

Rapid Change

9 July – 4 September 2011

Rapid Change features nine artists who have explored cities facing periods of major transformation. Focussing on Auckland, Detroit, Hong Kong, Liverpool and New York works in the exhibition consider the politics and societal impact of change in the urban environment.

While cities are continually in a state of flux, there are often concentrated periods of rapid change that dramatically shape urban landscapes and greatly impact communities. Auckland is currently at the beginning of such a period. The rapid merger of eight regional councils into one 'Super City' government, together with the electoral promise of rapid public transport, has set Auckland on a course of major transformation. By looking at significant changes in cities around the world, *Rapid Change* considers Auckland's past and future urban landscape within a global context.

Artists include: Anu Pennanen, Dieneke Jansen, Elisapeta Heta, Gregory Holm, Matthew Radune, Peter Wareing, Stefan Canham, Reuben Moss and Rufina Wu
Curated by Bruce E. Phillips

Artworks in order of appearance
Writing by Bruce E. Phillips, 2011
Curator, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts

te tuhi
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www.tetuhi.org.nz

Elisapeta Heta

Mega Mall Information Centre, 2011

digital video, vinyl signage, timber, MDF, cardboard

Shopping malls have had a significant impact upon the urban landscape of Auckland. This has occurred to the extent that private developers in effect become public urban planners. In particular, large 'mega mall' developments have a substantial effect on traffic volume and the value or character of residential neighbourhoods. Rather than following a regular resource consent process, some companies can opt for a plan change with the city council. The latter allows the developer to work directly with council with minimal public consultation.

In collaboration with Te Tuhi, architectural graduate and artist Elisapeta Heta has created an information centre for the Te Tuhi Foyer. The *Mega Mall Information Centre* (MMIC) provides clear information about the various stages of 'mega mall' developments in Auckland. Using three recently built or soon to be expanded mega mall developments as case studies¹, MMIC sheds light on the design, planning, consent and public consultation processes. Rather than using obscure technical and legal jargon, MMIC attempts to encourage understanding of how such developments occur and what options are currently possible for public input.

¹ Westfield Albany Shopping Centre , Westfield St. Lukes Shopping Centre and Sylvia Park Shopping Centre.

Gregory Holm
Matthew Radune

Ice House Detroit, 2010

c-print, 35 mm film transferred to Blu-ray, 6:17min/loop
photography by Gregory Holm, audio by Jeffrey Williams

Once the fourth largest city in the United States, Detroit is now in serious decay. Since the 1950s, Detroit has undergone a steady decline in population and industry. However, it wasn't until the 2008 American mortgage crisis hit, causing the global recession, that Detroit was nearly crippled. Detroit is now faced with foreclosures on approximately 20% of its residential property, much of which is now abandoned and scheduled for demolition. The severity of the crisis has caused an escalation in crime and a significant withdrawal of core municipal services from particular neighbourhoods.

In attempt to draw attention to this plight, photographer/artist Gregory Holm and architect/artist Matthew Radune created a site-specific architectural intervention that encased a two story wooden house in ice. Over the course of thirty days, during the winter of 2009-2010, the house was manually drenched in water for 24 hours a day, until it was heavily laden with thick ice. *Ice House Detroit* created a sombre memorial for the local community and a temporal beacon of Detroit as a shrinking city. Throughout the course of its creation, the intervention morphed into a destination for locals drawn in by the sublime spectacle. The project was also socially engaging through the process of the acquisition and subsequent demolition of the building. In negotiation with the State of Michigan Land Bank, the artists made arrangements for the house to be one of the first in a dismantle and recycle scheme - rather than being demolished and dumped in a landfill. Through this partnership the artists also paid the back-taxes on a second foreclosed home, providing a single mother and her family a home to live in. Being inherently temporal *Ice House Detroit* now lives on through photographic documentation. As documentation, removed from its original socio-political context, the intervention suggests other more architectural references such as the entropy of the built environment and the resilience of nature.

Anu Pennanen

A Day in the Office, 2006

HD DV CAM transferred to DVD, 16 min/loop

audio by Timothy Lambert

commissioned by Liverpool Biennial 2006 in collaboration with FACT

With approximately 40% of the world's economy passing through its port during the early 19th century, Liverpool fast became one of Britain's major cities. Today only 10% of Liverpool's economy relies on the port. Its economy, like a great part of the UK's, is reliant upon the public and private service sector industries. The economic shift from the port to offices has led to Liverpool undergoing major urban development. This surge in development resulted in much of the historic port architecture and local business being replaced with high-rise office buildings and shopping complexes. The most significant regeneration of the city occurred between 2004 and 2008 in the lead up to Liverpool being the European Capital of Culture. Being mostly private development, this regeneration was used to attract new business to Liverpool and to resurrect the historic heart of the city.

A Day in the Office, by Finnish artist Anu Pennanen, was commissioned for the 2006 Liverpool Biennale and documented this crucial point in Liverpool's urban development. Set to a brooding ambient soundscape, the footage poetically drifts through the city focussing on sites of heritage, decay and construction. The audio is also interleaved with snippets of conversation between the artist and local office workers, public servants, developers and architects. The sampled conversations provide personal insight into the thoughts, concerns, assumptions and speculations on the city that is rapidly changing around them. *A Day in the Office* poetically documents a city in the midst of urban regeneration and subtly considers for whom the development will benefit.

