ISSN 1751-9853

aesthesis

Design and the Art of Management
THEMED ISSUE

International Journal of art and aesthetics in management and organizational life

ISSN 1751-9853

Volume 2//THREE: 2008

Aesthesis:
International Journal of Art and Aesthetics in Management and Organizational Life

is published by

the Aesthesis project

The Aesthesis Project was founded in January 2007 and is a research project investigating art and aesthetics in management and organizational contexts. The project has its roots in the first Art of Management and Organization Conference in London in 2002, with successive conferences held in Paris, Krakow and The Banff Centre, Canada. From those events emerged an international network of academics, writers, artists, consultants and managers, all involved in exploring and experimenting with art in the context of management and organizational research. The Aesthesis Project will be developing extensive research and artistic projects internationally, with academic research fellows and associate creative practitioners, publications and consultancy.

http://www.essex.ac.uk/aesthesis/

ISSN 1751-9853

CONTENTS

Design and the Art of Management — *themed issue*

Ken Friedman, Laurene Vaughan and Jonathan Vickery

The editors of *Aesthesis* have been thinking of new approaches to 'the art of management' – or perhaps thinking about new ways to approach old problems. It seemed natural for us to think of design and design thinking as central to this intellectual endeavour – design is the process by which designated problem-solvers address the problems of legitimate stakeholders using innovation and creativity. But design is more than just problem solving. Design engages the sensibility, and designed artefacts take their shape in terms of feeling and form as well as function. The papers submitted for this issue on design, management, and organization covered all those areas and more.

In different shapes and guises, the articles in this issue all merge on the subject of 'design thinking', whether looking at 'tools', processes, experience or interactions. In terms of subject matter, the term 'design' in this issue emerges as a dynamic element of investigation into organizational learning, collaborative networks, product development, organizational resource management, service capability development, strategic urban planning, organizational creativity, contemporary art, and the conceptual-philosophical content of the epistemic functions of design that give us frameworks to think, create, assess, analyse and evaluate. Design always involves three great questions. How do we make things? How do we make things work? How do we make things work better?

Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon (1982: 129) defines design as the process by which we '[devise] courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones.' Creating something new or reshaping something that exists for a purpose, meeting a need, and solving a problem, are courses of action toward a preferred situation even though we may not yet be able to articulate this preferred situation. This definition therefore covers most forms of design.

Design is not necessarily an outcome, but rather a process. The verb 'design' describes a process of thought and planning, and this verb takes precedence over all other meanings. The word 'design' had a place in the English language by the 1500s; its first written citation dates from the year 1548. Merriam-Webster (1993: 343) defines the verb design as 'to conceive and plan out in the mind; to have as a specific purpose; to devise for a specific function or end'. Related to these definitions is the act of drawing, with an emphasis on the nature of the drawing as a plan or map, as well as 'to draw plans for; to create, fashion, execute or construct according to plan'.

The American architect and designer Buckminster Fuller (1981: 229-231) describes design as the difference between a 'class-one evolution' and 'class-two evolution'. Class-one evolution is natural evolution according to Darwin, the natural phenomena studied through evolutionary biology. Class-two evolution involves 'all those events that seem to be resultant upon human initiative-taking or political reforms that adjust to the change wrought by the progressive introduction of environment-altering artifacts' (Fuller 1981: 229). Design is both intrinsic and essential to human development in a fundamental sense, but also creates artefacts that change the very context of that development.

One argument for the importance of design is the increasing number of areas now subject to human initiative. The vast range of technologies that surround us mediate most of the human world and influence our daily lives. These include the artifacts of information technology, mass media, telecommunication, chemistry, pharmacology, chemical engineering, and mechanical engineering, along with the designed processes of nearly every service industry and public good now available other than public access to nature. Within the next few years, these areas will come to include the artifacts of biotechnology, nanotechnology, and the new hybrid technologies.

Fuller's metaphor of 'the critical path', which was the title of his last book (1983), articulated a scenario where our world is as much subject to disintegration as it is development or growing better. The way that the new artificial world affects the natural world has immense ramifications that parallel Fuller's idea of class-two evolution. This is what Victor Margolin (2002) called 'the politics of the artificial', where design has become so intrinsic to our environmental development that we need seriously to assess its power, and create new boundaries, ethics and agreed protocols.

Design plays a role in the evolution of an increasingly manufactured world, from ordinary objects to advanced technology. The design process takes on new meaning as designers take on increasingly important tasks. These tasks are important not because designers are more visible and prestigious, but because design has greater effects and wider scope than ever before. Despite this scope and scale, however, robust design solutions are always based on and embedded in specific problems. In Jens Bernsen's (1986) memorable phrase, the problem comes first in design. Each problem implies partially new solutions located in a specific context. The continual interaction of design problems and design solutions generates the problematics and knowledge of the field.

Design as an activity translates utilitarian, symbolic, and psychological needs into functions; it translates needs and wants into ideas; and it translates these ideas into the structural descriptions and entities to produce required functions that satisfy needs. As such, design always serves strategic goals on some level, large or small. The different forms of professional design practice require a process incorporating the strategic and managerial aspects of design as well as the hands-on developmental application of design. These move from thinking, research, and planning at one end of the process, on to manufacture, assembly, packaging, and presentation at the other.

For business firms, design is a comprehensive part of an integrated process that links selecting challenges and solving problems to developing products and marketing them successfully. For business firms, design is a comprehensive part of an integrated process that links selecting challenges and solving problems to developing products and marketing them successfully. The immaterial forms of design process have long been hidden, and now we are in the midst of a transition. Getting from one point to the next in this complex map of process, project, and product requires 'design thinking'. Design is in the business literature and designers are being brought in to organizations as they seek new ways of being, working, and producing. It is an exciting time of evolution. The literature on design thinking and the role and contribution of design to the fields of organizational and business development is expanding – and this issue of *Aesthesis* is part of this process.

REFERENCES

Bernsen, J. (1986) *Design: The Problem Comes First*, Copenhagen: Danish Design Council.
Fuller, B. (1981) *Critical Path*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
Margolin, V. (2002) *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Merriam-Webster, Inc (1993) Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Tenth edition), Springfield, Mass.
Simon, H. (1982) *The Sciences of the Artificial* (second edition), Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Ken Friedman is Dean of Design at Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia
KenFriedman@groupwise.swin.edu.au

Laurene Vaughan is Research Leader in the Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.
laurene.vaughan@rmit.edu.au

Jonathan Vickery is an editor and designer of *Aesthesis*, and creator of the Masters in International Design and Communication Management at Warwick University.
J.P.Vickery@warwick.ac.uk

The Ontario Plan, the *Performable Square* and The Fun Palace

Kati Rubinyi

This paper is about the design logic of a long-range strategic plan for a city in California, USA, called Ontario. Our task was to create a policy document that acknowledges indeterminacy and enables positive transformation in a context of inevitable change in external and internal conditions. This was not possible to achieve simply through the language of the policies contained within the document alone, but required for the document to shape its own conditions of use. The document became a website conceived of as a scalable framework containing modular components. In its embrace of indeterminacy and storytelling, the project makes covert reference to art and architecture practice of the mid 60's. I will present two specific works from this time-period that were unlikely, but direct, influences for this strategic plan.

