

### intimate immensity

*Grandeur is most active in the realm of intimate space...Baudelaire writes: " In certain almost supernatural inner states, the depth of life is entirely revealed in the spectacle, however ordinary, that we have before our eyes, and which becomes the symbol of it."*<sup>1</sup>

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

The condition of intimate immensity described in Gaston Bachelard's seminal work *The Poetics of Space* is an aspirational concept for architects and designers, connecting the most profound perception of space – physical and psychological – with an everyday experience of being. Bachelard argues that intimacy + immensity are not binary oppositions, but are symbiotically linked. In a similar way the various scales of operation in architecture can be seen to be intrinsically connected. The macro frame of architectural ideas and contexts – its history, its material associations, its mesh with location and cultural settings – coexists in real time + real space with the close detail and immediate workings of a specific space for a given individual. The overlap of these spheres is what potentially gives the humble act of dwelling its potency. And this potential applies at whatever scale architectural thinking/action is levelled – from the broad settings of urbanity to the close dialogues between exterior envelope and interior space. There is analogy between (the oxymorons) of intimate and immense and humble and exalted.

### everyday

In another influential text for architects + designers, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, author Michel de Certeau recognises this characteristic, and elaborates on the ways in which the ordinary and everyday can provide a means towards transcendence. He discusses activities such as walking and cooking as demonstrations of intense personal and cultural significance, social engagement, political resistance and spatial interrogation.

*Everyday life is what holds us intimately, from the inside.*<sup>2</sup>

From analysing modest daily processes of urban navigation, neighbourhood life and 'doing cooking' de Certeau establishes a theoretical position for the everyday as a profound and complex system – infinitely, intimately + immensely nuanced. The possibility is revealed for subversive and beautiful occupations of the built world, where the ordinary can be transformed into the extraordinary through the accumulation of myriad small acts of consequence.

The exhibition takes its rationale from the congruence of these (two) themes:

ONE: as an exploration/interrogation of simultaneous scales of perception, motivation and operation within architecture and interior architecture

TWO: as an exploration of the everyday as a source for spatial and aesthetic practices.

Concepts of spatial readings, whiteness and partnerships are emphases catalysts for these explorations.

### partnerships

The dialectic between inside + outside is a physical manifestation and conceptual division between the two disciplines of interior and architecture, which can also be extended to the idea of dialogue generally. Design processes depend on an exchange of ideas, traditionally between client and designer.

Beyond (and within), therefore, the obvious coupling of these disciplines exists a set of potentially synergistic pairings – between female + male, marital or familial, academic, professional, and collegial. This exhibition intends to use such partnered conversations of six of collaborators who have established personal or professional links as designers/artists. All the contributors are design educators associated with the AAD, UniSA either as full-time or sessional staff members of the LLS School of Architecture + Design, recent external moderators to LLS, or alumni. All are currently engaged in practice or practice based research. These include, Linda Marie Walker and Michael Geissler, Matt Davis and Sally Davis, Sacha Radjenovic and Sean Humphries, Damien Chwalisz and Katica Pedisic, Hannah White and Phil Walker and Rachel Hurst and Jane Lawrence. The partnerships have been invited to express the tangible dynamics between them and also to interpret Bachelard's chapter of intimate immensity as a prompt to create two or three dimensional composition/s or combinations thereof as their exhibition piece/s.

### overlapping spatial readings

The tactic of exploring pairings and binaries, which work in concert with each other (sometimes through opposition or complement, sometimes in tandem or parallel) has been extended to the spatial practices employed within the gallery setting. As Bachelard suggests:

*The two kinds of space, intimate space + exterior space, keep encouraging each other, as it were, in their growth.*<sup>3</sup>

The exhibition creates a particular reconfiguring of the space of the existing gallery – setting up a strong delineation between outer and inner. Each space establishes its own intimacies, albeit with tentative and ephemeral boundaries to evoke the tenuous and shifting patterns of occupation. Further, the relationship between the stable immovable shell of exterior and the fluid operational interior installation alludes to the temporal distinction within the professions which conventionally work within different timescales. Architecture assumes a certain built longevity while interior practice responds to fashion and temporality with greater agility.

### whiteness

Both the term intimate immensity and the spatial practices highlight issues of boundary and limit, concepts which can be extrapolated to how material is deployed in architectural practices and the prudence of everyday life. The orthodox attitude in design is generally to limit the materials of making, for reasons of economy, propriety and ingenuity. Further whiteness pervades the everyday: the comfort of white linen, the cleanliness of white tiles and the expectation of a blank white page. Accordingly the restrictive palette of predominantly white material has been stipulated for the exhibition. By using a

predominantly white backdrop – like the field of the white page, the big white plate, the blank canvas – everything against it – the viewer/participant/ object – is made more apparent. However the use of white in architecture has additional connotations, which have been rigorously examined by Mark Wigley et al, not only as a tenet of Modernism but as a limitless, luminous palette or surface which "*dematerialises building in order to make a space for...new spacings, new sensualities.*"<sup>4</sup>

A primary premise of the exhibition is dialogue between designers and disciplines. The writings of Bachelard and de Certeau are recognised as an influential and compelling source for theoretical discourse in the visual and applied arts. Furthermore the area of creative artefact and practice-based research is a significant one for contemporary design culture, as it seeks to challenge the hegemony of conventional written research as the major language for serious design research. The theme of the everyday extends critical debate within the architectural and design community, about the links between the professional and domestic realms.

The exhibition enacts the performative nature of architecture itself – that it is not mute object, but relies on inhabitation and movement to be activated. The materiality of the elements propose a range of transparencies, opacities, framed and glimpsed views to connect viewer, user and space as a potential animated microcosm of all spatial experiences.

Rachel Hurst & Jane Lawrence

1. Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, Jolas, Maria trans.(Beacon Press: Boston, Mass. 1994), 192
2. Certeau, Michel de, *The practice of everyday life: Volume 2*, Rendall, Steven trans., (University of California Press, London, 1988)
3. Bachelard, G. *The Poetics of Space*, 201
4. Wigley, Mark, *White Walls, Designer Dresses,: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 31