

Installations

— by —

Architects

Experiments in Building
and Design

Installations by Architects, Experiments in Building and Design
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LAb[au] featured project:

Touch - interactive urban installation

chapter4 about : public space

page 174-175



Sarah Bonnemaïson and
Ronit Eisenbach

5. Public Space

The public art movement of the early 1970s has shaped installations by architects in two key ways. First, the very notion of an installation takes for granted that art can be found outside of museums and galleries, a direct result of the work of public artists. Perhaps more importantly, as art critic Eleanor Heartney reminds us in her essay “Beyond Boundaries,” this movement contributed to changing views of public space reflected in larger debates in sociology, architecture, and urban planning. Heartney writes:

No longer regarded simply as any open place where strangers intermingle, the public sphere is now seen as an environment that, ideally, can create a sense of public life and reshape people’s sense of themselves as thoughtful individuals and responsible public citizens. Art is seen as an important instrument in that endeavor.¹

As this last sentence suggests, with public art, artists became active in shaping culture, not just commenting upon it.

But the work was not without challenges. For example, artist Mary Miss recalls some of the questions that artists asked themselves as they engaged in this work:

How could you participate in the conversation in the culture? ... What kind of engagement were you going to have with the situation? ... How do you make things that are physically and emotionally engaging [for] people who just come upon these things, they don’t have the walls of the museum? ... This [public artwork] ... was going to be out on the street, and anybody would be bumping into it, sitting on it, sitting next to it.”²

Following the path paved by these artists in the 1970s, architects have inserted their work into the public realm to explore the nature of public spaces. The first section of this chapter includes three installations that challenge the boundary between public and private, exposing underlying assumptions about each: *Toilets* by James Cathcart, Frank Fantauzzi, and Terence Van Elslander; *Pink Ghost* by Périphériques Architectes; and *Line of Site* by Arqhé.

The second section includes installations that examine how we look at the city. They portray the urban experience as simultaneous and fragmented but also celebrate the city as a place of the unexpected. By juxtaposing multiple places and times in new representations of public space, these projects draw out the potential for poetry in city life. Three projects are presented in this section: *Drawing on Site* by Kennedy & Violich Architects, *How to Walk a Flat Elephant* by Shin Egashira + Okamura Furniture Advanced Engineering Team, and *NY A/V* by field office.

The final section presents four projects that directly involve the public in transforming and imagining their environments. In these installations, architects question the very idea of controlling the design process and explore ways to involve members of the public in the design of public spaces. The projects included are: *Structures of Light* by Leonardo Mosso, *Touch* by LAb[au], *Sky Ear* by Haque Design + Research, and *Barking Town Square* by muf architecture/art.

5.1 BOUNDARIES

Urban planner and theorist Margaret Crawford argues that existing definitions of the terms *public* and *space* “derive from an insistence on unity [of culture and experience], a desire for fixed categories of time and space, and rigidly conceived notions of public and private.”³ Predicated on an assumption of social homogeneity, such definitions exclude entire segments of society. These segments of society constitute “counter-publics” and suggest a public sphere defined by contestation and competing interests rather than unity.

Two installations in the previous chapter, *Eye Level* and *The Dresser Trunk Project*, enlarged our understanding of traditionally underrepresented groups by bringing their stories to a larger public and challenging dominant narratives. Installations in this section also address these issues, but do so by considering implicit and explicit boundaries within public spaces. *Toilets* provided public facilities on the street; *Pink Ghost* created a new gathering space in an urban setting; and *Line of Site* carved a pedestrian shortcut through a private house. Through architectural incursions, overlaps, and other strategies, these projects examined critically the boundary between public and private.

James Cathcart, Frank Fantauzzi, and Terence Van Elslander, *Toilets*, New York, New York, USA, 1992 (see p. 149)

The sociologist Richard Sennett coined the phrase “fear of exposure” to describe people’s fear of contact with strangers in urban contexts. He suggests that, as a protective measure, people have settled into a mode of “city-building,” where they both literally and metaphorically “wall off the differences between people, assuming that these differences are more likely to be mutually threatening rather than mutually stimulating.”⁴ To rectify this situation, he calls for

“an art of exposure [that] will not make us one another’s victims, rather more balanced adults, capable of coping with and learning from complexity.”⁵

Toilets took on Sennett’s “art of exposure” directly with five rented portable construction toilets piercing through the street wall of the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York City. These toilets were made available for public use and serviced for six weeks. Architects Cathcart, Fantauzzi, and Van Elslander used the project as an opportunity to visit the idea of the street front and what it meant to the public.

The act of breaking through the facade created a symbolic and actual connection between the outside of the building and its inner, more private realm. It at once revealed and concealed the interior beyond, eliminating “the barrier between inside and outside and [redefining] the gallery as an extension of public space.”⁶ The user of the toilets occupied a threshold between private and public at the property line and inadvertently inhabited space inside the gallery. Visitors entering the gallery doors viewed the backs of the toilets presented like art objects on exhibit. To keep the gallery odor-free, the architects drilled holes in the facade to accommodate extensions of the vent pipes, directing spoiled air out to the street.

The bathroom is considered a private space. By making the toilets directly accessible from the street, the project commented on the need for access to public toilets in urban spaces. Like Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917), which presented a urinal in an art gallery, the meaning of the five port-o-johns was altered by their placement in the facade of the Storefront for Art and Architecture. With their placement and continued functionality, the toilets dethroned the concept of the art gallery as an exclusive space while also presenting a criticism of New York’s public spaces and social priorities.

The issue of free access to public toilets is not new. In Paris, *vespasiennes* (public urinals)

installed on the boulevards designed and constructed in the nineteenth century by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussman, have become symbols of democratic urban design. (But the *vespasiennes* only attended to the needs of male pedestrians—it was only relatively recently that women had modern public toilets accessible to them.) By creating an in-between space that could be inhabited by anyone from the street, not only those people who would normally enter the gallery, the addition of the toilets at Storefront addressed an issue of social inequality. A large number of poor and homeless people populate the Bowery neighborhood where the Storefront is located, a population that is, in the word of Fantauzzi, “disenfranchised and has to reduce themselves everyday in order to find a place to go to the bathroom. This project showed the difficulties that homeless people had to go through.”⁷ The project highlighted the distinction between visitors to the gallery, who tend to be educated and relatively wealthy, and the neighborhood people. But surprisingly, because both groups used the temporary facilities, the installation also demonstrated their commonality.

The power of this installation lay in its directness and simplicity. Using economical means (the budget for the project was only \$500), it made a strong statement about the right to access public toilets. While important, that concern is symptomatic of a larger issue—the underlying values and structures in society that lead to inequity and permit homelessness in the first place. The installation’s bold inversion and interpenetration of public and privileged spaces resonated on many levels: viewer and displayed, wealth and poverty, interior and exterior, object and container. None could maintain an unknowing relation to the others.

Since its founding in 1982 by architect Kyong Park and artist Shirin Neshat, the Storefront for Art and Architecture has welcomed radical engagement with the physical space of the gallery and the display of work on

the street for public viewing. In the first chapter, Mark West’s concrete *Pressure Buildings and Blackouts* (1991) also broke through this same building’s facade. The porosity of the boundary between public and private realms explored by these two installations was given a permanent expression in 1993. Architect Steven Holl and artist Vito Acconci designed a new facade for Storefront composed of large panels that pivoted into the adjacent sidewalk. Now pedestrians can weave in and out of the gallery at will; gallery space is mixed with the public space of the street, bridging the gap between thinking about architecture and experiencing it.

