DECONSTRUCTING THE CHILDREN'S ART PAVILION
Chris Tucker

This paper discusses the design, construction and eventual deconstruction of the Children's Art Pavilion at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery in Australia. As a space for children to experiment with art, the Pavilion metaphorically engaged the verandah as a space that has historically (albeit minimally) mediated the zone where inside and outside meet. Its process of deconstruction referenced the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, and was testament to how the architectural design process continues through this phase, albeit uninhibited by the need to create a functioning object. In the time leading up to its deconstruction, the Pavilion became perfectly functionless, while its form and architectural content remained critically intact. Cutting into its surface, as a continuation of the design process, framed the void. Security was replaced with instability, not just physically but emotionally. At this point, the ground became cliff, or broke against the surf, and indeterminacy destroyed the purpose of even the most elementary architectural space. The new construction immediately suggested the possibilities of another architecture. As an intriguing social and architectural experiment, undergone by a building that could have quietly been loaded into a bin within a few hours, this project illuminated the social responsibility invested within architecture.

Keywords: pavilion, children, verandah, demolition, deconstruction, residual, architecture.

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Abstract

This paper discusses the design, construction and eventual deconstruction of the Children's Art Pavilion at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery in Australia. As a space for children to experiment with art, the Pavilion metaphorically engaged the verandah as a space that has historically (albeit minimally) mediated the zone where inside and outside meet. Its process of deconstruction referenced the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, and was testament to how the architectural design process continues through this phase, albeit uninhibited by the need to create a functioning object. In the time leading up to its deconstruction, the Pavilion became perfectly functionless, while its form and architectural content remained critically intact. Cutting into its surface, as a continuation of the design process, framed the void. Security was replaced with instability, not just physically but emotionally. At this point, the ground became cliff, or broke against the surf, and indeterminacy destroyed the purpose of even the most elementary architectural space. The new construction immediately suggested the possibilities of another architecture. As an intriguing social and architectural experiment, undergone by a building that could have quietly been loaded into a bin within a few hours, this project illuminated the social responsibility invested within architecture.

Background

The Children's Art Pavilion was constructed in 1996 as a temporary structure on the site of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery in Australia. Its lifespan was to be only three years; however it remained in use as a children's art space until 2010. In 2006, an architectural competition was held for the design of a new Newcastle Region Art Gallery, the brief suggesting that the Pavilion and the Art Gallery would both be demolished to make way for the new building. The competition was well supported by architects throughout Australia, but the cost of constructing the winning entry was going to be considerably more than the available funds. In 2010, a revised design was undertaken by the NSW Government Architect, adapting and extending the existing Gallery, removing only the Pavilion. The cost for this work had been estimated at £15million, with the Federal Government, NSW State Government and Newcastle City Council (NCC) slated to commit £5million each. However,

the NSW State Government rejected applications for this funding, leaving NCC no other option but to pick up the remaining £5million. With local government elections in September 2012, the issue of whether to fund the final £5million was politicized, with recreation and culture going head to head for electorate support. The decision to go ahead with the demolition of the Pavilion, while debate continued about the future of the Gallery addition, was significant gesture given this current political situation. The demolition of the Pavilion was also used in the media by NCC to leverage the NSW Government to commit to the remaining £5million now that work on the new Art Gallery had begun (Smee, 2012b). It is the demolition, or rather the unmaking or this Pavilion, that is the subject of this paper.[1]

Making the Children's Art Pavilion

The existing gallery was Australia's first purpose-built regional gallery and was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1977. Designed in the Brutalist style, its concrete structural frame, articulated with a split double column, provided a visual separation between structure and the wall elements that it supported. The site for the Pavilion was triangular in shape and something of a left-over space from the original gallery design, but facing a popular street to one side of the Gallery, and with a mature eucalyptus in its centre. In 1995, the then director of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery, David Bradshaw, contacted three recent architectural graduates to see if they would be interested in designing an adjunct space for no more than £60,000, where children could experiment with making art. While contemporary project procurement and management processes have limited the engagement of architectural graduates for these types of small, low-cost public buildings, a significant legacy of the Pavilion was that it afforded this opportunity. The design of the Pavilion was well publicized and a series of models were exhibited within the Gallery. The matter of whether it could remain within a small budget, however, would always have the potential to impose design changes. When the construction tender was only £3,000 over budget, the designers removed the surveyors' fee from the tender and completed this themselves for no cost. The construction drawings described each element of the building's frame with a discrete length, cutting profile and bolt locations, allowing the complex organic shape to be assembled

