2018 Design Project

Performance Architecture

A Research Programmes carried
out with MA & PhD Environmental
Design Students at China Academy of Art

The programme was
devised and carried out by

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In association with

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PART ONE

Preparations for Beginning

A Taoist Design Process

A six-week programme carried
out in April and May 2018

PART TWO

Preparations for Inhabiting

The Tao of Naming Place

A four-week programme carried
out in November 2018

INTRODUCTION

> *After ten minutes in the old house he imagines he's looking through it, discovering its inner properties. Something lies within it and it is moving between them, permeating them both. Then his mind stops. He can hear the place talking to him, and, because he's an architect, he asks the place what it would like to become.*

I think this is how architects should behave with buildings. It's not the normal way to carry out a site survey, so I'm not a normal architect. I started my architectural studies 50 years ago and immediately after qualifying I decided not to be part of the profession. I decided to become a Performance Artist. I suspected that Performance Art would have a key role to play in my way of making architecture, but I could never say why. For 25 years I taught creative practices to students studying interior design, but after all this time I still couldn't say what the role of performance might be for space makers. So, my inability to explain remained constant until I completed these two workshops and it was Li Kaisheng, Professor and Vice dean of the School of Architecture at China Academy of Art, who asked me to explain what was meant by *Performance Architecture*.

In architectural education, it had become a fashionable term for something avant garde, a thing that was probably connected to *Narrative Architecture*, which is a practice invented by Bernard Tschumi, my tutor at the AA in the seventies. The various schools of architecture used the term to describe courses in the performing arts (which they see as theatre) and its associated technologies. Theatre is not a field I am interested in. *Performance Art* has a completely different attitude to theatre. It is abstract and are therefore much more applicable to the task of looking to make narratives in the practice of architecture.

I have made many attempts to clarify *Performance Architecture*. In 2000, I organised a weekend symposium with this as its title at the newly opened Tate Modern. Diane Lewis, Zaha Hadid, Will Alsop, Heidulf Gerngross, Fred West, Olafur Eliasson and Julian Maynard Smith presented their thoughts, but at the end of the weekend nobody was any wiser what the term meant. I also organised an exhibition by my staff at Chelsea College of Arts called *Performance Furniture*. We presented many engaging drawings, films and performances and we enjoyed the activity very much, but still it didn't clarify a practice that might confirm what is meant by the title. I had also taught students, like Red Hu, who wanted to engage performance in the process of designing her interior design project. It was inspiring and useful to her, but it didn't give us a theory that might be clear enough to hand on to others. So this research at CAA started from a page that only had the words *Performance Architecture* written on it.

Not having a clue but being very interested is a good place to be for the start of a research programme, because the word research means *finding out* or *discovery*. We ask questions and search for answers. It is not about reading and looking at other practitioner's work and it is not about theories and philosophies - it is the work we like to be engaged in and we can only start by trusting this work. Everything we do can be seen as research. A simple drawing can be research. What we do to go in search of research can be our research. We can research processes, techniques, skills or any visual language; the important thing to do is convert the activity into a quest to know something. If *Performance Architecture* was going to be the mystery I wanted to investigate, then I needed a strategy for testing it and I had to keep a record of my findings. I knew that I might have to rephrase and refocus my questions a number of times, but the important things were to enjoy the work, learn from it and find it stimulating.

That's all I knew when I started this programme. Li Kaisheng agreed to fund two research projects which I carried out during Spring and Autumn 2018. During the first research period, I made a series of preparations for beginning an architectural project and these provided me with an architectural language.

In the second research period and I made another series of preparations, this time for ending an architectural project, and these gave me a language for the inhabitation of architectural space by naming its places. I only realised that these activities had anything to do with my search for *Performance Architecture* towards the end of part two when I was talking about the rituals of the first builders. One of the students was interested in the primitive hut and the relevance of the practice of Feng Shui. My position is that we cannot go back to ancient practices, so we discussed what kind of alternative practices could take their place. I was clear that the Taoist Design Process we enacted in April was a perfectly good substitute for Feng Shui, because all that was needed was a meaningful process that converted the ordinary space into important space.

I will orientate my thoughts now by referring to the state ate the beginning of architecture and, more specifically, I will refer to the thoughts expressed by John Berger in his book, "*and our faces, my heart, brief as photos*." He says that for nomadic people, *home* is erected where they stop. For settled people home is primarily their dwelling place and then their village. Home is the centre of the world, what Mircea Eliade calls, "at the heart of the real." Everything that made sense was real and everything outside of this was chaos. Without a home at the centre of the real, we are lost in unreality, a place of non-being where everything results in fragmentation. Home is the centre of the world because it is the place where a vertical line crosses with a horizontal one. The vertical line is a path leading upwards to the sky and downwards to the underworld. The horizontal line represents the traffic of the world, all the possible roads leading across the earth to other places. At home, we are nearest to the gods in the sky and to the dead in the underworld. This nearness promises access to both. And at the same time we are at the starting point and the returning point of all terrestrial journeys. When nomadic people erected a tent pole, they established this vertical line.

We might imagine that in the 21st century, it is no longer possible to hold the notion of the centre of the world, but maybe our nostalgia for home keeps the expectation alive. According to Berger, and I fully agree with him, we create a substitute home and this place has little to do with a building - it is held together by memory and our habits. Habits are our domestic practices, the secular rituals we enact, they are how we perform on a daily basis. When discussing this with the students, I suddenly realised that this could be where the notion of *Performance Architecture* lies. Maybe it exists before we build and after we build, for these are the times when people are performing, preparing to start and preparing to inhabit.

This insight was a tremendous relief for me, for now I can make sense of my youthful decisions. Building is a serious job for the builders, they focus on the task in hand, it doesn't have a real opportunities for any performance activity which requires acts of playfulness that arise out of deep sensitivity. Architecture has to be carried out with a series of strictly controlled tasks of a rational and logical nature and Performance Art must proceed from a completely open, highly sensitive workshop practice. The two terms cannot coexist unless, and this is what I have discovered, we are referring to the activity that immediately precedes and immediately concludes the activity of architectural design. These are the great sensitivity periods that are essential to making architecture resonate with life, but which, in today's commercial milieu, are simply ignored. They take up too much time and very few practitioners have any idea about how to play them.

The text for A Taoist Design Process was written at the time of the project and the text for The Tao Of Naming Place was written as an introduction to the project.

The research was only possible because Nylas (Wu-Han Chou) and Red (Zhihong Hu) accompanied me every step of the way, and Ray (Runwu Fang) who organised the practicalities that made the programme possible. I am deeply indebted to them.

PART ONE

Preparations for Beginning
A Taoist Design Process

The inspiration behind this programmes is a series of vague suspicions.

The first suspicion is that if we are going to improve our practice of designing habitable space then we should start with a sense of wonderment about the place we are about to design. We need to work with *a compassionate sense of connection with everyone and everything around us. We should possess a* talent for listening that is so great, people might say we could engage in a dialogue with the lazy breeze. (1)

The second suspicion is that magic exists in a performance space when a performance is taking place – that an ordinary space can become magical simply because it is declared that this space is special. Maybe nothing out of the ordinary is taking place yet it is significantly different from other kinds of place. Performance offers its innocent audience a very particular invitation.

The third suspicion is that the act of making (using one's hands) in the process of architectural propositions, such as drawing, selecting, placing and model making, could benefit from being regarded as performance activities with all the unique qualities that this implies.

The fourth suspicion is that if we are to find an alternative to living in a dead environment, inhabiting soul-less places filled with inanimate objects, then we should attend to the world of imagination that exists in these objects and places. As designers, we should presume that the greater part of imagination lies outside the body and assume that anything can be a vessel for soul,

whether it be part of the world out there, such as a chair or a tree, or part of the world inside, such as an idea or a fantasy. (2)
The fifth suspicion is that the simple actions we perform when walking, standing, sitting and lying down are the inspiration for everything we design.

This *Performance Architecture* programme starts with the question - what we can do to bring life to dead sites? These are places that have no brief because clients have no idea what to do with them. In such a situation a designer might be asked to come up with ideas, but what kind of strategies can a designer adopt for enlivening space. Where do they start? Intuition and imagination are key players, but how do we create a milieu in which these qualities start to flow, how do we establish a rich editorial process that thrives on instinctive responses? My first inclination is to set up a distraction and tuning process; one that keeps the details of the brief, site analysis and other kinds of factual information out of the picture. Such a strategy can't be simply a process of emptying our minds of presumptions, it should be help us gather materials and build a language to enable us to develop a language that will kick-start initial conversations about the brief.

This document is designed to help those courses that start the process of making architecture with an open-ended brief. Given the importance of the role played by editing and change in the design process, one could start anywhere, but we have decided to start with performance. By performing actions and words with equipment and furniture for an agreed time in a given space, we are starting the process with play; doing what anyone engaged in the creation of architectural space should do.

Performers do not act. Here is a quote from "Elements of Performance Art" by Anthony Howell and Fiona Templeton. *"Instead of acting, the performers use exercises to create the possibility of extending their own behaviour into the arena of the action presented to the public - thus the only drama the performers are involved in is that of their real lives at the time of the performance. The "drama" visible depends largely on the audience reading their own interpretation into every situation made manifest at the same time* *as they watch the performance as if it were a game watched for the first time – having both to elucidate the rules and judge how the game may be progressing.”*

A performance arises out of a workshop process and ends with a performance, not architecture. We too started with workshops, but we used our performance activity to generate the making of architectural propositions, so naturally our actions mutated into a series of notations and diagrams, which gave us clues about what to build in the model. We made our model at a scale of 1:25; a scale that helped generate performances throughout the process, including the gathering, choosing and placing of materials. We played our games at ground level, not from a place in the sky. We used many 1:25 figures and these helped us to inhabit the model.

The strategies we developed were games of consequence and chance. These encouraged us to accept accidents, which in turn spawned a wealth of surprising connections. Meaning was a thing we discovered; it was never pre-conceived. We went along with the flow of events and we referred to this as the Taoist design process. At the end of six weeks we didn’t have a design proposal, but we had a clear design language, we had a typology with many structural components, a great collection of possible strategies, a record of important events that had been part of our journey and a notable collection of architectural elements. At the completion of this process we had a clear architectural language, a mountain of possibilities and a huge collection of abstract narratives. These are the qualities we needed in order to speak confidently to a client about the choices they could make when devising a brief and how they might consider a variety of ways to develop their land.

(1) For more on this see the book, ‘The breath of Jīngshén’ published in my book *Structure and Ambiguity*.

(2) For more on this, see the section entitled ‘Material Imagination’ in my book *Structure and Ambiguity*.

Starting with Workshops

The performance exercises have been adapted from Anthony Howell and Fiona Templeton's book, *Elements of Performance Art*. This handbook was based on workshops that were held by The Theatre of Mistakes. I was a member of this company from 1975 to 1981.

1 - Principles and instructions

I am starting with exercises because they help create a confident way of being. By performing we are extending our usual behaviour pattern into an arena of action; getting decisions into our bodies in an attempt to keep this outlook when designing. The exercises may be considered in the same way as one considers the dishes named on a menu. Any selection of dishes adds up to a meal: any selection of exercises and ideas adds up to a performance. The ideas should always be commented upon. Chance may be a good method by which to choose which exercises to carry out. Consider making a performance out of a few exercises as well as a performance using as many exercises as possible.

Decide on the duration of a performance before starting.

Agree upon *on and off* areas and activities.

a. It could be agreed that the entire workshop period is "ON".
b. A specific period in the workshop could be regarded as "ON".
c. Time in a chosen place could be "ON".
d. Having chosen a place to perform, maybe some areas within it are "ON" and some are "OFF". It may aid the performance if the borders of the "ON" area are marked out with masking tape.

Agree upon a time for starting & ending
The duration of any performance may depend upon
a. The time needed to complete a task.
b. The achievement of an "endgame" intrinsic to the exercise.

c. The time of the workshop.
d. Begin after a sound chosen by another performer.
e. End if you have completed an exercise or cannot continue.
f. End if you have achieved an "endgame" intrinsic to the exercise.

2 - Conditions

Because inexperienced performers will quickly adopt a dramatic, emotional or confrontational attitude in the performance space, it is important to consolidate the conditions governing a performance at the beginning of the first few workshops. This will establish the importance of instruction and structure in a performance space and confirm that performers are being themselves, not acting.

3. Instructions and Exercises

Invent an instruction:
a. To be carried out by one performer
b. To be carried out by a specified number of performers
c. To be carried out by any number of performers

The instruction may concern:
a. The conditions of the performance
b. The action of a performer
c. The verbal or musical aspects of the performance
d. The time and/or the space in which the performance occurs
e. The equipment performers might employ.

4. Examples of instructions given for this project

Model Making Performance
A series of performances – for two or more performers. Use a long, narrow performance space. Pace tables at either end. Create a series of exercises;

verbal, action, furniture and trigger, for transporting objects from one table to the other. This will become the selection and placement of materials in the model making process.

For example Performer 1 pulls performer 2 to the materials table while talking about narrative in architecture. Performer 1 influences the choice of material performer 2 makes. Performer 2 pulls performer 1 to the model table while talking about narrative in architecture. Performer 2 influences the place where performer 2 wants to place the material.