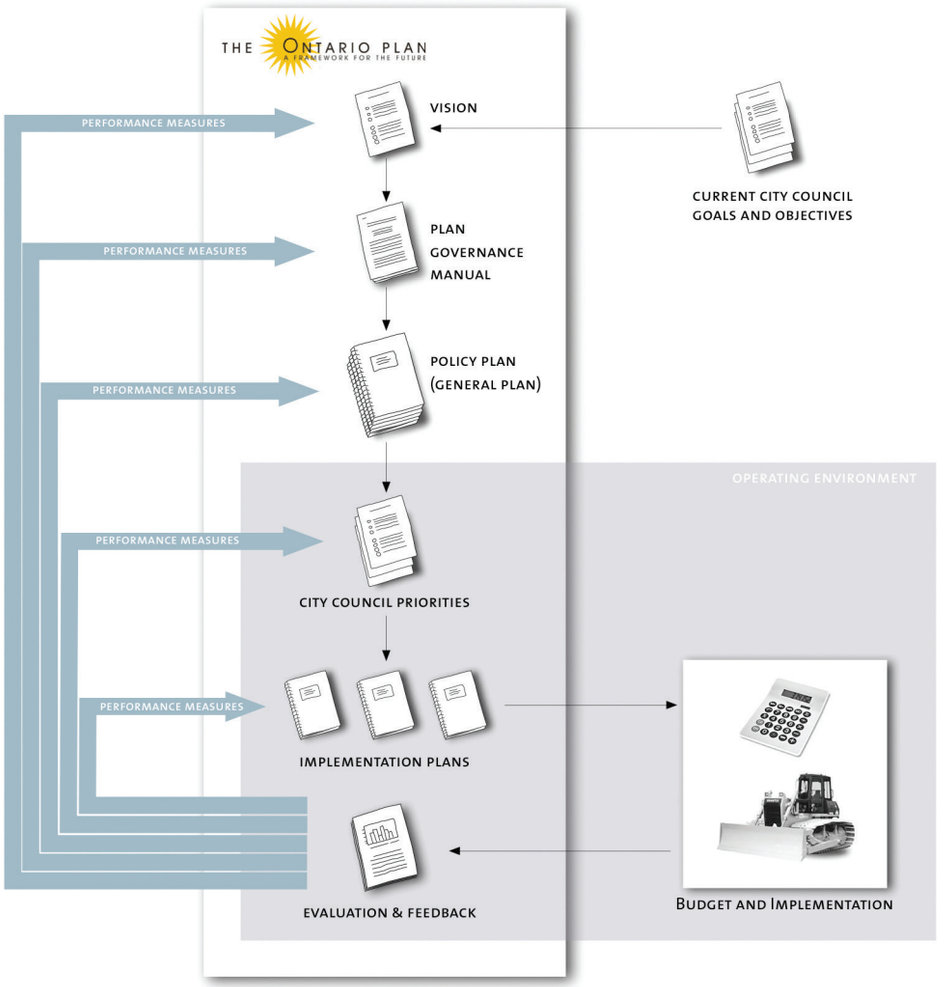
The Ontario Plan is a *General Plan* – a thirty-year strategic policy plan – prepared by legislatures in California to guide physical growth and development. It establishes a vision for quality of life and sets out policies for a wide range of topics in order to steer the city or county through unpredictable circumstances towards a desired long-term future. A General Plan typically addresses such things as land use and population density, mobility and housing, and less typically, fiscal and governance practices. Because of its emphasis on land use, a General Plan is written and submitted to the state government by planning departments. In the case of the City of Ontario, an industrial city with a population of 200,000, east of Los Angeles in an area known as the Inland Empire, their General Plan effort was run by their planning department, but benefited from the all too rare close attention of a City Manager, the highest-ranking city staff member responsible for implementing the elected Council's agenda. Unfortunately, General Plans are usually not used to their full potential, gathering dust on shelves despite the expensive and labor-intensive effort that goes into producing them. In Ontario, the City Manager, along with the Planning Department, wanted to make the most of their investment in a General Plan, requiring that the document function as a tool of governance, and that would remain responsive and useful throughout its lifetime, and be indispensable to day-to-day operations.

In order to understand how this General Plan might be best integrated with city operations and changing conditions, we began our work by looking into how successful municipalities adapt organizational practices from the private sector. What emerged from the research was the need for Ontario to establish a dynamic system of continuous improvement or feedback based on widely disseminated and easy to understand performance measures. The city's activities, such as implementation programs, would need to be continually understood and assessed in light of General Plan policies and the city's stated vision for the future. The tool of governance the city was asking for needed to link strategic thinking to actions, serving both as a communication and decision-making mechanism for city staff and the public.

The way we achieved this was by designing a conceptual framework that embedded the General Plan into City operations and reifying it on the web. The General Plan, which, for a variety of reasons was renamed the Policy Plan, became only one part of a larger system of governance components that included the city's vision, the City Council's goals and priorities, implementation programs and their evaluation. All these working together became The Ontario Plan.

A Framework for the Future: The components of The Ontario Plan

The best way to understand The Ontario Plan is by taking a tour from the homepage through one of the Policy Plan *elements*, or chapters, in this case Environmental Resources.



