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THE LIVES OF SPACES

The Lives of Spaces, Ireland's official entry at the 11th International Architecture Biennale in Venice, is curated by Nathalie Weinstock, Director of the Irish Architecture Foundation and Hugh Carrigwell, Professor of Architecture at UCD. The exhibition occupies the first floor of the Palazzo Giustinian-Colonna, opposite the Accademia, and the scale, character and decoration of these typically Venetian rooms provide a setting that amplifies the curators' themes. Primarily using film and moving image, the nine pieces in The Lives of Spaces explore the central role of space in our society, how it frames and structures the patterns and practices of our collective day, from domestic to civic, from personal to public. The exhibition involves many new collaborations and experiments, which open up new ways of envisaging, designing and understanding space. Taken together, the nine pieces provide a spatial portrait of Irish architecture and of Irish society.

The Lives of Spaces is a Culture Ireland initiative in partnership with the Arts Council, sponsored by the RAI and the Embassy of Ireland in Italy.
The Brookfield Youth and Community Centre
Hassel Ducatzi Architects

The Brookfield Youth and Community Centre and Creche sit at an apex of social development on an open tract in Tallaght on the edge of Dublin city. Its long and irregular rhythm communicates a slightly incline but perhaps beautiful spatial and even social order born out of a desire for ‘spaciousness’. This is expressed through layout, light, structure and movement. The creation of the building was played out in a difficult economic and constructional environment and in a design downturn and with a prevailing sense of the possible ultimate destruction of the new place. Yet it has, like a survivor, persisted to give rise to a new phase of dialogue in that place on the nature of the inclusive institution. Here the exhibited film documents the characteristic and the bridging life in use of this new institution.

Filmmakers: Rung-Tang Tso in collaboration with Hassel Ducatzi Architects

Bóthar Fhailte - Patrick Lynch & Sean Walker

This exhibit tells the story of the house Robin Wapper built for his family and friends on the remote Baile Óstail in County Cork, from 1970-72. Called Bóthar Fhailte (meaning ‘yellow road’ in Irish), it comprises a settlement of three ancient and three new structures, on a steep wooded slope of several acres, facing across the salt-water Fenit River to the fields of Kerry. It has been one of the most talked about houses in Ireland in recent years, where the world of Dublin politics rubbed shoulders with the artistic community in an informal yet grand manner. The exhibit presents Bóthar Fhailte as an objective, geometric composition, but as a happening, a confluence of physical and perceptual phenomena. A film of the house is displayed centrally, while participants examine its influence and its legacy as an exemplar of the Irish build.

Filmmakers: Sue Bari and David Hamishone

REAL-UNREAL - McCullough Mullins Architects

This exhibit deals with the constantly changing zone between the architects’ idealised concep of spaces and the raw reality of their subsequent lives. Do architects ever dream of their spaces in use? If they do, do they visualise control rather than open-ended acceptance of flux? How does the ex-plicit sense of real-life affect the original vision? Can they be weighed against one another? Can they be read in unison? And what might be learnt from the comparison? A pair of screens displays a sequence of Spanish episodes from Waterford Library. Nine still images – which together capture the episodic nature of the work – were filmed again to make living, moving images. These are set against the exact same shots in real time, capturing the ordinary existence of the building in progress and the architecture framing that existence or being framed by it.

Filmmakers: Rung Tang Tso in collaboration with Steaine Mullins and Matt McCullough

SECOND LIFE

If there was one dominant presence, one unavoidable taking point, during the vernissage weekend at the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale — if one thing was guaranteed to sum up in your tracks and prompt uneasy reflection on your relationship with the built environment — it was not the elaborate thee-thee-ah-thee-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah of curators-in-chief, Atonik Britsk, ’s youth centre piece exhibition, but rather the persistent, near-apocalyptic effect of the twin acts of retailing and constructing the sprawling downhill drops that — you guessed it — some of the most iconically-starched in attendance were left huddled on the soiled pavements as a visual accompaniment to the Amurale prior to the basins. Amongst these, in hindsight, is a secret curiosity that the drenched, well-dressed hoardes were streaming to gain access to an exhibition entitled The Architecture Beyond Building.

