

Thinking Metropolis V: Temporary Spaces, Places & Mobile Structures, June 27, 2008

Thinking Metropolis V evolved around the role of temporary spaces and places in the city, routes and pathways in the city, as well as mobile structures, events and works in the city. The focal point of the lab was new visions and perspectives in the practices and experiences found in a variety of temporary interventions.

KEY NOTE SESSION 1

SASKIA SASSEN

One of the worlds leading authorities on "new urbanism" **Saskia Sassen** (US) is Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, New York. Sassen is author of "The Mobility of Labour and Capital" (1988), "The Global City" (2002), "Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages" (2006), "The Urban Architecture of Global Networks" (2001) and several other books, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saskia_Sassen

Saskia Sassen's presentation dealt primarily with the link between local and global political challenges and focused on the possibilities of confronting the global order – or lack of same – through local institutions, the city being a key example.

A main point for Sassen is that cities should not mainly regard each other as competitors (as it is often done in contemporary city discourses), but rather as potential collaborators in a global network of cities. There is a tendency to see cities too much as powerless actors in an overwhelmingly strong, global economy. Sassen argues that even though capitals move ever more freely they still need specific places to unfold themselves. A capital still needs space.

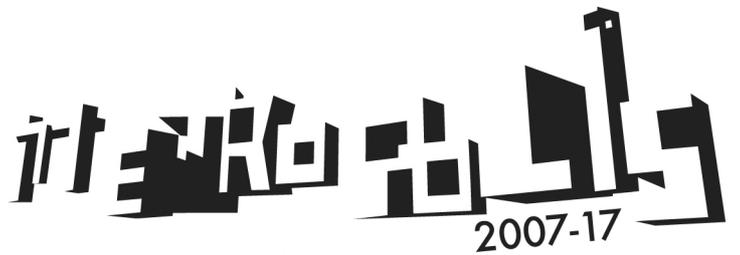
Cities have a potential power if they know and use the specific need for concrete spatial location of different economic circuits. Sassen argues that there is not THE global economy, but a range of global economies (in plural). For example there is an economy dealing with steel unfolding itself in Detroit, Sao Paulo and Mumbai, a.o. If the cities of the steel-circuit joined forces, they would be able to challenge the power of the capital with democratic demands – be it of workers' rights, environmental rights etc. The challenge is to differentiate between the different economic circuits and thus be very concrete in the approach to the global economy.

There is a general potential in knowing the ways of using local power structures in the global game. Sassen gave an example of how a court case regarding work conditions in the 3rd world was actually being tested through a local law in the US (and not in criminal court, not WTO as you might expect). It's a matter of using local interfaces to approach the global field of challenges.

The potential of creating networks between cities – and through collaborations exert political influence over the strong capital players – played a big role in Sassen's rich presentation, but a range of other issues were also discussed. A second part of the lecture dealt with the power of the powerless and how very local protest groups could be seen in a global context. Also she briefly entered the theme of new 'mutated' identities arising in globalization - the in-between identities of people who neither belong in their 'native country' nor in their new country.

USMAN HAQUE

Usman Haque (UK) is Director of Haque Design + Research, a company which specialises in the design and research of interactive architecture systems. He is involved in the creation of interactive environments using both low and high-tech solutions with artistic content. See: www.haque.co.uk.



Usman Haque presented a range of projects exploring 'soft' aspects of architecture, not normally considered in the discourse of architecture, namely aspects like sound, texture, colour and smell. Another central theme in the presentation is how he explores interactive or participatory systems that enable people to interact with their environment. In Haque's own words, he designs systems in both meanings of the word: he designs systems and make systems that enable (other people to) design.

Haque showed his project *Skyear* as example of an urban celebration that allows for active participation rather than just passive contemplation (as is common with typical urban celebrations as for example fire works). *Skyear* is an interactive cloud of balloons that changes colour depending on the viewers' use of their mobile phones. See more about *Skyear* at www.haque.co.uk

"The balloons contain miniature sensor circuits that respond to electromagnetic fields, particularly those of mobile phones. When activated, the sensor circuits co-ordinate to cause ultra-bright coloured LEDs to illuminate. The 30m cloud glows and flickers brightly as it floats across the sky. As people using phones at ground-level call into the cloud (flying up to 100m above them) they are able to listen to distant natural electromagnetic sounds of the sky (including whistlers and spherics). Their mobile phone calls change the local hertzian topography; these disturbances in the electromagnetic fields inside the cloud alter the glow patterns of that part of the balloon cloud. Feedback within the sensor network creates ripples of light reminiscent of rumbling thunder and flashes of lightning."