A Framework for the Future: The components of The Ontario Plan

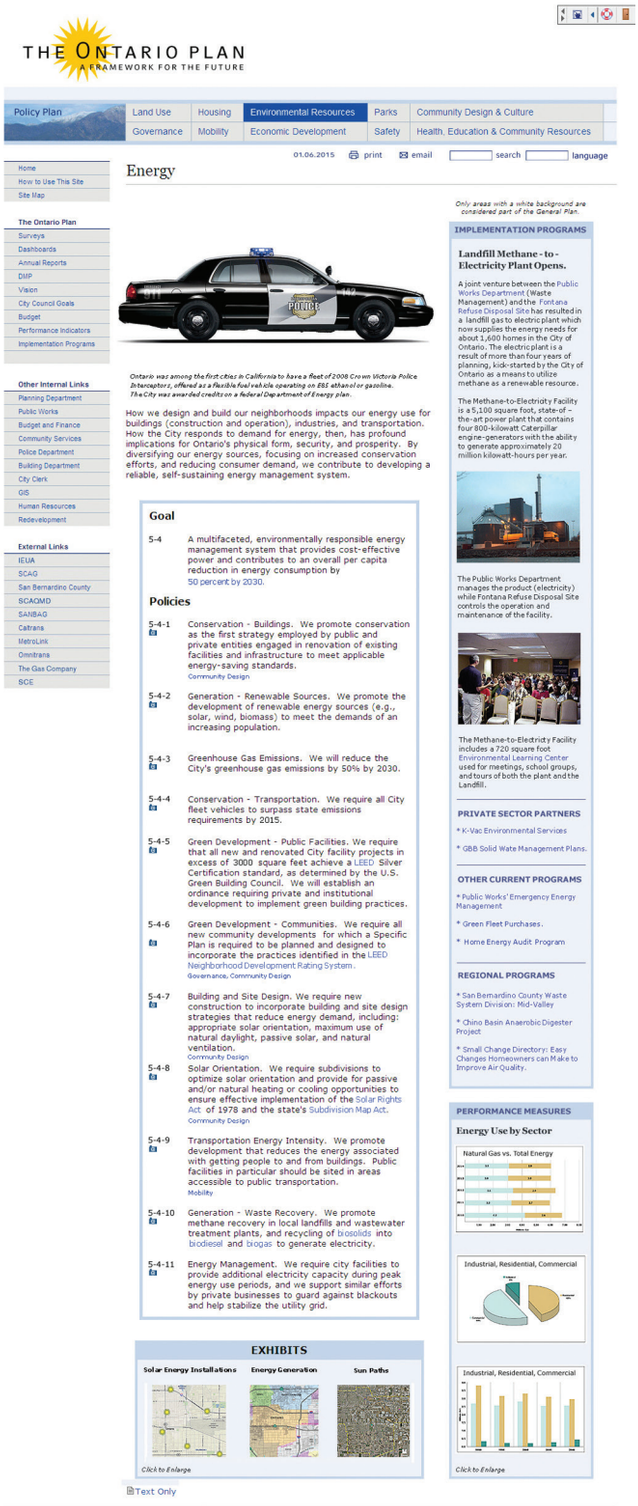
Policy Plan content is in the middle of each page, and is legally required to stay the same for the next thirty years unless it is updated or amended through a legal process. The column on the right, by contrast, offers information about implementation measures related to the policies and is updated as often as monthly. The right-column significantly extends the scope of The Plan and features regional and private sector implementation efforts as well as local ones. What emerged as possibly the greatest potential benefit of The Ontario Plan is its ability, through this right-hand column, to facilitate collaboration and interoperability between different levels of planning mechanisms both inside and outside the city and similarly, between the private and public sector.

It seems inevitable that this communication tool will be a catalyst for shifting the culture of the organization. The activity of writing and designing the short-term entries that report on implementation and performance will gradually reconfigure current operations. It will require a widespread organizational coordination and commitment, both horizontally and vertically, to pull together the content, challenging current silos. The very public nature of the site and the anticipated volume of traffic will also require a much more intensive use of graphic communication, elevating the status of planning, graphic design and information management in the City.

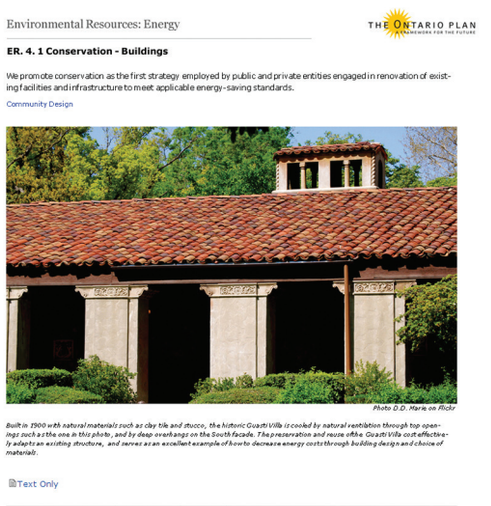
I'd like to now address how The Ontario Plan accommodates indeterminacy by being three things at once: first, a conceptual *model* that provides a framework structuring the relationship between components such as the Vision, Council Goals, Policy Plan, implementation, and performance measures; second, a functional *object* being a web-site whose use and maintenance continuously impacts City operations; and lastly, an *image*, with aesthetic qualities that promote effectiveness by facilitating use. As an architect, I'm used to thinking about things that are at once models, objects and images. Buildings, as per our original project requirement, notably 'connect long term vision to day-to-day'.

But I'm not going to argue that The Ontario Plan is a building. Instead (after a brief detour) I'd like to explain these concepts of *model*, *object* and *image* through

Homepage of The Ontario Plan



Environmental Resources Element Homepage of The Ontario Plan



Example of Environmental Resources Policy Page

to intrigue and surprise with a concentration of frivolous details focused on action and on the qualities of surfaces such as clothing. Simultaneously elitist and accessible, these paintings sought to entertain rather than educate, typically conveying 'a love of the pleasurable, delicate, frivolous, and feminine'[1] all arguably in too short supply in most municipal policy documents.

Another kind of storytelling in The Plan comes from the fact that it will continually change. With long term, static Plan policies put into perspective by the real-time and current, The Plan is a tale of progress, comparing the city in the future against The Plan when it is adopted. The Plan, as model, object and image, will be activated, unfolding over time within the logic of its own structure. I have a longstanding preoccupation with this motif of structured unfolding that leads me to take another sharp turn away from planning, organization and municipal governance to the work of an artist in whom I've had a longstanding interest.

two examples. In both examples, the aspects of model, object and image act together to tell a story. Storytelling is similarly important to the Ontario Plan because it connects broad, abstract concerns, expressed by the policies, to individual experience, expressed in implementation. Unlike typical long-range strategic planning documents, The Ontario Plan's effusive reportage makes a human connection to viewers. The effect partakes of the spirit of Rococo painting. Rococo artists sought to dislodge the idea that art was only for the king and church by reaching out to the spectator through portraying subjects that were playful and ephemeral. Instead of being didactic, Rococo art beckoned and drew the viewer into the conversation. Its main method was

