

## On Cities

March 4-May 4, 2008

### Santiago Cirugeda

For more than a decade, Santiago Cirugeda in Sevilla, Spain has been bombarding his local city council with building proposals. Among the permits he has been asking for are permission to erect scaffolding, extend a balcony, parking permit for containers in the street and to build huts on roofs. Asking for these permissions he sets a long and complicated process in motion and in the meantime Santiago goes to work and builds whatever he feels appropriate.

With his interventions in the city, Santiago Cirugeda make use of existing city planning loop holes simultaneously as his structures inhabit and ask questions about unused land. The recipe part of the project consists of encouraging citizens to do the same, to make use of the space for their own needs.

“Reasons for building oneself an urban reserve can be as many as there are citizens that dare doing it. What we can say with certainty is that this personal and intimate action takes place outside everything politicians and professionals may plan.”

### Teddy Cruz

The *Manufactured Sites* model shows how Maquiladora\*-produced prefabricated frames act as a hinge mechanism to mediate across the multiplicity of recycled materials and systems brought from San Diego and re-assembled in Tijuana's suburbs. By giving primacy to the layered complexities of these sites over the singularity of the object, this small piece is also the first step in the construction of a larger, interwoven and open-ended scaffold that help strengthen an otherwise precarious terrain, without compromising the temporal dynamics of these self-made environments. By bridging between the planned and the unplanned, the legal and the illegal, the object and the ground, this frame questions the relationship of manufacturing, labor and community participation in building emergency housing in Tijuana.

\*NAFTA-supported assembly factories that take advantage of Tijuana's cheap labor.

## Cybermohalla Hub

Research institute Sarai/CSDS and the NGO Ankur: Society for Alternatives in Education are collaborating with architects Nikolaus Hirsch and Michel Müller to design a cultural laboratory in a new settlement in Delhi. The Ghevra settlement is in the northern frontier of the city and emerged after a large population was re-located there after an intense round of demolition of squatter settlements in the city. The hub's wooden structure works both as a load bearing structure for the vertically growing institution and as display for the cultural production of the *Cybermohalla project* in Ghevra, as well as for the archive of the destroyed hub in Nangla Manchi.

Mohalla in Hindi and Urdu translates as neighbourhood. The *Cybermohalla project* takes on the meaning of the word *mohalla* in the sense of alleys and corners, of relatedness and concreteness, and as a means for talking about one's 'place' in the city as well as in cyberspace.

## Oriana Eliçabe

Music has always been part of the identity of towns and culture. In her project *Rebel Voices* Oriana Eliçabe sees Hip Hop as a narrative, the thread linking stories of struggle and resistance to the neoliberal system that generates economic and social apartheid. An essential aim of the project is to use photography to make visible the internal borders that divide cities. Emotional and psychological borders, linked to the process of gentrification, that are manifested in social, economic and racial differences. From a local point of view (neighbourhoods) and from a global perspective, documenting the culture of Hiphop in different cities in Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. The documentary uses slides and evolves through contact with peripheral neighbourhoods with young Hip Hop virtuosos, monitoring the everyday life that they live. Their lyrics have been Eliçabe's inspiration to conceive a visual landscape of the social reality and politics of the different places. Their voices may give a framework for finding a different way of expressing issues of marginality and resistance.

## FlyingCity

In their generative explorations of urban phenomena, flyingCity is specifically interested in the ongoing transformation of communities that are influenced by the rapid re-structuring in the city of Seoul. Part of their practice is to consider alternative ways in which to think about the

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city and its steady growth under current strained conditions, and under the influence of density and accumulation. At the same time flyingCity are trying to delineate processes of natural growth in Seoul where site specific performances, mental maps of utopian urban planning and photographic documentations are the fundamental tools. The aim is to articulate a critique that engages with the urban landscape of Seoul. On the basis of an in-depth research method, flyingCity is trying to stimulate a collective imagination that appropriates the dominant mode of urbanity into a platform for smaller scale creative practices. Working with the recombination of texts and images, memories and imaginations, flyingCity considers such material recordings of a specific place, and use the material to articulate new understandings of space and time.

