

acts of collaboration**“Analysis of the role of the artist, designer and architect as Facilitator of inclusive social processes”**

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Collaboration refers to small groups of people who work underground, undermining, violating trust, colluding, unfaithful. This is collaboration.

It is not a neutral zone where plurality triumphs and individual voices perform a cappella. Whenever collaborators offer images of noble and equal exchange transformed into an autonomous work, the voyeur looks for hierarchies and signatures, noticing which name appears first, whose C.V. is more impressive. Who cares about the process? Cherchez the author! Then you can glean the process.

The nobler the collaboration the greater is my speculation.

First let me define the language of collaboration. It is an equal reciprocity, a gradual construction of physical work where authorship is fluid. No signature, no battles. A harmonious exchange free of acrimony. We shall see.

We mean we as in individuals agreeing upon a commonality yet retaining essential difference. It is not an expansion of I that I adopt as an authoritative stance. At least that is my definition.

In collaboration, the advantage is secrecy. If we reveal all the machinations of our collaboration, it becomes a mere contract, an exchange of ideas. We do not exchange. The work exchanges, is overloaded, bloated with individual input and attacked for its blubber.

Where is the treachery? Where is the fraud? Not in the work. It is unfaithful to the imposed. It undermines the established. But now authority welcomes collaboration. Encourages it. Insists upon it. Legislates for it. The collaborators have to be clever to avoid the paternal gaze of authority.

Define space. In the word we are suggesting emptiness, air that is easily negotiated, a large malleable area with possibilities. We will not colonise this space because we know it is not truly a blank canvas. It has an ongoing history of occupation and diverse experiences of use. We will merely add another layer to the rich strata already in existence. I am we now because I am enjoying this exchange. There is no ego in the process.

Who constructs the space for collaboration to take place? Collaboration is collusion underneath, under the noses, while authority blinks. It has a single purpose, to bring down the status quo. In the collusion of public space, the experts conspire with the users or so you say. Where do we meet to resolve this territory equitably?

It must be a room with many doors. It should have no corners and the view through each window should be identical. Preparing the journeys of the collaborators, it should ensure they approach with equity and perceive each other's arrival. Authority is now the chief collaborator and has become a quick learner. The space has become territory and is carved up accordingly.

The enemy is Upper Case. How can the artist bring their expertise to a space when the Cultural Planner, the Architect, the Client, the Engineer and the Steering Committee among others have already imagined it? All these Titles have divided the territory and the artist having arrived late has not been allotted a seat. The identical views through the windows are totally different because each of the eyes that look see and read has totally different intentions, histories and agendas. There is only one resolution and the artist struggles to put a capital letter A in front of the title artist.

The artist has arrived late because he/she has used public transport. The esteemed Cultural Planner does not live locally and has arrived by taxi. The architect has driven by car and has been allotted a car space. The Steering Committee has at least one member who resides in the

territory about to be divided. I have not mentioned the distinctive signatures of fashion either. This is heterogeneity at its best.

How do the collaborators navigate the space?

Divided not. It is a resolution resulting from the dialogue of many voices. Sometimes this resolution is better than the wasteland that existed prior, while at other times the space has drastic elective surgery performed upon it.

The architect's vision will determine the porosity of space, however she/he conceptualises structures in terms of their dialogue with existing structures rather than with the compass of navigation. In the wide-angle lens of architectural photography, it is unusual for the image to include people. They upset the geometry disturb the relationship between building and sky and their grubby signature of movement destroys the hymen of the building.

What is great about the architect is the model she/he has brought in. High on Mount Olympus we look down upon the world lifting buildings with our bare hands sweeping developments aside in a tantrum of rage. The vision scaled to the table before us is accessible to all. I remind my fellow collaborators that we rarely access space from a helicopter and experiencing space at 1:1 in the horizontal heightens our perceptions. We are careful to leave the tiny sacred plastic figures intact to remind us of the enormity of our task.

Of course the Planner delights in our differences, in our unique histories because we are Plurality. The very success of our collaboration depends upon an intangible resolution that celebrates difference. The problem with the Planner is that she/he will equate human's obsessive adaptive qualities as justification for the worst planning decisions. It may look like a wasteland however the theatre of everyday life asserts its integrity with gusto.

