

Thinkbelt

'Delightful Fun': a Cedric Price Thinkbelt for our times

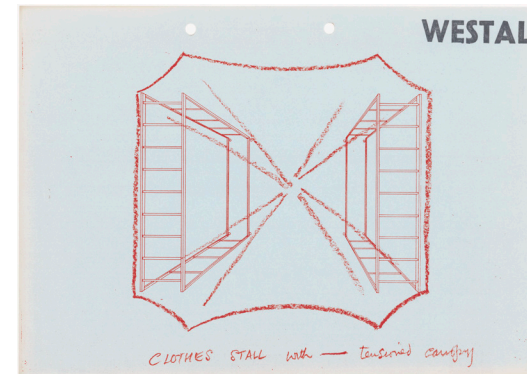


Scott Sutherland School of Architecture, Robert Gordon University |
The Sir Ian Wood Building
Garthdee Rd, Garthdee, Aberdeen AB10 7GJ

A 'Delightful Fun: a Cedric Price Thinkbelt for our times

The Thinkbelt Network

Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment
Robert Gordon University | The Sir Ian Wood Building
Garthdee Rd, Garthdee, Aberdeen AB10 7GJ



Cedric Price. Sketch for Westal. 1986-1990 red pencil on paper 21 × 29,7 cm DR2004:0487:001
Cedric Price fonds @Canadian Centre for Architecture

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Alessandro Columbano | Birmingham School of Architecture and Design, Birmingham City University
Prof. Christian Frost | London Metropolitan University

During this last year, the Thinkbelt network has been preparing an exhibition that will be touring several schools of architecture across the UK between October 2024 and March 2025. The project – ‘Delightful Fun’: a Cedric Price Thinkbelt for our times – aims to celebrate the legacy of Cedric Price for its relevance today. Two original market stall prototypes designed by Price, from Drawing Matter Collection and never exhibited before, are the exhibition’s centrepiece. These market stalls, and a range of facsimiles of archival materials – including prints of original drawings, texts, ephemera, film extracts and audio recordings from institutions such as the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Drawing Matter, Architectural Association, St. John’s College Library, the British Film Institute, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York – present the diversity of Price’s practice and interdisciplinary conversations. The exhibition will act as a stimulus for a conversation on site-specific pedagogies and practices in each school of architecture that engage with issues as varied as community-led urban and architectural developments, circular economies, the integration of time in architectural thinking and action, interdisciplinarity, design for pleasure and delight, among others. These will be supported by a programme of events in each of the venues. The outcomes of these conversations will be displayed in the exhibition space, and incorporated into a cumulative catalogue across the schools visited. Ultimately, the Thinkbelt will disseminate, interrogate, collect and share knowledge – with the expert and the non-expert – on the move, and thus, embodying the dynamism, expediency and inclusiveness that invested each of Price’s projects.

‘I feel that the real definition of architecture is that which through a natural distortion of time, place, and interval creates beneficial social conditions that hitherto were considered impossible.’

Cedric Price

The Thinkbelt network: rethinking architectural education

Professor Maria J.M. Sanchez |

Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment

Cedric Price has inspired generations of architecture students and architects. In that spirit of transformation, we have created an initiative that we hope brings back the energy that Price was able to communicate and to continue inspiring. The exhibition ‘A delightful fun: a Cedric Price thinkbelt for our times’, on its first iteration, will tour across 6 schools of architecture in the UK; Scott Sutherland School of Architecture, Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Mackintosh School of Architecture, School of Architecture University of Staffordshire, Birmingham School of Architecture and Design, School of Art, Design and Architecture London Metropolitan University.

The two original prototypes of market stalls, from the Drawing Matter collection, will trigger transformation and compile the best pedagogical practices of each school regarding community engagement and sustainability. Alongside pedagogical practices, the project looks into innovative professional projects and initiatives developed by local and regional authorities.

Engaging communities in the design of architectural and urban spaces is an essential part of the sustainability of Cedric Price’s designs. Price’s collaboration with Joan Littlewood in the Fun Palace project highlights how the versatility of buildings as a response to the users’ needs can shape the design of spaces. This is also essential from a sustainability point of view. If the buildings adapt to the changes through time, they will be in use and integrated, reducing waste and implementing economic growth. However, taking into account the temporary aspect of buildings and accepting that they may just be needed for a certain period of time can also positively impact the design and technical considerations of the building. An excellent example of this is Price’s

