

DISCOURSE

02 THE AGENCY OF SITE

Friday 14 August 6:15pm

Swanston Academic Building (SAB)

Building 80, Level 4, Room 11

Convenors
Graham Crist & Richard Black

Moderator
Graham Crist

Panel
Amy Muir
Helen Duong
Dean Boothroyd
Richard Black

Our studios look to the formulation of new tactics where the well worn crutches of artificial programmatic intensity, sectional complexity and intricate formal syntaxes have limited purchase. Instead, the void of the figure ground and the speculation of what resonances can be produced through its warping are valued.
Dean Boothroyd (2015)

Every move and decision I make is about the site: I design the site. Built interventions are often secondary, and support the way in which the site has been imagined and invented. Designing the site commences with on-site and off-site operations. This marks the beginning of the design process. Sites are not given; they need to be designed.
Richard Black (2015)

We have been interested in investigating incremental urbanism, entrepreneurial and accretive appropriation of site to lead to new programmatic and spatial arrangements. We ask- can these evolving site phenomena and systems have material and physical outcomes? Can we supersize, exaggerate, heighten and translate these qualities into speculative architecture?
Helen Duong (2015)

Site may first appear quiet and subservient prior to the 'new' being realised. However place will rile against ill-conceived architecture that denies the importance of site, adopting a state of numbness, confusion and disillusionment.
Amy Muir (2015)

One of the first defining characteristics of an architectural work is its location; its relation to a site. Yet the term site remains highly contested, and our relation to it far from natural. The Agency of SITE will debate the positioning of that relationship, and consider site as a much wider discourse than a prosaic boundary.

Site is an idea that is invented in the design process, whether this might be a landscape generating architectural form; or a constructed city forming that position. At RMIT there has been a sustained investigation into the particular location we find ourselves in; a trajectory running through Edmond and Corrigan's suburban sites, and which offers a counter-position to the landscape defined culture sold as Australian.

The recent debate of the Mongrel Rapture publication turned its attention to our location versus anywhere else, as speakers asked: 'What is it like to not be the global city?' Acute observation of an environment might be a way into that question. The design studies of the metropolitan periphery in Jacques and Boothroyd's studios for example, take a counter-position to the clichés of planning policy or of consolidated urbanism; just as Black or Muir's attention to the ground under us, resists the indifference to where we are located. These discourses in the Agency of Site need to be tested also, against the proposition that site is of little relevance to contemporary design.

RMIT Architecture & Urban Design values ideas-led venturesome design experimentation and exploration. To be venturesome is to be brave and take risks. At RMIT students are asked to articulate the positions contained in their projects, to be critical and assert their interests and future directions. It is important that architectural projects and ideas are situated within wider discussions in the discipline and that propositions are formed that suggest how a contribution can be made to disciplinary, as well as to wider contexts and ideas in the world.

The Architecture & Urban Design Discourse Series will use five themes as catalysts to initiate conversations amongst design studio leaders and reveal their positions, attitudes and propositions. There is a long standing tradition of discourse at RMIT and this series aspires to reveal our collective and diverse concerns and facilitate speculation on how these might contribute to advancing the discipline and the wider terrains that they engage in. If we drill down and look behind the statements made at design studio presentations, what do they explicitly refer to, what do they suggest and what do they lead to?
Vivian Mitsogianni - Deputy Dean Architecture & Urban Design