Do you
remember...

'Do you not have better things to do?'

'No, we're fine just here...'

OPEN SPACES
art ¦ architecture ¦ citizenship

A participatory programme for secondary schools exploring public space. Initiated by Dublin City Council Arts Office and led by artists and designers Michelle Browne, Jo Anne Butler and Tara Kennedy.

'Architecture is a record of the deeds done by those who have had the power to build' Leslie Weismann

This project gives a voice to teenagers experiences of and ideas for public space in Dublin. It also investigates the potential for teenagers to influence architecture, planning, design and decision-making process around public space in the city. If teenagers had the 'power to build' what would they build and why? or would they choose to 'build' at all?

This booklet has been produced alongside an event which marks the culmination of a collaborative workshop and fieldwork process. The event includes short presentations by students involved as well as the first screening of 'The Proposal'.

'The Proposal' is a series of five short-film documents of works for public space by students from five secondary schools across Dublin City. In these filmed works teenagers' proposals are temporarily staged and enacted. Proposals range from temporary built structures and mobile devices to public protest and suggestions for re-thinking public attitudes and management structures for public space - proposals which cannot easily be presented in plan, section or perspective drawings. 'The Proposal' is Filmed by Areaman Productions.

As part of this presentation day students will give short presentations on research issues which have arisen from the workshop series. This includes: inter-generational use of public space; noise and shared spaces; self-managed spaces for teenagers; the right to gather in public space; the placelessness of teenagers in public space; the shared needs and uses of public space between teenagers and homeless people; the teenage pack; and stereotyping. The focus throughout will be on the teenagers' own direct experience of these issues in their day to day use of public space in Dublin city.

Participating schools:
Manor House School, Raheny. Dublin 5
Maryfield College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9
St. Dominics Secondary School, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Trinity Comprehensive, Ballymun, Dublin 9
Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount, Dublin 8

'All you need is a shelter with a plug socket and heat...'

PROJECT AIMS

'If the council pay it might get wrecked...So we could fundraise and the council pay half?...'

+To challenge students to think about ways that we live in and use public space

+To actively engage students in meaningful architectural practice in a safe environment, while encouraging creativity and enriching their participation in the arts, focusing on architecture and the built environment.

+To connect the work of challenging contemporary artists with the lives and concerns of young people.

+To broaden and enrich participation and awareness of art and architecture through capacity building for teachers and students through working with planners, architects and others involved in the public realm within the city council.

+To challenge students to think about the interrelatedness of life at community level and their stewardship of the environment.

+To broaden and enhance the audience for architecture and contemporary art practices.

+To promote active citizenship through the arts while complementing various subjects in the school curriculum (Art, Geography, CPSE)

'...Or we could do a clean up and the council give us stuff in return?'
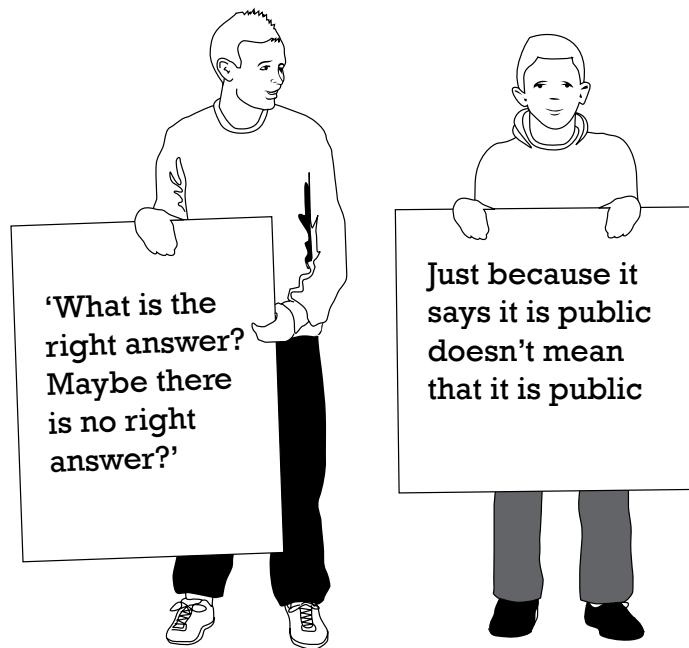
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE US?