5 - Designing by Events

Designing by events could be seen as a Taoist lifestyle. The events a designer might be engaged on are: -

1. Hunting and gathering on a daily basis; constant begging, some borrowing, a little stealing and persistent shopping, both physical and online. The simple advice is, don’t design and make anything if it can be found.
2. Visiting the site in a relaxed manner, talking to it kindly, as you would an animal that has been hurt.
3. Looking for opportunities to perform in the components of architecture; doors, windows, stairs and balconies etc.
4. Finding a special time and place to meet, like Sunday night in the dark, and talk about ancient stories and a connection with nature.
5. Inviting visitors to join in the process, especially children.
6. Finding surprising and inspiring materials which can be used in the architectural model. Collect and place these in a communal store, ready for use in the model making performances.
7. Playing constantly with documentation and notation. Video recordings and a great quantity of photos and drawings. Run a workshop on notation drawing.
8. Looking out for surprising and inspirational architectural elements, doors, windows, staircases etc. and make these at 1;25 and give them a place to live in the model.
9. Thinking of all space as performance space where a performance is taking place; a place where ordinary actions are just ordinary actions, where space

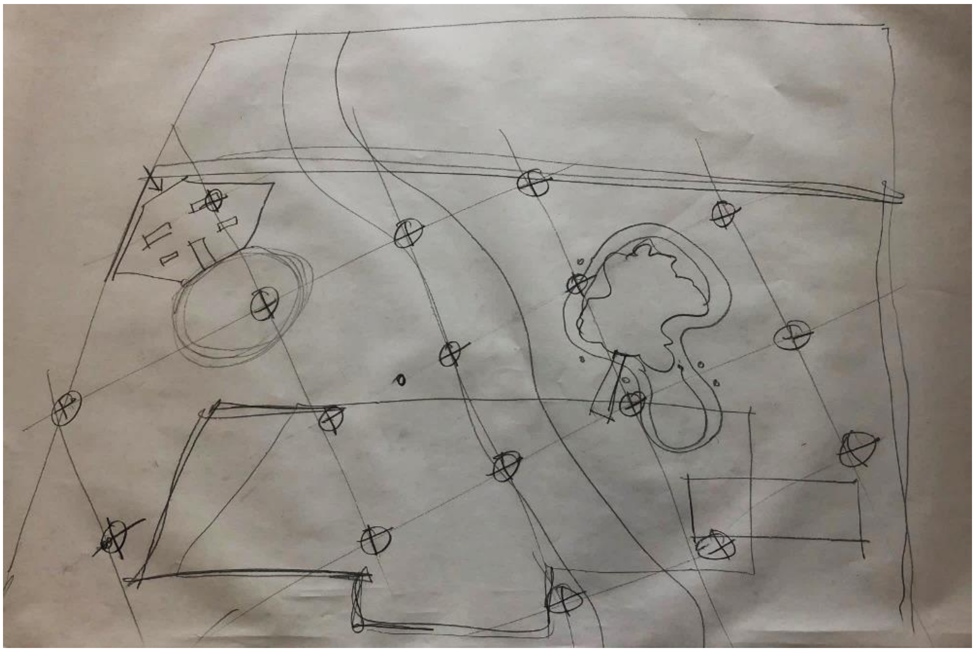
is just space, objects are just objects and its description relies on performance storytelling and notational drawings.

10. Deciding where you’d like to locate such a place on the site and gain the agreement of others in the group for its location. Develop its qualities through model making and place the final proposal in the site model.

A Series of Performances

1 – A Strategy for Developing Building and Model

The site is 110 metres by 40 metres. The building is a speculative apartment development that remains incomplete and empty.
We agreed to limit our activity in the building to the first five floors.
We agreed to make a model at 1:25. It will measure 4.4 metres by 1.6
metres; the floors being 160mm high.
We agreed to extend the ground floor atrium up to the fifth floor.
We agreed to use the centre of the building as circulation space.
We agreed to design our personal spaces as separate boxes which can
be slotted into the model from the outside.



2 – Interior Function Performance

This is a diagram drawing exercise.
Each performer draws a rectangular space – scale 1:25 representing five metres wide and eight metres deep.
Choose a domestic function that has obvious performance qualities, such as a kitchen or a bathroom. In each of the following exercises design the layout of an apartment, but do the following:-

a. Increase the size of the chosen function and reduce other functions.
For example; allocate most of the space to the bathroom.
b. Place your chosen function in an unlikely place.
For example; place the kitchen by the entrance door so that the cook Faces a visitor as they enter.

Discuss the design strengths and the performance strengths.

3 – Architectural Element Performance

This is a verbal descriptive exercise to practice using the word performance to describe an architectural proposition.
Architectural elements are - wall, stair, balcony, door, window.

Describe an installation where an architectural element performs a significant function.
Example - A large staircase now performs where a small staircase down to a basement apartment previously performed.

4 – Furniture Performance

This is a verbal descriptive exercise to practice using the word performance to describe the function of a piece of furniture.
Examples of furniture – bookcase, cabinet, bar, table, chair.
Describe an installation where a piece of furniture performs a significant function.
Example – A large table performs all the functions of living room, dining room and workplace and, because it can be wheeled onto the Patio, it performs as an outdoor dining table.

5 – Performance in Architecture Performance

Ask a dancer or a performer to choose an architectural or interior location that inspires them to dance or perform. Invite the group to the performance. Make a model at 1:25 of the place chosen.

6 - Agree a Strategy for Developing the Landscape

We agreed to develop proposals for the landscape around the building by a workshop process based on performance or game-like exercises.

7 - Performance Sentences

In one sentence, using the word performance at least once, describe a social function you would like to see on the site and describe which performance actions intrinsic to it attract you to this suggestion.
For example; I suggest we initiate a street market performance, because I like the three distinct stages of the day; the setting up performance, the buying and selling performance and the taking down performance.
The sentence should not describe a design concept nor should it describe a complex abstract narrative concerning the arrangement of architectural objects and components. It should be a place of work or play activity relevant to the speculative apartment building. Places such as a garden, café, bar, gallery, children's play centre or gym.

8 - Performance Photographs

Research existing architectural installations with a strong element of performance and share images of them with the group.

9 - Performance Diagrams

a. Draw a diagram of a social function associated with a performance activity that might suit the landscape around the building. This could be a notation drawing or the type of drawing associated with a plan or a section.
b. Draw a diagram of a series of performance activities that might combine together and suit the landscape around the building.
c. Draw a diagram of the edges of this landscape when the central space is left empty; inviting non-specified performances.

10 - Preparations for Model Making Performance

Contribute to the group's shared collection of sheet materials. These could be found or created and be suitable for a model of 1:25 scale.
These could include metals, plastics, acrylic, glass or wood, all of which could be treated, painted, burnt etc. Fabric of great variety and fabric applied to sheet materials. Cardboard, including boxes with its graphics intact. Paper of any number of textures and with graphic or photographic images applied. Paper fixed to sheet materials.

11 - Shared Drawing Exercises

This exercise uses an axonometric diagram on paper as a base and coloured crayons to contribute to the base drawing. Using a selection of coloured crayons, draw a social function with a high degree of performance activity on a part of the ground floor area. Pass the drawing to the person on your right. Draw another social function associated with a high degree of performance activity on the paper you have received. Keep passing it on until four people have contributed. The fifth person to receive the paper describes what they imagine the social functions to be.

It is important that participants keep their descriptions short and push their imagination to give their descriptions a strong sense of reality.
Participants vote by a show of hands after each description.

12 - Named Functions Exercise

This exercise is a repeat of the previous exercise, but participants write in pen the name of the function they have drawn. At the end of the process, the fifth person changes the names around and ascribes functions to proposals that were previously named differently.

13 - Ancient story telling

This session is based on the premise that design is a profound, dynamic, concentrated and sensitive activity and its practice should receive as much care and attention as an opera singer or concert pianist would give their preparations for performance.

Choose a time and place different to the workshop time and place.
For example, outside, in the dark, in a comfortable location.
This is a special place for storytelling, the kind of time and place chosen by grandmother for telling the children tales about how the world began, tales of heroism and danger, ambition and initiation.
All participants should be given a present, the talk should be conducted in whispers and the subject should connect with a way of life found only in cultures that live close to nature.
In our experiment we conducted a commentary and discussion on the story, The Breath of Jingshén, by Peter Stickland.

14 - Design process game

The design process game requires a performance space of approximately four metres square, a table and chair, plenty of A3 paper and a box of crayons. All participants are to bring a paper copy of one of their drawings which best describes their work. In this example there are eight participants, if there are twelve in total, divide into two groups of six and so on for larger numbers.

a. Performer one shows everyone their selected drawing and then they sit at the table and quickly draw a diagram of this drawing. They show this diagram to everyone and, after clearing paper and crayons from the space, they perform a homage to the spirit of this diagram using actions and words or sounds.

b. Performer two carries out an identical set of actions.

c. Performers one and two repeat their performance together, adapting their homage in order to establish a relationship with each other. On completion they place paper and crayons on the table and draw a diagram together, attempting to reflect the spirit of their shared performance. Performers should discuss how this drawing is to be carried out; they could share one crayon and draw together, they could work from opposite sides of the table or the same side, they could make a mark alternately or draw independently etc. Then, holding up the diagram, each performer explains what kind of design their diagram might be used for.

d. Performers three and four repeat this sequence of actions, as do performers five and six and seven and eight.

e. For the finale, all performers line up with their final duet diagrams and in turn tell a story which features all the subjects that featured in the explanations given by the individual participants.

A Series of Seminars

Seminar 1 - Creating the Site Model

Since the site visit students have been making a 1:25 model of the first, second and third floors of the building.

We put together tables so the site at 1:25 would fit on the tables and prepared an even base so that work on the site could begin.
We drew the site and the ground floor plan of the building and assembled the model of the building on the site model.

Ground Floor Decisions

It was agreed that the entire ground area of the site and the building would be a collaborative design exercise carried out by all the participants.

Second Floor Decisions

It was agreed that the second floor would be given over to a single user, but we would not make any design proposals for this floor during the six-week course. For the sake of making a design gesture for the model, it was agreed that the perimeter would be a continuous deep balcony with dense foliage. Only the foliage would appear on the model. All participants were invited to invent their own story about what happens on this floor.

Third Floor Decisions

It was agreed that the third floor be allocated to apartments for each of the students. A drawing of the third floor was made and students selected the area they would work on. They will design and make a model to fit into the group model.

Seminar 2
Journeys, Processes, Reflections and Stories

This is a group activity and concerns the collaborative decisions that will enable the design development of the ground area.

Lay out all the previous drawings so that each person can state what elements they would like to see incorporated into the proposal. Have a group discussion about these and see if any consensus can be reached.
You might want to discuss particular conditions such as the site boundary, the corners of the site and the entrances etc.
Think about how the architectural elements can be made and where to find the relevant materials needed to make it.
Think about what else you can find, such as disused models.
Search the internet and do group design shopping, buying readymade objects and materials to use on the site.
Keep flexible and frequently change your mind.
Follow any strange idea and see where it takes you.
Think of an ordinary thing as something marvellous.
Let your imagination play risky games and change scale.
Let the world tell you what to do, follow your intuition.
Anything can be the unknown waiting to be discovered.
The innocent or naïve question will take you to fresh places.
Look for a totally new way of working and trust chaos.
Increase your sensitivity and charge up your energy.
Don’t reject anything because you suspect it’s risky.
Describe the process, reflect on the journey, talk about an installation as if you are telling a story and give the installation a name.
Tell a story about all the installations.
The objects that arose for us from this exercise were; a waving path through the site from front to back, a series of huge, centre pivot swing doors on the perimeter, a circular tower at the crossroads corner and a slope with sofas on it at the shopping corner.

Seminar 3 - Dreaming the Site

Consider the following strategies: -

A palimpsest process where a sequence of decisions is made, where subsequent decisions cover up the previous decisions.

Describe the various actions as stories and then talk about the site as a layering of stories.

Think about the proposed installations as a dance of elements and describe their tempo and rhythm.

Discuss the advantages of a structural grid of elements that dictate subsequent decisions.

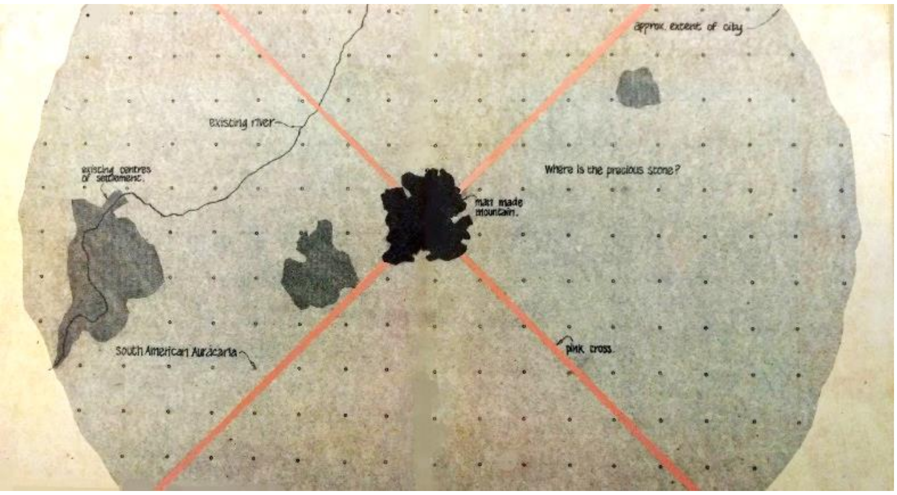
Decide which actions cannot be undone.

Decide which elements are nature and which are manmade?

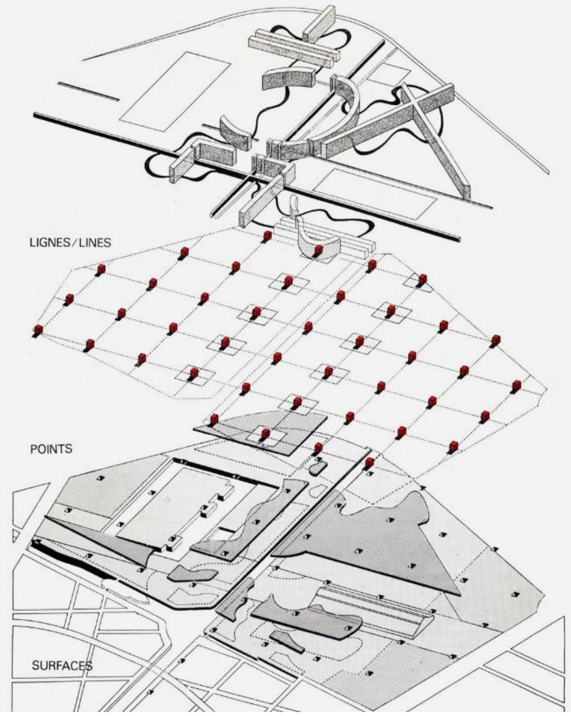
Discuss colour and texture.

