

**Columbia University GSAPP  
Advanced Studio VI –Spring 2015**

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Works from the Artists in Residency at the World trade center in NYC, 1998 – Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> 2001  
Right: Christian Nguyen. *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, 2000  
Left: E-Team (*127 Illuminated Windows*, 2001

## **Background**

A fact concerning contemporary cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. is that the city itself has now become a commodity, as has 'quality of urban life'. Moreover since the end of the last century experts from a broad range of fields from geography and sociology to economics and politics, have converged to declare, albeit from their diverse and not always converging perspectives, that culture, alongside consumerism, tourism, and knowledge-based industries, has become a major protagonist in this commodification and a vital contributor to the urban economy of our cities.

A number of civic leaders and policy makers have subsequently inferred from this diagnosis that significant investment in cultural amenities such as museums, theaters and concert halls is the primary means to reap the benefits associated with support for culture. While these project have largely been undertaken to jump start urban redevelopment, to increase real estate values, to generate tourist dollars or to attract a sophisticated work force, the investment in large cultural assets in the end has been far less significant to the quality of life of residents as well as to the local artist community as these sites may provide inspiration and fuel future aspirations, but the work of local artists is rarely ever performed or exhibited in these cultural attractors.

This approach to culture by policy makers is in many respect naïve and shortsighted, as the role of artists in the urban economy is significant and varied. The artist population contributes significantly to urban development through the export of their work, by providing multiple and diverse consumption activities for residents and by re-investing back into their local cultural economy<sup>1</sup>. In addition to their role in the consumer economy, artists contribute to 'quality of life' by enlivening as well as invigorating our communities. No less important is the activism of many artists and the social and political value of cultural production that publicly addresses issues of race, ethnicity, gender, inequality, civil liberties and free speech. Often serving as the conscience of society, artists contribute further to the urban economy in immeasurable ways.

## **The situation**

In New York City, creative professionals, including celebrity artists such as David Byrne and Moby, are giving voice to a collective frustration and a feeling of disenfranchisement brought about by power structures that marginalize and threaten artistic communities as a whole. As the artist led transformations of Soho and Tribeca have been followed by those underway in the Bowery and the Lower East Side; and the on going mass exodus from Manhattan to Brooklyn has now moved from Williamsburg and Dumbo, to Bushwick and Bed-Stuy, to Red Hook and Gowanus - the securing of space to live and work has become ever more challenging for many artists, even reached a tipping point for some as more and more artists are now venturing even further afield, forsaking the vitality of the city to upstate New York, or to Detroit, to Atlanta, Philadelphia and beyond.

The narrative of artists instigating or contributing to the gentrification that they in turn become victims of, continues unabated and is hardly unique to New York, as the 'Soho' model has become a global paradigm deliberately played out in cities across the US and Europe.

## **Kinney travel**

The studio will visit Berlin and Paris, both sites of ongoing urban transformation with lively and ascending contemporary art scenes, one very different from the other, yet each host to various art institutions that are relevant to the studio.

In Berlin the KW Institute for Contemporary is a visual arts institution without a permanent collection. The name 'KW' is a play on Kunstwerk or "Artwork" as in "Art & Work", and speaks to the Institute's mission as a resource both for resident artists who are actively engaged in the production of art and for visitors who experience the Institute's exhibitions. The institution occupies an entire building complex in Berlin's centre that includes exhibition halls, function rooms, and a café, alongside artists apartments and studios. Each year the KW commissions an artist (Joseph Kosuth, Dan Graham, Douglas Gordon, Andrea Zittel among others) to create a permanent site specific work that is embedded within the architecture.

In Paris, 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the Cite Internationale des Arts, a building conceived Post-World War II and supported by the City of Paris, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide much needed support to artists living and working throughout the city. Inspired by the Lallukan Artist Foundation that was established in Helsinki in the early 20<sup>th</sup> c., the Cité today continues to provide over 300 artist residence/studios as well as exhibition spaces at its central location in Paris. Elsewhere throughout the city new types cultural ventures such as the Centquatre-Paris (104) located in the vast premises of former municipal undertaker continue to proliferate alongside the informal artist "Squats" that eventually are legalized, such as 59 rue de Rivoli and Les Frigos, which continue a French tradition that harks back to Picasso and Modigliani.

## **The Scenario**

The studio will interrogate urban cultural policies and their impact on the collective realm and project how they might be taken further. Not unlike the current public/private "backroom deals" that require developers to build and subsidize a new school, library or park in exchange for development rights, we will posit that select new urban developments could be mandated to accommodate new types of the artist work/live communities.

We will speculate that the steady migration of artist communities towards the periphery might not only be halted but inverted and re-directed back towards the center.

## **The project and site**

The studio proposes a critique, re-interpretation and transformation of the KW, Cite des Arts, Squats and others forms of artistic accommodation to speculate on the design of new artist live/work interventions.

Our site in Paris will not be a conventional arts neighborhood but rather is inspired by the seemingly surreal juxtaposition of artist-in-residence studios on the 91<sup>st</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup> floors of the former World Trade Center from 1998 until Sept. 11, 2001. Our site will be within the interior of a centrally located Hausmann block that is currently owned by the State and occupied by the Ministry of Defense. The site is slated to be redeveloped and is expected to attract the high value 'assets' such as corporate HQ, bank building, luxury hotel or residences etc. that will provide sufficient contrast to our projects and afford a critique the relationship of the spaces of culture in relation to those of commerce among others.

## **The process at 3 scales**

As an initial step the students will undertake a conceptual exercise to generate conceptual approaches to the overall master planning of the block, devising innovative strategies to 'insert' this new cultural intervention as a catalytic agent within the predictable assemblage of conventional and benign programs.

At the architectural scale we will invent new typologies for an urban artist-in-residence community, not through the typical rehabilitation of existing derelict buildings but through atypical architectural proposals from the ground up. We will investigate new types of formal configurations that will disrupt and challenge the apparent complacency and resiliency of the surrounding and adjacent architectural context.

We will devise new spatial strategies, new organizations and aggregations, to creatively house live/work studios, collective spaces as well as spaces of recreation, display and event. We will manipulate these to create unique and unexpected conditions for the insertion of site specific art and to overlap and engage with adjoining public space.



1. Markusen, Anne. 'Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from the Study of Artists', *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 38, No. 10: 1921-1940, 2006.
2. Byrne, David. 'David Byrne Will Work For Inspiration', *Creative Time Reports Summer Series*, 2013, <http://creativetimereports.org/2013/10/07/david-byrne-will-work-for-inspiration/>
3. Moby. 'Moby: Los Angeles The First City of the Apocalypse', *Creative Time Reports*, Feb. 3, 2014 <http://creativetimereports.org/2014/02/03/moby-los-angeles-first-city-of-the-apocalypse/>