At the Palazzo Gusman Loin, on the morning after the opening of the live of Spaces, Ireland’s 20th exhibition at the Biennale, the strengthening honours had begun to transform the elegant ground floor galleries into a network of askew-assembled peddled puddings. Upstairs, where the Irish show had been sensitively installed, a quite utilitarian was ruffling the carpet of the canary-yellow, the obvious, immediate impression was of this Venetian relic suddenly blending into urbanity life. Such unescapability of the perceived fluidity of the building, such Gabin special effects, would have made sense, perhaps, as splendid, functional features of the ‘live of Spaces, was this post-war presentation of recent architectural practices that in many ways sought to go beyond representation, or to at least circumvent the absurdities of how the work of architects is captured and communicated — curators Hugh Campbell and Pascale Wadsworth instead sought to suggest something of the multi-layered and often mysterious experience of buildings, providing movement, memory and imagination to static images of designed perfection.

Of central importance to this ambition was a proposed engagement with the medium of film, participating architects being invited to explore possibilities for reflecting on their work in a format that is fundamentally moving and that captures rapid delays between divergent visions of space; allowing, potentially, for fluid and plural articulations of architectural phenomena. The rest, in its most precise expression of this filmic premise was perhaps McCullough Mullins’ contribution. McCullough Mullins contribution is, in his words, a contemplative pairing of stunning images from their Waterford Library scheme that allowed us to compare still life photographs of the building in its pristine, unpopulated, juxtapositions of scenes with scenes of the newly-occupied, everyday. An example of an installed, urban public activity within these genetically re-imagined interiors. In an elegant text included the Irish Pavilion’s handsome accompanying publication, Paul McCullough noted that REAL-UNREAL “seeks to affirm, to occasionally change zone, between the architects’ ideal, conception of spaces and the raw reality of their subsequent lives.” How McCullough adds, does “the ecstatic circus of real life affect the original vision of spaces in use? If they do, do they visualise control rather than open-ended acceptance of flux? How does the ex-plicit sense of real-life affect the original vision? Can they be weighed against one another? Can they be read in unison? And what might be learnt from the comparison? A pair of screens displays a sequence of Spanish episodes from Waterford Library. Nine still images, which together capture the episodic nature of the work, were filmed again to make living, moving images. These are set against the exact same shots in real time, capturing the ordinary existence of the building in progress and the architecture framing that existence or being framed by it. The exhibited film documents the characteristic and the bridging life in use of this new institution.

Filmmakers: Rung-Tang Tso in collaboration with Steaine Mullins and Matt McCullough

REVIEW
Sanctuary + Congregation - Garth Gahill, Architect

Religious life in Ireland has gone through huge changes in the latter part of the 20th century. Situations long considered immutable - the power and influence of the Catholic Church, the central role of the religious orders in education and health - have allowed for these changes. Buildings of great significance to communities are being abandoned by those who can no longer care for or support them. Divergent of all traces of their previous meaning, they become mute symbols of a lost tradition. The efforts to maintain a congregation's sacred space becomes a landscape of psychological significance, imbued with the past lives of its future occupants, yet ready to be appropriated as a new space. A triptych of films charts the past home, enduring present lives and future spaces of the family. This archetypal group faces each other as contemporaries in an interrogated viewing space of reflection and layering. The object is conveyed as a soundscape; an early precursor to film, but one where the persistence of vision is replaced by the endurance of memory.

An Gaelár - O'Donnell + Tuomey, Architects

An Gaelár, a cultural building for the Irish Language in Derry currently under construction, has a glass-roofed atrium courtyard that is carved through the four floors of the building, with stairs, bridges, and platforms crossing and overlapping the central space. Light spills into the central court through an inverted rooflight and the different functions of each floor plane are made legible by the complex overlapping geometries of the structure. The exhibit consists of an abstracted model of the courtyard space with an built-in light and sound installation. The visitor approaches to observe the life of the space with through deliberately placed openings, framing events. On engagement with the model, a light and sound sequence is triggered, casting shadows across the interior which illustrate the passing of day into night to the accompaniment of a projected soundscape.