Périphériques Architectes (Emanuelle Marin-Trottin, Anne-Françoise Jumeau, and David Trottin), *Pink Ghost*, Paris, France, 2002 (see p. 150)

Pink Ghost was part of an annual Parisian event sponsored by local businesses to celebrate modern art in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, an area of Paris densely filled with universities, boutiques, small art galleries, and bookstores. The theme of the event was “transformation,” and Périphériques chose Place de Furstenberg, a small quiet plaza shaded by large trees, for its installation. Architect Anne-Françoise Jumeau of Périphériques describes Place Furstenberg as “devoid of life, museified . . . People go through the plaza but do not stay there because there is nothing for them to do.”⁸ Périphériques remedied this situation by filling the middle of the plaza with furniture one would normally find in a living room. In this way they created “an art object and a meeting place.”⁹

The installation was constructed off site in sections that were easily transportable. Over twenty armchairs and five tables arranged in groups to encourage conversation were fixed to plastic sheets and covered with plaster of Paris, with a further layer of glass-fiber-reinforced plastic applied on top.

Finally, the entire surface was painted pink. On site the thin covering was drawn up around lampposts and tree trunks to a height of 2.5 meters (7.5 feet). This pink “skirt” was designed to allow water to reach the tree roots during the installation. After the sections were assembled on site, matching pink glue rendered seamless the pink surface that covered the over one hundred square meters (1,075 square feet) of the small plaza.

The once-quiet plaza now held a fantastic pink salon with a luscious tree canopy hovering above and a lamppost in its center. The plaza quickly took on a new life, attracting tourists and architecture students from the nearby École des Beaux-Arts and bringing new people into the neighborhood. Taking advantage of this new setting, visitors brought picnics to enjoy during the long spring evenings of Paris. As the unwritten boundaries of use shifted, some residents living in the apartments overlooking the plaza expressed concern about noise and the loss of peacefulness and privacy in this sleepy place.

The soft pink surface that unified this large *objet d’art* redefined the living room, normally associated with the privacy of the home. But unlike a sculpture set in a plaza to be viewed only, *Pink Ghost* invited people from both within and outside the neighborhood to sit and enjoy the plaza. Like a found object transformed by the context of an art gallery, or by the imprimatur of its designer, the idea of the living room took on new meaning in this public context. The fantastic nature of the work triggered the imagination, suggesting new possibilities for social contact in the urban arena.

Arqhé Collective (Luc Lévesque, James Partaik, and Michel Saint-Onge) with Blair Taylor, *Line of Site*, Québec City, Québec, Canada, 1999–2000 (see pp.151–52)

Like *Toilets* and *Pink Ghost*, *Line of Site* blurred the line between private and public domains and challenged assumptions about each.

Rather than bringing the private domain into public spaces, *Line of Site* invited the public into the private realm. Arqhé (a multi-disciplinary trio composed of an architect and two artists) transformed a private residence in Québec City with the creation of a public passage that cleaved the floor plan in two. Simple materials delineated the passage—walls were built with standard lumber and stained particleboard, a glowing fabric illuminated the ceiling, and a path of pebbles marked the ground plane. New exterior doors inserted into the passage walls allowed the apartment’s inhabitants to access the two halves of their still-functional dwelling. Like a desire path made manifest, the passage traced the hypotenuse between two perpendicular streets, Scott Street and Boulevard René-Lévesque. It created a new shortcut for the numerous pedestrians circulating between the office buildings of Parliament Hill and the commercial street of the residential district.¹⁰

The title of the installation, *Line of Site*, referred both to the context or “site” of the dwelling and the “sight” created by the new view corridor that directs the gaze through the apartment to the government buildings to the east. As the seat of the National Assembly for the province of Québec, Parliament Hill is charged with symbolic and real power. The passage also pointed to the past. The work alluded to the invisible yet very real historical lines that connect the decision-makers who work in this building to the residential neighborhood. In the 1970s, Parliament Hill expanded, resulting in the decision to demolish a large portion of the adjacent residential neighborhood. Additional dwellings, including the installation site, were at risk. A public outcry finally halted the demolition of the entire neighborhood, and this home was spared. *Line of Site* commemorated this grassroots effort and the ways in which government decisions affect the lives and dwellings of the people, crossing the boundary between public and private domains.

James Cathcart, Frank Fantauzzi, and Terence Van Elslander

Toilets

left, top

The architects inserted five port-johns into the exterior wall of the gallery. “Bless you, boys,” declared a resident of New York City’s streets.

left, bottom

Maintenance truck for *Toilets*; the toilets were free, open for public use, and regularly serviced during the duration of the exhibit.

right

Interior view of toilets projecting into the gallery

“Our work is like a lever: it opens, measures, illuminates, but also creates a connection. It weighs a moment against a place, an event against an object. It finds a crack and widens it.” —Terence Van Elslander



Périphériques Architectes

Pink Ghost

top

A lone tree was cloaked in pink and joined by a single armchair awaiting the visitor who preferred solitude.

bottom

People quickly took advantage of the new "salon," bringing their picnics and relaxing with friends.

"We tried different colors, but pink was the color that created the greatest contrast with the environment. We wanted to create a sense of high artificiality."



Arqhé Collective with Blair Taylor

Line of Site

top left

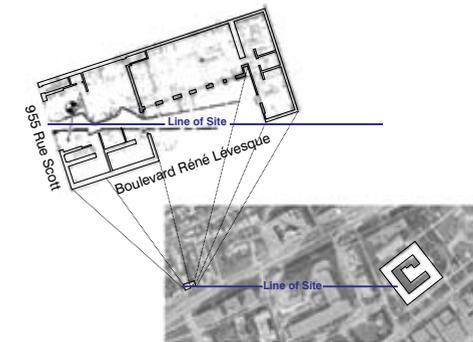
A slice through 955 Scott Street directed vision toward the Parliament building several blocks away. Decisions made by lawmakers in the Parliament building spawned the "urban renewal" of the residential neighborhood that once surrounded the house.

top right

The video footage of the rotating dining room table was projected onto a screen hanging in front of the Scott Street window. It was thus visible to passersby.

bottom

View from Scott Street. A "public passage" cleaved the apartment of James Partaik, a member of the Arqhé Collective, in two.

