EXHIBITING ARCHITECTURE: Appropriating the Toronto Harbourfront Centre

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EXHIBITING ARCHITECTURE:

Appropriating the Toronto Harbourfront Centre

Amber Baechler B. Arch. S.

Contents

Abstract

01 Introduction	06
02 Architecture in the Gallery	10
03 Exhibition Types	14
04 Case Studies	22
National Gallery of Canada	
Canadian Centre for Architecture	
Toronto Harbourfront Centre	
Conclusions	
05 Laboratory Installations	42
06 Design Proposal	49
Installation Mechanisms	
Program Diagrams	
Drawings & Models	
07 Installation Schedule	86
08 Post-Script	97

Endnotes

Bibliography

Abstract

How is architecture communicated? The increasing interest in architecture exhibitions by both the public and exhibiting institutions presents an opportune moment to critique contemporary exhibition practices and propose alternate types and institutions. Building on the arguments of Peter Smithson and Florian Kossak this thesis argues for the evolution of architecture exhibitions towards a spatial based practice of *laboratory* installations.

Contemporary architecture exhibitions and institutions in Canada are studied and selected case studies from the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Centre for Architecture and Harbourfront Centre are used to define two general categories of exhibition types: *reflective* and *laboratory*. *Reflective* exhibitions rely on existing artifacts and prior research as content. *Laboratory* exhibitions explore future architectures that engage the visitor in habitable installations.

Drawing on recent discourse on art installations, the thesis argues that *laboratory* installations allow gallery visitors to become active agents rather than passive observers, revealing themselves to themselves and each other. Due to this activation, the definition and scope of *laboratory* installations is expanded beyond tectonic space to include social and political space. The thesis then goes on to propose that this expanded mandate of *laboratory* installations is best suited to improve public engagement, act as a platform for research and contribute toward future democratic and architectural processes.

Toward this end, an expansion of the Harbourfront Centre program in Toronto is proposed, including a dedicated architecture gallery designed to facilitate *laboratory* type installations.

01 Introduction

“... I will always commend the time-honored custom, practiced by the best builders, of preparing not only drawings and sketches but also models of wood or any other material. These will enable us to weigh repeatedly and examine, with the advice of experts, the work as a whole and the individual dimension of all the parts, and before continuing any farther, to estimate the likely trouble and expense. Having constructed these models, it will be possible to examine clearly and consider thoroughly the relationship between the site and the surrounding district, the shape of the area, the number and order of the parts of the building, the appearance of the walls, the strength of the covering, and in short the design and construction of all the elements... It will also allow one to increase or decrease the size of those elements freely, to exchange them, and to make new proposals and alterations until everything fits together well and meets with approval” – Leon Battista Alberti (1452)¹

6

SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE

In 1366, the citizens of Florence were invited to confirm the architectural design of the dome that would crown the Santa Maria del Fiore. In the tradition Alberti would later document, on display in the partially constructed church for their consideration were two models illustrating the competing visions of the dome. The models, at 15 feet in height and 30 feet in length, were representations of possible architectures as well as inhabitable constructions in and of themselves.² Their scale and articulation allowed citizens to interact with, scrutinize and ultimately vote on the architectural idea that would come to define their city.

The story of this design exhibition is told by Ross King in *Brunelleschi's Dome*. Construction supervision of the cathedral was in the hands of Florence's most powerful guild, the Wool Merchants through their administration of the Opera del Duomo. Their vision was ambitious. They supported cathedral architect and master mason Arnolfo di Cambio's plan to build the largest dome in Christendom despite the fact that this design had proved to be problematic. The proposed structure – with a span of 62 *braccia*, or 119 feet – was 12 feet larger than the dome of Santa Sophia in Constantinople (Hagia Sophia in Istanbul,

Turkey).³ Construction of such a grand dome had been openly acknowledged as a significant – if not impossible – challenge. “Even the original planners of the dome had been unable to advise how their project might be completed.”⁴ Arnolfo’s own model had collapsed under its own weight sometime during the 14th century. By 1366, 70 years after construction of the cathedral began, the nave had been vaulted and the east end of the church – which included the dome – was ready to begin construction. However, a resolute design direction for the dome had yet to be reached.

At the request of the Opera del Duomo two master masons, Giovanni di Lapo Ghini and Neri di Fioravanti were solicited to each propose a design – represented in the form of a model – for the cathedral’s dome. In response to the competition Giovanni prepared a design that employed external buttresses to support the large dome. His competitor, Neri, rejected buttresses proposing instead a dome that supported itself with the aid of stone or wooden chains running around its circumference. After more than a year of deliberations it was Neri’s proposal – with a few structural adjustments – that won out, thus securing the design direction of the cathedral. This decision was confirmed not only by wardens at the Opera del Duomo but also by the Florentine public through a public referendum.

It was not unusual for the Florentine public to reject a proposal. Examples of this are recounted in the exhibition narrative of the *Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore di Firenze* museum; the design of the cathedral’s exterior, for example, went through several proposals and referenda before gaining public approval. There can be little doubt that the model prepared for the competition would have been the primary means through which the public determined their confidence in the architect’s proposal. Due to the referendum, the public had both the opportunity and reason to visit the model and, given its large scale, to walk in and around it – to experience the cathedral as it would be (albeit at a smaller scale). Neri’s model was more than a building in miniature; it tested and was built in real space, it engaged a real experience of a possible future architecture.

Following the referendum, during the period between 1366 and the 1418, according to King, “Neri’s model of the dome became an object of veneration in Florence . . . it was displayed like a reliquary or shrine in one of the side aisles

The practice of submitting a design proposal in the form of a scale model is corroborated by the original model of Santa Maria del Fiore constructed by Arnolfo as well as models created for a subsequent competition held by the Opera del Duomo for the Cathedral's exterior. A collection of models surviving from the later competition are on display at the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore di Firenze museum. Photo: Author.

8

of the growing church. Every year the cathedral's architects and wardens were obliged to place their hands on a copy of the Bible and swear an oath that they would build the church exactly as the model portrayed.⁵ The model acted as a fulcrum; it inspired and challenged the wardens of the Opera del Duomo, the Florentine public and future competitors to work towards the future reality it inspired.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

It is outside of the scope of this thesis to speculate on the political climate of Florence or the reasons why the wardens of the Opera del Duomo chose to hold a referendum.⁶ Instead our argument will explore the potential value architecture exhibitions lend to both democratic and architectural processes.

The public exhibition of the models created for the Santa Maria del Fiore dome is an early example of what, we will continue to argue should be the mandate of contemporary architecture galleries; in particular, those whose aim it is to communicate architecture to a broad public toward the goal of achieving a more inclusive dialogue on contemporary architecture. In the story of Santa Maria del Fiore the large scale models marked the point at which the Florentine public were able to access and engage a democratic process; to become informed on the architectural vision they were being asked to endorse. The models also offered the architects an intermediary stage to experiment and test spatial ideas. As discussed later, the British architect Peter Smithson describes this as a stage towards the real (a “real’ before the real”) in which both the architect and client experience a possible, future architecture.⁷

In Canada, public referendums on architecture are not an expected component of the democratic process. While there are legislated procedures whereby the public is able to engage policy and regulatory decisions that affect architecture these channels are largely bureaucratic. Meetings are often held in obscure rooms, during limited hours and debate within them reflects courtroom procedures more than an open and accessible forum. As a consequence, architectural issues lack the necessary forums to engage the public in a discussion on architecture.

Might exhibitions held within a gallery be an appropriate venue to undertake the challenge of engaging the public in a discussion about architecture?

An increasing number of existing and new institutions are incorporating architecture exhibitions into their operations. There are, however several questions about how (in terms of content and media) architecture is being exhibited and what is being achieved. Of significance to both these questions is the identification of the audience and who is being addressed; architects themselves, other professional/educated classes, or the public at large? Each group has a different range of abilities and scope of interest that might necessitate different curatorial and exhibition responses. This thesis will assess the current and potential capacities of gallery exhibitions to communicate architecture to what we will term the *popular public*⁸.

02 Architecture in the Gallery

While gallery spaces are traditionally a venue for the display of art, architecture exhibitions have been increasingly adopted by both art and architecture institutions. Europe and North America have experienced a growing public interest in architectural exhibitions. Existing museums and galleries are expanding the floor space allotted to architectural exhibitions and new museums or galleries dedicated to architecture have opened in France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands.⁹ Further, enthusiasm for architecture exhibitions is evidenced by the inclusion of gallery spaces within newly constructed or renovated architecture centers – such as those in New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Paris and London.¹⁰ While these spaces are often part of a larger program of initiatives and activities, the gallery is regarded as a valued interface between the profession and the public.¹¹

Salon Blauraum is located in a former retail store on a busy street in downtown Hamburg, Germany. Through hybrid programming the exhibition space facilitates encounters between gallery visitors and architectural staff who use the space during working hours as a cafe, canteen and meeting room. Panels in the wall open to reveal hidden amenities. (Source: Blauraum Architekten, <http://www.blauraum.eu>)

In 2002, Blauraum Architekten in Hamburg, Germany established a small gallery as an auxiliary component to their practice. The space is not intended to promote their own work, but as a means to create “a space of discourse . . . from which a genuine architectural scene could emerge.”¹² A similar scenario lies behind Dare Space Gallery established by Denis Byrne Architects in Dublin, Ireland in 2009. Recognizing a need to bridge the divide between architects and the public, architects are looking to gallery exhibitions.

Alongside the expansion of architecture into gallery exhibitions there remains some doubt about what can and should be achieved through an exhibition. Two articles appearing in *Architectural Record* (published four years apart, 2000 and 2004) provide two very different positions. In 2004 Sam Lubell suggested a very positive outcome where an emphasis on exhibitions within architecture centres plays a positive part in 'bridging the divide between architects and the public,' as the title of the article asserts.¹³ Thomas Mellins in 2000 however, previously conveyed the presence of a deep skepticism within the architectural professional when he quoted Nicolas Olsberg, former director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA): "More people may be attending architectural exhibitions today but architectural literacy among the literate class is no better than it was 15 years ago, and not nearly as high as it was 25 to 30 years ago"; and "Should we be exhibiting architecture to the public at all?"¹⁴

This map indicates the names and locations of public and private venues that regularly host architecture exhibitions in Canada. While the oldest institution opened in 1979, the majority opened only recently (post 2000 a.d.). Some, such as M.A.D.E. in Edmonton and Storefront Manitoba, do not have a permanent location opting to rent space on an event by event basis. Several venues identified are on the margins of what might be considered a 'gallery'; however in their specific situations each defines a gallery-like setting.

The Jardins de Métis in Métis, QC for example is an open air garden, however it achieves a spatially defined and controlled precinct – two significant characteristics of a gallery space. Installations made within the garden are often set within a delineated landscaped area that functions similar to a 'room'.

