Tonia CARLESS
Oxford Brooks University

AN ARCHITECTURAL GLEANING

Goméz and Paez, then, frame their arguments about Parra in three ways: the personal, the political and the ecological. In this regard, the ecological is seen as the re-use of found objects and this principal, also identified as a modern trait by Brooker, is the explicit subject of our penultimate text by Tonia Carless. Carless takes on the notion of 'gleaning', the activity of searching through debris to find things that can be re-used and incorporated into anything new – in her case, primarily architectural renovations. …

She does this by basing her ideas on Agnes Varda's film, The Gleaners and I*, using it to question the nature of capitalism as a consumer-led economy, on the one hand, and to open up the possibility of seeing design as a work of activism, on the other. This is primarily examined through the presentation of design proposals that use the intellectual framework of gleaning and Varda's film as their guide lines…*

Introduction

Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse [*The Gleaners and I*][1] is a documentary film made in 2000 by the French filmmaker Agnes Varda. It forms the point of departure for a cultural investigation that begins with the famous Jean-Francois Millet painting (1857) of women gathering wheat left over from the harvest (Figure 1). To glean is to take something after it has already been used. Ruth Cruickshank describes it as 'giving something a second life'.[2] It is a process that emerges from contrasting actions: firstly, of discarding and then, secondly, of gathering or collecting up. It is therefore tied up with the notion of dissent; of disagreeing with the dominant notion that something is waste or excess or without value. Gleaning as an act is about contesting whether what is gleaned should have been discarded in the first place.

Figure 1: Jean-Francois Millet, Des Glaneuses, oil painting, 1857

The film follows individuals and groups of people who are on the margins of society and who make an economy out of the process of gleaning. While they are on the fringes, however, they are also able to engage productively with the world through the process of gleaning. In this paper, the concept is applied to architectural research in order to develop a critique of contemporary architectural production and offer an alternative approach to design processes and intentions. The approach to architectural gleaning described here considers the concept of 're-purpose': a concept within which sustainability is embedded in the process of the customisation of materials, space and the city. It goes beyond the materiality of re-use, which is what architecture tends to focus upon, and aligns it with social occupation. Consequently, it is also aligned with a programmatic architectural agenda, rather than the formalist or aesthetic one. The architecture of gleaning, then, is both a spatial and material hacking but also an attitude. It is a cutting into the city and a reappraisal of its ways of living that allows the consideration of the disappearance of boundaries between architect, consumer and user.

The architectural ideas to be discussed here have been examined through the application of an architectural approach that has remade and compressed residual urban spaces, and which also uses a representational method of the 'readymade' (a

technique that allows for the architectural recovery of existing drawings). The projects described in the second half of this paper aim to make visible the 'process of making and production' as part of everyday life in the city and also embrace the informal economies of nomadic and transient populations. Both Agnes Varda's film and the architectural projects based upon it, then, take on a critical view of capitalism and urban life. The intention is to use architecture as Varda does film: as a form of cultural critique which raises questions about the effects of globalisation and consumer capitalism. The aim is also to highlight the potential of the architect to be opportunistic and underline the notion that architecture might be an oppositional practice.

This analysis will examine Varda's conceptions of gleaning and describe a possible adaptation of this through architectural and spatial productions. It will consider resources and their use from an understanding described by Baudrillard[3] as 'being an excess of energy rather than a scarcity'. While architecture has embraced many of the ideas of re-use, this text will consider its excess and waste as having its own vital potential. It is based on research that has examined architectural, spatial and the city's detritus as a 'cluster of possibilities'.[4] It is an approach that has emerged from a desire to examine excessive consumption and the excess production of energies apparent in cities where, according to Baudrillard, 'the city feeds on its own hubbub, its own waste, its own carbon dioxide emissions arising from the expenditure of energy, thanks to a sort of miracle of substitution.'[5]

To some extent, the concept is oppositional to the notion of saving resources in architectural production, like those of 'experts who base their calculations solely on the quantitative aspects of an energy system [and who] inevitably, underestimate the peculiar energy source contributed by energy discharge itself.'[6] The work here will examine precisely this energy source, not as a tactic for legitimising the profession of architecture under current ideological and economic stresses but rather as a potential ecology. The works described attempt to draw a parallel and illustrate an 'architectural gleaning' envisioned as a generative process of seeking residues.

