Tim Jones: Covert 7 City, 1989

Tim Jones sculpture, Covert City 7 was a response to the increasing density of Melbourne’s cityscape, which had been transformed by the 1980s building boom into a high-rise metropolis. While Melbourne city was the literal subject of Covert 7 City, the sculpture references other iconic architectures meaningful to Jones: Manhattan’s bustling urbanity; the medieval Tuscan town of San Gimignano; Gotham City in Tim Burton’s 1989 Batman film; and the labyrinth of buttresses, turrets and towers of Mervyn Peake’s 1946 fictional castle Gormenghast. According to Jones, Covert 7 City conveys a ‘dark sewer-like underbelly, but aspires to Heavenliness’.


Boosterism

Chris McAuliffe, the curator of the exhibition at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, 2013, describes Covert 7 City as representing boosterism. In this instance, the term appears to refer to the literal ‘boosting’ of the city upwards as urban density increases.

However, boosterism can also refer to the ‘boosting’ of the reputation and perceptions of a place. Boosters often dealt in myth-making, idealism and overstatement, but they also aimed to make their dreams reality. Boosterism can be due to a combination of collective self-interest, civic pride and genuine concern for a town or city’s welfare. The main goals were to attract and keep residents, businesses and industries, and to encourage investment.


Open Space Site, The University of Melbourne

The ideas and themes behind Covert 7 City were used as a way of representing the Open Space Site at the University of Melbourne.

The first image reflects the notion of boosterism and the promotion of The University of Melbourne as a prestigious University. The image depicts the site in a bright and inviting manner while the buildings feature many of the promotional banners typically found on the campus.

The second image is one in which the aims of boosterism have been realised. Attracting students and academics to the University has the inevitable consequence of requiring more buildings to house the increased student population. The second image is therefore a literal interpretation of boosterism whereby the campus has been boosted upwards, in a manner similar to that portrayed in Tim Jones sculpture, Covert 7 City.
BOOSTERISM REALISED
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

USES
The site currently has no distinguishing features that would attract people onto the site i.e., it is nodeless. However, this means it is a blank slate, ideal for future development.

The area could be used for eating and drinking coffee, as a meeting point, for socialising, and for reading or studying.

The area can also provide students and staff of the university with a place to retreat from the academic environment of the campus.

LINKS - VISUAL LINES
The site faces towards Swanston Street unlike the majority of buildings within the campus which face inwards. Therefore the site has the potential to be developed as a welcoming, facade to the campus.

The area is also visible from the Swanston Street footbridge and from the windows of the David Caro Physics Podium to the North of the site.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS - BASEMENT ROOF AND ELEVATION
The site is the rooftop of the Physics basement so it is limited in terms of soil depth.

The presence of Physics basement means that the slope/height of the site is quite steep (rise of over 1.5 m across 20 m distance). This places considerable limits on the extent to which the site undulations and elevations can be modified.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS - SOLAR ACCESS
The site is open to the east and also relatively open to the north. However, the Physics building is immediately adjacent to the west of the site. Therefore there is good solar access for the first half of day but it can be shaded in the afternoon.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS - VEGETATION
There are two large elm trees on the east border of the site. Elm trees are deciduous so provide shade during summer and allow sunlight to enter the site during winter.

However, many Elm trees in Melbourne are suffering from disease which may affect the long term viability of these trees.

The Elm trees have a considerable canopy which typically reflects the spread of the trees root system. Therefore any excavation of the site will likely affect the root system of the trees.

There are several existing garden beds on the site, however these do not appear to be thriving and have no strong visual appeal.

LINKS - PATHS
The site has several access routes from within the campus and easy access from the perimeter of the campus.

LINKS - TRANSPORT
The site is close to the tram stop on the corner of Elgin Street and Swanston Street. However, the majority of trams terminate further down the line at Monash road. Therefore, the site is a reasonable walking distance from one of the major entrances to the campus.

NODES
Two cafes (Castro’s Kiosk and The Potter Espresso Bar) are relatively close by so the area is already within a popular congregation zone for students and staff of the University.
CONCEPT DESIGN:
DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Singular, smooth, curved form transformed into multiple, irregular, sharp pieces.
Finding order in the disorder of a broken bowl.

Narelle Bethune, 15546, ABPL20038 Explorations: Landscape Studio 1
Mend....
The mended bowl still has the general form of a bowl, however its function has radically changed.

Support...
The introduction of spaghetti is used to highlight the changed nature of the bowl. The bowl no longer holds or supports the spaghetti. Instead, there has been a role reversal and the spaghetti has become the supporting structure for the bowl.
The current site tends to have the character of a raised platform, making people feel as if they are on display when they use the site.

The form of the broken bowl could be used as a privacy screen to provide a sense of enclosure while still allowing sunlight and views in and out of the site.
CONCEPT MODEL: PRIVACY SCREEN WITH LIGHTING

Subtle translucent nature of spaghetti has the quality of luminescent poles. These could be used to provide light while also providing a sculptural feature to an otherwise gloomy site at night.

Narelle Bethune, 15546
ABPL20038 Explorations: Landscape Studio 1
ASSIGNMENT 3: INITIAL IDEAS
Explorations of different ways in which my broken bowl could be oriented to provide screening and/or shelter.

BROKEN BOWL : SLIDING SCREEN IDEAS

Explained the possibility of having the fractured pattern on a screen made of two separate parts on top of each other as demonstrated by the grey and blue sections in the images above. When the blue section is moved upwards, it covers the cut out sections of the grey screen underneath it.

