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Architecture Week 1999: DIT at 60 Years: Sensibility and the City

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- sensibility and the city

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Architecture Week 1999

DIT at 60 Years – Sensibility and the City

Noel Brady *Project Co-ordinator*

Introduction

The School of Architecture – DIT (Bolton St.) has spent 60 years at the heart of Dublin. In celebrating 60 years DIT-Architecture is also preparing for the new millennium, one in which the urban environment will be more important than ever. The central theme for the week was sensibility and in particular how we should begin to address Dublin City Centre. For the last three or so years this week has been devoted to a student architectural project used as a vehicle for vertical student interaction and collaboration. This laboratory for architectural ideas involves a different programme from year to year.

This Year's Laboratory: Dublin – An Lár

The usually indefinable context of Dublin – An Lár was the focus of our attentions. Through ten individual sites and investigations we examined the multiplicity of layers that make up any complex city. A controversial section, containing The Henry St/Mary St Axis, the IFSC, the National Conference Centre Site, Trinity, Hawkins House, Temple Bar and Christchurch was chosen. This 'core' contains some of the most important civic buildings in the city.

Investigation

Ten investigations were established to explore key aspects of the city, which have remained hidden or have been avoided in the making of our contemporary metropolis. The themes were chosen to elicit a particular response to the idea of

making a contemporary cityscape.

The investigations were

- 1 Processional Space
- 2 Burgh Quay – Transportation and People
- 3 Sustainability – Hilltop morphologies
- 4 Connections – Through arcades and streets
- 5 The 3 dimensional City – Air Rights Buildings
- 6 Being There – Public spaces and public realms
- 7 Edges – Forming the definition of the core
- 8 Public Art – Why and where and how
- 9 Crossing – Active bridges across the Liffey
- 10 Port Gateway – Entry to Dublin

Collision and Collusion

The core area was certainly controversial. Questions such as why this and not that, why here and not there or why not something else altogether emerged almost immediately. The response was exaggerated due to the confines of time and unique team characteristics. Each team had a representative from each of the five Architecture Degree years and the three Architectural Technology Diploma years. Collisions between issues and people gave way to collaborations. Each project became the conduit for new thoughts about the nature of contemporary cityscape, out of which, we hope, a new fondness for improving our urban centres will emerge.

Processional Space

Perhaps the most difficult project involved the use of Processional Space. Based on the

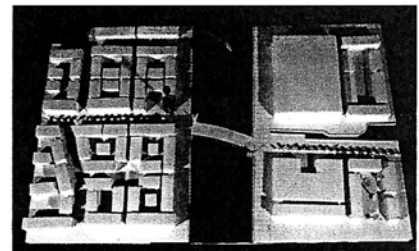


Fig. 1 Team 10



Fig. 2 Team 11

idea that the fabric of the city is a representation of its social structure, the teams explored the area between Capel Street Bridge and O'Connell St Bridge. Two processional ways, in particular, have influenced the existing city core. The first related to Capel Street (Essex) Bridge where a statue of King George I (in the guise of a Roman Emperor) was erected on a podium up stream from the bridge in 1750. The second centred on the statue of William III in College Green.

The most successful project interventions involved the use of both building and space to define new sense of public order (Fig. 1 - Team 10). It is important to engender an appreciation for a common public order, especially when it is absent in an individuated free market (Fig. 2 - Team 11).

Burgh Quay – Transportation and People

Burgh Quay and Eden Quay, while originally involved with the commerce of a port city, have become bus terminals by default. Proposals for this 'site' involved some of the most radical treatments to the urban fabric as part of this week. These included moving the buses to the centre of