They centre on a number of student design projects that were initially carried out at the 1:1 real scale of the human body but which were subsequently translated to the space along Commercial Street in East London – a site on the fringe of the City. They are projects constructed from a reading of Varda's film documentary, in that they select real sites and subject them to processes of extension and conversion through drawing, recording and making exercises; through gleaning both the cultural and physical conditions of the sites. They use a strategy of identifying the architectural researcher as subject, in the same manner that Agnes Varda identifies and places herself in the role of the anthropological subject of her films.

The Gleaners (Les Glaneurs): A People

Varda is one of the world's leading filmmakers and has been making films for over fifty years. She has a 'lifelong commitment to counter cultural activism'[7] and uses

the *Gleaners and I* to develop experimental and radical processes such as 'bricolage'. Significantly, it was her first digital film[8] and her method of bricolage is as much about the process of documentary filming as it is the content of her film. Her use of the hand-held digital camera enabled her to get close to her filmic subjects and was ideally suited to the subject of gleaning, as it allows for continuity, immediacy and intimacy. Varda seeks out gleaners in the same way that they seek their forage; she finds extremes of living; she seeks those who exist on 'that which is left over'. 'Her consciousness of such marginal poverty is a characteristic of her most subjective films'.[9]

Through the *Gleaners and I*, we are introduced to gleaning as both a rural and an urban phenomenon. In this sense, it is interesting as, in general, 'gleaning' is most often associated with the rural condition: as the act of gathering up and retrieving leftover crops from fields after the profitable harvest. Its considerable significance to the economy of the rural poor, especially to women, has been highlighted by Peter King, who traces its origins from a biblical reference to its being a charitable practice:[10]

> *'And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger… (Leviticus 23:22)'*[11]

King makes a comparison between the differing status of 'gleaning' in French and British law and states that, from the Middle ages through to the eighteenth century, 'France, unlike England, protected the customary right of gleaners.'[12] Throughout the film, Varda too highlights the legal aspects of gleaning, its origins and associated traditions, always rooting its conception in property status and ownership. Consequently, it becomes inextricably bound up with property and land rights and, by extension, access to the use of space. It can be seen as oppositional to cultivation and accumulation and, indeed, to the concept of ownership itself. Mazierska and Rascaroli argue that 'it is potentially closer to the lifestyle of the nomad as described by Deleuze and Guattari'.[13] They argue that gleaners' lives, both urban and rural, are conceived as being 'smooth in a striated space' and thus, the 'gleaner', as documented by Varda, is seen as a marginal figure and a cultural 'other' whose shifting form is always nomadic and whose changing state or statelessness (the statelessness of the vagrant) are always associated with temporary spatial occupations.

Although primarily a filmmaker, Varda uses her documentary to consider the effects of globalisation through different media: painting, photography and aural accounts of legal documentation and custom are all shown.[14] In the *Gleaners and I*, she refers to the paintings of both Jean-Francios Millet and Jules Breton[15] (both of whom lived in France during a time of significant political, economic and agricultural crises) to draw parallels with contemporary culture. She presents gleaning as a method by which the marginalised may find sustenance, both as physical and psychological nourishment, and reveals how the 'gleaner' seeks out leftovers in attempts to learn, adapt and reap what remains after the harvest. 'It is a mental activity of souvenirs gleaned, of loading up, of salvage and retrieval.'[16]

This is an attitude clearly seen in the early-twentieth-century project *Facteur* (Postman) by Ferdinand Cheval and his Ideal Palace at Hauterives in the French district of La Drome.[17] Cheval was a postman by day and collected stones and shells to construct his own fantastical palace, a process that took over thirty years. Whilst not a gleaner of substances previously used, he was using elements that nature had cast out. He collected stones and tufa in his pockets as he walked his post round across the French countryside and piled them into a wheelbarrow to take home later.