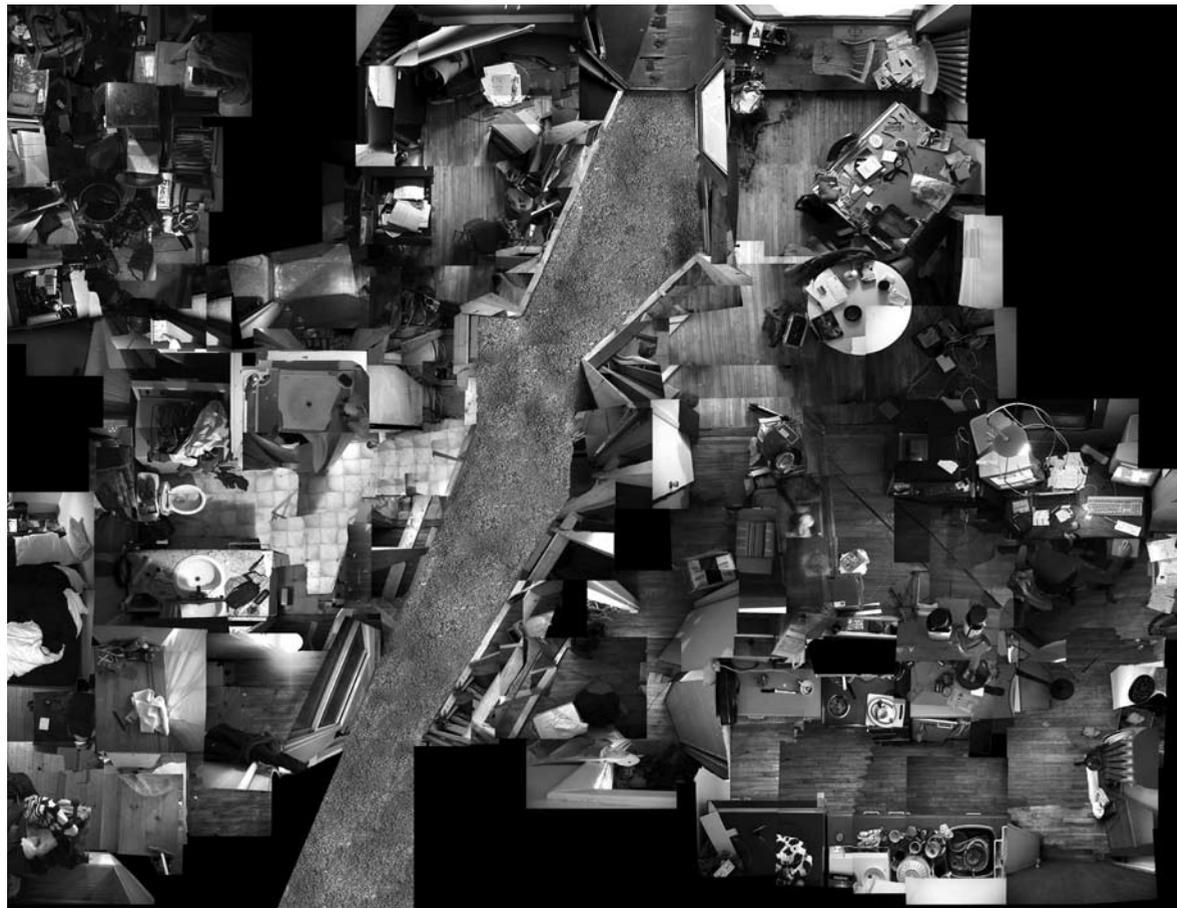


top

The thin constructed boundary separated private (kitchen, office, and dining room on one side of the public passage; bedrooms and bath on the other) and public realms.

bottom

Line of Site explored the interface between public and private, virtual and real. Within this temporary public passage, a passerby could peep into the private dwellings or continue through the house toward the Parliament. Cameras and sensors, actuated by visitors in the passage, sent video clips capturing their presence to the website and to monitors located in the apartment.



5.2 DESCRIBING AND PERCEIVING THE CITY

The projects in the previous section examined the boundary between public and private territories, but none addressed how people perceive and describe public spaces. In the works that follow, architects employ drawing (in the broadest sense of the word) to analyze and describe the city. Through these works they demonstrate that what and how we “draw”—that is, the techniques architects use—can shape and stimulate insight into, understandings of, and dialogue about our environment. The architects of these projects drew out hidden relationships between multiple places, moments, and potentialities, which invited the public to reconsider its experience in and understanding of the city around it.

Architects in the first project used traditional drawing techniques and constructive geometry in an unconventional way to draw the future upon the site. Like author Jorge Luis Borges’s imaginary map that depicted reality at “the same scale of the [fictitious] Empire and that coincided with it point for point,” the project made the future visible and public through a full-scale drawing on the construction site.¹¹ Through this work they pointed out hidden infrastructures as well as the evolving nature of the city—two things that are often overlooked. This thread continued with *How to Walk a Flat Elephant* and *NY A/V*. In these works architects employed video to examine and describe the complex and constantly changing whole of the urban environment. Like Italo Calvino’s Marco Polo describing a Venice in which ever-changing worlds coexist, both Shin Egashira (*How to Walk a Flat Elephant*) and Martha Skinner and Doug Hecker (*NY A/V*) revel in the simultaneous and conflicting stories that make up a city.¹² However, they take opposing attitudes: while Egashira creates an installation that underscores the fragmentary nature of our understanding of reality, Skinner and Hecker rigorously stitch video clips together to enable

the viewer to grasp spatial and temporal continuities that are otherwise invisible.

Kennedy & Violich Architects (with Linda Pollak and Michael VanderBourgh), *Drawing on Site*, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, 1991 (see p. 157)

The U.S. Federal Highway Act of 1956 resulted in the interstate highway system. These roads were designed to meet the defense needs of the country at national and regional scales, but gave less consideration to the local impact. Along the East Coast, construction of new highways connected areas within the region, but also cut apart many cities. In Boston, for example, an elevated highway cleaved in two the neighborhoods in its path. Fifty years later, the city implemented the Big Dig, which buried this central artery and redesigned the infrastructure to stitch neighborhoods back together.

Drawing on Site invited the public to assess what the city planned for a portion of the new infrastructure where a highway interchange would lead into the sunken artery. Over a single weekend the architects mapped out the construction drawings of the engineers at full scale directly onto the site. The architects chose a moment in the site’s history when past, present, and future were visible—demolition was underway and construction had begun—reinforcing the constancy of change. Architect Frano Violich explains, “We were interested in finding the dynamic moment when things were beginning to emerge from the ground.”¹³

Without proper surveying tools, the architects improvised. Athletic field line markers chalked the transposed construction drawings onto the site. An existing rail line became a scalable reference, enabling them to measure objects found on the drawing but not yet built. Objects in the drawing were located on site using triangulation and a three-hundred-foot (one hundred meters) tape measure. The architects checked the

drawing's accuracy by climbing a one-hundred-foot (thirty-three meters) radio tower on site. The viewing position—at ground level or the top of the tower—affected the drawing's appearance and thus its comprehension: "from the air the line on the debris [looked] straight, but from the ground the chalk broke into fragments."¹⁴ Once the drawing was complete, an aerial photographer documented the site from above. *Drawing on Site* was a hybrid representation, superimposing a drawing upon the material reality of the earth. It was akin to what is now commonly accessible through Google maps, though the technique was unheard of at that time.

When the drawing was complete, the architects invited the public to view the planned interchange and the impact it would have on the neighborhood. For a short time, the construction site became an outdoor gallery. Placards with text and images explained the chalk drawing to the audience, but it was difficult to understand the drawing fully from one position. The visitors walked around the site to assemble the whole scene in their minds and to discover the full extent of the drawing and its implications.

This quick sketch underscored the temporal dimension of the city. "It was important," Violic offers, "for us to see the contrast between what was there, what was planned, and what disappeared over time. Layers of past, present, and future were seen together.... The work raised awareness of what was there and convinced people that even a site as derelict and abandoned as this one was could be fascinating."¹⁵

**Shin Egashira + Okamura Furniture
Advanced Engineering Team (with support
by Alvaro Cassinelli and Yuji Fukui), *How to
Walk a Flat Elephant*, Tokyo, Japan, 2007**
(see pp. 158–61)

—
How to Walk a Flat Elephant challenged the viewer's ability to understand a city as a whole by emphasizing disjunctions and ruptures

in the patterns of an urban landscape. It celebrated the complex nature of the city and questioned whether it was possible or desirable to integrate different understandings of a city into a single construct.

The elephant was the metaphorical focus of Shin Egashira's installation, standing in for the city. In his installation, Egashira combines two representations of an elephant with video footage of Tokyo displayed on a series of devices. The gait of the elephant is the subject of the stop-motion photographic analysis of Eadweard Muybridge (1887); the elephant is at the center of a famous Buddhist parable about seven blind men and the limits of individual perception. In the parable, a king summons seven blind men to examine a discrete part of an elephant through touch. Having never seen an elephant before and only knowing the beast through this interaction, each man describes the animal differently. Rather than consolidating their information, they argue about their conflicting interpretations of the elephant. Their fragmented understandings reflect a truth about human knowledge. The parable ends with the king's declaration that a single viewpoint can never properly reflect the true nature of reality.

The installation juxtaposed a version of this parable written on the wall with a projection of Muybridge's reanimated stop-motion stills. Egashira coupled this reconstituted and flattened elephant in motion with video fragments of yet another giant beast, the city of Tokyo. Egashira suggested that while the photographs appeared to be scientific, the knowledge of the elephant that they produced is as fragmented and illusory as the knowledge of the blind men in the parable and, more importantly, as fragmented as our understandings of the city.

Egashira filmed the video clips of Tokyo from three different vantage points: from a revolving restaurant (a high-angle shot), the window of a commuter train circling the city (a mid-height perspective), and focused

on the feet of pedestrians as they walked across a bridge leading to a zoo (ground-level view). These viewpoints on the city corresponded to three geometric forms: the small circle of the revolving restaurant, the larger circle of a moving train circumscribing the city, and the flow of feet sweeping across the frame.

