

MONUMENT

NIDA'S OPENING NIGHT
SULMAN AWARD WINNER

50



ISSN 1320-1115

02

771320 111004

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 02
AUD\$16.45[INC GST]
NZ\$17.50[INC GST]
RM\$29.90
SNG\$15.90[INC GST]
PRINT POST APPROVED
PP 233867 00013

**MONUMENT CELEBRATES 50 ISSUES WITH HASSELL
DURBACH BLOCK • ZAHA HADID • GLENN MURCUTT
CARUSO ST JOHN • DROST + VAN VEEN • SEAN GODSELL**



CONTENTS **ISSUE 50**

NIDA by HASSELL/Peter Armstrong
Photography by Patrick Bingham-Hall

SITE

- 016** UPFRONT
- 018** PROFILE Mike Nelson, 24 Orwell Street, Sydney Biennale 2002
- 020** POSTCARD Vitra Design Museum – Weil am Rhein, Germany
- 022** SPACE Dior Homme, Paris; Dinosaur Designs, New York; Orang-Utan Enclosure, Perth Zoo
- 028** DESIGN Tribeca Apartments, East Melbourne; 521 Design, New York; Minotti
- 034** EXHIBITION Expo 2002, Switzerland; Laboratories CCA, Canada; Finnish Design 125, Sydney; Designing Futures Forum, Perth

FEATURES

- 042** AN AUDIENCE IN ROME Monument speaks to Glenn Murcutt upon his return from Rome after being awarded the prestigious 2002 Pritzker Prize
- 048** PERFORMING ART HASSELL, with Peter Armstrong have created a space for NIDA that accommodates the complex relationship between actor and audience
- 056** SHADOW BOXING As architecture is increasingly embedded in cultural meaning, Sean Godsell, draws inspiration from human and environmental relationships
- 062** COATE HOUSE Caruso St John's refurbishment of a disused London warehouse is part celebration of the existing fabric and part high modern, utopian vision
- 068** TAXI RIDER Chauffeured through London in a black cab and looking out to a congested city, Zaha Hadid turns mobility and intersection into architecture
- 076** A CONSTRUCTED LANDSCAPE Drawing on great architecture and an innate sense of space, Durbach Block with Sue Barnsley, have created an artful environment
- 084** NEW FRONTIERS OF SYNTHETIC SPACE The Lord of the Rings heralds a new era in technology and software design, one that is redefining the reality of space
- 088** A WATERSCAPE SILHOUETTE Drost + van Veen Architects are looking to the sea as the Netherlands investigates how to adapt to their waterlogged environment
- 094** A ROYAL AFFAIR H2o have provided a series of elegant spatial manipulations to provide new vantage points on the action for the home of Royal Tennis in Hobart
- 100** THE POLITICS OF ART The world stage of Germany's Documenta11 highlighted the changing and undefinable face of art in the 21st century

REVIEWS

- 106** PRODUCTS
- 108** EXHIBITIONS Gerhard Richter Survey, RMIT Gallery; Objection, Sarah Cottier Gallery; Milan In A Van, V&A Museum; Rebecca Horn, Annandale Galleries
- 110** BOOKS Bird, 3 Deep Design/Kat Macleod; Realms of Impossibility, Wiley-Academy/Studio 8; RMX Extended Play, Rinzen; Case Study Houses, Taschen
- 112** CALENDAR
- 114** HINDSITE Martyn Hook profiles Tyler Brülé and discusses his recent departure from Wallpaper* magazine and his new venture Wink Media



THE POLITICS OF ART

ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE CONTEMPORARY ART PROVIDE ARTISTS AND CRITICS WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF MATERIAL FOR SPECULATION. AS TECHNOLOGY PUSHES THE FORM INTO NEW DIMENSIONS, THE WORLD STAGE OF GERMANY'S *DOCUMENTA11* HIGHLIGHTED THE CHANGING AND UNDEFINABLE FACE OF ART IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Text **Gerard Reinmuth** Photography **Courtesy of Documenta11**

DOCUMENTA11 IS THE 'OLYMPICS' of art. A massive, eagerly anticipated event in the art world, *Documenta11* has unfolded over 18 months in five continents and via five 'platforms' (with each platform being a public discussion, workshop or conferences in a different city). It culminates in a major exhibition, featuring the work of over 100 artists exhibited in four locations across the city of Kassel in central Germany.

