Gap Filler

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The Third Landscape

The Third Landscape Forum
October 27, 2012, 2pm-6pm

A public forum will focus on the changing face of Sydney’s watery edges, from the warehouses and industrial runs of the harbour to new urban planning in the margins. Speakers include Kila Clark (Historic Houses Trust), Blair Fancey (Ansemble), Richard Goodwin and Helen Armstrong (landscape architect), Tom Rivard (Urban Productions), Robert Gasparini (Design 5), Alex Ritchie (artist). Joni Taylor (artist — Wasteland Twinning) and Joni Taylor (curator).

Supported by the Faculty of Architecture, Design & Planning.
Universtiy of Sydney.

Bios

Joni Taylor is a researcher, writer and curator focusing on the transformation of the urban environment. Her projects have included Urban Wildlife Safari (NOCA, 2012), DPM UWS (The Sheds Gallery, 2011) and beyond the Master Plan (COFA, 2011). She is currently completing a Masters Research in the field of city design and urban provocation at COFA, UNSW.

Helen Armstrong is an artist and Professor and associate member at the Centre for Cultural Research. She holds the inaugural Chair of Landscape Architecture, QUT (1997-2003) and is now Professor Emeritus. Her current research is focused on the value of urban marginal landscapes and she recently completed a book, Disturbing Landscapes: Re-envisioning the industrial, pending publication. Gapper is a creative initiative started in 2012 and launched on September the 4th, 2012. The project aims to temporarily activate vacant sites in Christchurch with creative projects. To make for a more interesting, dynamic and vibrant city.

Professor Richard Goodwin is an award winning artist and architect with an extensive history in public sculpture and performance work. His work has been exhibited worldwide and Goodwin was the 2011 recipient of the Copyright Foundation Prize. His book “Performance Possibility” was published in 2006.

Peter Nelson is an artist and researcher, who works in an interdisciplinary vein. We will discuss BFA (First Class Honours and the University Medal for Fine Arts) and MFA (Research) from the UNSW. He is currently situated at FUTURES, a new institute at the University of Sydney. He has worked with Richard Serra, Carsten Nicolai, Sarah Sze and others to consider what it means to consider architecture.

Of course, there was no one who was more excited about this. When we got the Council support. We were so excited. We had a meeting of 200 people who were there. It was a great moment.

I admire how you encourage self initiated projects through the open source of your own research. In legal terms, is this a time that you might need to be cautious about?

You mention the amount of demolition being undertaken — are there any moves to retain a sense of history or to ensure spaces for the creative and experimentation that often occurs only in post-traumatic ‘gaps’?

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A Sydney Architecture Festival event

Thank you Kazzie, Jeff Jowett, W.T.Norbert, Craig Brown, Lee Scollial, Wayne Madconomy, Michael Lesli — co-instructor in “Exhibition Management: How to Open a Successful Art Exhibition”, The School of Art, UNSW. Royal Academy of Visual Arts, London. Slick, and Michael French, amongst others.

The Sydney Architecture Festival event has been a success. It has been a great opportunity to talk about the role of architecture in the world — it has been a great opportunity to talk about the role of architecture in the world. It has been a great opportunity to talk about the role of architecture in the world.

Christchurch has been hit by a number of earthquakes and aftershocks since 2010, and much of the city’s central business district has been classified as a Red Zone. Please describe what is happening now in Christchurch to make it a better place.

We’ve lost 70-80% of the buildings in the central city. Christchurch is a post-city, the ruins of what it once was. It’s also a pre-city, which is why we don’t quite know what to make of it. And we’re trying to show that the transitional is not just biding time until the new permanent is built, but can be a time to experiment and inform thinking about the future of the city.

How has the work of Gap Filler evolved as an organization and over time?

We began as eco-frolic: brocologie: scavenging, salvaging and re-configuring whatever we could of necessity, because we were entirely self-funded. As our funding has grown, what once was a requirement has become a principle.

What do you think is the power in temporality and temporary architectures for cities like Christchurch?

If not, everyone will rebuild the same stuff. We find rebuilding boring. Reimagining and reenvisioning is far more interesting.

What is the relationship between the top down planning of government strategies and your own bottom-up initiative? Has participation and consultancy?

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Helen Armstrong

As a landscape architect, how do your ideas relate to the spaces of ruin and dereliction?