Olsberg's use of the term 'architectural literacy' is left undefined thus leaving his expectations for architectural exhibitions unexplained. If the term 'literacy' is taken to indicate a certain level or measured knowledge about architecture, as if architectural exhibitions would be expected to teach or educate the public

about architecture, then there may indeed be an issue. As Jeffrey Kipnis, curator of Architecture and Design at the Wexner Centre for the Arts, warns:

“I abhor the supposition that exhibitions should be informative or, god forbid, educational...We should never confuse the fact that cultural practices affect us, change us, stimulate us to think and see and hear and feel differently with the supposition that they teach us anything. Once something teaches you something, it thinks for you.”¹⁵

Kipnis’ motivation is not to limit the potential of exhibitions but to reframe their intention. Knowledge *about* architecture is not the end goal for an exhibition intended for the *popular public*. The objective is to initiate dialogue with those outside the profession and to improve ‘client culture’ by raising their expectations for and perceived valuation of architecture. The difference may be subtle but it is quite significant. In contrast to pursuing didactic knowledge based models, the desired outcome requires a broader cultural shift.

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has similarly argued for a change in museum practices away from a didactic, transmission-based model toward a cultural approach in which interpretation is understood as being constructed in a circular and dialogic process with the visitor.¹⁶ She refers to the former model as the *modernist museum* and the later, the *post-museum*:

“The communicative aim of the modernist museum is to enlighten and to educate, to lay out knowledge for the visitor such that it may be absorbed. . . The educational aim of the museum is to transfer or transmit information about ‘art history’...The second approach sees communication as integral to the whole of culture, and insists on the constructed character of both culture and communication.”¹⁷

In the *modernist museum* interpretation, otherwise understood as knowledge, of the work is defined by the exhibiting institution. In contrast to this, the *post-museum* considers interpretation as a process of constructing meaning between the viewer, the work and the frame provided by the institution. Hooper-Greenhill suggests that communication in a *post-museum* exhibition is comparable to a conversation rather than a lecture.

Hooper-Greenhill notes that as contemporary galleries and museums work towards expanding their audience, concern for making exhibition content accessible and relevant to a larger and more diverse public has become a central

task.¹⁸ It is with this in mind that, I would argue, architectural exhibitions present a significant (if still unrealized) opportunity; in particular, those that occur in a gallery setting. While other exhibition forms (such as tradeshow shows, world expos, and design biennales) may also hold popular appeal, the capacity of galleries, museums and architecture centres to act as legitimate research institutions puts them in an ideal position to present pertinent issues for discussion. Furthermore, as permanent institutions, public galleries have the capacity to build, nurture and respond to their audience and topic over an extended period of time.

Hooper-Greenhill's articulation of modern and post modern exhibitions are useful in understanding the pedagogical agenda of an exhibiting institution and their expectations of the viewer. She proposes that the post-museum emerged in response to a disjunction between those who control the exhibition narrative and a changing audience (diverse, empowered and educated). These changes are not exclusive to art. Architecture is also witnessing a changing context; architects are opting for collaborations and shared authorship to solve the field's more pressing problems. The following chapter will begin to explore how this change might be taking shape in architecture exhibitions by proposing and comparing two types of architecture exhibitions.

03 Exhibition Types

Contemporary architecture exhibitions held in a gallery or museum setting can be divided into two categories: *reflective* and *laboratory*. *Reflective* exhibitions tend to communicate and construct ways of understanding architecture through media that require significant interpretation by the gallery visitor. Such exhibitions often rely on documents sourced from archives – such as photographs, drawings, models, etc – or private collections to create visual and text based narratives. The exhibition narrative parallels an academic thesis in that it lays out evidence to construct an argument or story. Discrete documents are brought together, organized and displayed in such a way that they can be ‘read’ in sequence. In this way *reflective* exhibitions can act as an alternate method to present research. As we will discuss later, this is particularly visible at research oriented institutions such as the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal.

14

While the documents displayed in a *reflective* exhibition are organized spatially, the space itself does not communicate. Rather, room divisions, wall color, etc., operate grammatically to punctuate the exhibition narrative. Parallels can often be drawn between an exhibition layout and the book (no longer called a catalogue) that will be published along with it, for example: rooms act like chapter divisions separating different theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the space of the gallery is seldom altered from exhibition to exhibition. The universal, neutral aesthetic referred to as the *white cube* prevails despite the changing content under discussion. For this reason, we will argue that *reflective* exhibitions emerged from within art institutions, in particular the modern *white cube* gallery, and are still indebted to this legacy.

The second category of architecture exhibitions we will use is termed *laboratory*. The crucial distinction between *reflective* and *laboratory* exhibitions is found in the character of the exhibition. As proposed by Florian Kossak in the essay “*Exhibiting architecture: the installation as laboratory for emerging architecture*,” *laboratory* exhibitions reify a future praxis. Whereas research precedes the presentation of a *reflective* exhibition, a *laboratory* exhibition is the means through which research is actively engaged: it is a testing ground. This thesis will build upon Kossak’s arguments to investigate the *laboratory* exhibition, in particular, that which take the form of an installation. Just as the citizens of Florence were able to engage in a ‘real’ spatial experience through the model of Santa Maria del Fiore, *laboratory* installations provide a direct immersion within a possible, future architecture.

THE ‘REAL’ BEFORE THE REAL

In the essay “*Exhibiting architecture: the installation as laboratory for emerging architecture*,” Florian Kossak points to theatre stage set design during the 16th and 20th centuries to argue the integral role architectural installations have played in the production and development of architecture. He claims that installations can be considered to be a *laboratory* when used to test new forms of architecture. Kossak’s position builds on a similar argument made by Peter Smithson in the essay “The Masque and the Exhibition: Stages toward the Real.”¹⁹ Here, Smithson alleged that, during the Renaissance, temporary installations were used as opportunities to test new architectures. These installations (for Court masques, birthdays or wedding celebrations) created “the new sort of space and the new forms of decoration made real for one day only perhaps, but still real.”²⁰ Smithson relates these early practices with the temporary installations and pavilions created by architects in Europe and Russia during the 1920s.

Kossak develops Smithson’s position through historical examples in theatrical stage design from Renaissance Italy and early modern Russia. He claims that the *Teatro Olimpico* in Vicenza, designed by Palladio and completed by Scamozzi in 1585, employed a perspectival *scena* that was later applied to the “ordering’ of the city by means of a perspectival axis”; And that the “complex assemblage of elementary architectural elements” employed in the ‘acting apparatus’ designed by Russian Constructivist Lyubov Popova for the *Magnanimous Cuckold* in Moscow (1922) anticipated and tested new architectural forms which were later

applied to buildings such as the *Izvestiya* pavilion by Niva, Galdkov and Kester in 1923 Moscow.²¹

In response to this evidence, Kossak proposes and defines the term *laboratory* exhibition as the practice of using exhibitions to engage “theoretical, spatial and material speculations.”²²

“The *laboratory* exhibition is here defined as a continuation and integral part of the architectural praxis. It is predominantly driven and generated by architects. It is process oriented and projects into the future praxis of architecture. Most importantly, the *laboratory* exhibition provides a testing ground in which architectural research is conducted. It is concerned with the investigation, development and experimentation of hitherto un-imagined, un-tested, un-established architectural propositions.”²³

Laboratory exhibitions are primarily discussed by Kossak in the form of *laboratory* installations. He proposes that such installations stand apart from other installations because they inform a “future praxis” outside of the exhibition itself. In this way they act as a testing ground in which architectural research can be conducted. Quoting Smithson, Kossak maintains that “the real before the real” of the experimental installation points already beyond the realm of experimentation and towards another, future architecture that would supersede its experimental precursor.”²⁴

A weakness in Kossak’s argument however, is his reliance on examples that separate the visitor from the space of the installation itself. This contradicts the ‘immersion of the viewer’ stipulated by his own definition of an installation. It also marks a significant departure from Smithson’s original argument that primarily referred to installations which were accessible to a larger public audience. Despite claims that the use of narrative, sound and light provides a ‘vicarious immersion’ capable of overcoming this shortcoming the point is left largely unresolved. I would argue that limiting the immersion and participation of the visitor also limits *laboratory installations* to formal and visual devices.

SPACE OF DISPLAY

A difference between *reflective* and *laboratory* exhibitions is found in the relationship between the documents on display and the space within which it is presented. As discussed previously, while all exhibitions are organized spatially

not all exhibitions treat the entire space of the exhibition as a unified part of the exhibition. In “From Margin to Centre: The Space of Installation Art” Julie Reiss further illustrates this:

“There is always a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer. One could argue that these qualities define many artistic practices. To refine this further, therefore, one might add that in creating an installation, the artist treats an entire indoor space (large enough for people to enter) as a single situation, rather than as a gallery for displaying separate works.”²⁵

An installation constitutes a continuous space rather than a container for the presentation of autonomous documents of/on/about architecture; it assumes the entire space of the exhibition to be part of or contributing toward a single work of architecture.

It might be argued that the use of full-scale reconstructions would remain within the realm of a *reflective* exhibition as long as they intend to elucidate an existing or historic (recent or distant) facet of architecture. Boris Groys has argued that “(T)he installation takes a copy out of an unmarked, open space of anonymous circulation and places it within a fixed, stable, closed context of the topologically well-defined ‘here and now.’”²⁶ Installations resist the universal, neutral *white cube* by defining a specific (even if temporary) site.

Furthermore, definition of the site might also extend beyond physical space of the gallery to include social, economic and political space of the institution, its location and visitors. As we will argue later, *laboratory* installations have a relationship with both architecture and art installations throughout the mid-late 20th century. The later, in particular, has opened many possibilities regarding the nature of ‘space’ in an installation. For example, artists, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, produce social encounters within which possible social realities can be enacted. In view of that, *laboratory* installations might not only construct a future tectonic space, but also propose a possible situation through which a way of living can be experienced and tested.

SCENES - FORMS FOR ARCHITECTURE

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Preliminary notes on the relationship between objects on display and the space of a gallery in an architecture exhibition.

This diagram illustrates, in ascending scale, the relationship between exhibition objects and the space of gallery (solid lines denote the 'object' while dashed lines denote the 'gallery'). At the smallest scale, there exists a large degree of separation between object and space: the original gallery condition remains unaltered by the documents that are placed within. In the intermediate scale, large three-dimensional objects begin to blur the space of the object with that of the gallery and at the largest scale the distinction between object and gallery is lost. At this point objects cease to be documents of/on/about architecture: they are a 'real' architecture.

CONCLUSIONS

Categorization of an exhibition as either *reflective* or *laboratory* is intended to provide a means to examine the circumstances around exhibiting architecture; in particular, the limitations and opportunities afforded through an understanding of the ways an exhibition might operate. In a *laboratory* exhibition/installation coded forms of representation most commonly used in architectural exhibitions are eliminated. In their place a 'real' experience of architecture: that is, a direct experience of space rather than one perceived through interpretation.

It has been suggested from within the field of art that installations may provide a media which is universally accessible. In *Understanding Installation Art: from Duchamp to Holzer*, Mark Rosenthal proposes that installation art has two primary constituents that are the source of its accessible nature: space and time. Visitors to an art installation are able to "investigate the work of art much as he or she might explore some phenomenon in life, making one's way through actual space and time in order to gain knowledge."²⁷ Installations communicate and engage the viewer much like real life, through inhabitation.

As a communicative approach a *laboratory* installation parallels the post-museum proposed by Hooper-Greenhill. Rather than constructing a narrative which is imparted to the visitor through the transmission process characteristic of the modernist-museum, visitors are engaged in a situation, the meaning or significance of which is derived from an embodied participation. Communication operates as a dialogic process involving the visitor's own experience.