The aim of *Documenta11*'s curatorial team - headed by creative director Okwui Enwezor - is to explore how 'contemporary art and its various enterprises can move forward in a dialectical relationship with global culture at large.' Thus, *Documenta11* - via its size and importance - is both an extension and validation of contemporary art's continuing trajectory away from the aesthetic and toward the political. However, by extending the theme of globalisation in *Documenta11* to the structure and format of the event itself, Kassel has been displaced from its previous role as a privileged historic place and the focus of the exhibition to

simply one of many points in a global network of art events. This may not be a bad idea; Kassel, the centre of Nazi arms production during WWII and a city demolished by Allied Bombing at the time, offers little for the visitor beyond its 18th-century Orangerie and associated gardens.

A visit to *Documenta11* is exhausting. Four massive venues - the Museum Fridericianum at the Friedrichsplatz in the centre of Kassel, *Documenta*-Halle nearby, Kultur Bahnhof adjacent to the Kassel Train Station; and a new venue for this year, a massive warehouse on the site of the *Binding Brauerei* (the other side of town) makes a visit of *Documenta11* an onerous task where 'gallery-fatigue' takes on a whole new dimension.

This is compounded by the limited range of work on show. In fact, one could be forgiven for assuming that painting and sculpture were no longer part of contemporary art practice; this exhibition is completely dominated by photography and audio-visual works and their largely political thematic content.

The selection of such a limited range of work poses immediate problems. The first is the means of selection and/or the validity of those few exceptions to the prevailing domination of photography and video. For example, I counted only six painters in the whole show. The questions one asks is, 'why these painters? Were they the best six' in the world? Did their work critically contribute to any thematic content within the show? Does their work fundamentally move the world of painting in any way?' The answer is a resounding 'no' on all four counts, leaving less than six practitioners on canvas floundering, impotent and silent among the audio-visual assault coming from adjacent rooms.

Sculpture didn't fare much better and featured maybe another six artists. That is, assuming one makes a distinction between 'sculpture' and 'installation' of which there were many. Some architects were also represented, although the reasons for their selection were equally questionable given that a graduate year at RMIT would have a far more

>>





1. Yona Friedman, Installation view *Documenta 11*, photo credit: Werner Maschmann, (courtesy *Documenta 11*).
2. Constant A Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon: untitled 1969*, photo: Victor E. Nieuwenhuys (courtesy of the Gemeentemuseum den Haag)
3. Yona Friedman, *Architectural Projects, 2007*, installation view artist studio (courtesy of the artist).
4. Allan Sekula, *Fish Story (Chapter 3, Middle Passage), 1993*, detail/installation view *Documenta 11* (courtesy of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam).
5. Constant A Nieuwenhuys, installation view *Documenta 11*, photo credit: Werner Maschmann, (courtesy *Documenta 11*).
6. Ken Lum, *Mirror Maze with 12 signs of Depression, 2002*, (photograph courtesy of G. Reinmuth).

>> interesting collection of propositions than much of the architectural turnout. Yona Friedman may be an urban theorist of some interest but a room full of his crude and decidedly unbeautiful working models offered little interest. New York 'blob' exponents *Asymptote* didn't fare much better with their installation - a groovy light shade that may have been left over from a dance party, onto which rotating projections of cities were supposed to be 'constantly oscillating between virtual and real existence' (according to the catalogue). Unfortunately, the installation did not even transform the spatial confines of the room in which it was located.

Asymptote were completely outshone by the aromatic and place transforming room full of ground coffee, bread and wine by Artur Barrio next door. In an ironic art moment, an array of cool art types were seen hanging around this installation drinking the red wine (glasses were available) and discussing the horrors of globalisation 'while Rome burned' in an installation protesting against the commodification of art. One highlight did exist among the

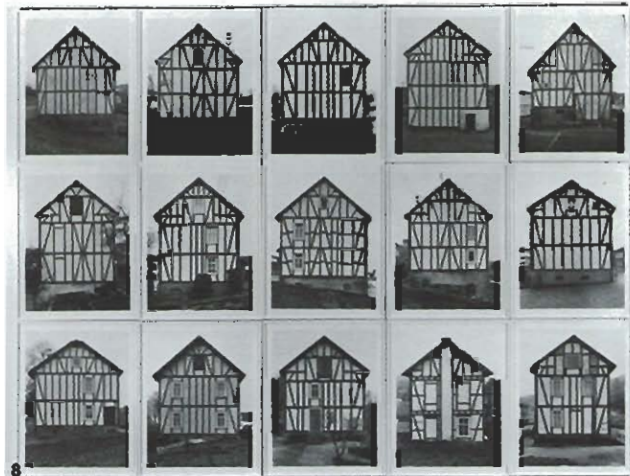
architectural contributions - an entire floor of the *Kultur Bahnhof* devoted to the work of Dutch urbanist Constant A Nieuwenhuys. His models and exquisite drawings and paintings reveal both a visionary mind and an interest in the beautiful exploration of these ideas through various media. Refreshingly, this work was beautiful to behold in addition to its valuable role in the exploration of an intellectual position.

