

Around the pool:

Converse

... we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the
power

Of harmony, and the deep power of
joy,

We see into the life of things

Wordsworth

in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern
Abbey'

(lines 45–49)

Conversation 0 (zero) Introduction

We've been given three very nice themes as a primer, so nicely put together that they have led us to the idea of a dialogue and we have built them directly into this competition. The resulting conversation spans documents, ideas and a generation. We are reminded at the time of our graduations, some 30 years ago; that complexity was for a while - fashionable. The world has gone on to be a much more complex place but as for design, what we have both learned in the meantime is that the apparently simple conception is everything. How do we reconcile these apparent poles?

So we converse, with the apparently disparate components being read together to form a complexity. We hope the challenge of making a succinct architectural piece that reflects the integration of our influences might take you somewhere. The process might also reflect the notion that design is like juggling and the skilled designer engages with more elements, faster and more fluently. The challenge is to respond to the issues raised, but not sieve and analyse them methodically - you haven't time, rather we request you undertake this tacitly during the focus on a design proposition.

Part of the weave is always morality and here we have gone for a conservative orthodoxy (even though we are inclined to lean the other way); which is that a distribution and sharing of good fortune occurs through the agency of Architecture. Here in Australia, such philanthropy is well behind other comparably wealthy countries and we hope it will be your generation that sees and helps positive change.

SUPER STUDIO 2016

Fri 12th –
Sat 13th
August



Student Organised Network for Architecture



Australian
Institute of
Architects

Creative Directors:

John Price

Catriona McLeod

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Meditations for a theme

So, there is a set
of conversational
steps:

1. Meditations for a theme
2. It is not my form of space (about garden)
3. Conversation 3 is a material brief and a dialogue between the client and designer
4. Your own pre-design musings and findings
5. Your design, where you tacitly architecturalise your conversations.

Conversation 1 – The themes

At the bottom of each of these themes we have offered our very brief response

1. Music & Territory: The Psychogeography of Aural Space

Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating.¹

Excerpt from: **The Audible City Boundary**

- Study project by Dutch sound artist Cilia Erens and architect Sabien de Kleijn

...In contrast to other western european capitals, Amsterdam's boundary has some sharp, physical demarcations, abrupt transitions from the city to the world beyond. Housing and industrial estates stretching for kilometres along arterial roads are largely absent. Can we listen to this as a quality in its own right, and how do we make it audible in a presentation?... At what point does the city really start to sound like an inner city? What does a road leading out of the city sound like? What does a city boundary sound like? We searched for 'earcatchers', sound themes that linger in the ear, as elements that can be measured.²

High & low, bright and dark, these are psychological properties of acoustical perfection: impressions relating to locations whose reality is that of aural psychology rather than of physical space.³

¹ John Cage. *The Future of Music: Credo*. Lecture, Seattle 1937

² Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, Music, Space and Architecture (Amsterdam: Achitectura & Natural Publishers, 2012), 43-49

³ Karl H. Wörner. *Stockhausen Life and Work*. London 1973, p.155

On the musical psycho-geography:
We believe in Genius Loci, and that understanding, responding to and supporting uniqueness is not merely sophistication, it's a morality.

2. Landscape of the Anthropocene

Excerpt from: *Telling Friends From Foes in the Time of the Anthropocene*
- Lecture by Bruno Latour

Those among you who have seen *Gravity*, the film by Alfonso Cuarón, will have noticed, I am sure, that once again a blockbuster's special effects offer a powerful symbol of a drastic change of mental state. For the human race there is no space anymore, at least no durable occupation of outer space. That is, there is no way to escape from the Earth. The main character, Dr. Ryan Stone, confesses it at one point: "I hate space," she says while trying to run from one destroyed space station to the next. Even more forcefully than in Cameron's *Avatar*, the characters, and the spectators with them, realize that there is no longer any Frontier; no escape route except back on Earth. The direction is not forward, Plus ultra, but inward, Plus intra, back home.

When Ryan, sole survivor of the space adventure, reaches the shore of the lake where she has finally landed and grabs a handful of dirt and mud, she has, literally, been metamorphosed from a human to an Earthbound, while the old-fashioned American hero played rather clownishly by her teammate George Clooney, has vanished forever in outer space, debris among the debris of the European and Chinese space stations. Much as in von Trier's *Melancholia*, in *Gravity* we witness the step-by-step destruction of the old Galilean idea of the Earth as one body among other spatial bodies. We are forced to turn our gaze back to sub-lunar Gaia, so actively modified by human action that it has entered a new period, geologists turned- philosophers propose to call that of the Anthropocene.⁴

The formal announcement of the Anthropocene, that is, the geological period that defines the earth's systems as being fundamentally controlled and manipulated by human activity, is set to be announced by the International Commission on Stratigraphy this year. As we emerge from the Holocene, which began approximately 10,000 years ago, we acknowledge a significant shift in the way we view the landscape. The natural landscape, by definition, will become a cultural landscape. How does this change the way we design?

⁴ Bruno Latour, Draft of the lecture prepared for "Thinking the Anthropocene" (Paris, November 2013), 1-2

On the Anthropocene:

Architecture is empowered by the technical, by the emerging possible so it might be an agent for, or ultimately part of the evidence of the Anthropocene. But Architecture can demonstrate and lead human living in a way that's globally and locally moral. Conversation 1 continues...

continued Conversation 1...

3. Liquid Texture

The 2016 Australian Venice Biennale Pavilion seeks to explore the cultural identity of Australia through the lens of 'The Pool'.

