

common room 2

465 grand street, rear lobby, new york, ny 10002
+1 212 358 8605

www.common-room.net

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sep 26–nov 18, 2006

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Intended as a preview of future common room 2 exhibitions, and an indicator of the larger intentions of participating artists, table of contents explores the production and use of the built environment through different works engaging in a dialogue about the social, economic and political structures inherent within.

BASEKAMP Walk, Talk, Eat, TalkSomeMore

“Walk, Talk, Eat, TalkSomeMore” is a multi-city, multi-day project in and between London, Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, Malmö, Portland, Stockholm, Tallinn, Berlin and San Francisco. The project is an experimental hybrid of similar work by C.cred & the 16 beavergroup (counter.cartographies, alt.space), BASEKAMP & The Institute for Advanced Architecture (Evident Use), 0009 (platial) and the Bureau of Research into Post-Autonomy. It constitutes an attempt to explore the different geographical territories and political terrains of each city and create a space of engagement through dialogue. The open-ended nature of the project contributes to creating a practice where the idea of a final product, a culmination or conclusion becomes redundant, underlining the importance of the process, more than the outcome. The hybrid project itself is thus necessarily and by definition a work in progress. The program includes three interlinked components: a collective counter.cartography walk through our different contexts; an alt.space meal (supper, dinner, luncheon) taking place in our different cities and linking us through the questions we pose to one another; and a concluding discussion taking the form of a web-cast linking us in real-time dialogue.

BASEKAMP derived their name from the exhibition space which members of the group founded in 1998 and continue to run in Philadelphia. Using their Philadelphia facility as a home base, BASEKAMP invites domestic and international collaborative groups to engage in experiments to develop new models of relations within overlapping art communities. They also participate in other initiatives by creating collaborative projects which exhibit internationally, often working with other artists and groups.

BASEKAMP's participation in critical curating is approached as an interdisciplinary team of artists and not necessarily as curators. A majority of BASEKAMP's cultural involvement has taken the form of exhibition-making, reinventing who-does-what, and reexamining artist roles and relationships. This, in addition to an exclusive emphasis on collaboration, has led the team to hybridize the roles of curator, archivist, artist, and audience in their work -- illuminating the possibilities of agency and autonomy in cultural co-production.

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In the Field
UNHOUSED

Global housing crises are not abstract. These crises have a physical site where people sleep, gather, eat, and raise their families. They are visible and viscerally experienced on the ground. While conditions in distinct and distant cultures may differ, they are increasingly interrelated; so are the processes that generate these conditions. People are actively (and passively) unhoused by markets, governments, wars, ethnic violence, gentrification, natural and manmade disasters, and other factors. Where markets and governments fail to provide housing, people provide housing for themselves. The creative efforts of individuals, groups, and others invested in improving the condition of their daily lives and shelter at the margins of affordability are the subject of our upcoming exhibition at Common Room. The material we will present is drawn from research on creative responses to global housing crises we are doing in preparation for a book called UNHOUSED. The images shown here are from a recent research trip to Tokyo.

We are beginning a long process of research and collecting for an edited volume not only of thoughtful texts and images, but of inspiring examples of strategies that can be shared. Our process is not limited by disciplinary boundaries or conventions. Over the next few years we will visit with innovators on the ground in different parts of the world, as well as artists, activists, and others. We are interested in celebrating creativity at every level of intervention - be it with materials, organizing strategies, or within policy structures. Contributors will be invited to tell their stories and experiences in their own voices. Independently the examples inspire and teach; together in a comprehensive volume, they will be an even more powerful tool for understanding what links the local articulations of global housing crises.

In the Field's work begins by looking at, listening to, and learning from how people transform the spaces they inherit and build new spaces based on their needs and desires. We seek out and celebrate the enormous creativity of these ordinary actions. Whether appearing as a spontaneously generated public space, in modifications to existing spaces, or in an example of self-housing or community generated urban planning, we take these hyper-local articulations as a rich entry point into understanding the complex ways in which the built environment is shaped. We gather these examples in books, field guides, and exhibitions with the aim of sharing good strategies and making little known projects visible. We consciously work with the power of adjacencies because together projects can bring to bare ideas and concepts larger than any project viewed in isolation.

