

## Session N8: Artist strategies and methods of resistance in the regenerated city

### Session organizer

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### Session description

Urbanism as process and product is the source and profit of capital production. Hence the city, its urban fabric and socio-spatial structure manifest and correlate with its economy. Artists and art have long been at the centre of the economic transformation of the city with a well-established relationship between the arts sector and the private (commercial) sector of urban regeneration and gentrification. This varies from the temporary inhabitation of post-industrial urban areas and buildings under disrepair, as studios, galleries, and sites for temporary art works, through to the flagship tenant status of educational, gallery and museum institutions, and the commissioning of public artworks within urban redevelopment and regeneration projects. Their presence builds a positive image of a cultural ‘creative hub’ that both attracts a different social set and adds value to the area. This added cultural and commercial capital value asset for the developers render art and artists as complicit agents in social and economic injustices and inequalities effected through regeneration and gentrification processes. Their actions valorise the decanting of low-income residents and independent businesses, and help to striate the socio-economic make up of urban areas from which they eventually also end up excluded.

## Order of presentations

N8:1

**Time: IV: 20 June, 9:00-12:00**

**Room: Ahlman, House U**

### **1:1 Artists and collective citizen responsibility**

Pat Naldi

### **1:2 Speculating on urban futures: framing art conceptually, and orienting it strategically, beyond the aesthetic-political paradigm of the contemporary city**

Andrea Pavoni

### **1:4 Playing the tune, calling the piper: the music for master planning project in Newham, London**

Alberto Duman

### **1:5 From protest to planning, and back again? Public art and the temporary**

Thierry Maeder

### **1:6 Living in a non-place: the case of transition Heathrow Nick Ferguson**

N8:2

**Time: V: 20 June, 13:15-15:00**

**Room: Ahlman, House U**

**2:1 Performing feminist architectural materialities - placing taking place.**

Teresa Hoskyns & Helen Stratford

**2:2 Performing the public: Constructing narratives of taste through performative practice in architecture**

Adriana Cobo

**2:3 So It Goes: Past, Present and Future at Princesshay**

Dr Mike Ricketts

**2:4 Pictures not homes**

Ian Dawson, Louisa Minkin, Francis Summers

## Paper abstracts

N8:1

1:1 Artists and collective citizen responsibility

Pat Naldi, *Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London* [p.naldi@csm.arts.ac.uk](mailto:p.naldi@csm.arts.ac.uk)

**Abstract:**

Inaugurated in 1997, the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain, gave rise to the term *Bilbao Effect* to describe the economic transformation of a city effected through regeneration and gentrification. The commodification of culture and new landmark iconic signature buildings by *starchitects* that ‘house’ this culture, have become the primary features of the processes of the *Bilbao Effect* in post-industrial cities. In a globally competitive neoliberal economy the state and corporate sector desire to be ‘seen’ commissioning and inhabiting these iconic buildings as a reflection of their financial status and aspirations; this is fictitious value creation based on the adage of speculate to accumulate. These cultural institutions create and sustain a top-down infrastructure of support. Simultaneously property developers ‘follow’ the transitory urban inhabitation of artists – “when the artists start coming, that’s when you want to get in”<sup>1</sup> –, cultivate artists as cultural and commercial capital value asset, commission public art works, and deliver outreach art projects ‘to’ local communities as a form of ‘social good’.

This paper contextualises the session ‘Artist strategies and methods of resistance in the regenerated city’. It offers an examination of the well-established relationship between the

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<sup>1</sup> Rise @ The Deptford Project

arts and urban regeneration and gentrification, and questions its short-term and short-sighted benefits to artists. This paper argues for artists to ‘not fill the gap’ in regeneration processes – to withdraw the cultural and socio-economic endorsement of the neo-liberal project – take up collective citizen responsibilities, and propose possible alternate strategies.

