging the importance of a sense of order in public space and urban design, while at the same time, taking apart the differences behind Moses and Jacobs rivalry, these four projects show the enormous ongoing potential of Third Way approaches to public space and urban design for innovative interventions within the realm of contemporary architecture, and especially within the context of the Latin American city and the demanding challenges it faces today.

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RMIT UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF ARTS (ART IN PUBLIC SPACE)

Play in Melbourne City

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Abstract

Play in Melbourne City outlines a series of playful incursions in Melbourne, Australia's central city that hopes to act as a reminder of the potential power and influence that individual citizens have in disrupting, creating and recovering public space.

This is a practice-based exploration that uses Melbourne city as its site. Through a series of playful guerrilla theatre style incursions, the artist creates and embodies fictional characters that spontaneously appear throughout the city. Notions of the carnivalesque are harnessed through the use of masks, costumes and puppetry. Each character investigates and responds to a specific issue of spatial politics within the city, with the works importantly sitting outside of the scheduled template of gallery exhibitions and festivals.

For the conceptual framework, the artist draws on Henri Lefebvre's ideas of the production of space and Chantal Mouffe's 'agonistic' model of public space.

Keywords: public space, protest, play, carnivalesque, citizen

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Figure 1. The Envoy of Mischief. Swanston St, Melbourne, 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith.

In this portfolio I briefly outline my art practice, the theoretical frameworks that I have drawn on in my exploration of public city space, and the works that were created over the course of my Master of Arts (Art in Public Space) at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, as I posit the notion that one citizen has the potential to disrupt, create and recover public city space. In *Play in Melbourne City* I am making a performative ‘claim’ to space through a series of playful and humorous incursions which attempt to resist and protest representations of space and ultimately shift the public imaginary. The incursions endeavour to harness the power of the carnivalesque and to act as a reminder that nascent within the lone citizen lies the capacity to disrupt, create and recover public city space.

I describe my art practice as a lone rogue carnivalesque protest employing masks, costumes and occasionally puppetry to generate this carnivalesque and playful space. My

interpretation of the carnivalesque can be described as the creation of a space outside of the everyday milieu. A liminal space where there is a deconstruction and upending of conventions and the status quo. Bakhtin (1984, p. 7), explains that it is through humour and laughter that 'a second world and a second life outside of officialdom' is built. He proposed the carnival as the moment when the dominant power structures could be subverted. For example, kings become fools and fools become kings, producing a window into a topsy turvey world, created through humour, laughter and chaos. In this space of the spectacle there is a revolutionary power in that it not only acts out against the hegemonic discourse but confirms the existence of another world outside of the 'official' one (Bakhtin 1984).

Potential opposition to this idea has been that the very carnival itself acts as a tool for the dominant power structures to suppress the people. The carnival becomes a mechanism of sedation and relief for the masses so that once the carnival finishes, they can then peacefully return to the status quo. With this in mind, I purpose the fanciful idea that in my art practice, the characters I embody are carnival characters gone rogue... lone characters who have left the carnival to reappear unexpectedly, each time reinvented, so as to extend and fuel the continued life of the carnival within the everyday. The invention of different and absurd characters in my practice plays into this idea.

As an artist I hope to harness these powers of the carnivalesque where anything is possible. I create fictional characters that I embody and insert into public city space in a guerrilla theatre style that attempt to explore some of the spatial politics of Melbourne city. I am calling these moments 'incursions'. The Cambridge definition of incursion is 'a sudden attack on or act of going into a place, especially across a border.' (Cambridge 2020). The work relies on transgressing all kinds of borders of public space with the intention to make them visible.

The works that I outline here, all intentionally sit outside of the scheduled template of galleries, museums and festivals. This allows the incursions to be encountered by chance in a setting that is not associated with art. The audience is both the public on the street and the public on social media sites where I post the video documentation of the performances.

For the public on the street, the work is transitory and may only be experienced for a moment as they pass it, or stop to photograph it. At this first level, the work aims to disrupt the space through a sense of the absurd. For the public on social media sites more of the fictional narrative can be shared.

I am drawn to the idea of the lone protest. There is a power in the individual protestor as it displays a vulnerability that does not have the moral authority of a group. It presents to the public an individual clashing with the dominant Goliath powers...the underdog scenario. It hopes to act as a reminder of the agency and power of the individual citizen.

