Critical Dialogues

Dialoghi Critici

Jonathan Charley

DO Architecture
GRAS
Pidgin Perfect
Stone Opera

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Foreword

Image: The Bridge, Easterhouse,
Glasgow, by Gareth Hoskins' Architects
Photography Andrew Lee
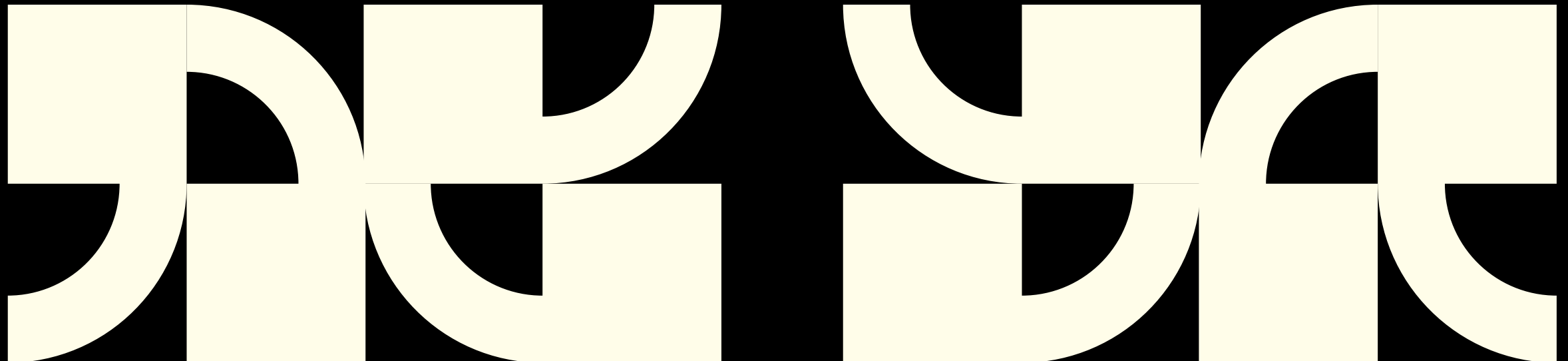
Foreword
Scotland in Venice:
Critical Dialogues

Prefazione
Scozia+Venezia: Dialoghi Critici

Alberto Campo Baeza writing in the catalogue, Young Spanish Architecture, an Ark Monograph of 1985, talks about,

''a world riddled with noise and yet paradoxically mute, creatively speaking, a group of young Spanish architects are playing a very engaging song, their own song, the most beautiful song.''

Twenty-seven years later that Spanish song has grown in quality and projection as subsequent architects took their lead from this earlier generation resulting in a Spanish architectural culture of great stature and depth.

New voices are occasionally heard, often emanating from the architectural edge, such as Pascal Flammer and Raphael Zuber's work in Switzerland and Alejandro Aravena's *Elemental Housing* in Chile. Some of the most beautiful and poignant songs have emerged from China in Atelier Archmixing's *Twin Trees Pavilion* and Amateur Architecture Studio's early *Ceramic House*, projects that can be heard through the din of the architectural circus that travels the globe, a circus with an increasingly desperate and cynical appetite. For a song to

become engaging and powerful, three components are critical: personality, passion and technique. Scotland's presence in Venice 2012 is about the recognition of four voices that are on the verge of making themselves heard.

Scotland lies on the periphery of Europe, nascent both politically and in contemporary terms architecturally. Yet once its architects stood shoulder to shoulder with the best in Europe and many claim that Charles Rennie Mackintosh's sublime Glasgow School of Art 1899-1909 heralded modernism not just in the UK but also in Europe. In the post-Second World War period Gillespie Kidd and Coia in the West and Morris and Steedman in the East helped propel Scottish architecture in new directions, the former becoming part of a west coast figurative culture that explored a phenomenological sense of section and atmosphere, the latter by an east coast sense of abstraction, detachment and refinement.

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Foreword

Image: Raasay Village hall, designed by
Dualchas - Photography Andrew Lee

It seems to me there has always been this kind of architectural watershed that splits Scotland in two. The west possesses a character like its fractured romantic coastline that is passionate about layers, complexity and conversation, whilst the east with its more austere coastline nurtures a more ascetic, reflective, emotionless and silent quality in both its art and architecture. More recently the architectural scene seems to have lost this sense of split personality that came out of place.

The new architecture has a tendency towards an image of rediscovered modernism albeit executed with a new graphic material suaveness that could equally be seen anywhere in the UK. The years from the 1970's have seen a gradual dissolution in the architect's role. It is a situation that has been greatly exacerbated by the current recession in which many architects have lost not just their voice, but their ability to make architecture altogether.

The four architectural practices represented in Venice are all based in Glasgow; they all share a concern for people, the ordinary, and the street. They all have passion and an emerging personality even though their technique has had little opportunity to develop. The critical word that connects these architects is architectural practice.

They explore the act of practicing as an architect in a marginal situation, politically, socially, professionally and culturally. Their approach is primarily concerned with conversation and engagement.

Venice itself is a city on the edge. Once the edge of Europe and a portal to a far eastern imagination, a city barely founded on land or sea, a mirage. The Scottish contribution to the Venice Biennale itself is a marginal act, emerging, hopeful, outside the main event. Four Northern figures flit amongst southern shadows.

Neil Gillespie 2012

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On The Margins
of Architecture

Images: The politics of Community
Engagement, GLAS Manual

Critical Dialogues

Dialoghi Critici

On The Margins of Architecture
Architeturre ai margini

This year's Scottish contribution to the Venice Biennale, *Critical Dialogues,* showcases projects from four emerging practices that in their different ways explore the social role of the architect and the creative boundaries of architecture.
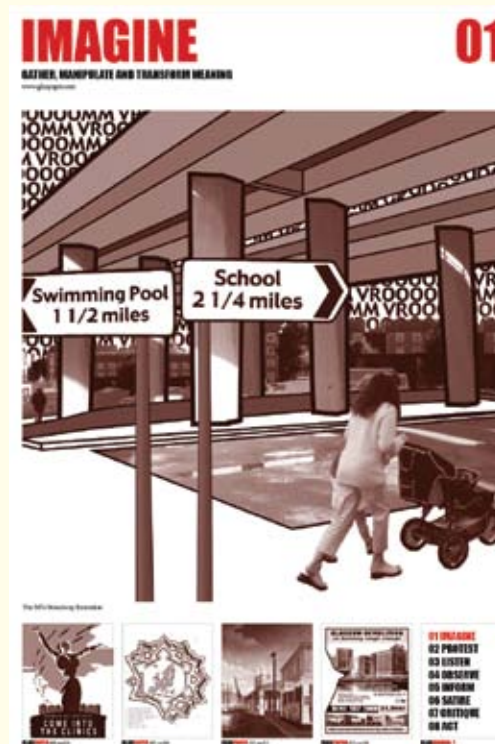
Il contributo Scozzese a questa edizione della Biennale di Venezia, *Dialoghi Critici*, mostra progetti di quattro studi emergenti che a loro modo esplorano il valore sociale dell'architetto e i confini creativi dell'architettura.

One of the main catalysts in this impulse to experiment with diverse forms of architectural practice has been the economic crisis that has swept across Europe and decimated the construction industry. Since 2008, thousands of UK architects and builders have been made redundant, and countless firms have either shrunk, been taken over or declared insolvent. Faced with such a catastrophic slump in building activity, many architects have been forced to rethink how they operate. (i)

In this spirit, *Critical Dialogues* is organised as a week-long series of events that will take place within the public realm. All four projects play with a series of popular themes that have their

roots in the long history of alternative architectural and urban practice - the politics of community engagement, the ludic dimensions of architecture, the celebration of the architecture of everyday life and the investigation of different ways of seeing and mapping.

As well as planning a sequence of actions that engage with overlooked and marginalised places and social organisations, each practice has developed a methodological tool kit that is adaptable and playful, so that in principle any one of the projects can be transferred and repeated in other urban locations.

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On The Margins
of Architecture

Image: Celebrating the architecture
of everyday life, prefabricated cast iron
fountain, Glasgow, exported around the
world. Photos by author/Jonathan Charley

(i) As in the aftermath of the crises that hit the construction industry in the early1990s and mid 1970s, financially more robust firms will survive the slump but only by reorganising themselves, diversifying into new areas of activity, and searching for markets overseas. For a review of the impact and historical context of the on-going crisis, see Charley, J, *The Shadows of Economic History - The architecture of boom, slump and crisis*, in the ARQ, Architectural Research Quarterly, Cambridge University Press, Vol 14, No 4, Jan 2011.

It is a 'tragic' irony that whilst socially destructive, crises can prize open new opportunities to engage and work with the city, and perform a more general function of providing a space for capitalism to restructure itself, a characteristic acknowledged by all the great economic historians from Marx onwards. It was Schumpeter who coined the descriptive phrase 'waves of creative destruction,' whilst David Harvey has recently described crises as, 'the irrational rationalisers of an always unstable capitalism'. See Harvey, David, *The Enigma of Capital – And the Crises of Capitalism*, (London: Profile,2010), Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Volume III, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1984), and Schumpeter, Joseph, A, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, (London: Routledge,2010).

For their project *Ludoarchiteca*, Stone Opera have drawn on their experience in play and design education and designed a life-size kit of cardboard building blocks that comes complete with a diagrammatic instruction manual.