These simple geometric forms recurred at the site of the installation, where viewers interacted with large glass video screens. As the videos of Tokyo were projected, the screens moved on a system of tracks: two traveled in a circle—one around a large ring, the other around a smaller one—while the third screen traveled along a set of linear tracks. The movement of visitors walking through the space triggered motion sensors that altered the speed and direction of the rolling screens as well as the order of projection of the video clips on each screen. To the viewers' surprise, as they approached the screens the elephants would change direction and walk away from them.

In *How to Walk a Flat Elephant*, Egashira asked the audience to consider the nature of its perceptions and how it interprets them. This relationship is reflected in the ancient Buddhist parable, which is embedded in the Chinese and Japanese languages. Egashira offers a new connection: "The Chinese character of the word *vision*, or *image*, [is] made up [of] a combination of two words—Man on the left and Elephant on the right. Imagination is the contact between the two. Perhaps the body of our city may no longer exist but as an elusive elephant imagined by architects today."¹⁶ Like the Dadaists and the Situationists, Egashira reveled in the city's complex, contradictory, and unpredictable character—what the sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre would call "the place of the unexpected"—and created an environment that responded in unexpected ways to the viewer's presence.¹⁷

fieldoffice (Martha Skinner and Doug Hecker), *NY A/V*, New York, New York, USA, 2001 and 2005 (see pp. 162–63)

—
NY A/V was "mobile yet site-specific."¹⁸ It was a work composed in two parts: audio/video mapping of the physical conditions and activities found along the length of a major street, and the public presentation of this material four years later. The work began in the summer of 2001. Over seven consecutive days, Martha Skinner and Doug Hecker walked along and documented the entire length of Broadway in Manhattan. Each day they began their work at dawn and ended at dusk. By the end of the seventh day, the team had completed their "cross-sectional audio/video (A/V) map" of the avenue from the southern to the northern tip of the island. Their mapping was accomplished not with pencil, paper, and ruler but with the zoom feature of a video camera and a rigorous plan of action. As the team moved northward, they stopped on each block at four predetermined locations: the southern corner, one-third and two-thirds up the block, and the northern corner. At each location they set up a stationary video camera and focused on a distant point further up the avenue. With the camera they recorded a "zoom" clip that showed the initially distant horizon moving closer to the viewer and filling the screen. Fifteen minutes later, they walked north to the next station point and repeated the action. Over the course of one week, the process was repeated 636 times; in other words, the team collected 636 individual but consecutive zoom clips documenting Broadway's length. Commenting upon the experience of gathering the footage, Skinner remarked, "Each day the investigator, through the viewfinder, is entranced by a different story, by a different place, as the various personalities of the city are experienced."¹⁹

Four years later, after stitching together the 636 individual clips to create one long, continuous zoom of the entire length of this artery, as well as three versions that played

Kennedy & Violich Architects with Linda Pollak and Michael VanderBourgh

Drawing on Site

top

Lacking a single vantage point to view the entire project, visitors walked around the site to discover for themselves what existed and what was planned for their neighborhood.

bottom

Drawing on Site became intelligible from the air—a hybrid of drawing and photograph, before the era of Google maps.



at different speeds, the team returned to Broadway and retraced their steps. This time they brought a custom-designed “container,” a mobile theater on wheels, to present the video map to the public. A ritual ensued. Each day for seven days, the container was driven up Broadway and parked within the section of the street traveled that same day four years earlier. Once parked, the container’s ends were opened and a set of stairs was placed at either end to entice the public to enter and look. The shiny skin of the vehicle reflected activities surrounding it, while its darkened interior permitted visitors to view the videos created from the 2001 footage. Inside, projectors played the same footage at three different speeds: slow motion, real time, and accelerated. Like the Baroque clocks that showed the movement of the moon, sun, and the stars, each tempo “allow[ed] different conditions of the city to be read.”²⁰ In slow motion, observers noticed subtleties of human interaction, but, as with a detail drawing, they saw fragments without understanding the whole. Accelerated motion, like a map or an aerial image, offered an overview, which emphasized transformations from one neighborhood to the next, showcased the rhythm of traffic, and revealed topographical changes as one zooms up Broadway, but masked details. Real-time speed, like time travel, allowed the observer to replay four-year-old events and notice changes that would have been forgotten or perhaps have gone unnoticed.

In the words of urban theorist Margaret Crawford: “everyday urban space is the connective tissue that binds daily lives together.” The significance of the “utterly ordinary” is that it “reveals a fabric of space and time defined by a complex realm of social practices.”²¹ These three videos made that realm visible and available to New Yorkers.

According to Crawford’s interpretation of Lefebvre: “everyday time is located at the

intersection of two contrasting but coexisting modes of repetition, the cyclical and the linear.”²² *NY A/V* inhabited and captured both, natural time—starting at sunrise and ending at sunset—and artificial—marking and measuring the minutes and hours with the video camera. Ironically it was the rigorous structure of the documentary and editing process that made it possible to step back from the flow of lived experience. For the citizens who followed their curiosity to watch the videos, the installation offered a gift: the opportunity to experience a unique, insightful moment and to enter the category of time that was, according to Crawford, “more important to Lefebvre than those predictable oscillations.”²³ It is “the discontinuous and spontaneous moments that punctuate daily experience—fleeting sensations of love, play, rest, knowledge.”²⁴ As Crawford points out in her introduction to *Everyday Urbanism*, it is these types of moments that the Situationist Guy Debord relished, for he saw them “as potential revolutions in individual everyday life, springboards for the realization of the possible.”²⁵

This sense of possibility and passing time is suggested by comments recorded in the guest book: “A great reminder of time and how things seem to never change and yet how quickly what we have seen changes”; “Watching it [was] like traveling through different villages with their own culture and pace”; “This used to be Irish, now it is Dominican. The groups change to let others come in.”²⁶ Rigorous and precise in their planning, the individual video clips evoked the constantly changing, coexisting worlds of Calvino, filled with an infinite number of simultaneous and conflicting stories, while the linked footage of quotidian moments presented at three different speeds provided insights into urban patterns of activity, time, and geography unavailable through lived experience.

Shin Egashira + Okamura Furniture Advanced Engineering Team

How to Walk a Flat Elephant

left
Seven blind men examine a very patient elephant! This Buddhist parable attests to the limits of individual perception. Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai Manga* [The Hokusai Sketchbooks], vol. 8 (Nagoya, Japan: Eirakuya Tôshirô, 1814–78)

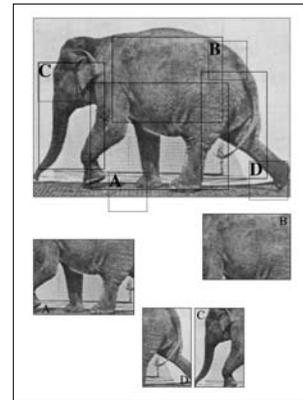
right
Egashira applied the blind men's methods to Muybridge's photographic motion study of an elephant's gait. Photomontage (2007) with photographs by Eadweard Muybridge (1887)

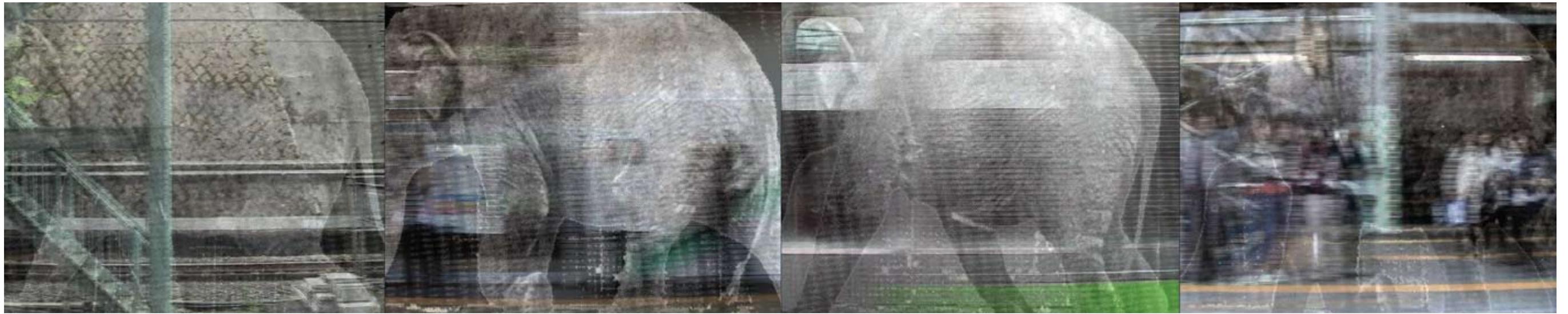
opposite top
The video footage was projected on three viewing apparatuses in Space R, a gallery in Tokyo. As people circulated through the gallery, they triggered actuators that controlled the speed and direction of the viewing assemblies. Sounds of the city, the mechanisms, and the occasional roar of an elephant filled the space.

