BAETSCH IN THE CITY
INTRO

Competition: culburb (EU) and SOHO in Ottakring.
This project was the result of Paul Woodruffe and Walter Klasz winning the design competition for an architectural acupuncture for Nietzchplatz as part of the Culburb Project funded by the E.U. Culture Fund. In Austria the cultural partner organization was SOHO in Ottakring.

Place: Nietzchplatz, Sandleiten, Ottakring, Vienna, Austria.
Time: September 23rd to 30th 2012.

CONSTRUCTION
A young boy from Ottakring helping in the construction of the Baetch, he was one of a group learning how use construction tools with assistance from the team.
INITIAL PROJET OBJECTIVES

The objectives were to create a building that at once is both familiar and strange, and to use materials gathered by the local people from the surrounding environment and to use this process to facilitate storytelling and dialog through the discovery of common ground. The first objective was achieved by the initial construction of a symmetrical framework that outlined the shape and provided a solid structure that would accommodate spontaneous design, this framework provided the familiar as a starting point. The subsequent building design process and the materials used provided an ongoing experience of the strange and surprising that lasted throughout the entire construction time. The local people were very interested and surprised by how and where the objects they delivered to site were used in the Baetsch, this acted at first as a catalyst for dialog between them and the artists, creating a sense of joint ownership of the structure, and later as a common ground between the different groups of people who brought materials.

CONSTRUCTION

The frame is constructed, and the floor is laid using pallets donated by the supermarket across the road, the unwanted household materials are delivered to the site by local residents.
PROJECT RESULTS

The project resulted in creating a space that was both an inside that people used to gather, talk and play music as well as an outside space that people especially children, constantly moved through creating play based on the design features. The building of the Baetsch within the park seemed to reactivate its use by families (parents watching their children play), as when we first visited the site there seemed to be little activity other than a group of men drinking alcohol. The placement of the structure created two spaces within the park; retaining the seats with the drinkers but now allowing others who disliked this activity to sit and enjoy the structure and it’s associated activities in peace. The project inspired children to make drawings and to write messages that were placed into the structure, with one local resident performing an impromptu guitar concert, young teenagers brought CDs of their favourite music and danced to this in a self-run competition. The Baetsch was received entirely positively by the local residents and visitors, the result of its creation was to introduce a positive experience for both casual users of the park and the local residents, both as a passive object of art and an interactive one of design.

CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

New fastening systems were used to secure the frame, but donated objects such as these skis were used to provide structural rigidity. The slats on the left are from an old bed end, and the old ironwork on the right was hinged to make a small door for children.
WHO DID THE PROJECT BENEFIT?

The beneficiaries of the project were in the large part young teenagers and children of mixed ethnicity, next in numbers would be the parents of the children, then the men who gathered daily in the park, and lastly the many adults who passed through the site on their way to somewhere else. It is very difficult to assess the number of people who benefited from the project as it was located within a public park and was not always attended at all hours by the artists, but what we do know is that there was a central group of about 20 young teenagers and children who often brought their parents and relatives and were at the Baetsch every time we were there. The dozen or so men who congregated at one end of the park every day and drank took an active interest in the project, and one performed a guitar recital and sang. The concerts of film, DJ performance and music involved and benefited mainly the youth, although we had a wider audience with the Ukulele concert put on by New Zealand artist Fats White, this attracted adults including some ex-pats from NZ now living in Vienna. The target audience of local residents were the ones who benefitted from the project the most, the number of indirect beneficiaries is almost impossible to assess as the number of children and teenagers at the site increased with each day with some arriving on bicycles, and it was clear they talked about it constantly, and visited site even when it was closed to look through the wrapping on the last day.

Baetsch interior

The interior was centered around a small cooker on which Goulash and Gluwein was served, the walls all had different relationships with the outside; one was a wall of doors, one a window wall, one utilizing a snowboard as a serving bar and finally a wall of seating seen here at the end of the interior space. The interior furnishings were all donated by local people and decorated by the local children.
IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON A LONG TERM BASIS.

It was clear that the children and young teenagers were very upset that the Baetsch was closed at the end of the project, they staged a protest sit-in and made posters demanding the Baetsch continued to remain open. This closure was done using clear film (Frischhaltefolie) to wrap the entire sides of the structure so that the interior with all it’s furniture and fittings was made just visible on a close inspection. The power supply cable was left still intact allowing the interior lights to be activated illuminating a frozen moment in time, thus extending the memory of the events that had taken place at the site during the project for the local people. We would say that there would be a strong desire to repeat or extend the life of the Baetsch on the part of this group of children and young teenagers, and we would guess also from their parents as they would often come to watch them play in the evenings. The project also identified the park as a place for activities that have not been appreciated by some of the older residents within the adjacent social housing complex due to the noise factor, so we have identified Nietzcheplatz as an important venue for public artwork, play and performance for young people in this area. This project is one that could be repeated in other areas where there is an uneasy mix of age groups and/or ethnicities, or where there is a difficulty in establishing cultural activities as a counter to social malaise, as it clearly fostered a sense of community across many types of people and encouraged creative activity of more than one variety and on more than one level.

