

## Heritage, Immigration and Temporary Fabrications: *Abandoned Facilities & Housing Immigration*



Image courtesy of Jaspar Joseph-Lester, from his *A Guide to Casino Architecture of Wedding in Collapse VIII*, Urbanomic



Image courtesy of Andrea Delaplace, as part of her research into the Paris Immigration Museum

## Background

Material Conjectures (UK project co-authored by Dr Kirsten Cooke and Dr Dale Holmes) and Andrea Delaplace (Paris based PhD candidate in museum studies) have produced a research group, *Heritage, Immigration and Temporary Fabrications* that presents two strands. Together the strands explore the highly contested and contemporary issues surrounding immigration within architectural and exhibition practice. Material Conjectures head the strand *Abandoned Facilities* and Andrea Delaplace organises the strand *Housing Immigration*.

*Abandoned Facilities & Housing Immigration* overlap, as each strand is interested in the ground-up and ad hoc construction of either crisis architectures, which house people, or museums of immigration that house artefacts of those whom have had to relocate. Both constructions have an uncertain status in terms of the nation state that houses them: museums of immigration aim to give other cultures a voice highlighting that they are part of the national culture and identity. Crisis architectures are temporary because the nation state does not necessarily see them as permanent structures, as it is often part of the governmental policy that the citizens or the intervention do not remain in the country. To summarise, the buildings and national agenda for museums of immigration may remain permanent but their approach to presenting immigration changes following new developments in immigration history. In contrast, the crisis centres are both necessarily built in an ad hoc fashion but are also pre-empted as temporary by the governments involved because the immanent issue that caused their construction is always intended to be resolved so the architectures can be dismantled.

## Strands

### Abandoned Facilities

Temporary clinical facilities permeate our cultural landscape: from military field hospitals and migrant holding centres through to epidemic treatment centres. These centres are both real and fictional. There are numerous instances of these real instantiations of crisis facilities: refugee camps across the developing world, between the borders of Calais, France, Italian coast and the Greek islands, as well as the British funded Ebola centres in Sierra Leone. In their fictional incarnation these arenas of crisis are manifested in TV series and films, such as, *The Walking Dead*, *Children of Men* and *Contagion* among many others.

In both fictional and real scenarios these are architectures that are constructed quickly to cater to a very particular immanent need and once the 'goal', of moving immigrants through the violent region or ridding an area of contagion, is achieved these spaces are abandoned or destroyed. *Abandoned Facilities* aims to engage with the vacuum that has been left between the rejection of modernist ideologies and critical postmodernism; exemplified by the 'postcritical' age. As Jose L. S. Gamez and Susan Rogers state, 'The post-political turn, which has been emerging for some time, has surveyed the current architectural and intellectual landscape and has pronounced that we have entered a *postcritical* age. The implication is that architecture's recent infatuation with critical theory has now run its course, leaving us with a pragmatist's agenda for the foreseeable future. This is a pragmatism of expedience, not the pragmatism of philosophers...'\* Questions that arise within this scenario are: what critical spaces can be produced within this vacuum? What is art's or an exhibition's role within this political landscape?

\* Jose L. S. Gamez and Susan Rogers, 'An Architecture of Change' in *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism*, ed. by Brian Bell and Katie Wakeford, New York: Metropolis Books, 2008, pp. 18 – 25.

## **Housing Immigration**

Migration is no longer, in the phrase coined by the French historian Gérard Noiriel a 'non lieu de mémoire'. Public sites increasingly harbour the memories of migrants in their diversity and specificity, making audible and visible versions of the past that have been occluded or simply neglected. Nations increasingly believe that you empower immigrants by remembering and redeeming their memories, which have often been absent from main stream histories and cultures or actively suppressed.

Henceforth, the transformation of old facilities that used to hold immigrants, such as *Ellis Island or Pier 21* in Canada, into sites that stage their histories. This shows a transformation in attitudes towards immigration, which has changed the status of diaspora and given visibility to a range of cultural identities. Changing migrants' relationship with their identity: from overseen and transitory memories to recognition and empowerment.

The integration of migration history continues to be facilitated within museum spaces and narratives, so it is an increasingly notable feature of the international museum landscape. This also raises a lot of questions such as: What is immigration heritage and of what is it composed? How to exhibit immigration? Do attempts at representing migrants mirror a national paradigm? Paradoxically, does giving migrants a voice actually marginalise their cultural diversity from the mainstream national citizens?

## **Speakers**

Morning Session: Abandoned Facilities

### **Jonathan Darling**

*Precarious mobilities: refugees, urban life and informality*

Refugees interact with the urban environment in a wide variety of ways. Most often, urban refugees have been studied as escaping urban conflicts and the mass destruction of urban infrastructure, or as being governed through the city as a place of control, discipline, and marginality. In the UK context, for example, asylum seekers and refugees are dispersed throughout British cities on a 'no choice' basis, serving to manage and control refugee mobility. Yet, these outlooks downplay the political potential of urban life for refugees, and how cities may offer opportunities as well as challenges for the displaced. In this presentation, I draw on research with refugees from across the UK, together with studies of urban refugees across Europe, to explore how urban environments offer sites of informal politics and precarious modes of belonging for the displaced. In doing so, I argue that refugees expose the temporary, informal, and fragmented nature of contemporary urbanism.