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1 As one of the original architects of the Children's Art Pavilion, I became interested in the wider political questions around the removal or unmaking of buildings at the point when this project was slated for demolition.
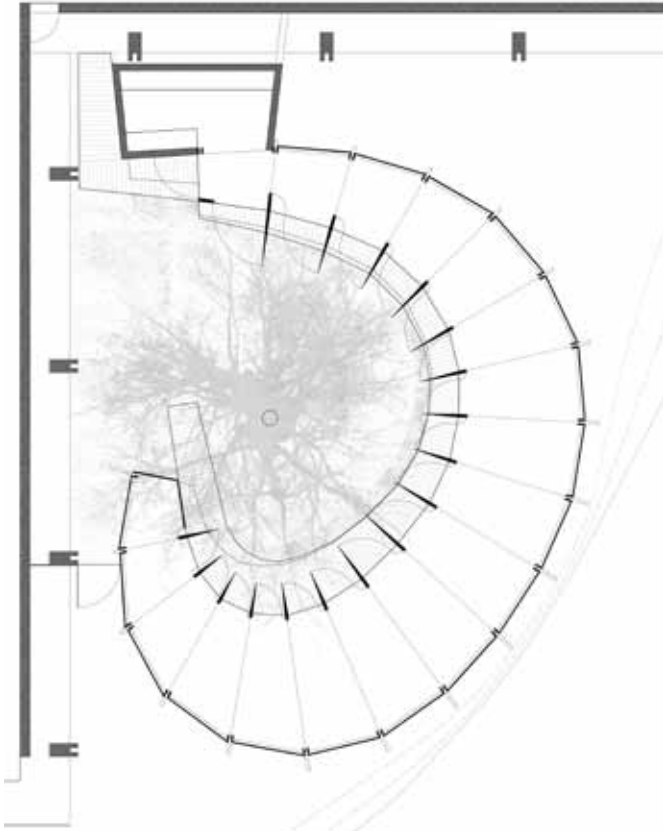
Figure 16.1: Chris Tucker, *Art Pavilion plan*, 2013. Courtesy of the architect.

on site. Purlins connected each of the portal frames and the structure was lined externally with a single skin of cypress pine tongue and groove floorboards. The wall facing the courtyard was made from fourteen swiveling and tapered doors lined with galvanised sheet, allowing the children's workspace to be completely opened up to the court-like a verandah, as shown in Figure 16.1. The doors became easels, with magnets holding paper in place, or even surfaces for temporary *in situ* artworks, shown in Figures 3 and 4.

When Bob Carr, then Premier of NSW, officially opened the Pavilion in 1996, he recognised it as a cultural milestone within a city that was undergoing change, with for instance the closure of its steel making facilities (Scanlon, 1996). There followed a number of newspaper editorials describing the Pavilion's engagement with the community (Towndrow, 1997), and particularly with children as part of the Scribbly Gum Art Club (Ryan, 1996). It received design awards including the 1996 Charles Davis Award, the Hunter Civic Design Award and the 1996 Master Builders Association Award for innovative timber use. (This was quite an achievement, for as none of the graduates were registered architects, the Pavilion could not be considered for any architectural awards sponsored by the Australian Institute of Architects).
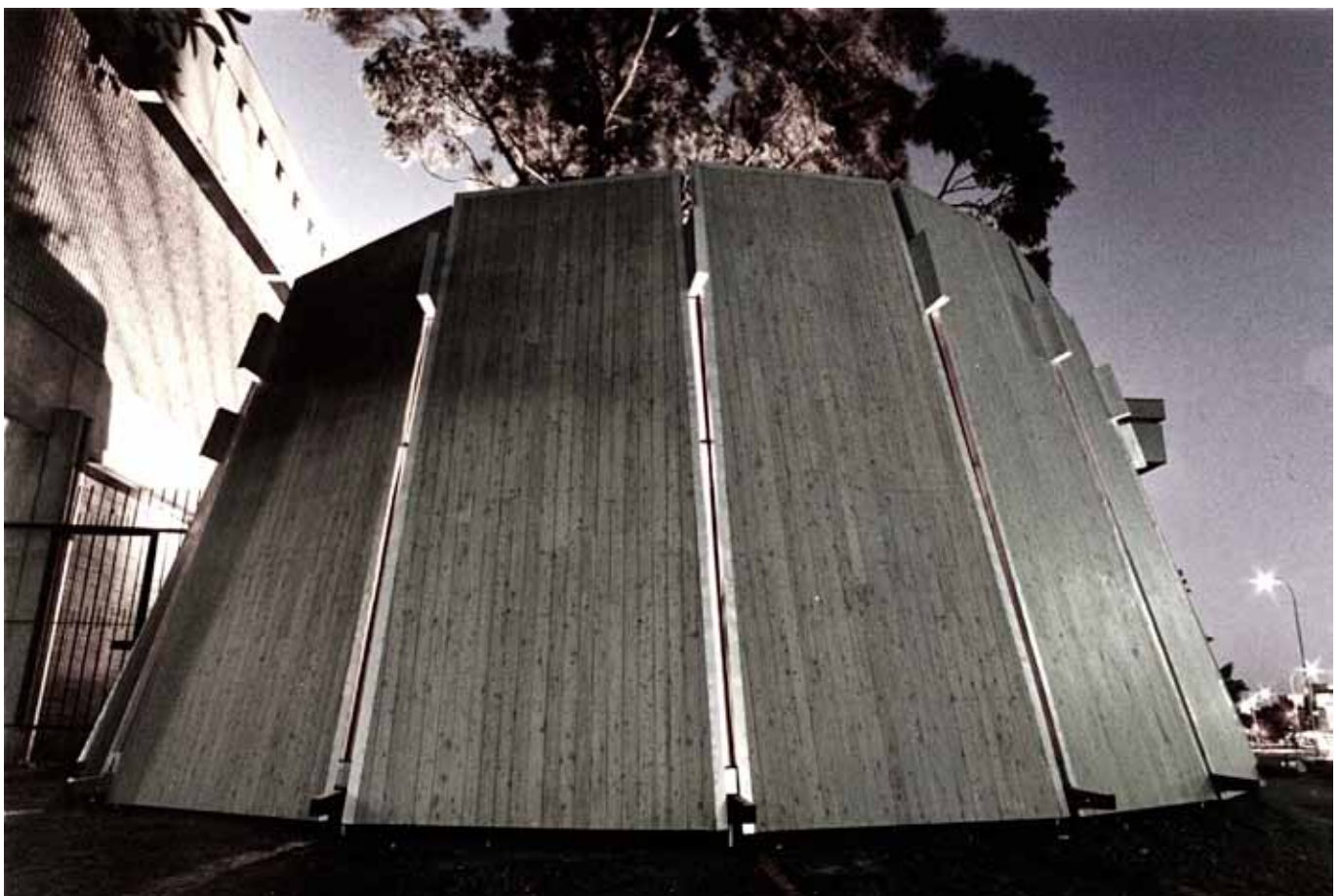

