

There are three types of art that can be delivered at SWBA:

1. art that is one with the architecture and/or landscape, and, as such, is realised through the core design and construct programmes;
2. art that is retro-fitted to the architecture and/or landscape, and, as such, can follow a different timetable; and
3. art that is activity based and curriculum focused, and can happen after we have all left the project.

Types 2 and 3 Art will probably be the responsibility of a commissions manager, and, while we can point towards the possibilities of what this art might be, we shouldn't be prescriptive or limit the possibilities at this stage. Both Types 2 and 3 Art will be funded via the %4Art allowance. Otherwise the %4Art budget can be used to pay for 'extra-over' expenditure on art in the architecture and/or landscape.

Type 2 Art might be a reaction to the completed architecture and/or landscape, i.e. it might need the new built environment in place before the possibilities/opportunities can be defined. Type 2 Art is about commissioning.

Type 3 Art isn't part of the design agenda but is very much part of the BSF change agenda. It will be activity based (i.e. artist + students), may generate an exhibition or performance, etc.. Type 3 Art is about programming.

It was clear at yesterday's meeting that the constraints on dialogue and the tight timetable for design means that the 'sense of place' briefing material I put together at the start of this project will be best used as briefing material for the later Types 2 and 3 Art commissioning and programming. We don't have the time to do this 'sense of place' narrative proper justice during the design phase.

Type 1 Art

So 'we' (i.e. you, me, Jo, Richard, Andy, et al) are really only dealing with Type 1 Art at this stage, i.e. that which is originated in the design team process and which is realised as part of the main build programme.

Type 1 Art is about the design team, and is usually an architecture/landscape 'event', or a narrative that is played out against the architecture/within the landscape. Type 1 Art works with the architecture and landscape, it is not a separate conceptual layer. Type 1 Art also includes decision making about colour, surfaces, finishes, lighting, etc. that are part and parcel of the detailing of architecture and landscape.

At the moment, the architecture and landscape are about the horizontal in terms of:

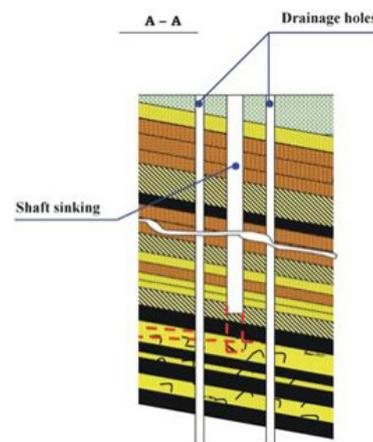
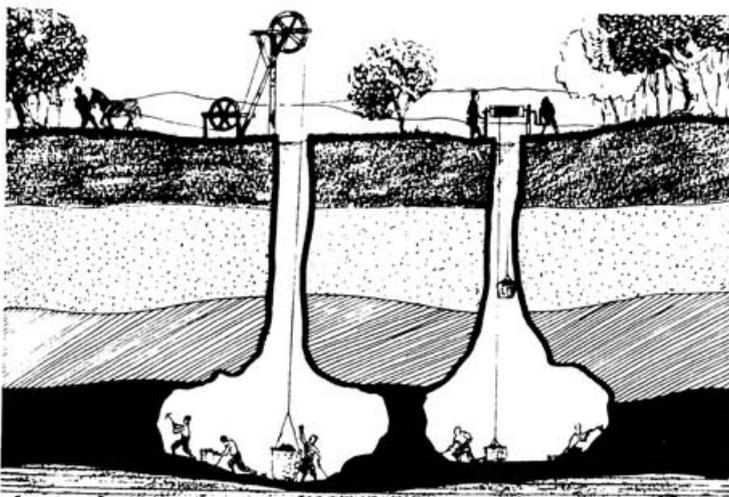
push / pull

stacking and terracing.

See my e-mail 'jenga = stacks' 25.06.2010.

Type 1 Art can work with this horizontal proposal, or set up the vertical.

At Bilston, we could work with the idea that the horizontal characteristics of the architecture and landscaping are like coal seams, and the art is like the vertical mine shafts that 'cut' these horizontals. Not in any obvious way, of course!