Baetsch outdoor life.

A dance competition was held at the Baetsch, as were screenings of images made during the construction and films, young teenagers brought music to play on our laptops situated at the window wall. These events were gazetted on the posters at the entrances to the park.
SUMMARY.

The project exceeded our expectations in all areas, with the notable case of the almost complete absence of ego in the decision making during the construction, it was successful without any form of hierarchy being employed in the creative process. The students and young lecturers accompanied by Veronika Kotradyova from the University of Bratislava proved a very valuable team for both the design and the construction, their contribution provided us with the collaborative multi-disciplinary profile that was required for success, and has much potential as a multi-disciplinary teaching tool. It seems that this kind of suburban Process Art needs a certain time or discussion to be understood by the public press. The interesting discussion in the DEPOT (Kunst und Diskussion, Vienna 2nd of October) was the first successful step in this direction.

Baetsch indoor life.

Food and drink was always being brought to the Baetsch to be shared, the children and young teenagers quickly adapted the space to interact and create play, music was always present as in the form of „Fats White“, the Ukulele player from New Zealand.
WHAT IS THE BAETSCH IN THE CITY?

It’s the urban brother of the New Zealand „Bach”.
It’s a big needle in a suburban acupuncture.
It’s a three dimensional sketch of a dream.
It’s undisciplined, spontaneously designed space.
It’s done by the inbetween and used by the everyone.
It’s a comment on our well organized throw-away society.
It’s a reflection about the materiality of our lives.
It’s a hybrid between the natural environment and the built environment.
It’s the indian hut of urban troubadours.
It’s a counter-memorial.
It’s built not to last forever.
It’s a shelter for timelessness.
It would ask many questions in a gallery like Guggenheim or MOMA.
It’s up to you say what it is.
It’s for celebrating the everyday live.
It would be different in Paris than in Rome or Madrid.
It will never be the same wherever you want to do it again.

Baetsch life.

Children protesting at the closure of the Baetsch and its wrapping in clear film (Frischhaltefolie), and Fabian, a local boy reflects on his drawing of the Baetsch on the last day we were allowed to keep the building open unattended by adults.
COMMENTS.

„Considering a very sensitive and complex community, it was awesome to observe how you were able to set up the .Bach’ in such a professional and profound way.”
Andreas Mrkvicka, district council, Ottakring.

„As the Viennese .Bach’ grew in the middle of a square which rarely gets much attention, people started coming, bringing things, observing, talking. Suddenly different concepts of life would evolve around the .Bach’ - a place to identify with. It should continue!”
Ula Schneider, Soho in Ottakring.

“The city becomes part of the dwelling through the ensemble of the pieces. The house reverberates with the ambience of the city and enhances it. Thus the Baetsch is both catalyst and mirror of the city and its residents.”
Dr. Thomas Michl, Assistant Professor for didaktik in art, University Burg Giebichenstein Halle/Saale, Germany.

„.Baetsch in the City’ is another successful project of Soho in Ottakring, that is integrated in the public sphere and every day life of the residents, who in turn are invited to be involved and to be made more aware of their surroundings. .Baetsch in the City’ has an exciting artistic approach, and Ottakring is the fitting place to put in practice."
Franz Prokop, district chairman of Ottakring.

„The Baetsch in the City is a well done three dimensional social sketch”

„They built a house - in the middle of Nietzsche-square, just around the corner from my house. Wonderful irritation in Sandleiten - would even be habitable...Please, more of this!!!”
Mag.a Sonja Kothe, member of the district council and Head of the Commission for Integration in Ottakring.
“The bach is the vestibule for all the things that make a NZ life and particularly a NZ childhood golden, like an endless summer. What seems remarkable to me is that Paul Woodruffe has not only taken a cultural icon from New Zealand and placed it in the old European city of Vienna, but he has brought a little of this childhood with it.”

Marcus Williams, Assoc. Prof. Design, Assoc. Dean Research, Faculty of Creative Industries and Business, Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand.

“It would be desirable to create more ‘Baches’ in Vienna similar to the one in Ottakring - let alone for the kids, so they can start to practice occupying and protesting. Permanent ‘Baches should be planned too. At least the one in Sandleiten should stay!”

Martina Reuter, artist and managing director of the debate platform ‘Depot’, Vienna.

Baetsch after-life.

At the moment Kilic Kenan is cutting the film material of the week. The team hopes to get a sponsor for an old TV, DVD player, battery and solar cell for the top of the Baetsch, this will allow the film to be shown nonstop inside the Baetsch and visitors will be able to watch it through a hole in the wrapping.
Austria, New Zealand, Slovakia, Czech Republic