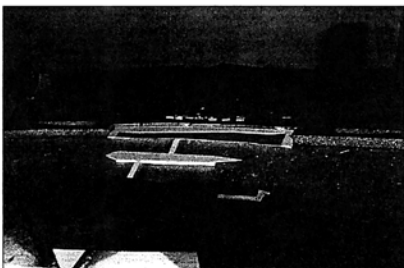


Fig. 3 Team 5

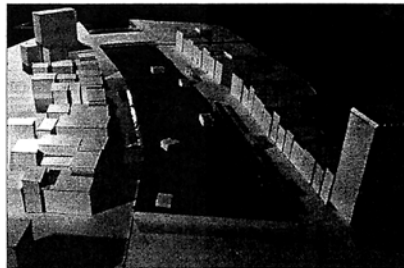


Fig. 4 Team 7



Fig. 5 Team 1

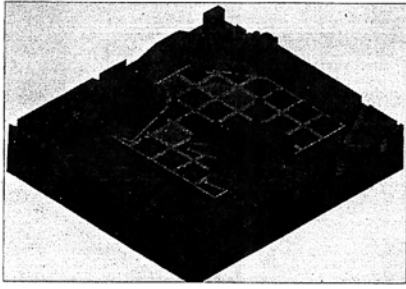


Fig. 6 Team 1

the river using a system of ramped entrances (Fig. 3 - Team 5). This ensured that people could re-occupy the quay walks and the buses could be marooned on a river island, a resource in itself. The most radical intervention suggested glazing over the river so that it would become a new public square. This frozen plate would allow unfettered access while preserving the river (Fig. 4 - Team 7).

Sustainability – Hilltop Morphologies

This project proposed a frightening prospect of higher sea levels within fifty years. What strategies are available to address the problems associated with global warming? A number of under-utilised rooftops were identified as suitable foundations for new urban ecologies. The students enthusiastically responded to this particular challenge, which resulted in some of the more visually stimulating projects. The proposal to form a super architecture above the 'archaeology' of the city provided a very interesting point of departure (Figs. 5, 6 and 7 - Team 1). This super grid allowed for the positioning of different elements within the frame. Other projects explored the hilltop analogy setting out platforms for landscape and machine 'events' (Fig. 8 - team 3 and Fig. 9 - team 4).

Connections – Through Arcades and Streets

This project was set out to exploit the myriad of urban spaces and connections that wind their way through the city. By linking and enlarging these utilitarian spaces new possibilities emerged that allow for new arcades and protected walks (Fig. 10 - Team 16 and Fig. 11 - Team 17).

The 3-dimensional City – Air Rights Buildings

The challenge in Dublin, particularly in the central core area, is the need to 'sweat' the resource. The provision of major infrastructure such as water and transport

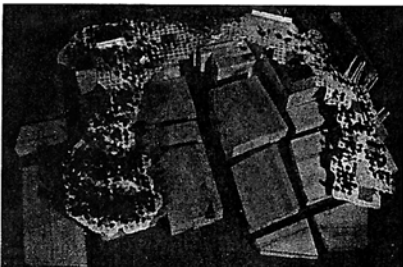


Fig. 8 Team 3



Fig. 7 Team 1

requires extensive financial investment. As Dublin comes closer to reaching its sustainable limit, the need to make better use of what we have is central to making the city work. An 'air rights' site was located above the Screen Cinema on College Green. Each team examined a number of ways of unifying the urban block (Fig. 13 - Team 19).

Being There – Public Spaces and Public Realms

Since the Victorian era there have been few public projects involving the creation of meaningful space in the city. This project emerged to challenge this lack of public realms. New developments such as LUAS offer the possibility for new spaces (Fig. 14 - Team 26). The existence of previously under utilised spaces, such as Smithfield, also offers the possibility of new forms of engagement (Fig. 15 - Team 28).

Edges - Forming the Definition of the Core

To identify the city core can be a line on a map. It can also be the realm within which there are certain urban characteristics. Buildings may be of a different scale, texture, materiality or sense. The edge of the core becomes the boundary, the wall, the edge and the limit. The site chosen for this project is the junction between Westland Row and Pearse Street. It is heavily trafficked and one senses arrival in the dense heart of an active and burgeoning city. The project illustrated here challenged the normal conceptions of dealing with such a linear site with multiple levels of transportation (Figs. 16, 17 and 18 - Team 30).

Public Art – Why and where and how

The presence of art in the city has become an almost random act of genetic production. Statues and events appear and disappear with alarming rapidity. The projects that emerged attempted to unify these random events into what is best

