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Re-solved. Iterating design solutions by understanding failure

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Abstract
Design is considered one of the most important parts of an architectural education. Much emphasis is placed upon the Design Studio within a School of Architecture, yet in the traditional tutor/student model how much opportunity is there for the student to understand the process of designing when emulation forms the heart of the learning? This paper reflects upon a series of large scale fabrication projects offered to students from 2012-2014 in Christchurch, New Zealand, under the umbrella of FESTA. These projects challenged the students to confront a series of ‘firsts’; to work collaboratively, to present themselves professionally, to navigate regulatory bodies, to engage with a client, and to realise a project at full, one to one, scale. These projects tend to exist without a specific precedent for students to draw upon, as would be usual when designing one of any number a normal building typology. This forces students into a space of discovery, one where a design can change for any multitude of reasons. Students are moved from the usual Design Studio experience of problem solving to one where the situation is uncertain and problematic, to a space of problem setting.

Keywords: design process, iterative, fabrication, prototype, technology.
The majority of a student’s time in a school of architecture will be spent toiling away in the design studio. Given the vast amounts of time spent on this part of an architectural education it would be easy to surmise that designing is the most important skill that a student can learn. The importance placed on design would suggest that we believe that the act of designing can be taught, that when a student leaves his or her education they will be a better designer than when they entered.

A key part of an architectural education in the usual design studio environment is one of emulation. Students are required to research precedents of a typology or topic and extrapolate a response to a specific design brief. The design studio is headed by a studio master to whom students will present a series of responses for individualised critique and subsequent advancement. This back and forth will occur until such time as a level of competency is determined as achieved by the student or until the project deadline arrives. Other than the reliance on the feedback of the studio master or learning from precedent studies there is little to guide the student in advancing their project. The learning could be considered passive with little active engagement from the student required in the process. Students are, as Donald Schön puts it, problem solving rather than problem setting and as such, have little opportunity to understand the process of designing.

“There’s the perspective of Technical Rationality, professional practice is a process of problem solving. Problems of choice or decision are solved through the selection, from available means, of the one best suited to established ends. But with this emphasis on problem solving, we ignore problem setting, the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the mains which may be chosen. In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling and uncertain.”


It is curious that architectural studio teaching in its usual form tends to limit students to seek and apply solutions to a known problem of an architectural typology. We know that students will tend to produce the obvious and this will reduce their capacity to understand at a meaningful level what is being asked from them. There is another approach to the design studio, one that places design-led research at the front of an architectural question to engage students in a way that empowers them in the process of not only solving problems but also in the setting of design problems. This can be facilitated by the ‘live project’.

Ruth Morrow discusses the relationship between Design Studio projects and Live Projects, in particular, that Live Projects may be set up to serve a different role from Design Studio

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We agree that Live Projects introduce students to a range of alternative skills, particularly around collaborative agency. And by situating the following case studies within a community situation, we see how the role of people in the design process, the client and end user, contribute to challenging any presumptions students might have about their projects. In these projects students are taken outside of the usual design studio environment in order to contribute to the reinstatement of an urban environment in the recently devastated Christchurch CBD. In creating objects and places for people to engage students encounter problems of real significance. They are put into the position of ‘problem setting’, into a process of iterating design solutions or, another way, of re-solving architectural problems.

**FESTA Large Scale Fabrication Studios**

The large scale fabrication studios undertaken as part of the Festival of Transitional Architecture (FESTA) presented an abstract problem to students to solve, namely to realise temporary architectural projects at a city scale for public consumption for a single night. The students were drawn from architecture and design departments at the University of Auckland (SoAP), Christchurch Polytechnic (CPIT), Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and Unitec.

In each of the programmes (2012, 2013 and 2014) the installations required interaction with the public as well as engagement with a local client. In every case projects started out with a zero-dollar budget. Many ‘firsts’ occur in this project; the first time students are required to work collaboratively, the first time students present or market themselves externally, the first time students negotiate council regulations, the first time students engage with a client, the first time students realise a project at full scale and, the first time end users will pass judgment on their work.