Nieuwenhuys also managed to outshine most of the installations at *Documenta 11*, which generally revealed more about the self-indulgent mindset of these artists. Given the public and political aims of the curators, this was a surprising component of the exhibition. Rooms were filled with objects that rarely evoked any profound spatial (or other) experience, unless one was previously acquainted with the precise workings of the artists' mind. This mannerism reached its zenith in two installations; where one artist simply moved items from their studio into the exhibition space or, in the case of Georges Adéagbo, crudely papered the walls with various newspaper cut-outs

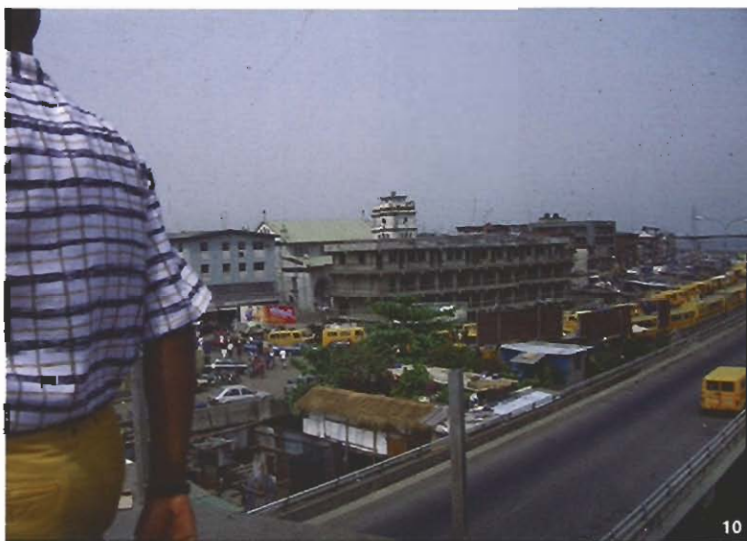
and associated rantings that were apparently of some consequence.

Of the works located in the parks of Kassel, Ken Lum's small pavilion in the gardens of the Orangerie was of interest. His arrangement of mirrors in a pattern of repeating isosceles triangles created a 'hall of mirrors' that one navigated by a series of 'signposts' in the form of eleven slogans printed on selected panels. These slogans (taken from popularised psychology) such as 'you'd be better off without me' or 'I feel alone in the world' are intended to resonate in the viewer as they look at repeated reflections of themselves. However, the placement of this and the other externally located 'pavilions' need not have been outside the gallery such was the meaningless of both their form or content to any external location.

Photography formed one of two key pillars of the event. The amount of photography was immense, dominating the *Bindings Brewery* and *Kultur Bahnhof*, and provided a large slice of the work at the other two venues. Thankfully, it is inevitable that such an enormous range of work would see



7. Georges Adéagbo, "Explorer and Explorers Confronting the History of Exploration"...! *The Theater of the World*, 2002, installation view *Documenta 11*, photo credit: Werner Maschmann (courtesy the artist/jointadventures.org)
 8. Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Giebelwände Fachwerk*, 1959-1979 (courtesy of the artist).
 9. Ravi Agarwal, *Rickshaw Puller*, New Delhi, India, 1994, (collection the artist).
 10. Oluşmuyiwa Olamide Osifuye, image from a photo-essay of Lagos, Nigeria, 2002 (courtesy of the artist)



some gems float to the surface. Some compelling images were exhibited; such as Oluşmuyiwa Olamide Osifuye's images of a suffocating Nigerian capital, Ravi Agarwal's exposition of Indian underclasses, and Allan Sekula's images of workers at containership terminals. Yet on a formal, emotive, or narrative level, these works did not carry the potency of Sebastião Salgado's *Workers* series of images. Candida Höfer's series of Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* located in different contexts across Europe and the US provided a filter through which differing urban and architectural conditions can transform one's experience of a sculpture. Bernd and Hilla Becher's images of old industrial buildings were of architectural interest, particularly those that illustrated these methodically documented structures in a more poetic light within their contexts.