It will be installed in a park in the Cannaregio neighbourhood where local children will get to become 'builders for the day'. DO with *Deriva Veneziana* set out to explore and map the working life and periphery of the city through photographs and film footage shot remotely from a low-flying red helium balloon. This still and moving imagery, edited into a film, will take the viewer on a journey through a previously unseen city.

GRAS's project for a *Galeria Temporanea*, also plays with visual perception and comprises of a pop-up mobile gallery fabricated out of interlocking white panels. Lightweight and easily transportable, the gallery will visit the disused wellheads that dot the city, temporarily isolating, framing and objectifying them as important works of architecture.

In contrast, Pidgin Perfect's *Banchetto* is driven by a commitment to engaging with communities who are normally excluded from the design process.

To this end they have organised a tour of the main Biennale for a group of local residents who have never before crossed its threshold, and invited them to eat, drink, and talk architecture, at a 'theatrical' open air dinner to be held in the old Castello Alto-Basso neighbourhood of the city.

The week culminates with the screening of edited footage and documentation of the week's actions and events at a public opening to be held in Ludoteca Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, the studio hub used by the practices as their Venetian headquarters. This work will form the basis of a retrospective exhibition in Scotland at the beginning of 2013.

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On The Margins
of Architecture

Images: Different ways of
seeing and mapping. Photos by
author/Jonathan Charley

The ideas and strategies employed in these sorts of *Critical Dialogues*, will be familiar to those engaged in the forms of practice that occupy the margins of the world of architecture. In this strange frontier land, critically distant from the hard and unforgiving business of mainstream practice, the borders of architecture are porous and open to the invasion of ideas from other creative disciplines. It is in this fertile territory that an architectural discourse has emerged that is as happy to stray into art, sociology, and critical theory, as it is environmental or digital technology.

In fact, these days, a typical architecture student is as likely to hear lectures on prisons, bus stops, and psycho-geography, as talks on iconic modern masters and concrete. *Critical Dialogues* very much reflects this multi and inter-disciplinary tradition, and in this sense the four projects on show in the Biennale are very much new twists on old tales; a mesh of complimentary narratives whose origins can be traced back through the twentieth century.

The exploration of the social role of architecture, and the assertion that the architect should first and foremost be a social agent, whose job it is to facilitate and improve the quality of the built environment, should not be contentious. It would after all be peculiar to suggest that the prime motivation of an individual in becoming an architect was to a make the city ugly, environmentally fragile and socially divisive. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the hegemony of neoliberal political and economic ideology has accomplished exactly that.

Obsessed with 'star architects', civic boosterism, and 'free' markets, neoliberalism it is argued, has exacerbated socio-spatial inequalities, and produced architecture of questionable quality in which short-term profits from speculative ventures have taken priority over long-term social and environmental benefits. It comes as no surprise then to find a new generation of architects 'rediscovering' the politics of community architecture, and committing themselves to working within the public realm, even if opportunities to build in the public sector are few and far between.

Accordingly, the four projects have deliberately strayed away from the tourist itinerary into the periphery of
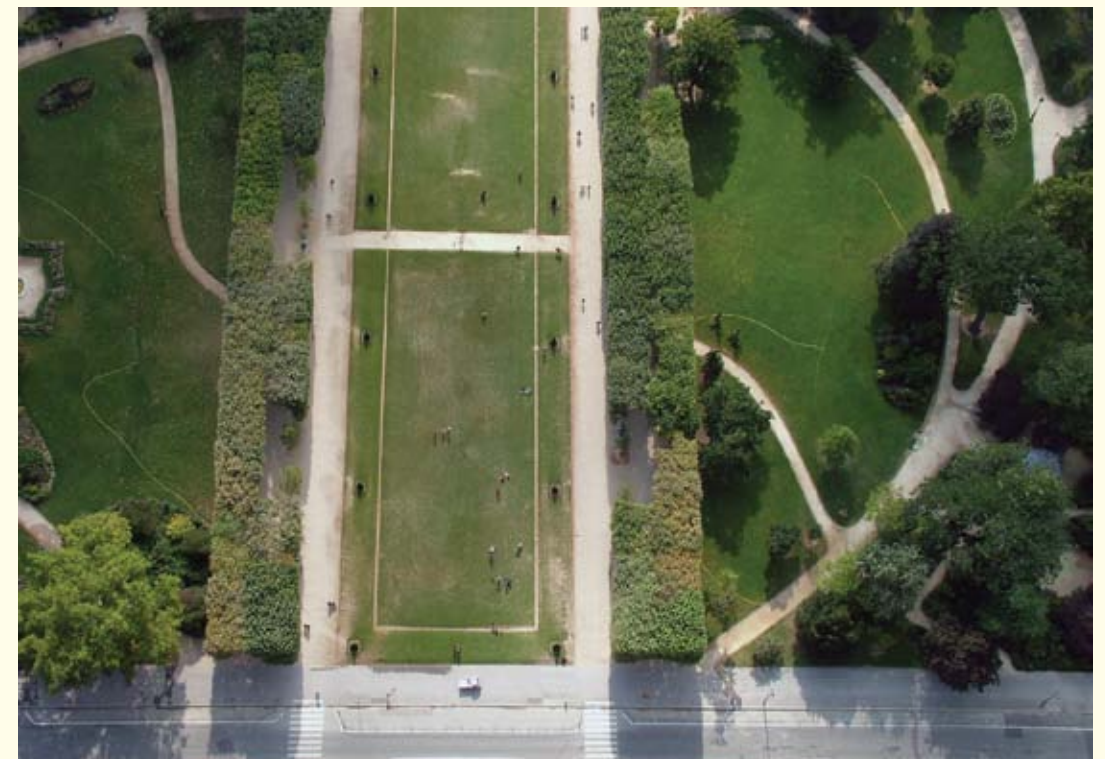
(ii) Scotland has its own longstanding tradition of alternative forms of practice exemplified by the work of ASSIST, the T.S.A (Technical Service Agencies), Wester Hailes Design Unit, CAS, (Community Architecture Scotland), the design unit of the Drumchapel Community Organisation Council and more recently the cooperative G.L.A.S, (Glasgow Letters on Architecture and Space).

For a more in-depth essay on alternative forms of practice, see Charley, J, *Glimmers of another world: Questions on Alternative Architectural Practice*, in the ARQ, Architectural Research Quarterly, Cambridge University Press, Vol 12, No2, 2009. For a really useful compendium of alternative practices, see Awan, N, Schneider, T and Till, J, *Spatial Agency and Other Ways of Doing Architecture*, (London: Routledge, 2011).

(iii) For an engaging book on current forms of urban resistance, see Harvey, D, *Rebel Cities*, (London: Verso, 2012)

(iv) See the seminal books by Huizinga, J, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949) and Debord, G. Kotanyi, A, Vaneigem, R, et al, *The Situationist International*, Anthology, by K. Knabb, ed, (California: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981)

(v) It is perhaps obvious, but nevertheless vital to remember, that no form of representation however dynamic and convincing can be real in the same sense as social reality itself. In this sense an abstract painting of a city scene can say as much, if not more, about the complex realities of urban life, than a figurative landscape that purports to provide a 'real' picture. For key texts on this debate see Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogic Imagination*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) and Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch et al, *Aesthetics and Politics in German Marxism*, (London: Verso, 1986)

the city, employing techniques that challenge the social relations between architect and user in ways that are experimental, inclusive and playful. Again these sorts of strategies will be recognisable to those who remember the 1970s, when in the aftermath of a global economic depression that is analogous to the contemporary crisis, groups of architects threw themselves into various forms of practice that seemed to provide an alternative to dominant forms of capitalist urban development.

The cooperative movement enjoyed a new lease of life as tenants, architects and builders, experimented with various forms of collective ownership and management. Simultaneously, architect-activists assumed new roles as political campaigners with a remit to defend public housing, the public city and the public sector in general.(ii) Some abandoned architecture altogether and joined the counter-culture, whilst on the political left there was a renewed call for the nationalisation of the building industry.

Such social idealism is characteristic of the history of 'other ways of doing architecture,' whose origins we can trace back through time, past the architectural programmes of the welfare state and 1920s avant-garde, all the way to the utopian socialism of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. In brief, capitalist building production and patterns of urban development have always been shadowed by their critique that has challenged its orthodoxies, and regularly raised a banner on which is inscribed, 'rights to the city.' (iii)

As for the ludic dimensions of architecture as an emancipatory project and critique of practice, it too has its own particular genetic markers that take us on a parallel historical journey from the Situationists' theories of the playful city, to Johan Huizinga's contention that 'play is older than culture', and Schiller's proposition that we only reach 'our full potential as human beings when we play.' (iv)

This ludic dimension is reflected in all of the projects, not just in Stone Opera's *Ludoarchiteca* and the theatrical character of Pidgin Perfect's *Banchetto*, but also in the experiments in ways of seeing and mapping conducted by GRAS and DO. Play in this context is not just about fun,

(vi) I am referring here to the work of British Marxist historians like E. P. Thompson, Hobsbawm, Hilton, Hill et al, the French Annales School, the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and the rise of Cultural studies, Feminist and postcolonial theory, that together helped shift both the subject and methodology of historical criticism. For example, 'The Making of The English Working Class' meant not only understanding the political subject in terms of class, but also gender and race, and this was paralleled in an appreciation of the cultural importance of popular music, literature and film - that is, the study not of what intellectuals thought people should be reading or listening to, but what they actually were.