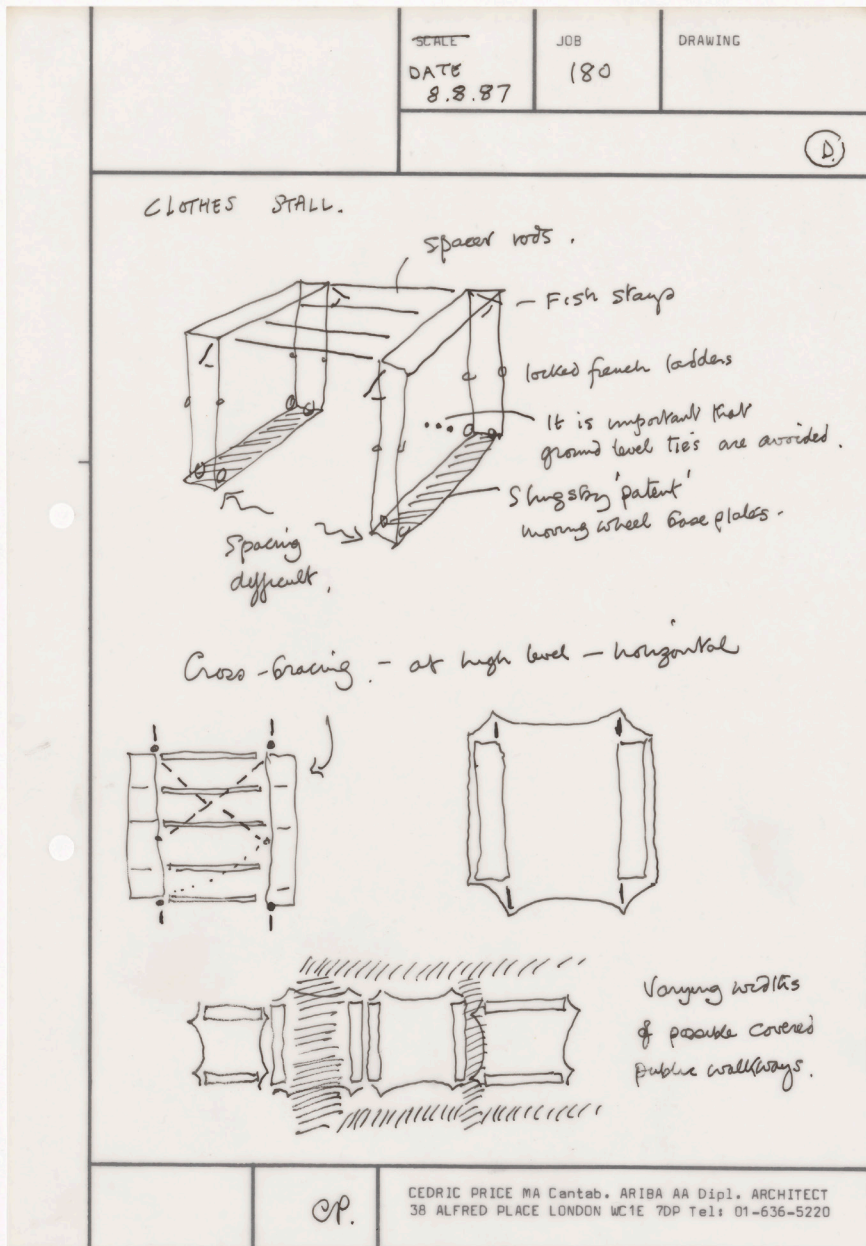
Inter-action Centre, which was disassembled once it was no longer needed.

The Thinkbelt Network has emerged from the Cedric Price Day initiative that started in September 2021 at the University of Staffordshire. After the event attracted significant local and national interest and thanks to the invaluable support of Drawing Matter, we embarked on this exciting adventure which is the Thinkbelt Network. In a conversation with Niall Hobhouse (Drawing Matter) in 2022, we discussed the possibility of displaying one of the market stalls in one of the Cedric Price events. Due to its mobile nature, the market stalls offered the opportunity of an expanded Thinkbelt, beyond the Potteries.

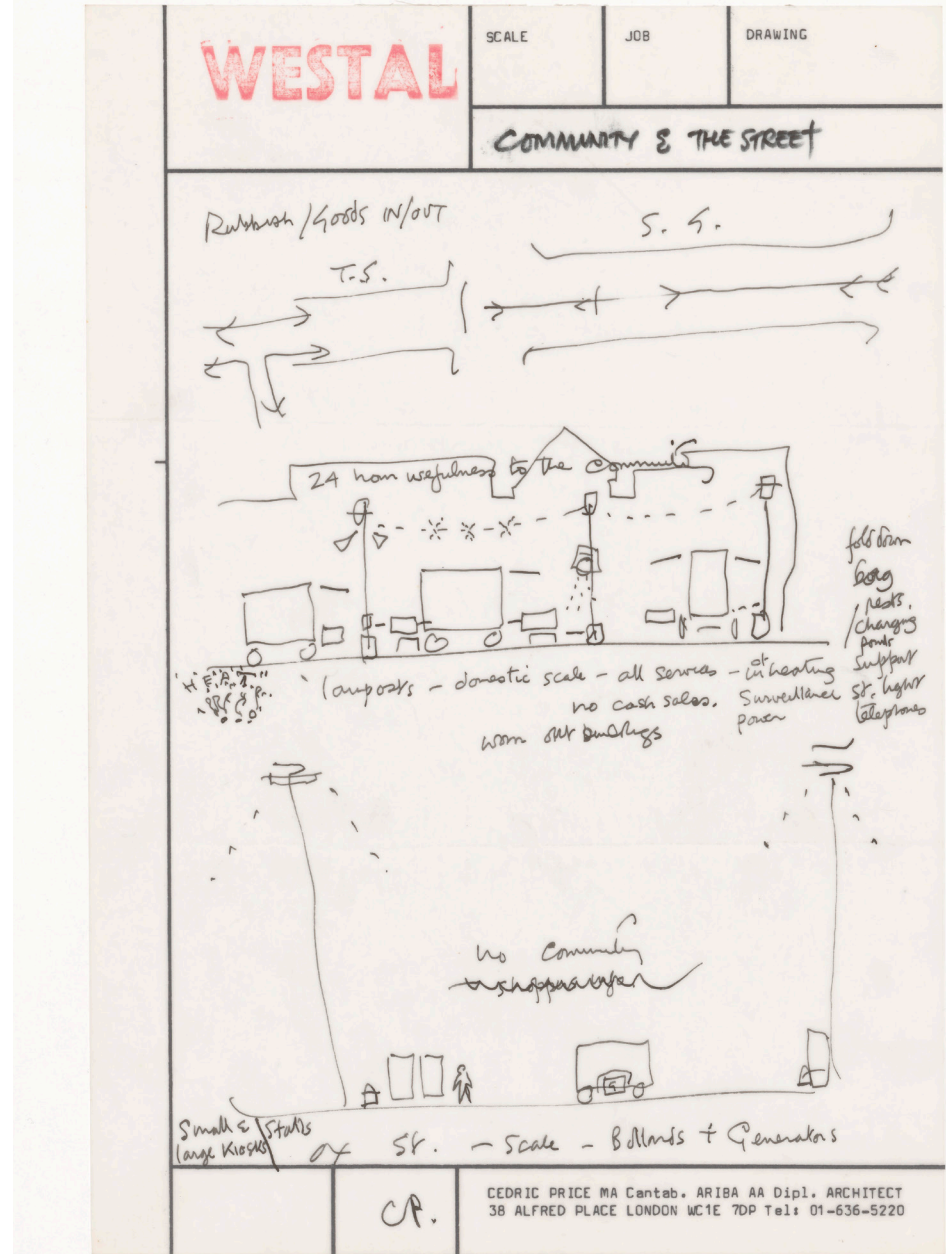
The Network takes its name after the Potteries Thinkbelt project. It proposes a university integrated with the city and its citizens through mobile learning spaces and housing based on the abandoned rail network. The exchange of knowledge is shared with the city, having a wider impact. This idea of sharing knowledge horizontally, at the same level is one of the common characteristics of Price's project. This pedagogical aspect is essential in the process of placemaking as it supports and assures the sustainability of the intervention. The market stalls would act as a vehicle for the Thinkbelt to reach different regions, communicating and sharing the best pedagogical and professional practices on community engagement and sustainability impacted by Cedric Price's work.