The site of my investigations has been the city of Melbourne. I consider the city as my primary site of protest as it is where the major economic, cultural and political stake holders are based. It is also a site that the whole population of Melbourne has access to. All roads, trains and trams lead into the city, and all major sporting and cultural events mostly take place in or around the city. These factors make it the ideal site for protest. Sassen (2017, pp. 124-125) describes the city as 'a complex but incomplete system', where there 'lies the possibility for those without power to be able to assert, "We are

here,” and “This is our city”. Essentially, the ordinary citizen can have a voice and be heard in the city. My incursions also present themselves to the City to be seen and heard as a way to reclaim space.

My practice draws on Henri Lefebvre’s text, *The Production of Space*. The French Marxist philosopher and sociologist wrote of space as a concept that is not fixed, but is continually being produced (Lefebvre 1991). He was a revolutionist and understood that space is power and the role it plays in the continuation of capitalism. Lefebvre (1991, p.54) wrote that ‘A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential.’

Lefebvre (1991, p40) outlines three elements that combine to produce space as the ‘perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces)’. It is in the ‘representational spaces’, that Lefebvre suggests there is an opportunity to impact space. This space, ‘embracing the loci of passion, of action, of lived situations’ is described as ‘qualitative, fluid and dynamic’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.42). Here lies the potential for revolution. As space is continually being produced by the interplay of these forces, there is the opportunity to resist and momentarily transform the abstract space that is produced through capitalism.

So when my characters disrupt the street through incursions into the space, they not only disrupt the pedestrian flow of traffic but the bodily presence is creating space and thereby regaining power. By producing ‘representational space’ that resists the dominant ‘representations of space’ (Lefebvre 1991) there sits a power to change that occupation of space. Since we are a predominantly visual culture simply seeing people act in deviating but unarmful ways becomes a means of change.

In relation to the notion of space as a contested site, Mouffe (2007), a Belgium political theorist, offers up an ‘agonistic model’ of public space. She describes the model as one where, ‘public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation.’ and ‘not conceived as the terrain where consensus can emerge’ (Mouffe 2007)

In viewing public space through this political lens, it follows that public space can be seen as a combative space where practices of hegemony and exclusion dominate. The danger in presenting or considering public space as a consensual space is that it camouflages the reality and therefore denies the opportunity for the individual citizen to act and present an alternative. Revealing these forces and foregrounding this ‘battleground’ (Mouffe 2007) therefore becomes vital.

Indeed, this model also acknowledges the notion of space as a fluid and dynamic one that is constantly being produced (Lefebvre 1991). To view public space as a contested site (Mouffe 2007) and not a fixed space (Lefebvre 1991) foregrounds both the competing forces that are at play within space and the opportunity each of us as individual citizens have in shaping and producing space. My incursions aim to expose these tensions by rupturing the space with the unexpected thereby puncturing the myth that public space has a unified consensus (Mouffe 2007).



Figure 2. Flaneuse Fox and Croissant the Tortoise. Block Arcade, Melbourne 2017.
Photo by Jeremy Griffith



Figure 3. The Protest Pigeon. Victorian State Parliament, 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith

The Flaneuse Fox and her puppet tortoise, Croissant was my first incursion as part of my Master's project. Flaneuse Fox was a character, playing on Francis Alys's artwork, *The Nightwatch*. In this work Francis Alys lets loose a fox in the London Portrait Gallery at night and uses the gallery's surveillance cameras to record the fox's movements. In my work the agency has shifted from a fox under surveillance to one doing the watching. Flaneuse Fox was investigating the kinds of spaces women had access to and those from which they were barred in Melbourne's history and exploring what it might mean today to be a female flaneuse in contemporary Melbourne. In this series of incursions, I am making a retrospective claim to public space on behalf of the women who were excluded from public space at the time of modernity. The artwork was comprised of a series of incursions around historic Melbourne sites and formed the footage for a mini 10min video that playfully revealed some of the public spaces that women from the past were barred. It looked at the dates of first public toilets for women in the city compared to men, access for women to Australian universities and the right for women to vote. The Protest Pigeon was attempting to represent the everyday citizen and responded to the numerous global and local protests post Trump and the Australian 'yes' vote. With a pigeon mask on, and feathered wings for arms, the protest pigeon held up a protest sign reading 'Hope is the thing with feathers'. As part of a series of incursions at recognised protest sites within Melbourne, I attempted a durational piece at The State Library. I was asked rather forcefully by security to leave the space after about 10 to 15 minutes. I was told it was not public property. Here unintentionally, I am making visible some of those invisible boundaries of public space.