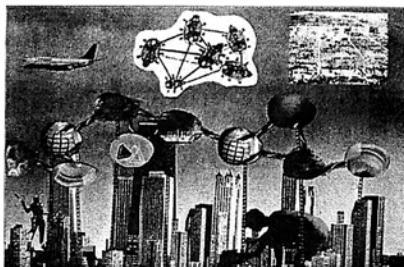


Fig. 9 Team 4



Fig. 10 Team 16

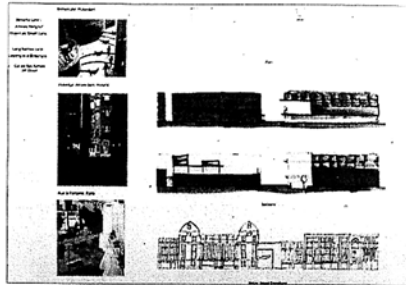


Fig. 11 Team 17

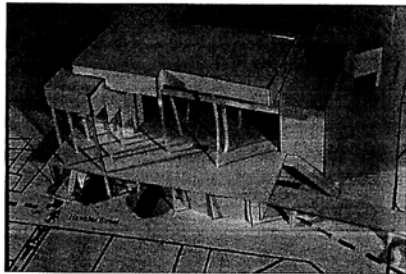


Fig. 13 Team 19

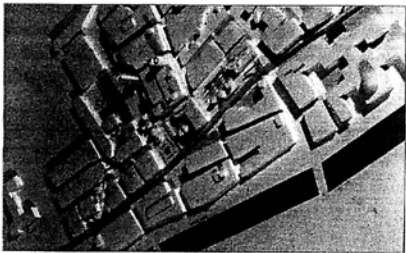


Fig. 14 Team 26

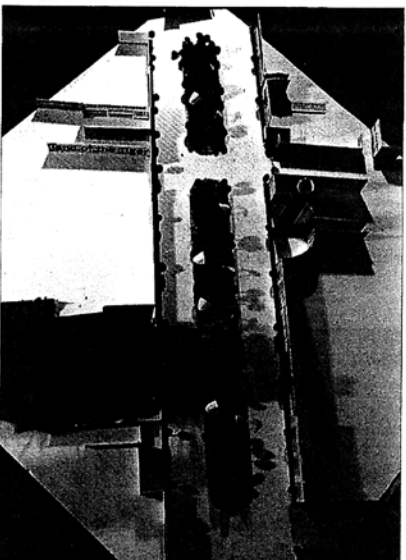


Fig. 15 Team 28

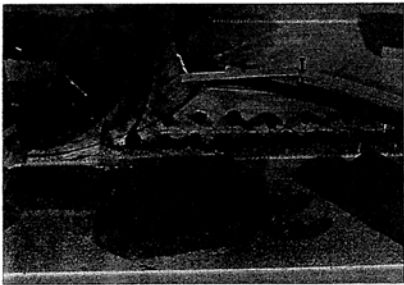


Fig. 16 Team 30

described as an open air museum for artistic experience (Fig. 19 - Team 21). An unusual project for Smithfield involved 'mapping' the memory of movement and space onto the surface of Smithfield (Fig. 20 - Team 24).

Crossing – Active Bridges Across the Liffey

Making bridges across the Liffey is beginning to take on the frenzied activity of art works. The task of making a living bridge has origins in Edwin Lutyens project for a bridge like gallery to house the Hugh Lane collection over the Liffey. This proved to be a visually exciting project (Figs. 21, 22 and 23 - Team 38).

Port Gateway – Entry to Dublin

Even though we have lost the great trades that once dominated our quays we still have significant water based traffic entering the Port of Dublin. Dublin's traditional entry point has been replaced by the functional toll bridge. The International Conference Centre will be the first significant building marking the start of the city proper, since the Customs House (Fig. 24 - Team 34). Some of the projects sought to extend this potential point of entry closer to the sea marking the entry at the Pigeon House Station (Fig. 25 - Team 36).

The work identified here is merely a layer of the extensive work carried out by students and staff at the DIT-School of Architecture and Town Planning during the week. The senses that have been heightened may allow for a new sensibility about the city and particular Dublin.

Prizes for the best works were presented at the end of the week. These were as follows.

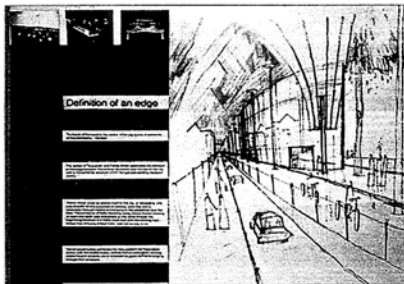


Fig. 18 Team 30

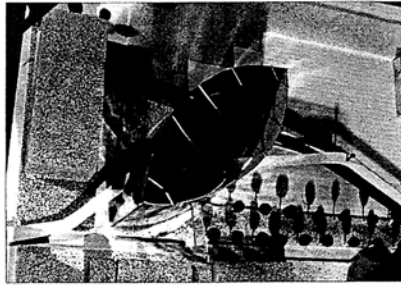


Fig. 17 Team 30

Overall Winner

Team 38 - 'City Bridges'

Second Place

Team 30 - 'Edges'

Commendation

Team 4 - 'Evolving City'

In addition to the jury prize a student prize was awarded. This encouraged the students to become aware of the work of others and the difficulty in making choices associated with any competition.