opposite bottom
Wooden benches incorporated into the mechanized structure traveled with the rest of the design, providing visitors the opportunity to ride with the elephants. Egashira drew an analogy between the elephant's nervous system, the electronics used in the installation, and the city.

following spread
Video footage taken from three vantage points in Tokyo presented a fragmentary view of the city, suggesting an analogy with the Buddhist parable. These clips were superimposed over Muybridge's walking elephant. (Top) Video footage of pedestrians crossing the Ueno Zoo footbridge were superimposed over that of the walking elephant; (middle) the elephant's torso was juxtaposed with people waiting for a commuter train; (bottom) when a visitor touched the glass, like the blind man touched the elephant, a close-up of the animal's skin appeared, or it roared.

“Communication gadgets deliberately left incomplete are combined with float glass, timber beams, pebbles, and steel angles that give the elephant its weight. Computers, microcontrollers, industrial motors, speakers, and sensors reconstitute its nervous system, creating a new set of relationships in the name of City Elephant.” —Shin Egashira





5.3 SPECTACLE AND PARTICIPATION

The next four projects directly engaged the public in shaping the social, cultural, and physical form of public spaces. They did so in a playful and often humorous way, with spectacles that triggered the curiosity and imagination of the participants. For example, the first two installations established relationships between the parts of the city and the whole: they linked buildings, neighborhoods, and monuments with light works that were visible from a distance, inspiring people to move around and conceive of the city in new and unfamiliar ways. They underscored existing landmarks and created new ones. Like urban festivals and holiday celebrations, works in this section purposefully set themselves in opposition to everyday life and standard use. They altered understandings associated with familiar places by transforming environments and inventing new ways for the public to participate. Memorable, magical, and in some cases theatrical, they suggested actions that citizens might undertake to alter their environment (or their conceptions of it) permanently.

Leonardo Mosso, *Structures of Light, Vlissingen, the Netherlands, 1995–2000* (see pp. 171–73)

Leonardo Mosso employs his nocturnal *Structures of Light* to bring attention and energy to neglected urban spaces and buildings throughout Europe.²⁷ Designed and built by the architect, each individual light structure is created from a system of standardized, adaptable components: luminescent neon tubes of colored light held together by flexible joints. This system enables the architect to rework and adjust his structures for each situation; they are experiments in a “directed architecture” that build on his interest in cybernetics and the potential of dismountable elemental structures held together with elastic joints.²⁸

Mosso spends weeks deciding where and how to insert each structure, creating “photos... collages and photomontages until he finds the flex point, the magical and precise area where he starts working.”²⁹ Adjusted and reworked in response to the particular context, each light structure is carefully placed in order to enhance the dialogue between these structures, the light they emit, and their surroundings, framing architectural details and bringing light into darkened passages. The luminous neon colors of Mosso’s linear lights alter apparent depth, while the shadows they create bring unexpected contours to buildings, drawing the viewer’s attention. Mosso’s interventions come to life after sunset and create a sense of wonder and celebration: “This is catalytic art in which light installations assist and accelerate the metamorphosis of architecture and environment.”³⁰

Mosso’s *Structures of Light* installations have been realized throughout Europe. In order to underscore the long-term effort, continuity of his work, and to give a sense of its breadth, we choose to focus on one town, the city of Vlissingen, the Netherlands, where a series of projects have been realized since 1989.³¹ These projects are: *Transparent City: Neon Structures on the Towers* (1995), *Urban Plan: light structures for the city of Vlissingen* (1997–2000), and *Lichtwolke Willem 3* (1999), the first permanent work outlined in urban plan to be built.

Vlissingen is a harbor city located near the Belgian border between the Schelde River and the North Sea; it was strategically sited to foster commerce. In 1995 the municipality invited Mosso to create a temporary installation that involved six historic towers. *Transparent City* celebrated the city and was intended to attract travelers who might otherwise pass it by: “This project is about attracting attention to the various monuments of the city of Vlissingen. The buildings included the cathedral that is very old, the city hall, and so on.”³²

The initial installation involved six towers: five were outfitted with linear light structures that clung only to their exteriors, and the sixth had lights inserted into the interior as well. At night, the illuminated towers could be seen from distant highways and the sea—“the boats coming from various countries via the ocean could see the lights on the buildings”—beckoning travelers to take a closer look.³³ Within the city special buses toured the towers and created a festive atmosphere. Like a parade that weaves its way to city landmarks scattered throughout the city, the bus tour told its own story about Vlissingen. With the design of this itinerary and the guide map marking the sites of his interventions, Mosso helped the public to “look at how they are looking, by leading them around the city.”³⁴

Pleased with the results of the project, city officials then invited Mosso to create *Urban Plan* (1997–2000), which built on the temporary *Transparent City* by envisioning permanent points of light placed on significant buildings of the city. *Lichtwolke Willem 3*, completed in 1999, was the first of eight permanent lights configurations resulting from the plan. An eight-part installation, it consisted of light structures “anchored to the facade and roof, and hung in the lobby of the new Kunstcentrum (art center) in a converted neo-classic army barracks near the sea.”³⁵

These *Structures of Light* installations took advantage of the opportunities offered by the blackness of the night. As the sun was setting and the spaces in the urban fabric disappeared, Mosso’s brilliant line drawings lit up like large fireflies connecting one place to another in the darkness.

LAb[au] (Manuel Abendroth, Jerome Decock, Pieter Heremans, Alexandre Plennevaux, and Els Vermang), *Touch, Brussels, Belgium, 2007* (see pp. 174–75)

The Brussels-based architects at LAb[au], or Laboratory for Architecture and Urbanism,

specialize in a type of digital architecture they call Meta-Design, which employs existing architecture as a tool for “think[ing about], promot[ing], and establish[ing] public space while using new technologies to enhance the relationship between [the] citizen and the city.”³⁶ *Touch*, for example, was an interactive installation held in the winter of 2007 utilizing the facade of the Dexia Tower in central Brussels.³⁷

The Dexia company, a bank that specializes in financial services for the local government, wanted its building, Dexia Tower, to be a city landmark. Architects Samyn and Partners together with lighting engineer Barbara Hediger designed a facade on which each window could be independently lit and computer-controlled.³⁸ The result was a 145-meter (475 feet) tower with 4,200 windows illuminated by red-green-blue light-emitting diode bars (RGB LEDs), which transformed the facade into an immense display surface. Video loops projected on the facade could be designed to change over time: the first such loop flashed advertisements for the Olympic Games.

LAb[au]’s contribution and innovation was the development of a vehicle that allowed the public to alter the facade directly. Their installation *Touch* was the first interactive use of the facade, allowing the public rather than the building’s owners to control the lighting in each window themselves (and thus the imagery on the building). To make this possible, LAb[au] designed software that tied into the building’s LED window system and an interface that the public could use. A kiosk located in the adjacent plaza sheltered a control panel that enabled people to “touch” the building remotely and change the colors and patterns of the lights on its facade.

When a user touched the control panel and started a sequence by picking a background color from the multi-touch screen, the kiosk would light up, signaling to others in the plaza that someone was at play and a new spectacle was about to begin. Next, by

touching the screen itself participants could create black-and-white graphic shapes that responded to their gestures. Gestural input animated the shapes, giving them momentum and direction. The resulting luminous, kinetic designs were visible on the facade of the building in real time.