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These ‘firsts’ are of course generalisations but serve to contextualise where the project sits within a student’s education and the multitude of new challenges that are faced with such a task. They also highlight where the regular studio experience, which focusses on the individual, might exclude exposure to a number of necessary skills required by students for their professional careers. Additionally, in having very little precedent for the outcome there is an emphasis placed on discovery, on the iterative nature of the design process as new challenges are faced and solutions pursued.

The focus of this paper is on the programme offered in 2012, the first iteration of the projects with FESTA. As the FESTA event evolved over three years so too did the framework within which the projects sit, largely driven by stricter council controls. These first projects then offer greater diversity to choose from when analysing the student approach.

Small teams of students, 4-6 in number, initially presented preliminary research and exploration to a jury panel. Students were encouraged from the outset to make things and explore the physical properties of light and materials. This led to a number of highly inventive ideas at a conceptual level with a great capacity to be scaled up to a city sized realisable structure. Through working with a variety of media and scales students are able to better understand the full consequences of their design decisions. What begins as a small jelly cube with a light inside (and perhaps questionable architectural value) might come to be an entire interactive field of light for people to walk through.

![The Wobblers, Concept Design, LuxCity, 2012.](image)

The projects undertaken in Christchurch required economy of means. The projects had to be transported from Auckland to Christchurch (ideally within the standard airline luggage limits), be erected within a day for a single night event and then removed without trace of waste at the end of the night. This moved students into the direction to explore the qualities of light and lightness, both the medium of light and materials with physical lightweight characteristics.

The following case studies examine some of these issues.

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Silhouette Carnival

The initial concept for this project was established by a group of Chinese International students based on their understanding of traditional Chinese Shadow Theatre. The project used the notion of projection of a light source onto a body so that the silhouette could be viewed on a translucent surface. This meant that the origin of the light could be small but had the challenge to construct a suitable surface onto which the silhouette could be viewed.

The initial group were combined with a group of students whose original project sought to create free-standing objects from construction materials, drawn from the concept of the Terrain Vague. The two teams were merged due to complimentary skills and also as each project offered possibilities for exploration to the other.

With the lighting aspect of the project generally understood, the combined team set to explore methods for constructing free-standing projection screens. This necessitated engaging with issues of construction at an early stage to test how materials would react in an external environment. The initial layout for a concentric arrangement of planar elements began to give way to more three-dimensional shell type structures that an ‘actor’
could inhabit. This began to work with the associated client for the project, the Free Theatre Christchurch who began to programme activities that would engage with the built structure. New challenges were added by where structures could be picked up and moved yet still remain free-standing when not in use by the actors. Another layer of detailed design exploration was therefore required to examine how the structure would connect to the ground. The project site shifted from sealed to unsealed surfaces several times as negotiations regarding the overall project boundaries ensued. A solution that could meet either condition was required.

As the design developed the footing connection began to inform how the overall shell structure could be formed, with curved members springing from a single point. With a basic shape becoming finalised, further criteria for the material investigations for the shell covering were established. The group established the parameters by which the material needed to perform; the ability to receive and transmit a shadow, to warp and twist to a form, to absorb and allow wind to pass through and, to give some element of rain protection. Experiments again were undertaken initially at a scale model level and then at half and full scale realisations.

Figure 5. Silhouette Carnival, Concept Design and Development, LuxCity, 2012.
Throughout the process students realised the need to gain new skills for construction as well as learning how materials and means of fabrication will affect design decisions. Some learned to sew while others to weld and all of them to tie knots! The success of this project could be measured at many levels; the integration of two design concepts and cultural backgrounds provided a fertile environment for growth and learning from one-another; the ability for the design to respond to a variety of physical conditions including a last minute change of site; and the ability for the project to remain successful at a social level by enabling public engagement when in the final moments it became apparent that the client wouldn’t be able to partake in the event.