Jonathan Darling is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Manchester. He holds a BA, MA and PhD in Geography from Durham University and has worked extensively on the

experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in British cities. His research focuses on the spatial politics of migration, asylum and sanctuary, the role of ethics within geography and the changing nature of cities. He is currently working on a three year ESRC funded project exploring the impact of the UK's refugee dispersal policy on four cities. Jonathan teaches courses on urban politics, borders and migration and geographies of mobility.

## **Jaspar Joseph-Lester**

### *The Rise of the Infinity Pool: A Tour*

Our tour of Embassy Gardens will explore the recent influx of rooftop infinity pools. Starting with Embassy Gardens, which boasts a new 82 feet long glass bottom pool that stretches between the complex's two towers, we will look over to Battersea Power station to consider the plans for a new rooftop pool overlooking the Thames. The tour will end in the Embassy Gardens marketing pavilion, itself a temporary fabrication and home to a number of state of the art architectural models.

Jaspar Joseph-Lester is an artist based in London and Reader in Art, Urbanism and the Moving Image at the Royal College of Art. His research interests are situated between art making, curating and writing and draw from the fields of architecture, design, urban studies, human geography, philosophy, cinema and media studies, spatial theory and economics. Here he has focused on the conflicting ideological frameworks embodied in representations of modernity, urban renewal, regeneration and social organisation as a means to better understand how art practice can redefine the successive cycle of masterplans and regeneration schemes that determine the cultural life of our cities. Since 2014 he has been involved in a series of international curated exhibitions; authored, co-authored and edited books and articles for journals. Recently published work includes: 'The Mimetic Drive of Capital', *Adjacent Realities*, Austrian Cultural Forum; 'A Guide to the Casino Architecture of Wedding', *Casino Real*, *Collapse: Philosophical and Research Development*, Urbanomic, 2015; 'From Commodity form to Experience Economy, the rise of the Infinity Pool', *Café Gallery Projects (LGP)*, 2014; commissioned artwork for *EROS: INTERIORS*, 2015 and *Coventry: A Guide*, Lanchester Gallery Projects (LPG), ACE commission, 2013.

### Afternoon Session: Housing Immigration

## **Andrea Delaplace**

### *Memorial Institutions*

As memorial institutions, museums play an important role in the construction of identity. The representations of the past and of local cultural heritage are essential for the development of national or regional identity. Today, under the impact of globalization and due to a growing awareness of the positive role played by cultural diversity, museums can no longer claim to represent societies and cultures considered exclusively in national or local terms. The contributions

of other cultures are essential to understand the construction of identity - national or regional. Museums highlight other narratives, largely ignored in the past, which also are part of a larger narrative, national or regional, complex and differentiated. Consequently, an increased awareness of the importance of an inclusive identity is essential for strengthening social cohesion and mutual understanding in contemporary multicultural societies.

Thus, the challenge of representing societies increasingly diverse, multilingual and multicultural, museums are faced with a series of questions:

- How can museums represent memory and identity in a multicultural perspective?
- What are the challenges and opportunities faced by museums in their role as cultural mediators?

Andrea Delaplace is a PhD candidate in Museum studies and heritage, ED 441 History of Art, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, under the direction of Professor Dominique Poulot. She presented her Master's dissertation on the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration at EHESS – École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales - (Mention Ethnology and Social Anthropology). In 2015, she published an article - Un palais pour les immigrés? Le Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration à Paris : une collection et un musée en devenir - at the Cahiers de l'École du Louvre on the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration (<http://www.ecoledulouvre.fr/cahiers-de-l-ecole-du-louvre/numero7octobre-2015/Edito.pdf>). She is also a member of the Groupe de Recherche en Histoire du Patrimoine et des Musées - HiPaM: <http://projet-hipam.blogspot.fr/> and of the association de recherche sur l'image photographique - Arip: <http://arip.hypotheses.org/>

## Donald Smith

*A Talk in Four Movements*

CHELSEA space is a non-commercial public exhibiting space on the campus of Chelsea College of Arts next to Tate Britain with an experimental exhibiting programme across art, design, and popular culture. This paper examines the curatorial potential and ethos of a not-for-profit public gallery sited on an art school next to a major national museum and describes four exhibitions which, from different perspectives, examine some creative outcomes of immigration.

Donald Smith is an artist and Director of Exhibitions at CHELSEA space, which he established in 2005. He is also Practitioner in Residence on MA Curating and Collections at Chelsea College of Arts. From 1993-2002 he was Editor and Photographer for the Contemporary Art Slide Scheme (CASS), a visual archive of exhibiting activity in London. His CHELSEA space curatorial projects include *Vertigo: Marcel Duchamp and Mark Titchner* (2007); *Mick Jones Rock and Roll Public Library* (2009); *Stephen Willats: The West London Social Resource Project* (2011); *Red White and Blue: Pop|Punk|Politics|Place* (2012); *Almost Bliss: Notes on Derek Jarman's Blue* (2014).