The language of the facade's imagery was an abstract one of points, lines, and surfaces whose color, direction, and "motion" changed in response to the choices made by the person at the control panel. The architects of the installation chose this visual language because they felt that it recalled that of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian, whose works—such as *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942–43)—suggested "relationships between architecture and urban elements."³⁹

A web camera set up on another building made visible a framed view of the Dexia Tower set within the Brussels skyline. By using the Internet to access this camera, participants could photograph their work as it was displayed on the facade and then create a digital postcard to send to friends. Each new image was also posted on the project website.⁴⁰ As these postcards reveal, "touching the facade" not only altered the Dexia Tower directly, but also transformed the character and color of the buildings and public spaces surrounding the tower through reflection and light emission.

The people who made their mark on the building felt a sense of pride in the city and a connection to it. Having the opportunity to send the digital postcard further enlarged the power of their creation. The changing colors of the facade engaged evening strollers in that area of the city in a way that was quite appropriate for the holiday season. The building became known for its constantly changing appearance, achieving the owners' original goal of creating a city landmark.

Like Mosso's installations, *Touch* used light as both a communication device and an artistic medium, bringing beauty and a sense of celebration to the city. The transformative

power of light could be enjoyed collectively at an urban scale in these two projects: Structures of Light raised the profile of a city by increasing public awareness of its historical buildings and urban form; and *Touch* strengthened a sense of citizenship by allowing the public to participate directly in crafting the illuminated image of a building and, through their efforts, making this building more prominent in the urban landscape.

Haque Design + Research (Usman Haque), Sky Ear, Fribourg, Switzerland, and Greenwich, London, United Kingdom, 2004 (see pp.176–79)

Like many of the architects whose work appears in the "Tectonics" chapter, Usman Haque and LAB[au] employ installations to experiment with the medium of architecture. However, rather than exploring the poetics of materiality and construction, these architects are part of a growing movement that focuses on the integration of emerging digital interactive technologies into the built environment. These technologies have the potential to "shift the way people interact both with those around them and also with the space around them."⁴¹ Haque sees many possibilities for the use of interactive technologies in participatory design—the involvement of the public in the process of envisioning and creating the built environment—and has developed a series of installations to explore these opportunities. In particular he creates artifacts to examine "how humans, devices and their shared environment might coexist in a mutually constructive relationship."⁴² One such experiment was a giant kitelike structure called *Sky Ear* that was launched in 2004 at the Belluard Bollwerk International Festival in Fribourg, Switzerland, and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London.

Sky Ear was composed of a thousand interconnected helium balloons enclosed in a carbon-fiber-and-net structure twenty-five meters (eighty feet) in diameter.

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and electromagnetic sensors were distributed throughout the structure. The diodes lit up in different patterns based on the various frequencies of electromagnetic waves picked up by the sensors. Tethered by four guide-wires held by people on the ground, the entire apparatus hovered a hundred meters (330 feet) off the ground. Participants interacted with the system by means of cell phones attached to the structure.

From a nearby building Haque arranged for the telephone numbers of the flying phones to be projected on the ground. On-site participants used this information to call *Sky Ear* using their personal cell phones. People could also participate remotely by accessing the phone numbers online.

Sky Ear both listened and spoke in a number of ways: it was an active participant, translator, and negotiator in the dialogue between its environment and the public. Calling *Sky Ear*'s cell phones altered the electromagnetic waves that triggered the embedded LEDs and resulted in wavelike patterns of colored light that were diffused by the rubbery surfaces of the balloons. Activated by the incoming calls, the flying phones generated additional electromagnetic waves that were in turn picked up by *Sky Ear*'s sensors. Furthermore, calls allowed participants on the ground to hear fluctuating electromagnetic waves converted into sound—much like "whistlers" and "spherics," which are the aural equivalent of the aurora borealis.

The cloud of balloons was both a sensor system, responding to the electromagnetic waves generated by mobile phone calls, and an actuator, producing electromagnetic fields itself through increased activity of the cell phones it carried. Computer chips linked to the sensors and LEDs attached to each balloon were networked and programmed to coordinate with one another in response to the different types of signals. This "balloon-to-balloon" network controlled

the concentration of light, thus indicating the epicenter—the place where the mobile phone actually rang in the system. Light patterns emanating from that point were designed so that observers might interpret their cause, similar to how they might understand that a pattern of expanding concentric circles in a pool of water results from a tossed object. By interpreting these signs, participants could grasp the relationship between their actions and *Sky Ear*'s transformations and could alter the pattern seen on the "kite" by increasing their calls to it. When there were many simultaneous calls, the patterns became chaotic. At other times, *Sky Ear* was programmed to respond generally to all of the combined electromagnetic fields it detected in its environment. Then the viewer noticed moving, glowing color that made it appear as if the whole kite was pulsing. In this case the pattern was much smoother, rippling across the object.⁴³

Electromagnetic waves are all around us, carrying messages and information, but we cannot see them. *Sky Ear* made these omnipresent waves visible, enabling people to understand their "daily interactions with the invisible topographies of electromagnetic space."⁴⁴ In addition, *Sky Ear* shifted the social interactions that depend upon this medium. While cell phones are now multifunctional, their most basic function is to make phone calls: a process that links one or two individuals while at the same time separating them from the larger group around them. In this work these same devices were employed to different effect, linking strangers in a common effort to change the electromagnetic fields around them and thus transform *Sky Ear* hovering above. *Sky Ear* was "ground-breaking," according to architectural critic Lucy Bullivant, "because it [broke] the perceptual boundaries between the physical and virtual by encouraging people to become creative participants in a Hertzian [electromagnetic space defined by Anthony Dunne] performance."⁴⁵

While *Sky Ear* was beautiful and technologically innovative in and of itself, Haque's installations have another dimension. For him they are a part of a larger research agenda building on cybernetic theories that value conversation, interaction, and the democratization of public space. Guided by cybernetician Gordon Pask's arguments in favor of a variable and evolving interaction between people and computers, Haque seeks to enhance the interactive potential of public spaces in order to create places where people feel that they belong and situations in which they have influence.⁴⁶ Thus, Haque's installations are conceived as tools for the public to:

use to construct (in the widest sense) their environments and thus to build their own sense of agency. It is about developing ways to make people themselves more engaged with, and ultimately responsible for, the spaces that they inhabit. It is about investing the production of architecture with the poetics of its inhabitants.⁴⁷

muf architecture/art, Barking Town Square, London, United Kingdom, 2005–ongoing
(see pp. 180–81)

The final project in this chapter, like Mosso's work in Vlissingen, is a long-term, multifaceted project, but here we will focus on the combination of installations and permanent architecture that reinvigorated an urban square in Barking, a neighborhood of London.

Barking is an area with a diverse population, some racial tension, and no strong sense of its own history. It is also a key center in the Thames Gateway regeneration area in London and one of the one hundred spaces that the Mayor of London's Architecture and Urbanism office has advocated for in an effort to "deliver an urban renaissance in London."⁴⁸ When the developers Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM) proposed a high-density residential and retail development adjacent to the existing town hall, the local council gave them permission to go beyond existing

zoning limitations in exchange for amenities that included a new public library and the revitalization of the public space that would be redefined by this new construction.

The local council hired muf architecture/art, a cross-disciplinary firm based in London, to work with the developer of *Barking Town Square* based on its reputation for innovative community-involvement techniques. This particular project illustrates its pioneering working method.⁴⁹ Building on the strengths and shared ideals of artist Katherine Clarke and architect Liza Fior, muf embeds tactics borrowed from art into the design process in an effort to engender a sense of ownership and ensure affection for its projects once they are built.