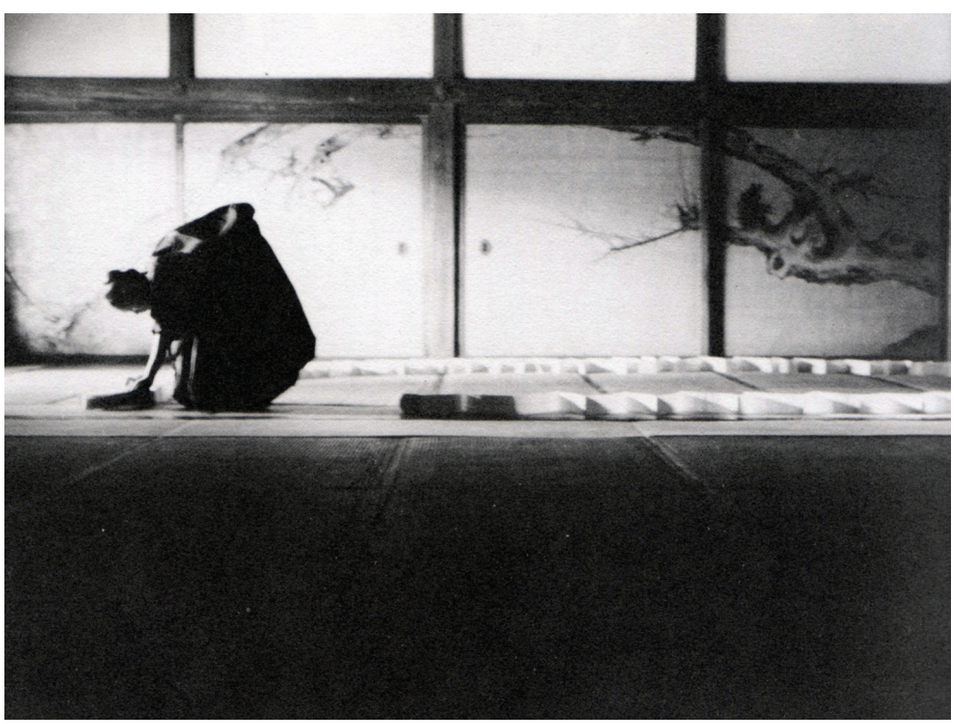
All images of The Ontario Plan by Kati Rubinyi

James Lee Byars who died in Cairo in 1997, was born in Detroit and started his career in Japan, where he lived from 1958 to 1967. There, he studied the techniques of papermaking and produced drawings. In the 1960's he made a transition to performance using paper objects as a way of structuring movement. He called these Performable Objects, and in the context of a long and diverse career, they constituted a bridge between his drawings on paper and the performances presented in the US and Europe for which he became best known.[2]

Here are these pieces described in ***The Perfect Thought, Works by James Lee Byars***, by James Elliot:

1962
Creates several giant, performable paper works in Japan made of many sheets of Japanese flax paper connected by paper hinges. These works are folded into solid geometric shapes and intended to be exhibited in stylized, gestural presentations in which a performer, sometimes Byars, sometimes an individual he has invited, deliberately unfolds the paper over the course of as much time as an hour. While these works were conceived as performable pieces, it appears that they were seldom performed immediately; rather they were shown months later, and in one case only after nearly fifteen years. These events initiate Byars's practice of presenting works through special actions inspired by Zen and Noh theater.

1963
Exhibits performable paper works at the Shokokuji Monastery in Kyoto: one work, *A 1,000-Foot White Chinese Paper* (4 inches by 800 feet), folded like an accordion, is unfolded to an oval shape by a Japanese woman in ceremonial dress; another work, a long sheet of white Japanese flax paper (1 by 200 feet), with a single charcoal line running the length of the sheet, is unfolded from an accordion shape and stood on edge in a straight line.



Above: Jamie Lee Byars (1962) *A 1000-Foot Chinese Paper*, (permissions received)

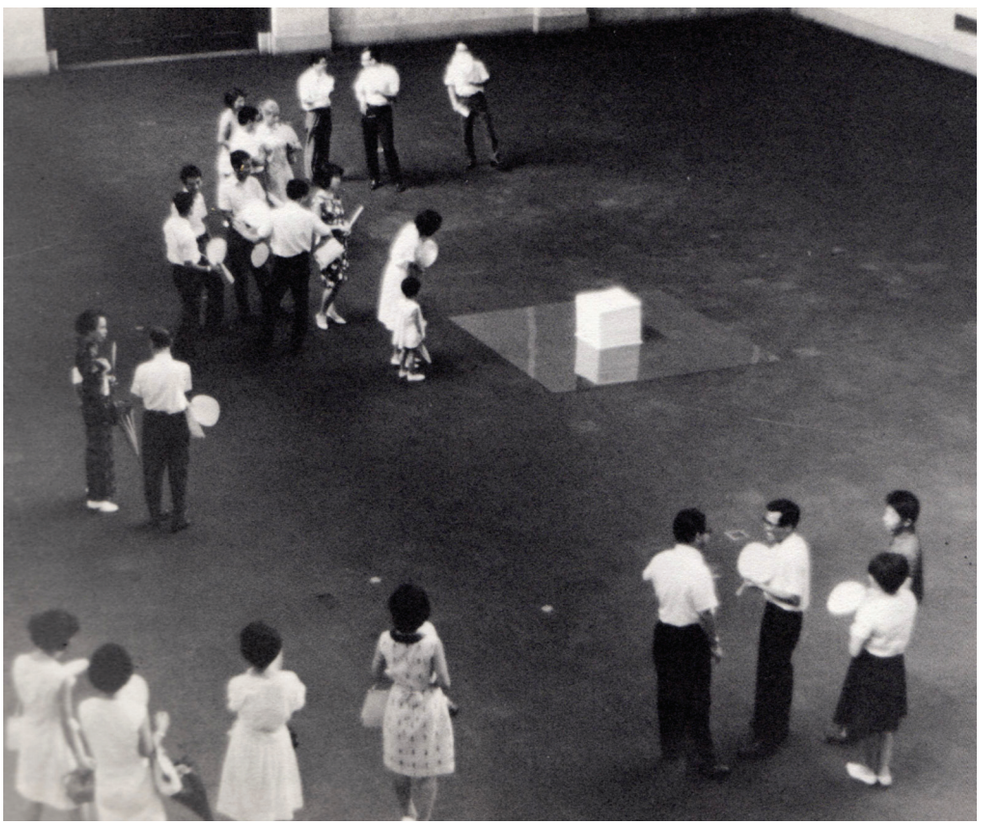
The Performable Square: Exhibition of a giant performable paper work, which, when folded, measures one and one half feet per side. In this exhibition the work is shown folded and placed on a square glass plane in an empty gallery at the national Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.