In this way the canopy could provide dappled shade or complete cover (i.e., from rain) depending on the weather conditions.
NEW IDEAS

I started exploring whether the ideas of a broken object could be applied to our site in different ways. I explored two ideas relating to the ideas of a city that has cracked under pressure. These included, 1) whether we could manipulate the surface of our site as if were a fractured object and 2) whether we could view the buildings on the campus in a fractured/broken way.

BROKEN GRID - BROKEN TOPOGRAPHY

The Melbourne City Grid and its Topography

The University of Melbourne Campus

The Melbourne city grid applied to the Open Space Site

I wondered if an analogy could be drawn between the city grid and our site as both could be seen as being a (possible) centre point for activity with various access routes branches out from this centre point. I also considered how the unusual topography of our site to some extent mirrored that of the city grid with the north corner of both areas having the highest elevation and the south corner having the lowest.

I then started thinking about how the geometry of the grid or the square interacts with the topography. With my fractured bowl in mind, I started thinking about our site in terms of a fractured grid with different segments elevated. I wondered whether this could be a way of dealing with the different elevations of the site that would be more appealing than its current form.
I wanted to see if there was a way of combining the ideas that came out of Assignment 1 (The city boosted upwards) with the ideas from Assignment 2 (broken/ fractured bowl) as I felt that the ideas that came out of the broken bowl had no real meaning for our site whereas the ideas of boosterism did.

I wondered if we could view our site in the various stages of boosterism with the basement representing the past, the ground plane representing the present day and the area above ground representing the future with the future represented as a fractured/segmented building. In other words, a building that is not really a building.

While I really liked the sculptural element of the building fragmented into planes, the idea is perhaps too dominant for both the concept and also the open space site.

This led me to start thinking about ways to represent a building of the future without actually having a structure there. Two ideas suggested were to have just the beginnings of a buildings structural elements (i.e, the piles that support a building or the columns that support the floors of a building) or to represent a building using lighting or lasers. These ideas led me to my final design.
ASSIGNMENT 3: FINAL DESIGN
DESIGN SUMMARY

My design stemmed from the ideas that came out of studying Tim Jones sculpture, Covert 7 City in which there is a city that has literally been boosted upwards in response to increasing urban density.

I felt that these ideas related very clearly to our site and the University of Melbourne Campus as a whole. At times our campus appears to be in a perpetual state of construction, renovation and upward expansion as the University seeks to utilise every square inch of the campus.

One of the ideas behind Tim Jones work is that the city consists of buildings built upon existing buildings so that the city progressively rises upwards. In a way this boosterism reflects our site as we are designing for a site that is effectively the roof of an existing building. But there is also the possibility that the physics building will be knocked down and replaced in the future with a multi-story building.

So my design seeks to respond to the changing nature of the university and seeks to capture the past, the present and the future possibilities of our site. Using the ideas of boosterism and buildings built upon buildings, in my design, the area below ground represents the past, the ground plane represents the present day while the areas above ground represents the future of the site.

Past
To showcase the past history of the site I wanted to expose the concrete bunker and turn it into a new Physics Museum.

Present
In keeping with current state of redevelopment occurring around campus, I have chosen to represent the present as if it were a site that was about to undergo major building works. Drawing inspiration from these I have designed seating, planter boxes and rebar columns with lighting that all reflect the raw aesthetic of construction processes.

Future
And lastly, the lighting within the rebar columns provide a sense of what the future possibilities of the site may be as our campus is boosted ever upwards.
Tall benches constructed of timber and concrete, coupled with rebar column bar stools. Designed to link the Potter Cafe to the open space site.

The offset timber battens on the benches are reminiscent of piles of timber often found on building sites.

This area provides students and employees of the university access to shelter and power for laptops.
PRESENT | REINFORCED | BUILDING UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Exposed concrete roof of physics basement to display the true nature of the site
- Cor-Ten steel stairs to emulate materials on a construction site
- Glass pavers on sections of basement roof to allow view back into the history of the site
- Cor-Ten steel cladding on garden bed and edge of ramp to emulate construction site
- Concrete pavers on ramp
- Glass pavers on edge of physics basement to highlight transition from old to new
- Native grasses in garden bed and planter boxes. These reflect the plants that typically grow on building sites
Lights within rebar columns provide a sense of what the future elevation of a building may be. These lights aim to improve the nighttime experience of the site.
ASSIGNMENT 3:
ALTERNATIVE IDEAS
In my final design I produced two different versions, one with significantly more vegetation (i.e., the Elm trees retained and with creepers planted within the rebar columns instead of using them as lighting) and the other version with the vegetation stripped to the bare minimum. I decided to go with the version with the vegetation stripped bare as I felt that this fitted more closely within the design concept of a construction zone. However, I equally felt that vegetation should be retained and included as much as possible as this is what would make an area more aesthetically pleasing to visitors.

I also explored other ways in which a future building could be represented using lighting. One of my alternative ideas was to project images of buildings onto the physics building in a manner similar to that used in the White Night festival recently featured in Melbourne (http://whitenightmelbourne.com.au/).
REFERENCES

Boosterism

Corten Steel Cladding

Structural Glass Floor System
http://www.ibpglassblock.com/floor/sg.htm

Tim Jones, Covert 7 City

White Night Festival Melbourne