Stefan Canham
Rufina Wu

Portraits from Above, 2008

Building 1, Sham Shui Po District, Hong Kong

Building 5, Tai Kok Tsui Area, Hong Kong

c-prints, silver gelatine prints, CAD drawings as digital prints

funded by Kulturbehörde Hamburg

supported by Art & Culture Outreach, Hong Kong

Hong Kong-born architect Rufina Wu and German photographer Stefan Canham documented a series of illegal rooftop dwellings across Hong Kong, on buildings scheduled for redevelopment. With an average population density of 6,490 people per square kilometre, space in Hong Kong is at a premium and such shantytown-like rooftop dwellings are common. Using architectural drawings, text and photography, the project provides an unprecedented insight into these improvised homes and the largely migrant communities that inhabit them.

Dieneke Jansen

McLennan Development, Papakura Military Camp, 2011

inkjet billboard print

Auckland photographer Dieneke Jansen documents a site currently planned for a state housing and private residential development, prompting contemplation of the future shape of our urban landscape. The work consists of a single expansive composite photograph, measuring 8m wide by 4m high made from of over 343 images, placing the viewer at a 1:1 scale with the site. Through its numerous focal points the image creates a multiplicity of perspectives for the eye and encourages a re-examination of the future potential and history of the site.

Peter Wareing

Utility Black, 2011

dual channel digital video, 30min/loop

Since the mid 1980s, I began a loose video diary of my neighborhood, the East Village in Lower Manhattan as it was undergoing serious gentrification, not dissimilar to parts of the Brooklyn and Queens boroughs. I was drawn to the lives of those living in the margins against the hyped, celebrity culture most often portraying this city.

By 1984 New York City had turned its back on tenant rights, in favor of developers backed by Wall Street money, and began to push low-income renters out of their homes in the East Village and the Lower East Side in Manhattan. Artists like myself were part of the very gentrification process that I was documenting. My 'privileged' educated position ensured a safety net, unlike the fate of most of my long-term Hispanic and African American neighbors. The squatters in the East Village were often the most vocal group with their manifesto 'Decent Housing for Low Income New Yorkers Now!' caught between their need for homes and a city bent on privatization. By 1993, all the squatters had been forced out by the police, the last one being on East 13th Street. These harsh evictions left many people homeless, some of whom came straight from my building. The financial crash in late 2008 revealed huge financial cracks in the system and exposed Bernard Madoff's largest fraudulent Ponzi scheme. It echoed Bush senior's infamous assertion, leveled at Reagan's 'voodoo economics', as an economy of 'smoke and mirrors'.

Peter Wareing (2011)

Utility Black features footage of the East Village shot by Peter Wareing between the late 80s to early 2000. The work focuses on the interior lives of tenants versus the exterior political and financial circumstances that have been forced upon these individuals. By mixing raw documentary footage with fictionalised reenactments, Wareing creates an ambiguous and apprehensive representation of the city. This is not the Manhattan seen through the rose-tinted lens of Hollywood. Rather, *Utility Black* pictures a grimy city whose less fortunate inhabitants live in substandard conditions. Also juxtaposed throughout the work are surreal moments that create a sense of anxiousness about the cityscape. A man neurotically claims to see a UFO, police helicopters hover as if omnipresent, and the theme song from Bonanza makes an odd appearance. Wareing doesn't spell out the significance of these strange inclusions instead he leaves us to consider: '*Should psychics have been employed to fathom the future, or perhaps were aliens with their special powers sucking the banks dry?*'

Reuben Moss

The Parade of the Old New, 2010

digital audio, 1 hour 28min/loop

soundtrack written and performed by Stuart Porter, with the Maitland St Ensemble

Please note: *The Parade of the Old New* loops every hour and a half starting at 9am

A full web-quality version of the work is available to listen online by visiting: www.tetuhi.org.nz

Change in the urban environment is most often the result of a particular political addenda as equally as it might a practical need. The political history of New Zealand, and how it has effected urban planning, is rife with examples. Responsible for about 30% of New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product and centre for the country's international trade, it is no surprise that Auckland has had a history of political leniency towards commercial enterprise. Auckland, it could be said, is a city shaped by the private sector, not the state.

The Parade of the Old New by Ruben Moss delves into New Zealand's political history and uncovers how urban planning shifted from state driven initiatives to those favoured by the private sector. In particular, Moss focuses in detail on the unrealised community developments designed by modernist architect Ernst Plischke and advocated by William Robertson in the 1940s. In the style of a radio documentary, Moss narrates the story supported by interviews with Lynda Tyler and Ben Schrader - key academics on the topic. The documentary pieces together the intriguing but tragic story of the Naenae community development in Lower Hutt. An ambitious initiative that was to incorporate community run business co-operatives, 'health, social, recreational and cultural services for the [then] new state housing developments in Lower Hutt'.² The Naenae project was the first of three other such state funded housing and municipal developments planned for Auckland - including Mt Roskill, Te Atatu and Tamaki. Aside from being the largest in the country, the Auckland developments were also planned to integrate with a city wide public train system. Moss' retelling provides insight into how personal and collective ideology fell to the demise of political pressure and ultimately in favour of the private sector.

² Robertson, William. "Lower Hutt Community Centres: Final Statement" (1950), p1. <http://mebooks.co.nz/clients/library.huttcity/text/FinalState1/thumbnails.html>