Cheval's work has echoes of the 'artist collector/constructor' who built the towers made of discarded dolls and television sets that we see in Varda's film. There are also echoes of this in the 'house of refrigerators' in Paris, a collection of retrieved refrigerators used to make the walls of an entrance to a dwelling. In all of these cases, we see a form of bricolage:[18] the gathering together of things that may be close at hand but, equally, may be from a diverse area. We also see a form of an embedded frugality, ingenuity and surprise. In each case, we have gleaners: activists stooping to retrieve their hoard, collectors scavenging for miscellaneous elements and artists foraging for unexpected detritus. They are diverse in their preoccupations but comparable in their ethic. The same principal can be applied to architecture.

And I (La Glaneuse): She

The film's title, *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse,* when directly translated, refers firstly to 'the gleaners' in the plural as those who are in the film and then to 'the gleaner' (*la glaneuse*, the feminine noun), referring to Varda herself.[19] She identifies the significance of the feminine form of the noun 'gleaner' which does not directly translate into English, saying:

> *'We had to translate it as "The Gleaners and I" which emphasizes in a way the "I". In the French, "glaneuse" refers to an anonymous female gleaner. That little nuance makes it more important than me.'*[20]

In the architectural context that is discussed here, the same nuance is significant: the work documented is intended to refer to the wider individual and anonymous architect, on the one hand, and the user/consumer on the other. No significant distinction is made between the two. In applying the notion of gleaning and its philosophy to architectural design, then, this chapter takes the notion of Joseph Beuys that 'everyone is an artist' and interprets it as 'everyone is an architect'.

In addition to facilitating the reconsideration of the architect as a defining individual, however, Varda's film also offers analogies for how we might begin to reconstruct the waste footage of our architectural spaces. The way she does this is through what she describes as the 'dance of the lens cap'. At one point, Varda forgets to switch off the camera and the film keeps rolling: the camera swinging freely at her feet, following the gleaner as she crosses the documentary fields. This clip, inserted into the film, gives us a sense of the possibilities of retrieval. The 'opportunism' of incorporating this footage into the film raises a question about whether the filmmaker has to be an expert; and

this is a question we equally ask of architecture which may also be able to benefit from an opportunistic method that is not completely dominated by expertise. Architecture too may be able to embrace 'rushes' or the accidental into its approach to design and construction.

Ruth Hottell describes Varda's cinema as being one of subjective inclusion and, in a sense, it is picked up in the way in which she allows the viewer of the film to do their own gleaning; their own scanning of the screen, its characters and its spaces.[21] More importantly, however, it can also be transposed to questions of 'filmic gleaning': who and what is to be included or rejected by the filmmaker. Varda herself describes the process of making the film as 'always being aware of both the method and the wider regime'. She says: 'I had to piece it together… but without betraying the social issue that I had set out to address – waste and trash: who finds a use for it? How? Can one live on the leftovers of others?'[22] To this end, her film must allow the viewer to 'glean'. She should not determine what is or isn't important.

The architectural projects we will discuss here are intended, in the same manner, to open a discourse on theme and method: to question globalisation, to consider its effects upon socio-economic structures, to research retrieval and reclamation. They thus examine the notion of leftover space and materials but, crucially, do so while simultaneously proposing a collapse of the boundaries between architect and user. Just as Varda leaves space for gleaning in the production and viewing of her film, so too our architectural projects are intended to allow users to appropriate the spaces created and their representations, according to their own ends and desires: to make new forms of social space. They are projects that have considered the possibilities of an architecture that can be, in part, released for its own life and given over to a user or a set of users.

The Labour of Gleaning

Gleaning is a process affected by hand. It implies an engagement with the substance of a material itself and, by implication, is associated with being a slow process – one which might involve minutely intensive labour. Henri Lefebvre described Marx's notions on the labour of production under capitalism, in relation to growth in capitalism and space, saying that:

> *'productive activity (labour) became no longer one with the process of reproduction which perpetuated social life; but in becoming independent of that process, labour fell prey to abstraction, whence abstract social labour – and abstract space.'*[23]

Lefebvre's critique of the construction of abstract space is one of the concepts under investigation here. The idea of the labour of production can be seen as another such concept, being significant in terms of how space is organised and, in particular, in terms of the methodologies used in design and construction. It considers the process of commodity reification in capitalism as an expansion of the Marxist ideas proposed by Georg Lukacs, who described the process as being 'determined by the attempt

to flee class guilt and, in particular, to efface the traces of production and of other people's labour from the product'.[24] In this context, it is manifest most obviously in the consideration of the issue of authorship. The projects analysed here aim to question notions of originality, open the possibility for manual work to play a part in design and construction, question architect–author control and, in the process, mark design as a process distinct to the now-administrative project of the architect.