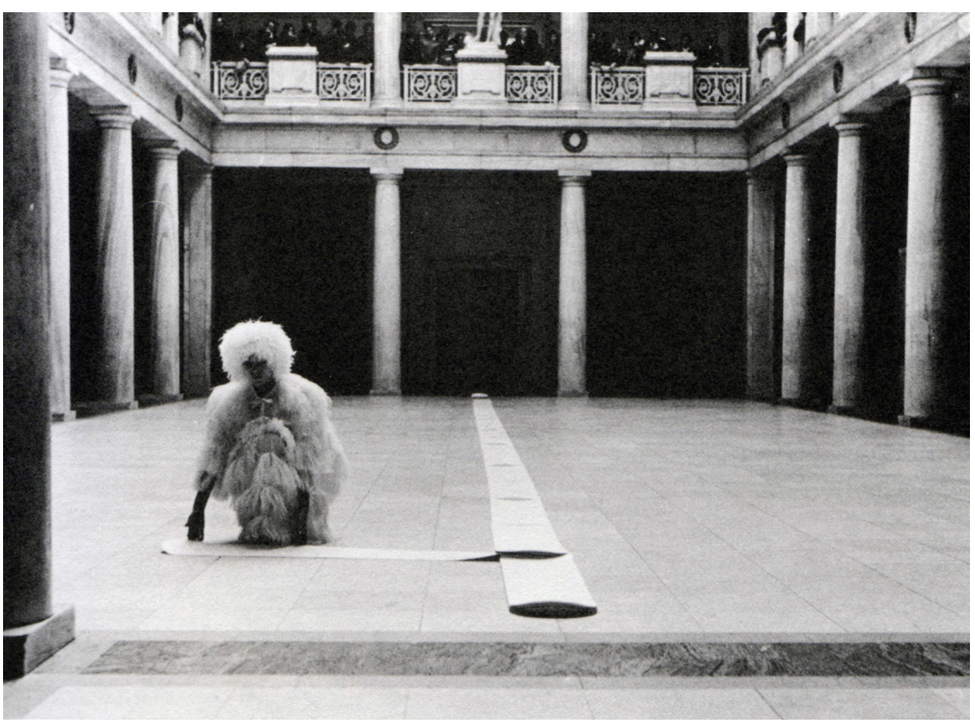
Although this work was conceived of as a performable work, in the manner of the works mentioned above, *The Performable Square* was not performed and displayed fully unfolded until 1978, when Byars presented it at the University Art Museum at Berkeley.

1964
In November Byars exhibits *1 x 50 Foot Drawing*, the first of three performances in the sculpture court of the Carnegie Museum of Art during the 1964 Pittsburgh International: In these actions, each of which lasts about one hour, the performer carries a folded paper work to the center court, delicately and deliberately unfolds the paper to full length, and finally refolds the paper to end the action.

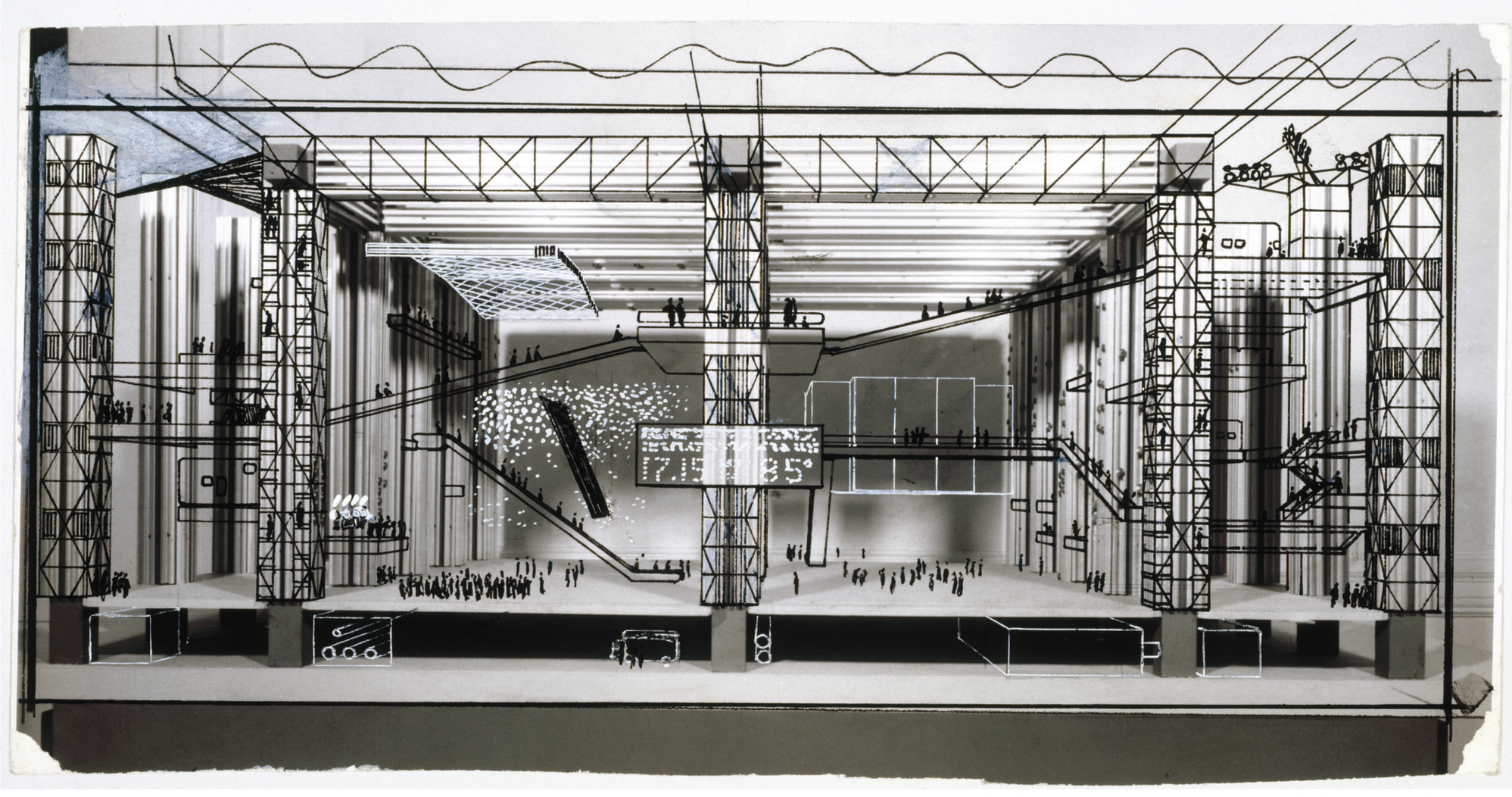
A Mile-Long Paper Walk, is performed by the dancer Lucinda Childs, who is dressed in a full-length ostrich feather costume .

Images and Text: James Elliot (1990) *The Perfect Thought, Works by James Lee Byars*, University Art Museum, Berkeley.