Figure 4. Protest Pigeon. State Library, Melbourne, 2018. Photo by Teddy Griffith.
(face of security guard has been pixelated)

There is a power in the ridiculousness of asking a pigeon protesting about hope to leave the space. I also propose that by creating protests that don't read as a standard protest, not only may I at times trespass in places others may not, but hopefully the public may be more receptive to the work by using humour to disarm and engage. Here, I have foregrounded the notion of public space as a 'battleground' (Mouffe 2007), as I have revealed in this moment, the space as a contested site. After this experience, I began to think more consciously about how I might expose some of the invisible boundaries of public space.



Figure 5. Fairytale Goat. Prince's Bridge, Melbourne 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith

The Fairytale Goat was a response to the new bollards and chicanes that were erected on Princess Bridge around the end of 2017 after the London Bridge terrorist attack of June the 3rd in 2017. The goat character's costume echoes the colours of the chicanes and as she 'trip, trap, trips' across the bridge she attempts to creates a counter narrative to the fear based one that these new ways of protecting the city evoke.

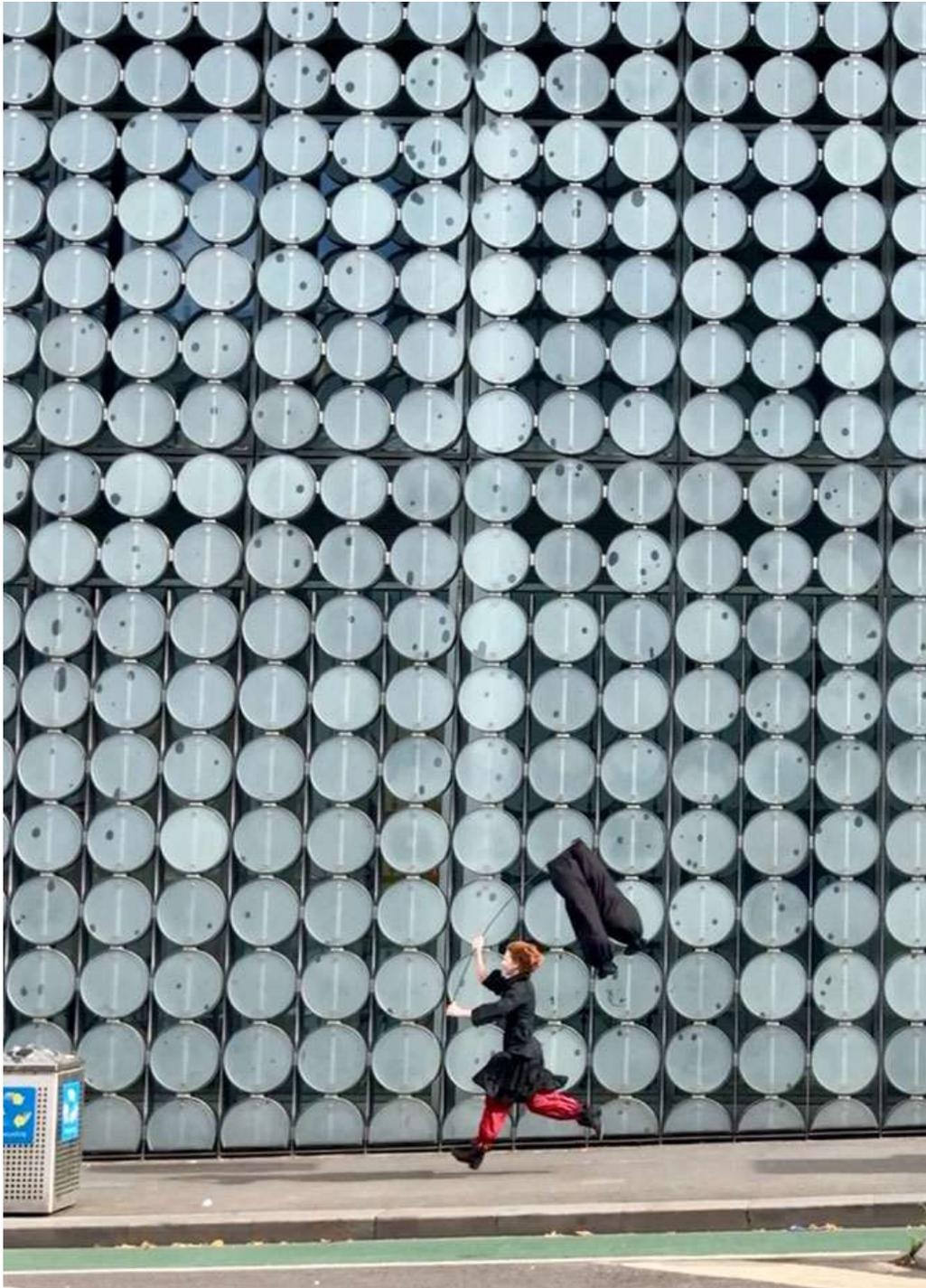


Figure 6. Blooming Fast. Swanston St, Melbourne, 2018. Photo by Teddy Griffith.

This globalised culture of fear plays into the neoliberal ideology. Here, I am making a performative claim to the space of the Prince's Bridge with the intention to resist and protest a neoliberal representation of the space and hopefully shift the public imaginary around this space...if only for a moment.

In the next iteration I am running the city. I wanted to run the city for the cause of Bloomerism. as a way to acknowledge these female dress reform campaigners of the past. Blooming Fast, wearing black and carrying a bloomer flag, wanted to literally carve out a silhouetted space for the women of the past. I wanted to have this character running not walking the city, as running in this congested space seemed like a subversive act. Running to me, harnesses a sense of power and freedom in a way that walking may not. And running, when not in running clothes interestingly becomes something completely different and somehow dangerous. This incursion became another retrospective performative recovering of space as I was running for those women of the past. The Fountain Flaneuse was a summer iteration that I created to playfully push the boundaries of public space. The incursions occurred at the Hochgurtel Fountain by Josef Hochgurtel, 1880 and the William Stanford Bluestone Fountain, 1870. These fountains built in Colonial times, were built to evoke a sense of grandeur. I wanted to put the female form into these spaces and I liked the idea of questioning the function of these fountains.