Reflecting on the work carried out by this group of students we clearly see them setting themselves problems to be re-solved, a critical aspect of learning to understand the design process. Alongside this the number and variety of solutions presented emphasise how iterating enabled the students to solve the problems they set themselves in their realisation of a large scale architectural installation.

Figure 6. Peter McPherson, *Silhouette Carnival*, LuxCity, 2012.
Archrobatics

The team Archrobatics started life as Spherical Sounds, a scheme utilising glowing spheres to illustrate the call of a Tui, a native New Zealand bird. The intent was to create a structure suspended overhead, establishing an environment below for the public to engage with. This project underwent the most radical of formal transformations of all the groups and finally resulted in a beautiful elegant structure.

In working through variations of their initial design proposal the idea that appeared achievable at a small scale was becoming unwieldy at full size. In setting about resolving the design challenges presented by the initial scheme students concluded that it was proving too expensive and unreliable to construct, not to mention posing physical danger, and the group came to the conclusion that a change in direction was necessary. With a focus on achievability and simplicity the group looked at a single point of vertical suspension from what would be a crane hook, 30 plus meters above the ground. The pyramid type structure that was emerging was used to suspend the spheres from the initial
concept within. At this time a rigid structure with steel cables was imagined with the spheres being the light emitting object. As continued exploration into materials, including the spheres and alternatives were undertaken, a decision to omit the spheres altogether and focus on the shapes that could be formed by the structure itself was made. As considerations regarding site and flexibility were also included greater levels of flexibility were considered and explored for the overall structure eventually resulting in rope forming the guiding members. In testing materials criteria were established by the group where wind loading would be the dominant factor given the height of the structure, along with lightness, the ability to accept light cast upon it from LED light sources and the ability to flex and hold a shape under tension. The group eventually settled upon agricultural bird netting.

Figure 9. Archrobatics, Developed Design Concepts, LuxCity, 2012.

Grounding the structure was another design challenge, met mostly through the use of deadman weights but also through the filling of empty sacks filled with rubble from the site itself. Through testing of the construction technique using rope, netting and lights and a variety of scales and settings the group were confident that they could quickly erect and adjust their full scale scheme onsite.

Figure 10. Peter McPherson, Archrobatics, LuxCity, 2012.
The particular success of this project lay in students’ ability to identify there being an issue with the initial design proposal. What might be considered a failure provided the basis for the group to better understand their constraints, establish priorities and reset their design problem, demonstrating their learning from earlier setbacks. Learning from failure is an important aspect of design and failure can be considered a success if students are able to demonstrate learning from it. Failure additionally highlights to students that design solutions can change for any number of reasons, again encouraging them to iterate in their design thinking. In being able to re-establish and re-solve the design problem, goals and objectives, the group was able to achieve one of the most successful outcomes of the evening. All material was transported on the aeroplane, the project was erected in a short period of time with site specific adjustments to the overall shape incorporated and de-installation of the project took moments with zero waste left behind, save for what was already found onsite initially. The project itself had an ephemeral quality to it during the daytime and as day turned to night the beauty of the three hyperbolic forms came to life on a city scale.

Conclusion
The two case studies presented here are examples of live, situated and community based projects that highlight to students two key components of the design process; iteration and failure. In exposing students to these types of projects, failure becomes a core part of the learning. Failure is critical in the resetting of the design problem and hence, in empowering students to engage with and develop their own design problems. In understanding failure in the context of their own parameters the reasons to alter a design, to iterate, become more tangible to students than in the usual design studio environment. In better understanding the reasons for altering a design alongside the setting of their own design problem, students become more engaged and aware of their thinking and process. This is in contrast to the traditional student and mentor design studio relationship where design is guided and the student can remain removed from the process of understanding the problem. Students are instead able to challenge what an architectural outcome might be for a given situation.