Top: Jamie Lee Byars (1962) *The Performable Square* (permissions received)
Bottom: Jamie Lee Byars (1962) *A Mile-Long Paper Walk* (permissions received)

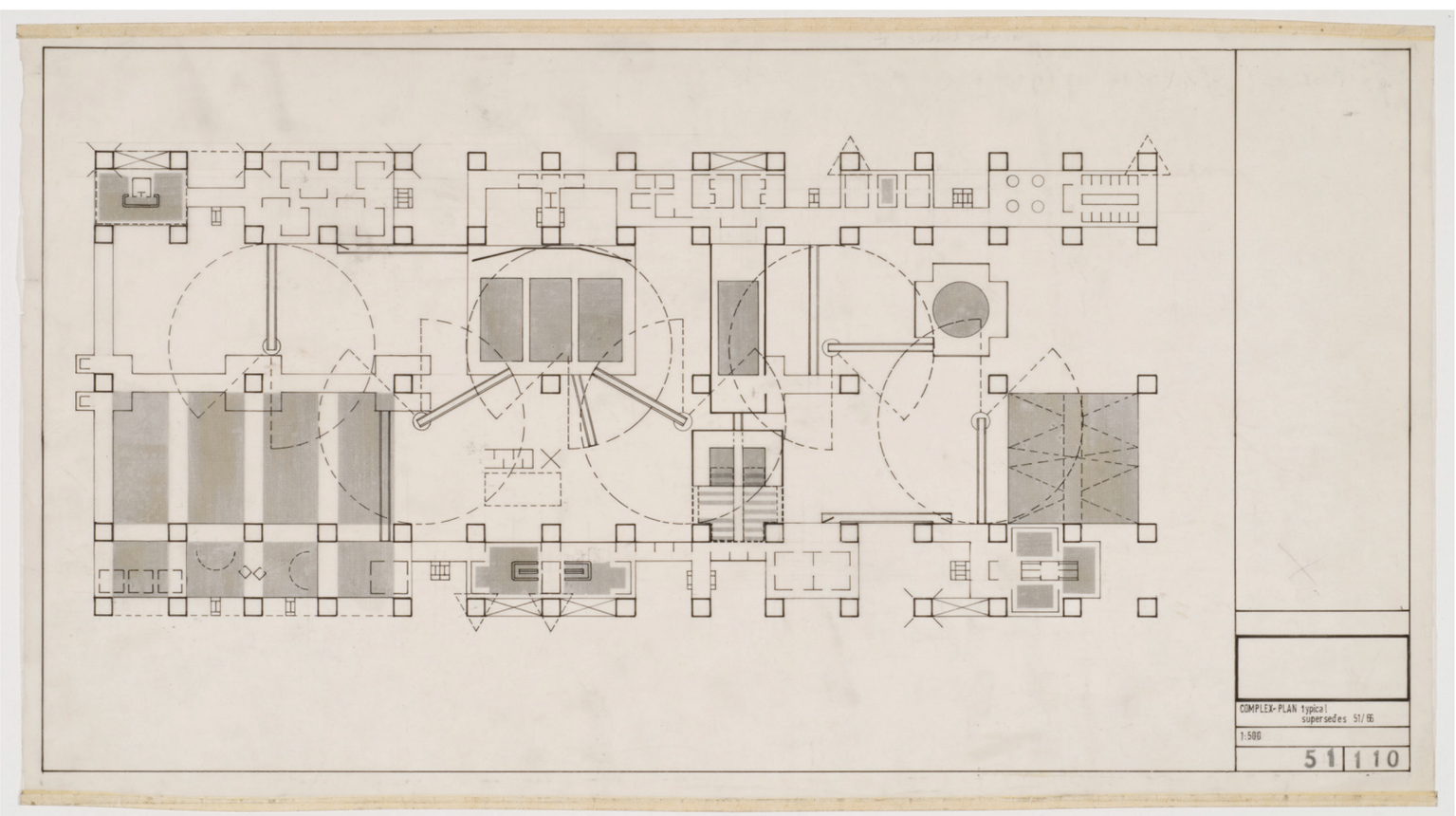


Cedric Price, *The Fun Palace* (1963) Fonds Cedric Price, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian, Centre for Architecture, Montreal

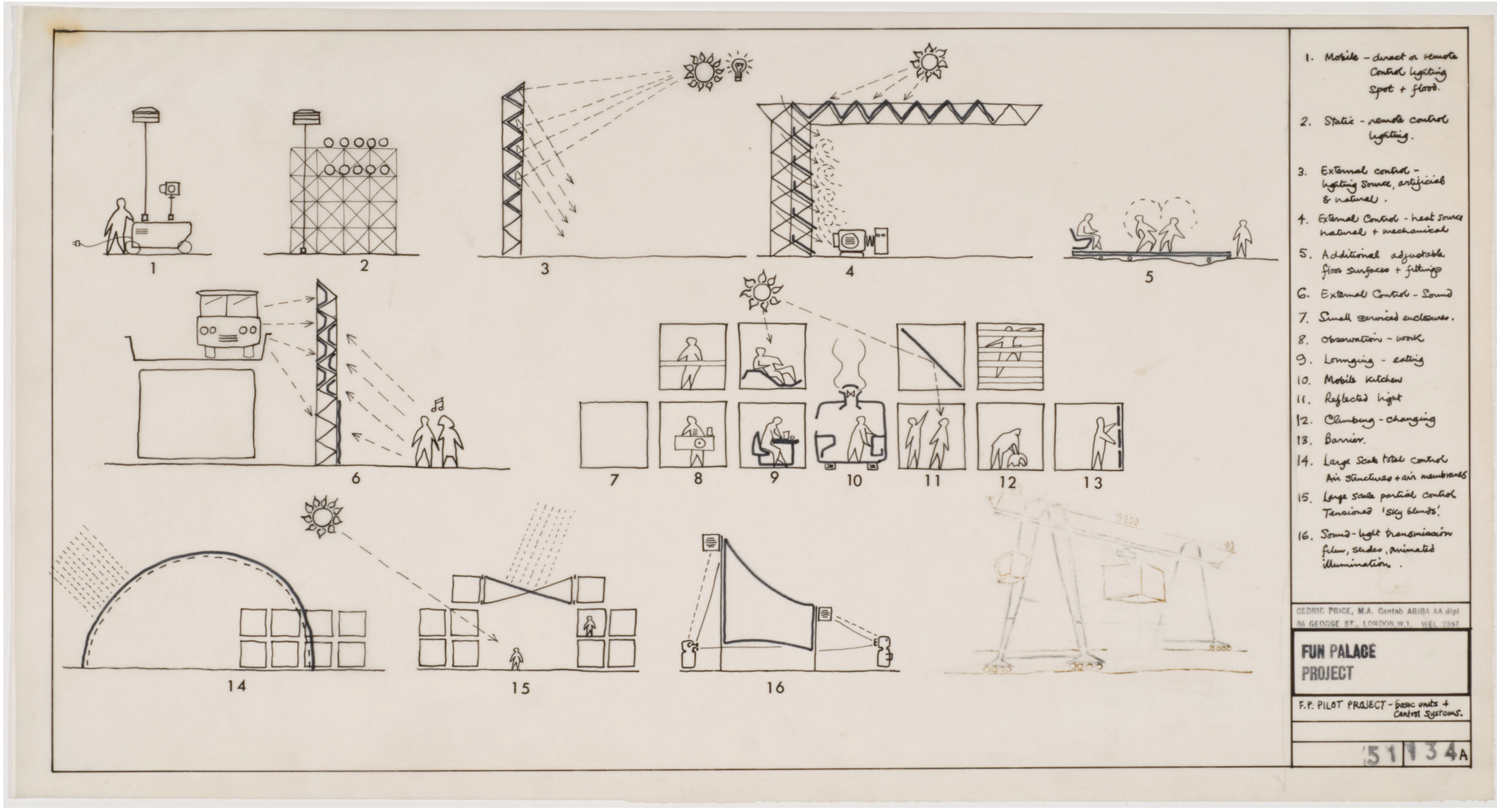
The Performable Objects translate three-dimensional geometric form into space that is at once experiential, pictorial, and linear. They are rich in ideas about shape, material and performance, but also about beauty, humor and the artistic context in which they were made. There isn't the time here to look at all of these aspects, so I will choose only one to discuss further: the role of the performer in relation to the structured object. For example, *The Performable Square*, a cube one and a half feet in each dimension in its unopened, dormant state - when opened, is a strip of paper sliced from a virtual grid. The grid is etched into the paper by the folds and translated into the rhythmic movements of the performer as she unfolds the cube. With each repetition, the movement appears more codified, more pose-like, and more eligible for division into discreet units, analogous to the frames of a film, or separate photographic images. The performer becomes the engine that drives a low-tech instrument – the gridded strip of paper. Conversely, the paper object is a tool that animates the performer. Paper and performer have a symbiotic relationship, setting each other into motion within the same tableau.[3] This artwork, an object with agency, influenced *The Ontario Plan* to become a document that had to be enacted.