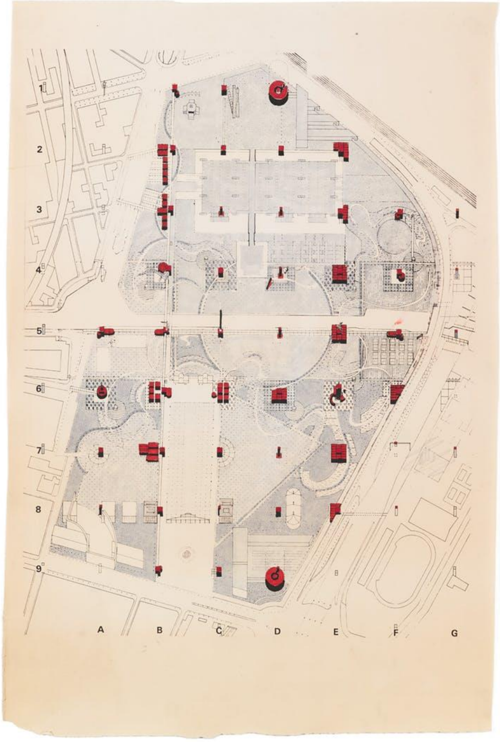
We discussed my project for a new city. My response to the brief was to produce a set of instructions.

1. Select a site encompassing existing areas of settlement.
2. Build a 1,000-foot-high mountain in the centre of the site.
3. Construct a cross of pink flagstones over the entire site.
4. Plant monkey puzzle trees in a grid at one-mile intervals.
5. Ask someone to secretly bury a precious stone in the site.
6. Have only poets and musicians on the planning authority.


approx. extent of city
existing river
existing centres of settlement.
Where is the precious stone?
man made mountain.
South American Auracaria
pink cross.

We discussed Bernard Tschumi’s strategy for Parc de la Villette.





Agreed Process and Events

We drew a diagram of the site and agreed these decisions.
A grid would be established on the diagonal.
There would be five nexus points in any one direction.
Players can, at will, chose and place objects at these points.
The circular building became a mountain and changed position.
One Player wanted to build a bar around the mountain.
The sofa mountain moved to the crossroads corner.

Seminar 4 - Designing by Events

This is a note about the notion of events, previously outlined in Chapter 2, section 3. It wasn’t actually a seminar; it was a continuous invitation to design according to "The Tao of hunting and gathering.” We rigorously carried out the activities required by those designing by events. We welcomed visitors as participants and audience. We invited small children to play with and adapt the model. We talked about ancient stories in the dark. We visited a Taoist monk to discuss Feng Shui. We searched the city for pots and found a ceramicist at the university who generously contributed to our model. We shopped at the College art store daily, regularly scouring the internet for new and interesting materials. Our photographic documentation was extensive.

The idea about finding things rather than designing things is crucial to this exercise, because it employs chance in a very positive way and what we find is often more inspiring than the things a ‘sit-down’ design process would give us. We are probably the first designers to use mushrooms as trees and this is because we were deeply attuned to how the trees should feel and we saw their usefulness straight away. Being highly sensitised in this way and feeling a little mischievous, we could easily make the connections that suited our needs. The spirit of our activity, our engagement in this notion of event, was a lively affair which allowed marvellous accidents to occur and helped us make remarkable choices. This is designing outside, on the move, walking about, looking for trouble. By comparison, designing on a computer is dead, because you can only do what is in your head or copy something others have done. The event seen like this is daily life and the most useful evidence of the way the spirit of Tao can be used when designing.

Seminar 5 - Beginnings, Middles and Ends.

Consider the design process as a continual dance of beginnings, middles and ends.
The beginning is hugely important. You can do anything at the beginning because the responsibilities are few and the actions don't yet have significant repercussions. At the beginning you can be intuitive, unprejudiced, playful and risky, and it is best to engage these qualities at the beginning, not after you have filled your mind with didactic research. A designer quickly becomes conscious of their actions, a quality that is characteristic of the middle phase, so allow the beginning to be everything a beginning can be. Stay adrift, spellbound, innocent and explorative for as long as possible. Don't be anxious about not having something to show, something that you can describe and be certain about. Let the unknown reign until nothing new is being discovered. As Jalal Uddin Rumi suggested, "Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment."

The middle is the making phase and if things have gone well in the beginning phase you will have plenty of energy to launch yourself into a time of purposeful action. You must continue to work openly, without becoming too critical, but you can begin to feel that things are right or not quite right. There is plenty of work to do gathering your components, editing your decisions and dancing with all the endless changes. You must remain intuitive, unprejudiced, playful and risky, but little responsibilities start to emerge, you begin to orchestrate the materials and become aware how the language is developing.

The final phase is conscious decision time when you reflect on what you have and where you have been. You will probably need to clear the space so that you can get a clear picture of the important things and what are remnants leftover from undeveloped activities. You need to see how things are acting and what the relationships between things are. Talk is more urgent and purposeful as you seek to give the abstract language of objects a voice, so you can communicate with others. You reflect on your journey and prepare the presentation.

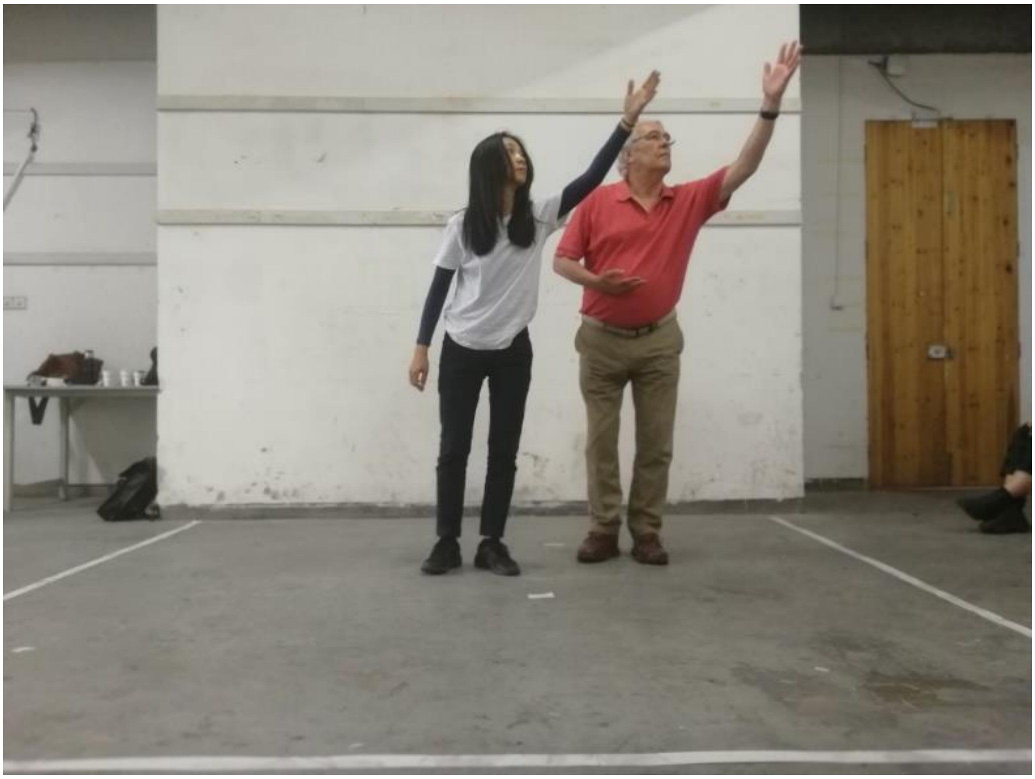
Once you are familiar with this notion of the three phases, you can begin to recognise that the three phases each have a beginning, middle and end. The beginning of the beginning, the middle of the beginning and the end of the beginning. The beginning of the middle, the middle of the middle and the end of the middle. The beginning of the end, the middle of the end and the end of the end. One could go on and on deeper into the molecular structure.

Final note

The time period for our three phases was roughly equal, but this isn't always the case. It is important to recognise when you have reached the end of a phase, as you may have to make considerable changes to your practice. To be stuck in a phase is disastrous. Our glide from beginning to middle was seamless and the energy of the beginning carried us naturally into the making phase. Then, after two weeks in the middle phase, we realised we could not develop the unconscious process any further; we needed a new impulse. We decided to go and visit a Taoist monk, in the belief that he would provide us with some expansive connections and the benefits of his knowledge about Feng Shui; it was a dream we had. In reality he told us that he could not contribute because we did not have a brief from a client. This response was the opposite to our quest. So, we made him our client and built him a new temple on the site in the most minimal, rationalist manner, using western geometry as its starting point. This kind of surprising switch reminds me of the exploits of the Mullah Nasrudin. The singular, modernist quality of our temple was the perfect companion to the playground, something that was its opposite and an equal partner to the work we had done via the performance workshops.

Photographs of the Performance Architecture Workshops

Duplication – for two or more performers, facing down the same line.
Duplicate exactly the position and actions of the performer in your sight line.



Words

One performer says a word. The second performer repeats the word and adds another word, either before or after the original word. The first performer repeats the first two words and adds a further word either before or after them – and so on.

Action

a. Walk so slowly, your movement is hardly recognised.
b. Make rapid single short movements to walk forward, turning your head 90 degrees after each movement of the body.

Furniture

Select a piece of furniture and carry it off the ground.

Trigger

When you contact a piece of furniture start using different verbal and action instructions.

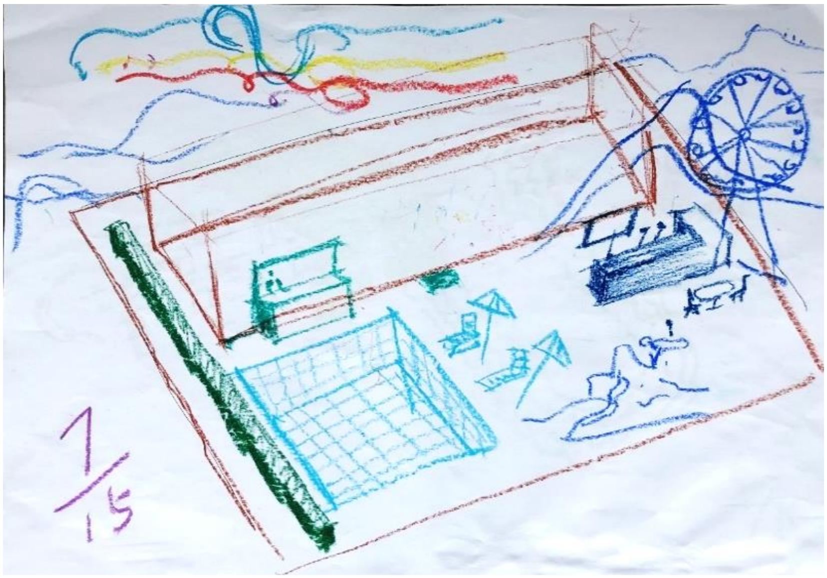
Performance in architecture performances

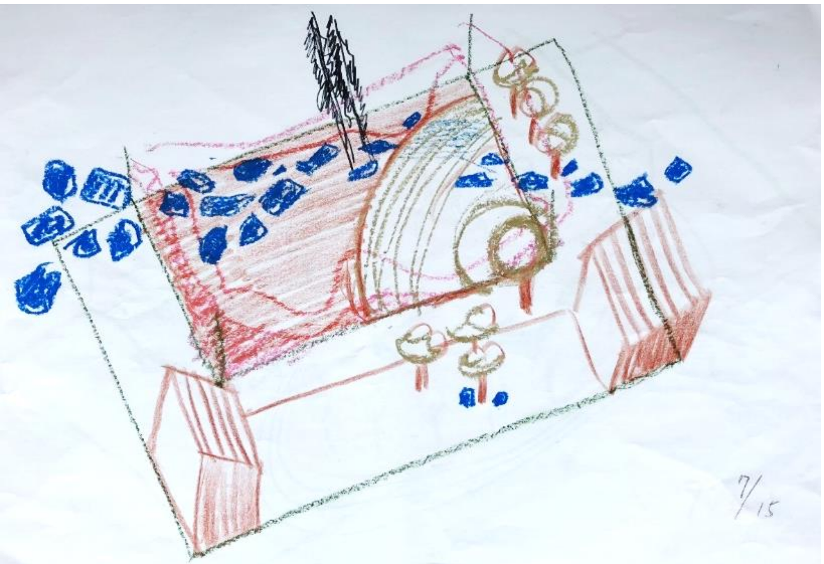
Ask someone to choose an architectural or interior location that inspires them to dance or perform. Invite the group to watch the performance.

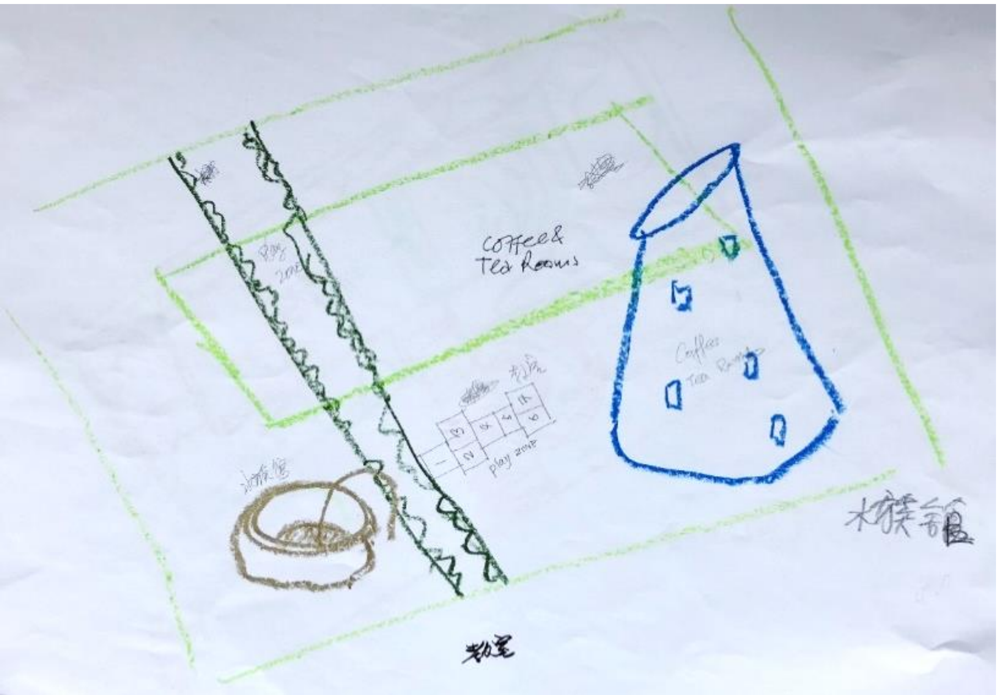
Next to the campus was this site, an unfinished apartment block, carelessly put together and left neglected when the project ran into trouble. Who would know what to do with this land to bring it back to life. It was the most difficult problem we found, so we chose it for our project.