Participation in a *laboratory* installation does not necessarily end with a physical experience. Visitors may also become active elements and agents; simultaneously inhabiting and exerting their presence. Installations not only blur the distinction between object and space they also blur the gallery's separation from everyday, real life. Rosenthal proposes that "because there is no frame separating this art from its viewing context, the work and the space having melded together into an approximation of a life experience."²⁸ Under the auspices of installation art, real life, or any part thereof, might be invited into the gallery. If so, not only would *laboratory* installations engage a larger audience, they may simultaneously contribute to the re-territorialization of architectural discourse.

The following chapter will present a series of case studies that apply the categories of *reflective* and *laboratory* exhibition types to recent architecture exhibitions. In pursuing this analysis we hope to establish a way forward for future architecture exhibitions aiming to address the *popular public*.

04 Case Studies

Drawing from recent examples we will examine a selection of architectural exhibitions progressing from *reflective* toward *laboratory*, as well as the institutions that hosted them. The selected case studies are, in order: *Global Architect: The Architecture of Moshe Safdie* (National Gallery of Canada, 2010), *Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture* (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011), and *Personal Space* (Harbourfront Centre, 2009).

These particular examples were selected for several reasons. Firstly, together they stand as a reasonable cross section of how architecture is currently exhibited in Canadian galleries. Three different types of curators are accounted for: independent, embedded/scholar and architect/practitioner. They demonstrate various relationships towards exhibition content and how it is sourced: newly commissioned representations, archival documents and commissioned installations. In addition, they were exhibitions personally attended or sourced including first hand descriptions.

Contrasts will be made between panel and model exhibition format employed in the first two examples and installations constructed in the last case study. The intention of this analysis is to further illustrate the difference between *reflective* and *laboratory* exhibition types and to identify possible correlations between an exhibiting institution's mandate and facilities with the type of exhibition produced. In addition, we will question the essential message that is being communicated to the *popular public* by each exhibition.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

MANDATE AND FACILITIES

The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) is a federally owned crown corporation and member of the Canadian Heritage Portfolio. In both the official mandate and mission statement of the NGC, the collection is presented as the foundation of the organization. It follows that a central aim of the institution is to pursue scholarship and organise exhibitions based on its own collection of artworks.²⁹

As an art institution, collections and exhibitions at the NGC are primarily restricted to the display of artworks – drawing, print, painting, sculpture, photography, art installation, etc. While the gallery holds a large collection of images of architecture (in the form of prints and photographs), *Global Citizen: The Architecture of Moshe Safdie (2010)* was one the first exhibitions on architecture to be held within the gallery.³⁰ Might this exhibition mark a broadening of the NGC mandate? Should we not take a moment to consider the consequences of displaying architecture within a framework intended for art?

The NGC's exhibition halls, library, archives and offices reside in Ottawa, Ontario in a 46,000 m² building designed by Moshe Safdie and opened in 1988. The building is divided into two parts: those for the public and those for museum staff. Publicly accessible facilities include: 12,400 m² of exhibition space, an auditorium, a lecture hall and seminar rooms.³¹

Exhibition facilities are not particularly unusual. Both the permanent and temporary exhibition areas, occupying two floors, are subdivided into a series of smaller, white walled rooms with aligned openings from one to the next. There is plenty of natural light but few views to the exterior. This is the type of neutral *white cube* aesthetic referred to by, among others, Brian O'Doherty (1976) and Iwona Blazwick (2006).³² The design provides a consistent exhibition space while allowing a certain level of flexibility, for example: changes to the lighting, a fresh coat of paint, or the addition of a partition wall are within the capacity of the gallery staff and facilities.

This is not a place for experimentation or messiness: rather, it is a pristine space of display. Thus, while satisfying the conditions of a *white cube* other circumstances suggest that the NGC might also be understood as a 'temple' for art. Interior

spaces of the building are comprised of honed granite, polished chrome, wood and leather. The details – joints, edges, hardware, etc. – are flawless; the atmosphere they create is both lush and serene. In addition, the presence of priceless and fragile art works in the permanent exhibition halls severely restricts the possibility of constructing and demolishing exhibition spaces on an ongoing basis.

As we will expand upon in the following case study, the mandate and institutional parameter of the NGC have a direct effect on the type of exhibitions it holds. Understanding the gallery as a *white cube* or a temple suggests a certain relationship between the *work* on display and the site within which it is displayed. There are certain restrictions implicit within this setting which, I will suggest, give rise to the tendency to display architecture in a manner similar to the traditional display of art.

GLOBAL CITIZEN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF MOSHE SAFDIE, NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA (OTTAWA, 2010)

"I think that what you want to do when you show architecture is to have an experience of architecture." - Aaron Betsky³³

In the exhibition, *Global Citizen: the Architecture of Moshe Safdie* (National Gallery of Canada, 2010), projects by Moshe Safdie and his office Safdie Architects, were presented in a manner similar to a traditional display of art – as discrete, autonomous objects. Often referred to as the 'panel and model' type, the exhibition objects – scale models, drawings and photographs – were arranged at distances similar to that employed for pre-contemporary paintings and sculptures throughout the gallery. Models were presented at a scale that did not allow visitors to visually 'enter' them. Few references were made to the embodied characteristics of the projects and none were made palpable; interior and inhabited spaces were effectively eschewed from the content.

Following a traditional method of displaying art, objects were set in a neutral space. Pursuant to the *white cube* aesthetic, floor, walls and display bases were treated as neutral backdrop to the work on display. Ambient lighting was low, while bright spotlights illuminated the images and models. Artefacts were mounted at a comfortable distance from each other and divided into four rooms, each of which identified a particular tectonic development or stage in the architect's career.

Global Citizen is a typical example of the type of architectural exhibition that, according to Henry Urbach, finds its origin in the modern era. In his essay "Exhibition as Atmosphere" Urbach proposes that "architectural projects were sublimated to conventions of exhibiting art in order to enter the modern museum."³⁴ He notes that "when architecture entered the modern museum as a medium to collect and exhibit, it was precisely its capacity to produce atmosphere (or space broadly considered) that was lost."³⁵ The moment Urbach is referring to is the exhibition *Modern Architecture* (also cited as "The International Style"), curated by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock, presented by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1932.

(all) Global Citizen installation views
at the National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa (2010). Photo: Adam Birrell

In this exhibition Johnson drew from the methodology of the art gallery by intentionally displaying architectural representations – photographs and small scale models – in a manner similar to the display of art. Urbach describes models placed on tablecloth-covered bases “as if small sculptures” and quotes Johnson instructing staff “to hang the photographs as if paintings.”³⁶ It is exactly this strategy that was used by Albrecht for *Global Citizen*.

Modern Architecture: International Exhibition installation view as displayed at Bullocks-Wilshire Department Store, Los Angeles, CA, July 23 - August 30, 1932 (Source: Terence Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 1.5 and the Museum of Modern Art* [New York: Rizzoli, 1992], p. 42)

27

The space of the exhibition itself did little to inform a greater understanding of the work being discussed. (Considering that the NGC was designed by Safdie, this is all the more surprising.) Exhibition rooms were used to punctuate the exhibition narrative, but not the architecture behind that narrative. One can see that the curator, Donald Albrecht, approached the gallery as a neutral setting within which he could tell a story *about* Moshe Safdie and his work. Albrecht understood the objects on display to be separate from each other and from the exhibition space itself.

The issues raised here are twofold. First, there is the tendency to force architecture into the conceptual parameters of art: that is, as autonomous objects rather than as a practice contingent upon a myriad of other conditions and factors. Throughout *Global Citizen* there is little reference to the broader context of architecture, such as social, political or economic circumstances of its realization. There are few insights or references to the critical texts on architecture and the city written by Safdie throughout his life. There is little mention of the people or communities who solicited the architect to work for them. Instead, the emphasis is on the man (as autonomous genius) and his work.

Global Citizen installation view at the National Gallery of Canada (2010). Photo: Adam Birrell

Barnett Newman. *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani* installation view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington (2010). Photo: Author

28

(left) *Global Citizen* installation view at the National Gallery of Canada (2010). Photo: Adam Birrell

(right) David Smith. Installation view at the Hishhorn Gallery, Washington (2010). Photo: Author

Second, there is the tendency to force architecture into the institutional parameters of art. Architecture is presented through media that abide by the realities of a fixed space. Drawings and models fit nicely within the dimensions of a typical exhibition room and do not challenge the scale of operations possible within the pristine halls of a national gallery.

What message about architecture has been conveyed?

Thomas Mellins has suggested that the primary statement made by a monographic exhibition is the veneration of the architect and buildings featured. He notes that the result of the exhibition *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention* (1997-2000) was “greater name recognition for the late couple among the general public, higher prices for their work in the market, and greater demand for their mass-produced furniture and fabric.”³⁷ This isn’t surprising. It is well recognized within the field of art that exhibitions, particularly those within large institutions, have the automatic effect of legitimizing the work on display. Thus, exhibitions increase brand value.

29

Amongst several galleries or organizations in Canada, there appears to be an inclination to approach architecture exhibitions as another way to display a portfolio. Such exhibitions operate similar to a ‘sales-pitch’ when, for example: the introductory biography transforms into a lengthy design statement complete with a list of high profile awards and projects; and exhibition content is sourced almost entirely from final documentation and displayed like a slide show of magazine ready images. Examples of this are found in the recent exhibitions *Common Ground* at Design at Riverside (Cambridge Galleries) and *Twenty + Change 03*, a travelling ‘pop-up’ awards exhibition.

Is it enough for a monographic show to merely say that someone was a great architect? Is there not also a need and desire for an exhibition to say something more fundamental about architecture?

Rather than emphasizing individual brands or icons it might be in the interest of the profession (as a whole) and the public to establish a broader discourse surrounding architecture: to position architecture within a larger debate and reveal why it is important to society. This objective shifts the emphasis away from an individual architect toward the archetype of an architect and the profession.

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE

MANDATE AND FACILITIES

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) was founded in 1979 by philanthropist Phyllis Lambert “as a new form of cultural institution to build public awareness of the role of architecture in society, to promote scholarly research in the field, and to stimulate innovation in design practice.”³⁸ In practice this mandate is primarily weighted towards scholarly research, which we will see, produces primarily *reflective* exhibitions.

Located in Montreal, the current home of the CCA opened in 1989. The facility – a 150,000 square foot building and 7,000 square foot garden – is comprised of exhibition galleries, an auditorium, bookstore, library, study centre and offices (level 3-6) as well as state-of-the-art conservation and collection facilities (levels 1 & 2).³⁹ The CCA is renowned for having one of the foremost collections in the world; access to these collections is supported through several research grants and study programs. Accordingly, scholarship generated through the study centre is a fundamental aspect the CCA’s operations and has been cited as the initiator for past exhibitions.