Haque showed several other projects dealing with how to enable a truly interesting and real interactive experience, making people themselves become co-makers in the making of the city. Read more about Haque's project at www.haque.co.uk

JES VAGNBY & PETER SCHULTZ JØRGENSEN

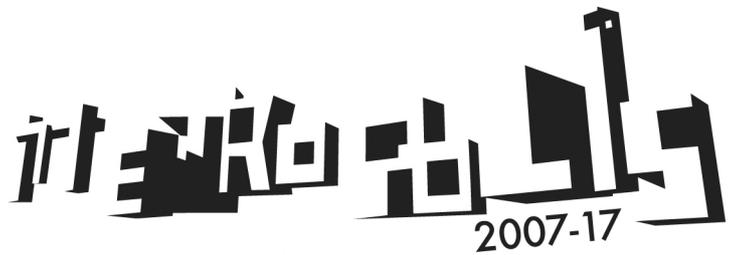
Jes Vagnby (DK) is architect and chief designer at the Roskilde Festival which accommodates 90.000 people for 5 days and turns a field into a bubbling, temporary city of music. See www.roskilde-festival.dk // www.vagnby.dk. **Peter Schultz Jørgensen** (DK) is a trained architect and works as cultural planner for the Roskilde City Council. He especially works with the development of the Musicon area which takes the idea of temporality and event lead processes into the field of city development.

Jes Vagnby and Peter Schultz Jørgensen were talking about the potentials and challenges of temporary and permanent city-making alike.

Vagnby describes the very concrete and specific challenges that come with building a city and taking it down again 3 weeks later. The main philosophy in his approach is focusing on what the structures *can do*, rather than the built structures themselves. The energy arises in the meeting of the architecture with the audience; the structure itself is secondary. For example the fence on this year's Roskilde Festival was kept in a sober black, which in itself can seem boring, but in praxis accentuates the diverse, expressive and colourful audience.

The festival architecture is carefully planned to enhance different modes of being - and being together. The first phase (before the festival programme begins) focuses on individuality and participation, and the second phase (during the music programme) focuses on community and fascination. The transition between the first and second phase, as well as the transitions between festival space and camping space, are deliberately staged to enhance the experience of change and the different modes of action.

An interesting theme in the presentation is the amount of deliberation that is being put into creating an experience of freedom. The very precise and controlled framing is what allows urban life to unfold itself in a way that is not seen elsewhere. The experience of freedom and the possibility of self-expression are taking place in a setting that is very



strongly framed and not - as you might expect - in a place that has no boundaries or framing.

Peter Shultz Jørgensen talked about the approach to plan the Musicon area - a former construction facility close to the centre of Roskilde which is to be turned into a creative urban area. The area is being developed in an untraditional way, attempting to integrate temporary, cultural and social qualities in the development process. This approach challenges a traditional master planning approach and opens up for changing the course as the site develops.

Peter Schultz Jørgensen has developed the unique approach to planning in his article *Musicon - confronting the borderline* from the book *Changing Metropolis* inspired by the Metropolis Lab 2007. Also you can read more on www.musicon.dk

BREAK OUT SESSION A: Signs of life in mega cities

Metropolis is launching collaboration with major non-European cities focusing on the African continent. From the hyper-reality of mega cities facing huge logistical problems, new perspectives on traditional (Western) solutions are being developed. Here the synergy of art and architecture explores useful and courageous possibilities for new forms of urban development in Third World cities.