## Francesco Jodice

The work on display is *Sao Paolo Citytellers*, a kaleidoscopic documentary film about the social, economic and political situation in the Brazilian capital of Sao Paolo. With its nearly eighteen million inhabitants, a 'hyper-city', the film reveals the impossibilities to govern "from above" certain aspects of its perpetual growth. On the one hand a documentary, the film is also a private investigation into facets of city life containing contemplation and poetics. The film informs about urban conditions and narrates stories from people's lives that at first may seem unreal, but that in fact are looming realities in many of the major cities in the world. In Sao Paolo, fear of abduction, aggression and violence prompts the rich to use helicopters as taxis. Improvised heliports on rooftops serve a minority of people in this city. 23.000 helicopter flights take off and land per week, bringing people to work, school, shopping and to church.

## Fernando Llanos

In his incarnation as Videoman, Fernando Llanos proposes a strategy that intervenes in already existing channels of communication within the fabric of urban environment. Equipped with a closed circuit system; a video camera linked to a hand held projector, the mobility of Videoman converts the streets he walks into his own stage. The urban environment; facades, walls and squares become screens and passers-by are instant actors with various levels of engagement. In its unpremeditated nature, the drifting character of Videoman strolls without a specific goal or plan other than to explore the city. In itself an action deployed by the Situationists in the 1950s and 60s as part of their critique

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of existing urbanism, the drifting explorative nature of Videoman's performances points to the diminishing social functions of street life while at the same time as he presents a dynamic model for coexistence.

## MAD

MAD takes great care to dream up what life may look like in the future city of Beijing. They envision how the old and new will be handled as equal and without conflicts. That there be a floating city, complete with park and lake, just above Beijing, and that trees are planted over the Grand National Theater, creating an underground stage where operas can be performed. Part of their visionary and politically daring design, *Beijing 2050*, is a blueprint for transforming Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City area into sprawling parkland. Converting the world's largest city square into a park would have major repercussions on Chinese culture where people, not the Communist Party, would be at the nation's centre. "This space records the history of China. If this space can change, all of China can change" says Ma Yansong, MAD's founder.

## Ou Ning

The area of Da Zha Lan in Beijing is located in the southwestern corner of Tiananmen Square. The typical layout of diagonal streets in this area was formed naturally as people traveled in between the new and old capitals after the Middle Capital of Jin, was destroyed and the Main Capital of Yuan, rebuilt. Unlike the neat and orderly design of "hutongs" (narrow streets or alleys) in the Inner city, Da Zha Lan developed more freely. According to the *Investigation of Urban Corners in Beijing* published in July 2005 by Beijing Social Science Institute, the density of population in Da Zha Lan reached 4.5 people per square meter, more than twice the average for the capital's city center. Extremely crowded, the risk of fire is severe and supply of water and electricity inadequate. Conditions of hygiene are appalling and public security chaotic. The daily living expenses are less than RMB 8 (€ 0.75). Da Zha Lan area has become a typical slum.

## Joachim Sauter and Dirk Lüsebrink

Anyone shooting a film sequence leaves the invisible trace of his/her camera movement and our surroundings are filled with these invisible traces. The project *The invisible shapes of things past* aim to make such traces visible and reposition a narrative information-architecture in the city. To achieve this,

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single frames from a film sequence are lined up in space according to the camera movement with which they were shot. A straight tracking shot, e.g., the line-up of single frames produces a cubic object. The line-up of frames of a pan shot (the camera rotating on an axis) will create a cylindrical object. More complex tracking shots result in intricate, abstract but still readable sculptures. Through this translation of single frames consisting of single pixels, or picture elements, into space, objects of voxels (volume elements) are generated. Every volume point in the resulting sculpture can be described in its position and color.

## STEALTH

In this exhibition two tangent bodies of work are on display; *Open Futures, still here to be claimed* and *Wild City*. *Open Futures* is based on vacant urban areas, usually centrally located and strategically important, the work engages with specific circumstances observed in nine emerging capitals of the Western Balkans (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Pristina, Skopje, Tirana, Podgorica, Sarajevo). For various reasons these empty lots remain outside the plans for development and are 'waiting' to be used - even now, in the midst of a hectic post-socialist transition. *Wild City* precedes *Open Futures* as a research into non-planned and barely regulated processes of urban transformations. Starting from the drastic changes in the urban structure of the city of Belgrade during the 1990's, it tries to identify the internal logic of those transformations and investigates how to describe seemingly chaotic events in a process based and systematic way.