Under the directorship of Mirko Zardini since 2005, exhibitions at the CCA have taken a self-described ‘heterogeneous’ character.⁴⁰ *Imperfect Health* (further discussed later) follows on the heels of similarly expansive exhibitions such as *Journeys: How traveling fruit, ideas and buildings rearrange our environment* (2010). These exhibitions investigate the larger context within which architecture is created. This trajectory is in keeping with the wider shift taking place in

30

Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal: view from the northeast of the building and gardens (7 June 1990). Photo Michel Boulet © Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

contemporary discourse on architecture, one that seeks to consider architecture in relation to its contingent and social-political context, “to show how architecture and urban planning are interwoven with our daily lives.”⁴¹

The position of Zardini and the CCA is, in part, a response to an issue specific to architectural exhibitions: the designation of the architectural artefact and the subsequent dilemma of the *absent object*. Museums traditionally exhibit original work; however, it is generally considered not possible to transplant the primary *work* of architects (understood as buildings) into an exhibition hall. Under this conception of *work* exhibitions in the gallery are dependent on mediating devices; in other words, representations.

Zardini suggests that the problem of the absent object and the limitations of mediating devices are removed if the definition of the architectural *thing* is reconsidered. According to Zardini:

“An exhibition aims not to replace a work that is elsewhere, but instead to comment on architectural ideas, their relationship to the world around them, and the formation of a thought through the project. Designs, physical or digital models, reports, letters, airplane tickets, videos and photos, books and magazines are by no means inadequate substitutes for something that is absent, but rather are primary sources – the specific, original material representing the development of architectural ideas, their interpretation and effects.”⁴²

31

Restated, Zardini believes that the role of an exhibition is to illustrate architectural ideas and the social-political-economic-historical conditions of architectural production. Exhibitions about architecture are composed through consideration of diverse interrelationships.

Zardini's statements respond to the criticism of promotion driven exhibitions raised earlier. He stresses that the appropriate response to contemporary issues is to “present exhibitions not *of* architecture but *about* architecture, about the city, and about the landscape, using all available material, including but not exclusively, architecture itself.”⁴³ Exhibitions conceived following this premise seek to redefine the boundaries of architecture and reposition architecture/the architect within a larger community of agents.

IMPERFECT HEALTH: THE MEDICALIZATION OF ARCHITECTURE, CANADIAN
CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE (MONTREAL, 2011)

In the exhibition *Imperfect Health: the Medicalization of Architecture* (2011) photographs, videos, publications, material samples, architectural models and drawings are assembled into a wide-ranging narrative that questions the role that architecture and related design fields play in creating 'healthy' human environments. Various projects, proposals and research documents offer a survey of information from a diverse set of authors – architects, urban planners, industrial designers, scientists, government agencies, etc. Topics addressed fall into six themes - allergies, asthma, cancer, obesity, epidemics, and aging.⁴⁴

Designed by Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen (Office KGDVS) from Brussels, the exhibition occupies five interconnected gallery spaces. Each of these has been subdivided by two long mirrored-glass partition walls that reinforce “the notion of overlapping viewpoints, optically joining contradictory ideas about health and the city.”⁴⁵ This assembly may also reflect the type of partition used in hospital quarantine facilities, lending a restrained clinical sense to the exhibition: a tongue-in-cheek tectonic analogy.

32

The act of installing architectural elements into a gallery does not however, immediately indicate that it amounts to an installation. The partition walls fail to gather the entirety of the exhibition into a single continuous situation.

Conceptual design model for
*Imperfect Health: the Medicalization
of Architecture*, Canadian Centre for
Architecture, 2011. © Office Kersten
Geers David Van Severen, Brussels,
Belgium.

(all) *Imperfect Health: the Medicalization of Architecture*, installation view at the CCA. © CCA, Montréal

Not only do the documents on display maintain their identity as autonomous objects but the original gallery space continues to assert its presence. Exhibition documents and the surrounding space of display remain as two separate things. This evaluation is corroborated by the fact that the partition walls are planned for use in a subsequent exhibition. Thus, I would argue that Office KGDVS's intervention is more akin to a renovation (albeit temporary) than an installation.

What message about architecture has been conveyed?

Imperfect Health successfully reflects on the intersections of architecture, science and human health to re-define the territory of architecture. It demonstrates a collaborative and multi-disciplinary dialogue with various vocations and in

doing so demonstrates the multivalent nature of the architectural profession. I would argue that thematic exhibitions aim to answer the questions, “What is architecture?” and “Is it more than a building? If so, what else can we find it in?” As Mirko Zardini subtly proposed, the intention is to present exhibitions *about* architecture rather than *of* architecture. This it has achieved.

Is it enough for a thematic show to expand the territory of architecture? Is there not still a need and desire for an exhibition to convey an understanding of architecture as space – as society manifest in space?

Once again, Henry Urbach’s criticisms apply. Due to the objects employed, *Imperfect Health* remains within a coded realm. The narrative exists separate from the immediate experience of the visitors who, in order to engage the content, require certain faculties of interpretation. Is it not possible for architecture exhibitions to also communicate through space? We will see in the following case study that this is precisely the mandate pursued by the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto.

TORONTO HARBOURFRONT CENTRE

MANDATE AND FACILITIES

The conceptual basis of *Architecture at Harbourfront Centre* (AHC) began with the question posed by Patrick Macaulay and Marlee Choo (Head and Assistant Head, Visual Arts respectively), "how do you present architecture?"⁴⁶ This question must also be considered within the broader mandate of its parent facility, the Harbourfront Centre (HC), to showcase contemporary art and performance to a broad public audience. The HC is a community gallery with a clear focus on living artists. Thus, the intention behind Macaulay and Choo's question is better understood as, 'How do you present *contemporary* architecture *to the public in Toronto*?' In response to this question a unique exhibition format, one that points toward a *laboratory* exhibition type, has emerged.

For each exhibition three architects and one artist/author from a different discipline are invited to respond to a particular provocation on architecture. "There is always one idea that through the discussion, debate, controversy is being brought to the forefront . . . What we want is a discussion from firm to firm."⁴⁷ Invited architects, architectural researchers, landscape architects and artists are always living. The majority of past participants are based in Toronto, however several hail from Montreal and Vancouver. Rather than compromise the AHC's commitment to the local community, this diversity reflects the presence of nationwide issues. Topics are vetted by both the HC Board of Directors and an Architecture Advisory Committee to reflect current issues in architecture. The exhibition format described clearly fulfills the institutional mandate of "presenting *contemporary* architecture *in Toronto*": It reflects the local community and provides a unique venue for a contemporary discourse on architectural practice.

This leaves Macaulay's second question '*how* is architecture presented *to the general public*?' He explains that "Programming and exhibition of architecture [at the HC] does not follow the traditional, didactic model."⁴⁸ The 'traditional, didactic model' referred to by Macaulay is that of modernist museums and *reflective* exhibitions – narratives visually phrased through representations (panels and models) and text. For Macaulay, these forms of representation are professionally coded and ineffective at reaching the general public. Rather than sourcing

PERSONAL SPACE, ARCHITECTURE AT HARBOURFRONT CENTRE
(TORONTO, 2009)

For the exhibition *Personal Space* (HC, September 28, 2008 – January 4, 2009) three Canadian design firms – Donald Chong Studio, Lateral Office (formerly Lateral Architecture) and NIP paysage – and writer Andrew Westoll, were invited to fashion a response to the notion of personal space in an urban context.⁵⁰

Clearing, an installation by Lateral Office, was a dense field of 4000 black elastomeric strings running from top to bottom across a tight grid of perforated metal panels. A room constructed within the existing gallery acted as a frame to hold the field of strings in place. Visitors entering into the field were provided with an acrylic collector tool that allowed them to manipulate the density of the vertical strings. In the introductory wall text Lateral Office explained that “our personal space is negotiated, wrested . . . from the public realm and environment.” (Exhibition pamphlet – HC, 2008) *Clearing* reifies this negotiation process into a physical experience.

37

(Y)ourspace, an installation by Donald Chong Studio, sought to reveal the perception of self within the “civic spaces of appearance.” For this installation two mirrored surfaces were placed in the corner of the gallery. A long curved wall separated this corner from the open gallery floor. Upon entering into the installation visitors were confronted by a reflection of *self* beside the *other*; an image of themselves within the public realm.

Lateral Office. *Clearing* installation view from the exhibition *Personal Space* at Architecture at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. Photo: Peter Legris

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and ○○○○ + 17

SAD Cu

Team: Mason White, Julia Sheppard, Joseph Yau.

Stringers: Omar Alaboun, Hessa Azizi, Tamer Barakat, Chris Dur, Jason Cheng, Mustafa Jabari, Anne Cheng Christine Tang, Virginia H. Sanchez, Avery Gutierrez, Gabriel Gutierrez, Sam Hwang, Carl Jungmann, Wade Lyvanti, Richard Lam, Chris Mascarenhas, Sarah Under, Michael Mitchell, Verleen Nub, Chrissina Nam, Shane Neill, Shengye Nivardam, Nimah No, Dan Nook, Nadine Rodriguez, Evan Sazon, Prince Speck, Kerrie Thompson, Elaine Tong, Richard Unterhoffer, Kenya Vans, Dan Vnati, Chris Wineska, Aydin Wills, Jonathan Wong, Sandy Wong, Adrienne Yau, Celine Yau.

Waterfall Collaborators: Soft Floor Canada Performing Inc.

www.lateralarch.com

CLEARING

• C_{10}H_8 is Naphthalene

Plan where and how to make a clearing for you or your group.

Donald Chong Studio. *(Y)ourspace* installation view from the exhibition *Personal Space* at Architecture at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. Photo: Peter Legris

NIP paysage. *Please Swing* installation view from the exhibition *Personal Space* at Architecture at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. Photo: Peter Legris

Please Swing, an installation by NIP paysage, proposed that “Personal space is not about being alone and escaping city realities”⁵¹ rather, it is about program and experiences that stimulate individual appropriation of public settings. *Please Swing* re-programmed the gallery by inserting a “pleasure bubble”⁵² in the form of a swing that visitors could use. Thus, within a public gallery setting each visitor was able to access a personal experience.

Personal Space was composed of three installations, physical and social spaces that directly engaged and involved visitors. These new spaces were distinct environments separate from the original space of the gallery. Thus, *Personal Space* begins to demonstrate the potential of exhibitions to act as a tool – a *laboratory* for the production for architecture – as well as an accessible medium

to communicate architecture (through architecture itself!).

What message about architecture has been conveyed?

The answer to the question posed above is far less conclusive than for the prior two case studies. There are several possibilities. Perhaps architecture is a spectacle or event; the architect a dual functioning figure as a maker and critic; or the affirmation that architecture is primarily a spatial practice. Is it perhaps more significant to first ask, "What is it that *laboratory* installations do?" *Laboratory* installations engage architects in a contemporary, future oriented public discourse on architecture. They allow architects to pursue research outside of academia and commission-based market forces. They provide a venue in which both architects and the public can imagine and experience what architecture could be.

CASE STUDY: CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the preceding case studies. First, an institution's facilities exert a significant influence upon the exhibition – *reflective* or *laboratory* – produced. Indeed, the two are intrinsically related in that one propagates the other. Those with architectural archives tend to pursue research and assemble exhibitions from them. Those with no archive must somehow create the work to be displayed. This can be achieved through re-constructions or new commissions.

Second the exhibition types and formats influence the essential message conveyed by the exhibition. Portfolio or monographic *reflective* exhibitions serve to legitimize and increase the brand value (or name recognition) of the architect(s) featured. Thematic *reflective* exhibitions define the territory of architecture. Exhibition narratives are critical to these exhibitions and often reflect or catalyse theoretical discourse.