Figure 16.2: Herd (Architectural Practice), *Art Pavilion*, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Australia, 1996. Credit Tim Lincoln. Courtesy of the architect.

The Pavilion was published in the *Australian Architectural Review* (Margalit, 1997) and described elsewhere as a thrilling, surreal and unique place (Maitland and Stafford, 1997). That it was built at all, however, was an achievement in itself, and a significant cultural statement. Due to its ambitious form, the designers were always going to struggle to meet the budget, and its timber construction being a fire hazard to the

adjacent Gallery only passed because it was considered temporary, Figure 16.2 shows its relationship with the existing gallery. To reduce the risk of vandalism and graffiti, the landscape around the Pavilion was to be planted with thistles, stingers and other offensive weeds, warding off anyone getting too close. In the end, more servile plants were prosaically positioned around the exterior, yet the Pavilion still remained surprisingly graffiti-free for six years, and never suffered any vandalism that affected the performance of this space. It was only when the exterior landscape and cladding began to take on a neglected appearance that the graffiti began to appear. For the remaining ten years, tagging and occasional commentary would appear on the timber walls, perhaps acknowledging that this urban space was right for reclaiming by the city (Banet-Weiser, 2011). The response to the appearance of graffiti was to paint over the markings, which had an unfortunate effect on an oiled timber building, making the surface look even more inviting of abuse.

Figure 16.3: Herd (Architectural Practice), *Internal view 1*, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Australia, 1996. Credit Tim Lincoln. Courtesy of the architect.

Verandah as metaphor

The Pavilion's plan (Figure 16.1) shows a verandah space whose inclined walls wrapped the existing eucalyptus, enclosing a courtyard adjacent to the Gallery. In Australia the verandah has historically mediated the conditions of outside and inside, and here it became a metaphor for minimal construction and the activities of children within. The critique of the verandah within Australian architecture has a long

Figure 16.4: Herd (Architectural Practice), *Internal view 2*, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Australia, 1996. Credit Tim Lincoln. Courtesy of the architect.

history, beginning with the notable architect John Sulman, who in 1883 criticized it as being too often a stylised element flimsily attached to an otherwise solid building. He wrote that it looked more like the scaffold used in its construction, only to be disappointingly metamorphosed into a seemingly more permanent motif (Phillips, 1997). His critique took aim at the use of the verandah on many dwellings and commercial buildings of the time, as a form of decoration that lacked any real spatial or environmental role. He argued instead for the verandah to become an integral part of the internal spaces they were attached to, and to be of sufficient width to allow a multitude of household functions, effectively becoming an outdoor room.

Phillip Drew surveyed this evolution of the verandah and its use, not as a single space wrapping the edge of a dwelling, but as a demarcated zone of differentiated territories (Drew, 1992). The street-facing verandah became the ceremonial space of the house, the sides becoming the domain of individuals with adjacent bedrooms; the back becoming a service zone where the mechanics of the household could be undertaken in relative privacy. The exposed edge of the verandah was often mediated with fixed or moving screens that filtered the harsh sunlight, shielded against a strong wind, or visually made private the space from passers-by or neighbours.

Inside the verandah, furniture signified a territorial zone of the house, yet highlighted a 'nomadic condition' due to the fact that it might only be occasionally occupied (Drew, 1992, p.80). The verandah supports an overflow of internal functions where old chairs and tables might gather, only returning inside as required by guests and special occasions. A body-length lounge chair or chaise-longue becomes a place to watch passers-by or sleep outdoors on hot nights. Treasured but broken furniture finds a space to simply weather away, being just a single step from leaving the house entirely. The verandah is a temporal space critically measured by sunlight, air, household size, social relations and the street. The production of children's art is often associated with the verandah because its proximity to the inside and relaxed formality can safely accommodate the often messy business of painting and crafts. Experimentation is tolerated here because it is a border zone lacking the functional rigor that defines and limits what is possible on either the inside or the outside. For Crouch (Crouch, 2003) it is this quality of being half-open that best describes the formality of such a liminal space. Remembering the phrase of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (Bachelard, 1969, p.222), 'man is a half-open being … so frequently inverted, and so charged with hesitation,' what the verandah makes vivid is that the inside and outside are not simple opposites.