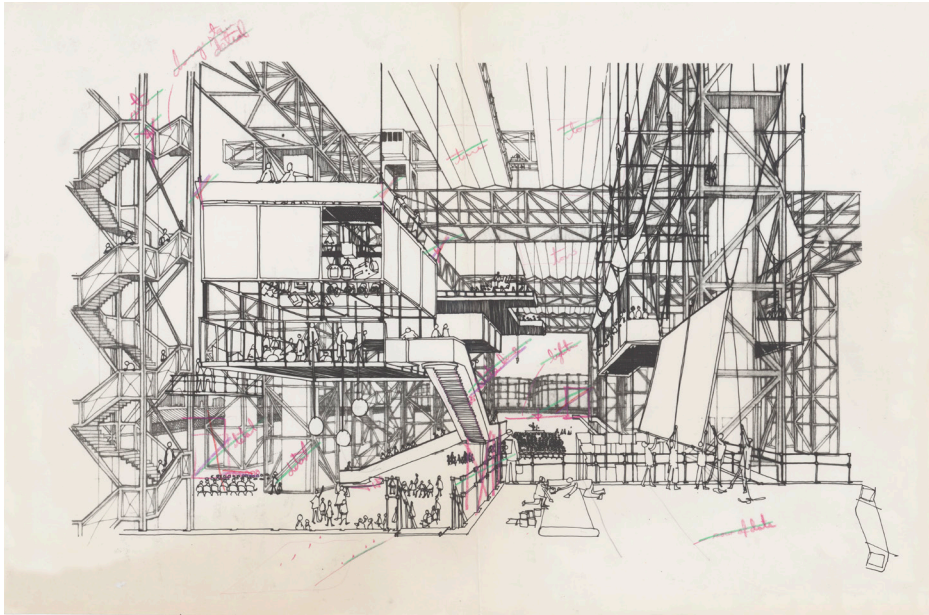
Cedric Price. View of prototype for Westal 1986-1990. chromogenic colour print mounted on foam core board 29,6 × 42,1 cm DR2004:0458:002 Cedric Price fonds @Canadian Centre for Architecture



Cedric Price. Sketches for Westal. 8 August 1987 sketches and notes in ink on translucent paper 29,8 x 21 cm. DR2004:0487:002. Cedric Price fonds @Canadian Centre for Architecture



Cedric Price. Sketches for Westal 1986-1990 sketches and notes in ink on translucent paper 29,9 x 20,9 cm. DR2004:0503:001 Cedric Price fonds @Canadian Centre for Architecture



Cedric Price. Fun Palace: interior perspective ca. 1960-1964 pink and green pencil on reprographic copy
26,67 × 40,4 cm DR1995:0188:855 @Canadian Centre for Architecture.

‘The fun palace is one of the most ambitious and original manifestations of many of the ideas that defined postwar leisure architecture, and that continue to inform the design of cultural institutions in the digital age.’

Stanley Mathews

Placeness as performative actions; the engaged architecture of the Fun Palace

Prof. A.S.Dundjerovic, Centre for Interdisciplinary Performative Arts,
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire | Birmingham City University

Every space tells a story, and every story can give meaning to a space. One such example is Knossos Palace in Crete. With its preserved architecture the palace tells us a story of the everyday lives of the Minoans and King Minos. But Ancient Greek myth embodied in the narrative of the labyrinth that King Minos built to keep the Minotaur (half-man, half-bull) who lived there gives a place mythical and distinctive qualities that became the subject of many interpretations in works of art and subsequent narratives. Placeness of the Minotaur narrative is situated in the labyrinth, and maze that metaphorically represents something dark and uncontrollable in human nature. Indeed, it is inhabited by the beast that eats humans in a labyrinth from which no one can escape. The uncertainty within multiple possibilities within the maze and the existing danger of encountering a human-eating beast creates placeness with multiple possible realities and meaning. The Argentinian author, Jorge Luis Borges constructed philosophy based on metaphorical playful possibilities of representation of Minotaur in the labyrinth where actions gave meaning to a space.

The dominant narratives of the time are reflected in architectural space; however, the conceived narratives are not fixed they are playful and flexible, and they are shaped by numerous factors, so the stories move, progress or regress, and are unpredictable. This is where performative production of place comes into play in the creation of placeness. The connection between architectural space and the performance narrative is one of causal, co-dependent influence. Performative actions that make narratives of placeness refer to defining the meaning of space and how space as an architectural entity defines performative actions. For example, in site-specific and immersive performances

are created by the space–narrative relationship that provide the meaning of space produced by a specific society and culture.

Performative space is relevant to human action and community interactivity in gathering, both coming together within established structures and through dissent by breaking from structures within urban spaces. The relationships between performance and human space, whether in the city, the stage, shopping or place of work, means of transport, political or religious centres, the sacred or cultural space and, of course, the virtual space, generated an exceptional place. In the same way that the contemporary urban place is generated, the place where the community expresses itself either through gathering or dissent, performative space is a place that accommodates and, at the same time, influences that expression.

Urban storytelling emerges as an essential process in the configuration of civic identities. Urban storytelling has been explored by numerous thinkers in their work such as Walter Benjamin, Jane Jacobs or Italo Calvino. Architects and urban planners create narratives to design the cities and its spaces. In the 1960s the architect Cedric Price collaborated with the theatre director Joan Littlewood and the cybernetician Gordon Pask in the project of the Fun Palace. The Fun Palace was defined by Joan Littlewood as the ‘university of the streets’.