Importance is placed here on the question of originality and the figure of the architect as an individual creative figure, which have been explored in various texts over the years, most recently in *Architecture and Authorship* by Anstey, Grillner and Hughes.[25] These are important notions in our context, in that they reopen a dialogue on the concept of 'architectural action' developed by Cedric Price during the late 1960s. This is the idea of a gap between architectural representation, architectural intention, the projection of the building and the building itself. It reopens questions on the relationship between design, the design process and the purpose of architecture found in projects such as Price's *Fun Palace*.[26] The idea of manual work is also important, in that the architectural gleaning projects described here reinstate an emphasis on materials as *spatial* and, potentially, *social* substance, as retrieved materials are re-assembled by both users and designers.

The projects described were intended as vehicles to make visible the 'process of making and production' as potentially a part of everyday life in the city. There is an organic functionality to the gleaning process that makes it engage more immediately with the social condition of occupation. The projects propose the spatial theory of Raymond Ledrut's[27] 'primacy of action' which suggests that, in order for architecture to be anything more than abstract space, it has to be 'a work of life'. It is suggested that this creation of a 'a work of life' can be seen through radical, self-build construction in projects such as the ones envisaged here that find the fragments (material, spatial and cultural) from which to remake the city.

Michel de Certeau's 'practice of everyday life' considers how space is produced through occupation.[28] His notion of 'everyday life' is used here in terms of the need to put into practice subversive strategies which work directly against the structures of power; strategies he describes as being 'never fixed, rarely visible and always constituted through the fleeting and unexpected appropriation of the spaces of established power'.[29] These ideas manifest themselves in this research through projects aimed at working outside the frame of spaces that might be 'recuperated' for tourism and leisure consumption, as 'event' architecture.[30] The design intention in every case was to waste nothing, with everything being reformed: materials, drawings, films, models, information, programs, journeys, paper, portfolios, photographs, plans, sections, buildings, sites, landscapes, highways, railways, everyday life and work. The projects analysed here were intended to offer ways of remaking the city – or at least, remaking fragments of it.

Contemporary architecture has many precedents for this re-use strategy, some purely material but others extending into the social and political domain. One such example

is that of Samuel Mockbee and Rural Studio's architectural practice, working in Hale County, Alabama, USA. Active during the 1990s, the work of the studio was in part a system of welfare that embraced many of the concepts of gleaning. Rural Studio's program was one of providing low-income housing and 'an architecture of decency'. Their insistence on 'using inventive building methods and scavenged and unusual materials' distinguishes the studio's approach from that of other low-income housing programs of the same period.[31] Combined with an approach where architects and students designed and built in conjunction with the clients (as a reciprocal process of architectural student education), this meant that the process was slow. Like the process of gleaning, it necessarily accrued over a period of time.

More recently, the work of Wang Shu and Amateur Architecture Studio, in China, has illustrated ideas akin to gleaning and the approach to architecture we advocate here. The projects of Amateur Architecture Studio re-use materials, not merely as an economy of recycling but also as an economy of tradition. The Ningbo Historic Museum in Zhejiang Province has, for example, been built from the materials collected from previously demolished buildings and, according to Shu, the focus is upon architecture that is:

> *'Built spontaneously, illegally and temporarily… [A]mateur architecture challenges professional architecture but is generally considered to be insignificant. Professional architects think of buildings too much as physical objects… They can learn from amateurs in that respect'.*[32]

In a country like China, where current change is increasingly rapid, it can also be seen as a practice that attempts to retain some 'histories of production and place'; a phenomenon that inevitably occurs in the architecture of gleaning.