We blend approaches and knowledge from visual art, urban planning, and creative activism. We operate in an exploded field and work to expand it further still because we care about opening up spaces for new possibilities and social forms.

Ava Bromberg and Brett Bloom
September 2006

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Lasse Lau
Displaced Utopia

The digital image Displaced Utopia that was produced in the spring of 2006 for the Manifesta 6 Library is, in the Common Room context, going to reference and represent APR's (Agency for Public Resources) upcoming artistic research project working with self-organized structures in Beirut. This residency that is funded by NIFCA and locally by Espace SD was programmed before the recent war but was consequently delayed and has now been re-scheduled for November/December 2006. It has -- since the tragic event of the war -- shifted the entire meaning and discourse for the project. Initially the intention was to research dialogical self-organized structures as a strategy to re-claim and auto-organize public space aligned to counter-capitalist hegemony. The current humanitarian situation of refugee camps and thousands of people displaced, however has significantly changed this particular meaning of self-organization. Therefore the original project description has for the time being been erased and kept open for the exchange and participation of the situation. The result of the research project is going to be presented later on at Common Room.

Lasse Lau is a visual artist and filmmaker based in New York and Copenhagen. He studied at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and Funen Academy of Fine Art.

The art introduced by Lau seeks to reach an understanding on art and democracy in an ongoing antagonistic process of dialogue and research by accumulating meanings from various site-specific locations. The art projects often function as a mediator and channel of crises and displacements that occur by frictions of reason in between absolute, relative or relational spaces. Lau's view on art is to generate critical thinking that often involves the viewer's direct participation in its interdisciplinary production. It frequently seeks to combine aesthetics as a framework that opens dialogical paths for social exchange of meanings.

Lasse Lau was the co-founder of the Danish artist group "CUDI - Center for Urban Culture, Dialogue and Information" that raised questions on the displacement in the representation of minorities driven by xenophobia in Europe. He has exhibited in a wide range of museums and galleries including Hamburger Bahnhof in Germany, Aarhus Art Museum and Brandts Klaedefabrik in Denmark, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Croatia, The Turin Biennial of Contemporary Art in Italy, and The Contemporary Museum in Baltimore in the United States.

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Lize Mogel
Travelogue

Travelogue represents some of my research for an ongoing project on the geopolitical significance of former World's Fair sites in North America. World's Fairs offered the spectacle of both technology and ethnography, presenting a utopian idea of global harmony. Remnants of a century of World's Fairs still stand in many cities. These anachronistic structures can be functional tourist attractions or empty ruins, but often the site of the fair has been entirely swallowed by the growth of the city.

The 40 images were taken during visits to 10 of the more than 15 sites in North America that hosted World's Fairs. These photographs show aspects of each former fairground as it is today- most of them sites of recreation and cultural activity. Captions/commentary hint at urban narratives of public space, gentrification, nostalgia, placemaking and place-forgetting. Occasionally, a trace of the site's "global" past is visible—an historic marker, or a glimpse of an iconic structure given new life or fallen into disrepair.

The images include documentation of Portland (Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, 1905), Seattle (Century 21 Exposition, 1962), Spokane (Expo '74), San Francisco (Panama Pacific International Exposition, 1915 and Golden Gate International Exposition, 1939-40), St Louis (Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904), Chicago (Worlds Columbia Exposition, 1893 and A Century of Progress, 1933-34), Montreal (Expo '67), and New York City (New York World's Fair, 1939-40 and 1964).

Lize Mogel's practice combines her interests in geography, cartography, landscape and urban studies. Recent work takes the form of maps, often distributed in public space. She uses maps as informational/aesthetic objects which are a populist form of public address. While mapping is a subjective practice, the map itself is culturally understood as presenting an objective truth. She uses this strategy to reveal the political construction of the urban landscape and to offer alternative ways of understanding site.

