Changing Places, Creating Situations
A national and international visual investigation into temporary art in public places

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Fête de Mai, Belgium, May 2005
Warsaw, Poland, May 2005
Farming with Mary, Queensland, Australia, June 2005
Dalby, Queensland, Australia, June 2005 - February 2008
Domain, Canberra, Australia, October 2005
Great Walks, Queensland, Australia, November - December 2005
Mountain Festival, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, March 2006
TeATR ‘ePROUVeTe, Corbignay, France, May 2006
The Port Arthur Project, Tasmania, Australia, March - April 2007
CAMAC, Marnay-sur-Scine, France, May – September 2007
North Keppel Project, North Keppel, Queensland, Australia, September 2007
The Making of Curtains, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, April 2008
Abstract

This project is concerned with new modes of ephemeral, relational practice for the Australian public art audience. It uses visual art models to investigate the use of everyday activities as an aesthetic premise for temporary public art activities in Australia and results from a lack of cohesive models/frameworks for a temporary public art practice.

Public art, usually publicly commissioned work for a specific site and intended for public viewing, is in a state of change: in Australia, the transition from the production of permanent, monolithic and monumental works is recent but this transformation is already well established in Europe. I have surveyed various models of public art-making in Europe and have expanded upon the possibilities of employing these models in Australia.

My research has been informed by a number of contemporary theorists and artists that, since the early 1980s, have been concerned with practices, variously termed social sculpture (Beuys), new-genre public art (Lacy), functional site (Meyer) and relational (Bourriaud), that dissolve the distinction between public art, community art, art education and such avant-garde practices as performance and conceptual art.

Since the 1990s, artists working in public have begun to depart sharply from the dominant, abstract, ego-driven, Modernist mode of production. Rather than defining private, autonomous systems of representation, they have begun to use the vernacular: sites and social structures that directly relate to the personal experiences of the public. Instead of producing discrete objects, the focus has shifted to the infiltration of, or
interventions into, the flow of the daily lives within the community. These interactions promise more profound revelations of sites and the creation (or re-creation) of a sense of community.

Such practices, to which the ephemeral nature of experience is fundamental, bear a clear lineage from early conceptual practice of the early 1960s that generate interactive relationships between artists and the community. This project studies the relationship between art, the artist and the community through participation in twelve events in Europe and Australia; of these, seven were chosen to exemplify the key factors that help make a project successful or, in some cases, unsuccessful.

Throughout this research the objective was to identify, describe and salvage from the social space, a temporary ongoing and sustainable justification for supporting relational practice into public art-making and programming in Australia. This, in turn, will support and provide an alternative to permanent public art that is currently favoured by major public commissioners. Methodologies have included situational observations, collections of stories, living *in situ*, performance-based activities, video, art *in situ* and permanent and temporary commissioned public art works. Each has facilitated a personal understanding of public art-making.

The project concludes that the connection of people and their everyday activities, although often tenuous, is directly related to what binds communities together. Furthermore, this research suggests that ‘Relational Public Art’, that is, projects where artists have meaningful access to community, facilitate the free flow of a more diverse and open discourse. Despite the conclusions I have drawn, the project is not aimed to present a definitive solution to public art-making. Rather, it has been driven by the
need to understand how contemporary site has changed the way in which we, as community, as artists, and as art agencies, can participate wholly within public art.

This research has produced a series of national and international projects; the accompanying exhibition includes components of the final project, *The Making of Curtains* and informative panels that illustrate a selection of the projects that best exemplify the research topic. The exegesis includes documentation of the practical and conceptual investigations together with the research underlying the historical and contemporary themes associated with site-based art practice.