Figure 7. Fountain Flaneuse. Hochgurtel Fountain, Carlton Gardens. Photo by Jeremy Griffith.

Why is the fountain a space for just looking when we endure 40 degree days of heat? Are sites of play in the city only for the young and in designated playgrounds? Where are sites of play in the city for adults? Sometimes children transgress the boundaries of the fountain but rarely adults. Why is this? What other boundaries of the city do we unconsciously adhere to? By using the fountains for play I am producing spaces of representation that oppose the official representations of space and thereby making a performative claim to recover the space.



Figure 8. The Envoy of Mischief. Swanston St, Melbourne, 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith.

My final character was created as a response to city public space becoming increasingly privatised (Sassan 2017). I created the rat character, The Envoy of Mischief, dressed in construction worker clothes with associated props. She was said to have appeared from the cracks in the city and having taught herself the language of the city, she is fluent in both construction and real estate. Rather than real estate though, she is selling a revolutionary dream, the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ). It is an idea coined by Hakim Bey, an American anarchist author, based on the notion of the pirate utopias of the 18th century.

Bey describes the zone as,

an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen, before the state can crush it (Bey 2003, p. 99).

This description sits eloquently with The Envoy's act of poetic terrorism in that the Rat creates these zones throughout the city then packs them away to move on to the next.



Figure 9. The Envoy of Mischief. Federation Square, Melbourne, 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith.

The first site that the Envoy claimed was at Federation Square where at the time, an Apple store was threatening to encroach on this space. Among the other many zones secured was the lobby space of the Melbourne Stock Exchange where the rat was asked to leave by security and the steps of Victorian Parliament where the Police also asked her to leave. Both of these encounters were fairly benign yet they make visible the invisible boundaries of 'acceptable' use of public space. In the Rat's performative claim to space in these sites, the representations of space are resisted and could be said to be made more expansive in these moments. I also consider these interactions as disruptions to the consensual surface (Mouffe 2007). At these moments where authority steps in to remove the rat, the hegemonic powers within that space are revealed.



Figure 10. The Envoy of Mischief. Lobby of The Melbourne Stock Exchange, 2018.
Photo by Jeremy Griffith.