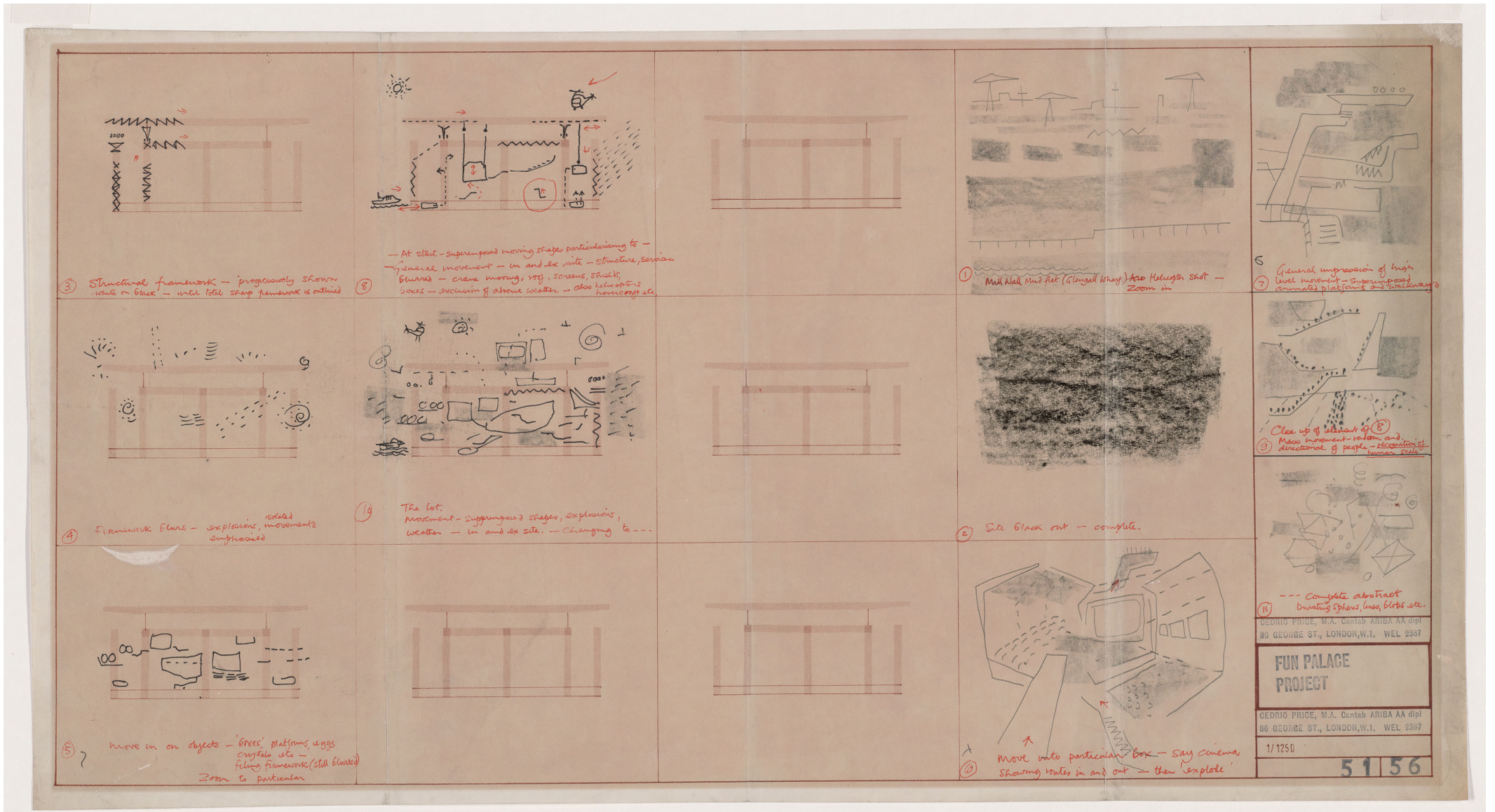
Architecture and design can be interpreted as a set of performance events in space through the design of a space where space and audience experience can be interconnected. The architectural space can be designed to blur the boundaries between performers and the audience, creating an interactive experience. The space does not have to be only physical it can also be mutational and digital, with audience interactivity as in computer video games. In 1964, the architectural design for Fun Palace by Cedric Price, was a new idea about a flexible and adaptable multi-purpose place for the community to engage in various arts, culture and educational activities envisioned by archi-

tects, theatre artists and cyberneticians. Price's placeness came from intermedial connections between space, body and computer in a temporary, movable structure (walls and floors) and assembled in different locations, in urban settings at the heart of the community. Interdisciplinarity of Fun Palace was the practice and the vision of transformative architectural space that builds on Littlewood's theatre performance space as a transformative event. Bringing cybernetics and space design had to measure the human behaviour in an environment as a relation of the body to space and also to predict human behaviour and invented narratives as they can come out of an interaction between performers, audience, media and space.