## **1:2 Speculating on urban futures: framing art conceptually, and orienting it strategically, beyond the aesthetic-political paradigm of the contemporary city**

Andrea Pavoni, post-doc fellow, *DINÂMIA’CET – IUL, Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies*, ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, [apian11@iscte.pt](mailto:apian11@iscte.pt)

### **Abstract**

In the 70s Henri Lefebvre famously claimed that the future of art would not be artistic, but urban. Today the prophecy has been fulfilled, yet in a rather more dystopian sense than the one he implied. In fact, after an enthusiastic break out from the prison house of the Gallery, artists took the street by undergoing – rather uncritically – their own *social* and *experiential* turn, often with dire consequences. On the one hand, the insistence on the social and political value of art ultimately defused its potential, often reducing it to an ameliorative and legitimising appendage to processes of neoliberal urbanisation. On the other, the site-specific craze for constructing transgressive and eventful experiences in the urban space, soon became incorporated into what Doreen Jacob terms *eventification*, i.e. the use of urban events as an aesthetic strategy of gentrification. If we are to address the question of how might art contribute to long-term socio-political change, it is paramount to rethink its aesthetic strategies, against the aesthetic paradigm of the neoliberal city. A task, I argue, which rests on emancipating art from what today seems its one and only horizon: namely, phenomenological experience. An art of *speculation*, that is, not as the financial/economical process traumatically reshaping contemporary urban space, but as a philosophical strategy for art to address its (urban) conditions of possibility, and thus to challenge the urban both as an aesthetic paradigm and a structural process. Employing relevant examples from Italy, UK and Brazil, this paper will speculate in this direction.

## **1:4 Playing the tune, calling the piper: the music for master planning project in Newham, London**

Alberto Duman, *Middlesex University* [a.duman@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:a.duman@mdx.ac.uk)

### **Abstract:**

In 2010, the London authorities produced a promotional movie called ‘*London’s Regeneration Supernova*’, to be screened at the Shanghai World Expo 2010. The aim of the film was to highlight land and property market opportunities for investment in the Borough, with particular emphasis on a large area of Newham, known as the ‘*Arc of Opportunity*’.

After the 2010 event, the ‘Regeneration Supernova’ movie disappeared from the public sphere, never to be seen again, until 2012 when I made a specific FOI (Freedom Of Information) request. The recovered movie was silent but the absence of sound for such an important piece of promotional marketing urbanism and top-down narrative of place opened the conceptual space for the *Music for Masterplanning* project.

*Music for Masterplanning is a project about place, people and music in Newham, London that aims to interpret the ways in which visual languages of affect are central to the pre-designing of the contemporary global city as shaped by incoming investments. It is about how places are turned into simple stories for packaged investment opportunities, how people living in those places relate to those stories and how music can tell different stories in many different ways.*

In this presentation we will review the project's impulse to appropriate and repurpose a lost piece of marketing urbanism, -the 'London's Regeneration Supernova' movie- in order to produce Music for Masterplanning outputs: a compilation of 17 music tracks and a Book+CD with contributions from writers, journalists and academic.

### **1:5 From protest to planning, and back again? Public art and the temporary**

Thierry Maeder Research Assistant/PhD Student – University of Geneva,  
[thierry.maeder@unige.ch](mailto:thierry.maeder@unige.ch)

During the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, counterculture art scenes started to resort to temporary modes of artistic production – happening, performances, urban '*dérives*', '*reclaim the street*'-like actions – as a mean to protest against a social and urban order they considered oppressive, while proposing alternative ways to make place in the city. The idea to make art as a *moment*, rather than an *object*, was rooted to a radical approach of art: to extract it from a logic of market, and disrupt the order and the rhythm of everyday life by bringing it out in the streets.

On the contrary, artistic public commission, as it appeared in Europe after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, tended to rely exclusively on a patrimonial logic, i.e. the constitution of public collections of art in the public space, reinforcing thus the dominant urban order and its spatial boundaries. However, while accumulative approaches are still the main mode of production of public art, for the last two decades public commission relied more and more on the temporary modes. Moreover, this new kind of public commission – outdoor exhibitions, ephemeral site-specific artworks, artistic transitional occupations – is legitimized not only by cultural purposes, but as a tool for urban planning. Hence, disruptive spatial strategies aimed at reappropriation of public space are embedded in a marketing of placemaking, leading to ambiguous or even adverse effect on their emancipatory power.