Shared drawing exercises

Draw an axonometric diagram of the site. Using a selection of coloured crayons, draw a social function with a high degree of performance activity on a part of the ground floor area. Pass the drawing to the person on your right. Draw another social function associated with a high degree of performance activity on the paper you have received. Keep passing it on until four people have contributed. The fifth person to receive the paper describes what they imagine the social functions to be.





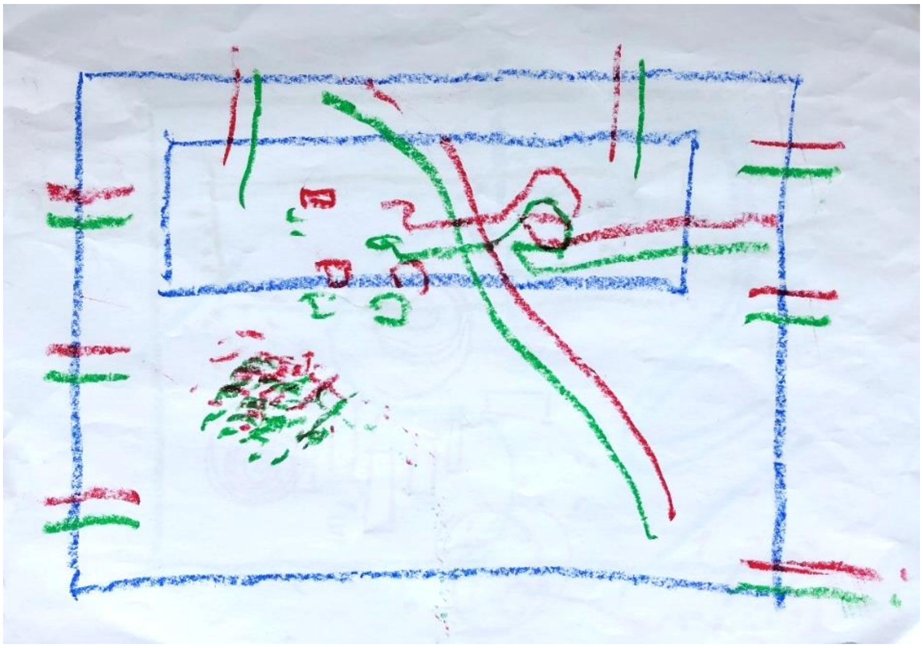


Design process game

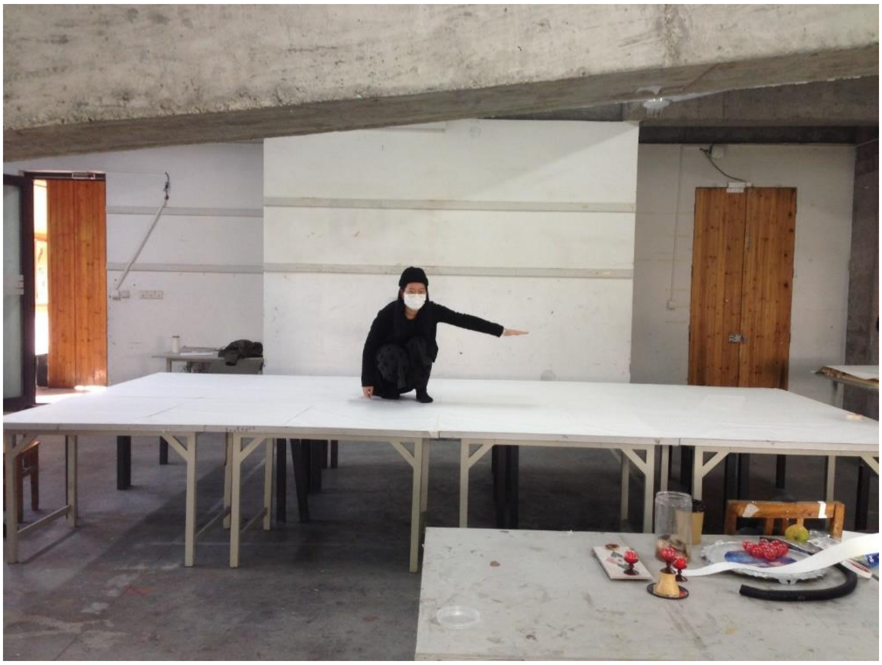
a. Performer one shows everyone one of their drawing. They sit at the table and draw a diagram of this drawing. They show this diagram to everyone and then perform a homage to the spirit of this diagram using actions and words or sounds.

b. Performer two carries out an identical set of actions.

c. Performers one and two repeat their performance together, adapting their homage in order to establish a relationship with each other. On completion they place paper and crayons on the table and draw a diagram together, attempting to reflect the spirit of their shared performance. Performers should discuss how this drawing is to be carried out; they could share one crayon and draw together, they could work from opposite sides of the table or the same side, they could make a mark alternately or draw independently.

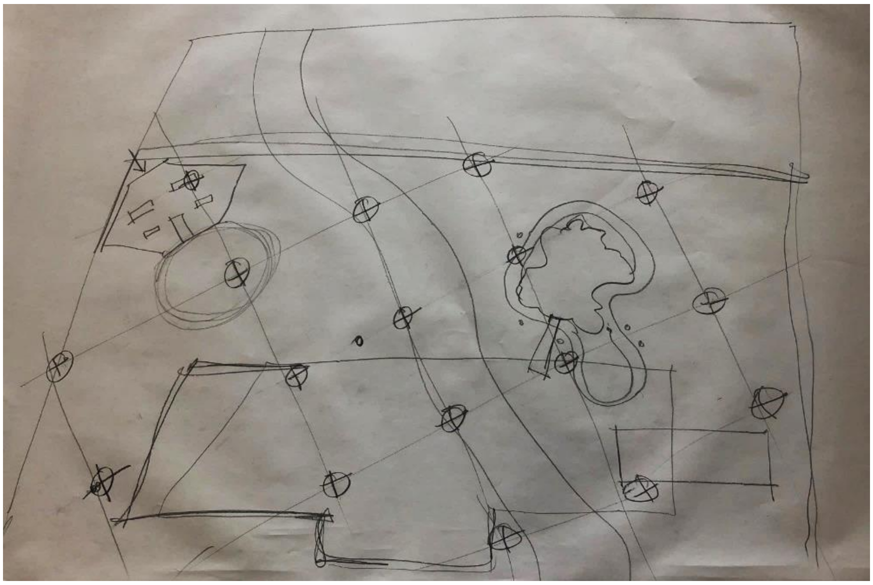


While preparing a base table for the model, one participant performs the height of the model.

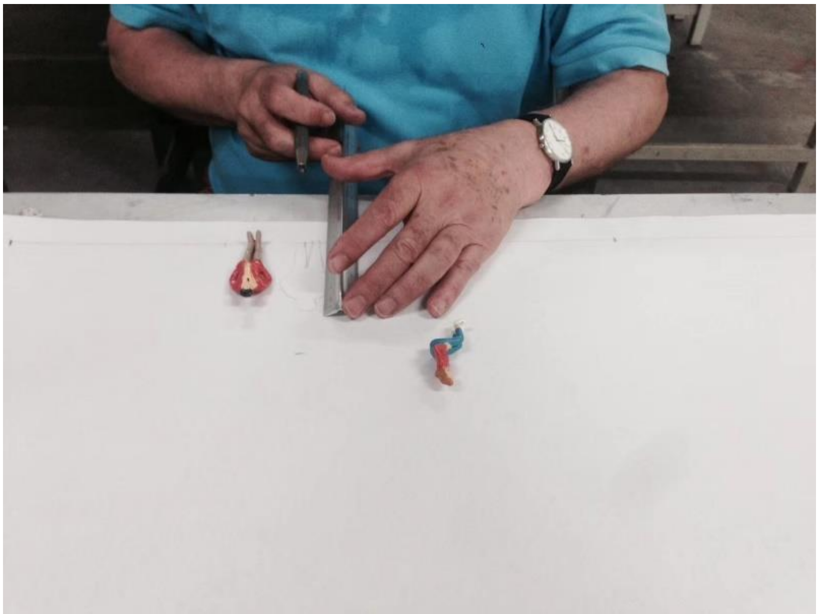


Agreed process and events

We drew a diagram of the site and agreed these decisions.
A grid would be established on the diagonal.
There would be five nexus points in any one direction.
Players can, at will, chose and place objects at these points.



Describe the process, reflect on the journey, use people to help you design for people, talk about an installation as if you are telling a story and give the installation a name.



The innocent or naïve question will take you to fresh places. Look for a totally new way of working and trust chaos.

Increase your sensitivity and charge up your energy.
Don’t reject anything because you suspect it’s risky.

Think of an ordinary thing as something marvellous.

Let your imagination play risky games and change scale.

Let the world tell you what to do, follow your intuition.

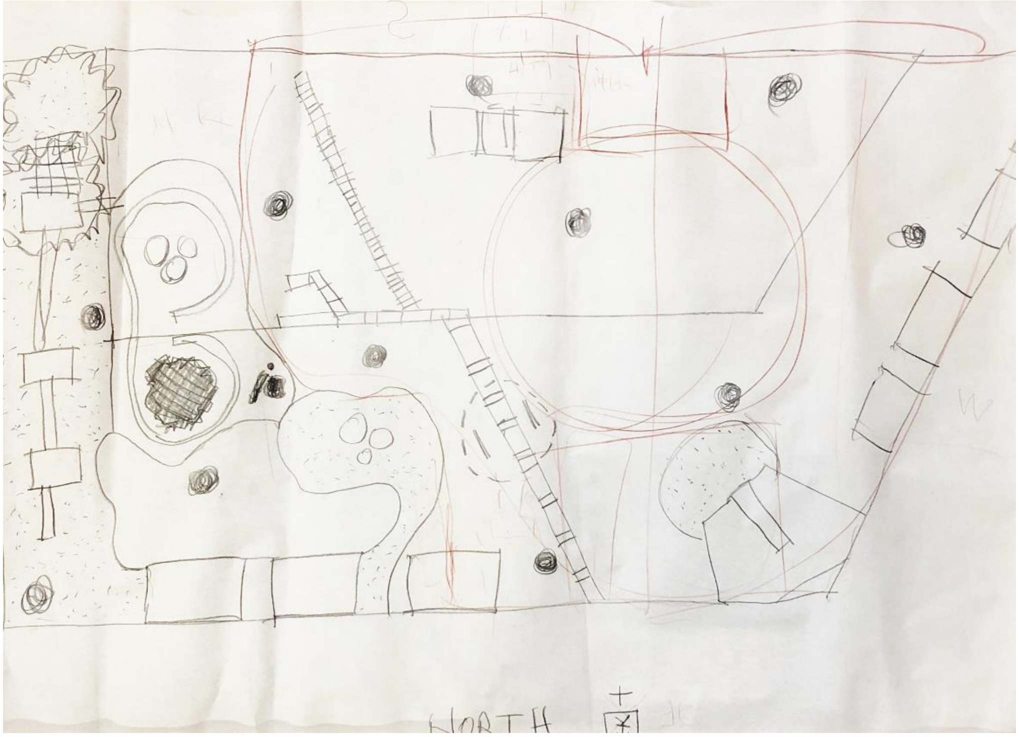
Anything can be the unknown waiting to be discovered.

Search the internet and enjoy group design shopping,
buying readymade objects and people to live on the site.
Keep flexible and frequently change your mind.

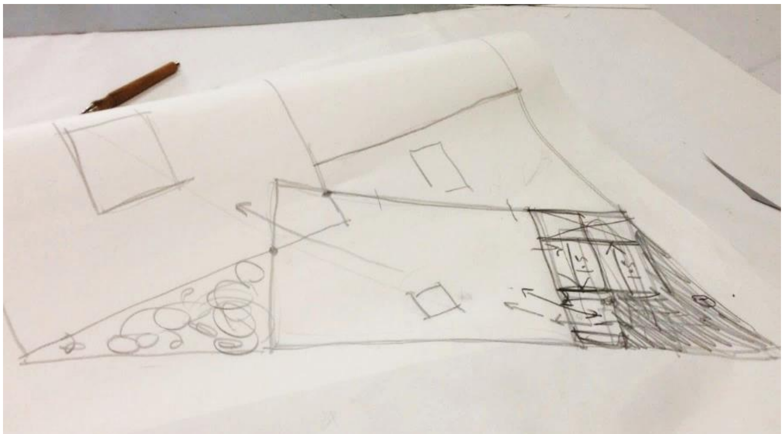
Every process goes through the beginning of the beginning,
the middle of the beginning and the end of the beginning.
The beginning of the middle, the middle of the middle
and the end of the middle.
The beginning of the end, the middle of the end and the end of the end.
After two weeks in the middle phase, we realised we were at the end of the
middle and we needed a new impulse to move into the beginning of the end.

It is very important to make marvellous mistakes.
We went to see the Taoist monk, in the belief that he would give us expansive connections. He told us that he could not contribute because we did not have a brief from a client.
This was the opposite to our quest, so, we made him our client.