(vii) The study of the iconography of the street in *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Brown and Izenour, (MIT, 1977), represented a landmark in this field.

it assumes an important educational role as a way of drawing individuals into an orbit of ideas that in a more formal context they might well be resistant to.

Just as the relationship between play and daily life is a far more complex affair than it might seem, so is the way in which we look, represent and map a city. These might well be activities that lie at the core of an architect's craft, but they have never been simple politically neutral processes. In the pursuit of authentic portrayals of real life and of the actual social and aesthetic impact of a building, images, whether they are photographs, photomontages, perspective views or plans, walk an ideological tightrope in which the descent into myth is as likely as the depiction of truth.

This dilemma opens up a hornet's nest of debates that were revisited in the controversial hubbub surrounding post-modernism, but which have their origins in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, and the arguments on aesthetics and politics between Adorno, Lukacs and Brecht, in which simplistic notions of realism as faithful depictions of reality were put on trial.(v)

Despite these dangers, new forms of mixed media have opened up exciting opportunities in how to represent the hidden stories and palimpsestic layers that make up a city, and which are as important to the development of a brief and the understanding of the architectural potential of a place, as the gathering of topographical data. Central to this phenomenological investigation of the history of a site has been a renewed interest in the architectural and social narratives buried in the types of ordinary buildings, places and spaces, previously neglected by architectural historians.

The 'rediscovery' of the value of the mundane, common-place and banal elements of the built environment, began as part of a broader cultural revolution in the 1950s and 60s that set out to illustrate social history with the material and cultural phenomena that make up the fabric of real life.(vi) In the spirit of this critique, architectural and urban history began to take seriously and non-judgmentally the iconography of the street, and how people appropriated and used the city in unexpected and unregulated ways. (vii)

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On The Margins
of Architecture

Images: Scotland On a world stage.
Photos by author/Jonathan Charley

(viii) Ideas explored in the classic works by Henri Lefebvre, in *Production of Space*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) and *Critique of Everyday Life*, (London: Verso, 1991) and by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (Penguin London, 1975) and his essay *Of Other Spaces-Heterotopias* (1967)

See for instance Augé, M, *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, (London: Verso, 1995), De Certeau, M, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1984), Perec, G, *Species of Space*, (London: Penguin, 1999), Virillio, P, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, (London: Verso, 2009) and Vidler, A, *The Architectural Uncanny*, (MIT, 1992)

(ix) Indicative of this renewed interest in the everyday and relationship between cultural theory and architecture in the UK were: *The Unknown City*, (MIT, 2001) and *Strangely Familiar: narratives of architecture in the city*, (London: Routledge, 1996), both edited by Borden, I, Kerr, J, Rendell, J and Pivaro, A, and *Rethinking Architecture-A Reader in Cultural Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1997), by Leach, N, (ed).

France was at the epicentre of this politico-linguistic revolution that infused social history with a new geographical and spatial agenda. The Situationists' revolutionary urbanism, Lefebvre's, 'differential space', and Foucault's 'heterotopia', helped redirect our gaze to the sites of difference - of rebellion, of the covert and underground - to the places and spaces that fall outside of the normal pathologies of power and governance.[viii] It was the start of a deluge.

Certeau and Augé added the transitory 'non-places' of supermodernity, such as the motorway, the airport lounge, and the waiting lobby; George Perec contributed essays on bedrooms, staircases and walls; Virillio an idiosyncratic index of ideas on the architecture of war, cinema and optics, and Vidler the architectural 'uncanny' and 'warped'. Others followed, but what is significant is that urban theory and history became a lot more interesting.[ix]

The project *Deriva Veneziana* that takes us on a visual drift through the urban periphery, and *Galeria Temporanea*, which celebrates unsung architectural infrastructure, are very much embedded in this type of approach to urban analysis.

Scotland On a World Stage

This is the fourth occasion on which Scotland has presented work at the Venice Architecture Biennale, the previous three being, NVA's 2010 programme of public events entitled, *To Have and To Hold*, which investigated the future of St Peter's Seminary near Cardross, Gareth Hoskin's *Gathering Place* staircase in 2008, and NORD's exhibition Landforms in 2004. The decision to have an independent Scottish presence at the Biennale reflected a renewed sense of national confidence that was inextricably linked to the opening of Scotland's parliament in 1999, and by the unveiling in 2001, of its own Architecture Policy.[x] Not surprisingly, this helped reinvigorate a debate about the distinctiveness of architecture in Scotland, and over the last fifteen years an array of practices have emerged who have collectively made a significant impact on the quality of the built environment.[xi]

At its height, the Lighthouse in Glasgow was instrumental in supporting this transformation through a series of exhibitions that helped focus the spotlight on everything from reinterpretations of the Scottish vernacular, to the future of the

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On The Margins
of Architecture

Images: The Ludic dimensions of
Architecture, gable wall, Brussels.
Photos by author/Jonathan Charley

(x) This was followed up by the 2007 document *Building Our Legacy: Statement on Scotland's Architecture Policy*, and is about to be reviewed again in *Architecture and Place*, due to be published later in 2012.

(xi) Some of the practices that come to mind are Reiach and Hall, Dualchas, Page and Park, ZM, Elder and Cannon, Richard Murphy, Murray Fraser, Sutherland Hussey, Gareth Hoskins, Rural Design and NORD.

(xii) For example, the exhibitions: Anatomy of the House (2002), Common-Place (2003), Field Trips (2004), Six Thousand Miles (2005), Northern City (2006), Shifts (2007) and more recently Spaces of Labour (2010).

central belt, the untapped potential of the coastline, and to the development of a new agricultural and industrial landscape. (xii)

The decision to focus on four practices based in Glasgow is partly an acknowledgement of the pivotal role that the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde has played in building up a critical architectural culture in Scotland. But it also reflects more generally, the fact that the city possesses probably the greatest concentration of practices in Scotland that have been innovative in what they do and how they go about it, from the multi-award winning practice NORD, who have pushed the tectonic agenda of architecture in exciting new directions, to the cooperative Collective Architecture, who have remained committed to redefining the social relations that exist not only between employees, but also between architect and client.

If we were to add to the list of progressive architectural practices, the profusion of Turner prize-winning artists, graphic design firms, musicians and literary authors who are based in the city, the much talked about vibrancy of Glasgow's creative scene is perhaps not such a myth after all.

Critical Dialogues is very much a product of this Glaswegian culture, and it is hoped that the projects and events planned for this years Biennale will contribute positively both to the city's reputation, and to the debate over the future of architecture in Scotland.

Jonathan Charley, Project Director, Scotland+Venice 2012

Jonathan Charley lives in Glasgow where he is currently Director of Cultural Studies in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde after ten years running the M.Arch in Advanced Architectural Design. He studied Architecture in London and Moscow, and before entering academia, worked for seven years in an architects' and builders' collective in east London. He has lectured across Europe and Brazil, was a founder member of the cooperative GLAS, and publishes in a variety of media on the political, social and cultural history of buildings and cities.

His recent works include the co-edited volume *Writing the Modern City* (2011), which explored the relationship between architecture, literature, and modernity, and a new collection of his essays *Memories of Cities: Trips and Manifestos*, due to be published in the autumn of 2012. He is currently writing the third book in this trilogy, *City X: the Urban Archaeology of Karl Marx*.

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History
Our story so far

Storia
La Nostra Storia Fin D'ora

"DO believes that a fully engaging and collaborative design process can enrich a project and help produce an architecture that is responsive to human needs and scale"

"DO crede che un processo progettuale assolutamente coinvolgente e collaborativo possa arrichire un progetto e supportare la produzione di una architettura piu' rispondente ai bisogni e alla scala umana"

DO-Architecture was founded in 2005 by Adrian Stewart and is currently staffed by himself, Judith Wylie Macleod and Elizabeth Robertson Stewart.

A small, multi-disciplinary studio, the practice celebrates diversity and works in close collaboration with individuals from other disciplines such as artists, filmmakers, writers, musicians and scientists, who offer a vital critique and alternative perspective on their work.

Their shopfront studio is of particular importance to the practice and allows it to maintain a strong connection to people, the street and the city.

DO are fully committed to education and teach at The Mackintosh School of Architecture.

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Do Architecture

Top: Heliotrope at the CCA, Glasgow

Bottom: Glasgow is Made by Us,
collaborative site specific work

Manifesto
Our core values and beliefs

Manifesto
I Nostri Valori Fondamentali

**"Take Risks and Experiment, Be Rigorous,
Collaborate and Engage"**

"Rischia ed Esperimenta, sii Rigoroso,
Collabora e Coinvolgi"

We believe that the process of making architecture should be conspicuous, thorough, fun and fully engaging.

We actively encourage participation, collaboration, and experimentation in order to create an architecture that is of its time, but also timeless, appropriate to its place and users, and which is able to adapt, evolve and age gracefully in balance with its context.

We believe that architecture and cities must encourage diversity and be afforded the opportunity to evolve over time. They must be responsive to shifting patterns of social, economic and environmental change.

We are interested not only in creating new buildings and spaces, but through the innovative use of light, in transforming environments and spaces that have been created, altered, or abandoned by others.

