

2008 SCAPE
Christchurch
Biennial
of art in public space



SCAPE 2008 Christchurch Biennial of Art in Public Space

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WANDERING LINES: TOWARDS A NEW CULTURE OF SPACE

“The function of public art is to de-design.”ⁱ

Vito Acconci

Cities are complex dynamic systems that are constantly in flux. Together with the impact of globalisation and growing populations which reflects greater mobility and migration, they are rapidly transforming. This is evident in terms of urban spaces that operate as complex habitations for social and political representations, cultural production and consumption, tourism and leisure. Alongside this, the conception of public space has also changed.

‘Public space’ is difficult to define in urban centres where space is increasingly moving into the hands of private developers. Together with the adaptation of neo-liberal global economic models and budgetary limitations imposed on councils, change in cities is now largely motivated by private enterprise. This has spawned a heightened focus towards consumption. With life organised around consumerist culture, visible socio-economic divides within cities are created.

In order to think through these issues, ‘public space’ is defined as negative space – the voids, façades, streets, publicly owned buildings, sky- all the possible spaces in-between private space. This provides a starting point to reflect on how cities can produce a sense of ‘publicness’ through space and to consider how ‘publicness’ can be reinfused into cities to create a more relevant public space to be enjoyed equally. It is important to unfold city space in terms of social fluidity and “hybridity” through a close examination of the structures that organise it and the conditions of its development.

Contingencies of Space

The exploration of urban spaces that construct and contain the life of the city engages with issues regarding how we live and how culture is constantly transforming and adapting to new conditions.

Unlike early permanent 'drop' sculptures in public space, temporary art interventions respond to the contingencies of real-time and space: everyday life. The SCAPE 2008 Christchurch Biennial is firmly positioned within the dynamic systems of the city and will develop relationships between artworks and an infinite number of spatial, urban, social, psychological, individual or communal, political and historical contingencies that exist in the city. Making these seemingly invisible contingencies visible, the artistic interventions can propose an entirely different experience of locale and situation. In this sense, interweaving art within the social and urban context is vital in activating a critical dialogue towards a new culture of space.

In line with Vito Acconci's definition of the function of art in public space, all SCAPE 2008 projects will be selected in accordance with their ability to de-design/deconstruct the spatial politics of established 'ways of operating' to reveal conflicts in specific localities.

The title *Wandering Lines*ⁱⁱ is drawn from the notion that 'indirect or errant trajectories obeying their own logic'ⁱⁱⁱ can provide new understandings of space. Chosen because of SCAPE 2008's desire to unfold the constituting structures and conventional ways of operating within the existing urban design. This suggests a deconstruction of the city grid which can reveal new possibilities beyond those the city proposes.

Christchurch in Context^{iv}

SCAPE 2008 is structured around three intersecting layers: 1. researching the drivers behind global conditions of transformation in cities, 2. mapping the complex textures and terrains that are specific to Christchurch city; and 3. creating a spatial dialogue within the city that brings to the fore palpable aspects of Christchurch city's structure that resonate with global issues.

Through artistic interventions, SCAPE 2008 explores points of connection, disconnection, and conflicts, where artists work site-specifically to draw attention to the current situation from an oblique perspective.

Public Programme and Publications

Public Programme: To create a critical platform to discuss the issues related to the politics of space, SCAPE 2008 will generate a series of public programmes to operate locally and nationally. A range of lectures, panel discussions, workshops, and artist talks drawing on the perspectives of the spatial practitioners as well as artists, theorists, curators, critics will explore critical discourses on urban transformation and its impact on public space. The programme will focus on emerging tendencies, creative strategies, and possible futures for art in public space. These programmes will begin prior to the opening of SCAPE 2008 (in March 08) and be concentrated around the opening and closing of the project. They will be developed in partnership with a number of national and international organisations to ensure discussions also occur in Auckland and Wellington leading up to SCAPE 2008.

Student Workshops: SCAPE 2008 is working with lecturers from a number of universities around the country to engage students in research projects on the intellectual premises of SCAPE 2008. They will be invited to discuss the conceptual framework and the issues it raises, and present their approach – this could be in the form of writing, magazines, videos - or a form that supports their studies. These 'workshops' will be formulated in a collaboration between the

curators of SCAPE and the lecturers of the students. The student presentations will be publicly available to view during the exhibition.

This engagement with universities is an essential part of the public programme encouraging students to participate and to formulate their own ideas and responses to SCAPE 2008.

Publications: Two publications are planned to maximise the impact and distribution of ideas raised by SCAPE 2008. The first will be a guidebook with basic information on the project, including the curatorial outline; artist biographies and information about their work; maps; and sponsorship information. This will be available for the opening.

A second more substantial publication will contextualise SCAPE 2008 within a broader discussion on the politics of space through commissioned essays from national and international writers. This publication will be an in-depth analysis of issues relating to public space raised by the project as well as a documentation of the exhibition. It will be produced at the end of the exhibition and distributed internationally.

Proposed national partners include:

Christchurch City Council – City and Urban Planning Departments
University of Canterbury, Christchurch
Design & Arts College of New Zealand

Public Art Panel, Wellington
City Gallery, Wellington
Massey University and Litmus Project, Wellington
Te Papa, Wellington

Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
Artspace, Auckland
Auckland Art Gallery

ⁱ Vito Acconci, "Leaving Home, Notes on Insertions into the Public" in Public Art ed.by Florian Matzner, 2004, p.30

ⁱⁱ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Los Angeles: 1998

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. From de Certeau where he describes Francios Deligny experience working with autistic children who "trace "indeterminate trajectories" that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written and prefabricated space through which they move. These trajectories are sentences that remain unpredictable within the space ordered by the organizing of techniques and systems. Although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, the supermarket or city planning), although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes (the temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic organizations of places), these "traverses" remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful rules of different interests and desires."

^{iv} Detailed information on SCAPE 2008 sites and locations is available in the attached SCAPE 2008 Dossier.