



My design and research work in the field of exhibition making is a situated practice where the spatial and cultural contexts are considered as fields where the designed interventions create reciprocal relationships that the viewers activate. Through a series of exhibition projects across multiple sites ranging from park landscapes to international biennales and white cube galleries, these artefacts connect their host environments and the viewers to produce discursive encounters. In this way the sites of the interventions become spaces of production rather than merely spaces of display. The artefacts are both operational and compositional interventions and are necessarily temporary being precisely situated in the context of their host environments. Some of them have been deliberately designed as nomadic structures that can activate a number of specific contexts. I have also worked with a photographer to document the interventions and have produced written texts that reflect on these events and articulate the conceptual dimensions of the work. This movement from explicit intention to designed intervention, to documentation and critical reflection returns on itself so that each design process is informed by the previous ones. The methodological approach was articulated by Murray Fraser when he proposed that “..design research in architecture has to form its operations around a dialectical engagement between ideas and practices (and) a very real task for design research is to act as a mechanism for a wider critique of architecture itself.”<sup>1</sup>

I have explored my process through a series of papers presented at previous CA<sup>2</sup>RE conferences. My paper for Milan will build on these earlier papers by comparing and contrasting the formal and operational designs of the exhibits and host environments. This was a suggestion in a previous CA<sup>2</sup>RE review. Through a comparative analysis it will elaborate the principles that run through the spatial organisation of the connections between host and intervention. The projects were situated inside older structures that themselves had previous uses. The design of exhibition environments is informed by the power of temporary interventions to change our readings of permanent spaces.

Academic debates about research into explicit and tacit knowledge in architecture often put the two forms into opposition with each other labelling one as “conservative” and the other as “liberal”. Recent theory has posited hybrid forms that combine both critical and creative approaches to form new research practices. These types of research sometimes encounter resistance along established disciplinary boundaries that tend to silo architectural knowledge into history-theory-criticism models on the one hand, and reflections on creative practice on the other. A different way to think about them is to view explicit and tacit knowledge as different research areas with porous connections, and to explore practices that operate at the nexus between them producing, papers, books, drawings, buildings, and exhibitions, as related outputs to be experienced by different audiences where “knowledge is produced in both tacit and explicit form and is formulated both as...concepts and as particular answers to specific local questions”<sup>2</sup>. By rejecting a binary opposition between theory and practice it becomes possible to imagine multiple ways for philosophy to be spatial and for design to be theoretical. I am drawing on Foucault’s concept of a “discursive formation” as it may be applied to architecture -

*“When an entity is not a word, conventionally it cannot be a statement, but is designated an object, no longer part of discourse. Foucault enables us to treat as statements and as part of a discourse entities that are neither spoken nor written. Constructed objects can be considered as components of a discursive formation. The practices of the construction, inclusion and exclusion of objects can be related to the rules and patterns of such formations. We can thus bridge the gap between theory in architecture and spatial constructs, not merely by treating constructs as examples of a theory, but by examining how discourses enter into construction and how, in consequence, buildings or planned environments become statements. Here is the possibility of a link between a discursive formation, the institutional conditions in which it becomes a practice, and the products of that practice, on the model of The Birth of the Clinic. We can supersede the problem of the ‘gap’ between intellectual influences on architects and the practice of construction.”<sup>3</sup>*

There are many precedents for these ways of thinking from conceptual art’s move beyond objecthood in the nineteen seventies<sup>4</sup>, to the philosopher Francois Lyotard’s exhibition Les Immatériaux in the Centre Pompidou in nineteen eighty seven, where pure philosophy was presented spatially. What they each share is a rejection of disciplinary autonomy in either theory or practice.

1: Fraser, Murray. 2013. Design Research in Architecture. London Ashgate Press.

2: Marijn van de Weijer, Koenraad Van Cleempoel, Hilde Heynen. 2014. Positioning Research and Design in Academia and Practice: A Contribution to a Continuing Debate. Design Issues Volume 30, Issue 2, p.17-29.

3: Hirst, Paul. 1993. Foucault and Architecture. AA Files No. 26. London, Architecture Association.

4: Voorhies, James. 2017. Beyond Objecthood – The Exhibition as a Critical Form Since 1968. The MIT Press. Cambridge, MA.

5: Birnbaum, Daniel, and Sven-Olov Wallenstein. 2019. Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition. Berlin: Sternberg Press.