

THE HAPPENSTANCE.07  
Tools of the Trade

Scotland  
+ Venice

Customised Deckchair - at the Calle de Vecchi entrance to The Happenstance



# OPEN

# TOOL

STREUMENTO  
411X0102

Film screening in a local campo



# THE HAPPEN STANCE

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

In this dispatch, anti-curator of The Happenstance, Peter McCaughey, focuses on five principal tools, of the many tools and tactics used. All tools encouraged people to react, respond and engage. Most importantly they were quickly taken up by visitors and used by them for their own purposes. The garden, the armature, the tools and the tactics, were resources available to all who ventured in, and also those who were met when The Happenstance ventured out into Venice. A resource that continues to support activity in Venice to this day.



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An Introduction



**Issue 2**  
Venice Reflective



Scotland  
+ Venice



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Into the Mouth  
of the Wolf



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My Experience  
as a Fellow at  
The Happenstance



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Venice /  
Local Context



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Play



**Issue 7**  
Tools of the Trade

**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](https://ads.org.uk/the-happenstance-archive-dispatches) to access the other publications.**



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One A-Z of  
Making Connections



**Issue 9**  
Participatory Practice



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A Conversation,  
A Workshop  
and Afterwards



**Issue 11**  
An External  
Perspective



**Issue 12**  
On Legacy



year of young people  
bliadhna na h-òigridh  
2018



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

Architecture &  
Design Scotland  
Aithearrachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba



BRITISH  
COUNCIL

**‘we were mining for treasure,  
mapping connections,  
underscoring our intent to  
make that person our focus’**

**‘a gesture of hosting, a  
contextualiser for conversation,  
a functioning, playful form that  
conflated leisure and work’**



Customised Deckchair - Albert Lago holds up a deckchair with a motivation

**‘an open programme, a cinematic  
freespace for the ideas and  
opinions and actions of others’**



Inflated, red heart - Gobby at the entrance to Palazzo Zenob  
Image - Ashrat Khan

**T H E  
H A P P E N  
S T A N C E**

member of National council

volanteer - for LIPU  
in Student ancient literature

- GASI LIPU CAVE DI GAGGIO NORD
- RISERVA NATURALE LIPU CA'

Study art history ROMAN

Workshop  
with Barb

LIPU Anniversary + GAGGIO  
30 years - do in garden

Melena  
Stefani

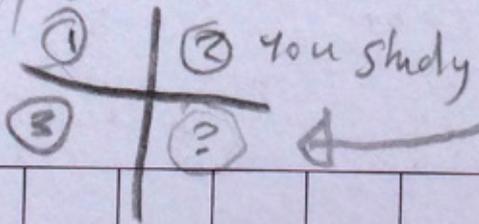
would love to  
become  
documentary  
film maker  
(Barb)  
would like  
make photographs

Our garden has a rare species of  
bird - and a rare butterfly  
+ lizards - geckos

Our garden is a nature reserve  
maybe -

next exam ethnology of music

Rule of 4



Fishing

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Customised deckchairs - a game using all the deckchairs  
Image: Brian Hartley



Outdoor Cinema - night-time film screening in Palazzo Zenobio  
Image: Graham Ross

# Tools of The Trade

## Peter McCaughey

What follows is a description of five of the principal tools used in The Happenstance, and the related tactics we employed to build the work, engage the people we met, and address the situations we encountered in the Venetian section of the work.

Having an extensive toolkit was central to The Happenstance's adaptable and resilient character. Across a talented team there were a wide number of tools and tactics at play, but describing these five allows for some focus on the related tactics and subsequent value. The toolkit allowed the team to have the confidence to go to Venice and be opportunistic serendipiters. Most Biennale projects travel with their show prepacked and ready to install.

We travelled with tools and tactics honed in Scotland, and argued, in response to the 2018 theme, that creating a Freespace was our goal, and expecting to be lucky would be our method.

### **7 Hats Postcard**

The simplest tool we brought with us was a printed Happenstance postcard. White, black and red, 350 gsm. On the back was a grid with asymmetrically positioned blank spaces, ready to receive 7 hats: *name and contact details, what you do (work), thing you are into, something about family, why you are here, something you'd like from, or could add to, the garden, 'other.....'* It was a map, not a list, more a drawing than a questionnaire.

Our fellows, and other team members, were encouraged to take a few minutes to fill these in with anyone who came into the space. We were mining for treasure, mapping connections, underscoring our intent to make that person our focus (if they welcomed that attention). We expected to get lucky and did, time and time again. We asked permission, and when granted, the cards went up on the wall, and this allowed us to weave connections between interests and needs and skill sets. The postcards helped The Happenstance consolidate, catalyse and generate relationships to the space.

#### **Outdoor Cinema**

The 5400 lumens Panasonic RZ570 was the best outdoor video projector we could buy on our limited budget - a fantastic addition to any kit of parts. In combination with a decent outdoor sound system, and the other tools listed, this supported our primary tactic: to offer an open programme, a cinematic freespace for the ideas and opinions and actions of others. This tool amplified WAVEparticle's ambition to be an anti-curator at the Biennale. In conjunction with the ability to instantly record and edit, this tool ensured that the vast majority of the content of The Happenstance cinema programme was generated from the local context - the people we met, the places they took us to, the things they treasured. This eventually amounted to a six-month Outdoor Cinema programme with over 100 screenings. Venetian, Danielle Sambo, on our team, had studied the decline

of the tradition of Open-Air Cinemas in Venice, and we knew that the last one on the island had closed the previous year. We were mindful of the resonance of returning this forum to Venetians, and so it proved.

