

THE HAPPENSTANCE.10
A Conversation, A Workshop
and Afterwards

Scotland
| Venice

Emily Speed making towers to wear workshop
Image: Basharat Khan



SHARE

PARTECIPARE
E' IL COMITATO.

Playing with strings attached to the armature
Image: Alberto Lago



THE HAPPEN STANCE

The Happenstance was Scotland's contribution to the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice, 2018

In this dispatch, artists Emily Speed and Elizabeth Murphy, examine how the individuals within a team are able to make something much bigger, more layered and more profound, and how the team brings together the strengths of the individuals and can often make you notice something you may not have seen yourself. How tools can be in the conceptual tool shed as well as in a practical tool shed - the list of tools growing project by project. How a member of the team can be the character of the place.



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+ Venice



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This publication is one in a series of twelve reflections on The Happenstance. Click here or go to ads.org.uk/the-happenstance-archive-dispatches to access the other publications.



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year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
2018



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7 **'there is a stretch of generations and time bounces round, a suggestion, a conversation, a game'**



Image: Emily Speed

'there is a deep knowledge of how to play and test everything to the limit'



Image: Elizabeth Murphy



Film still from *Façades and Fronts*, Emily Speed
Image: Duncan Nicoll

'we are working together to get it, to hold these ideas'



Emily Speed structures to wear workshop
Image: Bashtarat Khan

A Conversation, a Workshop and Afterwards

Elizabeth Murphy and
Emily Speed

A Conversation

There are the team: architects, artists, designers, performers, organisers, curators, students and thinkers. There are also the others: the past, the city, its wares and inhabitants, the water, the walls and Palazzo Zenobio.

The architects and organisers bring an official and confident knowledge, a kind of permission for everyone to go ahead and follow the plans (to start with at least, but everyone unspeakingly accepts there will be changes). The team bring not only their own work, but a generosity, a willingness to labour and work together. Everyone here brings multitudes. The artists, with lives often spent in precarious and makeshift working conditions, are

full of ingenuity, invention and swift problem solving. There is a deep knowledge of how to play and test everything to the limit. When brought together, these individuals are able to make something much bigger, more layered and more profound than would be possible alone.

Dancers and young people from Scotland have made the journey with us, and the films of work in which they feature are projected on the walls of Zenobio. These films add another window to the Palazzo, only this one looks out onto these other, faraway, spaces and people.

Zenobio, itself a formidable character, houses all things; structures, colleges and film crews, each coming with its own bursting

community pounding their footprints in, under and through. Existing inside and out, Zenobio's garden surround the inhabitants with high, protective walls, shielding from the tides and day-to-day life outside. Food is an important partner too, it soothes the day's work almost as much as the prosecco. Eating here is a communal and very, very human act. There is a stretch of generations and time bounces round, a suggestion, a conversation, a game.

A Workshop:

Some conversations are offered as part of chance passings, others have been anticipated and planned. Workshops slide in and out of a schedule, time and again erring on the side of suggestion.

On one particular day, in this space, we learn together, our limited shared language forces us to perform our intentions - we mime and stretch the capabilities of our hands to represent objects and actions. The walls bind us, the terrazzo floor keeps us all cool. We laugh for familiarity, we point for materials, we spend time together, we build.

You notice something about the wall, and it allows us to see it too. This little nook is beautiful. Our new knowledge changes the way we feel about this place and where the work might go. Thank you for showing us the things we couldn't see for ourselves.

Internal conversations happen - about our strength - and we share them through the air. Hands trace

the auras of the buildings our bodies could be. Invisibles cities rise from cardboard and tape. Sometimes they break and bend. Busy fingers from eager hands. We grow from waist up, to shoulder up, to head up, to sky. We are working together to get it, to hold these ideas.

Cardboard columns have legs and personalities and they walk, one by one pacing the cool floor. The columns continue out, they descend the stairs, pushing and crunching through the ivy. Into the world of architects and artists and the construction and conversations below. They bob along, 40 legs and 20 columns, trudging over the gravel. They are the pillars of all these conversations - the starting point and the end point. Castle tops and tape stars: embodied architecture.

The children of S. Francesco di Sales School are part of Venice and, once the workshop is finished, they radiate out and through families, teachers, schools and friends. They speak to those people about the garden, they tell them they can visit too. It's free, it's friendly, we can go after school and play. There are flowers and grass. Families come, and those people bring their own lives in, they bring instruments and play music, they bring hula hoops, films, language. Everyone who enters the garden is an expert in playing. Sharing, teaching and learning via gesture and intention continues.

Afterwards.

There are things that get taken away from this experience that will then be taken into every future situation those artists, architects and designers find themselves in. The tools they have acquired here will be added to those they already carry inside. The conceptual tool shed they live in everyday. It could be said that laughter is the most inclusive act and it cycles through every part of this story. Laughter leads into play and play into laughter.

There were also times that called for resilience; falls and stumbles, both physical and metaphorical. We learned through doing and continue to do so, the list of tools growing project by project and developing through circumstances, it becomes strong like a spider's web.

The material object is not the only tool we need, the material for doing is what is crucial.

‘Some conversations are offered as part of chance passings, others have been anticipated and built for’



Images: Emily Speed

TOOLS

People, of all ages

Trust

Gestures

Conversation

Tape

Scissors

Cardboard

Thoughts on the self, architecture,
your surroundings

Laughter

Demonstration

Patience (from everyone)

Willingness

RESOURCES

→ [Emily Speed Website](#)

→ [Related Films](#)

→ **Two Minds: Artists and Architects in Collaboration**, Fernie, Jes (Ed.), Blackdog Publishing, 2006, (case studies of Artists and Architects working together).

→ **Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration**, Ellen Mara de Wachter, Phaidon (studies of 25 artist duos and collaborators).

→ **teaching for people who prefer not to teach**, M Bayerdoerfer and R Schweiker (editors), (non hierarchical Bayerdoerfer and R Schweiker (editors), (nonhierarchical suggestions of other ways of being with students and peers).

→ **House Building for Children**, Lester Walker, Overlook Press, 2007, (projects children can build for themselves).

→ **Missing Out, In Praise of the Unlived Life** (p87-96 - On not Getting it), Adam Phillips, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux 2012, (a section on frustration and working with others).



The New Builders
Image: Daniele Sambo

How the strength of the individuals within a team are able to make something much bigger, more layered and more profound.



Skatsharving, building and playing
Image: Ron Colwin

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