Winner of Student Award

Team 1 - 'Evolving City'

The Department is grateful for the assistance of Dick Gleeson, Planner Dublin Corporation, Tony Duggan, Architect Dublin Corporation, Philip and David Crampton. Des McMahon who assisted with the work during the week, giving up his valuable time in the process.

This work could not have been undertaken without the sponsorship of various companies and individuals. G & T Crampton Ltd (Construction) sponsored the design project. We are grateful to Roadstone who sponsored our second journal, which was launched during the week, and the student medal. The International and Irish lectures were sponsored by Bank of Ireland, Tegral, Kingspan Building Products, Tony Lyons, Kieran Brennan and the RIAI. The work would not have been possible without the co-operation of the staff of the department.

During Architecture Week we were pleased to have the following guest speakers including Ole Wiig (Norway), Walter Zbinden (France), James Steele (Los Angeles), Dialogue 4 - De Montfort Engineering Building Team (UK), Sean Rothery (Dublin), Neil Downes (Dublin) and Frederick O'Dwyer (Dublin).

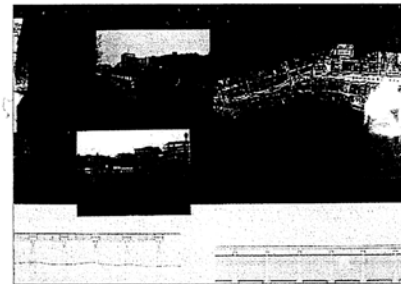


Fig. 19 Team 21

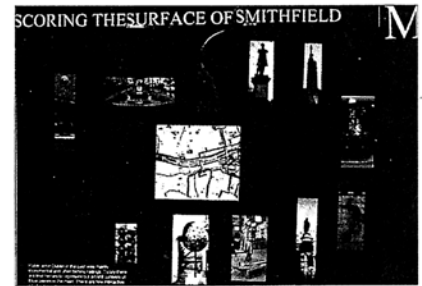


Fig. 20 Team 24

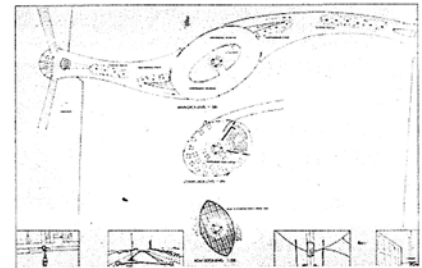


Fig. 21 Team 38

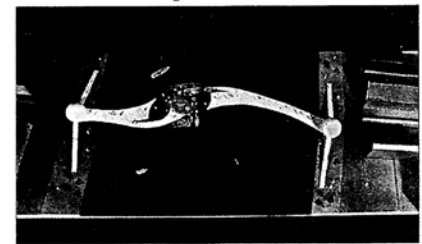


Fig. 22 Team 38

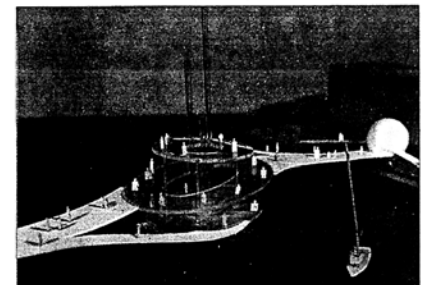


Fig. 23 Team 38

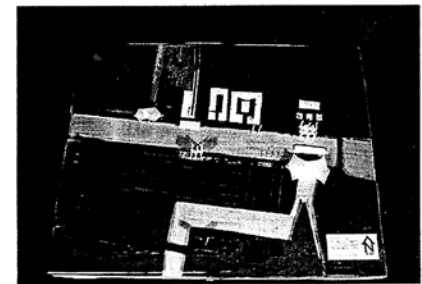


Fig. 24 Team 34

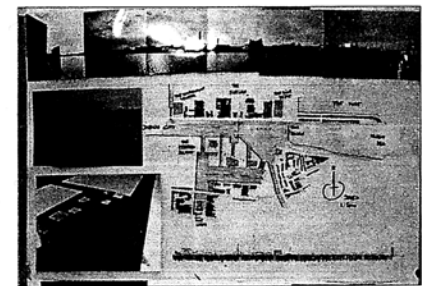


Fig. 25 Team 36