PEDRO JOSE MAHANDO

Pedro Jose Mahando, architect from Maputo, focuses on upgrading the slum areas of African cities

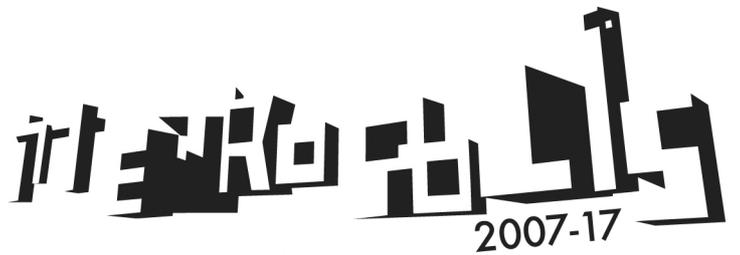
Pedro Jose Mahando made a visual, exemplary presentation of challenges to African cities. Though each African city has its own challenges, there are similarities. Mahando presented cases from South African informal settlements. He also presented a range of interesting data. A main point is that generally 90% of all urban investments in South African cities are invested in the formal city, although it only covers 15 percent of the entire urban area. The informal urban settlements are increasing and at the same time we see how informal activities – such as street trading, temporary constructions etc. - are invading formal urban spaces.

The presentation also showed a range of examples displaying concrete life situations of people eating, playing, beautifying themselves, etc. in the urban setting. In a concrete and emphatic way the presentation made clear the lack of adequate urban conditions. African cities are facing a great challenge to supply places for an urban life to unfold itself in the areas of informal settlements.

DUALA ARTS CENTRE

Marylyn Duala, from Duala Arts Centre, a centre for contemporary art and a laboratory experimenting with new urban practices in the mega city of Douala, www.doualart.org

The Duala Arts Centre presents both African and international artists and has a strong focus on community empowerment. The Duala Arts Centre seeks to empower people very concretely by involving them in the decision-making of projects in their neighbourhood. Thus, Duala Arts Centre has realized a variety of projects with the participation of both artists and local residents. A range of concrete interventions in the neighbourhood were demonstrated as well as heritage projects aiming to make the country's resistance history present in the urban space.



CENTRO CULTURAL GUEZI

Fernando Naftal Manuel Vamusse, Maputo/Mozambique, Director of the cultural centre Centro Cultural Guezi

Fernando Naftal Manuel Vamusse gave a small performance and talked about the work they do in Centro Cultural Guezi. The centre is quite unusual as it is very rare having a cultural centre in the informal parts of the city.

BREAK OUT SESSION B: Mobile Constructions, Innovative Structures

N55

Jon Sørvin, member of Danish art collective N55, a collective of innovative and socially concerned artists particularly interested in architecture and design, creating mobile constructions with a social and philosophical perspective, www.N55.dk

Jon Sørvin began his talk with a brief introduction of their work which started some twelve years ago. The group behind N55 started off by building things for daily use, e.g. toilets. Following their philosophy of “art as everyday life”, they began moving their project into the streets and work with social situations. Simultaneously they began to communicate their art projects through the production of user manuals. Inspired by American architect Buckminster Fuller, they conceived a small metal frame structure – a modern cairn – which can be put up anywhere in the world. Through the project “Land” people can make the private land accessible to others by placing the structure on their ground.

Sørvin explained how N55 is cautious with what they see as a tendency for artists to take commissions in the area of social work, and thus risk becoming an alibi for hidden political discourses.

WATERLIVING

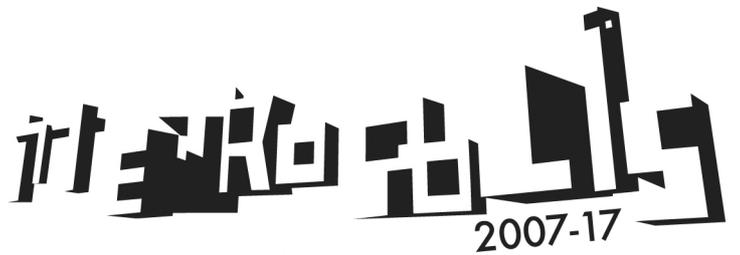
Niels Holck from Waterliving (DK), a company developing new houseboats and communities on water by combining contemporary architecture with an understanding of maritime design, www.waterliving.dk

Niels Holck explained how he started his company by asking: “Is it possible to live on water in a sustainable way?” Houseboats in Denmark suffer from an image of ‘last resort’, and unwillingness by authorities to make coherent regulations of the area. After seven years, Waterliving has been forced to move to a smaller harbour outside Copenhagen. They are now engaged in a project of building a self-contained city on water – complete with public spaces and aquatic courtyards between the boats. The keyword, according to Holck, is mobility. Living on a houseboat, people could move their home from Copenhagen to Brussels, if they want to.