A form of urban short story, the verandah has become deeply embedded within Australian culture. For the most (sub)urbanised people in the world, the verandah frames the 'ambivalence that Australians sense at being the reality of the city and the myth of the bush' (Beck, Cooper (eds), 2002, p.9). Not being defended by solid walls, the verandah and its furnishings implied that damage or theft was a reasonable possibility. There is a sense of ease within the space, where passers-by might get a glimpse of the living arrangements within. As families grew and the spaces of domestic work, study and entertainment became more common, the openness of the verandah often evolved into a more permanent enclosure. The lightness of the building, once provided by the verandah's open edge, was then bloated by the accretion of other functions.

Returning now to the Pavilion, it will be evident how the verandah has been used to structure the children's work space. The house that would usually support the verandah is sliced away, so that this side of the structure becomes another edge, one that now faces the street. From the street, it appears like a segmented wall, while from within, vertical slit-like apertures between the double columns provide a partial glimpse outward. This allowed the verandah's traditional public-facing edge to capture space in the form of a courtyard. Fully rotating swiveling doors wrapped the verandah posts, allowing the verandah space to be fully opened or completely closed as required. The doors were not lockable, and thus signalled this as an ambiguous and liminal space. The Pavilion was accessible from within the Gallery, while street-facing walls offered enclosure and security against random entry. The straight edge of the traditional verandah was abandoned, with the designers taking their cue from the eucalyptus in the centre, and delimiting an organic curve instead. This curve was not drawn with a compass, but generated by the requirements of respecting the drip line of the eucalyptus, utilizing space cost-effectively, and creating a pragmatic shelter for the activities that were to happen on the inside.

In section, the double columns that span the floor bearer and roof rafter were positioned at 2400-milimetre spacings. Nearest the entry from the gallery, these columns were vertical; however, they slowly become more inclined as the verandah space thickens toward the middle, and then become more upright as the width of the space is once again compressed (approximately to the size of a human body). Depending on their degree of incline, the walls facing the street changed in height. Only the doors

facing the courtyard remained vertical and of a regular size. The complex geometry of the Pavilion changed the way that normalised surfaces such as floor, wall and roof might behave in visual terms. The Pavilion was designed like this with a view to constructing a space that would be engaging for children, but only upon completion were its complex spatial and perceptual effects fully defined and appreciated. Visitors reported various sensations, some commenting that the floor appeared to rise as they moved through the space; that the experience became more intense as they quickened their pace, and that the walls appeared to close inward; that the scale of objects within the space seemed indeterminate; and that the light bulbs suspended from each portal frame actually appeared to defy gravity and hang away from the wall. Interestingly, children seemed to be far less affected by these perceptual effects, perhaps because adults are more habituated to rectilinear space.

Becoming residual

Cultural and social activities include both physical and cultural elements that ultimately create residual space, and occasionally result in ruins. According to the architect Louis I. Kahn, such spaces become free from the tyranny of function (quoted in Thompson, 2002). As new social spaces are created, or evolve, the existing conditions change and as a direct consequence something is lost. The deconstruction of the Pavilion in 2010 was a reminder of this, as were the words of the seventy-year old contractor who explained how he had demolished the houses that once stood here – in this very place – fifty years earlier. What other human places have been lost here, it might be asked? The Pavilion was designed and constructed as a temporary building with a three-year life-span. At the beginning of the design process, therefore, the timing of its end was already defined. While everyone is familiar with the fact that appliances and instruments of other kinds have quantifiable life expectancy, architectural design is usually intended to be more lasting, and thus it is continually challenged by the thought of its nonexistence.

With cypress pine flooring, Oregon timber columns and purlins, and plywood roofing, the Pavilion boasted a lightness of structure and skin appropriate to its temporality (as well as its budget). Even so, the Pavilion was not removed after three years as planned, but remained for another thirteen. The children's programmes run by the Gallery were only funded for three years, but proved such a success with parents and children alike, that they continued to run for twelve more before being moved inside the Gallery.

Admittedly, the Pavilion's architecture was looking tired at this time, with leaks limiting its use a public space. No longer serving its original function as a verandah-*cum*-workshop, it became a repository for chairs and tables used in Gallery seminars and openings, and an ungainly sight at best. The door between the Gallery and Pavilion was now locked to visitors, and the doors that pivoted open and shut so as to define a liminal space 'half-open' to the community were now closed for good. The Pavilion had become an actor left on stage too long, whose performance had long come to an end; the best way forward was now only a tactful departure.

