Platform – A Public Object

Book contribution describing a cross-disciplinary, collaborative project in Kosice, Slovakia, resulting in a multi-functional public ‘sculpture’ destined for the City street.

Submitted by Justin Carter
Output Type – Book contribution
Publisher - British Council and KOD Architects
(ed. Martin Uhrik)
Year Publication - 2008
Pages - pp. 10-25
Slovak with English translation
ISBN - 978-80-969966-4-3

Title
Platform – A Public Object

Submission No.
3

Authors/Creators
Justin Carter and Robert Mantho
The invitation to work on this project followed an International Art & Ecology workshop I led at Gallery KIT in Trondheim in 2005 (funded by the British Council). One of the workshop participants - Martin Uhrik (KOD Architecture) enjoyed the experience of intensive cross-disciplinary collaboration and thought that a similar approach would be useful in the Kosice Context. He invited me to design and lead a 5-day workshop considering the idea of ‘Speakers Corner’ in Kosice.

I decided to ask GSA MSA colleague Robert Mantho to contribute to this process and together we took on the challenge of generating ideas for a ‘Speakers Corner’ in Kosice. Concepts and models would be developed through cross-disciplinary workshops comprised of Slovakian students based in Kosice and beyond. Our role in the project was about designing, managing and facilitating an intensive process which could tolerate difference and uncertainty, and at the same time generate and harness a variety of possible outcomes.
Site:
“The proposed site is situated on Kosice’s Main Street, which is the historical center of the city. The exact location overlaps with an underground archeological complex that is viewed as one of the important attractions of the city, but this has little impact on its surroundings and offers little visual stimulus. This significant place on the Main Street is currently without an activating programme. However, the space is used by skateboarders and during the summer the entrance to the underground archaeological site is used as a stage for small events. One of the aims of the workshop is to better understand the significance of this site and to speculate on its potential use”.

(Extract from project brief)

A key contemporary reference was Mark Wallinger’s installation at Tate Britain ‘State Britain’ in which he replicated the anti-war protest site of Brian Haw opposite the Houses of Parliament. Another important reference was the invisible monuments of Jochen and Esther Shavez-Gerz.
What role and form could ‘Speakers Corner’ take in a post-communist, East European city? A nontraditional architectonic solution aimed to encourage communication between city inhabitants and institutions, and to create an unconventional space for presenting art in the heart of the city. This book documents the process of the design, including our design for the workshop - which was a catalyst for the architectural/sculptural output.

"It was important to find partners with experience in this sphere. Collaboration with British instructors, who have ample experience in similar projects, proved most beneficial. They played a substantial role in forming the central theme of the project in the subject area of architecture and socially committed art. They also assured top-class tutoring for the workshops,“

(Martin Uhrik, Partner from KOD architects)
The design process for Platform came out of an intensive 5-day workshop involving students of Architecture, Design and Fine Art, facilitated by Justin Carter and Robert Mantho (Glasgow School of Art). The results of this collaborative, cross-disciplinary workshop were incorporated into a physical design for ‘Platform’, by KOD architects. Two variable tapers and a movable stage became a part of Hlavná ulica in Košice”.

(Extract from book)

The physical object *Platform* has been used in a number of different ways since its completion, including a role as a stage for performances and for hosting temporary exhibitions in the run up to Kosice's successful bid for Capital of Culture status, 2013.

The book contains a partial programme of events (up until May 2008) developed by IC Culture Train, using the Platform structure in one way or other to engage the public. (pp.66-73) This programme of use is ongoing.
Thanks to the British Council for funding the project, IC Culture Train for hosting and supporting the project and to KOD Architects for inviting us to contribute to the process in such an important way. Thanks to Robert Mantho for sharing his architectural expertise with all of us and for co-authoring the workshop and book contribution.

Special thanks to workshop participants: Daniela Ambrozy, Kristina Balazova, Maros Batora, Lukas Cesnak, Brano Contos, Lucia Dudrova, Jana Fazekasova, Michal Hladky, Katarina Hladekova, Rasto Junas, Richard Kitta, Anna Kovacova, Ladislav Kubo, Katarina Martinkova, Stanislav Matusek, Juraj Novotny, Martina Paulinkova, Katka Panikova, Peter Radkoff, Jana Riecanska, Barbora Solarova, Jozef Spacil, Zsuzsana Szenczi Nemeth, Oliver Tomas, Alena Vachnova, Laura Vrskova, Peto Juricek and Brano Skopek.