Curriculum

The other thing that Type 1 Art can respond to is the curriculum, and there are a number of groups and institutions now looking at the combination of art and science [for example, see: <http://www.artscatalyst.org/>].

Another relevant example is the Museum of Art & Science at Ben-Gurion University which looks dreadful, but which has attempted to bring together ART and SCIENCE, as in:

"Among the scientific concepts illustrated in the museum are, for example, Einstein's theory of relativity, gravity and the absence of gravity, entropy, alternative medicine, infinity, the big bang, motion and fluid flow, the concept of time and periodicity as well as perspective. For each category, paintings were selected to depict a specific scientific principle, some by deliberate design of the artist, others without any such intent. The scientific principles and sciences that served as a basis for the creation of art include, for example, chaos, space sciences, fluid flow, holography, holusion, rheology, zoology and botany, the psychology of vision cognition by the brain demonstrated by visual illusions, virtual motion as well as impossible and contradictory situations."

As you know, I've been interested in how the design team of architecture + landscape + art can develop a new school environment that expresses SWBA's specialisms of ENGINEERING (civil engineering and built environment) and SCIENCE (health, social care, and medical science).

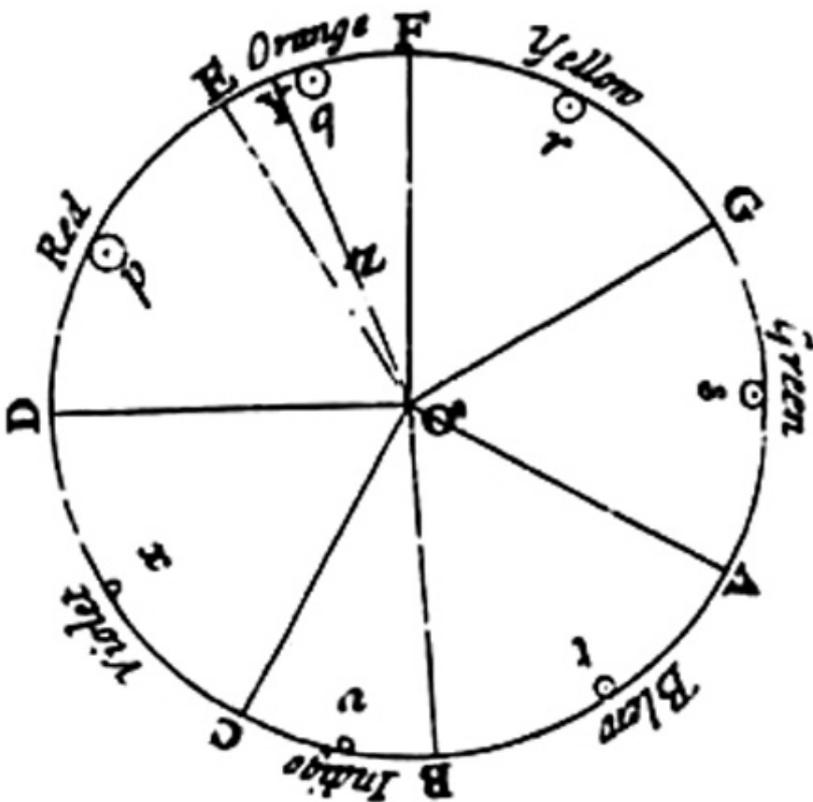
But given the need to resolve basic things like access, layout and adjacencies, I don't think we're going to have the time to explore this idea in any meaningful way. There might, though, be something we can do that could be stunning. A big idea.

Proposal #1 - Solar Spectrum

When we were looking at the 'garden' level yesterday, I was thinking about how art in proximity to music under the umbrella of science was like Newton's colour circle and experiments with light where he:

"compared colours in the spectrum to a run of musical notes. To this purpose, he used a Dorian mode, similar to a white-note scale on the piano, starting at D. He divided his colour wheel in musical proportions round the circumference, in the arcs from DE to CD. Each segment was given a spectral colour, starting from red at DE, through orange, yellow, green, blew [sic], indigo, to violet in CD."