The loss of a building, the destruction of something that appears more permanent, is both a horror and fascination to behold (Bevan, 2007, p.7); conversely, though, the forced usage of a building against its age or will has the character of a Phajaan (a violent ritual performed by a shaman to crush the instinctive wild nature of an elephant and render it obedient). To be sure, buildings are not alive and do not suffer, but they are bound up with emotions, ideas and meanings whose loss can cause pain to animate beings. As Hannah Arendt (1969, p.96) so lucidly puts it: 'The reality and reliability of the human world rests primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced.' The threat of demolition creates emotions of loss for those whose lives and memories found a home in such things. Emotions of nostalgia and sentimentality are usually reserved for those from the broader community and civic coalitions (Zukin, 1995) who symbolise the loss more generally as a social condition. In this sense, demolition becomes emblematic of a more pervasive societal malaise where change brings an uncertainty about what the future might hold. For the Pavilion, the sense of loss associated with its demolition was perhaps diminished by its own Phajaan a few years beforPlans to relocate the Pavilion to other sites were considered since 2008. However, while it appeared to be built of potentially removable panels, it was actually a series of portal frames strapped together with purlins and lined with floorboards and plywood. Any relocation would have involved the linings being removed and the frame being disassembled into parts, before being rebuilt in a new location. Simply put, the relocation cost was twice that of constructing a new Pavilion, and given the degradation of the Pavilion's materials presented a far better solution. The community groups proposing its relocation made a clear distinction between the Pavilion and a mere replica, and were prepared to overlook its current functional limitations so as to preserve the original project. The preservation of its

social and working condition, which its relocation seemed to justify, needed to be tempered by a design process that had invested in young aspirational talent to create it in the first place. The Pavilion showed how a small sum of money invested within a community project, developed by the creative capital of the recent graduates, could result in an outstanding success. Compared with the prospect of relocation and the costs involved in that, the prospect of providing this opportunity to others appeared to be far more difficult to resurrect or replicate.

Conservation and preservation

Maros Krivy (2011) has discussed the paradoxical lack of interest conservationists have in the historicity of the built structures they struggle to conserve or reinstate. The social and situational forces that establish the ground for architecture appear to become detached from the built form itself, often reducing the complex architectural ideas to an emblematic façade. This process of detachment as Frederic Jameson (Jameson, 1991, p.424) points out, is similar to the urban mapping processes outlined by the urban theorist Kevin Lynch (Lynch, 1960), where the legibility

of buildings is removed from the situational conditions that informed their creation. Through conservation, architecture is forced to signify a particular form of temporality that 're-creates the building as a reified object, frozen in a moment prior to its obsolescence' (Krivý, 2011, p.52).

It could be argued that preservation differs from this, because it retains the traces of time as use and alteration; it also tolerates the inevitability of obsolescence as functions continue to adapt and change. Urbanist Jacqueline Groth (Groth and Corijn, 2005) extends this by suggesting that even residual structures that retain no function are part of a collective historical memory that provides a mental base for their preservation. Studies conducted by building scientist Laure Itard (Itard and Klunder, 2007) also advance the idea that preservation is more environmentally efficient than demolition or rebuilding, a significant part of this being the reduction in construction waste. The longer that a building remains functional, the more the value of the initial investment continues to increase, indicating that preservation needs to accommodate change and adaptation as an integral part of a sustainable process (Thomsen et al,

Figure 16.5: Chris Tucker, *Before deconstruction1*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 16.6: Chris Tucker, *Before deconstruction 2*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 16.7: Chris Tucker, *Light*, 2012.
Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 16.8: Chris Tucker, *Light and door,* 2012.
Courtesy of the architect.

2011). Preservation however is continually threatened by obsolescence, as the capital-intensive characteristics of property always investigate the possibility of demolition.

The relocation of the Pavilion to a new site is indicative of conservation as opposed to preservation. The same building, on a new site and with a new use, reinforces the disjunction between context and object inherent in conservation. The persistence of architectural form discussed by Aldo Rossi (Rossi, 1982), where the urban environment and the building are linked by their production is a process that requires some level of adaptation to become successful, and as Abraham Akkerman suggests, a significant challenge for contemporary urban design could instead be to 'preserve change and to enshrine the passage of urban time' (Akkerman, 2009).
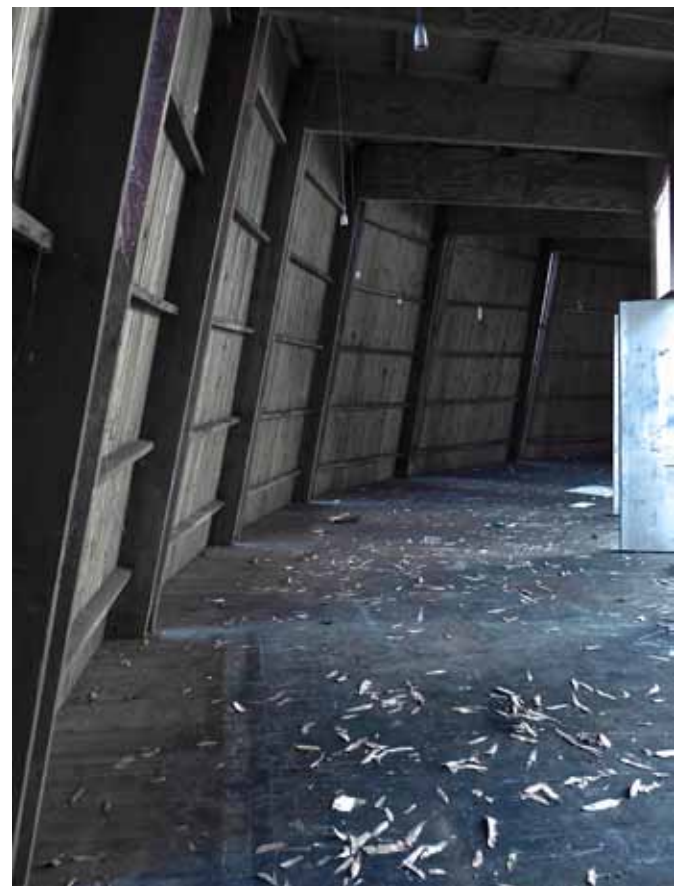

Figure 16.9: Chris Tucker, *Wall*, 2012.
Courtesy of the architect.