'The importance of the environment in supporting the developing sense of self identity and independence in teenagers is reflected in their desire for places that support their social lives'
Penny Travlou in 'Open Space : People Space'

While there is a general acceptance of the need for good quality spaces in the city that offer the public the potential for enjoyment, comfort and protection [1], often greater consideration is given to the needs of the adult population and younger children. It seems as though less thought is given to accommodating the specific needs of young adults in the built environment. The Open Spaces programme provided a platform to directly engage with teenagers and to understand their needs and experiences and ideas for public space. Penny Travlou writes in 'Mapping Youth Spaces in the Public Realm: Identity, Space and Social Exclusion', 'For many young people, public space is a stage for performance and contest, where a developing sense of self identity is tested out in relation to their peers and other members of society' [2]. Jonathan Franzen writes 'How sweet the promenade, everyone needs a promenade sometimes, a place to go when you want to announce to the world that you have a new suit'[3]. This sense of delight in the exhibition and performance of public space is possibly most suited to the teenage years. However, through the Open Spaces workshop series we have repeatedly found that teenagers living in Dublin have a marked sense of placelessness in public space, often feeling that their presence is undesirable and that their needs are considered unimportant.

From the outset, we had the stated aim that this project would be a chance for the students to seek to influence the policies of local authority planners and have their voices heard. Our initial approach to working with the groups was to be based on looking at specific sites. Through the early workshops we looked at locations that teenagers choose to spend time and listened to what the young people had to say about the current provision of public space in their area. As we listened, our predetermined process had to shift its path to allow a greater understanding of their point of view to emerge. We had initially imagined that teenagers would want to focus on designing an 'object' or a 'thing', a solution that would improve their experience of public space. Moreover, what was quickly becoming apparent was that there was a need for a shift in attitudes towards young people in public space and a rethinking of the management structures that control the use and provision of recreational and open space for young people.

'Space is always many spaces, spaces opposing, spaces co-existing next to each other, spaces with different relationships. They are conditioned by the relationship between subject and object, between humans and the built environment. Those relationships and the vis-a-vis effects render what we call the socio-spatial

'What is the right answer? Maybe there is no right answer?'

Just because it says it is public doesn't mean that it is public

construct. They are influenced by power and force, but also marginality and dissent. Therefore space is entirely political'[4]. For the adult designer this can be too easily forgotten. For teenagers the hierarchy of control and authority over public space is always palpable.

This idea that a 'building' or a proposal does not have to be an 'object' but could be a redesign of a system or management structure hardly seems revolutionary. Yet this idea continues to go against the grain of much product/output driven architecture and design practices. We recalled the work of Cedric Price... 'I think that one of Cedric's great and most valuable notions, which could almost be described as his essential paradigm, is the idea that a building does not have to be an object. It does not necessarily have to be physical [...] Architecture is really something that happens over time. That has been the nature of many of his projects, and right now, in the midst of the financial crisis, this notion is more topical and relevant than ever.' [5]

We introduced the young people to a wide selection of projects, our own work as well as international precedent projects engaging with issues around public space. Precedents ranged from the practical to the fantastical, the sublime to the micro-solution. We then structured a series of debates and discussions that would draw out the opinions of the teenagers and allow a range of subjects and issues to be explored. As the process developed it became apparent that while similar issues were emerging across all schools, each had their own very particular character and point of view. We began to tailor the workshops accordingly, to tease out the most from each process.

It also emerged that the younger teenagers were more aware of territorial issues and intimidation by other teenagers. They proposed small scale, indoor, self-managed teenage-run places as opposed to the larger centralised youth centres in their areas. Older teenage groups, on the other hand, used a wider range of public spaces in the city and were more prone to being 'moved-on' by the authorities. All of the groups expressed a frustration with a sense that they did not belong, they did not feel welcome and that their actions in public space seemed to come into conflict with the rest of the public. 'Its like people look at teenagers and see the potential of what we might do, rather than if you've actually done something. So they think they want to move us on before something happens... but we aren't actually doing anything', one group noted. 'Or sometimes its more just the fear that you will get moved on than it actually happening. You just don't feel comfortable' remarked another.

We decided it was our task then to explore, through artistic means, a way to express these frustrations and find ways to highlight and reveal the experiences of the groups. Issues were raised including self-organising, safety, territory, authority and power, issues around money and fundraising, noise, stereotyping, sharing spaces with homeless people and ways in which boys and girls use public spaces differently. Proposals were suggested such as the multi-use of space and considering the potential for commercial spaces to be used at night time by teenagers without bothering people in residential neighbourhoods. How could they overcome the stereotyping of teenagers? How could spaces be used by a cross section of society rather than one

designated set of constituents? As Suzana Torre points out 'What is missing from the current debate about the demise of public space is an awareness of the loss of architecture's power to represent the public as a living, acting, and self determining community. Instead the debate focuses almost exclusively on the physical space of public appearance, without regard for the social action that can make the environment come alive or change its meaning'[6].