The project began with a single public art commission: the design of a hoarding (a printed image covering a construction fence) for one of the sites that fronted the square. A series of permanent and temporary projects intended to make *Barking Town Square* a memorable and vibrant place followed. Muf's work expanded to include the design and construction of a fake "ruin" to add a sense of history, albeit fabricated, to Barking; a ceremonial arcade linking the square to Ripple Road, an important shopping street; the redesign of the central space as "an extra-large outdoor pink room scaled to the dimensions of the civic;" the installation of a second hoarding—a temporary evocation of a future planting and a venue for a community celebration; and the planting of an urban forest and stage, which will be completed in the future.⁵⁰ The focus in all of these projects was on using art and architecture together to create not only the physical aspects of a public space but to ensure its ultimate viability by creating a place that the public will care about.

Muf makes installations, plans community events, and initiates workshops to take advantage of the time-lapse between the initiation of a construction project and its completion, recognizing that "during times of change, temporary enhancement offers

an opportunity for citizen involvement and collective imagining."⁵¹ Construction hoardings usually present an idealized rendering of the project, depicting future inhabitants that the developer wishes to attract. Given the opportunity to create a hoarding for the site, muf instead chose to explore "the reality of the people who actually lived in the neighborhood" and how those people conceived of public space.⁵²

The firm invited a group of students from the nearby Broadway Performing Arts College as well as members of Barking's Afro-Caribbean Lunch Club to explore the "way artists look at the everyday and see the extraordinariness of it:" they took a field trip to the Tate Gallery and also examined "low" art.⁵³ Together the firm, students, and lunch club created and performed fantasy scenarios for Barking in front of large projected photographs of public spaces from around the town. Muf used these scenarios as springboards for discussions about what public space meant to the members of the group. Many participants had never thought that people could actually make decisions about public space—they had always assumed it was space left over between buildings. This assumption that the public realm was uncared for and belonged to no one rather than everyone, had greatly shaped residents' attitudes and actions in the public spaces of their neighborhood. This was the sort of assumption that muf hopes to disturb in order to ensure long-term care for its interventions in the public space of Barking.

Photographs of the students and lunch club members performing their scenarios in front of the construction site were incorporated into the first hoarding. Appropriately titled *Your Dream Today, My Dream Tomorrow*, the images projected residents' fantasies into the public realm.

Inserting the extraordinary within the ordinary, creating memories and ambition for the members of the town through the community workshops and hoardings—these

were the first steps toward the production of a permanent transformation of the square that welcomed invention and fiction into the design. Explaining the role of the installation in this particular project and in muf's process generally, Fior says that the installation "lifts the bar; this is where you should get to. It creates a fantasy, a theatrical occupation of the site. It then becomes the brief that has to be met by the permanent project."⁵⁴ In this project, creating the hoarding began the important process of developing meaning with the community.

Despite Britain's culture of public involvement in decision-making processes that affect the built environment, in Barking there had been little of democracy in the initial negotiations with the developer.⁵⁵ As a result, muf's use of the hoarding to involve the public and convey the multi-cultural nature of the community was well received and helped to reengage the citizenry in the process of shaping the town square. Ultimately, in order to continue the work of developing a relationship with the community and a vision for the place, the town council and the developer awarded muf a series of commissions for the design and construction of both ephemeral installations and permanent elements. These commissions extended muf's ability to integrate a mixture of history, fantasy, and narrative into the plan for the town square.

After the first hoarding, muf contributed to permanent elements to the site. Building on the picturesque tradition of garden follies that took the form of invented ruins, muf designed and built a freestanding wall that appeared to be the remains of a historic structure. In addition to using cast-off bricks, the firm added ancient-looking sculptures in small niches throughout to add to the effect of age. Along the main open space, muf also designed an arcade with a black and white terrazzo floor laid in an Edwardian pattern.

These permanent works were followed by an ephemeral effort. A second installation

and performance called *Gold Chairs*, *Tapdancing: Celebration and Vision* inaugurated the arcade and the ruin and presented yet another part of muf's design for the square: an urban forest. A new hoarding with photographs of a forest created a backdrop for a festive event with music and tap dancers in geometric formation parading under the arcade and into the public square. A precedent for using the public space was set. Citizens seated in gold chairs faced the image of the forest and contemplated the mix of reality and fantasy, ordinary and extraordinary, placed before them. Later, actual trees were planted, joining the arcade and the ruin in shaping the town square. A small stage located in front of the forest anticipates future performances and the dreams of the Barking residents.

When Clarke and Fior created muf and began working together, they felt quite strongly that “the public realm was completely devalued” and that the communities that used and took care of public spaces were not involved in the visioning process in any meaningful manner. They brought the knowledge and practice of artists to bear on

this issue and developed a strategy that they dubbed “action research,” which was exemplified in Barking Town Square:

[Fior] was interested in how conceptual art can influence our thinking when we work in the public realm. [It's an] open-ended piece of research, to understand how people in the community used those spaces, which then informs the design resolution. But it's not like we do the research and then we make a thing....

The research is much more speculative and more open-ended.⁵⁶

Barking Town Square exemplifies how installations can play an integral role in the architectural design process and, once built, in the shaping of culture of use. In this project, ephemeral works served as research tools, a generator of meaning, a vehicle to involve the community in the design of their public spaces, and a way to create a culture of long-term civic engagement. If design can be described as the art of anticipating use, muf's work reminds us that shaping the public realm involves shaping the tangible aspects of place, as well as the attitudes of those who will inhabit it.

Leonardo Mosso

Structures of Light

A guide map distributed to the public indicated the locations of the towers with Mosso's light installations and the circular itinerary of the bus.

Leonardo Mosso, *Transparent City: Neon Structures on the Towers*, Vlissingen, Netherlands, 1995

“Starting from the landscape where the Watertower CHK (#1) stands in isolation, all the way to the main buildings of the city, the city gets woven into a single urban entity through a visual triangle with luminous spots on the urban towers [that] date from different time periods.”



top
Permanent light structures proposed by Mosso were intended to draw attention to historical and contemporary buildings in various parts of the town. Mosso, *The Urban Plan*, Vlissingen, the Netherlands, 1997–2000

bottom left
“For Mosso a joint is a world or, rather, the principal tool—the atomic bonding almost—that makes possible the construction of his world, its molecules and clouds. Through such joints pass the energy that generates sparks and tightrope walks to the sky.” Attilio Stocchi. Mosso, *Lichtwolke Willem 3*

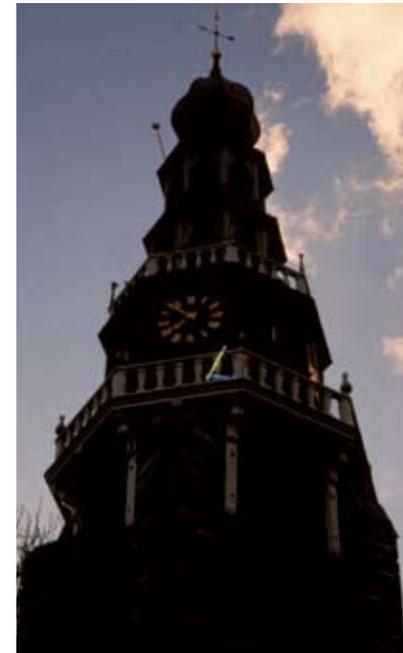
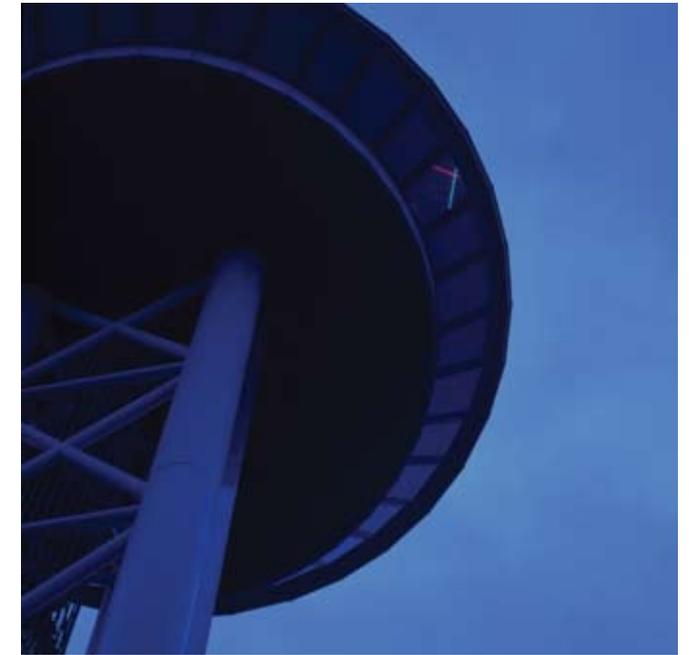
bottom right
Lichtwolke Willem 3, the first of eight permanent “points of light” to be built, illuminated the details of this neoclassical former navy barracks, now an art center. *Lichtwolke Willem 3*, Vlissingen, the Netherlands, 1999