Should the architect be the voice of a reactionary conservation, or look for the absolute recreation of their work in another place? Theorist Bechir Kenzari infers this by reflecting that architects view 'destruction as an antonym of performance' (Kenzari, 2004, p.30). Architecture suggests a permanence that architects perhaps feel is a stable vessel for holding ideas. While buildings have always been demolished, few have perhaps been strategically unmade by their own builder. It is counterintuitive that the architect should be the one to orchestrate this, but the creation of buildings also in a way implicates this as a responsibility. It is impossible to know how the role of a building will change in the future, but in the case of the Pavilion, the architect needed to be aware of and active in this process, which was one in which the residual construction afforded a medium for continued experimentation.

Having discarded the idea of relocating the Pavilion, based on the cost of that, the council moved to demolish the Pavilion using the standard method in which nothing is preserved. This is quick and treats nearly all of the construction material as a waste product. In response, a petition was drafted that

Figure 16.10: Chris Tucker, *One of these days*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

requested a gradual process of deconstruction instead,[2] which would remain engaged with the community that had formed around the Pavilion over the last sixteen years. The argument was made that its removal was a compelling part of its design (Jones, 2011). Community and political support for this option followed, and this longer and more highly skilled process was costed at only 10% higher than the less respectful and creative process of simple demolition; the use of smaller machines and the possibility of recycling much of the material counteracted the increased labour costs. The deconstruction was to take a week, and one day prior to this, I staged a well-attended art event, in which I projected onto the Pavilion's wall an architecturally mapped twenty-minute film, *One of These Days*.[3] This highlighted the performative dimension and essential temporality of architectural design already implicit in the Pavilion.

Destruction, demolition and deconstruction

The processes by which a building is removed fall into one of three categories: destruction, demolition and deconstruction. Beyond the unaltered use of a building lies preservation and its possible conservation as outlined earlier. Destruction is the most violent of the removal processes, being associated with war. This might be an unintended effect of war, but quite often the intent is to erase the collective memory associated with its existence, or fulfill a symbolic act against an object of high cultural or social value (Thomsen et al, 2011).

Demolition is the most commonly used process to regenerate the urban environment, and is often occasioned by the loss of value or function, and the wish to release the potential of a particular site. It is the elimination of all constructed parts leaving only a clear site ready for development. Partial demolition of a building can take place as a process of preservation, and in some cases where changes to the built fabric are regular, the waste generated has been shown actually to exceed that associated with a well-timed demolition and new construction (Thomsen et al, 2011). Mechanical demolition is generally incompatible with either the conservation or recycling of building materials, however this is dependent on the nature and condition of the building (Leigh and Patterson, 2006).

As the cost of new resources and waste disposal continues to rise, deconstruction is being recognised as an urban resource, similar to the urban mining

2   The petition received 133 signatures and can be viewed at: http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/newcastle-region-gallery-art-pavilion-demolished-as-art.html
3   https://distrify.com/films/4385-oneof-these-days

Figure 16.11: Chris Tucker, *Doors,* 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

processes that were common in most cultures before the modern movement changed the nature of resource management within the community. In effect, construction and deconstruction are part of the same industrial cycle, and over time this loop may close even tighter. Where demolition is an undifferentiated process of compressing the mass of a building into trucks, depositing it as landfill, deconstruction is a controlled process that requires careful planning, or more fundamentally, an element of design. The conservation of natural resources is a direct outcome of this process, but its benefits require skills not typically found within demolition teams (Leigh and Patterson, 2006).

Deconstruction is a value-adding exercise that requires a willingness to recycle. Temporary buildings such as the Pavilion highlight this need to consider the life of materials beyond an initial construction. Buildings destined for demolition need to be investigated as opportunities for deconstruction, a process that should involve the skills existing within the construction industry. A potential end user or designer could be required to assess what materials might be used elsewhere; the builder to assess the logistics of removal, and more broadly how the elements of a deconstructed building might once again become general building materials.

The deconstruction of the Pavilion began on 7 August 2012. Studying both prefabricated parts and general building materials within the Pavilion, and establishing a possible reuse, was easier than thought. Much of the cypress pine boarding went to a small furniture maker who specialised in recycled timber, the patina of the boards being of particular value; other boards in good condition became floorboards

elsewhere. Some sections of walls went to varied individuals as complete constructions that have become other types of objects, particularly as tables and garden furniture. Twelve complete portal frames went to an individual for reconstruction, four others were cut out as fully lined assemblies and used in various locations, again often in gardens. The galvanised sheet and cappings were recycled as were many other smaller elements such as galvanised pipe, bolts and framing members.