And now what of the artist? We are used to specific sites. We research the layers of history for a site. We are accustomed to the vagaries of collaboration. We are impressed by the scale of potential artworks and are delighted to work with so many distinguished people on this project.

That is what we say anyway. We want a piece of the pie. It is an exciting space with such possibilities for artworks that we do not want to miss out. We dream of our artworks sitting seamlessly within the site, experienced intensely by all. I say this to the architect because he/she sees potentially integrated artworks as decorations for the scaled skin stretched over the new site.

Although our master plan focuses upon the relationships between the physical and human elements and avoids the definition of distinct zones it can only map the journeys of peoples in terms of the start, their path and the finish. It does not invest in the imagination of the journey the poetry of movement the dreams enacted with each step. The skin of the site does not absorb the touch of its peoples. It shades them, casts shadows over them, offers security, shelter and channels their ingress and exit. It even encourages them to experience, however the sheer scale overwhelms them and it is only the artworks that respond to the sense of touch.

Opportunities for Public Art have been provided for enthusiastically in an integrated way in a space already realised. The hungry artists and craftspeople fight over these scraps of food thrown by planners and architects. The Public Art integrating within the consumables of sites such as furniture lighting and garbage bins settles into the fabric with a dusty patina. Often the desire for integration is motivated by the fear of a dominant intervention by the artist. Meaningful integration requires a dynamic response by artists whether on the skin or gesturing to the sky. It can be subtle but it should not be constrained.

The constraints of Public Art are often safety and longevity considerations in a space whose planning and cultural life may be in a much greater process of flux. Hence the artist's, that is, my desire for immortality, is problematic in an organic site adapting to pluralist shifts. What is the life span of a space? She is concerned because my signature seeks immortality. I will defer to the transformation of a space by its peoples but I will not agree to the destruction of my artwork by a developer.

I separate from the model before me. I have found the capital A in artist. The others await eagerly my intervention, my authorship. When I use we and I, it is a personal speculation and my exploration of land and space. My partner Susan Milne imagines land and space from simultaneous viewpoints, eg as an Australian, as a woman, as a Victorian, as a person of an

undisclosed age and as an artist. Our collaborations as artists have explored these various authorships in the process of this collaboration and the resolved artworks are both mine and ours and hers and his.

We spend a long time at the site because my response to Space is personal and different to him. She negotiates space because she is a woman but I simultaneously observe and experience.

Our initial site inspection is the most profound provided he remains open and unencumbered by preconceived notions and expectations of the site. The response is emotive, establishing a spatial body relationship with the site. We adjust the unspoken boundaries, searching as he crosses these boundaries from observer to object within the site.

The reading begins; the peeling back of historical layering, the land, the people, the usage, the paths travelled and the projected journeys to come are all projects within the Artist's eye or vision. In order to understand, feel and breathe the place, it needs to be experienced at varying times and time needs to be spent. She absorbs the site, meets the residents and imagines the place to come.

Our collaboration is truly a conspiracy. When we visualise the potentials before the others, we do not reveal the process of our imaginations. Our histories are private, aired between us and resolved in secret. The germination of an idea leads to rigorous debate motivated by ego from him and definitely ego from her. The critiquing of this concept shifts from diverse standpoints. One of us accepts the inherent potential of this idea and occasionally we both engage with an exciting concept. Rarely he refuses to accept my perceptions of the site and our collaboration is exclusive and hostile.

The worst aspect of our work in public is that it sits outside the museum. It is digested memorised and stamped into the fabric until its familiarity renders it invisible. The artwork's exchange is lost over the familiar repetitiveness of experience. Better to install within the elitism of the museum for the memory jolted by the photograph frames a vital discourse while the actual artwork is consigned to the atrophied archives.

Authority is excited by our collaboration referring to it as a team effort. Where was the opposing team? None of us wishes Authority to speak for us or reduce our process to a sporting contest but they are footing the bill, paying the fees, though at different rates. Disgruntled we stand, chairs scraping the floor, the model forlornly broken in the middle of the table. We acknowledge each other's invaluable contribution to the process and outcome. I have learnt much about the others and I hope that I have left the mystery of the artist's process intact. To know about the thought processes of your co collaborators will result in their obsolescence next time.

The residue is the resolution of space. I realise the degrees of authorship contested within the site but we are happy with the outcome not because the artworks were enthusiastically received but because all voices were heard and listened to.

They listened most attentively to me.