top
The Arsenal Tower (#2) offers panoramic views of the city. Viewed from below, the delicate pink and blue neon lines suspended outside a single window underscored the scalar interplay between people, building, and city. Mosso, *Transparent City*

bottom left
Through contrast with the medieval cathedral’s style, the neon line marked time’s passing in another way. Mosso, *Transparent City*

bottom right
Within the Watertower CHK (#1), the light structures illuminated and colored the surfaces to which they clung and articulated new volumes of light that drew the gaze upward. Mosso, *Transparent City*

“Neon reflections on stainless steel combine with the building materials that the structures rest on to create colors that didn’t exist before.”



LAB[au]

Touch



opposite

The Dexia Tower has 4,200 windows that can be individually lit by RGB-LED bars, turning the immense facade into a display surface. Architects of Dexia Building: Samyn & Partners, M & J.M. Jaspers—J. Eyers & Partners; Lighting engineer: Barbara Hediger

top

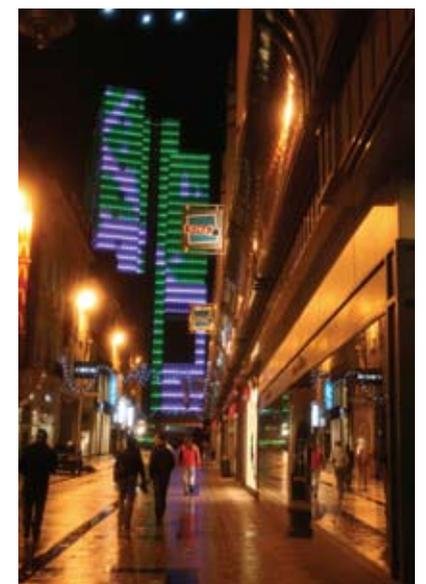
From a kiosk placed in the plaza, people used the multitouch screen to manipulate the color pattern of the tower. “Playing the screen” altered not only the Dexia Tower but also the light reflected onto the adjacent buildings, thereby transforming the character and color of the architecture and the public spaces.

bottom

A camera placed on a building nearby took photographs of each new color display in the Brussels skyline. The images were integrated into digital postcards for people to share with their friends. The unique qualities of the building quickly grew in people’s minds, for it was the only one constantly changing in response to public engagement.

bottom right

On Rue Neuve/Nieuwstraat, the illuminated Dexia building animated the urban night life.



Haque Design + Research

Sky Ear

top
Phone numbers corresponding to cell phones attached to *Sky Ear* were projected on the ground from an adjacent building and also made available online. People on site or on the web used these numbers to call *Sky Ear*.

bottom
Sky Ear was a social event: volunteers filled balloons with helium and tied them to the array. Nine people held wire tethers when it flew.



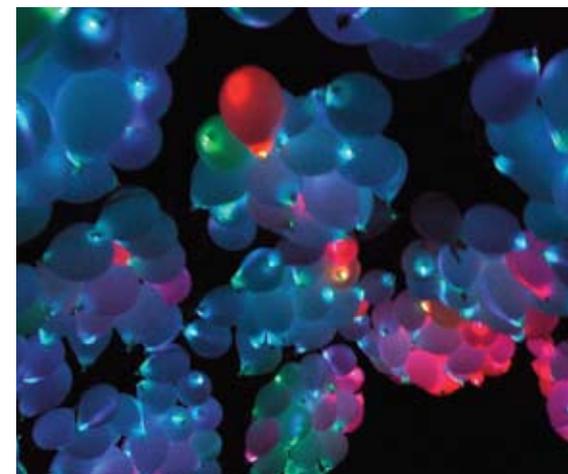
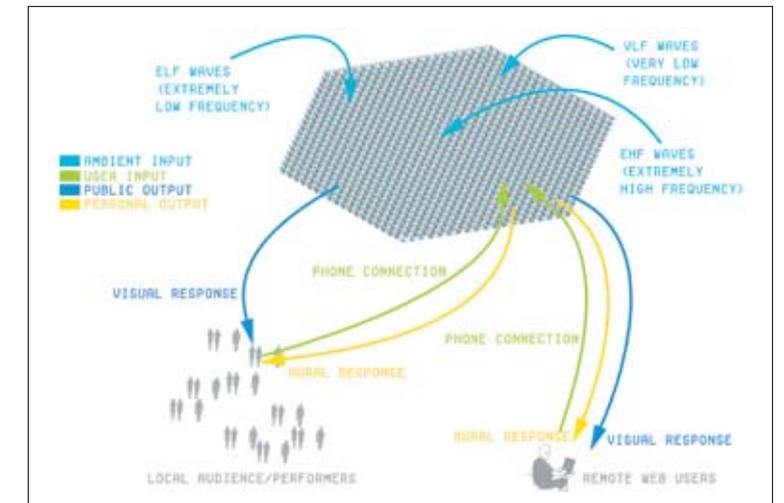
top
An "interactive magnetic cloud," *Sky Ear* was a vehicle allowing Haque to build upon cybernetician Gordon Pask's Conversation Theory. *Sky Ear* formed the hub of a web of stimuli, reactions, and interactions among people, electromagnetic fields, and devices. This diagram depicts the inputs and outputs that shaped this conversation.

bottom left
Sky Ear hovered overhead, a pulsing spectacle, watched by an audience of over 3,500 people.

bottom right
A call to *Sky Ear* altered the electromagnetic fields detected by the structure.

following spread
The balloons changed color and pattern as *Sky Ear*'s sensors detected differences in the types or magnitude of the electromagnetic signals or when it received phone calls.

"Electromagnetic waves exist just about everywhere in our atmosphere. The clouds will show both how a natural, invisible electromagnetism pervades our environment and how our mobile phone calls and text messages delicately affect new and existing electromagnetic fields." —Usman Haque





muf architecture/art

Barking Town Square

left, top
Muf's work to reshape Barking Town Square in East London extended over a number of years. The duration and scale of these interventions varied. Site plan

right, top
The civic space was conceived as an "empty, unfurnished pink room" that could be programmed by the adjacent institutions or used by the community. The folly wall in the background recovered "the texture of the lost historic fabric of town" and projected a fantasy history, while new temporary uses, such as a fairground and an ice-skating rink, and events, such as a speech day and a tap dancing show, built new histories and narratives.

right, middle
The hoarding around the construction site became the first step in enlisting community members and sparking dialogue among the stakeholders in reimagining Barking Town Square. *Hoarding 1—Your Dream Today, My Dream Tomorrow*, 2005

opposite left, bottom
A new hoarding depicts the future arboretum. The temporary stage and steps (anticipating the permanent one) served as an outdoor classroom for local children. *Hoarding 2—Arboretum*, 2007, temporary enhancement

opposite right, bottom
"The tableaux were photographed and formed part of the site hoarding. These images stood in contrast to the anodyne and anonymous 'resident' envisaged by the developers." muf architecture/art, *Hoarding 1*

top
At the end of the first phase of construction, muf staged a community celebration that included a new hoarding to launch the vision of an urban arboretum, gold chairs for the community, a temporary stage, and tap dancers, who "played" the terrazzo floor of muf's newly completed arcade. Celebration Phase I, Launching Phase II, 2007

bottom
Night rendering of arboretum looking through arcade

"How are thoughts made into things?"