One of the few exhibitions that attempted to excel on both the political and aesthetic fronts was Luis Camnitzer's coloured photographic engravings of torture implements used in Uruguay's prisons. When this work

was compared to the 'postcards' exhibited by *Destiny Deacon*, the only Australian I could find at *Documenta 11*, I was irritated at both the lack of clarity and potency of the latter. Deacon's delivery of her political message (something about the 'deconstruction of race-based oppositions') and the fact that so many other Australian artists had been overlooked was disappointing. Far more potent was the photography of the *Atlas Group*, an organisation concerned with the documentation of Lebanon's history. Their work featured prints of every type of car used in a car bombing in Lebanon. Each image was accompanied by the statistics of the car make and model, the amount of explosives used, date of detonation, body count and so on which provided a very real, moving and tangible insight into the events of that country.

To write about *Documenta 11*, one has to make reference to the continuous assault of audio-visual installations. To say I found both the number and quality of these installations problematic would be a major understatement. The first concern was sheer volume. Given that

many of the videos may take ten or more minutes to view, one must visit *Documenta 11* over a whole week to see them all, forcing the viewer to accept the arrogance of this medium that demands you sit and watch from start to end, while you can only hope you will understand the artist's message. Secondly, the quality of these installations was a problem; most audio-visual works simply took the form of a video played back in a darkened room. Some had a documentary format, existing not so much as artworks but as portage. If the videos were beautifully filmed, edited, scored or narrated this may have been reasonable but most were embarrassingly poor when compared to bona-fide filmmakers in command of their craft. One simply can not understand how the curators could accept that an exploration of a 'worthy cause' consigned to video was reason enough for the acceptance of that work for the exhibition.

Some key questions arise for art practice from *Documenta 11*, so perhaps in that sense the exhibition is successful. Firstly, is it enough for an art exhibition >>



11



12



14



13

11. Candida Höfer, *The Burghers of Calais*: Kunstmuseum Basel I, 2000 (Courtesy Galerie Johnen & Schöttle, Cologne).
 12. Luis Camnitzer, *The Uruguayan Torture Series*, 1983, installation view Documenta 11 photo credit: Werner Maschmann (collection the artist).
 13. Luis Camnitzer, *The Uruguayan Torture Series*, 1983, installation view (Detail) (collection the artist)
 14. John Bock, *4 lectures: Intro/inside Cashflow Box*, 2000, MOMA New York performance image, photo credit: Knut Kläßen (courtesy Galerie Klosterfelde, Berlin).

>> to be political, or do the 'artworks' still matter? If art exhibitions are going to deteriorate into a display of 'human issues' documentaries, then the visuals should explore and further the medium of film. Secondly, if the political issues upon which much of the work is based are as critical as we would expect, should we question whether the work has any real affect in furthering the particular cause. I would suggest that many of the artworks, despite their subject matter, were simply not powerful enough to compel visitors to action. It appeared to this critic that *Documenta 11* consisted of little more than 'preaching to the converted'. I started to feel decidedly queasy when considering that many of these artists were furthering their careers and artworld celebrity on the basis of such important issues but without making any tangible contribution. More effective action may be in assisting these causes in a very practical way by joining relief agencies, rather than by producing another bad film for the art intelligentsia. While megastars such as U2's Bono or Bob Geldof have demonstrated that an artistic career can assist in bringing

worldwide attention to important political situations or economic inequities, their audiences also extend way beyond Kassel. In the wake of such a politically driven array of installations, it is ironic that two hilarious videos of performances by John Bock really stole the show. As our visit to *Documenta 11* ended, I felt I could not face another video. This sensation was hilariously (but unintentionally) given form in Joelle Tuerlinckx's installation of a myriad of video monitors, screens and televisions providing a 'self-reflective experience of segmentation'. Bock's cleverly edited, *Pythonesque* videos provided a welcome laugh while also offering one of the more skilled examples of film-making on show. One of these, a boxing match between two people dressed in an array of quilts, pillowcases and sheets, disintegrates as the cloth characters find their body parts strewn all over the ring. While a second video presented a clumsy Jamie Oliver type character on fast-forward who spilt, burned and ruined everything within reach. At the very least, these works reinforced the position that if one is going to advance

any cause through art, it helps if the work is a wondrous, superbly-executed, boundary-pushing example of its type, and not a dreary second-rate, home-made video. Despite these criticisms, I would certainly recommend a visit to *Documenta 11*. If this is contemporary art practice, it needs to be viewed and reviewed, if for no other reason than as a path for establishing a counter position. Importantly, for Australian artists, I think *Documenta 11* provides a valuable, confidence-building exercise, both at a personal and cultural level. For, it is possible that a chance visit to any of our nation's better galleries may provide an art experience far more potent than those presented on the world stage of *Documenta 11*. MSO

Gerard Reinmuth is the Sydney-based Partner of Reinmuth Blythe Balmforth TERROIR.