

REPORT FROM HALFWAY THROUGH AN EXPERIMENT

Ole Bouman

Is it possible to gather people together on the basis of just one thing: the subject? Apparently so: since when has there not been a meeting on a certain theme, or because there was a special social occasion? Nothing appears to prevent a meaningful exchange.



But the truth is different. When you think about it, you will realise that people almost never meet up unless in one way or another the encounter is thoroughly encapsulated in a formal structure which determines the content of the meeting to a significant extent. Whether it is a birthday party, or a top conference about the future price of oil, the meeting is rigidly bound in codes and conventions, expectations and manipulations, ritual activities and predictable speeches. In fact, it takes an intensive search to find something solely concerned with the theme in such a gathering.

Everyone knows that moments of real intrinsic depth are usually experienced alone: while reading a book, visiting a building, listening to music. Even if a dialogue is explicitly involved, when exploring a subject with other people even at the highest level it is often occurring asynchronously: through a series of reactions each occurring in turn. The absolute reversal of this depth is the average conversation in a chatroom on the internet.

Pretty much the same applies to the subjects covered in *Archis*. Much of what people get out of them comes from reading the articles and looking at the photographs in private. Editorial skill can associate certain aspects and articles, but that association is then reordered and evaluated by the individual reader. If something is organised which brings people into direct contact with each other, then that invariably happens through the familiar dialogue formulas: seminar, conference, forum discussion, round table discussion, public interview, etc. Immediately social conditions of human behaviour arise that often steal the limelight from the subject. As editor of this periodical, I can tell you that there are an indecent number of such

meetings: every day we receive dozens of invitations for them. Imagine the global village as a cosmic field of rooms, headquarters, studios, auditoria, conference centres, arenas where a limited number of names give their performances in a speakers' carousel that becomes very recognisable over time. Performances much more than dialogues. Whoever goes to them will certainly not be alone in a dialogue. Even there, especially there, the network society is supremely active.

For many subjects in architecture and culture, this established fact is in general not a problem. Why shouldn't you conduct discussions about, say, building underground, multifunctional uses of space, the influence of Gilles Deleuze, or the effect of the computer on architectural design in ritualised meetings, with lists of speakers, CVs, a reader, route descriptions and a list of social activities? But there are also topics that are slowly dying out because they are being choked by social rituals which seriously undermine their substance. These are topics hidden in general cultural statements, which are too big for the levelling format of a conference. These subjects are better experienced than discussed, so if you intend to discuss them, it is better to do so at locations where they can also be experienced.

This fusion of discussion and experience is exactly what we have been attempting for the past half-year: RSVP-events at locations where the topics can not only be analysed, but also experienced. People who register for an event know only three things about it: the city, the date, and first and foremost the topic. It is not the fantastic list of speakers, not the list of those attending, not the prestige of



**ARCHIS RSVP EVENT 1
SINGLE ISSUE SPACE**
17 January, Berlin 15.50 – 19.30
hours
Location: Pergamon museum /
Kunstwerke Berlin



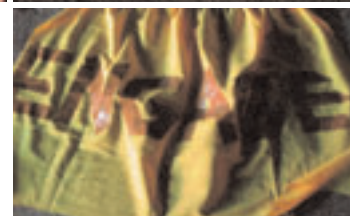
A whispering conference supported by headphones with infrared reception on the steps of the Pergamum Altar in Berlin about a world of mono-functional zones.

the organising institution, nor the number of places available, the admission price and the parking possibilities that are important when considering whether to attend. What counts is accumulating a group of people who are so passionate about this topic that they want to say or do something about it themselves, and they are prepared to travel to places which even the local inhabitants did not know existed or did not look at in that way. You make a reservation on www.archis.org, and from that moment on you form part of a growing community that ultimately determines what the dialogue will be. This is dialogue as it was originally intended. Not a superficial exchange of Powerpoint presentations and corridor lobbying, but a sharing of time in a slightly extreme situation, the generation of visions which can be immediately tested in reality, a reflection that is also a performance, an answer, we hope, to people's curiosities rather than their interests.

We have now held five of these events. Five subjects that were not suitable for a professional discussion by experts, but more suitable for practical experiments, emotions, fights, love affairs and inspired proclamations. Most of all, these events ultimately involved crossing borders. Not only as ideas of how to exceed the customary format, but as a way to tamper with the predictability of accepted behaviour on site at the event. The following are examples of what we mean.



Mattmo



Mattmo



ARCHIS RSVP EVENT 2
BANNING THE BANNERS
18 January, Berlin, 15.00 – 19.00
Location: Palast der Republik /
Bikinihaus (Urban Drift)

A funeral ritual for terms sentenced to death from the world of culture and design, conducted in the abandoned Palast der Republik in Berlin.

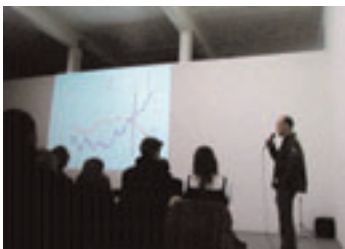
Mattmo



Archis 5
Layout Wallpaper*

Text Ole Bouman

Report from halfway through an
experiment



ARCHIS RSVP EVENT 3
EUROPEAN IDENTITY
20 March, Brussels 14.00 – 20.30
Location: Atomium, Koekelberg,
European quarter, demonstration
/ Roomade



Four groups roamed the streets
of Brussels looking for Europe:
as belief system, as stronghold,
as bureaucracy, as cliché.

Mattmo

Mattmo



**ARCHIS RSVP EVENT 4
SHRINK**

16 May, New York 14.00 - 20.00
Place: Time Warner Building,
Statue of Liberty / 16th Beaver
Street

Everyone prefers to always think in terms of growth. Certainly in the field of design. But what happens when shrink is confirmed: in an economy of recessions, in the science of nanotechnology, in the politics of increasing narrow-mindedness? A stroll through the Big Apple, symbol of unlimited progress.

Jeffrey Johnson



Jeffrey Johnson



Bert de Muijnck



Bert de Muynck



Bert de Muynck



Jannikos



**ARCHIS RSVP EVENT 5
PERVERSION**

15-18 July, Athens-Istanbul
Location : cities, ferries, bus /
Platform Garanti and 20ML
Istanbul

In the past few decades we have undergone an extensive dismantling of the classic world image. What started as a purposeful perversion of overly strict rules and canons ended in a new order. Concurrently, it is not difficult to discover the perversities all around us which have nothing to do with order. What is the relationship between the theoretical and practical perversions during a journey between two pillars of civilisation: Athens and Istanbul?



Thanasis Papageorgiou



Archis will continue to hold RSVP Events. Register for a dialogue about paranoia in Amman and Ramallah. Or come along on the border crossings between the new and the almost new Europe, to Moscow, Bratislava and Zagreb. Or keep your schedule free in January, when *Archis* welds a link between the past and the future in the cities of the absolute NOW: Beijing and Shanghai. How? We'll tell you after you register...

Register for Archis RSVP Events, in collaboration with AMO, Rotterdam at: www.archis.org.
RSVP Event production Lilet Breddels Elaine Ho