[see: <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/NATP00006>]



Would it be possible to create a huge 'Prism/Solar Spectrum Artwork' that was part of the atrium experience? Like these by the American artist Charles Ross [see: <http://www.staraxis.org/>].



Charles Ross
4 over 5 +72
Highlands University, Las Vegas
2005

Charles Ross
Conversations with the Sun
Meiji University,
Tokyo, Japan
2004



Charles Ross
SPECTRUM
U.S. Federal Courthouse, Tampa, Florida
1998

This would take some working out (beyond my abilities, I'm afraid), but would be a stunning statement in the architecture. It might also be relatively cheap to do.

As Ross describes his work, "The prism columns are...minimal forms yielding maximal experience. Acting as 'cracks in the world' they offer a view of another dimension of the everyday environment. A dimension made entirely of color and light. Groups of large scale prisms are placed under clear glass skylights, clerestories or windows so that as the sun strikes the prisms, huge bands of spectrum are projected into the architectural spaces. Each prism is specifically tuned to the sun for a particular time of day and season. The spectrums continuously evolve throughout the day, expanding into bright washes or contracting into brilliant bands of solar color, as they move through the space propelled by the turning of the Earth. It creates direct experience of light and reveals forms and structures contained in light."

If this idea is possible, it starts to dictate internal finishes. To be honest, I don't know whether a solar spectrum is possible, but it is the sort of big Type 1 Art expression of science/engineering I am now looking for in this project.



We could also consider the following.

Proposal #2 - Things we shouldn't forget

At the other end of the scale spectrum, I'm still interested in the memory of the earlier Stonefield School, and how teaching would have been via rote learning ("which avoids understanding of a subject and instead focuses on memorisation"). I'm interested in the idea that as you travel vertically up/down through the horizontal layers of the school, you encounter curriculum specific 'mantras' or mottos or 'things we shouldn't forget'. Statements like:

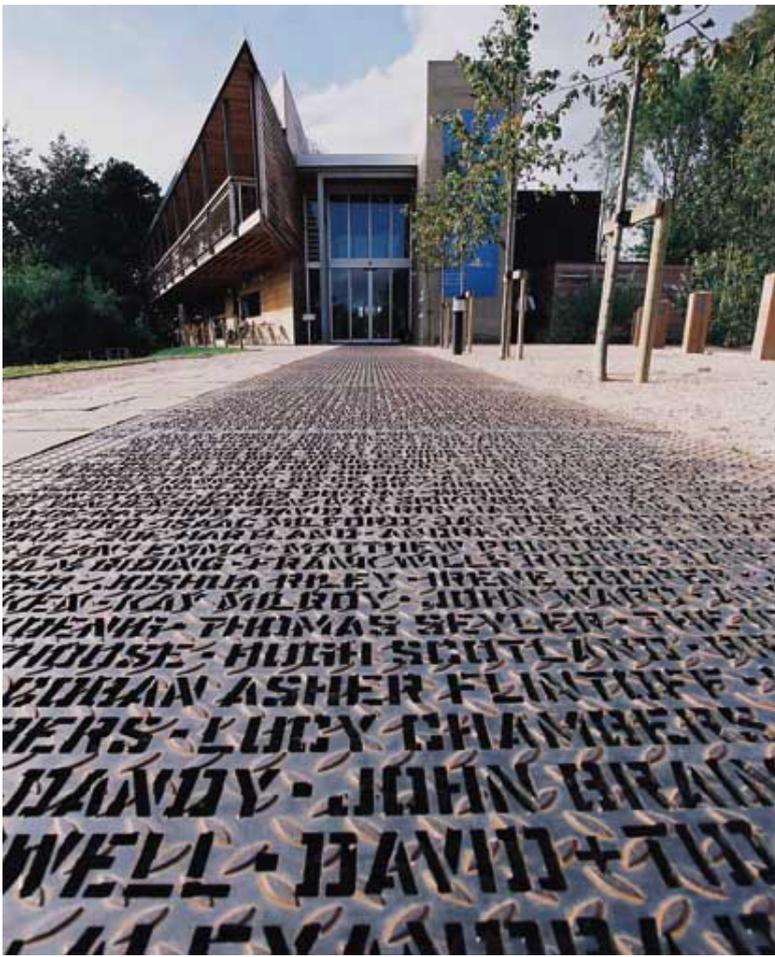
"At the speed of light, length shrinks to zero while mass and time approach infinity."

or

"Infinity is not just one divided by zero."

and as you move vertically through the horizontal stacking of subject areas, the statement changes accordingly. So at garden level the statements are about art and music, at the next level science, engineering and food, then maths and english, and so on.