Third, both monographic and thematic *reflective* exhibitions demonstrate a reliance on the interpretive faculties of visitors. Consequently, they continue to exclude members of the public who do not possess these skills and deny potential opportunities to communicate architecture through space – its' most basic definition.

Where traditional reflective exhibitions have failed, might laboratory installations succeed in providing a way forward?

Fourth, *laboratory* installations provide an accessible venue for architects and the public to engage a contemporary discourse about architecture. They provide a unique opportunity outside of academic halls and market-driven projects to test ideas at a full scale. They provide a venue in which architects can propose and the public can experience possible, future architectures. The following chapter will develop a more informed understanding of the nature and value of *laboratory* installations by drawing on the history of architecture and art installations throughout the mid-late 20th century.

05 Laboratory Installations

It was for an exhibition at the Basel Museum of Architecture in 1988 that architects Herzog & de Meuron (H&dM) first applied silkscreen printed photos to the facade of a building.⁵³ The images used were an extension of the representation assembled for the exhibition, however H&dM deployed them in a manner that also allowed them to explore their interest in the “relationship between facade and image, on the facade made up of, constituted of images.”⁵⁴ This small experiment later developed into a significant element in their work, as can be seen in projects such as the Eberswalde Technical School Library in Eberswalde and the Ricola Europe factory in Mulhouse.

42

Within H&dM's practice, exhibitions are employed as a tool to investigate architecture; like a test run. “The installations in art galleries form an integral part of our development, of our path, if you like. We had to do them so as to be able to go where we wanted to go.”⁵⁵ Philip Ursprung, curator for the exhibition *Herzog & De Meuron: Natural History* (CCA, 2002), explains: “Their point is neither to document finished (or unbuilt) projects nor to provide an insight into the architects' creative processes... The exhibitions make it possible for the architects to involve visitors in experiments that they otherwise could not realize.”⁵⁶ This is precisely the working method for *laboratory* installations argued by Florian Kossak. Rather than a medium for the purpose of enlightenment or education, exhibitions are active architectural environments. They are opportunities to test new procedures and to involve the public in experiments at a 1:1 scale.

Is there not more to this? Does the participation of the visiting public not provide for other opportunities beyond (but still inclusive of) tectonic experiments?

Architektur Denkform installation view at Architekturmuseum Basel (1998). (Source: Ursprung, Philip. "Exhibiting Herzog & de Meuron," in Ursprung, Philip (Ed.). Herzog & De Meuron, *Natural History*, Lars Muller, 2002, pp 22.)

Eberswalde Technical School library in Eberswalde, Germany. Photo: Thomas Ruff (Source: Source: Ursprung, Philip. "Exhibiting Herzog & de Meuron," in Ursprung, Philip (Ed.). Herzog & De Meuron, *Natural History*, Lars Muller, 2002, pp 32.)

43

'RELATIONAL' ART

The issue of the public participation brings to mind recent discourse on art, in particular 'relational' art, much of which occurs in the form of installations. In *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud identifies a form of art that he argues is emerging from artistic practices in the 1990s. This practice, which he calls 'relational art' is defined as "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than independent and private space."⁵⁷ Bourriaud continues "art is a state of encounter" and above all "the work of art represents a social interstice."⁵⁸ Artists are not makers but facilitators of encounters and the exhibition is an arena of exchange within which social interstices can be enacted.

The term *social interstice* is understood as “a space in human relations which fits... into the overall system, but suggests other (relational) possibilities than those in effect.”⁵⁹ For Bourriaud what is significant in the artistic practices of the 1990s is the facilitation of social encounters that involve the visitor as a “neighbour, a direct interlocutor”⁶⁰ and active element. In other words, visitors are a necessary constituent of the work.

A pertinent criticism of relational art is raised by Claire Bishop in the essay *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*. Bishop questions Bourriaud's assertion that relational art is inherently democratic because the artists presented by Bourriaud, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick, do not include dissent or antagonism within their work. According to Bishop, antagonism is a requirement for democratic space (a position based on the writings of Mouffe and Laclau) and this characteristic is noticeably absent from the feel-good examples presented by Bourriaud.⁶¹

In lieu, Bishop offers up several alternative artists claiming that “These artists set up ‘relationships’ that emphasize the role of dialogue and negotiation in their art, but do so without collapsing these relationships into the work's content.”⁶² While the work presented by Bishop is more controversial, are they in fact more democratic? It might be argued that Bourriaud's examples are simple in terms of their political (perhaps even apolitical) critique, however this itself does not indicate the level of ‘democracy’ present. The issue is not the content (both optimistic and dissenting interactions are equally democratic) but the nature of the medium.

In the essay “Politics of Installation” Boris Groys argues that all claims to democracy within an installation are, in fact, questionable. An installation, by its very nature, collapses the division of labour between the ‘artist’ and the ‘curator’ thus eliminating the difference between the private (sovereign) sphere of making and the public responsibility of curating. This interpretation assumes that within Western culture artists are granted complete freedom and autonomy while the curator is responsible to the public and must, in some measure, justify their choices.

Groys' assessment undermines the propositions that any artist can invite 'democracy' into a gallery. Rather, they can only install this as part of an authored situation; in other words, an imposed political order. This first act remains as a dictatorial appropriation. He explains:

"The artist's decision to allow the multitude of visitors to enter the space of the artwork is interpreted as an opening of the closed space of an artwork to democracy. On the contrary, the space of an artistic installation is the symbolic private property of the artist. By entering this space, the visitor leaves the public territory of democratic legitimacy and enters the space of sovereign authoritarian control. . . The visitor becomes an expatriate who must submit to a foreign law – one given to him or her by the artist. Here the artist acts as legislator, as a sovereign of the installation space – even, and maybe especially so, if the law given by the artist to a community of visitors is a democratic one."⁶³

Installations cause a fundamental shift in control of the gallery space from a public authority to a private sovereign by transforming it into an individual artwork.⁶⁴

In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, installations may still be able to challenge social and political norms. The very act of selecting and framing an aspect of everyday life within a gallery places a spotlight on it. As a result, installations can act as a tool to focus the visitors' attention on anything/everything that exists outside of itself.

"The relative spatial separation provided by the installation space does not mean a turn away from the world, but rather a de-localization and de-territorialization of mass-cultural transitory communities – in a way that assists them in reflecting upon their own condition, offering them an opportunity to exhibit themselves to themselves."⁶⁵

Installations allow space to discuss or speculate on ourselves; to reconsider current realities by experiencing a different or heightened everyday situation – a 'real' (social or political) before the real (social or political). Neri's large scale model for the Santa Maria del Fiore dome did not impose or create democracy; it allowed the citizens of Florence to approach a democratic event from an informed position, through experience.

Synecdoche, New York (2008) film still showing theatre director Caden Cotard's (played by Phillip Seymour Hoffman) attempt to reconstruct the city of New York and his own life inside a warehouse. (Source: IMBD.com)

CONCLUSIONS

*“Art was intended to prepare and announce a future world: today it is modelling possible universes. . . it is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through (...) It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion.” — Nicolas Bourriaud*⁶⁶

The production of social interstices by relational artists is comparable to the experimentation proposed by Kossak’s *laboratory* installations through their shared potential to model alternate realities. While relational art focuses on potential social realities, *laboratory* installations point towards alternate (or future) architecture. If it is not obvious, evidence that these two issues are related is found in the tendency of relational artists to employ architectural strategies and that of architects to tackle social conditions through architecture.

In *Architecture Depends*, Jeremy Till fervently argues that “The key ethical responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the object as static visual product, but as contributor to the creation of empowering spatial, and hence social, relationships in the name of others.”⁶⁷ Architecture is a social act. Following the trajectory of relational art, a *laboratory* installation slips from a static to a lived reality: inhabitation and participation allow the ‘real’ to expand from physical or tectonic space to include social and political space. This move broadens our understanding of what Smithson’s statement, “The ‘real’ before the real”⁶⁸, might imply as well as the scope of a *laboratory* installation.

Where the CCA endeavours to expand the rhetorical territory of architecture exhibitions beyond buildings, *laboratory* exhibitions bring this territory into the gallery as an active element. Architects might approach architecture exhibitions in a manner similar to relational artists, as an opportunity to produce a diverse set of experiments (tectonic, environmental, perceptual, programmatic, etc.) that invite the public to take part.

Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Tomorrow can shut up and go away)* installation views of a functioning, full scale replica of Tiravanija's own apartment constructed and installed inside Gavin Brown Enterprises in New York (1999).

Open 24 hours a day, the installation invited visitors to inhabit and use the space as they liked. One New York art critic recounts, "It was open 24 hours a day and birthdays were celebrated, beds were slept in, baths were taken and meals were cooked and eaten. It became a vessel for two months of unedited and diverse human activity." Subsequent versions have been shown in London, Liverpool and Germany. (Source: "Rirkrit Tiravanija: *Untitled 1999 (tomorrow can shut up and go away)*" on O-Matic. Web 20 July 2012. [http://www.o-matic.com/public_art/rirkrit.html])

Architects Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio have an extensive history of investigating architecture through alternative channels such as installations, performances and industrial design. Working within art galleries and theatre they were able to explore and reveal latent issues regarding the use of technology in architecture and society, in particular, surveillance and display. The ideas and research that resulted from these explorations were later applied to permanent built works such as the *Brasserie*, New York.

(top & middle) Diller + Scofidio. *Parasite* installation views at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1989) created as a part of the "Project Room" series. In this installation, live video footage of gallery visitors moving through high traffic areas was captured on surveillance cameras and relayed to the television screens within the work. Visitors watched other gallery visitors while becoming aware that they themselves had been watched. The theme of social surveillance was similarly explored in installations: *Jump-Cuts* at the United Artists Cineplex Theatre, San Jose, CA (1995) and *Facsimile* at the Moscone Convention Centre West, San Francisco (2003). (Source: *Scanning: the aberrant architectures of Diller + Scofidio*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003, pp 69)

(bottom) Diller + Scofidio. *Brasserie* renovation (2000) of the ground floor restaurant in Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building (1958) in New York. Photo: Michael Moran (Source: *Scanning: the aberrant architectures of Diller + Scofidio*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003, pp 96.)

06 Design Proposal

How do you create *laboratory* installations inside a gallery - architecture in architecture?

To create and display *laboratory* installations inside a gallery, a flexible framework that can facilitate the re-building of the walls, ceiling and roof is required.

This design proposal recognizes that an installation based exhibition practice requires an alternate gallery venue, one specifically adapted for the construction and display of space. A new form of architecture gallery is required. This thesis proposes a new architecture gallery, located within the Harbourfront Center (HC) precinct and Toronto's central waterfront area, to replace the limited existing facilities of Architecture at Harbourfront Centre (AHC). Building on the current operative strategy of AHC the new gallery intends to support a move away from *reflective* exhibitions and the accompanying space of the modernist museum toward a *laboratory* setting where the multifarious spatial dimensions of architecture (social, economic, political and tectonic) can be tested and experienced.

La Comedie Francaise (1776). This section drawing of a French theatre demonstrates the relationship between two interrelated but (at certain points) visibly distinct architectures, one nestled inside and supported by the other. (Source: Powell & Leatherbarrow (Eds.), *Masterpieces of Architectural Drawing*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1982, pp 108.)