The monk drew out the conditions governing his temple.
Our marvellous mistake took us to the beginning of the end.



We decided to build our monk friend a temple in the most minimal,
rationalist manner, using western geometry as its starting point.
This was the end; we could not go back to chance.

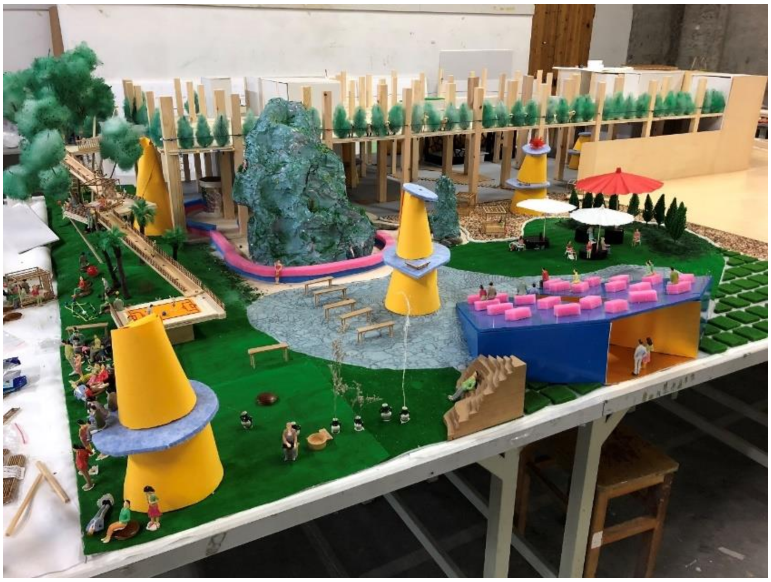


This decision changed everything on the project. We rearranged buildings, transformed our practice and initiated a completely new way of looking at it.

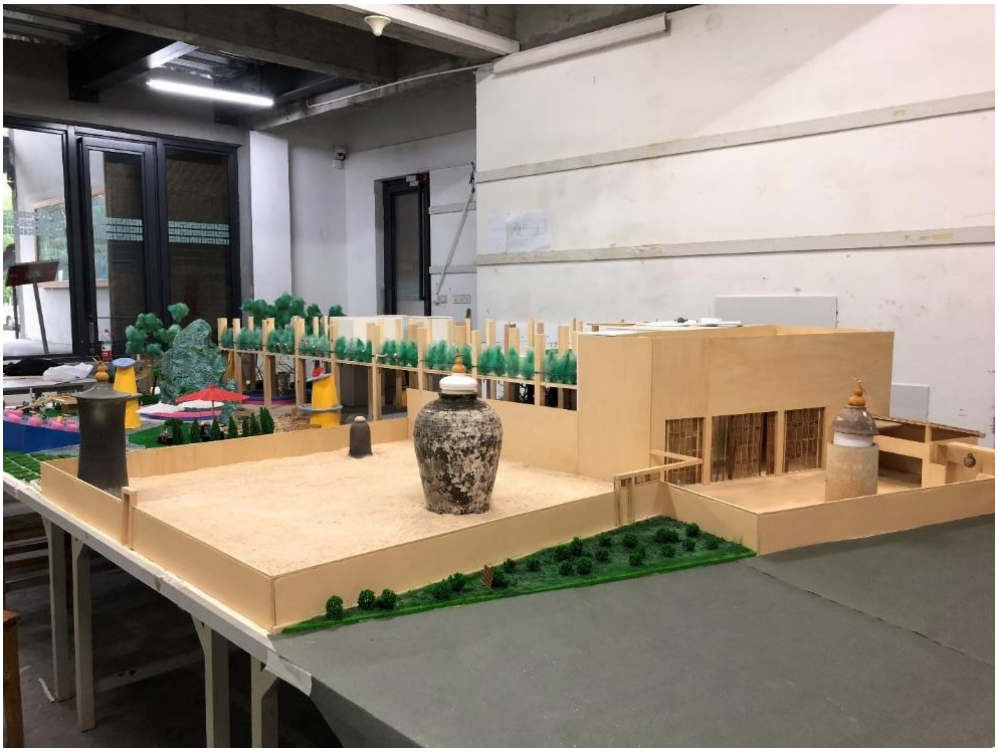
HELMO
ParCafé

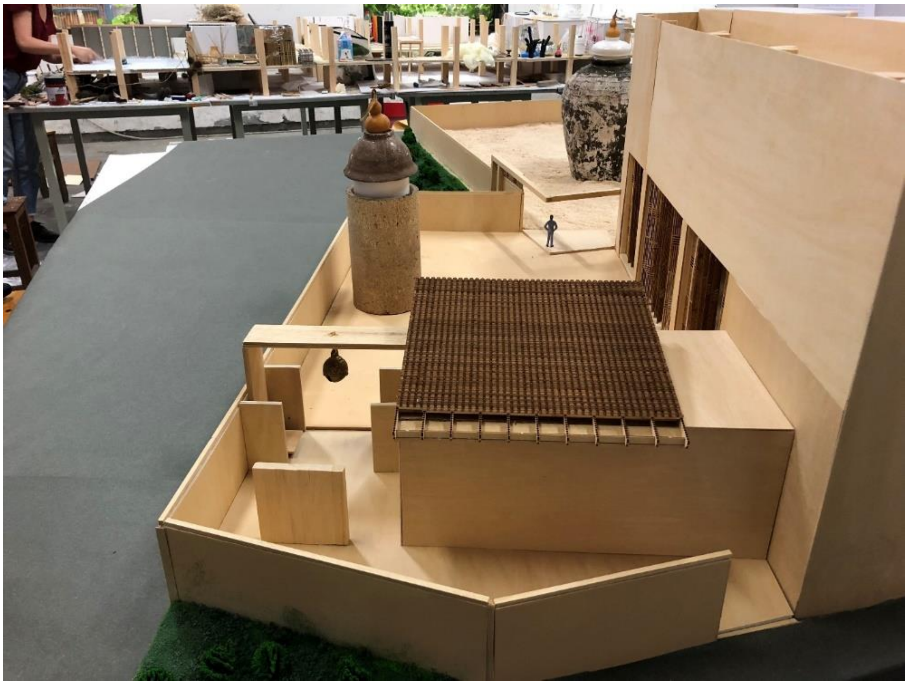
A subtitle for our work was
Events, Instructions and Processes.
We imagine that designing by events is a Taoist lifestyle.
The events a designer might be engaged on are; hunting and gathering on a daily basis; constant begging, some borrowing, a little stealing and the help of anyone who would like to join the game.
The simple advice is, don't design and make anything if it can be found.

Invite the visitors in and let the children play

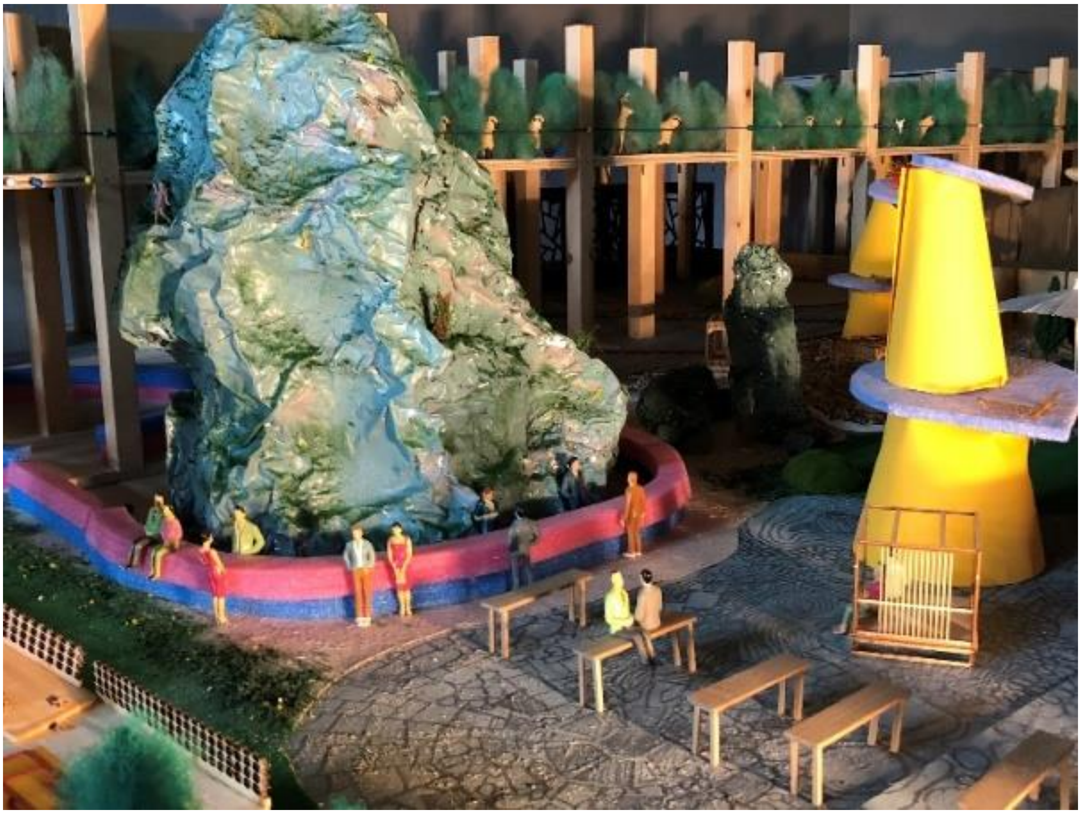


We created a series of social spaces without believing that the functions we had initiated would ever become the brief for the project. We are simply exploring language. The left-hand side is complex, natural, free and open. The right-hand side is simple, structured, manufactured and enclosed. The left side rises up to the building; including a walkway directly to the first floor. On the right side the building façade material has changed to wood and this flows down and envelops the landscape. There is a single use for the first floor which reads as a continuous line of trees; thereby ending the realm of nature. This is our language and we can discuss any number of social functions that will work well within this language.





Once we had agreed to treat the right side in the opposite way to the left, creating a kind of Ying/Yang dynamic, we had a clear language for designing all its constituent parts.



One of our greatest pleasures was playing with the figures and animals. This kept us tuned into the inhabitation of the site and we saw the space as a kind of movie set where all kinds of events were taking place.

PART TWO

Preparation for inhabitation
The Tao of Naming Place

Introduction

This text is written as an introduction to an environmental design project that will be carried out at China Academy of Art in Hangzhou.
In it I have borrowed ideas and words from three authors and I wish to make my debt to them known at the beginning. My purpose here is not to write an academic article, but simply to offer a reference point for my Chinese students. I doubt whether any of these books have been translated into Chinese, so there is little point in quoting specific passages and giving detailed references. I would like to applaud the research and erudition of these accomplished authors.

The chapter called *The Taoist Garden* is based on a text about Taoism and the naming of places in the Chinese garden in Maggie Keswick's book, *The Chinese Garden*. Published by Frances Lincoln; ISBN: 071122031X and ISBN: 978-0711220317

The chapter called *Taming the Landscape* makes reference to John Murray's book, *Reading the Gaelic Landscape*. Published by Whittles Publishing;
ISBN: 1849951004 and ISBN: 978-1849951005

The chapter called *Speaking with Names* is based on Keith Basso's book, *Wisdom Sits in Places*. This extraordinary book is an ethnographic study of landscape and language among the western Apache Indians of North America. Published by University of New Mexico Press. ISBN: 0-8263-1723-5 and ISBN: 0-8263-1724-3

时间：2018 年 11 月 21 号 4:00PM
地址：中国美术学院象山校区
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Peter Stickland 是行为表演式建筑先锋创始者，他将与三位实验教学导师及美院 20 位学生开始

拼贴交响乐的开端

行为表演式建筑叙事

Peter Stickland 曾任英国伦敦艺术大学切尔西艺术学院建筑与空间设计系主任，并加入伦敦著名且具深远影响力的“过失剧场”进行世界巡回艺术表演，同时与 Red Hu , Sky Xue 和 Nylas Chou 三位艺术家在中国一起进行“行为表演式建筑”的工作。

I have called this project *The Tao of Naming Place* because I want to associate the references, I make with ancient habitation practices in the East. I have no way of verifying that China was deeply involved with the naming of place in their ancient landscape, I simply presume they did because it was widely practised everywhere else in the world. The important aspect is that the spirit that created this profound relationship with the landscape is implicit in the philosophy of Taoism. It shares the same attitude to nature that triggers cultures to name their places, it is the guiding light that inspires the making of gardens and it is behind the importance given to place names and poetry in the garden.

I encourage my students to go out and find more evidence of the custom of naming places in their country. I would like them to feel an affinity with these practices and forge an intimate relationship with them. I suspect that the attitude they promote may prove crucial in the near future if we are to provide more grace to architectural and planning ideologies than has been in evidence in recent years. The reason I chose to use the word Tao in the title, is to encourage my students to connect the spirit of naming practices to the spirit of Taoist philosophy. I hope they will find ways to develop new ideas about urban living born of their own heritage rather than borrow ideas from outmoded consumer led models.

To accommodate this spirit we will make our physical presence on the project site the focus of our attention and regard our inhabitation as an event, a subtle engaging journey of change and celebration. In terms of architecture's language there are many formal elements that can contain the notion of change and event. The gates, the archways, the views, the doors, the lobbies, the corridors and the walls are all great vehicles for 'theatre'. In our daily life, we perform our narrative walks unconsciously - they are a theme that goes on underneath the surface of seemingly routine life. The spaces we make can activate or concretise our feelings; it can be engaging and meaningful and even act as a metaphor of our inner processes. The role of these spaces is to 'place' the imagination, to provide discrete and differentiated places for our dreams and narratives to unfold and deepen.