This paper analyzes that chiasmus between subversive methods and urban strategies through case-studies in Geneva. Basing our study on examples of temporary art commission that took place between 2003 and 2014 we develop a broader outlook on how the city includes methods and actors of the artistic counterculture in its planning strategies. Moreover, we question the margin of flexibility the artists still have in such a system of public art commission to remain critic. Considering what seems to be a depoliticization of temporary art within the context of festivalization of urban policies, should critical artists turn again to permanent practices?

## 1:6 Living in a non-place: the case of transition Heathrow

Nick Ferguson, *Richmond, the American University in London*, [fergusn@richmond.ac.uk](mailto:fergusn@richmond.ac.uk)

### Abstract:

As Britain prepares for Brexit, resistance among cultural workers has been deployed to heal divisions exposed within the nation, alongside the threat they pose to international alliances. The London Mayoral office has rallied with a public message “#London is open”; artistic diplomacy has become an ascendant phrase. Curiously, however, these discourses, despite accusations from “leave” voters that Britain is led by a metropolitan elite, have little to say about gentrification. Has the artist perhaps shot him/herself in the foot?

By way of response, and as part of an attempt to think past art’s complicity with gentrification, this paper reports on the grassroots activist organisation Transition Heathrow. Embracing both an expanded notion of the artist, and a holistic notion of the city (whereby the centre and periphery are counted as a mutually constitutive whole), it presents on everyday acts of making undertaken by the group, in order to propose that in the shadow of Heathrow airport, to dwell is already to resist. For the airport, we are told, is a space of speed, networks and flow; for the sociologist Marc Augé, it is a non-place given over to hypermodernity; for governments in the global north it is a strategic zone within the regenerated city that, rather like the financial centre that is its inner-city counterpart, must be sacrificed for the greater public good of wealth creation. To live at the airport is to reject this narrative and to embody a revised idea about how metropolitan space might be apportioned, used and understood.

N8:2

## 2:1 Performing feminist architectural materialities - placing taking place.

**Teresa Hoskyns**, Associate Professor, *XJTLU, Suzhou, China*, [teresa.hoskyns@gmail.com](mailto:teresa.hoskyns@gmail.com) & **Helen Stratford** PhD Candidate, *University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Sheffield UK*, [h.stratford@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:h.stratford@sheffield.ac.uk)

### Abstract

This paper is presented as a conversation between two members of feminist art and architecture collective **taking place**. It analyses the role of spatial practice in constructing feminist spatiality as an alternate strategy, method of resistance and action for artists and art in the regenerated city.

**taking place** is one chapter in a strand of feminist art/architecture collaborative practice, spanning three decades of public art in the UK. Between 2000 and 2010, the events and projects of **taking place** reflected a general shift between material and performative methodologies of public art practice. The nomadic subject was a key figuration that inspired discursive and material art and architecture interventions into architectural and public institutions.<sup>2</sup> Rosi Braidotti argues that in late neo-liberal capitalist society the nomadic subject is too easily equated with the ‘hyper-individualism’ traits of advanced capitalism and

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<sup>2</sup>See; ‘taking place 2’: Teresa Hoskyns, Katie Lloyd Thomas, Helen Stratford, Scroope 14, 2002; ‘taking place and altering it’, Teresa Hoskyns and Doina Petrescu, *Altering Practices*, ed. Doina Petrescu, Routledge 2007; ‘the other side of waiting’, Katie Lloyd Thomas and taking place, *Feminist Review* 93, 2009.

conflated with ‘quantitative multiplications,’ rather than ‘qualitative differences and multiplicities.’<sup>3</sup> Taking these interventions as a starting point the conversation will focus on a critical examination of the negotiation of difference as practice; exploring whether a nomadic mode of thinking and acting can still form a radical position within feminist spatial practice and inform wider public art regeneration practice today.

## **2:2 Performing the public: Constructing narratives of taste through performative practice in architecture**

Adriana Cobo PhD candidate, *Central Saint Martin’s College of Art and Design*, University of the Arts London, [acobocorey@gmail.com](mailto:acobocorey@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

How does the manufacturing of the public realm as a consumer product affect narratives of taste in architecture? How do these narratives synchronise with corporate investment interests?