The final projects that evolved from the process are both practical and fanciful, playful and earnest in their effort to represent the experience and position of young people in society. The groups were not interested so much in new pitches or cool benches but in new and fresh perspectives. The project aims to give voice to this idea.

By Michelle Browne, Jo Anne Butler and Tara Kennedy

[1] Gehl, J. & GemzØe, Lars, (2000) New City Spaces, Copenhagen, Danish Architectural Press.
[2] Torre, S. (2004)'Mapping Youth Spaces in the Public Realm: Identity, Space and Social Exclusion' in The City Cultures Reader, ed. Miles & Hall, London, Routledge.
[3] Franzen, Jonathan (2002) 'Imperial Bedroom' in How to Be Alone, London, Fourth Estate.
[4] Miessen, M. (2009) 'An Architektur, "R wie Raum"' in Von A bis Z, 26 Essays zu Grundbegriffen der Architektur, eds. Maria Hohmann and Stefan Rettich (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig, 2004) 110-111, Nightmare of Participation, Berlin, Sternberg Press.
[5] Miessen, M. (2009) Nightmare of Participation, Berlin, Sternberg Press.
[6] Torre, S. ibid.
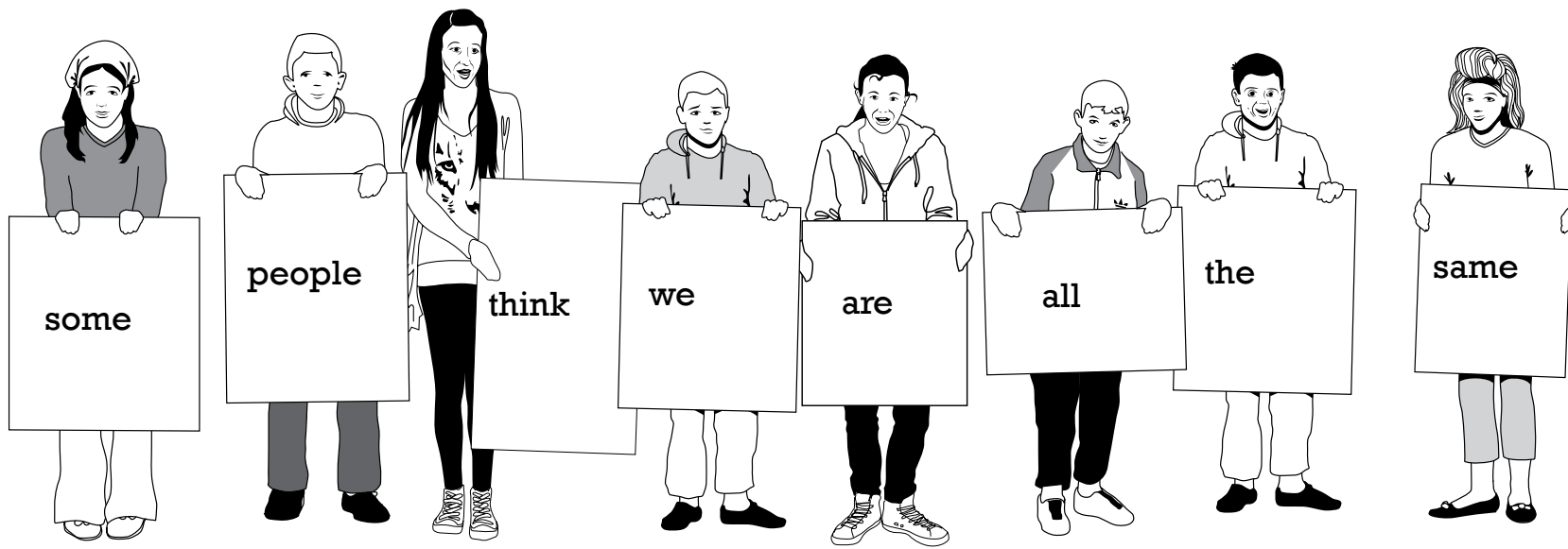
some people think we are all the same

THE PROPOSAL

'a mobile seating unit'

**by the students of
Presentation Secondary School Warrenmount, Dublin 8**

The 'mobile seating unit' unfolds to accommodate cushioned seating for up to 12 people at a time and is waterproof for use after heavy rain when ground and wall surfaces are wet and uninviting. The seating can be used in many different ways in public spaces – down steps, along a footpath, across a wall. The cushioning unfolds upwards along a wall to provide cushioned back support and down a footpath or step to provide cushioning under legs. It also includes pockets for magazines, batteries and an i-pod dock. The mobile seating unit is concealed within an inconspicuous wheelie bin and is an expression of the groups experience of continuously being 'moved-on' by the authorities when they gather in the evening time in the city's public spaces.