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Do Architecture

Top: White Sands, New Mexico

Bottom: Royal Border Bridge, Berwick
pun Tweed, lighting project, 2012

Context
What inspires us

Contesto
Cosa Ci Inspira

" **There are two different words in Portuguese that mean 'to look'
and 'to see and understand'. The tool of an architect is to be able
to see." Alvaro Siza**

" In portoghese esistono due differenti parole per intendere "guardare" e
"vedere e capire". Lo strumento di un architetto e l'essere in grado di vedere."
Alvaro Siza

We are truly inspired by the delicate balance between nature, mankind and human activity. In particular, the idea that a thoughtful and carefully considered intervention can positively affect each of our daily lives. This may mean creating a building, the immediate and temporary illumination of a space, or the planting of a tree, but it might equally suggest doing nothing except to allow nature to take its course.

It is often easy in practice to pursue methods and make work that is familiar to us and within our comfort zone. However, we believe that the best route may not necessarily be the most straightforward or direct one, and we admire people who genuinely challenge the norm and take risks to find the best solution for design challenges.

Just as thousands of pixels make up a digital image, so our ideas and proposals are formed from the tiny glimpses and minute, accumulative proposals, which go into forming a brief and which vary from project to project. A language of familiar and unfamiliar thoughts, ideas, sketches and past creations serve to inform the next iteration, which is crafted to specific needs and born of a particular place and time.

On the one hand, we continue to draw on the work of architectural luminaries like Koolhas, Olafur Eliasson, Aalto and Scarpa, but equally on the fragments of images, memories, scenes from a film, music videos, club nights, childhood holidays and dreams that make up our daily lives.

In keeping with this ethos, our project for Venice was inspired by the projects of Arte Povera, Albert Lamorisse's film *Le Ballon Rouge*, Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* and the words of both the architect Alvaro Siza and the novelist Italo Calvino who in *Invisible Cities* writes: "Many are the cities... which elude the gaze of all, except the man who catches them by surprise."

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Top: Golspie Street, Glasgow, 102 mixed
tenure flats for Govan Housing Association

Bottom: Basil Spence Exhibition

Method
How we work

Methodo
Come Lavoriamo

"**If we consider a space, building or a city as a living organism, then every client, project and site has a distinct genetic makeup, such that our approach to understanding the character of the site, client or programme cannot be standardised.**" Alvaro Siza

"Se consideriamo uno spazio, un edificio oppure una citta' come un organismo vivente, allora ogni committente, progetto o sito hanno una distinta struttura genetica per la quale il nostro percorso di comprensione del carattere del luogo, del comittente o del metaprogetto non puo' essere standardizzato"e'l'essere in grado di vedere." Alvaro Siza

We believe that before we can make any proposal, we need to understand place and people, reflecting on the urban scale, the minutiae, and everything in-between. In particular we are interested in the notion of proximity, which has many interpretations.

In relation to the reading of a place and people, this involves deploying a variety of recording and intervention techniques including photography, film and sound recording, where the proximity of the observer to the place or participant is constantly shifting.

We continually endeavour to develop new ways of working in order to expand our repertoire for reading a site, understanding behaviour, conceiving new spatial relationships and alternative typologies.

We do this by selecting, tailoring and deploying methods of investigation that are specific to each project and which become a critical part of the creative process.

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Do Architecture

Images: Concept sketches
for *Derive Veneziani*

Venice
Venetian Drift

Venezia
Deriva Veneziana

"**Quite losing his bearings in this labyrinth of alleys, narrow waterways, bridges and little squares that all looked so much like each other, not sure now even of the points of the compass, he was intent above all on not losing sight of the vision he so passionately pursued.**" **Thomas Mann from *Death in Venice***
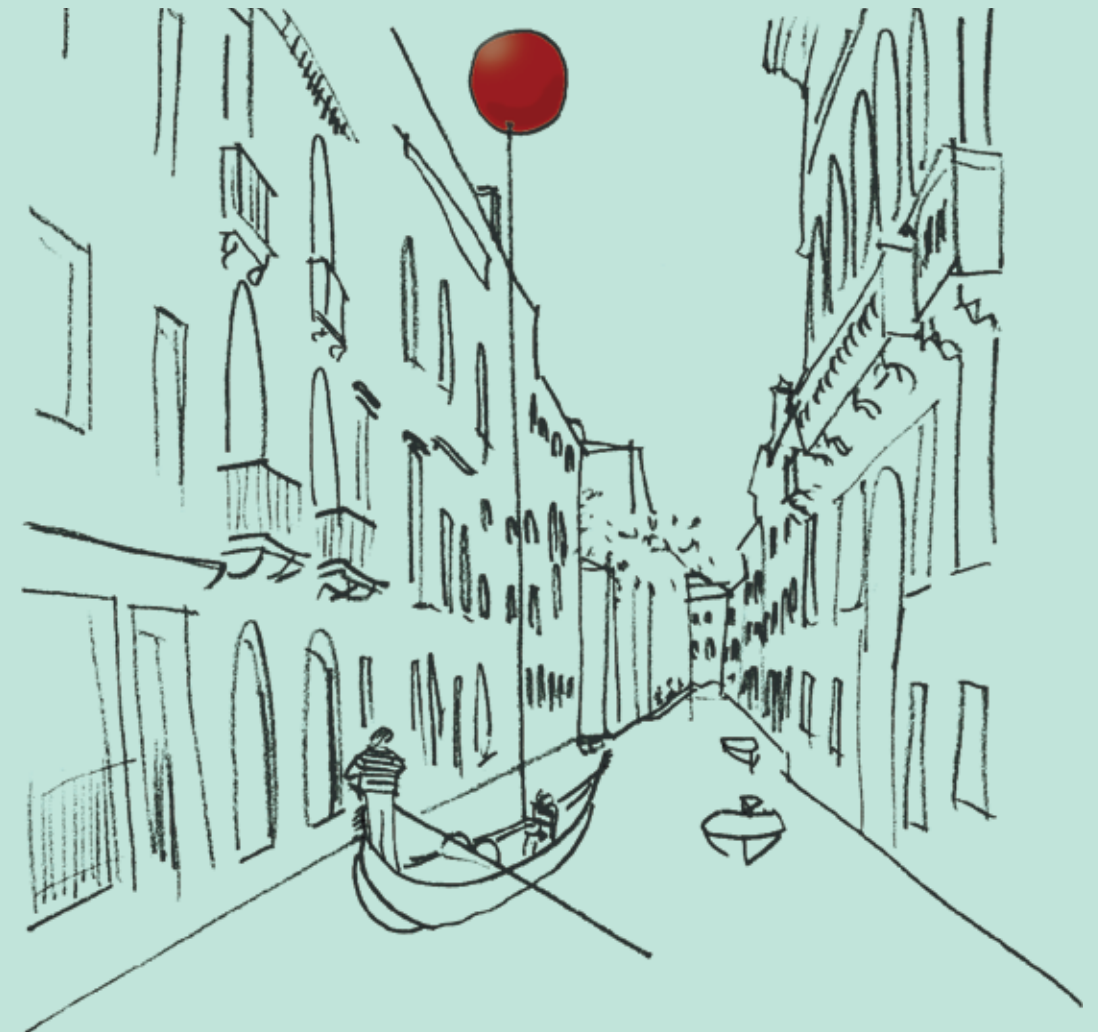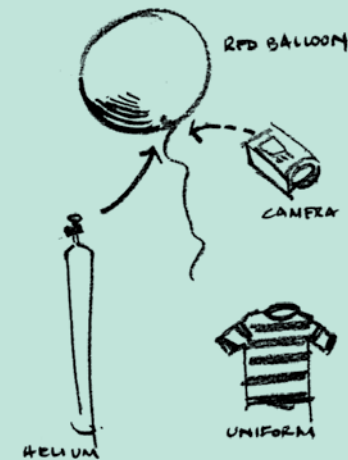
"Perdendo l'orientamento in questo labirinto di vicoli, stretti canali, ponti e piazzette che sembrano tutte uguali, senza essere piu' neanche sicuro dei punti cardinali, egli era sopratutto intenzionato a non perdere di vista quella visione che cosi' appassionatamente aveva rincorso." Thomas Mann da *Morte a Venezia*

DO plan to journey across the city over the course of a 24 hour period, observing, recording and mapping the marginal, often invisible, activities that make up urban life and which keep the city functioning.

Using a variety of photographic and filmic techniques, time-lapse camera equipment will be mounted on a three-foot helium filled red balloon. Cameras will look down or sideways, recording the interaction between people and the urban fabric, and capturing unexpected moments and details in the more private domain above the street.

Another camera will be placed at eye level so as to capture peoples' responses to the balloon as it travels around the canals and alleys.

The journeys, stories and accidental images found along the way will then be edited into a film revealing a never before seen portrait of Venice that will be available on-line and shown at the Scotland & Venice Studio at the Ludoteca Santa Maria Ausiliatrice.

Image: Masters project which envisaged
Cumbernauld as a International
Transport Hub in the year 2059

History
Our story so far

Storia
La Nostra Storia Fin D'ora

"With a portfolio of fifty built and unbuilt projects, GRAS celebrated their fifth anniversary in 2011. While the majority of their work is within or around existing buildings, the practice's first stand-alone new building, an education room, linked to the new visitor & interpretation facility at Sumburgh Head Lighthouse in Shetland, commenced on site in June 2012."