That projector travelled far and wide. Danielle and Hannah Brackston, also on our team, ran the peripatetic All'Aperto, a re-imagining of the Open-Air Cinemas, screening films at the sites across Venice where they had previously existed. We projected in Campos, and also loaned the projector to sister projects in local festivals and other garden spaces. When our time came to finish, we left our precious kit as a resource for the local communities.

#### **Customised Deckchairs**

A complement to the screenings, we took 66 deckchairs, each with a printed canvas carrying a noun that was also a verb, in three languages - English, Italian and Armenian. This lexicon of words was designed to encourage creative engagement, debate and play. This simple portable structure provided immediate activation of the garden space and had many other uses - occasionally wall-mounted as displays in our exhibition, as signage for the entrance, HAPPEN and STANCE, and regularly held aloft as instructional words for Grest, the summer school we began to run for children of the Parishes of the Angelo Raffaele and Santa Margherita.

The chairs provided a dominant, distributed aesthetic, carrying the brilliant Happenstance typography invented by Neil McGuire for

the project. They set the tone immediately. This space is for you. We thought about you before you got here. This project is about your body, your bum and your brain, and we recognise your language.

Like the projector, the deckchairs travelled far and wide and became synonymous with the project - a gesture of hosting, a contextualiser for conversation, a functioning, playful form that conflated leisure and work. At the end we gave many away to friends and associates, with individual words selected for particular characters. Wherever they are now, up high in Altana's or buried in back gardens or wall-mounted in flats, they act as an aide-mémoire to the ideas and memories of The Happenstance...a tangible, distributed legacy.

#### **The Broadcast Unit: Recording and Relaying**

We brought eight films from the Scottish wing of the project (described elsewhere) and shared treasures from an archive of thematically related Scottish films, but from the outset our intention was to build a programme of regular screenings from whatever we found in Venice. To do that, we shipped a full edit suite and brought a range of cameras and a drone.

We documented everything from the moment we arrived, and continually represented this too, in the style of outdoor broadcast. Basharat Khan recorded, edited and relayed what we encountered on a daily basis. Harald Turek flew the drone, and everyone on the team contributed

images of the emerging activities. An ongoing series of documentaries and short films were collated through the mapping of the people who arrived in the garden. And people began to bring their own films - Giovanni Andrea Martini, President of the Venice Municipality, brought us an entire two-month Pasinetti film festival! With this simple approach we ran a six-month cinema programme with over 100 screenings.

#### **Inflatable Hijack**

An honourable mention has to go to Pester and Rossi's brilliant and beautiful inflatables, that were deployed, unannounced, in many different circumstances. Here's a diary entry:

*Rob and Lucia, two of our five young Scottish architect-invigilators, get out Pester and Rossi's giant inflatable and turn on the fan. Wooosh! The noise level goes up five notches. From flat sheet to two stories high in 60 seconds this multi-coloured air pillow is the ultimate catalytic convertor. It says, "Now children, go MAD!"*

Gobby graced our Calle dei Vecchi entrance and, on several occasions, Zenobio's front entrance, and I'm sure contributed greatly to the headcount that made it to us. I describe this tactic as Cultural Hijack, where things, often unannounced and usually anonymous, insert themselves into the world, demanding our attention, interrupting everyday life, hijacking, trespassing, agitating and teasing.

These five tools and related tactics are amongst twenty or thirty others that we regularly used to facilitate meaningful engagement. This brief introduction to these tools and tactics is expanded in other essays in this collection, with the armature described in detail by Lee Ivett, and the Connecting of Cultural Connectors captured in the essay Making Connections (for a more comprehensive index see below).

### ADDENDUM: AN INDEX OF TACTICS/TOOLS

**A** Anti-curator / Armature **B** Being present **C** Connecting Cultural Connectors / Cultural Hijack **D** Deckchairs / Drone / Détournement **E** Expecting to be lucky / Eventing **F** Freespace / Flags Flying **G** Grub **H** Happenstance printing stamps / Hosting **I** Iterative architecture / Inflatable Hijack / Inbetweening **J** Joy / Jokes / Judgement **K** Kaprow's ideas on Art As Life **L** Lament (old Irish song deployed) **M** Mapping **N** Not Knowing **O** Open Space / Outdoor Cinema **P** Postcards / Performance / Play / Peku **Q** Quality of making **R** Recording and Relaying / Rapid Prototyping **S** Serendipiters / Seven Hats / Stalled Space **T** Typeface / Tell Them Nothing **U** Unexpected encounters **V** Vox popping / Video making **W** Weaving relationships **X** X factor **Y** Year-long engagement **Z** Zenobio herself.

### RESOURCES

→ [WAVEparticle Website](#)  
→ [Related Films](#)