An interesting example of architecture giving shape to thoughts can be found in a book by Frances Yates called, *The Art of Memory*. In this book, she describes the antique study of Rhetoric, where sequences of interior space were committed to memory in order to remember a sequence of thoughts and talk about them. In this method, the details of a long speech are placed on a sequence of places in an invented building. These places are memorised. This done, as soon as the memory of the facts needs to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various narrative details retrieved from the building. We have to think of ancient orators moving in imagination through their memory building whilst making a speech; drawing from memorised places the images placed upon them. The method ensures that the points are remembered in the right order, since the order is fixed by the sequence of places in the building.

Architecture sits nicely in the memory and does not prevent us thinking while we recall it. The naming of a space, its clarity and its orderly arrangement were the first activities to undertake. Memory was offered without effort by the architecture. If we walk through our project site and name the places it will sit easily in our memory.

Being from somewhere is better than being from nowhere. Naming the landscape and creating a sense of place is what our ancestors did. They wished to forge a sympathetic relationship with their land rather than live in an unknown environment that threatened them. The best example I have found comes from Apache tribes in North America. Through telling their stories about significant places, they became rooted in a series of social and cultural soils that made their shared identity a possibility and gave them a profound sense of self. This ancient culture could make their places meaningful because they had a communal body of ‘local knowledge’ which they mapped and named and shared in stories. In the telling of these stories they established conceptions of wisdom, notions of morality and models for living with benevolence. The system relied on the entire community knowing these stories. They faithfully remembered the place names and carried clear images of these places in their head. Their way of life required them to travel regularly across the entire length and breadth of their landscape. All were taught that their memories should never fade. This activity was more than a pleasant pastime, for by speaking of these places the Apache established a language that helped them deal with the present and it enabled them to interpret and share the past.

At the end of this book I provide a possible approach to making a project out of these concerns. It is about finding ways to create a sense of place and I would suggest that this is a very different discipline to designing as it is currently practised by architects and urban designers. As Albert Camus remarked - *A sense of place is not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do*.
So, while you are reading these pages, I would like you to keep in mind this list of outcomes for we might aim to achieve them in a project.

1. Bring life to our dying cities
2. Learn how to create habitations that promote a sense of belonging.
3. Develop a meaningful language about place in our cities.
4. Find ways to help us feel more sensitive to our community.
5. Improve our self-confidence and give us a sense of development.
6. Nurture feelings of inclusion by creating urban stories.
7. Conceive of architecture by walking and talking on location.
8. Create connections with the past, both recent and ancient.
9. Establish many new approaches without mimicking the old ways.
10. Find new materials and technologies that aid our pursuit.

The Taoist Garden

I will begin this essay with my edited version of Maggie Keswick's texts on Taoism and the importance of words in the Chinese garden.

For the Taoists, the word Tao came to symbolise 'the totally of all things.' It was more than just a path to follow, it was the whole process. In gardens, the concept of the Tao – always purposely vague and ill-defined – was embodied by huge, complex standing stones, which they placed to best effect by a carefully considering the proportions between order and chaos. The Taoist aim was to become one with the eternal shifting patterns of the seasons and to follow the way of the water. Like water, they do not impose a course on the landscape and the detached attitude it suggests helps the follower to overcome fear and uncertainty; they go with the flow.

The designers of gardens claimed similar ambitions, allowing them to follow nature's inherent pattern. When following the Tao, to gain you must yield, to grasp you must let go and to win you must lose. Garden designers, playing this type of intuitive, contradictory approach rather than following a precise formula, used the power of contrasts to great effect. This is the idea of *wu-wei*, which means no action contrary to nature. A garden was expected to flow with the soft curves of nature, become a haven of inner strength and invite a passive state of wisdom, free from the struggles of the world beyond its walls.

Despite the Taoist's insistence on a simple life in unity with Nature, many elaborate and extravagant gardens were built in its name and the spirit of Tao became harder to find. Perhaps the truest expression was reached when Taoist gardeners discovered a beautiful process which required them to find a beautiful vista by chance and then build a small pavilion from which to view their gem of nature. This notion of the 'borrowed landscape' was alleged to have more aesthetic value than a designed setting and it turned the natural landscape into a garden. Literary groups began meet in these pavilions to take part in poetry contests and by the fifth century the fashion of expressing Taoist feelings for nature in profoundly moving verse had begun, so setting in motion a long literary tradition that is an essential part of the Chinese garden.

Accompanying this passion for poetry was the custom of giving expressive names to pavilions and gardens, including all the separate parts of a garden. The poems and names were carved into stone and became an essential component of the garden. An inscription over a doorway, along a corridor or next to an entrance was expected to name the place and also hint at the feelings and function that the place inspired. Black tablets over a door were meant to impart a moral or offer a poetic description of the space a visitor was entering.

Apart from writing, there are other narrative components in the Chinese garden, such as sculptures. These mostly depict highly stylised animals that have an allegorical status, making reference to the richness of past myths, but they do not contribute a narrative that is comparable to the carefully chosen name over a pavilion entrance. Such a name, created with fine calligraphy, did far more than suggest a use, it put the experience of entering a pavilion into an historic and poetic context. The purpose was to engage the mind of a visitor and place it in relationship with all the natural forms around. It was a play on the senses.

A Chinese garden is liberally scattered with written signposts, just as a Chinese painting is the setting for the artist's emblems together with various comments and short poems. These additions of calligraphy on a painting are understood to enhance and develop the subject matter and provide a certificate of authority and venerability. They increase the depth and meaning of a painting and can even expand the frame of reference by providing a commentary on related historical perceptions. They become a palimpsest of meaning, without which the painting was regarded as incomplete. The inscriptions in a Chinese garden are perfectly analogous to the additions of calligraphy to be found in a painting.

There are three kinds of writing found in gardens. These are, names, inscribed couplets and the appreciative poems of visitors, which were often written to commemorate particularly enjoyable days or elegant gatherings. Some wealthy patrons actively sort to be immortalised in such 'occasional verses' by throwing extravagant parties. After performing some significant act, their name would appear in a poem and engraved onto a black polished stone tablet and laid into the garden wall. As the trees grew and the pavilions aged, so the historical richness of the texts increased until the references they eluded to had become a kind of labyrinth, a mental maze of scholarly interpretations and beautifully crafted metaphors.

Accompanying these poetic commentaries were a series of carefully chosen names which were not descriptive labels of places, but rather signposts on a profoundly aesthetic walk. They worked like chapter headings in a book and contained artistic visions and messages. Here are some examples. ‘The Gorge of Dripping Verdure’, ‘The Grotto of Secret Clouds’, ‘The Wind of Autumn over the Ocean of the World’. These signposts were expected to promote a suitable mood, create an apt metaphor and make discreet reference to classical literature. These elegant names showed an understanding of traditional culture, with all its set associations, and they added new insights to old meanings, thereby extending the tradition and keeping it alive. Naming was a delightful, meaningful and serious game.

Maggie Keswick goes into a detailed description of how tricky and amusing it is to create names for a garden. She uses as reference a famous chapter in the “*Dream of the Red Chamber”* by Hung Lou Meng. The protagonists, the Chia family, are inventing inscriptions for a garden they have just completed for their daughter, Yuan-ch’un. She has recently become an Imperial concubine. The task of naming the various parts of the garden is given to their eldest son, Pao-yu. For him it is a literary test to see if his schooling was adequate and to determine if his creative ability is fresh. Chia Cheng, the father, ruminates on the possibility of writing inscriptions before his daughter arrives. By rights, she should have the privilege of writing the inscriptions, but she cannot write them without visiting the garden. If they wait until after she has visited, half the pleasure of the visit will be lost. This is the opinion expressed.
“*All those prospects and pavilions – even the rocks and trees and flowers will seem incomplete without the touch of poetry which only the written word can lend a scene.*”
The family agree to make provisional names painted on paper so that the Imperial concubine can make the final decisions later. They prepare

horizontal panels to place over doors or under the eaves, and pairs of vertical panels made to look like hanging scrolls of calligraphy. The family walk through the garden making up couplets, but Chia Cheng and his attendant literati decide to create literary clichés in order to give Pao-yu the chance of enjoying a literary triumph. When describing a mountain view they offer names like "Emerald Heights" or "Embroidered Hill" and then they ask Pao-yu for his suggestion. The son tells his father it is better to recall old things rather than invent new ones and it is better to re-cut an old text rather than engraving a modern one. He also insists that it is only the first step towards more important things, so he suggests they write, "Pathway to Mysteries." The gentlemen are delighted with his title.

The party proceeds to an artificial ravine covered with trees and flowers, a large expanse of idyllic scenery. Pao-yu suggests "Drenched Blossoms" for the framed board, because it refers to a line from the "*Drunkard's Pavilion,"* a literary classic. For the seven-word lines that will sit either side of the doorway, he suggests a couplet which all agree has the right mixture of imagination, tradition and metaphor.

Three pole-thrust lengths of bankside willows green.
One fragrant breath of bankside flowers sweet.

The complicated naming ceremony – here the most significant act in garden making – goes on for days, naming rock hills, balustraded bridges, an herb garden, the main reception hall, a viewing terrace, a nun's retreat, a clump of crab trees and finally a pavilion without rooms. This pavilion is made from corridors, alcoves, galleries and partition walls. There are false windows and doors and mirrors to offer surprise, creating a maze of seemingly infinite space and time. Miraculously, when they are through it, they come to a broad flat path leading to the gate by which they entered. The quality of astonishment and enchantment allows the garden to hint at the most profound sense of immortality that is connected with the infinite Tao. This is why the Chinese garden is thought of as a superior kind of religious experience. The fact that the most significant act in all this garden making is the naming of the parts shows you what can be achieved by this conjunction of words and place.

Taming the Landscape

The most obvious reason why all cultures feel the need to name their territory is to get to know it. Obviously, we are more attuned to the names used in our native landscape and for this reason I will explore naming activity in the UK, and specifically, Scotland. I chose Scotland because the landscape here is mountainous, expansive and dominant. Also, my wife comes from the Isle of Lewis in the far north west and we have enjoyed extensive journeys across both the land and the seas. On many occasions we travelled by car with Marie, my wife's aunt, whose job had required her to travel frequently across the highlands. She knew every bit of the landscape we were travelling through and she would constantly point out features, giving their names and sometimes a story connected with it. For example, if we passed three hills, she would tell us they were called, *Three Sisters*. Some names she gave us were mythological, like, *Fairy Bridge* or *Giant's Steps*. Some were about historical facts – *U-boat Bay* describing the time when a German submarine got stuck in the bay. Sometimes the place we travelled through inspired Marie to talk about her adventures in the place. She caused an unknown and spectacular landscape to come alive for us.

The old language in Scotland is Gaelic and by translating the Gaelic names used for the landscape we get curious names like *Venomous Mountain*, or *Mountain of the Black Pig,* and more descriptive names like *Stub-topped hill above a noisy hollow* and *Rocky outcrop at the pool*. Not all names are rich in their association and often an original meaning has been lost. Interestingly though, there are places where the more recent inhabitants have created new stories to try to explain what they think the old place name might have meant.

It is certain that the Scottish Highlands must once have had a richer suite of names in which the lives of its inhabitants were folded into the landscape and recorded there, but many of these will never be recovered. In Adam Nicholson's book, *Sea Room*, he quotes a woman from Harris, a land of mountain, and water. She said, "There wasn't land the length of between here and the gate that we didn't have a name for, which is not the case nowadays. Every ben and every mound and every hill… I could name them all."

There have now been many generations who have feared this tradition has been lost. The great-grandparents of our current generation were probably the last to know how precious it was to be connected to their landscape. For them, to know a place was to tame it, because many of its qualities were forbidding and desolate. Our current generation drive quickly across the land in cars and connect to the outside world via the internet, they feel no need to keep the land in their memory. Consequently, as this tradition moves out of common knowledge, the art of naming the landscape becomes a territory for specialists; researchers, like linguists, who can help rebuild the poetic language and ethnographers who can unravel the habits and customs of the inhabitants.

In his book, *Reading the Gaelic Landscape,* John Murray, a linguist, shows us how the Gaelic landscape and its language play together and how the geographical environment affects the minds and behaviour of those who inhabit it. He starts with a charming experiment. Four groups of professionals are asked to map the influence of a river on its adjoining landscape. The biologists mapped areas of deposition, erosion and former water channels. The engineers mapped areas of slumping and active bank erosion. The landscape architects made beautiful drawing that showed nothing about the landscape process of change and the technologists made a crude drawing, but it showed what was happening in the landscape. What these professionals omitted and included was strongly influenced by their background. We draw what we want to see and what we value. Mapping is a selective process.

Landscape is generally classified according to three horizontal layers; the rock layer, the vegetation layer and the occupation or cultural layer. John Murray finds evidence of this structured thinking in the ancient naming tradition of the Gaelic landscape and he gathers up so much material to categorise, he has enough to create a structured linguistic analysis. He finds families of names that are repeated everywhere which give a precise picture of the landscape types. There are categories of names for mountains, glens, moors and heaths. In the mountain type there are common names that indicate the height, whether it’s fat, pointed, steep, with a plateau or a ridge; whether it has a summit, a pinnacle or a peak, whether it is conical, rocky, shell-like or castlelike. All this and yet there is even another lexicon of names to give further definition by colour and surface texture, which could be jagged, rough, notched, forked and smooth etc.

Sometimes Murray finds evidence of names that are paired, having only the words east and west to define them. He thinks the name-givers also loved using pairs of opposites for they invited character to the landscape. With this observation he feels confident that names were given for symbolic reasons as well as representational ones. He also finds examples of literary naming. For example; an Irish song of love and loss describes the healing powers of rowan berries when gathered from the heather. The place it referred to was named in the song. Years later, when the song became popular in Scotland, someone gave the same song place name to an area in Scotland where berries grew in the hills. In another example, Walter Scott, in his poem *Lady of the Lake*, renamed *Shaggy Island,* making it *Ellen's Island* to honour the name of his heroine. The poem was so popular that the fictional name soon became the official name. So poems can win over physical reality when it comes to naming.

What we can say is that the landscape is alive and can be read like a book, it is always changing and it can gather up anything that resonates with the inhabitants. When the process is active, the name givers gain identity for themselves and their environment. Could we, with name-giving make better designs and invite more significant events in these places?