"Con un portafoglio di circa cinquanta progetti, di cui molti realizzati, GRAS ha celebrato il suo quinto anniversario nel 2011. Sebbene la maggior parte dei nostri lavori sia all'interno o al contorno di edifici esistenti, nel giugno 2012 e' iniziata la costruzione del nostro primo edificio autonomo, un padiglione educativo connesso al centro visitatori del Sumburgh Head Lighthouse in Shetland."

GRAS was established in 2006 by Stuart Falconer, Gunnar Groves-Raines and Steven Orr to consolidate a working relationship that was formed during the Masters Degree course at the University of Strathclyde under the tutorship of NORD's Alan Pert.

Complimentary skills, a portfolio of small projects and a clear ambition to produce world-class architecture in Scotland, led them to set up the studio with the professional and administrative support of conservation-accredited practice Groves-Raines Architects.

Following Steven's departure in 2008 and Gunnar and Stuart's qualification as architects, they were joined by Gordon McGregor, who having worked within a range of architectural practices including NORD, Rural Design and RMJM, brought with him a vital breadth and depth of knowledge in contemporary design and detailing. Early projects included exhibitions commissioned by the

Lighthouse and the Scottish Government, house extensions, building alterations, commercial fit-outs, a cosmetic dentistry clinic, and housing developments.

In collaboration with Groves-Raines Architects, we have also been involved in a number of projects that required the integration of new elements into existing historic buildings.

Top: GRAS are currently collaborating with Polyscot to explore the potential use of high density polystyrene in architecture

Bottom: Prototype testing in the workshop of an individual cantilevered tread for a new stair at Royal Terrace, Edinburgh

Manifesto
Our core values and beliefs

Manifesto
I Nostri Valori Fondamentali

"GRAS strongly believe in the value of collaboration with tradesmen, artists and designers working in other disciplines."

"GRAS crede fortemente nel valore della collaborazione con artigiani, artisti e designers provenienti da altre discipline."

GRAS believes that the design and manufacturing processes should be more seamlessly integrated, allowing the experience, skill and knowledge of the maker to inform the design process and vice versa.

GRAS believes that traditional skills have a place at the heart of contemporary design and manufacturing. These skills are steadily becoming lost in favour of modern building methods and architects should work to ensure their survival.

Equally, GRAS believes in the potential of emerging technologies to create new possibilities in design and manufacturing. CAM software and machinery is becoming more widely affordable and we are certain this will have a significant impact on the way we design and make things.

GRAS explores the threshold between the seemingly opposing approaches of traditional and contemporary design to create excellent products with timeless quality.

Below: The work of a traditional stone mason to re-create carved stone indent, Turnberry Rd, Glasgow
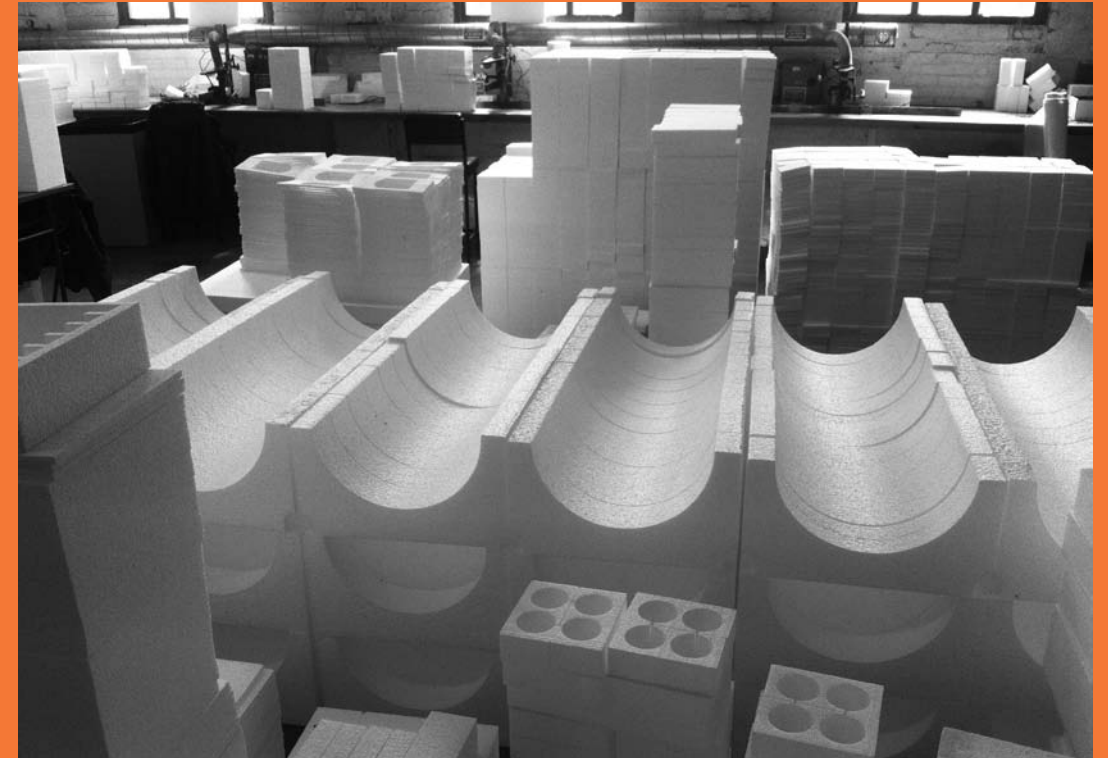
Context
What inspires us

Contesto
Cosa Ci Inspira

"As a practice born and raised in Glasgow, GRAS is deeply influenced by other architects, designers and artists working within the city's highly productive and creative design culture."

"Come studio nato e cresciuto a Glasgow, GRAS e' fortemente influenzato da altri architetti, designers e artisti che lavorano nell'ambito del contesto cittadino, notevolmente produttivo e creativo."

Low-cost studio space, dilapidated buildings and vacant plots make it a city with lots of potential. Amongst the many things that inspire us we would include the level of ambition and quality of work achieved by local artists such as Martin Boyce, Richard Wright and Jim Lambie, the sculptural and kinetic works of Heatherwick Studio, the formality and order of architects like David Chipperfield and John Pawson, and the emotive quality of Peter Zumthor.

Reminders of how Glasgow was once, quite literally, a giant workshop, are littered across the city, and Scotland's manufacturing industry continues to be a valuable source of knowledge and ideas. We spend a great deal of time in workshops and factories researching materials, techniques, and collaborating

with tradesmen to explore the potential of a project or to test a proposal.

A commitment to thoughtful conservation practice is embedded in our working method that retains a strong focus on quality craftsmanship, materials and detailing. This is combined with a keen interest in emerging technologies in design and fabrication, particularly three-dimensional scanning, modelling, printing and milling.

Left: Plaster restoration at St Andrews in the Square Glasgow

Right: GRAS are collaborating with a steel fabricator to create a new workspace, using the technologies and materials at their disposal

Top: The completed stair consists
of 20 unique cantilevered treads.
The form was inspired in part by
the work of artist Locke Morris

Method
How we work

Methodo
Come Lavoriamo

"We adopt an inventive but reflective attitude to design, always looking forward but mindful of the past. Working in parallel with conservation & restoration experts, we understand the significance and value of our built heritage and traditional crafts."

"Noi adottiamo un attegiamento creativo ma al contempo riflessivo verso il Design, guardando sempre verso il futuro ma riconoscendo il passato. Lavorando in parallelo con esperti della conservazione e del restauro, noi riconosciamo il significato e valore del nostro patrimonio costruito e dei mestieri tradizionali."

We see quality in traditional design, materials and crafts that is often lacking in contemporary buildings: solidity, permanence, proportion, hierarchy, human scale and timelessness, and seek to explore these qualities in our own work with new and existing buildings. At the same time we try to embrace opportunities afforded by emerging technologies, materials and techniques.

This approach is evident in many of our projects which wouldn't have been possible without the close, collaborative relationships developed early in the design process with fabricators, other design consultants and in particular, clients.

These include; the creation of a helical, cantilevered stair inspired by the sculptural work of Locke Morris, a collaboration with a steel manufacturer to create an enclosure over a 20m gantry crane, and working with Nicholas Groves Raines on the design of a composting shed during which we developed a new way of constructing a building with concrete reinforcing rods, meshing them together in a manner similar to traditional basket weaving.

It is essential that those working on a project share our vision and are willing to invest time and effort and take risks to realise it. The value of this type of

collaboration is most evident during the detailed design process, where we will often test ideas with a fabricator many times before reaching a final solution.

This relationship, built on shared values and trust, means that those delivering the project understand our intentions. Occasionally, on smaller projects, we carry out much of the testing and fabrication ourselves.

Many ongoing projects in the studio have no particular client or end user and have emerged though the speculative exploration of design and manufacturing processes. These proposals range from large-scale infrastructural schemes to single pieces of furniture.

Left: GRAS work with fabricators to develop new uses for standard building materials using traditional techniques

Right: Detail view of completed Composting Shed Edinburgh in Collaboration with Nicholas Groves-raines

Top: Galleria Temporanea will
temporarily place Venetian wellheads
in a gallery-like environment
removing the noise and distract

Bottom: Disused wellhead in a
residential area in Venice-1. Of the
seven or eight thousand wells which
originally dotted the city only

Venice
Transient Gallery

Venezia
Gallerie Temporanea

**"During the Venice Architecture Biennale, GRAS will explore
our relationship with public space by focussing on the historical
wellheads strategically located throughout the city."**

"Durante la Biennale di Architettura di Venezia, Gras esplorera' il nostro
rapporto con lo spazio publico concentrandosi sui pozzi storici posizionati
strategicamente nella citta'."