As parts of the Pavilion were redistributed for various reuses, the cost efficiency of the deconstruction process became more obvious. The lightness of the construction, used as a method to reduce costs, provided a more efficient deconstruction process as well. Very few elements were hidden by linings, reducing both the unknowns within the construction, and the labour of disassembly. A rational use of materials is such that it always asks what the minimal materials required are for an intended function, and expresses a yearning for architectural lightness captured succinctly in Buckminster Fuller's question: how much does your building weigh?[4] It was the geometrically complex way that those materials were joined that lent the space its qualities, and it followed in deconstruction that those connections and joints were highly valued as reusable items. The craftsmanship applied to the individually cut and profiled parts and joints, which had been left exposed, told a story of its making, and of processes of material transformation over time.

4   This is a question that Buckminster Fuller would ask when marketing his lightweight Dymaxion House in the 1920s.

Weathering

The Pavilion is conceptually derived from the traditional Australian verandah, minus the house that functionally and visually supports it. Generally speaking, the verandah is that supplement to the house which, mediating the inside and the outside, is exposed to the weather. The walls facing the children's workspace maintained much of their natural timber finish over its sixteen years of use. However, the same boards facing the street were exposed to the urban environment, with no roof overhang, and inclined to face more sky than a usual wall. Thus, its exposed surface was always going to be weathered in varied ways. Rain, light and wind on natural timber has the effect of opening up the grain over time. Cracks and fissures provide spaces for residue, lichen and other plant life to rest, and in turn either protect or continue to break down the physical surface. The environment thereby writes itself into that surface. The sixteen faces of the Pavilion, each differently angled, absorbed the sun, shade, wind and street, and weathered in their own ways; boards facing north east continued to look almost new, while the south facing boards became thick with lichen and other plant life.

These weathered surfaces, in their various conditions of decay, reveal a history of the Pavilion in response to its environment. While surfaces are fascinating in themselves (Mostafavi, Leatherbarrow, 1993, p.65), forming the very conditions of space (Bixby, 2009), it is the inscription of the environment there that layers meanings within the city, generating a space of articulation (Gandelsonas, 1998). As long as the surfaces are not repaired or maintained, they record their interaction within the environment in a literal way. This is often the condition of the urban residual, left as a remnant from some vanishing process. architecture continues to interact with the environment that it now persists passively within.

The weathering and possible deterioration of the building within the environment is often considered a failure of the architectural intention. Where surfaces are considered to be pure and faultless, as in many modern and contemporary buildings, the process of weathering is required to be suppressed as it creates a different impression from the one originally intended.[5]. Weathering on these surfaces requires repair, often undertaken by cleaning and painting the surfaces so they once again appear like new. Apart from the negative effect this has on resource usage, it also removes the recorded layers of interaction the building

Figure 16.12: Chris Tucker, *Urban reading 1*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 16.13: Chris Tucker, *Urban reading 2*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

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5   An example of this process is the evolution of Le Corbusier's social housing project in Pessac.

has had with the environment, and in doing so negates this history.

The surfaces of urban space are marked by their interaction with the public. Those buildings that have a public frontage are often regularly cleaned and updated to appear once again fresh and new. However, in the parts of the urban network that are less valued for their physical appearance, the residue of public interaction and weathering is afforded time to become layered and textual. The surface records its interaction with urban space, and in doing so tells its own history. As Kenzari states, 'matter is ready to receive and to keep alive the pervasive and slicing trace of a human being kept aside and condemned to silence' (Kenzari, 2004, p.21). Cutting into a building's surface is a radical intervention into the social fabric of urban space; it 'brings one history to a standstill but releases another in a moment of shock' (Muir, 2011, p.185).

Releasing the void

Just prior to it being removed, so as to free up the piece of land it has occupied for many years, the Pavilion has become perfectly functionless. If form follows function then what is left must become a pure object, or what is often referred to in the discipline as pure architecture. The marks of use, weathering, and present disuse are the most obvious changes that it has undergone, but it is essentially the same building. It is now without a useful function, but its form obviously remains, as a memory of what it looked like when it was first built. As an architectural and urban object, the opportunity to undertake the architectural transformation from building to open space, to describe how it leaves this space, is rare within the practice of architecture; or rather, it is an opportunity that has often been overlooked. Elements of the Pavilion can be surgically removed, structural breaches can be entertained, all the while experimenting with the sensation of constructed space. This process retains the object as architecture, and as long as constructed material remains to frame the void, it can continue.

The work of Gordon Matta-Clark offers insights into these processes, and the sculptural use that might be made of buildings that are due to be demolished. One of his works, *Conical Intersect* (1975), carried out at Plateau Beaubourg adjacent the Pompidou Centre that was then under construction, is of particular interest regarding the construction of the void. Conical Intersect, by carving into an established functional form – that of a terrace house – reduces the architectural capacity of its construction, to an assemblage of materials. The creation of the void exposes the architectural processes that remain hidden while the building retains only a memory of its function, releasing the useful object as an abstract space. Krivy (2010, p.839) suggests that the creation of the void is not a 'negation of architecture but exposure of its negativity.'[6] It exposes the architectural object stripped of its function, or as Matta-Clark put it, it 'embrace[s] the impossibility of inhabiting that moment' (Matta-Clark quoted in Lee, 2000, p.55). Jonathan Hill (1998, p.80) reflects that '[a]rchitecture is the gap between building and using, just as literature is the gap between writing and reading.'