'an elevated point of view'

**by the students of
Manor House School, Raheny, Dublin 5**

The elevated platform is a response to the combined pleasure of people watching and the paranoia of surveillance (the platform acts as a self-operated CCTV system). Following a number of attacks in a nearby park safety became a key issue. The group came to the consensus that 'Adults want teenagers to be seen and not heard but teenagers want to not be seen'. The group were also interested in taking into account the shared needs in public space between homeless people and teenagers. The height of the platform was carefully considered – tall enough to create a space below to shelter from the rain but not too high to create problems with wind and for those with a fear of heights. Designed to accommodate up to eight young people to gather, those on the platform are lifted up off the often-wet grass. Visible yet 'out of the way', they are granted a certain amount of privacy and we can never fully see what it is that they are doing. A trap-door permits access to and from the platform. Two sides are clad in sheet material so that occupants can lean their backs against these walls. The other two sides are open with railings so that occupants can dangle their legs freely.

'an alternative changing room'

**by the students of
St. Dominics Secondary School, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10**

Following a trip to a skate park in Bushy Park, Dublin the group were very conscious of the lack of activities in public spaces for those who are not interested in sports such as football, basketball and skateboarding. This led to a debate on the greater provision for more typically male activities over female activities. 'Or maybe its not that there are more things for boys maybe its just that boys make better use of them' they remarked. The group wanted to express this observation by temporarily re-presenting the changing rooms of a sports changing room as a hair and nail bar, run by and for younger teenage girls. Situated within a long narrow room three nail bar tables are cleverly designed to work with the existing changing room benches. On one side exisiting clothes hooks are used to hang drawings of various nail patterns and designs on offer. Hanging on the other side are holders for hairbrushes, hair straighteners and curling tongs for two young hairdressers.

'a teenage run skills exchange'
**by the students of
Trinity Comprehensive, Ballymun, Dublin 9**

Much like 'the alternative changing room' the issue of the management and organisation of public space was key to this group. The teenage run skills exchange is a proposal that gives positions of responsibility to younger teenagers. It is small scale and self-organised. Teenagers come together to teach one another the skills that they each possess. These skills range from drumming, dancing and boxing to polish language classes. The proposal also questions the nature of funding processes, based on a observation shared with many other groups that there is greater longevity for projects in which the group have been actively involved in the fund-raising process. In this proposal the group brainstorm fundraiser ideas for the skills exchange project. There is a strict age range of 13-15 years for entry to the skills exchange - a reminder of the sharp distinctions felt between younger and older teenagers.

'a protest and a mobile enclosure'

**by the students of
Maryfield College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9**

'Do you not have something else better to do?'
The idea of staging a performative protest was a reaction to the experience of always getting 'moved on' (an experience shared by all five groups). The group wanted to counteract the viewpoint that young people should always be 'meaningfully occupied'. Carrying placards and protest banners into St.Stephens Green they proclaim teenage catch-calls such as 'we're just chillin', 'cut us some slack', 'don't move us along', 'sitting isn't a crime'. The banner then wraps around the group creating a temporary windbreaker, as they sit and chatter. 'Do you not have something else better to do?' 'No. We're fine just here, we like it ... we're just chillin'.

SITE VISITS

14th - 18th February 2011

The Exchange *
Exchange St, Temple Bar
exchangedublin.ie

Kilbarrack Fire Station *
Tonlegee Road, Kilbarrack

Newmarket Square
Liberties, Dublin 8

Dartmouth Square *
Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Community Gardens *
Bridgefoot Street, Dublin 8
dublincommunitygrowers.ie