These 'vera da pozzo' were for centuries
the only source of fresh drinking water
and embody a whole number of collective
and social values. On the one hand
they were simple functional objects,
but like many other infrastructural
buildings and architectural elements,
they were often embellished with
cultural and political motifs.

Now however, they have fallen out of use
and sit like derelict follies in prominent
locations, taken for granted and almost
invisible to residents and visitors alike,
except when serving as a surface to rest on.

Working closely with manufacturers, we
have developed a mobile gallery that will
be used to highlight and celebrate the
existence of the wells by removing the
noise and distraction of the rest of the
city. In this way, we are looking to heighten
the individual's perception of them as
if they were objects in a white space.

In doing so, we hope to generate a
renewed sense of their significance
and to encourage a wider debate
on the importance of these types
of objects in shared spaces.
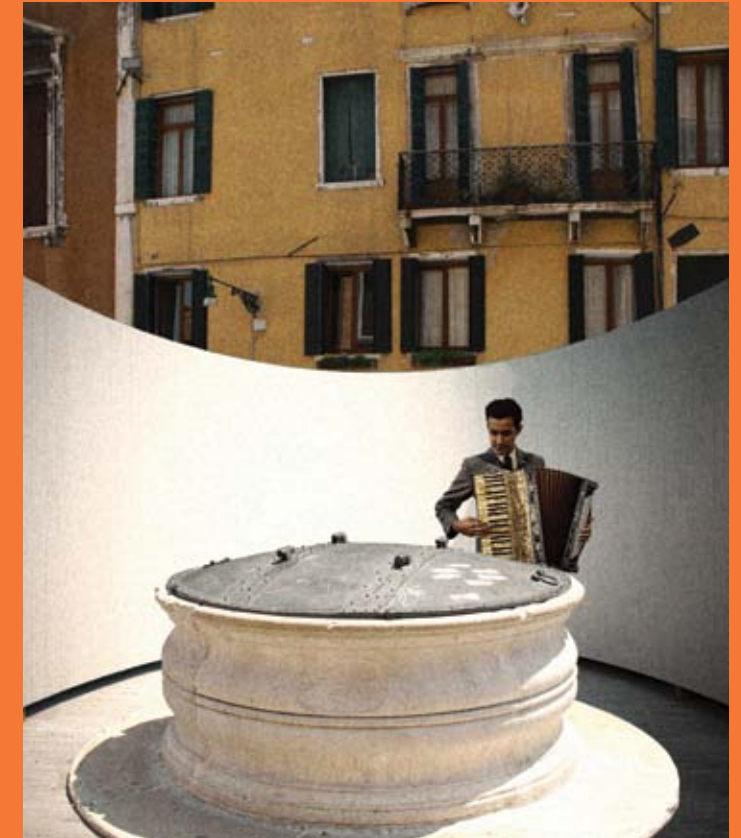
History
Our story so far

Storia
La Nostra Storia Fin D'ora

"Pidgin Perfect is a creative studio based in Glasgow. We build, produce, make and create, placing the community at the heart of urban projects."

"Pidgin Perfect e' uno studio creativo di Glasgow. Noi costruiamo, produciamo, facciamo e creiamo sempre posizionando la comunita' al centro dei progetti urbani."

Pidgin Perfect was founded in 2010 by Dele Adeyemo and Marc Cairns out of a shared desire to work directly with people and communities. A year later, Becca Thomas joined and the three of us set out to redefine our roles as young architects by specialising in different forms of community practice.

We don't see ourselves as a traditional architectural practice so much as a creative studio, combining imagination, technology and craft to help build better communities in Scotland and further afield. Since formation we have been developing new ways of working with a broad range of clients from across the architectural profession, education, government, local community and arts organisations.

All three of us graduated from the Masters programme in Advanced Architectural Design at the University of Strathclyde.

Before setting up Pidgin Perfect, Dele worked for Ateliers Jean Nouvel in Paris, Marc for Studio Daniel Libeskind in New York and Becca for Collective Architecture, a co-operative practice based in Glasgow.

Manifesto
Our core values and beliefs

Manifesto
I Nostri Valori Fondamentali

"Pidgin Perfect's founding manifesto was written when we were students in response to the closure of the historical Paddy's Market in Glasgow, a subject that greatly influenced our Masters project, Identity Crisis. The manifesto is raw and of its time but we continue to refer to these as benchmarks for our practice."

"Il manifesto originario di Pidgin Perfect e' stato scritto quando si era ancora studenti, in risposta alla chiusura dello storico Paddy's Market di Glasgow, fatto che ha fortemente influenzato il nostro progetto di laurea, "Crisi di Identita". Il Manifesto e' basilare e datato, ma continiuamo a riferirci ad esso come costante punto di riferimento per la nostra pratica quotidiana."

Pidgin Perfect are:

Against the vacuous branding of the city as a product. For the promotion of real identities, not false impressions.
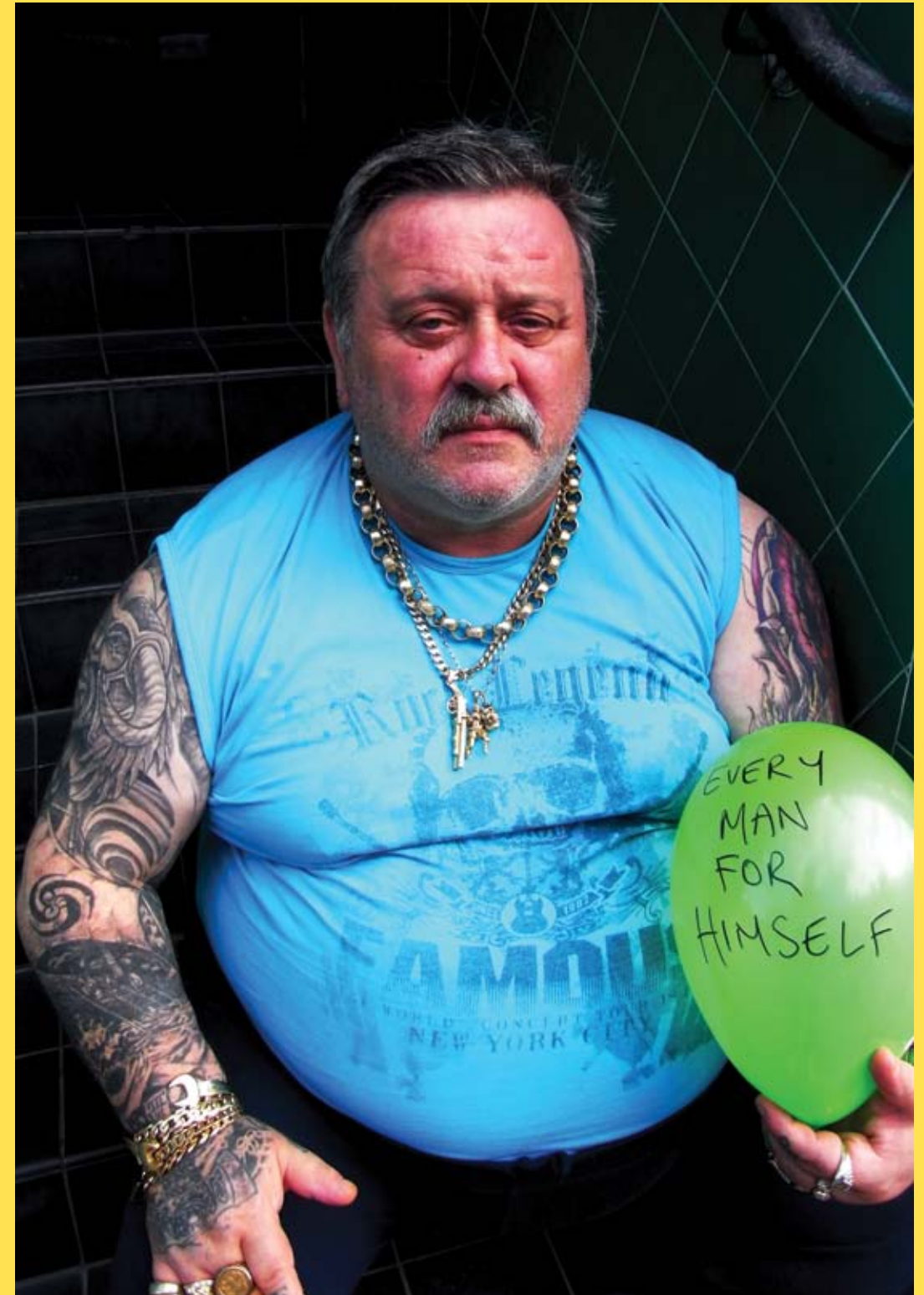
Against the marginalisation of the city's low-income citizens. For the breaking down of barriers between economic and social classes.

Against corporate identity over place and heritage. For the forging of positive integration of culture and experience.

Against the creation of soulless places to create short-term profit. For the promotion of long-term values of community and wellbeing.

Against the fetishisation of heritage at the expense of real communities. For the continuity of past, present, future.