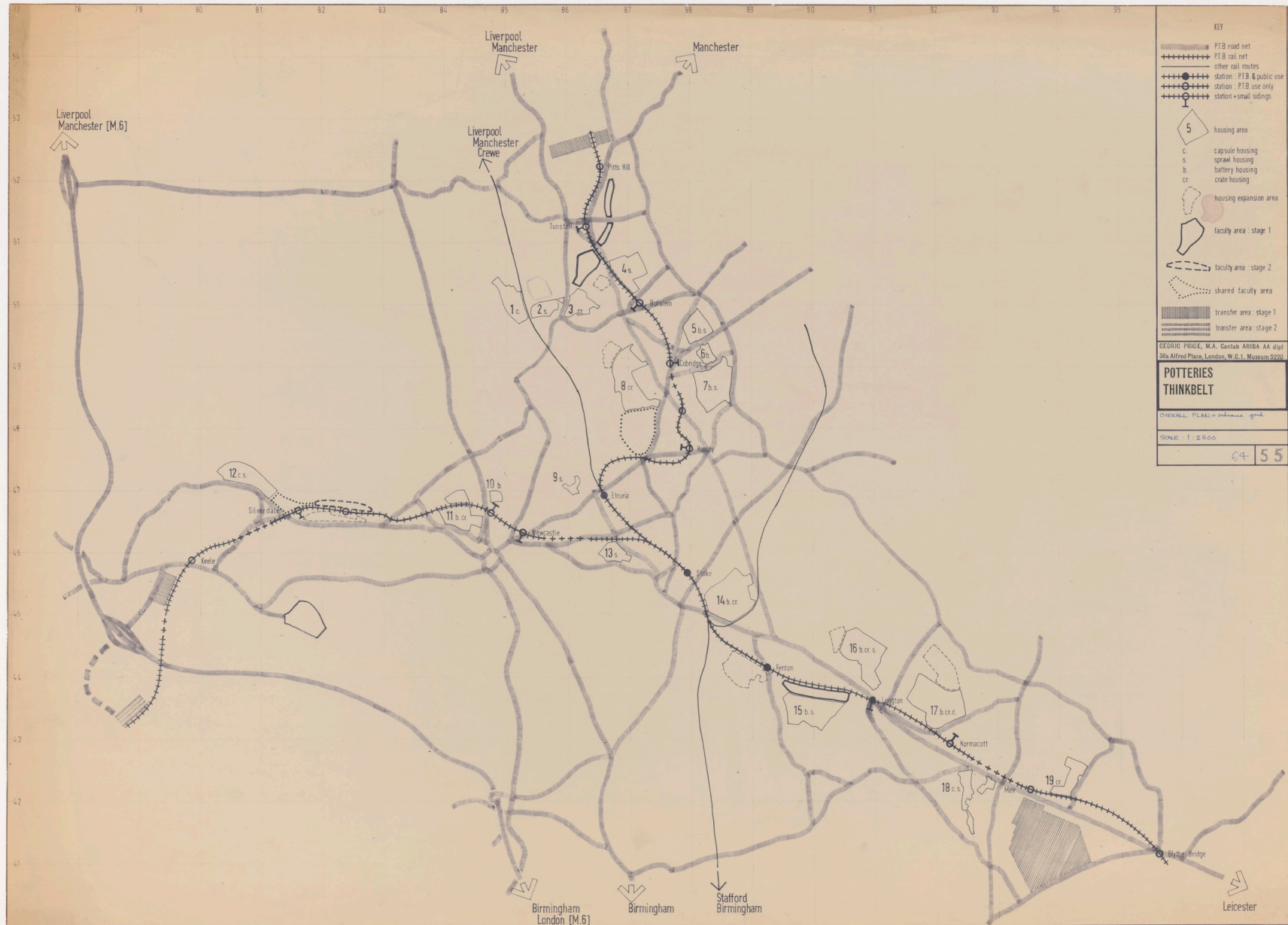
The visionary project Fun Palace was a utopian concept of place-ness that has yet to materialize, or not, in present-day dystopian urban reality. It is an inspirational vision for the time to come. It envisages a culturally complex community and empowers people to create and use art in a utopian society based on equality and access to well-being for all people.



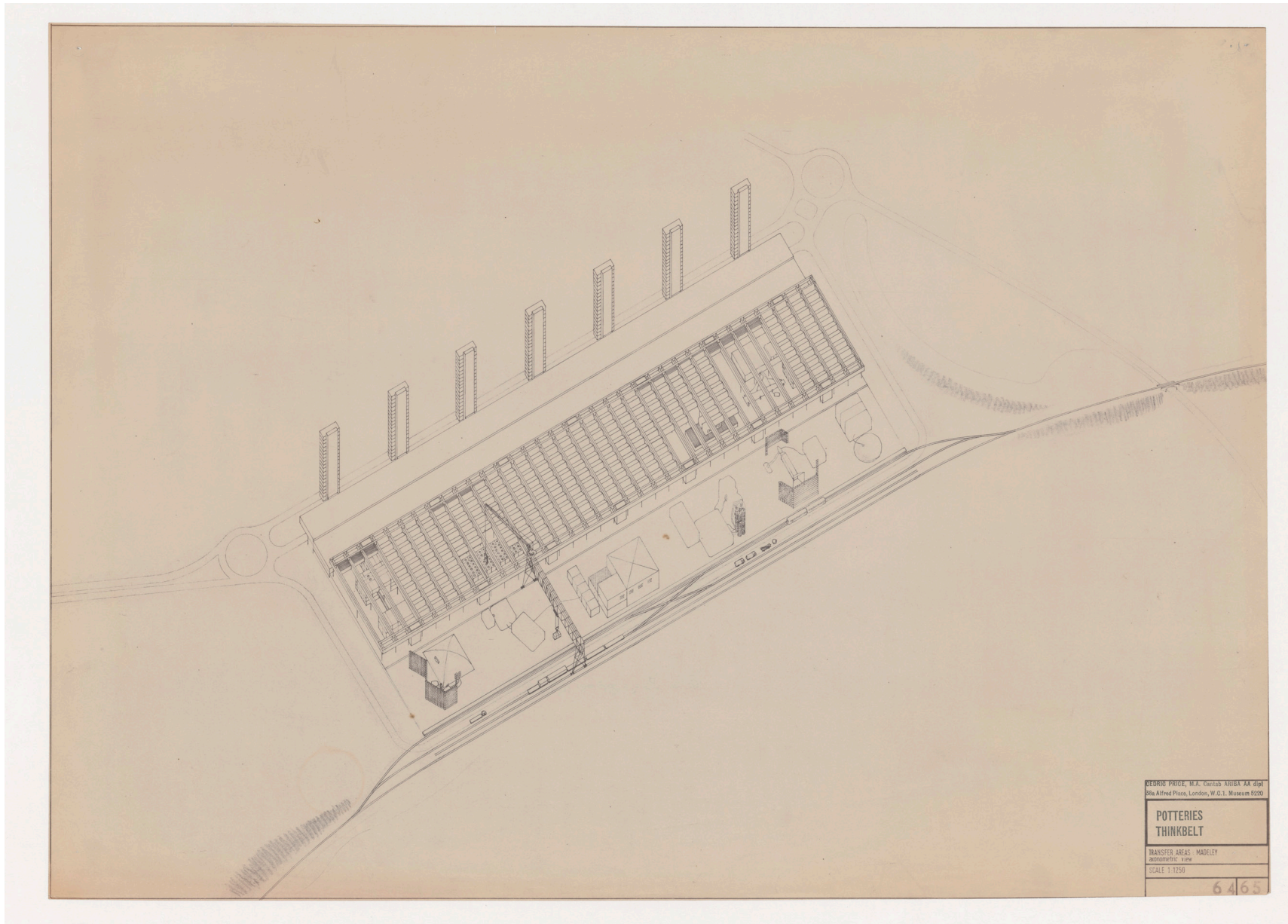
Cedric Price. Fun Palace: perspective for the Lea River site on between 1961 and 1965
gelatin silver print with appliqué lettering laid down on 62,87 × 121,6 × 0,32 cm DR1995:0188:522
@Canadian Centre for Architecture.