L.E.F.T.

L.E.F.T., Naji Moujaes (US) is a New York based design collective comprised of architects Makram el Kadi, Ziad Jamaledine and Naji Moujas. Established in New York in 2001, L.E.F.T is dedicated to examining the intersections of cultural and political productions as they relate to the built environment, www.leftish.net.

Naji Moujaes continued the session with a project preoccupied with water. After the Israeli – Hizbollah war in the summer of 2006, Moujaes and L.E.F.T started the imaginary project of rethinking and remapping the Arabic world. They went on to focus on Lebanon with another project that explores an imaginary scenario of “Offshore Urbanism” in which a “voluntary dismantling of infrastructure” is followed by moving the entire Lebanese population onto barges off the coast of Beirut, in order to render further Israeli attacks on Lebanese infrastructure futile. The project aims at addressing the Israeli atrocities as well as the numerous failed master plans to rebuild Beirut. According to Moujaes barges are ideal,



because the “exodus to nowhere” or permanent state of “in transit” – if only hypothetical – would help to change the entangled patchwork of religious, social and political disparity within the Lebanese society.

Q: Wouldn't the barges be perfect targets for air strikes?

A: Moujaes: Beyond that criticism of Israel, the idea is also about escaping local mistakes.

Q: Could some of N55's projects be added to Waterliving?

A: Sørvin/N55: No, because a project like Waterliving is all about planning, and in that process Waterliving becomes a new authority itself.

BREAK OUT SESSION C: Creative Spaces

BOSCH & FJORD

Rune Fjord Jensen (DK) from *Bosch & Fjord* works with concepts and designs that challenge spaces, organisations and users in a way where design borders artistic interventions, www.bosch-fjord.com

The company Bosh & Fjord focuses on creating art as an integrated part of everyday life. Art combined with architecture. They work with art as a catalyst for developing interactions between people and try to create possibilities for their clients with unorthodox rooms and design. One of Bosch & Fjord's design projects is a conference room where the floor is raised and the ceiling is extraordinary low. The unconventional room creates a humorous and relaxing atmosphere. The starting point for all Bosch & Fjord's work is the scale of the body; the body as a common starting point for all design development. One of the keywords for Bosch & Fjord is de-institutionalisation of institutions and many of their projects can be seen as attempts to create non-institutional spaces within institutions.

NORTH DESIGN OFFICE

Pete North and **Alissa North** (CAN) is a landscape architecture, urbanism and design firm which has developed a practice where research and theory strengthens the process based approach to the projects, www.northdesignoffice.ca

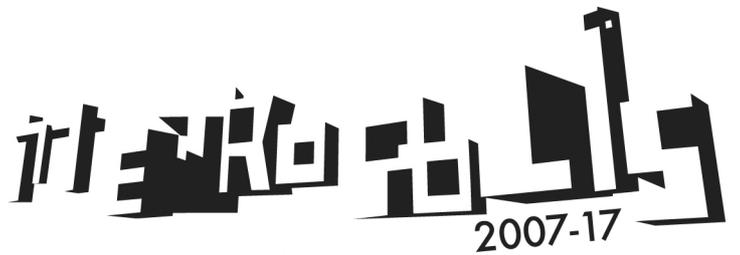
North Design presented a range of projects meant to interact with their surroundings and develop over time. Keywords in the work of North Design Office projects and processes are ecology and long time strategies. In creating the 'Los Angeles River Master Plan' they have defined the site with an initial planting outline, but the vegetation is encouraged to evolve on its own, rather than fit into a static plan. The aim of the master plan is to achieve maximum function with minimal intervention.

