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ESKYIU PLAYKITS
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Project Details

Designer
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Title
ESKYIU PLAYKITS

Output
Exhibition Design, Film, Performance, Curatorial, Publication

Location
Hong Kong

Venue
ArtisTree

Date of installation, film, and performance
2018

Date of publication
2020 is the expected date of final publication
Two hurdles transformed into the base of the instrument
ESKYIU PLAYKITS is a temporary exhibition, permanent playground, public dialogue, film, performance, and publication which investigates architecture at the intersection of multiple disciplines. In PLAYKITS, creating a sustainable design is positioned as a catalyst for innovation, proscribing not a reductionistic mindset but a maximizing one. Doing more with a finite resource, each element transforms into another – for instance, several track and field hurdles become a chair for the public dialogue, and components of musical instruments for the performance. The idea is to create an exhibition space
as a transforming public space, bringing divergent communities together to make use of a collective resource.

The position is that resources do not necessarily need to belong to an individual, they may have productive lives beyond each of us. Materials within the exhibition transform over time, from a water bottle to a shoe, to a temporary exhibition with numerous configurations, and finally to a permanent playground. A primary question considered is how to reconceptualize the idea of ownership – how to recapture the hundreds of thousands of discarded bottles and transform them into shoes, or to take over 50,000 shoes to turn them into material for a temporary exhibition that eventually transforms into a permanent playground for a local school. These are not technical
questions of establishing recycling collection points and recycling centers. Instead, this project investigates larger cultural questions of how to reposition recycling away from something that one must do, an obligation, into a unique creative challenge.

Invited to create a retrospective exhibition on our design work, we proposed a ‘projective retrospective’ illustrating how we are shaped by our past work to project a new future. Instead of limiting the exhibition focus to design, we purposefully included elements of music, sports, and dialogue to reach a wider audience. We collectively worked with our prior collaborators in the disciplines of film, music, athletics, and numerous divergent fields in order not to create an isolated, reductionistic,
investigation of an idea to prove a position, but as the means to test an inclusive design which responds to a diverse range of criteria and use.
One of the six sport transformations
1 The Chinese Music Rediscovery soundscape
Originality

The objective of the project is to resist the disposable nature of typical exhibitions by creating elements that are returned to the community and reused afterward. Maximizing the use of any one object, the elements are assembled to create a series of diverse settings to transform the space every day into a table tennis court, a basketball court, a concert hall, a symposium hall, and many other configurations. Transforming each day, the project went from a Sports Challenge, six days of sports experiences; to the C-Suite Dialogues, a round-table discussion on the balance of play and work; and finally to Chinese Music Rediscovery, a soundscape collaboration with Hong Kong New Music Ensemble.
Research Questions

• How to engage in conversations on sustainability that alters the focus to the role of innovation in terms of use?
• How to bring communities together, to maximize the use of a space and the objects within instead of using a reductionistic approach toward sustainability?
• How to engage the audience, so they become active participants and not passive viewers?
1. The recycled string of the basketball backboard became the structure for the musical instrument.

2. The audience did not observe the exhibition from a distance, they engaged it directly.

3. Catherine Shaw, a writer and design critic, in conversation with Ashley Hegland, a sustainable development strategist.
The interest lies in examining the ways in which the built environment and constructs of labour shape social relationships by forming connections between civic engagement, social values and sustainable design. In utilizing modest approaches, this method uses architecture, film and technology as a means to engage the larger public. The tools examine, propose and advocate for change in how resources are used, managed and deployed. This project involves techniques that bring different disciplines together to experiment in creating new possibilities. Addressing the idea that sustainability is one of the greatest innovation challenges, the exhibition repositions concepts of sustainability as a catalyst for change.
Design methods included:

- Developing a concept of shared resources that serve as opportunities for greater social interaction.
- To test the idea of designers as agents of change. When designing there is potential to design the material world better and to destroy it better, as in the case of this exhibition which takes our collective waste and reconstitutes it to become a material with a productive afterlife.
- To examine the exhibition as a means of communication through mass media of the contemporary age.
Significance

One indicator of the significance of this project is the invitation by ArtisTree to create a retrospective exhibition of our work. Prior individuals invited to exhibit a retrospective at ArtisTree are Pritzker Prize awardee Zaha Hadid and Pritzker Prize and Presidential Medal of Freedom awardee Frank Gehry.

The significance of the project could be further illustrated through our partners. Conversations with Nike involved a discussion with Hannah Jones, the Chief Sustainability Officer and VP of the Innovation Accelerator at Nike, in their global headquarters in Oregon. Additionally, Angela Dong, Vice President of Nike, spoke in the forum held within the exhibition space.
In Hong Kong there are minimal open areas, with additional areas for play rarely being accommodated for. The PLAYKITS exhibition encourages improving our urban playscapes, to challenge the norms of our environment. Although the project is not yet fully realized, with the publication currently being developed, we seek to maximize the impact by testing these ideas within local school playgrounds that have a need for repair, to test the idea in order to propose implementing these concepts into the public realm within the city.
Dissemination and Evidence of Peer Review

The project was widely disseminated in traditional printed publications and via emerging means, in the form of websites and social media. Working with several partners to reach an audience beyond architecture, the project had 12.7 million website impressions, 3.7 million social media impressions, and reached 1.3 million with the print circulation, as calculated by media agencies. Although website and social media reach is not considered in traditional research, the ambition of this project was to engage a wider audience, testing the idea of how to disseminate architectural concepts in the twenty-first century.

Evidence of peer review is in the form
of the draft book manuscript having been reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief of Actar, who committed to contribute, and the International Editorial Director of Thames & Hudson, who supports the project. Alice Rawsthorn, OBE, an award-winning critic and author of Design as an Attitude, is contributing to the publication.

1 A forum held with Angela Dong, Vice President of Nike Inc.; Stephanie Au, three-time Hong Kong Olympian; and Haiyan Wu, Captain of China Women’s National Football Team, among other speakers.
Appendix

Related publications by the designer:

The appendix is an initial draft of the future publication. The essays are currently being written to provide additional context to the research agenda, the process of creating the exhibition, and to document the playground that resulted from the material of the exhibition. The playground is currently a work in progress and will be completed in 2019.
The space configured for the public dialogue
The Department of Architecture educates students in an active culture of service, scholarship and invention. Uniquely situated at the crossroads of China and global influence, the Department takes the approach that design is best explored from a sophisticated understanding of both. With a multidisciplinary curriculum emphasizing technology, history and culture, students gain broad knowledge and skills in the management of the environmental, social, and aesthetic challenges of contemporary architectural practice. With opportunities for design workshops, international exchanges, and study travel, graduates of the Department of Architecture are well prepared for contribution to both international and local communities of architects and designers.