A key component to establish understanding of the architectural problem is the production of an architectural object, to be used by others. This moves students outside of the usual teacher-student learning relationship and the realisation of the architectural object becomes linked to the design process itself, the distinction between design and process blurs with the two becoming linked in the student’s mind.

Through an open brief that demands a real architectural outcome to be placed within a community we find a model of design studio that emphasises the adoption of critical skills required to be a successful designer. Specifically, the necessity to iterate a design problem, to fail and to understand those failures within set design problems of one’s own making. These projects equip students with an understanding how to set problems and, how to resolve them.

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VIEWPOINT

FESTA Festival of Transitional Architecture in Christchurch, New Zealand

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In 2012 FESTA emerged in Christchurch, New Zealand as a collective response to the extraordinary circumstances of a natural disaster. As a place-based (and now biennial) weekend-long festival of architecture and urbanism it continues to seek and find relevance to that place, its people, and to all involved in the event (participants, audience, funders and supporters) as the extraordinary fades into a more ordered and ordinary existence.

On 22 February 2011, a large earthquake hit the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. It was the second largest, and most destructive, of a series of over 11,000 earthquakes recorded in the region over a 2-year period from September 2010. 185 people died as a result of the February quake and over 75% of the built fabric of the central city was demolished. Christchurch’s central city was cordoned off from the public and put under army control, portions of it for over two years. A new government agency was established to direct the city’s recovery. It commissioned and backed a new spatial plan for the central city (‘The Blueprint’\(^2\)), designed to retain existing land values and incentivise new and current investment as well as renew public spaces and amenities. Land damage caused whole suburban areas to be deemed unreparable and these neighbourhoods were ‘red zoned’\(^3\) and purchased by the central government. Over 4 years, 8000 homes in the suburban red zones were demolished. Drastic change and uncertainty touched most aspects of Christchurch people’s lives in the years following the earthquake.

Amid the chaos and uncertainty of disaster, citizens\(^4\) swiftly recognised the effect of losing their public buildings and institutions and the civic and cultural life they supported. The creative communities of Christchurch responded to this loss with activity in the form of myriad creative urban projects and spontaneous public events. These returned some cultural and civic life and provided positive reasons to gather in the vacant and changing public spaces of the city. New organisations spearheaded this adaptive urbanism. Gap Filler\(^5\) drew on performance practice and theory as well as architecture, while Greening the Rubble\(^6\) drew on landscape architecture practice. These two new groups weren’t the only people active in this way as other artists, designers, community and arts organisations also ran independent temporary projects in unexpected places. The need for temporary urbanism and the desire for public participation led to the establishment of Life in Vacant Spaces\(^7\) in 2012 as a site-broker for creative, temporary urban projects in the city.

Two examples provide an idea of the diversity of these urban interventions. In a city suddenly bereft of performance venues, Gap Filler’s open-air, coin-operated Dance-o-mat\(^8\) provided a surprising and accessible space for anyone to dance to their own music. Greening the Rubble’s Nature Play Park\(^9\) not only gave children a safe and welcoming space to play in an otherwise inhospitable demolition zone, it exemplified the city as people wanted it to be: greener, more natural, human-scaled, child-oriented and accessible. Christchurch’s temporary urban and art projects weren’t confined to people employed by these organisations. The groups and individuals engaging in emergent urban and artistic practice welcomed public participation and actively sought collaboration and volunteer involvement.


There’s something galvanising and socially transformative about a natural disaster. Rebecca Solnit writes about this in her book *A Paradise Built in Hell*. “What is this feeling that crops up during so many disasters? …an emotion graver than happiness but deeply positive… [that provides us with] a glimpse of who else we ourselves may be and what else our society could become”.10 Solnit calls it a “reversion to improvised, collaborative, cooperative, and local society”.11 Christchurch people felt and experienced this. It is a desire, willingness and fresh capacity to create meaningful community, and with it, meaningful places.

