

## **Neither here, nor there.....**

Working with Lisa Scantlebury on her new works for Architecture Week, “Neither here, nor there” certainly raised my own awareness of architecture and urban planning. Her brief was many-layered and the lead-in time very short – only six weeks to respond to four locations. Lisa first used this photographic collage approach in her work for a commission by Station Gallery in Bristol in 2005. There, she created a frame around the actual building, presenting imagery on 3 sides depicting the quayside without the building on it – as if erasing the architecture, creating a visual void. It worked as a ghosting, because the material allowed the viewer to see through it’s semi-opacity and see behind, sharing it’s secret, that the building was merely concealed, not removed. Seen from a distance, it was as if the building had never existed. Close-up it revealed it’s architectural determination. Architecture can be hard to ignore.

The works Lisa created to launch Architecture Week in Bristol, Gloucester, Plymouth and Swindon developed this idea, with a slightly different approach used for each location. Visiting each place with a heightened awareness of urban planning to consider, and a specific agenda – to make people reconsider their familiar surroundings- raised our awareness of the specific character of each site. Moods and weather played their part, as they always will. Bristol was terrifying, making us want to plug our ears and cover our eyes – movement and noise, traffic and people, no respite, rushing and racing. Like lemmings. few people looking up, most forging ahead with only their destination in mind. How could an artwork interject there, make people pause, slow down, possibly even stop short? By creating an architectural structures that were temporary and extended the existing streetscape, Lisa’s screens blocked out the usual vistas and provided another element, an exit, a bolthole. We think we know this area so well - we know there are no real steps down towards the water, only ornamental watery steps. And we know the docks well too, the turning point for the ferry, the industrial museum in the distance, all gone. In its place was a piece of architecture, which could not logically be there. We knew that. And it raised questions about the other architecture we regularly ignore. Hopefully, it will have made people think.

Transferred to Swindon, to a busy pedestrianised square, the same work yet again transformed its location, startling passers-by by its sudden appearance. A similar scale work in Plymouth had yet another impact. These works, all eight feet high and twenty-five feet across, demanded people’s attention. In Plymouth, a site usually used to provide commercial marketing opportunities instead presented a virtual shop window, framing the landscaped vista beyond, returning to the viewer the sight that is normally concealed by publicity vehicles. What they did see was a huge photomontage of what they would see if the image had not been there. Along either side of the central green area, shops stand to attention, waiting for visitors to come and view their wares. Lisa’s work invited them to

come and view the wares of the urban designer, to reconsider buildings - where they are and how they got there. Just as the green landscaping alludes to a country park, not a shopping mall, the image used the language of advertising to seduce the public to question their architectural environment.

Gloucester had the benefit of a more extended make-over, with a series of images hung high above shoppers heads, creating a multi-layered collage which shifted visually as you moved under it. From a certain point, like any optical illusion, the images merged into one, erasing some of the familiar architecture, including the church spire, looking down Westgate. The cityscape appeared to step back in time, to the fields that were there long before the architects even dreamt up their towers and spires, their hostelryes and markets. It reminds us of our beginnings and of the canvas on which urban planners sketch their cities. And in doing so makes us aware, as we always should be, that where we live and we work is our special place and we should have a voice in how it develops architecturally and relish its specialness. Designed and built by humans for humans to utilise. Architecture.

Carolyn Black  
Project Manager  
4 June 2006  
email: [carolyn@hybrideyes.com](mailto:carolyn@hybrideyes.com)