Date: 11th July 2010

Page — 49
Critical Dialogues

Pidgin Perfect

Left: Pop-up matinee cinema,
the Barras, Glasgow

Right: Pidgin Perfect concept model

Context
What inspires us

Contesto
Cosa Ci Inspira

Always asking the correct questions early on is important, to the extent that you may question if a building is necessary. "Madame I don't think it's a new house you need but a new husband." Cedric Price, anecdotally

Poniamoci fin dal principio le giuste domande, dal contemplare se un edificio e' necessario a soddisfare i bisogni dati fino al guardare criticamente a noi stessi e chiederci, "che tipo di architetti vogliamo essere? "Signora, non credo lei abbia bisogno di una nuova casa, ma piuttosto di un nuovo marito." Cedric Price, aneddoto

1. Being, in our own way, a part of what we feel is a global shift in culture to values of community and wellbeing.

"The world is facing a wave of uprisings, protests and revolutions: Arab dictators swept away, public spaces occupied, slum-dwellers in revolt, cyberspace buzzing with utopian dreams. Events we were told were consigned to history – democratic revolt and social revolution – are being lived out by millions of people." Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The new Global Revolutions*, Verso:London, 2012

2. We see urban activism as a way of generating new approaches to architecture, empowering people and communities in this culture shift.

"…taking Cedric Price as an example, involving humour, pleasure and delight together when producing any form of physical or non physical design is aneffective way of … ultimately bringing about the empowerment of those involved. These 'other ways of doing' are at the same time proactive as they are practical and they address the role that time plays in the process of spatial production."

Nishwat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency : Other Ways of Doing Architecture*, Routledge: London, 2011

3. Connecting to our founding values is a constant point of reference for our practice.

"Our goal has been to create a new typology for architects working within the urban realm. Creating a model for a business that we can be proud of, a studio that is focused on innovative community led solutions because we believe that the public is entitled to greater dialogues between architects and the other professionals that shape the urban environment we all live in."

Pidgin Perfect, The New Wave: The Creative Studio, 2011 (Series of articles for ScottishArchitecture.com)

4. Building strong communities for everyone, a principle that is based on equality, and which is clearly vital for a strong healthy society.

"… further improvements in the quality of life no longer depend on further economic growth : the issue is now community and how we relate to each other." Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit*

Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger, Penguin: London, 2009

5. Most importantly, the joy of working with people and engaging communities with all of their varying characters and personalities is a great motivation and important to the success of any project.

"Communities generate social sustainability by mixing more "permanent residents with people who come and go, thus communities need to make it easier for people of all sorts to get involved. They essentially need to compliment low barriers to entry with low barriers to effective participation."

Jane Jacobs, quoted in Richard Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class*, Basic Books: New York, 2003

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Critical Dialogues
Pidgin Perfect
Images: Pidgin Perfect at work
engaging with the community

Method
How we work

Metodo
Come Lavoriamo

"Placing the community at the heart of urban projects is the key to Pidgin Perfect's process. Our aim is to make architecture approachable and understandable by listening to people and communicating with them in plain language."

"Posizionare la comunita' nel cuore di un progetto urbano e' la chiave dei processi generati da Pidgin Perfect. Il nostro obiettivo e' quello di tradurre l'architettura in qualcosa di comprensibile, ascoltando la gente e comunicando con essa in modo semplice"

Engagement is at the core of the service we provide. We have come to realise it is not enough to ask people simply what they think, they need to be involved creatively to produce outcomes they believe in. To reinforce this, we design unique imaginative experiences such as Pop-Up Cinemas, Tea Parties, or even jam-making sessions in order to create community events that people find meaning in and engage with.

Each event combines fun activities with the serious job of gathering new ideas and opinions that will form the basis of future design briefs, thus ensuring that the community gets what it really needs.

Our process of engagement can be summarised in seven simple stages: Getting to Know You, Explaining What to Expect, Working Out the Issues, Reflection and Research, Celebrating Progress, delivering a final Vision Statement and revisiting the project with regular Check Ups.

Each of these stages is designed to de-mystify the design process, engender ownership of the project, encourage more people to get involved and build momentum for change.

Pidgin Perfect's first commissioned project was Glasgow Harvest 2011, a festival run by the arts charity NVA, that brought communities together through the growing and sharing of food. We designed a 'Community Dining Table' that brought together the various user groups at the Kennyhill Allotments and Community Gardens.

The success of Glasgow Harvest continues to provide us with the opportunity to work with communities across Scotland. Most recently, we launched a participation programme in the Pollokshaws area of Glasgow, working with Glasgow Housing Association and Glasgow City Council to develop a series of distinct public realms as part of a wide-ranging regeneration strategy.

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Critical Dialogues

Pidgin Perfect

Page — 53
Critical Dialogues

Pidgin Perfect

Image: Rehearsing the Banchetto,
chair in the square, Venice

Venice
Banquet

Venezia
Banchetto

"Two worlds, Castello Alto-Basso and the Architecture Elite, in fair Venice, where we lay our scene, will meet on common ground, the via Garibaldi, and share together in the universal experience of eating"

"Due mondi, Castello Alto- Basso e l'Elite Architettonica, nella affascinante Venezia teatro della nostra azione, si incontreranno sul terreno comune di Via Garibaldi, e condivideranno/ confluiranno nella universale esperienza del mangiare"

Every other year, the elite of the world's architecture community descends on Venice for the Biennale, concentrated around the hubs of the Arsenale and Giardini that are situated close to the oldest community of the city, Castello Alto-Basso. For a short while these two worlds exist on common ground, but how much do they know about each other?

If architects are to address the 'common ground', "the spaces made by buildings: the political, social, and public realms of which architecture is a part," as stated by this year's Biennale Director David Chipperfield, then they should engage with those people who inhabit it both temporarily and permanently.

This poses the broader question of how to make a debate about architecture relevant to the daily lives of the people and communities it affects. We want to explore what those living in Castello Alto-Basso feel about the Architecture Biennale and how it impacts on their lives. How might the Biennale be better integrated within their community and how might the profession learn from where it is situated?

Working with a local organisation, the Gervasuti Foundation, Banchetto will be a jovial, theatrical event and an opportunity to bring people together from Castello Alto-Basso, Venice and the wider architectural community to begin to address these issues.

History
Our story so far

Storia
La Nostra Storia Fin D'ora

"Our objective is to increase people's awareness and knowledge of the places and spaces they inhabit and to involve them in how they are both made and used."

"Il nostro obiettivo e' quello di aumentare nella gente la propria consapevolezza e conoscenza dei luoghi e degli spazi che abitano, e di coinvolgerle nei meccanismi di creazione e fruizione degli stessi."

Stone Opera was set up in 2009 with the aim of improving the relationship between people and their built environment through interactive and playful architectural workshops, film documentary, architectural design and community events.

The practice works with all sections of society including schoolchildren, elderly people, politicians and contractors. Drawing on a wide pool of graphic designers, artists and students to deliver their projects, the core team consists of Hanneke Scott-van Wel and Kathy Li.

Both are qualified architects who have practiced in the UK and Holland and been actively involved in architectural education for over 10 years.

Page — 57   Stone Opera   Top:' Cultural village', a Stone   Bottom: 'Where We Play', filming
Critical Dialogues   Opera project with a young team   and listening to conversations
                                  of builders in Dalmarnock   about Urban Playgrounds

Manifesto
Our core values and beliefs

Manifesto

I Nostri Valori Fondamentali

"We throw play at architecture"

" Noi introduciamo il gioco in architettura"

Good places and spaces are not only realised in the design process, but are validated by the way people perceive and use them. The process of creating and improving our places and spaces should be open, engaging and accessible to all. Everyone is a potential client.

Our long-term aim is to make people more knowledgeable and critical about design so as to enable them to confidently contribute to the making of good places and spaces.

Carefully listening and involving people is paramount to facilitating and creating good design. Design should be driven by the needs of human beings. Economics should be used to facilitate this.

Context
What inspires us

Contesto
Cosa Ci Inspira

"Question your teaspoons. What is there under your wallpaper? How many movements does it take to dial a phone number?" From *Species of Space and Other Pieces* by Georges Perec

"Interroga il tuo cucchiaino. Cosa c'e' sotto la carta da parati? Quanti movimenti richiede il digitare un numero di telefono?" Georges Perec da *Specie di Spazi*

Scatola di Architettura by Bruno Munari

This small graphic architectural education book captures many of the values we aspire to in our work. It introduces a toolkit of simple building blocks that present ideas about architecture and construction in an appealing, engaging and creative manner. These are values that we aspire to in our work.

Against Architecture by Franco La Cecla

We found this provocatively titled book by chance, and discovered that it resonated with our own approach to architecture. Franco describes the frustration he feels at the current situation in architecture, highlighting the lack of power that 'ordinary' people have in controlling their environments and the lack of understanding shown by many architects and commissioning clients. We wonder whether our generation of architects will leave a positive legacy?

Cities for People by Jan Gehl

Jan Gehl has observed and documented how pedestrians use public spaces, which has led to an understanding how we use the public domain. He offers tools to improve the design of public spaces and the quality of our lives in cities. We are inspired by the research outcomes in the book, but also by the methods of observation.

John Hejduk

We take considerable inspiration from Hedjuk's work at the Cooper Union in New York. Hejduk encourages students to question the very basics of architecture, by exploring lines, surfaces, cubes, walls, grids, structure, colour, and narrative. We are also inspired by his book the *Mask of Medusa* in which he reflects on his life in architecture. Through the use of architectural characters, diagrams, poems and sketches he reveals a strong imagination, the mind of a craftsman and an urge to create a mythical architecture that engages with everyday life.

