

Socio-Political Acts

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Exposing Experiences: Research based Placemaking

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Toward Anonymity in Architecture: An Augmentation of the Historical Project of Autonomy

Paper Presentations

Exposing Experiences: Research based Placemaking

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The collection of data, both qualitative and quantitative, is an important part of our culture and directs many outcomes, although in the design of our cities' public infrastructure, it is often a piece that is underfunded and forgotten. Incorporation of real world testing, prototyping, and research into placemaking has a major impact on how we, as the public, experience place. It should also be a crucial part of the design process as it helps us to explore new ways of perceiving the world. Exposure to information informs the multiple players in the design process and directs decisions towards the best human experience.

This proposal presents three case study projects in which a strong qualitative research component influences design direction and ultimately people's experience in a city. The three projects were conducted in collaboration with the City of Seattle, Gehl Architects, and Sociology researchers from the University of Washington. The projects include a prototype streetscape element that folds into a wagon for downtown Seattle called a "Traveling Street Lounge." Working with a team of sociologists, the designers piloted this project with the public during a five- week time period, collecting data to inform the next phase of design. The second project, "Activating Alleys," is a research project where 200 alleys in Seattle were analyzed for built, behavior, and biodiversity data points. This data has informed future development of alleys and assisted the city in creating new alley programming. Lastly, the project "tweethouse," a public art piece, collected data from the public through a live twitter feed, creating a space for people to interact with art along a square in the city. This data has been used by the City to promote art- activating programs.

The ideas presented in this proposal share how real world testing and research started the process of engaging people in city development, created instances of playfulness in an urban landscape, and informed the future of design, all while shaping people's experience of a place.

Toward Anonymity in Architecture: An Augmentation of the Historical Project of Autonomy

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Architecture over the past century has broadly been framed as a discipline concerned with and accountable for the production of certainty, authorship, authority and autonomy. For much longer than that, however, an alternative but not necessarily opposite agenda has been developing in the shadows - precisely at or beyond the limits of human perception and orientation. By privileging the former and ignoring the latter, a crisis has manifest over the existence of critical distance and delineation of effective boundaries that architecture has otherwise claimed as its sovereign disciplinary territory. This paper aims at outlining the contours of a dark matter running beneath the accessible surface of architecture where the new, the alien and the speculative operate. By reframing the historical *Project of Autonomy* as a radical withdrawal of objects from one another, absolute alienation can be extended into a contemporary action-agenda in architecture: the production of anonymity. The language of key figures surrounding experimental architecture and the autonomy debate during the 1960's and 70's is closely examined in order to outline the conditions and objectives of this new agenda. Particular attention is given to Manfredo Tafuri and Peter Eisenman due to their concise (and ironically corresponding) accounts of architecture's complicity with the unknown and unknowable despite the problems it presents to the liberal human subject. Amidst this milieu, the possibility of political action is called into question, revealing "a new consciousness in architecture" (Eisenman, 1976) that manifests itself precisely through the reproduction of its own anonymity. Using the framework that emerges from this critique, it is argued that while the emancipatory socio-political act may have been extinguished for the liberal human subject, the possibility of autonomy remains for architecture *in itself* – even if it does not produce an autonomy *for us*.