Architects will be invited to appropriate the gallery at a 1:1 scale. Here, the verb ‘appropriate’ carries a double meaning. In the first instance, it refers to the physical appropriation of the building through tactile, three dimensional installations. A series of mechanisms are available to facilitate the (re)construction the walls, roof, ceiling and floors on the interior and exterior of the gallery. These details allow installations to borrow the gallery’s structural integrity and rapid staging mechanisms in order to meet the fast-paced construction (demolition) timelines required by a temporary exhibition facility. Three to four storey gallery spaces allow for the creation of complex, large scale interventions.

50

In the second instance, the term ‘appropriate’ refers to the act of re-programming the gallery. Working within the current mandate of the HC, architects will be invited to propose new spatial programs – independently or in collaborate with community groups, artists, other professionals, each other, etc. – to transform the function of the gallery into a live space. Installed programs might include: a print shop, performance stage, offices, hotel, flop house, counselling centre, prayer hall, restaurant, cafe, etc. The act of re-programming engages architects and architecture as an agent or facilitator of a social or political agenda. The space of the gallery is reinvested as an experimental social space. As a result, visitors are invited to ‘appropriate’ the gallery alongside the architects.

Further to this, the proposed gallery intends to provide a common ground, or meeting point, between architects and the public. In the previous research into *laboratory* installations it was demonstrated that installations utilize accessible

media (space and time) and invite the visitor to participate in constructing the meaning of the exhibition. There is a second opportunity for exchange. On an annual basis, the HC collaborates with over 450 community and cultural groups. By drawing on this mandate exhibiting architects can collaborate during the initial stages of an installation's design. Collaborations might take the form of a simple challenge or a team effort. Collaborators could include other professionals, artists, policy makers, clients, students, or product manufacturers.

Site Description and History⁵⁰

Aerial view of Toronto's downtown core and central waterfront area on Lake Ontario. Dashed line indicates the location of the Harbourfront Centre. Source: Google Earth (2012)

52

The Harbourfront Centre (HC) is a non-profit charitable organization located in the centre of Toronto's waterfront. It was first established as a crown corporation by the federal government in 1971 with a mandate to revitalize the then derelict industrial waterfront area through "culture, education and recreation". Since that time the HC has grown into an international multidisciplinary showcase for the arts and succeeded in bringing this together with smart mixed use development. The HC is now a year round destination for both tourists and residents of Toronto.

The HC hosts over 4,000 events annually and estimates 12 million visitors per year. Diverse programming includes: theatre, dance, literature, music, film, visual arts, fine crafts, food, horticulture and more recently architecture. Throughout all of the events and programs offered by the HC there is a clear commitment to promoting living artists and to reflect the cultural diversity of the local community. The HC partners with more than 450 community and cultural groups annually to offer a relevant and diverse program of events. These events span all age groups. Programs for children reach over 30,000 through facilitated school visits and 4,500 through special workshop and day camp programs.

53

Site Plan

- 1 York Quay Building
- 2 Power Plant
- 3 Queen's Quay Terminal
- 4 Outdoor stage
- 5 Canada Square
- 6 Ann Tindal park
- 7 Splash patio
- 8 Pond/Rink

Aerial view of Harbourfront Centre property in Toronto's central waterfront area on Lake Ontario. The solid line indicates the current architecture gallery location (within York Quay building) and the dashed line denotes the proposed gallery location. Source: Google Earth (2012)

The HC occupies a 10-acre site, encompassing York Quay and John Quay. On site outdoor amenities include: Ann Tindal Park, a public plaza (under construction), large and small performance stage, splash park, skating rink (seasonal) and exhibition promenade. Indoor facilities are primarily located within three repurposed industrial buildings: the Power Plant, Queen's Quay Building and York Quay Centre. The Power Plant, once a heating and power plant, contains a non-collecting gallery, as well as a theatre and reception area. Queen's Quay Building, a former shipping terminal, contains the 450-seat Fleck Dance Theatre, the Museum of Inuit Art (MIA), as well as many commercial shops and services. York Quay Centre, formerly a 1920s ice house, now hosts 10 different performance, dance and exhibition spaces. These include: two theatres (200 & 450-seats respectively), 450-seat performance space, showcase vitrines, multi-purpose classrooms, artists' studios and a gallery shop. At the centre of these buildings underground parking is currently under construction, the surface level of which will be a new plaza. To the west the Toronto Music Garden, Nautical Centre and Pier 4 are also under the purview of the HC. These ancillary spaces offers sailing, kayaking and canoe rentals and lessons, a dog friendly indoor facility as well as fine and casual dining.

A 5-10 meter pedestrian boardwalk encircles the three waterfront edges of the quay. A competition winning proposal by West8 and DTAH is underway to extend and connect this walkway along Queen's Quay from Marina Quay West (east of Bathurst Street) to Corus Quay (Parliament Street). This proposal includes several slip extensions (completed) and the occupation of one east bound lane of vehicular traffic for use by pedestrians and cyclists (planned).⁷⁰

Despite having developed a broad and diverse set of cultural programs, it wasn't until 2006 that the conception of a permanent place for architecture emerged. In September of that year guest curator John Ota selected 8 architects to present small works in a series of small vitrines located in the west corridor of the York Quay Centre (one of several buildings owned and operated by the HC).⁷¹ The exhibition, titled *Sited*, received an enthusiastic response and suggested that architecture was under represented not only at the HC but within the city of Toronto as a whole.⁷² Two years later two classrooms on the second level of the York Quay Centre were converted into the current facilities, a one room gallery space dedicated to the exhibition of architecture.

View of York Quay building (north facade) from Queen Quay West, Toronto, ON. Architecture at Harbourfront Centre is located on the 2nd floor, in the north end of the York Quay building (approximate location indicated by arrow). Photo: Author.

Sited installation view at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto (2006).
Source: Dubbledam Architects, dubbeldamarchitects.com

Too Tall? installation view at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto showing the current one room gallery (2011).
Photo: Author

55

View of entrance to second floor gallery in the York Quay building, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto (2011).
Photo: Author

Installation Mechanisms

Clip

Concept sketch for 'clip' installation mechanism.

(all) "Clip" 1:50 concept model.

58

Concept sketch of 'clip' screen and open air galleries.

59

(above) 1:500 massing model. Wood denotes non-exhibition spaces.

1:200 sketch models demonstrating design development of the 'clip' screen.

(top) Silver metal wire manipulated to create modulated densities and screen heights.

(middle) Black metal wire (shown on wood form-work) demonstrates knit patterning on west elevation.

(bottom) Bird's eye view from south-west corner (water's edge) looking north-east, showing 'clip' screen pulled away from the enclosed building to create two exterior galleries; one to the north the other to the south. The roof cantilevers out into the exterior galleries bringing embedded infrastructure with it.

Void

Concept sketch for installation mechanisms 'piston' (top) and 'void'.

(all) 'Void' 1:50 concept model.

Piston

Concept sketch for 'piston' installation mechanism.

(all) 'Piston' 1:50 concept model.

65

Design development sketch for 'piston' wall.

Pulley

66

Design sketch for 'pulley' installation mechanism and gallery 'fly tower'.

Program Diagrams

Drawings & Models

72

Site Plan

- 1 York Quay Building
- 2 Power Plant
- 3 Queen's Quay Terminal
- 4 Outdoor stage
- 5 Canada Square
- 6 Ann Tindal park
- 7 Splash patio
- 8 Pond/Rink
- 9 the Architecture Gallery (proposed)

1:750 site model of Harbourfront Centre precinct with proposed gallery shown in wood and metal.

Ground Floor Plan

- 1 Gallery No. 1 (exterior)
- 2 Gallery No. 2 (interior)
- 3 Gallery No. 3 (exterior)
- 4 Gallery No. 4 (elevator)
- 5 Curatorial Reception
- 6 Shipping/Receiving
- 7 False floor
- 8 Laboratory Installation

Mezzanine Floor Plan

- 1 Gallery No. 1 (exterior)
- 2 Gallery No. 2 (interior)
- 3 Gallery No. 3 (exterior)
- 4 Gallery No. 4 (elevator)
- 5 Multi-purpose Room
- 6 Shipping/Receiving (below)

76

Third Floor Plan

- 1 Gallery No. 1 (exterior)
- 2 Gallery No. 2 (interior)
- 3 Gallery No. 3 (exterior)
- 4 Gallery No. 4 (elevator)
- 5 Curatorial Offices

77

Basement Floor Plan

- 1 Workshop
- 2 Material Storage
- 3 Staging Corridor
- 4 Assembly Room

Roof Plan

- 1 Gallery No. 1 (exterior)
- 2 Gallery No. 5 (roof)
- 3 Gallery No. 3 (exterior)
- 4 Gallery No. 4 (elevator)

West Elevation

East Elevation

Section A (north-south, looking west)

Section B (north-south, looking east)

- 1 Gallery No. 1 (exterior)
- 2 Gallery No. 2 (interior)
- 3 Gallery No. 3 (exterior)
- 4 Gallery No. 4 (elevator)
- 5 Gallery No. 5 (roof)
- 6 Curatorial Reception
- 7 Multi-purpose Room
- 8 Curatorial Offices
- 9 Shipping/Receiving
- 10 Workshop
- 11 Assembly Room
- 12 Laboratory Installation

Section C (east-west, looking north)

Legend

- 1 *Laboratory Installation*
- 2 *Gallery No. 2 (interior)*
- 3 *Gallery No. 5 (roof)*
- 4 *Gallery No. 4 (elevator)*
- 5 *Curatorial Reception*
- 6 *Multi-purpose Room*
- 7 *Curatorial Offices*
- 8 *Assembly Room*

82

1:75 model.

(top) View from south-east corner showing entrance to curatorial reception and forecourt Gallery No.3.

(bottom) View from north-east toward Gallery No.1 and loading zone.

1:75 model.

(top) Model shown in section.

(middle & bottom) Interior views of 'piston' wall Gallery No.2 and reception lobby.

1:75 model.

(top) View of 'clip' screen wrapped around 'fly tower' and forecourt Gallery No.3.

(bottom) View of southern elevation and Gallery No.3.

1:75 model.

(top) View of 'clip' screen wrapped around courtyard Gallery No. 1.

(bottom) View of northern elevation and Gallery No. 1.

07 Installation Schedule

Three architects are commissioned to create installations for the first year of exhibitions at the Architecture Gallery (tAG). Nancy Chao, Teeple Architects and Mark Baechler Architect were asked to create an installation based on a topic of their choice that reflects the ambition of tAG to engage the public in a direct experience of architecture. In this inaugural series, Nancy Chao's *Groundless* explores an architecture separated from the site above ground; Teeple Architects' *High Density* explores urban residential typologies that increase density while also supporting socially cohesive neighbourhoods; and Mark Baechler re-constructs (literally and allegorically) the common ground of the Abrahamic faiths and invites visitors to experience the cross-pollinated sacred spaces of these seemingly disparate religions.

Groundless (Fall 2012)

Nancy Chao (2012). Sketch for proposed installation, *Groundless*.