RAUMLABOR BERLIN

Matthias Rick (DE) from *Raumlabor_berlin*. *Raumlabor* is an interdisciplinary team that investigates untraditional strategies for urban renewal and which involves and inspires people to act and engage, www.raumlabor-berlin.de

Raumlabor_berlin is a group of architects and artists that works with contemporary art and architecture in public space. The group questions the lack of use of public space and seeks to activate urban space and realize a city's social potential. Matthias Rick stated: "What makes a city is not the buildings, but the way you manage and use the public space". Raumlabor doesn't try to solve problems, but explores and initiates urban conflicts - and make very concrete installations that display new ways to interact in public space. One of their projects is an inflatable, transparent plastic room that can be placed in the city and used for different things like communal dinners, a dance pavilion or meetings.

Comment: It impresses how Raumlabor_berlin uses the city's existing building structures and how successful the projects are.



Q: How does the collective Raumlabor_berlin work process-wise?

A: Raumlabor is a collective of architects, art historians, carpenters, students, sociologists etc. In the late 80's we all worked together in different bands, bars, projects etc. Later on the projects became more focused on the development of the city. We try to work together with as many groups of people as possible. Everybody is independent, but comes together once or twice a week to discuss a theme or a project. It is a chaotic workspace, but very creative.

KEY NOTE SESSION 2

MAP OFFICE

Gutierrez & Portefaix are from the MAP office in Hong Kong, a collaborative research and design studio involved in cross-disciplinary projects that incorporate architecture and visual arts, www.map-office.com

MAP presented their latest research on new urban fields. One of the projects is "Underneath" exploring the use of the new space under Guangzhou's super highway construction where "a new social reality" is being created. The project shows how informal communities and economies evolve under the highways and how the new space is being occupied by a range of homeless people, small kiosks, garbage plants etc. Another example of unusual ways of using public space is seen underneath the HSBC Bank in Hong Kong. At weekends, when the lobby is open, but the bank closed, the indoor lobby area is being used extensively as a recreational area for the Philippine Diaspora in Hong Kong. MAP thus shows different strategies for how to make the best of a complex cityscape.

PUBLIC ART LAB

Susa Pop (DE), artist, curator and director of Public Art Lab in Berlin, a forum for international artists and curators working in the public realm, often using new media and technology. Pop has produced a number of projects including "Mobile Museums" and is now preparing the Media Facades Festival in Berlin for October 2008. See www.publicartlab.org

Susa Pop presented the Mobile Studios project, showing how a simple, white mobile multimedia platform could be put to use in a range of different urban contexts, not least in cities like Belgrade, Bratislava and Budapest. The project showed a social and cultural potential unfolding itself in a collaboration between professionals and by-passers in public space. Read more on www.mobile-museums.com

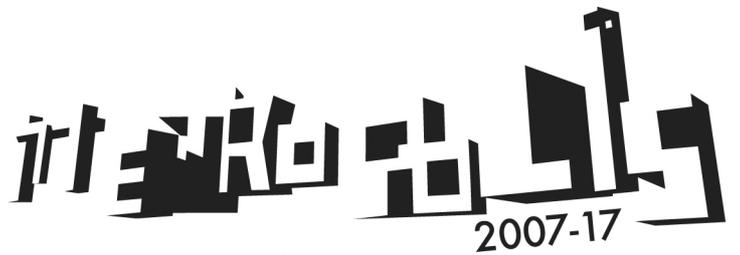
Pop also presented the main concept of the Media Facade Festival that promotes a multi-disciplinary approach to technology, architecture and media art in modern cities. The festival takes place in Berlin and uses the city as a space for projections and artistic expressions. The artistic events are combined with workshops, panel sessions, lectures and exhibitions. Read more on www.mediaarchitecture.org/mediafacades2008

BREAK OUT SESSION A: Actions in Urban Space

AIRPLAY STREET GALLERY

Independent Curator *Karen Toftegaard* from Airplay Street Gallery (DK), a street gallery based at a square on Nørrebro exhibiting digital and performative art in public spaces www.airplay.nu

Airplay is an urban gallery based on local demands for cultural activities in the streets. Karen Toftegaard explains that in order to establish contemporary art in the urban space and to become integrated and interact in a local environment, you have to be very focused on the local people. It is all about relations: don't distance the art from the public. Airplay consists of people from the education 'modern culture and cultural communication'. The projects made by Airplay have



been criticised by the locals for lasting too short time for it to sink into the public awareness. Karen Toffegaard wonders if it is possible to achieve permanent interaction and whether it is necessary.