Speaking with Names

To know who you are, you have to have a place to come from.
Carson McCullers – “The heart is a lonely hunter”.

Now we will turn to Keith Basso, an ethnographer who lived with Apache Indians in the 1960’s and 70’s. In those days, Apache in Arizona still had the ancestral knowledge handed down to them by each succeeding generation.

Keith Basso begins his book, “*Wisdom Sits in Places*,” with a quote from J P Hartley. “The past is a foreign country.” He makes reference to the past because the names of the Apache places were created by their ancestors. Then he quotes William Chapman. “The past is at its best when it takes us to places that counsel and instruct by showing us who we are by showing us who we have been, that remind us of our connections to *what happened here*.” This ever-changing landscape of the active heart and mind rewards repeated visits, for wherever one journeys in the country of the past, instructive places abound.

Anyone who has the inclination, can be a place-maker. They have to know that certain localities are capable of evoking entire worlds of meaning and the naming of them does not require special sensibilities or cultivated skills. It is a common response to curiosity and questions like – what happened here? Who was involved? What was it like? Why does it matter? We can also enjoy a place made famous by literature, music or dance and the country of the past can always supplant the county of the present.

Memory often provides a basis for imagining. What is remembered about a particular place guides and constrains how it will be imagined. It offers a field of workable possibilities that people can build upon to create a new set of possibilities and these in turn can create a new and expanded picture of how things might have been. The historical fact is just the starting point of an imaginative overlay offered by each succeeding generation, so there is more to place naming that localised events and history. It is a way of constructing and inventing history, of fashioning novel versions of "what happened here." Place naming can enrich past events and put us in the picture about what is happening now.

Building and sharing place-worlds invites us to revise the past and re-imagine how it might have been. Before writers were charged with preserving the past and before the start of historical verification, places served as symbols of events and aided us in the task of remembering and imagining them. This possibility is still with us today. In modern cityscapes people can ask, "what happened here?" and what we make of our answer is closely connected with what we make of ourselves. We are the place worlds we imagine.

An Apache explained to Keith Basso how they imagined their ancestors. They arrived somewhere without ever having seen it. They were very poor, had few possessions and survival was very difficult. They were looking for a safe and beneficent place to settle. If it was a good place, they would ask each other how to name it, how they could speak to the tribe about it so that this place could sit in their minds as a possible place to live. It looked to the ancestors just as it looked to modern Apache. They know that because its name gives a picture of it. Here are some examples. *Green rocks, side by side, jut down into water;* this describes a group of moss-covered

boulders on the bank of a stream. *Trail extends across scorched rocks;* this describes a crossing at the bottom of a canyon. The names are bold, visual and evocative, lending a poetic force to the voices of the ancestors.

In addition to names describing a place there are names which identify the clan. People give such a name when describing what activities they are engaged in and this becomes the name of the group they belong to. In addition to place names and clan names they also create a lexicon of commemorative names. These names encapsulate a story and every Apache can elaborate and extend upon this story as much as they wish.

All the commemorative names carry a message and provide seeds of learning. They might concern disruptive social acts, ending with the moral that describes how things would have turned out better if people hadn't behaved so badly. The story might also eulogize a woman who remained alert when the sentry had fallen asleep. By acting in this way she saved the tribe. These names have a special poetry and they are often sung in a haunting and provocative voice. A hill might have the name - *Two old women are buried*. A small flat close to a dried-up stream might be called – *They are grateful for water*. A steep slope might have the name –
She carries her brother on her back.

Apache see the past as a well-worn path they have travelled for generations. Beyond the memories of living persons, you might think this path is no longer visible, that the past has disappeared, but Apache can reconstruct and re-imagine it with the aid of place names, stories and songs. What matters to them is where events occurred and what they can reveal about the development and character of Apache social life. Apache history, the country of the past, is never more than a narrated place-name away. It is as near as the workings of their imagination and it can easily be brought to life at any time. They simply ask the question, *what happened here*, and then relate their personal, subjective answer. It doesn't worry Apache that an answer might change slightly or be elaborated upon. There isn't a definitive answer, they are simply, and with huge grace, speaking the past into being. What can this mean in practical terms?

Here is Keith Basso's list of actions that 'speaking with names' can accomplish.
1. Produce a mental image of a particular geographical location.
2. Evoke prior texts such as historical tales and sagas.
3. Affirm the value and validity of communal knowledge.
4. Display tactful and courteous attention to the concerns of others.
5. Convey sentiments of personal support.
6. Offer practical advice for dealing with personal circumstances.
7. Transform worry into optimism and hopefulness.
8. Heal wounded spirits.

In a modern city, we could never achieve so much, but how would it be if we could speak the recent past into being? How would we feel to be able to summon up recent events with words and give it dramatic form? Would it benefit us to be able to invite experience by creating poetic words in which others could participate and readily lose themselves? Could a group dedicated to such a task, take a completed development and, before it is inhabited, re-establish it with significant events they experienced when naming parts of the site? Could we, over a number of weeks, create a vivid sense of what happened during an intensely poetic naming ritual? Could it spark new installations that could give deeper meaning to the notion of completing a project? Could the new inhabitants arrive and gain a sense of *what happened here*? Would they enjoy taking this narrative frame and adding their own movements and animated talk to make the place their own? Would this narrative, theatrical art make a significant difference to their feelings of connectedness to the place where they are to live?

If narrative events are spatially anchored, they gain in significance. If the names of place, clan or commemorative tales are evocative and pleasurable to use, they become like poetry, acting like a spark or a seed that grows to take on meanings and feelings. Street music works like this and it has grown into major music genres such as rap. Graffiti has grown from renegade local activity into a highly accomplished artform that lifts the spirit of a neighbourhood. Performance events are also remembered if the place was significant. If geographical place have served the people for centuries as an indispensable mnemonic peg on which to hang their most important stories about the deeds of their important characters, could the installations that are created out of modern naming rituals act as tributes to a community. Could they help shape a neighbourhood's image of itself?

To understand about the people we design for we should understand what goes on between people and their external world. Knowing about the places people love should become part of the environmental designer's art. Barrie Greenbie, in his book, *Spaces; Dimensions of the Human Landscape*, says that "*what we call landscape is generally considered to be something 'out there.' But, while some aspects of the landscape are clearly external to both our bodies and our minds, what each of us actually experiences is selected, shaped and coloured by what we know.*" The external world is an intricate product of our collective creation. We share and agree about our feelings for a landscape. It is important that we are part of this collective vision. It is also important that we envision and establish our places of habitation in a collective spirit of agreement, not just accept something that has been handed down to us by the vagaries of concepts invented in a design office.

Some thoughts on a student project

Our first task is to create names and installations. These will provide the seeds of narratives that the inhabitants can use to grow their neighbourhood into a meaningful place. As the project develops, we will remember the landscape, discuss and refer to it regularly, write its poems and stories, draw a variety of maps and diagrams and communicate our proposals for the installations in a series of books.

Stage One - Prior to the four-week project period

For our project site we will use Mr. Li's Artist's village close to the campus. The project is nearing completion and has the potential of forming a meaningful community. During stage one, students will fully document the site, including all the architectural drawings. They should identify the incoming inhabitants and confirm what they might need to enable the satisfactory functioning of this community.

Stage Two - Four-week project period

Our first task is to create names and installations. These will provide the seeds of narratives that the inhabitants can use to grow their neighbourhood into a meaningful place. We will regard the new site as a skeleton. Our task is to put flesh and muscles on this provisional framework. We are performers and poets who will perform naming rituals over a period of two weeks; living on the site every day. We are the ancestors, the original inhabitants. We are the people, fully connected to nature, who name place. We can choose what event to carry out in a place. Do we discuss a problem, make music, dance, draw a picture of a map, plant something, build something? We will let the place teach us what our response is. The we can consider the three layers common to naming landscapes.

1. We will name places to describe how they can be identified. How they look will also depend on what students propose to add to the places in terms of extensions and installations. (Place names.)
2. We will name places to describe the function and social activities that occur in this place. (This is like names of the clan.)
3. We will name places based on the discussions and performances we have created in these locations. (This is like giving them Commemorative names.)

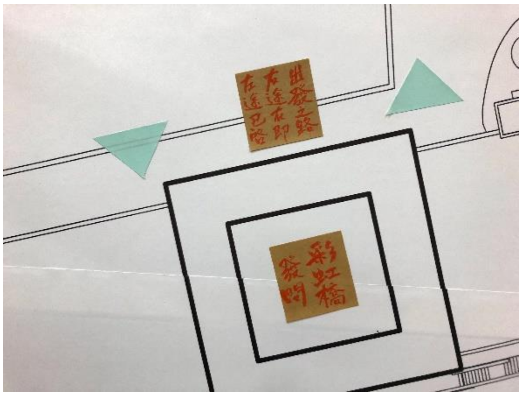
Student’s might want to select a subject of commemoration. The following are examples. We could discuss and perform these kind of subjects at the places selected for them.

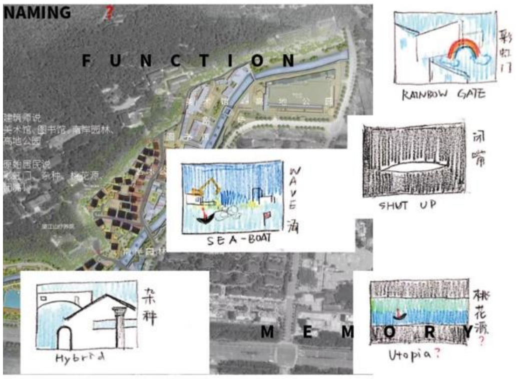
Memory
Process
Ambiguity
Invitation
Accident
Drawing
Playfulness
Story
Language
Material
Sensitivity
Mistake
Diagram
Poetry
Identity
Structure
Imagination
Chance
Relationship
Placement
Surrender

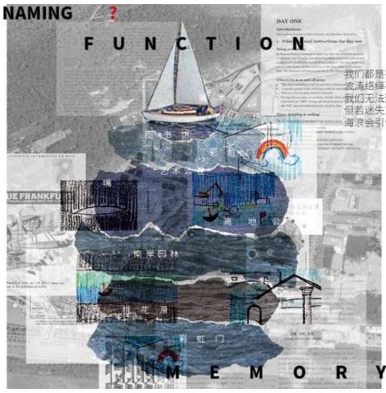
Stage Three – Design development

During this time students will lead their own project. They must work as a group and support each other. They’ll remember what is required of them because they will remember the landscape. The place names, the activity names and the commemorative names. Talking of these will direct their discussions, so they must refer to the names regularly and continually rewrite the poems and stories. They’ll draw a variety of maps and diagrams and find ways to communicate proposals for their installations. They will present their work in a series of books.

We started by walking around the Artist’s village and after this we worked with the students two days a week, mostly in the studio but sometimes out in the campus. On other days I ran seminars, mostly concerning how to find the best strategies for writing a thesis. We decided to end the workshops with a performance/lecture which the students would carry out. Other than directing the action, I made my presence as low key as possible; trying to shift the power from the single male at the top model to a large group of women at the top. In the final days a film was made of our workshops, seminars and final presentation. The performance was multi-layered. It included a dancer, a presentation about naming the village, visual contributions by the students, who also spoke about their work beside making a complex sequence of sounds. We also devised an exhibition for the studio.

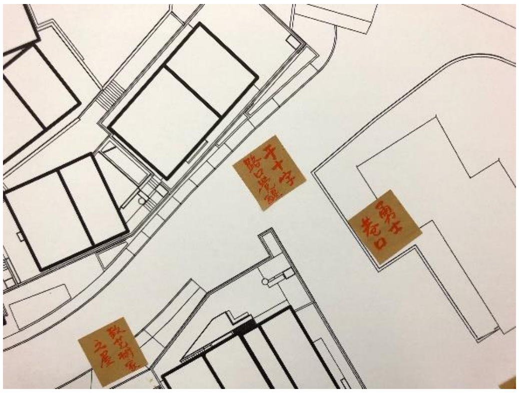

出發之路
右邊衣即
左邊包啓
彩虹橋
發問

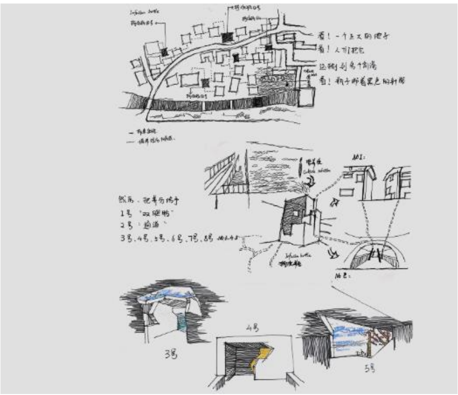

NAMING ?
FUNCTION
建筑师说
美术馆、图书馆、南岸园林、
高地公园
原始居民说
彩虹门、杂种、桃花源、
闭嘴！
美术馆
高地公园
图书馆
南岸园林
彩虹门
RAINBOW GATE
闭嘴
SHUT UP
WAVE 涌
SEA-BOAT
杂种
Hybrid
桃花源 ?
Utopia ?
MEMORY