This paper elaborates on some of the ways in which notions of style and architectural design, cultural and functional programs and maintenance structures intersect on specific locations within the public realm of London. It explores how these intersections affect the construction of taste narratives on chosen locations. The paper argues that key constitutive aspects of taste such as class distinctions and power structures, might be visually masked by an accepted emphasis on formal and stylistic components of architectural taste. It proposes performance as a method to investigate how to enable the temporary visibility of these suppressed aspects of design, by focusing on use and program.

During the last year I have devised solo and collective performances for Granary Square -a privately owned public space (POPS) in London- in order to investigate the complicity of architectural design with exclusive programs, and with notions of authority on specific sites. The paper questions whether taste narratives communicated through privately owned and managed public spaces in redevelopment projects such as King’s Cross in London, send a message of inclusion or rather maintain a system of class distinction by design.

## **2.3 So It Goes: Past, Present and Future at Princesshay**

Dr Mike Ricketts, *Christie’s Education* London, [rickettsmike@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rickettsmike@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Abstract**

On 21st October 1949, a young Princess Elizabeth stood on a paved area in the middle of an empty patch of ground in Exeter city centre and used a silver screwdriver to install a plaque in a low, freestanding wall. Thus was born ‘Princesshay’, a previously bombed-out area of the city that would be developed as a shopping precinct during the 1950s and 60s. In 2005, this area would be flattened once again to enable the construction of high-end retail centre PRINCESSHAY™ by private developer Land Securities.

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<sup>3</sup> Rhizomes, Issue 11/12 (Fall 2005/Spring 2006)  
<http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html>

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p.2

This presentation will reflect on *So It Goes*, a solo exhibition made for public art centre Exeter Phoenix in 2015. A distinct body of work including a film, photo-text pieces and sculptural objects emerged from an open-ended engagement with this area's past, present and possible future.

An improvised process of asking questions, following leads and making propositions provoked a range of encounters. A walking tour with the shopping centre's Operations Manager, and a dialogue with a museum curator of antiquities, for example, would prove decisive. Revelations included the significance of pavement demarcation studs as entities marking otherwise-imperceptible regulatory boundaries, the city of Exeter's mismanagement of its cultural heritage, and the largely-unnoted sale of a 50% stake of Princesshay to an alternative property developer during the development of this project.

An underlying concern with rights of access and the ownership of space characterize this, the latest in a series of projects which have explored the uncertainties and paradoxes of contemporary public space.

## 2:4 Pictures not homes

**Ian Dawson**, *Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton*, [I.Dawson@soton.ac.uk](mailto:I.Dawson@soton.ac.uk); **Louisa Minkin**, *Central Saint Martins*, [l.minkin@csm.arts.ac.uk](mailto:l.minkin@csm.arts.ac.uk) & **Francis Summers**, *University for the Creative Arts*, [francis\\_summers@talk21.com](mailto:francis_summers@talk21.com)

### Abstract:

Pictures not homes: posed as a question about dwelling. Walls as boundaries and divisive markers, doors as that which can allow access but that can dictate stasis, windows as pictorial 'seeing through'. Files without recto or verso.

We present the traces of remnants of houses and businesses from streets in the sky, from a community that did not arrive as planned. Homes not pictures: the found words of occupiers protesting the regeneration of the Aylesbury estate from which these picture-objects-files come. RTI and 3D scans are used with archaeological methodology gone lumpen. An exploration of the relation of lived-in space to the non-spatial format of the digital, a project addressing the disappearance of place; the obdurateness of material; the liquidity of media and capital. Sandbags and code. Flexibility and opacity.

Or.

A is for front line.

An alphabetical anomaly; we start with struggle, with a conflict between forms-of-life.

B is for backwardsness.

Also known as nachtraglichkeit.

A is for afterwardsness, then.

A retro-active understanding, a looping.

B is for belated understanding. Memory reprinted from later experience.

C is for concatenation, constituent, components, construction

class

culture  
comedy

Class War, Colonisation of everyday life, or Capitalism as Crisis.  
Consumption or the Common.  
Commodities and Counselling.