I am drawn to intriguing designs, layered and mysterious, and it is the ideas of Ignasi de Sola Morales that suggest cities’ landscapes should incorporate abandoned and derelict sites. De Sola Morales urged us to treat marginal landscapes in ways that maintain their enigmatic messages about time and space, however designers who focus on these sites with their wildly varied environments may find they lack the context necessary to make their work relevant. Designing with them radically to overpower these sites’ estrangement, creating ordered terrains vagues which relate to the ideas of Ignasi de Sola Morales. I am drawn to intriguing designs, and your ideas relate to the spaces of Sydney’s ridges. The magic of seeping Sydney — the trickles, the ruins, and the sandstone quarry faces carved out of Eastern Sydney’s ridges. The deliberate use of derelict sites and vacant lots, abandoned and derelict. The sense of urgency comes about when we project both the familiar — the friendly welcoming petrol station — and the unfamiliar — the broken windows and disfigured petrol towers onto the same space so that they overlap. This overlaying or doubling of spaces provokes a disturbing ambiguity. But replacing the abandoned petrol station with new shops does not necessarily mean it has the same power as the previous presence remains. The Sydney that once had meaning for me had such an elusive presence. It included a web of left-over meanings, that were layered with meanings. However with increasing urban development, these residual spaces have been subsumed by the city. I am fascinated by the idea of reconnecting with something that had a meaning to me. I particularly mourn the loss of utility indiscriminate areas; but for many others, the more people that abandon these aspects of landscape, the stronger the sense of urgency about those few that remain. It would be interesting to see what people react to depending on whether they had lived in the area. They hint at failed enterprises and interface with society’s story of an urban landscape. Deeper than these planning problems are concerns that most people have been left behind in the rush to develop Sydney’s ridges. The heritage leaves us ungrounded and disconnected.

What is particular about Sydney’s Third Landscape?

Sydney’s Third Landscape is made up of a complex web of marginal landscapes. It includes the dry grasslands under electrically emissive night lights, the bowl of rangeover that was left when the land was divided up, as well as the forbidding sandstone quarry faces carved out of Eastern Sydney’s ridges. The magic of seeping Sydney — the trickles, the ruins, and the sandstone quarry faces carved out of Eastern Sydney’s ridges. Sydney’s Third Landscape. Enigmatic, obscure and tantalizing. It has the potential to address the many long-standing issues of basic urban planning mistakes. Deeper than these planning problems are concerns that most people have been left behind in the rush to develop Sydney’s ridges. The heritage leaves us ungrounded and disconnected.

What is the theoretical underpinning of your work?

I write “the alchemic” de-sacralized spaces can transmute their alienation into elusive and mysterious gardens — re-enchanted landscapes in the sense of the “Third Landscape”. Many of the plans that grow in deserti sites are indeed rich in secrets. They live in mysterious gardens of biodiversity, growing and reproducing rapidly. But this potential is often overshadowed by the threat of drought and loss of the land.

Richard Goodwin

For The Third Landscape, you have revitalized your Exekaklion Monument to Nomadism, as well as a new performance and an exhibition, complex understandings between the descendants of European migrants and the indigenous people of the region. For Exekaklion, I would like to solve the problems associated with this relationship, but not to express it with the familiar touristic devices. “Exekaklion” involved physically and mentally in this act, while Michael Leslie, the individual who commissioned the work, is free to express the spiritual. The machine is pushed aside creating and interrogating the ideas of Ignasi de Sola Morales. I am interested in this relationship, and to revisit it in public space again questions unfinished business. Born in Barcelona, I am an artist who lives in Sydney, needs to address these structural problems before creating new structures. It is also a project to re-bridge the massive gap between Michael Leslie, creating a symmetry, which is reinforced by the changing face of the city. It has been 31 years between performances — what are the new directions, the new utopian spaces, the new relationships and the wounds that you ultimately want to reveal?

There are no points of tension — that the same tension remains is the point. The same question is posed by the performance today as it was in 1981. How do we work through the trauma which exists between us and the buildings? This performance is for the people who tell us where we might make connections between buildings which form dimensional public spaces. The new work — the act of collecting four-leaf clovers, yet picking only three-leaf ones implies an optimism that might continue to descend from hardware to refuse, interrupting the idea of layers. Baranagar is about trying to evidence my process of decommissioning. The idea is that these “Chiastic” spaces tell us where we might make connections between buildings which form dimensional public spaces. I am interested in psycho-geography rather than landscape; culture no longer presents. My constructed landscapes are based on the premise that any experience of place is defined on personal narratives, and it’s very hard to say when you are being nostalgically drawn to your own history.

In your work the Utopian and Dystopian seem to emerge, an ongoing duality. How do you reconcile the “nouveau” with the “ruinous”? Is there any space left for the “good place” of Utopia?

My understanding of the term Utopia was it’s being far away, going nowhere, yet Utopia is a place that is defined by the history of the person experiencing it. It’s hard to say what role nostalgia plays, as I don’t know what relationship I am forming with the past. I am fascinated by the history of landscape images, but I hope that my skepticism might somehow inoculate me from nostalgia. So many beautiful images use aesthetic strategies to either document or comment on the future. In the same way, all of these works are based on personal narratives, and it’s very hard to say when you are being nostalgically drawn to your own history. If we look at the Utopian and Dystopian, they seem to emerge, an ongoing duality. How do you reconcile the “nouveau” with the “ruinous”? Is there any space left for the “good place” of Utopia?

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