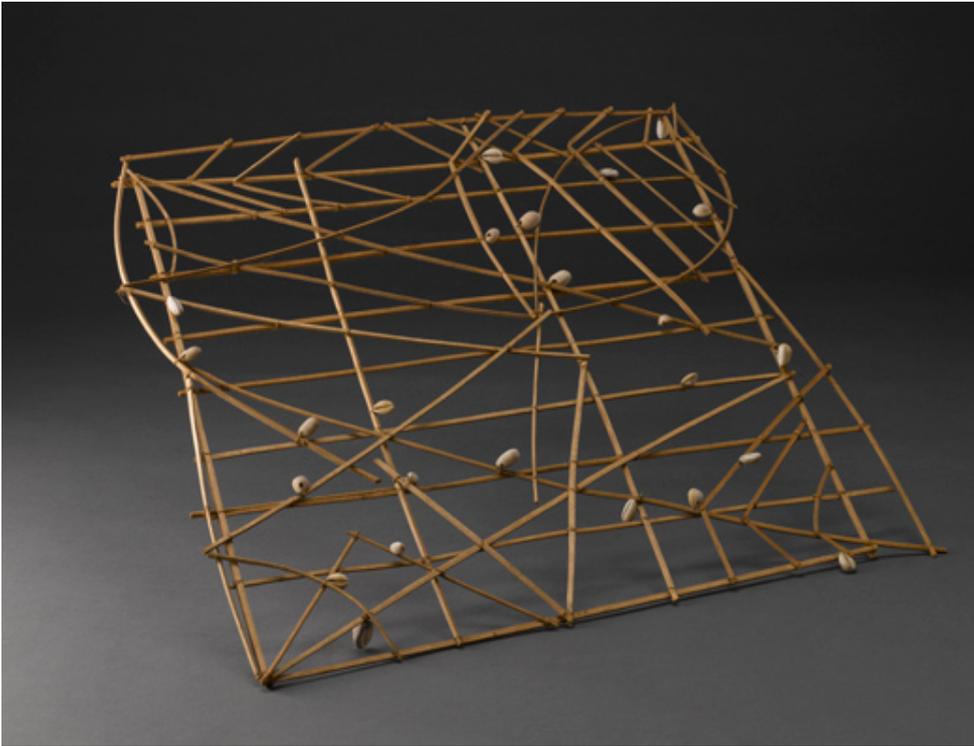
These statements appear in the step risers for the primary stair wells, are audio in the lifts [see: http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/blogon/view_video/814/martin_creed_singing_lift_work_no_409], and extended as lazer cut lettering in metal paths out into the landscape, like Gordon Young's path at Yorkshire Sculpture Park [see: <http://www.whynotassociates.com/en/walk/walk.php>].



Gordon Young and Why Not Associates

Proposal #3 - artifacts

I'm not sure whether this is a Type 1 or Type 2 idea. There's an interesting current initiative at the Science Museum in London which is looking at the relationship between art and science. Actually, it's not very interesting except for how some of the scientific exhibits look like art. Like how this 'Sailing chart of the Marshall Islands in Micronesia' is a bit like a Picasso's 'Construction in Wire' (1930s?). There's something here about taking a bunch of students to see the scientific instruments collection at the Science Museum, and from that experience commission art that uses the same formal language.



Analysis Drawing

Finally, after yesterday I felt we need an analysis drawing of how the building is orientated to the landscape. Something that both underpins and extends the information in the 'DCS 023 bilston consultation 4 landscape' drawings. Something that shows the sun path and shadow fall, identifies the best places for growing stuff or for being outside, etc., that gives us a start on the decisions about colour, reflective/absorptive surfaces, lighting, etc.. Is this something you want me to do? If so could one of you let me have a base line drawing showing the building block against the contours.

David Patten