Fun Palace for Joan Littlewood, project. Storyboard for film and sketches, 1959-1961. Stratford East, London, England. Felt-tipped pen, graphite, crayon, and ink stamps on diazotype, 15 x 27 1/2' (38.1 x 69.9 cm). Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation. Acc.n.: 1235.2000. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA.



Cedric Price. Overall plan for Potteries Thinkbelt, North Staffordshire 1965. Cedric Price fonds. Canadian Centre for Architecture



Cedric Price. Axonometric of the Madeley transfer area for Potteries Thinkbelt, North Staffordshire 1964.
Cedric Price fonds. Canadian Centre for Architecture

Assemble| Methods of Assembly

Camille Sineau

Assemble is a multidisciplinary collective working in the fields of architecture, design and the visual arts. Founded in 2010 to design a single project (The Cineroleum, the temporary occupation of a former service station in London by a cinema), Assemble has since delivered a diverse body of work recognised by international awards (including the Turner Prize in 2015 in the United Kingdom for The Granby Workshop in Liverpool). They promote a democratic and cooperative working method that enables the production of artistic projects that are co-constructed and socially engaged by nature, and always based on the exploration of a place, a territory or a situation investigated ‘from the inside’. Their projects combine all the scales of construction to generate “learning by doing” situations.

In contrast to traditional architectural practice, which is generally based on the principles of commissioning (without consulting future residents or users of the site), they are interested in situations where it is possible to call into question the way in which budgets and legal frameworks are managed. As “ignorant architects” Assemble are attempting to push back the boundaries of their disciplinary language and incorporating other forms of teaching, based on trust and collective intelligence. Assemble approaches each project according to emancipatory pedagogical principles that animates and brings to life the distance that exists between people and their environment. Through efforts to democratise and open-up different forms of knowledge, skill and practice, Assemble is trying to give access to richer, more productive kinds of collective action and experience to support alternative ways of doing things that offer new ways of thinking about how we make and re-make our shared environments.

Methods of Assembly is a teaching unit led by the architectural collective Assemble, in the school of architecture at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland. It is run today by James Binning, Amy Perkins, Camille Sineau and Noémie Zurbruggen.

The studio is dedicated to exploring innovative architectural practices in rural contexts, emphasizing the unique challenges and opportunities these environments present. It is built on the two premises that architecture can serve as a powerful catalyst for community engagement and social change and that rural spaces offer a fertile ground allowing for alternative practices and diverse ways of life to emerge and grow.

Methods of Assembly engages in hands-on projects that prioritize the use of local materials, infrastructure, and labour. This approach encourages us to consider the cultural and ecological dimensions of design, fostering a deep understanding of how architecture can respond to and enrich rural life. By collaborating closely with local residents and institutions, the studio wishes to empower communities to advocate for their own futures, moving away from traditional top-down methods of development.

One of the most innovative elements of Price’s projects was the idea that his buildings would only be in use while they were needed and then they would disappear. This took him into a wide investigation of construction techniques that allowed for the disassembly of the buildings once they were not in use. One example of this was his Inter-action centre in London (1972), which was disassembled and removed in 1997.

Another key element of his architecture was interdisciplinarity. This is clearly seen in the Fun Palace (1961-4), a project he did in collaboration with the celebrated theatre director Joan Littlewood. The Fun Palace displays a series of new approaches to an architectural project in which the use of the building and the

desires of its users are at the centre. The articulation of the different spaces and their manipulation by the users respond to the intersection of disciplines such as theatre and now cybernetics.

This exhibition presents reproductions of drawings, collages, and sketches with kind permission from the Cedric Price archive at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (Montreal, Canada). These original materials have been put in dialogue with more contemporary documents such as press cuttings, clips, films and images of the current state of the area of the Potteries.

The objective of this exhibition is to stimulate, through critical thinking and re:imaginings of Price's projects, proposals for meeting the region's current and future needs.

Our work encompasses a range of activities, from design research to practical building projects, all aimed at creating low-impact, sustainable structures that resonate with their surroundings. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and a commitment to environmental stewardship, we seek to redefine architectural practice as a means to address systemic issues of equity, ecological sustainability, and community resilience. Ultimately, as a unit, we aspire to inspire a new generation of architects who are equipped to engage thoughtfully with the complexities of rural life and contribute positively to the landscapes and communities they serve.

Camille Sineau is an architect and anthropologist based in Lausanne, Switzerland. With a strong interest in alternative approaches to architecture, Camille explores the relationship between skills, dwelling, and inhabitation practices, often drawing on anthropological and ecological perspectives to challenge traditional notions of architecture and urbanism. After graduating from the School of Architecture of Paris-Est, he gained diverse experience working with prominent firms including Go Hasegawa in Tokyo and Jean-Christophe Quinton in Paris. Sineau later joined Adam Khan Architects in London, where he was made Associate. His academic pursuits have further deepened his interdisciplinary expertise. Camille completed a Master by Research in Social Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, under the guidance of Tim Ingold, from 2016 to 2018, while engaging in parallel into socially engaged project such as "The town is the garden" led by Deveron Projects in Huntly. This experience has influenced his subse-

quent professional practice, allowing him to develop innovative ways of thinking about architecture and its connections to politics, ecology, production and education. Since 2020, Camille joined Methods of Assembly, the teaching unit lead by Assemble at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland, where he holds the position of teaching assistant and collaborates with Assemble. His work is marked by a deep engagement with the social and cultural dimensions of architecture which he continues to develop in his practice through exhibitions, workshops and public activities alongside his practice as an architect, anthropologist, or researcher.