SHAHRAM ENTEKHABI

Shahram Entekhabi (DE), Berlin based artist who is focusing on the transportation of ideas via live art and performative elements, fusing videos, architecture, sculptures, drawings and photographs framed within an urban setting. Highly provoking and questioning. www.entekabi.org.

Shahram Entekhabi has made public performances all over the world. His focus is the view of the society from the immigrant's point of view – the view of the society from the outside, and the white, masculine person in the west. One of his performances is a man in a suit walking around a public space putting up tape between trees and lamp posts. He never talks to his audience, he just interacts with the public space and films it from a distance. Local authorities in the different countries, where the same performance was carried out, reacted very differently.

KAROLINE H. LARSEN

Karoline H. Larsen (DK) is an artist working site-specific collaborating with and engaging the public in her projects which include strong elements of social sculpture and social creativity, www.huldada.dk

Karoline creates *Creative Actions*, actions in public space where the public can interact and be co-creators. An aim of her work is to create a flow of movements between people in public space, making people interact and co-create. Art is about interaction, not about being alone. It is important to understand the space where you create art and sense where you are. A project in Europe might have a social value or contribute to an understanding of public interaction in the West, but might not have the same effect in Brazil. *Creative Actions* is a process and offers artistic values throughout the different stages in the process. Even when the art has been demolished or torn down it is a part of the life of the artwork. It is important to interact with the city – the people and the architecture.

Q: How would you perform your art if the city was already filled with toys and interactions?

A: Karen: It is for the artists to create new ways of interaction and activities.

A: Shahram: The artist is a visitor who has to take the public space in the city and create a comment to the environment in it.

Q: What is your success criteria?

A: Karoline: If people use it, if they interact.

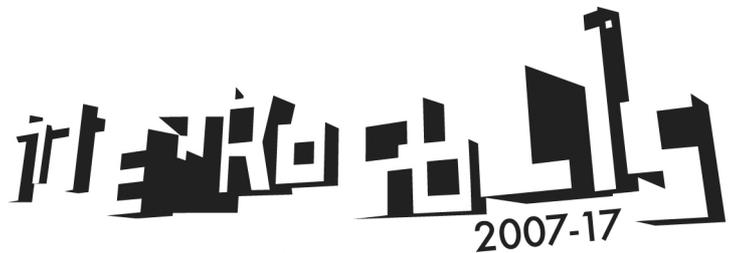
A: Shahram: The process of experiencing how far I can go in public space and what the reactions are.

BREAK OUT SESSION B: The body and the city

STREB

Elizabeth Streb (US), artistic director of the New York performance company STREB. Streb tours extensively internationally, presenting performances and residencies and conducts year-round activity at her home studio, the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics (SLAM), located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, www.strebusa.org

Elizabeth Streb started the session by inviting everyone in the audience to New York to find the *real moves*. She explained how her whole oeuvre is about the anthropological quest of collecting moves all over the world and finding an answer to the question: Where does human action occur? Many different people inspire her. Among the more unlikely is motorcycle daredevil legend Evel Knievel. Streb's goal is to have an effect on space through the body *in action*. She is



especially interested in the human aspiration to fly. In her performances Streb uses physical devices such as human sized hamster wheels and rotating l-beams.

JAY PATHER

Jay Pather (ZA), based in Cape Town, at the University of Cape Town, is founder and director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre. Their work with the city and in the city is based on a strong community connection and a strong engagement in the local society, www.drama.uct.ac.za/research/residencies/jaypatherbiography.html

Jay Pather showed a number of his site-specific performances. Dealing with the complex past of his native country South Africa, Pather's work is dealing with "discourse of opposites" as he engages questions of identity, memory and alienation in the public spaces. Unlike the pre-colonial past, the complexity of today's South Africa must be conscientious of what is visible and invisible in the city. By performing in public space, Pather wants to make his work available for people who would never enter a theatre. Until recently Pather has primarily been addressing issues of alienation as a result of South African history, but since 2006 he has turned his attention to a more critical view on how recent development has postponed the collective dream of post-apartheid South Africa.