From pools of necessity to the pools of excess, the pool is a key architectural device, a memory and also a setting. It has the unique ability to evoke both the sacred and the profane.⁵

By extension, what role does 'water' assume in the landscape of our cities? In a country characterised by extreme drought and torrential summer thunderstorms, do our urban centres allow the play of rain? How do we preserve and strengthen the textural layer of water in our city fabric?

Excerpt from: Pools and Streams
- Pattern 64 in 'A Pattern Language'

We came from the water; our bodies are largely water; and water plays a fundamental role in our psychology. We need constant access to water, all around us and we can not have it without reverence for water in all its forms. But everywhere in cities water is out of reach. Even in the temperate climates that are water rich, the natural sources of water are dried up, hidden, covered, lost. Rainwater runs underground in sewers; water reservoirs are covered and fenced off; swimming pools are saturated with chlorine and fenced off; ponds are so polluted that no one wants to go near them anymore.⁶

How can we build details that connect people with the collection and run-off of rain water? How can we create places where people can go to be in touch with the source of their water supply? Where can children go to play with running water, to stir up the mud and watch it clear gradually?

⁵ Australian Institute of Architects, The Pool, <http://wp.architecture.com.au/venicebiennale/australian-exhibitions/>

⁶ Christopher Alexander, A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction (New York: Oxford University Press), 322-327

On Liquid Texture:

It represents the ephemeral cultural imperatives and the moment; the iconography, the now. But the fashion of the day is one of the brashest forces in our design environment. To be responsible; it is better that we are conscious of all the forces that act upon us.

Conversation 2

(on garden)

It is not my form of space. I am intruder. Outside, the sheets of water shiver and disappear between cobbles. Porosity. Collection. I must shut my eyes as I enter. It is not my size of space. A foreigner; I can read sound, but not symbol. High keening. Hushed whispers. I pause, unsure, and retreat. Again water. Sheets and sheets of it force me back into the felt-dark. Cold. Flickering lights. I must grasp cold stone. I am dizzy as I open my eyes to the wrought cavern. I am enclosed. Captured. Small. Scale is a powerful mechanism. I am awed, but still not welcome. Nor unwelcome. The depth of quiet at times is profound. Porous stone absorbs all noise. The air, while cold, smells hot. Hot, heavy, liquid, coiling, and oily.

I retreat, backwards. Outside, water is all around; it pools, drips, slides, lingers, slips. It is complete antithesis to the cave building. The water has sound. It whispers and chatters. It can be read. Behind the cave is a garden. It contains scattered pieces of the cave, of the cave symbols. It is small and the pieces do not sit well in this delicate spatial remnant. Here green dominates over grey, and ultimately the green will win. The rain is quieter here on and amongst the green. I am reminded of another delicate space in which sits a highly reflective, shallow pool; where sound, even birdsong, is muted, flat, absorbed, sad.

Edges are not feasible. Edges have no place here. Is this possible? The green is all round. The green is inside and the green too has noise. But there is warmth, the air is warm, but smells cool. Is this possible? This space is personal, intimate, just so. But it is also expansive, elastic, soft, between. No edges. But containment is possible, is experienced. Sound is warm, swirling, bird-song, green.

Conversation 3

An instruction:

(Prelude)

When I was young and checking out the world I found a garden, the most improbable garden, tiny but grand within a great metropolis. Not in the teeming centre, not in a great plaza but in a kind of ordinary residential place. High banks and cliffs of perfect plants waved in the spray of a great waterfall and tables were set for anyone to enjoy. I could see that at night, great iron gates secured this park and it could go to sleep with its neighbourhood. I later found that it was the gift, an ongoing gift of a great capitalist, somehow that made it all the more poignant.

Well I got lucky and now I too can give something back; I know this is going to seem an odd way to instruct you but it's going to be like this, this all I will tell you:

(The material brief)

Firstly: I loved the waterfall and it became an icon and a beacon for me for me but my waterfall will sometimes flow as the sharing of spoken word and music practice (in preparation for performances) in a place, which is also a shelter from the rain and sun.

In character a garden - I'm going to have it kept perfectly - forever!

I want it to be a place where there are two rooms, one held within in the other; I want to be able to be somehow be in both rooms at once... Is that too much? - I don't know these things. One room is simply its place in our city and the other within it is my little monument to me; somehow I want it to be edge-and-room and I want the nested experience of both at once.

I still want a pool or a pond or something, frankly I'm a bit confused by my water-relationship, it seems such a luxury, but then my gift will be a luxury, a drop-in kind of luxury. ...Feel free to explore the water thing a bit.

(Going ahead!)

Hi, S, Great news! We have a contract on the property - thanks to you for helping me look beyond the obvious, for all the work you put in so many visits, so many places. Your hunch as you call it sounds amazing - can't wait to see a materialization. P.

Conversation 4

Can you find your own conversational cohesion from what you have been given ... one that helps you find the character and ethos of the *'beast' you are looking to make?

*(or the defining metaphors)

Conversation 5

Design and the material of your entry

- Please limit your research on the Inter-webs. This is not a Google grab-bag competition. From our experience, the more Google-collaging is done, the poorer the output. Think, draw, converse, draw ...
- It will have a, real or imagined context within your city that talks with/to the themes.
- You are not expected to address each and every issue raised and, as you can see, some of these are metaphors and require abstraction, anyway.
- You are expected to address the performance shelter/garden and its room within room notion, architecturally.
- You are freed from the chains that are slick presentation, as your design and ideas will be picked out and judged for what they are, and for the conversations with which they engage.
- Drawings based on plan-sections and cross-sections are encouraged as efficient conveyors of architectural ideas.
- Write us some words of explanation, and these will also be part of the assessed package (150 words maximum, please).
- Collage and montage are appropriate but remember that if made purely as decorative graphic, they might not count much toward your trip to Venice.