87

Nancy Chao

What is architecture without grade? *Groundless* (Fall 2012) challenges the idea of the traditional architectural site through an exploration of suspended space. Tethered to the galleries north and south exterior screen walls the inhabitable structure provides the visitor with an experience of a groundless architecture. In contrast to the typical Torontonians brick and concrete structures that rest heavily on the earth the architectural installation proposes an alternate building typology for the city.

88

Nancy Chao (2012). Sketch for proposed installation, *Groundless*.

89

Groundless is composed of three elements (shown in white); two anchors – one resting on the earth, the other suspended from the building's screen – secure the levitation of an inhabitable room located within Gallery No.2 (interior). This room, accessed from the adjacent elevator contains a series of multi-media based programs. The curved roof of the installation will act as a screen where the public can come to play video games, watch a movie or check facebook. As more and more visitors enter the room the floor and the walls sink under the additional weight, lowering everyone closer to the earth. The depression in the fabric floor made by each individual produces a second event observable only to those outside the media room.

1:75 model shown in section with installation elements in white.

View of *Groundless* (shown in white)
constructed inside proposed Gallery
No.2 (interior).

View of *Groundless* (shown in white)
constructed inside proposed Gallery
No.3 (exterior).

View of *Groundless* (shown in white)
constructed inside proposed Gallery
No. 1 (exterior).

High Density (Winter 2013)

Stephen Teeple (2012). Sketch for proposed installation, *High Density*.

93

Teeple Architects Inc.

Over the past decade the city of Toronto experienced a growing demand for residential space. The demand was addressed by the proliferation of two building types, the condominium point tower and the single family detached house. While the condo has come to define the city's skyline, a blanket of detached houses has consumed most of the cities former green fields. Now, only ten years into this major city building campaign flaws in residential planning are beginning to show. *High Density* is a critique of the two major residential building types currently being employed throughout the city of Toronto. In their installation Teeple Architects explore an innovative third residential building type that addresses the need for density that also contributes positively to the street life of Toronto.

Fully services, full scale units will be constructed along the west side of the Architecture Gallery. These units will be accessible from the 'street' between tAG and the Power Plant and will be rented out during off-hours for the duration of the exhibition.

Stephen Teeple (2012). Sketch for proposed installation, *High Density*.

Abrahamic Architecture (Spring 2013)

Mark Baechler Architect

Abrahamic Architecture (Spring 2013) is an investigation of the Abrahamic mythological universe through the lens of Jewish, Christian and Islamic architecture. Despite their common origins and similar theologies, the Abrahamic religions often appear disconnected. The architectural installation focuses on the faiths common theology and provides a space for Abrahamic insight and worship.

The floor of the gallery is covered with an allegorical drawing composed of synagogue, church and mosque floor plans. The space between the individual religions buildings is explored as works of Abrahamic Architecture. This shared space is composed of replicated walls originating in each of the faiths existing structures. These works of Abrahamic Architecture play host to Toronto's Jewish, Christian and Islamic communities for worship services. By providing a vision of the Abrahamic religions that is often hidden by fragmented representations, the installation symbolizes a modest effort toward the reconciliation of the invisible God's divided house.

95

Mark Baechler (2012). Sketch for proposed installation, *Abrahamic Architecture*.

Post-Script

In the introduction to your thesis you suggest that laboratory exhibitions are a tool for democratic processes because they are universally accessible. Can a gallery or an installation ever be democratic?

The answer is yes and no, respectively. In the essay “Political of Installation,” Boris Groys argues that an exhibition is an extension of public space. A certain sense of democracy is administered through the curator who, at some point, is required to justify the work on display. The curator is responsible to the public. An artist, on the other hand, has complete autonomy. They are never required to justify their work. In an installation the role of curator and artist or architect collapses. Installations shift control of the exhibition space from a public authority to a private sovereign by transforming it into an individual work. Even when the installation proposes a democratic situation, this is an imposed political order.

That said, installations allow space to speculate on and observe ourselves; to reconsider current realities by experiencing a different or heightened everyday situation. Perhaps democracy is the conversation that happens afterwards. As you recall from the introduction, members of the Florentine public visited Neri di Fioravanti’s model of the proposed dome for Santa Maria del Fiore before casting their vote in the design referendum.

What is the difference between an art and an architecture installation?

The line between art and architecture installations is not clear, there is much overlap. In the essay “*Exhibiting architecture: the installation as laboratory for emerging architecture*,” Florian Kossak lists the shared characteristics of art and architecture installation as: site specificity, spatiality, engagement of the viewer, temporality.⁷³ Here ‘engagement of the viewer’ is described as an activated participation or

direct experience; however, Kossak allows for physical immersion to be optional. (It is this exception that later allows Kossak to refer to theatrical stage sets as *laboratory* installations.) Architecture by its very definition is a spatial practice concerned with the housing of everyday life. Perhaps, the requirement for immersion, for inhabitation, is what separates art from architecture installations. In art installations inhabitation is optional, in architecture it is required.

There are, of course, certain cases where this is problematic, for example full scale historical settings which preclude full access. What is the line between an inhabitable installation and a full-scale diorama? Does the visitor have to inhabit the installation themselves, or as Kossak argues, can an installation be experienced 'vicariously' by watching someone else? There is also the issue of whom or what an installation is speaking to. *Laboratory* architecture installations point toward a future praxis beyond the exhibition space. This intention is not as focused in an art installation which could be speaking to any number of things and still be considered art.

It is common for families in India to erect temporary but elaborate tent structures (called mandap or shamiana) for use during wedding celebrations. These are often built along streets or beside buildings on an adhoc basis. Can you imagine a situation where the proposed infrastructure (installation mechanisms) was accessible for the public to install their own temporary installations?

98

The intention of an architect centered installation program is to provide a platform for practicing architects to conduct research. Currently, an institution capable of accommodating this need does not exist. *Laboratory* installations don't stop with architects, they provide a space where the public can act in collaboration with an architect, either directly (as part of the design process) or as an activated participant during the exhibition. I believe that an increase in meaningful interaction between the profession and the public would be incredibly fruitful for both parties.

I'm not entirely familiar with *shamiana*, however according to your description it appears that this act of setting up tents is the privatization of public space by a private group. It is important to be cognizant of the subtle difference between this type of privatization and that of an installation artist or architect operating within a public institution. A public institution cannot deny access: any member of the public is able to enter into the private space of an installation

constructed within a gallery. It is precisely this – the superimposing of public and private – which allows for the emergence of social interstices. In contrast, access to a private installation for a private celebration is controlled even if it occurs within public space: you can see examples of this in the park or on the beach in the summer.

Can you explain the form of the proposed design? Why does it deviate from the typical white walled, orthogonal gallery space?

The design of the proposed gallery is free from the illusion that architecture can ever be neutral, that a site can ever disappear. Institutional critique in art has revealed that the ‘white-cube’ aesthetic is anything but neutral, imposing a strong presence on the work displayed and the gallery visitor. One of the key characteristics of an installation described by Claire Bishop, Mark Rosenthal and Julie Riess is adaptation to site. This adaptation is as significant in a ‘white-cube’ gallery as in any other setting: the former merely standardized an expected type of space and type of display. ‘Site specificity’ is a reality that all installations (and indeed all architecture) must deal with. A filleted intersection is as imposing as an orthogonal one.

99

Rather than attempting to eliminate architecture (which is impossible) from the design of the gallery itself, the installation mechanisms intend make it as accommodating as possible. The ‘clip’ mechanism wrapping around the exterior of the proposed gallery is as practical as it is distinctive. While the gallery waits to receive installations by other architects, it has a presence of its own. This is particularly important for an institution that wishes to establish a place for itself in the public consciousness. Allowing the gallery to attain its own identity provides a clear point from which the public can, over time, observe installations in juxtaposition to it. In the same way that a temporary pavilion can change an empty lot, a *laboratory* installation can disrupt any established situation or place.

Often, when you tell a student not to design a box, the first thing they draw is a box and then they try to take it apart. Does not the delineation of an inside-outside condition (created by the glazed perimeter around Gallery No.2) confine the proposal to a traditional gallery space?

I can see that, in a way, what I have done is try to penetrate and reinterpret a

traditional exhibition space. I began by asking myself ‘how do you reconstruct the roof, ceiling, walls and floors inside a gallery?’ and then proceeded to embed the exhibition spaces with these mechanisms. The sectional drawing *La Comedie Francaise* (1776) [refer to page 50] was a significant influence; this image shows two separate architectures, one supporting a more delicate and detailed other, that meet at the exterior walls.

An important aspect of the proposed gallery is the inclusion of several different exhibition spaces. There are five in total and between them they each delineate the exhibition space differently. I think that the ‘clip’ screen begins to move beyond this. While it might suggest the boundaries of place, it isn’t a wall; it isn’t a gallery box embedded with infrastructure, it’s something entirely different.

What is the most minimal structure that could be provided by a gallery intended to produce laboratory installations

It would be possible, perhaps even preferable, to build laboratory installations in a setting that impinges as little as possible on the intention or potential of the exhibiting architect. An empty lot would be the extreme; however this would abandon the challenge I set out to pursue – to examine how architecture is exhibited in a gallery setting. Without going so far as eliminating the building altogether, a gallery could aim to provide a minimum amount of shelter from the environment; perhaps just the basic life safety elements required by local building codes (for example, exit stairs at 60m intervals). Canada is a cold climate and there are certain realities that must be acknowledged. The benefit of having an enclosed space in the middle of winter is obvious. Enclosure also permits architects to focus on the aspects of architecture that they are interested in; this may or may not include building a perimeter wall, roof, etc. So there is the benefit of year round operation and specificity in the research conducted. There are also security advantages.

Would you put a model of the proposed gallery inside the real gallery if it were built?

Sure. The Netherlands Architecture Institute has a record of producing exhibitions which combine *reflective* and *laboratory* types. I’m not against *reflective* exhibitions or the media that they employ, we just have to be honest about who can read these documents and what they are able to achieve. As soon as you start

Minimum Gallery #1: provision of vertical fire safety elements and accessible access (as per local building codes).

100

Minimum Gallery #2: roof.

to display historical documents conservation and security become significant concerns. Consequently, the unfettered appropriation of a *laboratory* installation would become more difficult.

My thesis has focused on exhibiting architecture within a gallery setting; exhibiting the gallery (or any building) itself is a different situation.

Do you agree that there remains much research to do on the history of how architecture has been exhibited?

Absolutely. The question 'how is architecture exhibited?' falls under the field of institutional critique. In art, institutional critique is a well established and developed field. Nonetheless, the conceptualizing of art exhibitions as significant historical events seems to have only recently resulted in comprehensive and in-depth studies. Examples of this include: *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* by Mary Anne Staniszewski (1998) and more recently *Salon to Biennial - Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume 1: 1863-1959*, by Bruce Altshuler (2008). In architecture institutional critique it is relatively new. While certain exhibitions in the 20th century are understood to have been significant events (such as *Modern Architecture* (1932)) the appreciation and understanding of this is still limited. There are no comprehensive publications on architecture exhibitions that I am aware of.

Endnotes

01 INTRODUCTION

1 Alberti, Leon Battista. *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. Translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988. Pp 33.