City Thinking

Neil Lamb | Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment | Robert Gordon University

As the third oldest School of Architecture in the UK, the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment at Robert Gordon University has a strong tradition of maintaining a strong and dynamic relationship with the city of Aberdeen, its populus and its local, drawing upon its context to explore sustainable urban and rural living.

The school has long focused on designing and enhancing public spaces and community-driven projects throughout Aberdeen. By working closely with local professionals and residents, students and faculty help imagine places and spaces that meet the needs of the city's diverse population providing visions of alternate possibilities that inform the border debate about the city's future and economic development.

Historically, Aberdeen has been fortunate in its continuing ability to capitalise economically on an abundance of valuable natural resources which has generated a city of considerable wealth, articulated in granite in the 19th century in the form of the great city center institutional buildings, and the leafy avenues and terraces of the west end. Aberdeen has in the past shown great ambition, not least when they drove Union Street from east to west through and over the undulating medieval city. History tells us that cities change and today Aberdeen like many cities confront the realities of change in living and working patterns. The people of the city are frustrated to see the demise of what they have come to know and strive to see what the future might hold. As we embark on a 'post pandemic' and 'post-hydrocarbon' future with a stronger emphasis on a 'tourist based' economy, staff and students at the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment

are actively engaging with city communities to 'think the future', producing new urban development concepts within a low energy, low carbon context, transformative, that secures social, economic, and cultural sustainability.

An example of the work that the school has done in the city, is the third year project led by Silvia Basanesse last year. Bon Accord Baths is a category B listed Art Deco swimming pool in Aberdeen, Scotland. Described as one of the most significant surviving swimming pools of the inter-war period in the UK, the pool is unfortunately not currently operational, but is being managed by Bon Accord Heritage. The semi-permanent exhibition titled Lost + Found: Diving into the Future of the Bon Accord Baths aims to address the significant isolation of abandoned, disused and controversial public buildings in Aberdeen by showcasing to the wider community a selection of adaptive-reuse students' design proposals. The title Lost + Found describes the trust of the project, and a share attitude towards architectural conservation, adaptive re-use and the role of heritage buildings in general. The rich history of this unique asset is at risk of being lost as the building sits as you see it today: in a state of stasis between care and decay. This beloved community building is shielded from complete ruin by a dedicated charity organization, its heritage preserved by conservation and listed building status, however its future remains unknown as it currently lacks the investment required to bring it back to life as a community-led facility. Following an intensive period of analysis into the Bath's past and current conditions, each student project imagines a future in which the Bon Accord Baths is found again, reinterpreted as a modern and sustainable community destination for twenty-first century life. By diving into the potential futures of the Bon Accord Baths, the exhibition can encourage serious conversations about the building's future, engaging public and stakeholders in the process and impacting change. We believe all is not lost for the Bon Accord Baths!



Poster of the students' exhibition at Bon Accord Baths



Image of the interior of Bon Accord Baths

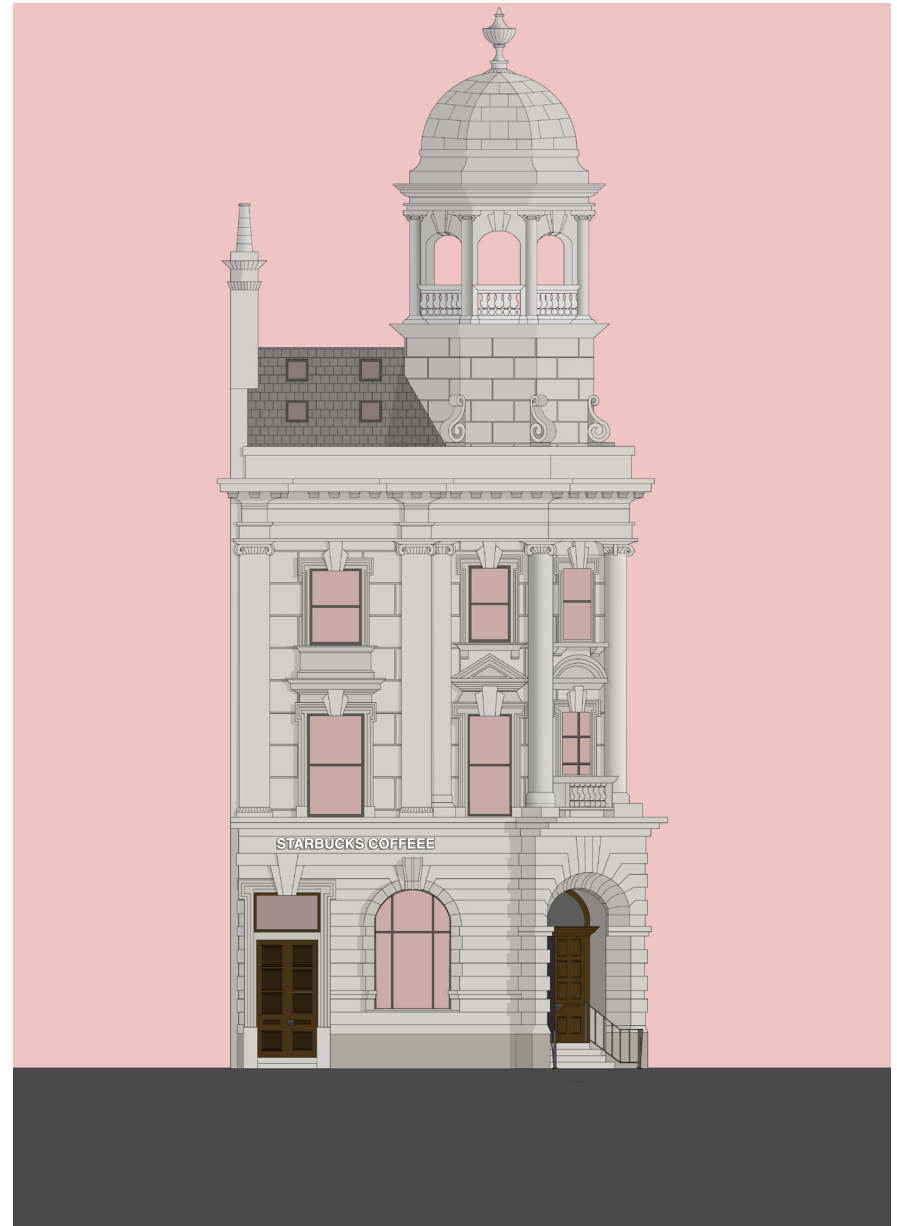
Union Street: A Celebration of Architectural Heritage