Within both the notion of space as a dynamic and fluid entity (Lefebvre 1991) and the articulation of public space as a politically contested site (Mouffe 2007), there exists an opportunity for the citizen to foreground and reveal these notions by rupturing and recovering that space, if even for a moment in time. This gesture alone, has the potential to invite the public to question and re-look at public space with 'new eyes' and shift the public imaginary. As the Carnival existed not just as a form of agency for the everyday citizen but a reminder that agency was possible (Bakhtin 1984), my incursions hope to create and inspire mini revolutions of public city space.

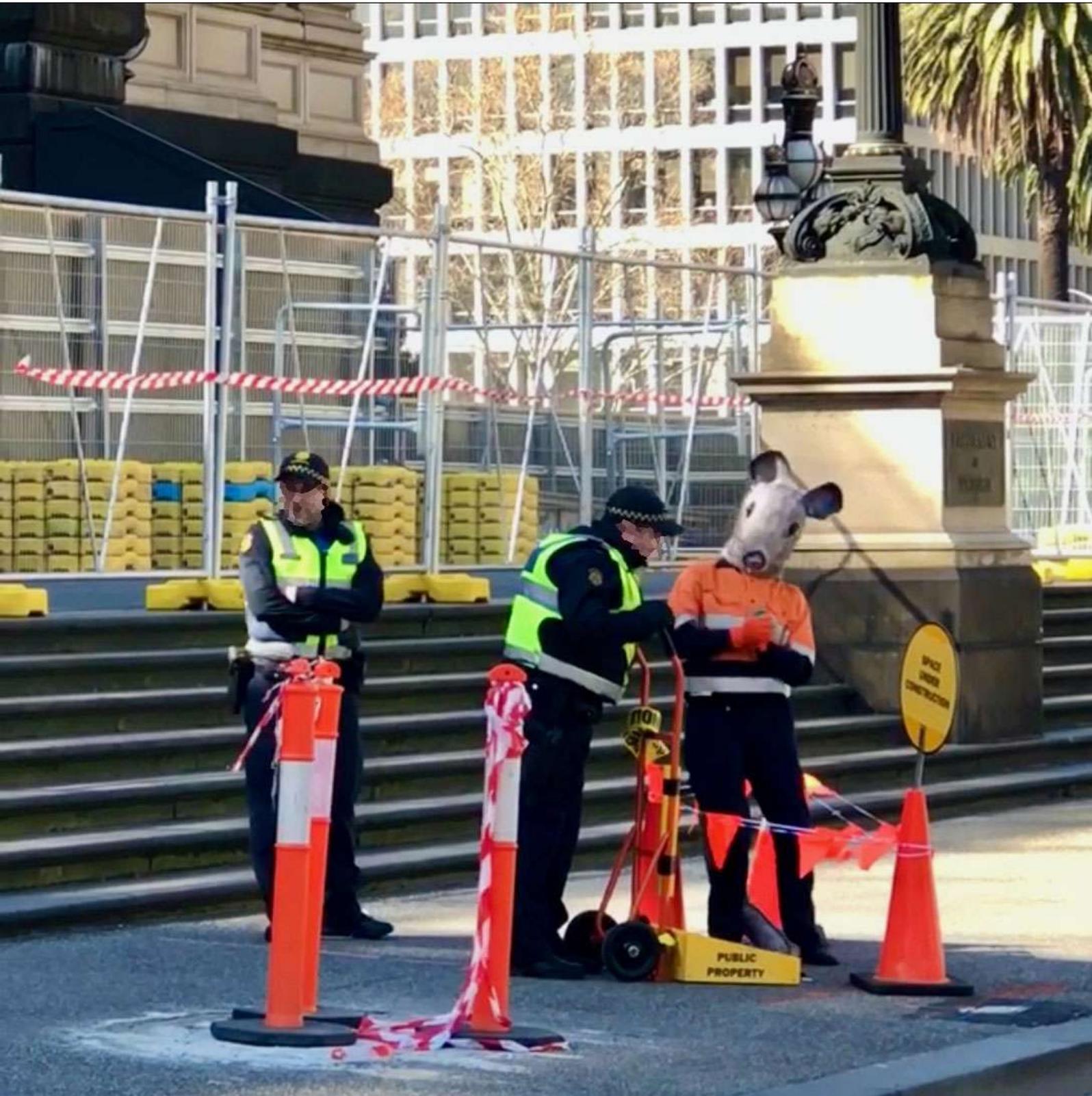


Figure 11. The Envoy of Mischief. Steps of Victorian State Parliament, 2018. Photo by Jeremy Griffith

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