Juhani Pallasmaa

Pallasmaa describes the dialogue between human beings and their surroundings through an investigation of the phenomenology of experience. He looks at how we perceive things through our senses, how we create particular atmospheres and how we explore the full sensory quality of materials and space. Reading *Eyes of the Skin* and *The Architecture of Image* enhanced our understanding of the possibilities of architecture.

High Line in New York by Diller Scofidio and Renfro

Initiated by the community, the High Line is now a successful linear park on a disused raised railway track that runs from 14th Street until 36th Street in Manhattan, New York. An oasis hovering above the busy streets, attracting tourists, office workers, and families, the project is a great example of a confident community believing in their ideas on how to improve their environment.

Method
How we work

Metodo
Come Lavoriamo

"Play is a key method that we use to engage people with architecture. It is through play that people learn, explore, experience through doing and accumulate knowledge in a manner that overcomes normal fear and apprehension."

"Il gioco e' un metodo chiave per avvicinare la gente all'architettura. E' attraverso il gioco che le persone imparano ed esplorano, il fare esperienza attraverso il fare e l'acquisire conoscenza in modo taleda superare le normali paure e apprensioni."

Depending on the project, the outcome of any play situation will inform the design process, provide an experience that will make people aware of their own surroundings and give them the confidence to influence the spaces and places that make up their daily lives.

As design tutors we encourage and enable architecture students to build their very first project. The briefs we use combine both individual and group exercises that explore issues of design, shape, construction, materiality, budget and teamwork in a process that culminates in the development of selected designs that are then built full-scale.

As tutors we believe that students should have the opportunity to arrive at their own solutions. Two recent projects that have informed our proposal for Venice took place with young people. The first was based on the myth of Icarus and Daedulus.

We asked primary-school children in Aberdeen to design and build – using plumbing components only - their own labyrinth that eventually filled the school hall, and was so large it took pupils ten minutes to get to the middle.

In a similar vein but this time inspired by the beautiful brickwork patterns used by Gillespie Kidd and Coia for their Lady of Good Council church in Dennistoun, Glasgow, we asked local children to create their own architecture using huge cardboard 'bricks'.

These projects both illustrate our approach to working with communities to engage them with architectural issues in an open, fun and friendly way.

In every project the outcome is driven by the participants. They are also central to the recording and documentation of the event, giving them a platform to make their own critique of the process.
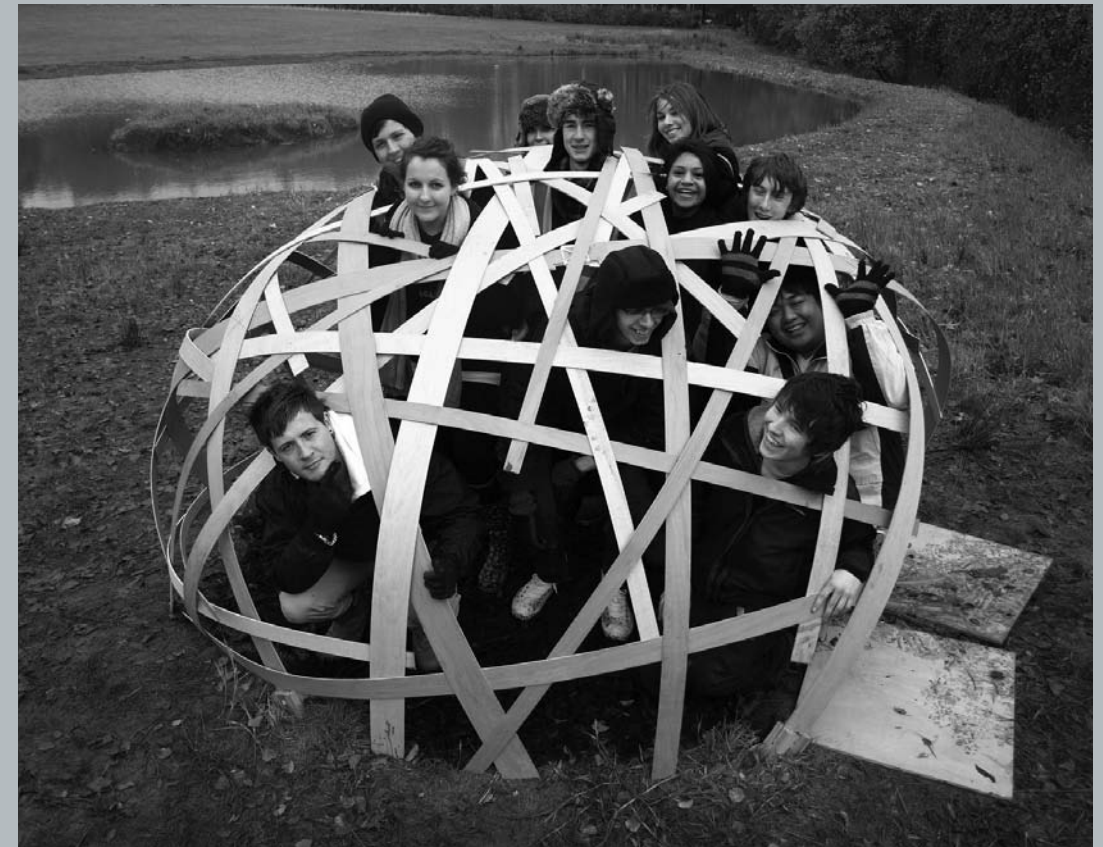
Venice
Playarchitecture

Venezia
Ludoarchiteca

"The project language is neither Italian nor English but the universal elements of architecture, such as the wall, column, door, window and drawing."

"Il linguaggio di progetto non e'ne` l'Italiano ne` l' Inglese, bensi' quello degli elementi architettonici universali quali muri, colonne, porte, finestre e disegni."


The Scotland in Venice event by Stone Opera asks the children and young members of a local Venetian Ludoteca to take part in their own mini-biennale or 'Ludoarchiteca' and become builders and architects for the day. Ludoteca loosely translates as a ground or place for play and captures rather perfectly in Italian our governing design ethos.

The Saint Alvise Ludoteca sits within the beautiful public walled garden, Parco Villa Groggia, in the area of Canneregio, Venice. The garden is also home to a local theatre and community centre and was given to the community by the Groggia family with the purpose of providing a social space for people to meet friends and family.

Stone Opera has developed a life-size architectural toolkit of cardboard elements that allows children to explore and discover the basic language of architecture. All elements of the toolkit are designed with a cardboard manufacturer in Glasgow, produced in Italy, and will be reused as storage boxes by the ludoteca after the event.

By creating an architecture toolkit that speaks any language, the project is transferable to other locations and it is our intention to further develop such kits for use by schools, other architects and community groups on our return to Scotland.
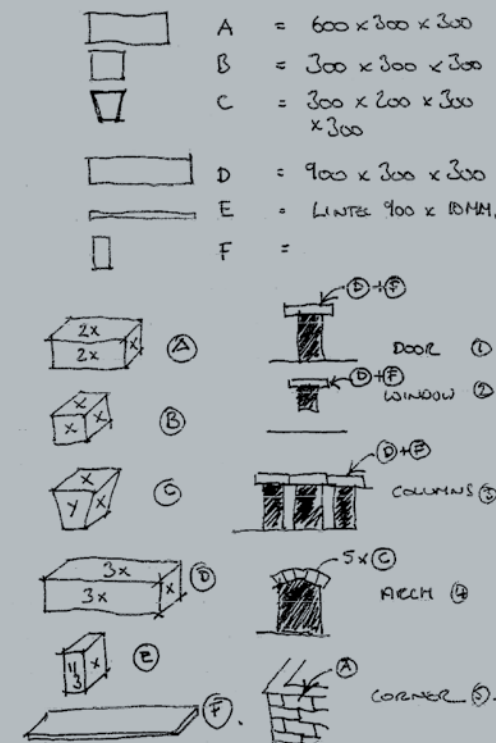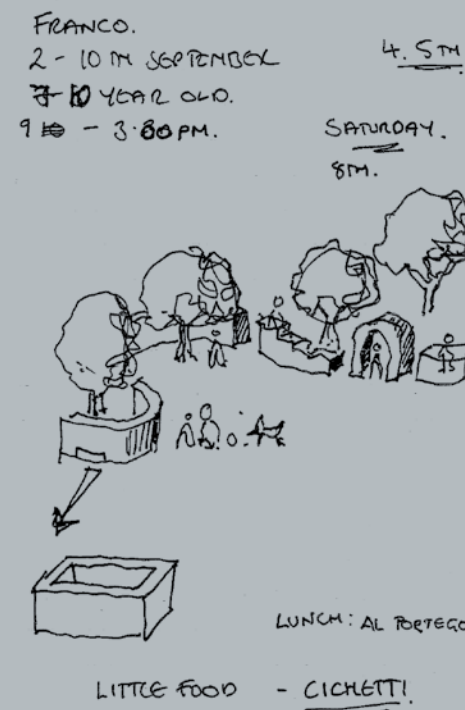
Credits

British Council Scotland:
Anne Renner   Arts Officer, British Council Scotland

British Council Italy:
Christine Melia   Director, British Council Italy

Press and PR:
Gurjit Singh   Communications Officer, Scottish Government
Finbarr Taylor   Web Design

Photography in Venice   Gilmar Ribeiro

M+B Studio   Lido di Venezia