The groundswell of social creativity and urban action knitted together new networks of people. In late 2011 and early 2012, two people on either side of the Tasman Sea independently suggested that Christchurch was a ripe place to establish a festival of temporary architecture: Christchurch experimental theatre producer and actor, George Parker (Free Theatre), and Melbourne-based futurist Stuart Candy (then at Arup). Uwe Rieger, Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Auckland, proposed a headline event for the nascent festival based on installations designed and fabricated by tertiary students in architecture and design. A steering group of artists, designers, lecturers and those active in the ‘transitional movement’ was swiftly assembled. We began to formalise a structure. As an under-employed architectural historian with a passion for public engagement in architecture and urbanism, I was elected to direct the festival. Uwe Rieger brought a wealth of experience conceiving, teaching and producing 1:1 fabrications as public events, and others had a background in theatre, festivals and dance parties. Our inexperience at producing complex events at an urban scale (in a disaster zone) was compensated for by an energy spurred by the physical, cultural and political context. We were spurred on by the encouragement we received from prospective collaborators. And so FESTA was born.

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10 Solnit, 2009, 5-6.
11 Solnit, 2009, 10.
The opening night for the inaugural Festival of Transitional Architecture (FESTA) in October 2012 was Studio Christchurch’s LUXCITY. Against the dark background of the red zone 16 architectural installations by 350 design and architecture students from across New Zealand created a fleeting and enchanting urban atmosphere. An estimated 30,000 people filled this city made from light for one night making it a moving and historic event.

Figure 3 (left). In Your Face, a collaboration between local fashion boutique Definite Indefinite and University of Auckland students from the School of Architecture & Planning for LUXCITY, FESTA 2012. Photo: Bridgit Anderson.

Figure 4 (right). Murmur was a thin, fragile canopy suspended from a crane so it shifted and swayed with the wind. Designed by students from the School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland for LUXCITY, FESTA 2012. Photo: Bridgit Anderson.

Figure 5 (left). CPIT installation ‘Illusion’ created a secluded atmosphere for live jazz at LUXCITY, FESTA 2012. Photo: Bridgit Anderson.

Figure 6 (right). AUT Spatial Design students created Halo, a human-scaled semi-circular arcade hung with glowing paper lanterns which were inflated by the breath of participants. Photo: Mark Gore.

LUXCITY, a city made from light for one night, was the headline event for the inaugural FESTA in October 2012. Set against the darkness of the evacuated central city, 350 design and architecture students from five New Zealand tertiary institutions designed and fabricated 16 architectural installations using light as their primary medium. The equipment that was demolishing the city by the day was used to provide structural support to LUXCITY’s installations. Achieving an urban scale relied on sponsors donating machinery and expertise to run hundreds of thousands of dollars of demolition equipment.
for free. With a backdrop of half demolished, damaged and inaccessible buildings, cranes, high-reach and telehandlers suspended an ephemeral and delicate architecture. The spectacle of student-created live projects was fundamental to the event. However, LUXCITY was more than an exhibition of student design bravura. The event also involved the ‘stuff of the urban scene’ that was then absent from Christchurch’s urban centre. We brought in collaborators for each studio project, who activated the installation sites with bars and cafes, performances, an all-ages dance venue, a live fashion show and a night market. The other key participants in LUXCITY were the public - an overwhelming number of people poured in to visit that night; crowd estimates ranged from 20,000-30,000.

![Image](image.png)

Fugre 7. LUXCITY’s principal medium was light and many of the projects used large-scale demolition machinery to support and suspend the installations. The machinery was generously donated by local companies Smith Crane & Construction, Leighs Construction, and Ceres Environmental. FESTA 2012. Photo: Mark Gore.