Oscar Square *
The Tenterrs, Dublin 8

Community Gardens *
South Circular Road
southcirculargarden.blogspot.com

Amphitheatre, Civic Offices
Wood Quay, Dublin 8

My City Exhibition
Civic Offices, Wood Quay
woodquayvenue.ie

Planning Desk *
Civic Offices, Wood Quay

Traffic Control Room *
Civic Offices, Wood Quay

The Lawns
Le Fanu Park, Ballyfermot

Bushy Park Skate Park
Bushy Park, Rathfarnham

St. Annes Park
Raheny, Dublin 5

St. Stephens Green
Dublin 2

Clontarf Seafront
Clontarf, Dublin 3

Coultry Park
Ballymun, Dublin 9

Shangan Blocks
Ballymun, Dublin 9

Father Collins Park
Clongriffin, Dublin 13

Grand Canal Square
Dublin Docklands, Dublin 1

Barnardos Square
Dame Street, Dublin 2

Lighthouse Cinema
Smithfield, Dublin 7

Chimney Park
Dublin Docklands, Dublin 1

Cows Lane
Temple Bar, Dublin 2

War Memorial Gardens
Inchicore, Dublin 8

Civic Offices Wood Quay
With presentations by:
Killian Skay
Jeremy Wales
Nicki Matthews
Susan Roundtree
(Dublin City Council Architects
Department)
Mary Ann Harris
(Dublin City Council Parks
Department)
Anne O'Brien
(Dublin City Council Play
Development Officer)

* Organised site visits led by
specialised tour guide

PROJECT REFERENCES

Psycho Buildings
Hayward Gallery, London

Test Site
Carsten Holler, Turbine Hall,
Tate Modern, London

The Pink Project
Make it Right Foundation,
New Orleans

Mobile Porch
Artists Kathrin Bohm and
Stefan Saffer with architect
Andreas Lang

ParaSITE
Michael Rakowitz, New York
michaelrakowitz.com

Radio Ballet
LIGNA
ligna.blogspot.com

Guerilla Bench
Rugwind
rugwind.de

Open Public Library
Clegg and Guttmann

Cineroleum
Architecture Students, London
cineroleum.co.uk

Black Cloud
Heather and Ivan Morison
morison.info

Rockscape
Atelier Bow Wow
bow-wow.jp

Boombench
NL Architects
nlarchitects.nl

School of Life
Alain de Botton
theschooloflife.com

Roll up your sleeves
Dylan Haskins
dylanhaskins.ie

Superhero Supply Store
Dave Eggers
superherosupplies.com

Policing Dialogues
What's the Story Collective
section8.ie

**Refugee Wear & Mobile
Intevention Unit**
Lucy Orta
studio-orta.com

A-Z Units for Living
Andrea Zittel
zittel.org

The homeless Vehicle Project
Krzysztof Wodiczko

Makrolab
Marko Peljhan

Madres de la Plaza de Mayo
Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Roof is on Fire
Susanne Lacy & Youth from
Oakland

Funk Lessons
Adrian Piper

No more Reality
Phillipe Parreno

Tkts Booth Seating
Time Square, Perkins Eastman
and Dewhurst Macfarlane

Splendid Isolation
Mark Clare

Haircuts by Children
Darren O'Donnell

The Highline
New York, James Corner
Field Operations, with Diller
Scofidio + Renfro
thehighline.org

**Out of Site Live Art in Public
Space Programme**

**The Social Life of Small Urban
Spaces**
William H. Whyte

Life Between Buildings
Jan Gehl

New City Spaces
Jan Gehl

**The Nightmare of
Participation**
Markus Miessen

**This is what we do: A muf
Manual**
Muf

What's this place?
socialcentrestories.wordpress.com

**Mapping Youth Space in the
Public Realm: Identity, Space
ad Social Exclusion**
Penny Travlou

Redrawing Dublin
Paul Kearns and Motti Ruimy

**The Structural
Transformation of the Public
Sphere**
Jurgen Habermas

**Sidewalks Conflict and
Negotiation over Public
Space**
A. Luokaitou - Sideris and R.
Ehernfeucht

The Practice of Everyday Life
Michel De Certeau

Leslie Weismann

The City Cultures Reader
eds. Miles & Hall

The Fall of Public Man
Richard Sennett

**Art, Space & The Public
Sphere**
Oliver Marchart

Open Space: People Space
eds. Ward Thompson, C. &
Travlou,

How to Be Alone
Jonathan Franzen

The City Cultures Reader
ed. Miles & Hall

The Culture of Cities
Lewis Mumford

**Mapping The Terrain:
New Genre Public Art**
ed. Susanne Lacy

One Place After Another
Miwon Kwon

Conversation Pieces
Grant Kester

The Production of Space
Henri Lefebvre

'It would be great if there
were wardrobes where you
could change your clothes
all over town…'

'But the park wardens are always gone after a week...'

'...so maybe the council should pay kids €50 a week to not burn things?'

thanks

'It would be safer
if there were more
people around and
more buildings...'

...what
it's like to
be us?