LOTTE VAN DEN BERG

Lotte van den Berg (NL) is a young Dutch theatre maker and performer who tours internationally. Her latest projects are about the interpretation of place viewed as both real, unreal, constructed and staged, from prisons to deserted suburbs at dawn. www.toneelhuis.be

Lotte van den Berg asked everyone to follow her outside. As she explained: in her work she is used to direct both actor and audience. Outside van den Berg went on to talk about her project "The blue hour" which explores how "art" is happening in the spectators' view, in the framing of things, rather than in the object itself. By placing the audience in a wasteland and the actors in the far distance, van den Berg attempts to lead the spectators' eyes to what is already there. In art as in life, it is about directing ones attention to what exists and simultaneously letting go, as it disappears. It's all about the framing.

KITT JOHNSON

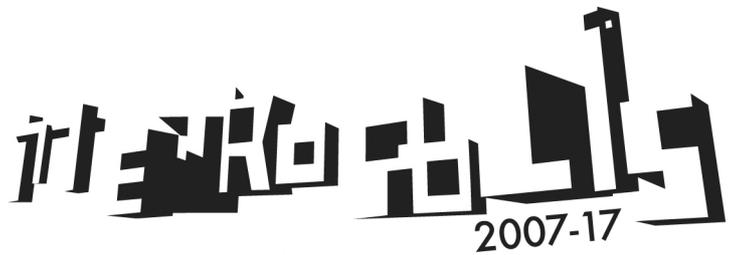
Kitt Johnson (DK), internationally recognized performer, choreographer and producer will present her recent project "Mellemrum", a site-specific performance festival taking place in the hidden, forgotten, known and unknown places of Copenhagen, www.kittjohnson.dk // www.mellemrum.info

Kitt Johnson invited everyone back inside where she showed a video of her recent project, the site-specific performance festival "Mellemrum". The audience is taken on a tour through various known and unknown places in Copenhagen. At the different sites they encounter performances which aim at evoking a number of different emotions, a.o. wonder, eeriness and above all humour.

BREAK OUT SESSION C: Routes and Paths

THE SECRET COMPANY

The Secret Company (DK) works in a crossover between art, communication and design developing books, brands, platforms of communication, websites, magazines, secret tours, events etc. www.theseecretcompany.dk.



The secret company presented their practice of combining research and performance in urban space. The group has launched the project "Searching Secret Stories" where they go into city spaces searching for stories, setting up a trailer and talking to people over a cup of coffee. In their presentation they underscored the desire amongst people to share stories about the city and about specific places in the city.

You can read more about secret stories in *Changing Metropolis* published as an outcome of Metropolis 2008, where The Secret Company explains more about their work-processes.

THE HOMELESS MUSEUM OF ART

Filip Noterdaeme (US), New York based artist and creator of *The Homeless Museum of Art*.

www.homelessmuseum.org

Filip Noterdaeme from Homu made a unique show including a staged interview with himself and a stuffed dog and taped answers. The presentation as well as the following discussion raised a number of issues regarding the ways of the art world and social questions about exclusion, social accept etc. At one and the same time, Noterdaeme mocked and challenged the art world's logic, using the language of art against the art system itself. Noterdaeme used a fictional version of himself as a kind of alter-ego to voice his criticism in a fine balance between irony and strong pathos. Also Noterdaeme showed some short films about the Homeless Museum of Art.

Q: Is there no other way to challenge the art system than being in radical opposition to it? Doesn't the system have qualities and the chance to be altered by dialogue rather than through opposition?

A: Sometimes there is a need to be truly anarchistic. And this is the time.

TOPOTEK 1

Martin Rein-Cano, partner at TOPOTEK 1 (DE) is working mainly with design for public spaces. Based on a critical understanding of immanent realities, the search for conceptual approaches leads them to decided statements concerning the urban context. www.topotek1.de.

Martin Rein-Cano presented a range of projects showing how Topotek 1 works with images, analogies and associations in their landscaping. They often work with projects where different kinds of graphical communication systems interact, allowing for both a graphical and functional clash. It's about letting things interact in urban space rather than keeping everything divided. It's a matter of letting the different logics meet. This is done in an example where a parking lot and a market place use the same space. The placement of cars and kiosks is shown graphically on the asphalt surface, making different types of information meet and collide visually.

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