Having a participating audience made LUXCITY’s promise of instant urbanity real through the crowd’s interaction with the installations and activities, revelling in LUXCITY, making it dense and alive. For many people attending LUXCITY, it was the first invitation they had had to come into the city since the February 2012 earthquake 20 months earlier. It was an intensely emotional experience for many – as their attention wasn’t first granted to the installations but to the once-familiar sights and places of their central city under the process of demolition and removal. A sense of grief and loss soon gave way to delight and amazement, as people had chance encounters with each other on the street, and became absorbed by the surreal and joyful presence of the architectural installations and urban activities. In that one night, Christchurch transformed to become what all cities are: an intensification of life. It might be too much to say LUXCITY felt messianic – but it briefly
brought light to darkness; hope and joy to a period of uncertainty and grief; celebration and a certain defiance to a tense political and social environment. LUXCITY established the model and a ‘signature’ for FESTA’s future headline events – the bringing together of tertiary student live project installations with local businesses and arts and youth organisations. Over the festival weekend a wider programme brings together intimate and smaller events, drawing on Christchurch’s new culture of collaborative temporary urbanism. FESTA co-founder Barnaby Bennett (UTS, Sydney) describes this “second kind of activity at FESTA [as] a programme of smaller public events such as workshops, book launches, exhibitions, openings, art projects, talks, walking tours, and other activities that enable engaged experiences to the public. Through these other events FESTA has developed networks and relationships with many other organisations in the city. FESTA has acted as a catalyst for the transitional movement and many of the major transitional projects have been planned by, for, or launched at FESTA.”

From its conception, FESTA adapted to the circumstances of the city. Politics, place and theatre expanded the range and ambition of the headline event for FESTA 2013. Free Theatre’s Canterbury Tales used the activities and rituals that bring people together in an “active search for a sense of community”. This time six student installations, six performance collectives, and a procession of giant puppets transformed the night-time emptiness of the city’s most prominent public spaces. Production lead George Parker described it as “Taking Chaucer as a point of reference, in so far as it brings together the seemingly high and the low, the noble and ignoble, [to create] a carnivalesque mixing up of social roles and urban environments.” Canterbury Tales was a far more consciously and deliberate political statement against the command and control of central government than LUXCITY. It used artistic collaboration, performance and site-specific temporary architecture as ways to sustain the openness, spontaneity and community warmth of post-disaster settings that Solnit recognises as fleeting.

In 2013 Christchurch’s ‘transitional’ culture was flourishing, with participants from a range of creative disciplines. It was also drawing international attention with coverage from Lonely Planet and the New York Times. This culture provided a strong and distinctive associate programme of events and projects over FESTA weekend to accompany Canterbury Tales. The programme included a tiny mobile cinema made from an advertising trailer, Agropolis, a new transitional urban farm, and a mobile sauna in a tent. ‘The Future Will be Live’ was the theme for FESTA’s third outing in 2014: how small, experimental and temporary projects in the city could be used to imagine, speculate on and present live experiences of the future. For the major event CityUps, installations were both physical and digital, with digital speculations anchored in physical space via an augmented reality app. The future city was presented not just as a technological leap but also with structures and opportunities that allowed for new social relationships. As well as 13 architectural installations, CityUps included students working in visual arts practice that drew on relational aesthetics, and drew artist practitioners from Wellington who activated public spaces with street games that recreated those immediate post-earthquake conditions of strangers working co-operatively and having shared experiences.

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of joy and celebration. CityUps imagined future longed to learn from and carry forward possibilities from the recent past. Solnit’s thesis recounts the flourishing of alternative social behaviour and experiments in the absence of conventional structures and organisations in post-disaster situations. Gradually FESTA has become more conventionally structured in its organisation. The decision to become biennial in 2015 and present FESTA only in even years was borne of a desire to make the event more considered, less random and hurried in its production. In response to a broader call within the city for less ‘transitional’ activity and an increased focus on a ‘permanent’ recovery for the city, FESTA deliberately became more strategic. This was seen in the preparation of a strategic plan for the 2016 event, which considered the outcomes for the ‘four bottom lines’ (cultural, economic, environmental, social). This change is described by Solnit’s question – as “emergent groups turned established...[can they] function with the same level of improvisation/creativity that once characterised their actions?” At its core, FESTA is still conceived as an event that seeks new ways to create meaningful connections between and within communities and urban place in a co-operative and open way. We understand FESTA as providing a platform for city-makers and citizens to “imagine and experience Christchurch differently” and to create opportunities for the denizens of Christchurch to get directly involved in the remaking of their city.