Dr. Jonathan Scott | Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment | Robert Gordon University

The exhibition, “Union Street: A Celebration of Architectural Heritage,” was a student-led initiative highlighting the rich architectural history of one of the city’s most iconic streets. In this project, students carefully selected buildings along Union Street that they found to be architecturally significant, using their fresh perspectives to bring new appreciation to these landmarks. Through their illustrations, each student captured the unique character and aesthetic of these structures, showcasing both well-known and overlooked details.

The exhibition was launched with a public event, where the students’ artwork was proudly displayed for the first time. The event brought together architecture enthusiasts, local residents, and visitors, fostering a greater awareness of the city’s built heritage. The illustrations not only emphasized the architectural beauty of Union Street but also opened a dialogue on how the community connects with its urban environment.

Following the launch, the exhibition was made accessible to a broader audience by being displayed in the Union Terrace Gardens. This outdoor setting allowed the public to experience the artwork in a relaxed, natural environment while promoting reflection on the importance of preserving and celebrating the city’s architectural legacy. The event was a tribute to the enduring charm of Union Street and an engaging exploration of its significance through the eyes of the next generation of creatives.



Union Street elevation. Jallen Chen.

An outdoors fun lab for Aberdeen Science Centre

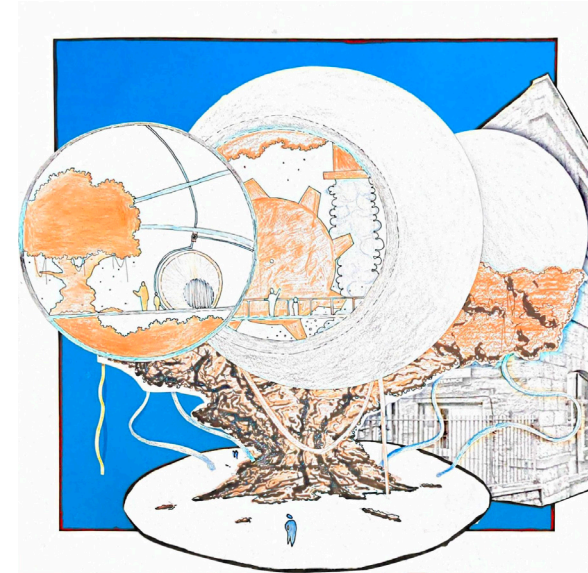
Architecture Stage 2 + Stage 5 | Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment | Robert Gordon University

the brief...

You will have to devise collaboratively ideas that respond to one or several of these provocations:

- A sensory place
- Think inside or outside the bubble
- Free play free access 365 - 24/7 space
- A secret for kids in the garden
- Urban wildlife
- A maze
- A treehouse
- A place to get messy in.
- An outdoor workshop place
- An outdoor stage
- A net Zero garden
- An oasis of science
- The museum of energy
- And innovation garden

You will have to create one 50cm x 50cm image/artwork per group that will visually represent your design to the community. You will have to explore different graphic techniques to bring to life your proposal thinking of a non-specialist audience.



Finalist proposal | Ever-Deen



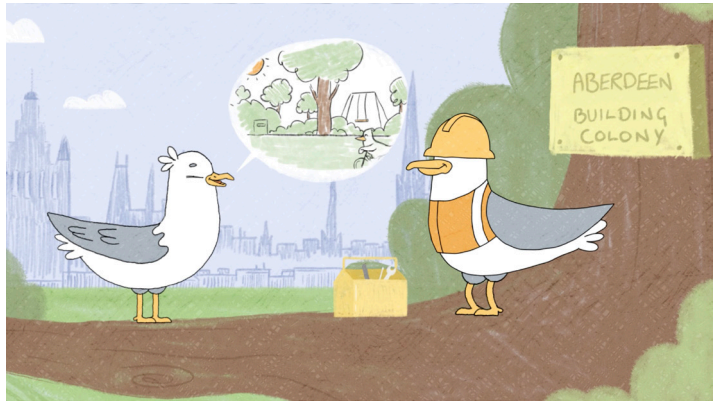
Finalist proposal | The magic garden

57.10

Architecture society | Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment



5710 proudly stands as Scotland's longest-running architectural society, creating a vibrant community at the Scott Sutherland School. Our mission goes beyond simply sharing knowledge; we create an inclusive space where students can generate ideas and spark interest through engaging lectures and discussions. These events not only inspire creativity but also encourage critical thinking about architecture's role in society. Community is at the heart of 5710. We believe in the power of connection, and our social events — whether it's enjoying good food and drinks or participating in fun outings — help create stronger friendships among students. These socials cultivate a sense of belonging, making everyone feel like part of something bigger. In the spirit of Cedric Price and the Thinkbelt organisation, we aim to challenge conventional architectural practices and promote innovative ideas that address societal needs. Price's vision of creating flexible, community-oriented spaces resonates deeply with our values. Through collaboration and engagement, we aspire to inject excitement into the student experience, echoing Price's belief in architecture's potential to enhance lives and strengthen communities.



Thinkbelt

'Delightful Fun': a Cedric Price Thinkbelt for our times



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