The deconstruction of the Pavilion clearly acknowledges *Conical Intersect* as inspiration and instruction on how the architectural process need not be limited to the intention of creating a functional object. *Conical Intersect* involves far more ambitious cuts into a more substantial building than was required for the Pavilion, but the series of cuts that I proposed for the Pavilion involved the apparent (if not real) risk of collapse. The danger inherent in a building with a series of cuts unearths the sublime within ordinary buildings and ordinary spaces. It makes buildings appear unstable, not just physically, but emotionally or psychologically. It is the point where the ground becomes cliff or where the ground breaks against the surf. There is an indeterminacy that destroys the security that defines even the most elementary architectural space. Being within a building with purposeful cuts can be a rather confrontational experience, and the spaces created immediately suggest the possibilities of another architecture. Richard Brook has discussed this process of allowing an object's appearance to suggest new uses as a way of establishing contingency and emergence (Brook and Dunn, 2011, p.25). The sequence of cuts to be made into the Pavilion was documented in a movie file that reflected the deconstruction process undertaken by the demolisher. The sense of theatre created by systematically cutting into a building as if an architectural model one-hundredth its actual size also brought an unusual sense of scale to both the street and the Pavilion.

To supplant habitat with intrigue and the uncanny requires calculation, control and strategy. The edges of the cut need to be calculated and clean, sliced as if with a scalpel. The geometry of the cuts, and the timing of their arrival, need to be considered in terms of a sequence, which might only end when the void is fully released as open space. A building doing this

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6   According to Krivý (2010), negativity is 'before' and 'after' architecture, and includes the 'invisible' materiality of urban space and buildings that is usually ignored; negativity finds its purest expression today in obsolete industrial architecture.

Figure 16.14: Chris Tucker, *Hole*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 16.15: Chris Tucker, *Open*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

through deterioration within the environment alone is a different process; it is the conscious act of design that established the architectural content of the Pavilion's deconstruction. A horizontal datum within a natural landscape creates a clear threshold between what is constructed through thought, and what is a consequence of natural selection. Thought, or in this case design, is the mental process that maintains the object as architecture while releasing the void.

Decadence

Making sophisticated cuts into a building that will soon disappear is a decadence afforded by art, particularly as the work itself is temporal. Passers-by and otherwise interested people appreciated the deconstruction process; some enjoyed the novelty, others as a possible act of urban vigilantism, something that might have no approval to proceed; others simply enjoyed the positive experience of a process of unmaking that was as creative as it was destructive. There does appear though something radical and uncontrolled in a process that allows the public to re-use the fabricated parts of a building directly from a street. A press release from the 'Save our Figs' lobby group expressed horror at the prospect of cuts being made

Figure 16.16: Chris Tucker, *Gone*, 2012. Courtesy of the architect.

into its surface, and the public being invited to take pieces home. The intention was framed differently, stating that the Pavilion 'is about to be chopped up – or, in Council's words, 'deconstructed under Mr. Tucker's supervision', and people are being encouraged to – wait for it – take pieces as souvenirs!' (Raschke, 2012). How to treat waste is a significant responsibility for local governments, yet the systems in place are overly concerned with locating it in bins. Beyond the waste it creates, the problem with the bin is psychological; placing waste within a bin somehow releases the producer from the responsibility of having created it in the first place (Hawkin et al, 1999, p.49). The Pavilion was almost entirely recycled; as stated earlier, very little was actually placed in a bin. In the moments before the deconstruction process began, the original intention for creating the Pavilion had been removed; it had become perfectly functionless. Critically, its form and original architectural content still remained, and by cutting into its surface as a continuation of the design process, to firstly frame the void then to remove it entirely, effectively closed the architectural loop that was the Pavilion. The process responded to the residual nature of the Pavilion, and through an urban performance, reinforced a social, cultural and architectural condition that still resided within its construction. Kristiaan

Borret (1999, p.242) has described these types of urban performances as libertarian, marginal, deviant and even disrespectful of the traditional codes of the city. As Groth acknowledges, it is also these types of spaces that defy urban meaning; they can establish temporary activities that challenge planning processes, questioning their relevance (Groth, Corijn, 2005).

Matta-Clark's innovation lay in sculpting the by-products of urbanity (Lee, 2000, p.73). In doing so, he made residual buildings function as transient monuments of a kind, just moments before they disappeared. He was the 'marauder of the blank wall' (Kenzari, 2004, p.18), opening walls up to the light and revealing what lay hidden beneath the surface. His cuts, like the voids he created, have long disappeared; instead, they are reconstructed and reclaimed as photographs and photomontage. The deconstruction of the Pavilion was an intriguing social and architectural experiment born upon a building that could have quietly been loaded into a bin within a few hours. Instead, a responsibility implicit within the construction of the building itself was answered. The pavilion, as an architectural type, presented the opportunity for experimenting with how one might take such responsibility.

Figure 16.17: Chris Tucker, *Chunk*, 2012.
Courtesy of the architect.

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