My next example is another delightful, highly structured interactive feedback system: in this case, a building, or rather, a non-building. Called *The Fun Palace*, it was designed by London-based architect Cedric Price over the course of several years beginning in 1960. The client was Joan Littlewood, a theatre producer who set out with Price to invent 'a laboratory of fun and a university of the streets'[4] that was to be operational only temporarily for a time frame of a decade. Client and architect worked closely with a long list of engineers, artists, scientists and politicians to work through the possibilities for the function, program and siting of a flexible public entertainment and education center. A partial list of program elements, which morphed over the years, came to include 'jam sessions, dancing, science playgrounds, drama therapy, film teaching, and music stations with instruments on loan'; the stated objective was to induce 'new activities presently without a name that result from concentrated fluidity'.[5] *The Fun Palace* operates most closely like a vertical park, freely accessible and comprised primarily of outdoor spaces - but it's also a customizable performance center that brings people together for celebrations and spectacle: a new kind of institution that combines entertainment with learning.

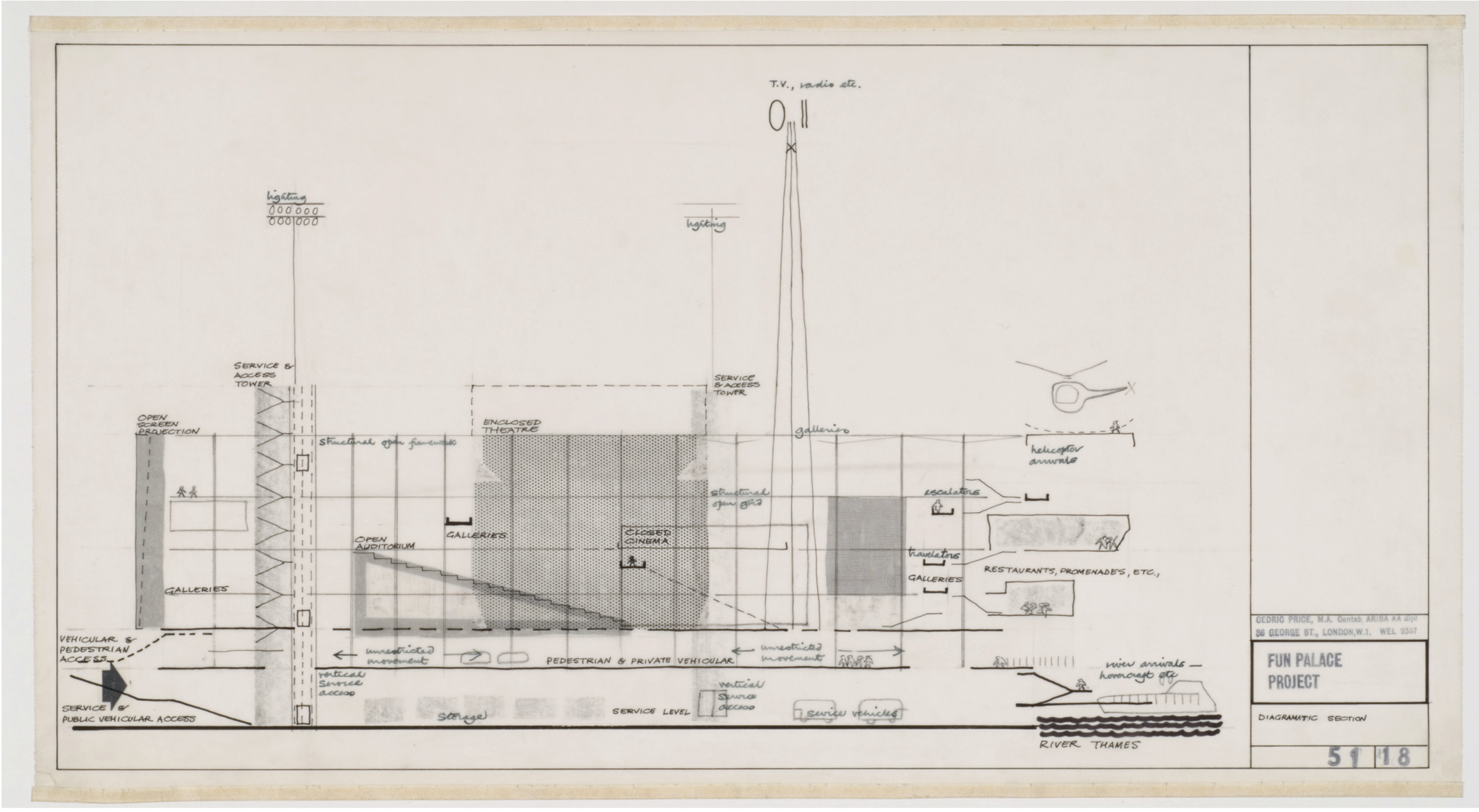
The project is indeterminate on a number of levels. It was to be built out of a three-dimensional modular grid structure made of off the shelf components, such as gantry cranes that could reconfigure the walls, floors and roofs according to the wishes of users. The size of the building could expand or contract in any dimension by attaching or removing modular components. Inserted into the structure is the occasional airborne roof, floor or temporary enclosure to create spaces responsive to preferred uses. To cope with inclement weather, suspended canopies supported by cranes hover over wall-less heated spaces, making light and air figure prominently in the pallet of construction materials. Instead of the conventional means of architectural representation such as plan, section and elevation, Price



Cedric Price, *Plan of Structural System* (1963) Fonds Cedric Price, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian, Centre for Architecture, Montreal.