NAMING ?
FUNCTION
DAY ONE
图书馆
彩虹门
艺术公社
高地公园
UE FRANKFU
南岸园林
杂种
桃花源
彩虹门
MEMORY

我们都是在漫无目的的划船
波涛络绎不绝
我们无法逃避
但若迷失方向
海浪会引领你再见朝阳

婦女的
帽子
倒塌的
烟囱
崑曲
角落


勇士巷口
致艺术家之屋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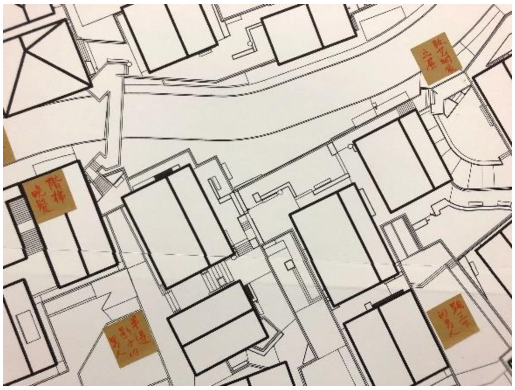
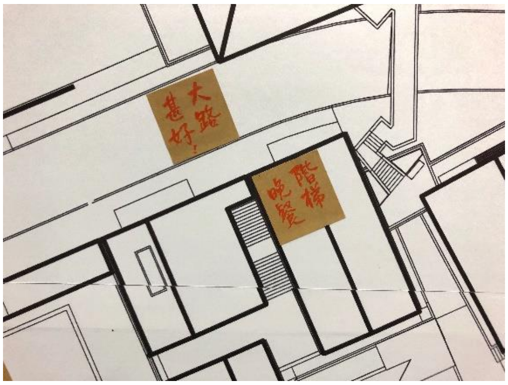
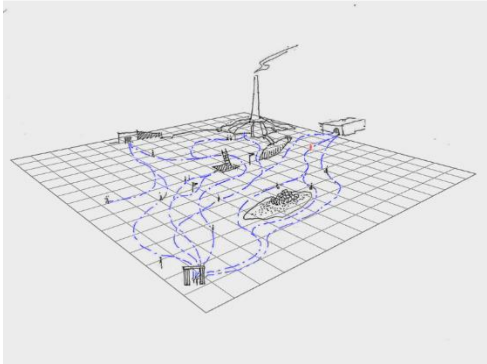
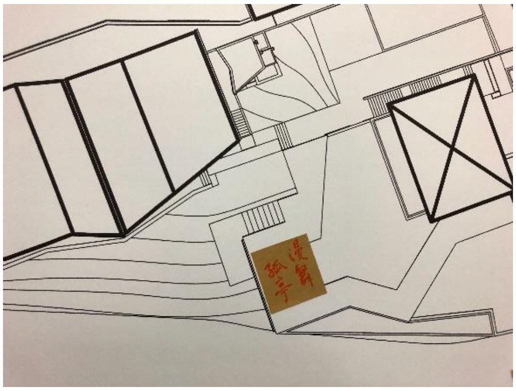
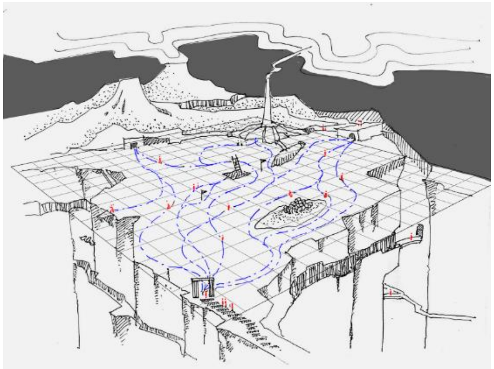

致艺术家之屋
阶梯晚餐

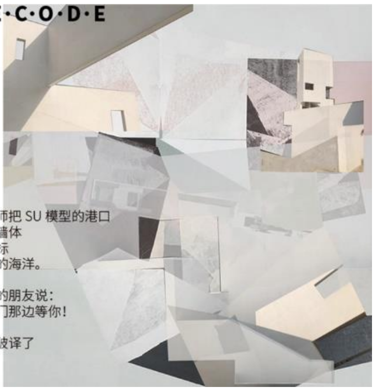






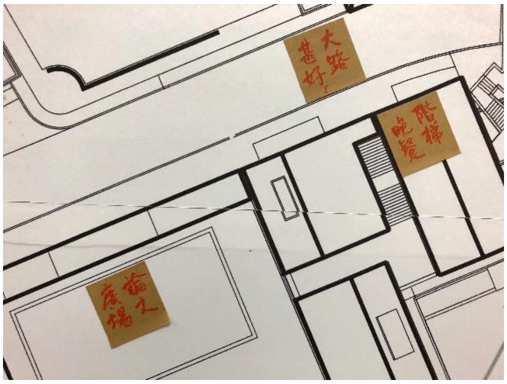


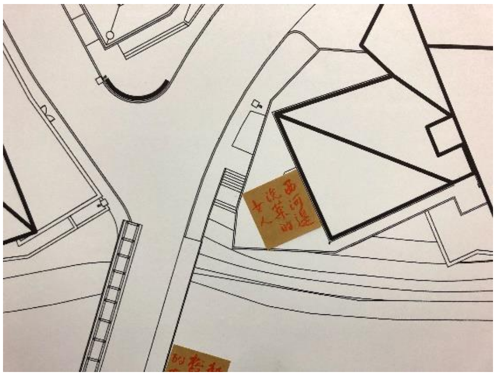
D·E·C·O·D·E

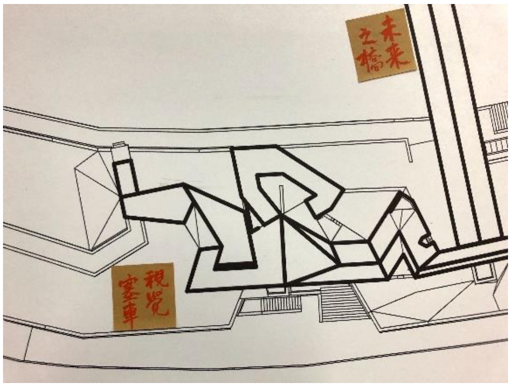


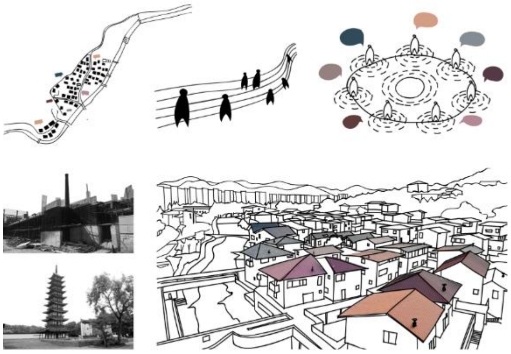
于是建筑师把 SU 模型的港口
有性别的墙体
游动的坐标
丢进黄色的海洋。

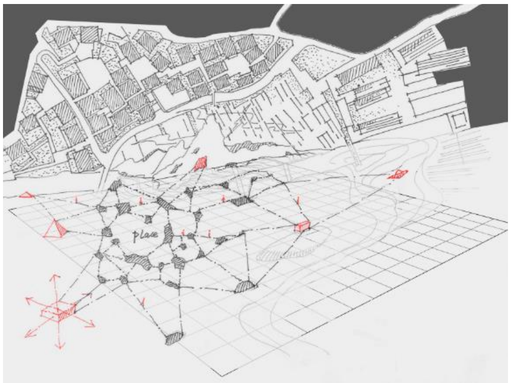
当我对我的朋友说：
我在彩虹门那边等你！
他来了
密码就被破译了

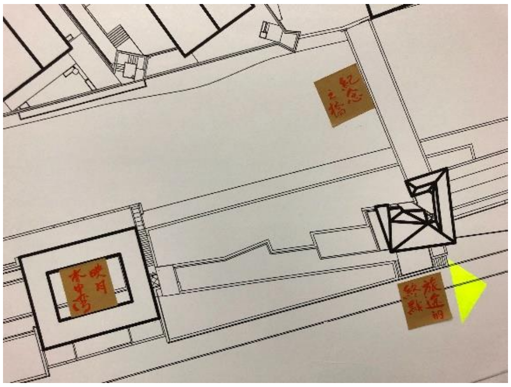

大路甚好！
階梯晚餐
論文廣場

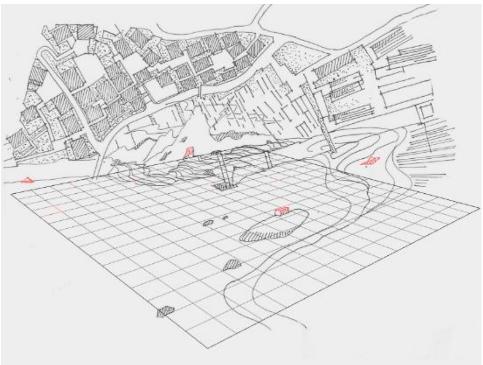

西河邊浣菜的女人

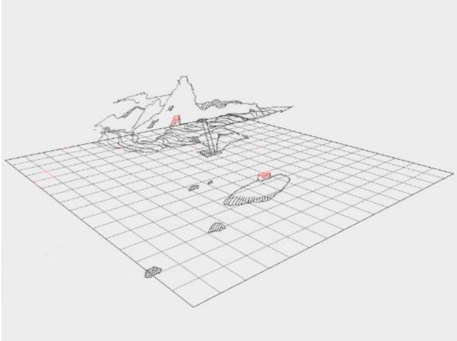

未來之橋
視覺塞車




place


紀念之橋
映射杏中湾
旅途的終點





Some thoughts by Yang Xiao, a PhD student, after attending the November course, The Tao of Naming Place.

My professor asked me if I knew how to name places after taking this course. It is not a simple question. My answer is “NO,” but I know how to walk through the village with him and play the naming game. What was emphasised on this course was a training process – how to engage in a relaxed dialogue and discussion, rather than look for a definitive result. There is no one way to proceed as everyone understands and engages differently in this naming process. I would say that the purpose of the course was to experiment with sensitivity. The final result was finding joy in the uncertainty.

After our performance for the final course presentation, I had a WeChat conversation with a sophomore student who had been in the audience.
These were her comments.

- I didn’t have the courage to ask questions yesterday.
- Can I ask you now?
- Yesterday, someone suggested that we didn’t see this performance with a critical mind, which I agree. Therefore, I feel everyone will have their own opinion after watching the performance.
- As you made more and more sound, I found it seemed like a series of events were happening in a large market or a small town, or any complex functional space.
- Although there were lots of sounds, I still could hear a few layers of different meanings delivered in various languages, and then I started to imagine the space where the languages were taking place and became aware of its size.
- It’s interesting to think about architecture from this perspective
- Then what I would like to ask is: did you want to create specific notions when you created this, or did you expect that the audience would imagine on their own notions?

We talked continuously about how to engage with research and what an enlightened process for writing a thesis might be. We explored a collage of languages to mobilise sensitivity, questions to explore our research objectives and experiments to explore method and process.

The experiment of the whole course was about the mobilisation of various languages and senses, through walking, discussion, painting and arranging images. We used it to make the final presentation and performance, all the while breaking the single narrative method and logical lines of thought in order to establish a space for dialogues. We were not passive listeners but catchers of information. The intertwined structure brought more possibilities, and they were the possibilities that happen when different people bring themselves together in these layers of relationships.

Peter talked about a series of things that we take for granted and yet no longer understand. What was meaningful for the ancient people? How did they perform in order to confirm the importance of an activity like building a house? These first dwellers on the planet were sensitively connected to nature and this affected their lives. Many of the early rituals were developed into complex systems, like Feng Shui and astrology, and their initial meaning was lost. If we take these activities for granted without thinking about the reasons behind them, we relegate them to superstition. Also, as a result of developing our western rationalism we have further diminished our sensitivity to nature. Therefore, to understand the meaning of these archaic people we should not try to get to the bottom of the question but try to regain the sensitivity they had. This is the only way we have of reconnecting with nature; it is the only way we have of dealing with our urban and rural issues, because we have lost our original sensitivity that helped us to establish connections with the land.

Peter, while helping us write our thesis, encouraged us to look for authentic questions. What do we really want to research how does it relate to the design work we are doing on our course. So, before experimenting, the first thing to do is to clarify what our research question is. Make sure it is an authentic question, which is worthy of research and development. The mobilisation of sensitivity is especially important for the development of our research questions. We too easily accept results. The process of naming tells me not to become numb. First of all, we must present our own opinions and question the established facts and rational theories. At the same time, we must mobilise our senses and collect all the information we need and enjoy the discussion process. We should develop a strong vocabulary, understand the meaning of names and their etymology in order to better understand the original meaning. What is needed this time is to put forward opinions on the basis of the reference. We should not be imprisoned by another's ideas and definitions. The research should be based on our understanding.

For example, for the operation of Chinese gardens, it is not the end of the project when the objects are put in place. There is a process of naming. This process is not to simply label, but to mobilise our sensitivity to nature, connecting our experience, senses, and the story that happened at the time. It is the overlap of latitude and longitude, the process of connecting objects and spirits. Only then can objects be spiritually woven into our situation. We must work from the phenomenon to find new notions, cultural meanings and histories and then travel back to the phenomenon. (Starting from the origin and returning to the origin, the origin in my eyes is not the original one.) In order to encourage us to reflect on the experimental process, we carried out a series of activities with questions, developing and interweaving a series of multiple paths.

Under the premise of a given subject, have you proactively tried to connect it to your research paper? If not, have you tried to break through the subject and propose the subject that you really want to do? For example, in the course of naming, we entered the site with our individual questions, so we had different concerns for the same phenomenon. Research is not just about the accumulation and reading of historical knowledge and theory that has already been determined but needs to be carried out simultaneously with the experiments. The mobilisation of sensitivity and experimental processes are interactive. Therefore, the experimental process carried out by research is particularly important.

There is no single way to conduct research, such as sitting in front of a computer. The experiment with questions in mind is a three-dimensional space map woven by various methods. This process is a process of connecting historical documents and designs. Design gives us feedback on rational theoretical thinking. At the same time, our design is verified by the related theories and others' work. Theory and design should be integrated, rather than being separated. In my case, I will integrate my education and research as my experiment. And this experiment makes thoughts, drawings, designs and articles all intertwined together, rather than a series of separate tools.

At the same time, in the process of experiments, the teacher guides and broadens our knowledge. For example, we are not learning the history of thought for a course full of thought history. But in the case of your question as a premise, the intervention of the history of thought will inspire you, so that you will also have the purpose of accepting the knowledge of the history of thought. In the end, we must find out how to tell people what we are thinking. We need a lot of experimental results to prove our arguments. This result might be presented by the architectural space or a research paper, but this will only be a small part of the large number of studies we will eventually put into our article. The sketches, experiments, records become the backstage of all thoughts. Use the results of the experiments to verify the arguments and answer the questions that were originally proposed.