Previous work includes Public Green (2001-2003), which mapped parks in relation to politics and land use in Los Angeles, and was distributed as bus shelter "advertising" throughout the city. A long-term collaboration with geographer Chris Kahle resulted in the exhibitions Genius Loci (SCI-Arc, Los Angeles, 2002) and Alternate Routes (California Museum of Photography, Riverside, 2002). Lize also works collaboratively and collectively, with artists and groups including the Center for Land Use Interpretation, the Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, and the Center for Urban Pedagogy. Currently, she is co-editing a publication titled "An Atlas of Radical Cartography," (IAS, 2007) and organizing a concurrent exhibition.

Exhibitions include the Gwangju Biennale (South Korea,) PS122 (NYC), Mess Hall (Chicago), and Eyebeam (NYC). She has presented her work within the disciplines of art, architecture, and geography, including at UCLA, USC, Art Institute of Chicago, Apex Art, the Municipal Art Society, and the UCLA Hammer Museum. Her work appears in Surface Tensions: Problematics of Site (Errant Bodies Press, 2003), the Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, and upcoming in artwurl.org.

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Martin/Baxi
Multi-National City

Excerpts from the forthcoming book 'Multi-National City: Architectural Itineraries' (ACTAR, 2007)

Multi-National City follows three architectural itineraries through three cities and their histories. Like so many, these cities are caught within the feedback loops of globalization: Silicon Valley in northern California; New York's internal suburbias; and Gurgaon, a burgeoning corporate city outside of New Delhi. Their historical, cultural, technological, and economic interconnections make these cities important nodes in a single Multi-National City (MNC) that stretches across the globe. The itineraries traced by the book take the reader on a tour of the architectural monuments of corporate globalization—corporate campuses, hi-rise towers, “public” atriums, call centers, and gated communities—in order to track their internal discrepancies, their utter strangeness, their otherness. Each itinerary concludes with an unannounced stop at a project (Feedback, by Martin/Baxi Architects) that applies the lessons of the Multi-National City to itself.

Martin / Baxi Architects is an architectural practice in New York engaged simultaneously in commissioned work and design research, known internationally for thinking differently. The collaboration is formed around the diverse expertise of the two partners, Kadambari Baxi and Reinhold Martin. They define architecture as a cultural practice that combines aesthetic invention, social vision, and technological innovation in the public realm.

Martin / Baxi Architects generates a surplus of ideas in the form of buildings – ideas about the city, about the public, about the interface between architecture and media, and about architecture's capacity to change the world. Really.

Reinhold Martin and Kadambari Baxi
2 October 2006

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Shannon Spanhake
Partial Cross-Section

1.3 million people
Three public parks
Lots of potholes
Plant gardens in the potholes

This gesture activated the City of Tijuana in a surprising way. The whole city, right before my eyes, began doing a striptease. Standing before me, undressing, revealing both strength and fragility in the details of its structure. 'Partial Cross-Section' is a presentation of various excerpts from a forthcoming book titled, 'Con Todo: you, he, that, we, there, when, they, her, yesterday, it, now, and I, beginning at 3:00 on a November day.' The book includes both text and photos documenting a project that involved planting gardens within potholes throughout Tijuana. The chapters are organized thus locating the images and text in a space of conceptual geographies. These invented spaces engage a multitude of views and perspectives, thus, carving alternate routes through the interactions, space, and time of the city.

Con Todo
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Shannon Spanhake's work takes the form of public interventions, engineered organisms, and tangible media installations. It investigates the transformative potential of new technologies and reconfigured social ecologies to address issues embedded within information politics, popular culture, and geographic/cultural territory. An important part of Spanhake's artistic strategy is to enable public discourse by providing access to information through the development of alternate modes of articulation in the production of knowledge.

Spanhake is a recent recipient of a funding grant through the Center for Humanities. She began her studies with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering at Drexel University, Philadelphia PA, and went on to receive a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is completing her M.F.A. at the University of California, San Diego where she is working on a forthcoming book and also, developing a project to personally monitor air quality using mobile phones at California Institute for Telecommunications and Information. Spanhake also co-founded Lui Velazquez, a research center in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico and is also the founder of the collective DoEAT, Inc.