Figure 8. University of Auckland School of Architecture and Planning, CHCH2061, CityUps, FESTA 2014. Photo: Erica Austin.

The city we wanted to imagine and experience with FESTA 2016 was one that was more sustainable and with greater social connection. ‘We Have the Means’ drew on the pioneering approach to sustainable design and city-making developed by Superuse.

14 Solnit, 2009, 302
Studios\textsuperscript{15} in Rotterdam. Adopting Superuse Studios’s systems-based approach to sustainable design challenged students and project creators to use waste streams as physical materials for the basis of their project designs. While Superuse Studios design permanent buildings from reused materials, for 2016’s major event Lean Means student studios needed to translate that resourceful design practice into temporary installations using lightweight and low-value reused materials. Plastic bottles and bags, expired lightbulbs and cardboard tubes were amongst the materials sourced and manipulated to create an experience of a resourceful city. Activation of these installations included the local social enterprise Rekindle\textsuperscript{16}, which staged public workshops and demonstrations of resourcefulness, taking underutilised and discarded natural waste materials and crafting useful everyday items from them.

In the years since 2011, Christchurch’s immediate disaster management phase gave way to recovery, and in 2017, it is now in a phase officially labelled ‘regeneration’. As the city rebuilds, is there a future for FESTA in a non-disaster urban context? Through FESTA we understand the city best as a public good. While there remains a demand and a desire to sustain FESTA’s practice of working with hundreds of architecture and design students to create a spectacle that attracts crowds in their thousands, we continually question what the Festival is and who it is for. The circumstances that birthed FESTA have changed. Disaster is no longer acute, the city is no longer on life support (or sliding to its grave), but our desire for creating meaningful community and meaningful places endures. How can a biennial festival continue to test and trial what that means and how it can happen? For our 2018 edition we’re teasing out ideas of inclusion and diversity in city-making, questions about who a city is made for and who is involved in its making. FESTA remains sustained by a desire for “purposefulness, meaning, involvement and community” and for “an affection that is not private and personal but civic: the love of strangers for each other”.

other, of a citizen for his or her city, of belonging to a greater whole, of doing the work that matters.”¹⁷

Figure 11. Gap Filler’s Cycle Powered Cinema and Grandstandium at FESTA 2014. Photo: Erica Austin.

Figure 12. DJs Cease + Desist with Gap Filler, SuperWow Disco at the Dance-o-mat, FESTA 2014. Photo: Chloe Waretini.

FESTA Festival of Transitional Architecture

FESTA is an annual transitional urbanism festival with a programme of multi-disciplinary innovative, creative projects, events and community-based activities that build and strengthen the passion and involvement of local communities in the regeneration of the central city.

Figure 13 (left). Agropolis urban farm was launched during FESTA 2013 and hands-on learning opportunities were held there every day of the Festival. Photo: Jessica Halliday.

Figure 14 (right). Makeshift’s Picture House, a cinema for two on wheels, made its debut at FESTA 2013 where it screened a short film every day of the Festival on the sites of former cinemas around Cathedral Square. Photo: Ed Lust.

Figure 15 (left). 100 people join Gap Filler to celebrate the activation of their Sound Garden project during FESTA 2013. Photo: Erica Austin.

Figure 16 (right). Fabricio Fernandes’ Nomadic Sauna with its pine wood-structured, canvas-covered dome and pot-belly stove popped up on Manchester St for FESTA 2013. Photo: Ed Lust.

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