Cedric Price, *Diagrammatic sketches of units and control systems* (1964) Fonds Cedric Price, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian, Centre for Architecture, Montreal.



Cedric Price, *Diagrammatic Section*, (1963) Fonds Cedric Price, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian, Centre for Architecture, Montreal

used game theory to anticipate the longer-term consequences of the building's indeterminacy.[6] Price wanted the *The Fun Palace* to 'learn' over time according to cybernetic principles. The administrative aspects of how changes are implemented are never discussed very specifically, but the implication is that the crane operators and administrators and other personnel become part of the building services.

After changing location a few times the project was eventually sited on the Isle of Dogs in East London where its scaffold structural system was to be in place five to ten years. Throughout the early 1960's various versions of the design were proposed, each consisting of a kit-of-parts including the following:

>> Mobile electronic projection units
>> Mobile electronic sound units
>> External lighting banks
>> Space-frame structures with thermal visual and acoustic baffles
>> Freestanding floating panels
>> Projection screens for external use
>> Standard demountable cubes with various infill panels: stairs, floors, doors
>> Inflatable structures, purpose made
>> Plasticised nylon tensioned canopies

Form, materials and the image of *The Fun Palace* never quite get pinned down. Textual descriptions and lists substitute plans, sections, and perspectives as Price invents a new vocabulary for incorporating the element of time and user-directed change into the project's presentation. In this project, as was the case in emerging trends in art at the time, *The Fun Palace* as conceptual model and process assumed greater importance than *The Fun Palace* as object. In the residue of its design process, in which lists and descriptions figure prominently, Price puts across an anti-aesthetic sensibility, making it known that *The Fun Palace* was serious business, along the lines of systems engineering, or urban planning.[7]

These works of architectural design and art, as far-flung as they are and so entirely outside the discipline of planning, contributed to The Ontario Plan, as model, object and image, and led it to assume a role far more active than typical policy documents. Not that it's possible to magically translate an artwork or building into anything other than what it is, but the way that art and architecture operate can undoubtedly contribute to strategic planning since they have so much to teach us about controlling the complex transaction between different modes, such as the metrical, formal, pictorial, and experiential. //

NOTES

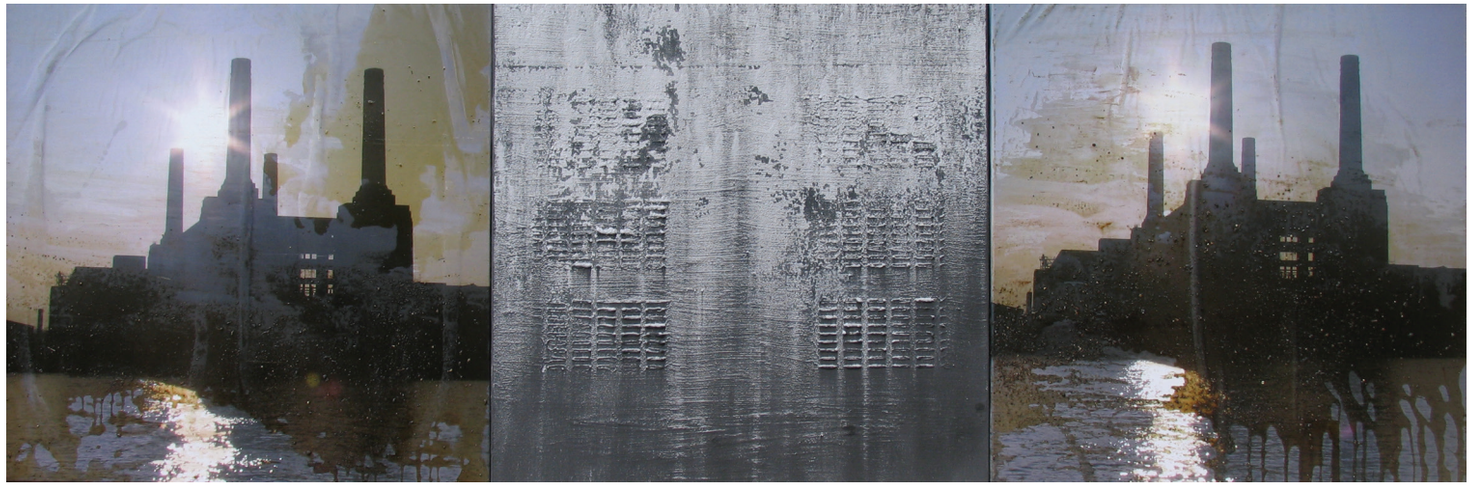
1: Marten, M. (2008) 'Gilty Pleasures', *Artforum*, Summer: 190.
2: Rubinyi, K. (2002) 'James Lee Byars' Performable Objects' in *X-Tra: Contemporary Art Quarterly* 5, No. 2.
3: Rubinyi, K. (2002) 'James Lee Byars' Performable Objects' in *X-Tra: Contemporary Art Quarterly* 5, No. 2.
4: Landau, R. (1984) 'A Philosophy of Enabling', Cedric Price, ed. (1984) *Cedric Price*, London: AA.
5: Landau, R. (1984) 'A Philosophy of Enabling', Cedric Price, ed. (1984) *Cedric Price*, London: AA.
6: Mathews, S. (2007) 'The Beginning of the Fun Palace' in *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, London: Black Dog Publishing: 74.
7: All images of *The Fun Palace* are courtesy Cedric Price Foundation, Canadian Center for Architecture and appear in Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*.

REFERENCES

Elliot, J. (1990) *The Perfect Thought: Works by James Lee Byars*, Exhibition Catalogue, University Art Museum, Berkeley.
Landau, R. (1984) 'A Philosophy of Enabling', in Price, C. ed. *Cedric Price*, London: AA.
Mathews, S. (2007) *From Agit Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, London: Black Dog Publishing.
Rubinyi, K. 'James Lee Byars' Performable Objects' in *X-Tra: Contemporary Art Quarterly*, 5 (2).

Kati Rubinyi
The Planning Center
1580 Metro Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
USA

krubinyi@planningcenter.com



www.colinhallidayart.co.uk