2 King, Ross. *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture*. New York: Walker & Company, 2000. p 10.

3 King, 2000: 6.

4 King, 2000: 5.

5 King, 2000: 10.

6 Ross King offers little commentary on the democratic processes surrounding this referendum, stating only: "[I]n keeping with Florentine democracy – and also, perhaps, with a desire on the part of the wardens to spread the responsibility as widely as possible – the plan was endorsed by a referendum of Florence's citizens." (King, 2000: 9)

7 Smithson, Peter. "The Masque and the Exhibition: Stages toward the Real," in Giancarlo di Carlo (ed.), *Language of Architecture: Lectures, Seminars and Projects. International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design, Urbino, 1981*. Florence: Sansoni, 1982. Pp 62-67. Pp 66.

8 The term 'public' can take on many different definitions. In the case of this thesis 'popular public' will be used to refer to those outside of the architectural profession and avid gallery-goers who already appreciate and understand architecture exhibitions.

02 ARCHITECTURE IN THE GALLERY

9 Mellins, Thomas. "Drawing a crowd to architectural exhibitions," in *Architectural Record*. August 2000, vol. 188, issue 8: p 68+. Web 11 Dec. 2010 [Architectural Record via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe (uploaded 31 August 2000)]

Lubell, Sam. "Architecture Centres: Bridging the Divide Between Architects and the Public," in *Architectural Record*. Jul 2004, vol. 192, issues 7: p 80-86. Web 12 Feb. 2012 [Architectural Record on Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe]

Mellins reports an increase in attendance rates of 40% at the National Building Museum in Washington from 1999-2000, record breaking attendance at the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. and at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. "[I]n recent years the permanent architectural collection at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris has frequently drawn more visitors than the museum's permanent collection." Lubell corroborates these statistical trends with those of smaller architecture centres in the U.S.A.

10 See for example, "National Architecture Centre," in *RIBA Journal*. Vol 96, Issue 12 (December 1989): p 24-27 and "Paris Architecture Centres," in *RIBA Journal*. Vol 96, Issue 6 (June 1989): p 26-31.

11 Lubell, 2004.

12 Ruby, Ilka and Andreas. "Cecci N'est Pas Une Agence: An Office, a Café and a Gallery by Blauraum Architekten, Hamburg," in *Archis* Vol. 5, January 2002, pp. 85.

13 Lubell, Sam. "Architecture Centres: Bridging the Divide Between Architects and the Public," in

Architectural Record, Jul 2004, vol. 192, issues 7: p 80-86.
Web 12 Feb. 2012 [Architectural Record on Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe]

14 Nicolas Olsberg quoted in Mellins, 2000: 3.

15 Kipnis, Jeffrey. "Who's afraid of a gift-wrapped kazzo?" *Questions of Practice, What Makes a Great Exhibition?* Paula Marincola, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press/Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiatives, 2006: 95-106, pp 99; 97-98. Print.

16 Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. "Changing Values in the Art Museum: Rethinking Communication and Learning" in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, edited by Gerard Corsane, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp 556-575. Print.

17 Hooper-Greenhill, 2005: pp 560, 564.

18 See the work of Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (*Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 2006) or Philip Wright (in *The New Museology*, 1991).

03 EXHIBITION TYPES

19 Smithson, Peter. "The Masque and the Exhibition: Stages toward the Real," in Giancarlo di Carlo (Ed.), *Language of Architecture: Lectures, Seminars and Projects - International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design, Urbino, 1981*. Florence: Sansoni, 1982, pp 62-67.

20 Smithson, 1982: pp 62

21 Kossak, Florian. "Exhibiting architecture: the installation as *laboratory* for emerging architecture," in Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara (Eds.), *Curating Architecture and the City*. Abington, UK and New York: Routledge, 2009, pp 121.

22 Kossak quoting Hani Rashid, 2001: pp 34.

23 Kossak, 2009: pp 117.

24 Kossak, 2009: pp 120.

25 Reiss, 1999: introduction, xiii

26 Groys, 2012: pp 5

27 Rosenthal, 2003: 27

28 Rosenthal, 2003: pp 25.

04 CASE STUDIES

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

29 "About," Web 25 June 2012. [<http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/index.html>]

"Mandate: The National Gallery of Canada's mandate is to develop, maintain, and make known, throughout Canada and internationally, a collection of works of art, both historic and contemporary, with special, but not exclusive, reference to Canada, and to further knowledge, understanding, and enjoyment of art in general among all Canadians."

"Vision: The National Gallery of Canada strives to provide Canadians with a sense of identity with and pride in Canada's rich visual-arts heritage. Through its collections, onsite and travelling exhibitions, loans program, educational programs and publications, professional training programs, and outreach initiatives, the Gallery aspires to be a model of excellence in furthering knowledge of the visual arts, both at home and abroad. Through collaboration with national and international institutions, the Gallery seeks to make art accessible, meaningful, and vital to diverse audiences of all ages."

"Mission Statement," Web 25 June 2012. [<http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/mission-statement.php>]

"Mission Statement: The strength of the National Gallery of Canada lies in its collection of art, especially Canadian art, and its accessibility to the public across the country. The collection opens the way for appreciation of the finest in artistic expression: The works of art reveal the past, celebrate the present, and probe the future. The collection must be expanded, preserved, interpreted, and used extensively by the public for pleasure and understanding, for research and the advancement of knowledge."

30 It must be noted that the exhibition was not sourced from the NGC archives and I am not aware that the gallery has changed its acquisition policies (although it does already contain many architectural drawings from the 'Grand Tour' era) however, the gallery was involved in the exhibition's organization and production.

31 "About the Building," Web 25 June 2012. [<http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/building.php>]

32 O'Doherty, Brian. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (Expanded Edition)*. Berkeley: University of California, 1995 (Original 1976). Print.

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33 Betsky, Aaron. "Interview with Aaron Betsky" in *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture* by Levy, Aaron & Menking, William. London: Architectural Association, 2010, pp 149.

34 Urbach, Henry. "Exhibition as Atmosphere," *Log 20: Curating Architecture* (Fall 2010): 11-17. p13.

35 Urbach, 2010: pp 13.

36 Urbach, 2010: pp 13.

37 Mellins, 2000: pp 3.

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE

38 "About CCA – Institution Overview." Web 22 March 2012. [<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/collection/294-institutional-overview>]

39 "About CCA – Institution Overview." Web 22 March 2012. [<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/collection/294-institutional-overview>]
See also, "About CCA – CCA Building," Web 22 March 2012. [<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/collection/336-cca-building>]

40 Zardini, Mirko. "Exhibiting and Collecting Ideas: A Montreal Perspective," in *Log: Curating Architecture* Vol. 20 (Fall 2010), pp 77-84. Print.

41 Zardini, 2010: pp 81.

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43 Zardini, 2010: pp 81.

44 Canadian Centre for Architecture. "Press Release - *Imperfect Health: the Medicalization of Architecture*." Web 22 May 2012

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46 "Patrick Macaulay." Personal interview. 20 Dec. 2011.

47 "Patrick Macaulay." Personal interview. 20 Dec. 2011.

48 Macaulay, Patrick. "Harbourfront Architecture," in Crossman & Ponte (eds.) *Architecture and Ideas: Architecture, Technology, Sense*, Vol IX (2010), pp 29. Print.

49 Macaulay, 2010: pp 29.

50 *Personal Space*. (Exhibition pamphlet) Toronto: Harbourfront Centre, 2009. Print.

51 NIP Paysage in *Personal Space*. (Exhibition pamphlet) Toronto: Harbourfront Centre, 2009. Print

52 NIP Paysage in *Personal Space*. (Exhibition pamphlet) Toronto: Harbourfront Centre, 2009. Print

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53 Herzog & de Meuron in Zuagg, Remy. *Herzog & De Meuron, an Exhibition*, Germany: Cantz, 1995, pp 9. Print.

54 Herzog & de Meuron in Zuagg, Remy, 1995: pp 9.

55 Herzog & de Meuron in Zuagg, 1995, pp 32.

56 Ursprung, Philip. "Exhibiting Herzog & De Meuron," in Philip Ursprung (Ed.), *Herzog & De Meuron, Natural History*, Lars Muller, 2002, pp 21. Print.

57 Bourriand, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods and Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les presses du réel (English translation), 2002. P113.

58 Bourriand, 2002: pp 16.

59 Bourriand, 2002: pp 16.

60 Bourriand, 2002: pp 43.

61 Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October* Vol. 110, (Autumn 2004): 51-79.

62 Bishop, 2004: pp 70.

63 Groys, Boris. "Politics of Installation," in *e-flux Journal* #2 (January 2009), pp 4. Web 06 June 2012. [<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-installation/>]

64 Groys, 2012: pp 3

65 Groys, 2012: pp 5

66 Bourriaud, 1998: pp 13, 15.

67 Till, Jeremy. *Architecture Depends*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009, pp 178.

68 Smithson, 1982: pp 62.

06 DESIGN PROPOSAL

69 Information regarding the history and operation of the Harbourfront Centre retrieved online and in conversation with Patrick Macaulay (Head Visual Arts, Harbourfront Centre) and Margaret Choo (Assist. Head Visual Arts, Harbourfront Centre):

"Patrick Macaulay." Personal interview. 20 Dec. 2011.

"Harbourfront Centre – About Us." Web 26 May 2012. [<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/whowcare/aboutus.cfm>]

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71 Information regarding the history and operation of the Harbourfront Centre retrieved online and in

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"Patrick Macaulay." Personal interview. 20 Dec. 2011.

"Media Release (September 7, 2006)" Web 28 May 2012. [<http://media.harbourfrontcentre.com/mediaDisplay.php?id=42>]

72 At this time a small private bookstore, Ballenford Books, periodically held exhibitions at their store. These were at a very small scale, typically occupying one wall inside the narrow store. Ballenford Books closed in 2008. The Eric Arthur Gallery (EAC) at the University of Toronto John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design opened a three room gallery designed by Kohn Shnier Architects in 2001. The mandate of EAC is significantly different from that of the Harbourfront Centre. A description of the gallery provided on the faculty website states that the curatorial focus is primarily on work of "international significance" with some national or local content and periodic student and faculty work.

"About the Eric Arthur Gallery." Web 28 May 2012. [http://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/resources/eric_arthur_gallery/about_eric_arthur_gallery]

08 POST-SCRIPT

73 Kossak, 2009: pp 118-9.

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La Biennale di Venezia [http://www.labiennale.org/en/Home.html]

Canadian Centre for Architecture [http://www.cca.qc.ca/en]

Darc Space Gallery [http://www.darcspace.ie/]

Harbourfront Centre [http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com]

Jardins de Metis – Reford Gardens [http://www.refordgardens.com/english/]

Lateral Office [http://www.lateraloffice.com]

Max Protetch [http://www.maxprotetch.info]

Museum of Modern Art | Architecture & Design

[http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/architecture_design]

MoMA PS.1 | Young Architects Program (YAP) [<http://momaps1.org/yap>]

National Gallery of Canada [<http://www.gallery.ca/en>]

Netherlands Architecture Institute [<http://en.nai.nl>]

NIP Paysage | Explorations [<http://nippaysage.ca/en/explorations.html>]

Serpentine Gallery | Architecture [<http://www.serpentinegallery.org/architecture/>]

University of Toronto - John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design | Eric Arthur Gallery [http://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/resources/eric_arthur_gallery/about_eric_arthur_gallery]

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