Lighting: Nicholas Wau
Sound: Jorgan Simpkins

Deconstructing the Maza - Dana McSweeney

Deconstruction is a research project, an exercise in simplification and an entertainment. The material of the study is time - cut and continuous, sound and vision, real and artificial. Deley identifies with the forced intimacy of the cinema and amplifies the uneasy proximity of audience. Its subject is the act of cinema, focused on the in-betweens. The object is a compression of the space between a door and a window, a portrait and a landscape, scaled by the viewer. It is both monument and toy. Cinema suggests that a window may be the "indirectly-combination of projection and screen, inverted by day to night. The freed nostalgic aspect - its an oblique opening - offers order and economy while relaxing the potential for continuity and montage within the Galway Picture Palace to reveal and fast forward time and space.

Film Direction: Peter Maybury

Mnemonic Tectonics: Constructing Space through Memory and Ritual - TAKA

Architecture can offer spaces in which memories are born, remembered and re-enacted. This display follows the journey of a Dublin family moving from their life-long home to a new one provided through the social housing system for the parents, another for a daughter and her new husband. A method of meaningful place-making is pursued through an architecture based on memory and social housing. A group of children and a concerned space becomes a landscape of psychological significance, imbued with the past lives of its future occupants, yet ready to be appropriated as a new space. A triptych of films charts the past home, enduring present lives and future spaces of the family. This archetypal group faces each other as contemporaries in an interrogated viewing space of reflection and layering. The object is conveyed as a soundscape; an early precursor to film, but one where the persistence of vision is replaced by the endurance of memory.

Camera, editing and sound: Eistine and no Guelscan - Gannakere MAAP, Philip Alisson

At 241/35

The Lives of Spaces runs until 12 November at the Palazzo Guistiliano Lolin, 2891 San Marto, San Vidal, (Vaprio) - Accademia. Open daily. 10.00 - 18.00. www.shallowspace.org
The Office of Public Works Architectural Service
(The New Wexford Opera House, Wexford)
The Office of Public Works Architectural Service is the premier State architectural practice, and provides the full range of architectural services in connection with the portfolio of existing State property holdings, historic and contemporary, and with new construction projects, both directly for the State and for bodies promoted or assisted by the State, as in the case of the new Wexford Opera House. Klaus Unger, Assistant Principal Architect, has been involved in works carried out to most of the major cultural institutions of the State over many years. Cláir McMahon, Project Architect for the Opera House, has had wide experience of involvement in a variety of building types for the OPW.

DTA Architects
(Lighthouse Cinema, Smithfield, Dublin)
DTA Architects are Derek Tynan, Niall Rowan and Colin Mackay. The practice was established in 2005 and has successfully realized numerous projects. A commitment to quality and design underpins the work of the practice in tandem with a proven ability to deliver complex programmes within existing urban contexts. Current work includes urban design and masterplanning; educational, residential and commercial building design; interior design; fit-out and domestic projects.

Keith Williams Architects Architects
(The New Wexford Opera House, Wexford)
London-based Keith Williams Architects is multi-award winning design firm with a fast growing international reputation. Williams and fellow director Richard Brown have been active in Ireland since 2001 where major projects in addition to the Wexford Opera House include the multi-award winning Athlone Civic Centre 2001-2004 and Clones Library & County HQ, 2004-2008 just completed. Elsewhere, in particular, the Unicorn Theatre, London was completed in 2005, The Long House, London in 2007, whilst at design stage the firm is working on the new Marlowe Theatre complex in Canterbury, and the new District Museum in Chichester. The work of the firm has been published worldwide.

O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects
(Tripartite Irish Art Research Centre, Trinity College, Dublin)
O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects are currently engaged in the design of cultural buildings, schools, housing and mixed use buildings in Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK. Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey have taught at schools of architecture in the UK and USA; currently Sheila is a studio lecturer and John has been recently appointed Professor of Architectural Design at University College Dublin. They represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2004 and won the RIA Gold Medal in 2005. A monograph O'Donnell + Tuomey Selected Works, featuring fifteen projects from 1991-2004, has recently been published by Princeton Architectural Press.

Newenham Mulligan and Associates
(Tullamore Courthouse, Tullamore, Offaly)
Newenham Mulligan and Associates are a progressive practice of Architects. Project Managers and Interior Designers with offices in Dublin and Limerick. Tullamore Courthouse is one of a number of Courthouses they have completed.