Research Projects

In the projects undertaken with students to develop these ideas, the students were encouraged to 'glean' from the space, to engage directly with found material and to document the site through photography and film. The intention was that they could more immediately engage with the substance of the space and further develop this through representation techniques. One portfolio of work, for example, was constructed as an extension to the found wheels of a shopping trolley; fragments of timber, bolts and string being used to develop an elastic structural model. The portfolio was taken to and from the site as part of the extended gleaning exercise that would allow for the ongoing collection of work and its conversion/use as a discursive model. This process is considered important as part of the understanding of gleaning as a continuous and active process. 'Gleaning means having your hands full; the glaneuse is compelled to work.'[33]

A preliminary project to design an extension and conversion of an existing 'body architecture' (the human body itself) allowed for the use of materials that were able to extend/prolong the life cycle of the existing 'structure'. It also allowed for the

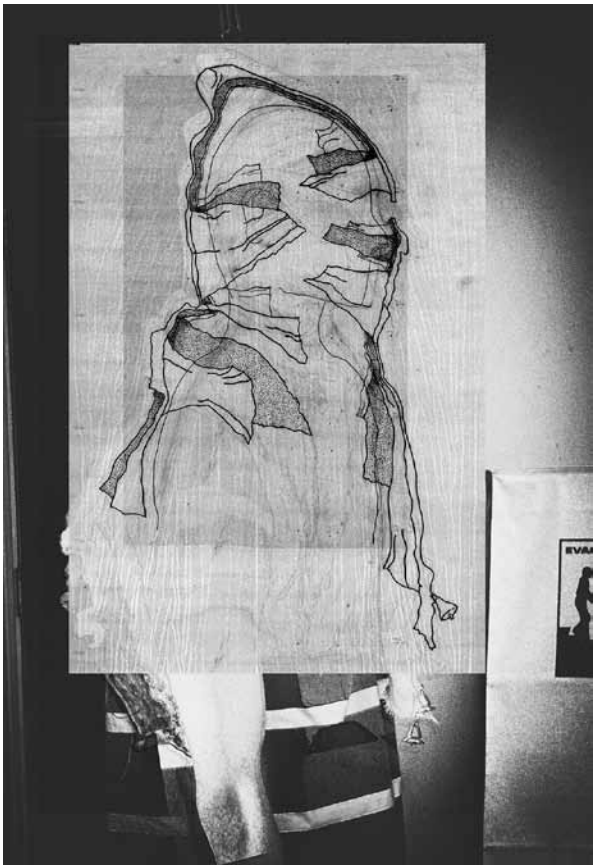


Figure 2: Aural scarf body architecture, collaged drawings, Kah Shuen Lee, 2010

seasonal or functional adjustment of the 'structure' in question and facilitated the use of new technologies to enhance sustainability. The use of the architect/body as 'site' allowed students to work at full/real scale. Furthermore, it allowed for the incorporation of the subject directly into the spatial condition of the project itself (Figure 2). These characteristics may be seen as analogous to Varda's use of herself in the film, particularly in the scene in which she takes up the posture of Jules Breton's *La Glaneuse* pose (with a sheaf of wheat on her shoulder and looking directly into the camera) to 'break down the barriers between filmed subjects and film maker'.[34] The architects here are scavenging for materials and simultaneously recording the process through film and photography and, as a result, the possibility of reading the architect and user as one, or as interconnected and exchangeable, is immediately initiated. It also produces a possible transformation through which 'we become what we glean'.[35]

The idea underlying the 'body architecture program' was that similar remaking strategies might be applicable to the larger social space of the city; we open up

the possibility that attention to the smallest existing conditions might generate larger possibilities. This manifest itself in one of the 'body architecture' projects that proposed the unpicking of a garment and the dismantling of other industrial debris into singular component elements; the aim being to completely reconfigure them as a new structural possibility for housing the body in extreme climatic conditions. This was developed into a 'city factory and construction library' which would facilitate the construction of temporary market stalls as modular dwelling frameworks.

The existing market of Petticoat Lane, off Commercial Street in East London, was proposed as a potential space for the subsequent 'city factory and construction library' project. What emerged from the design process that followed (a process that utilised a number of 'gleaning' strategies itself) was a proposal to insert the 'factory and library' behind the existing productive and functioning shops which operated as extensions to the market stalls. The proposed 'factory' would allow for the making, storage and reconfiguration of market stalls that could be distributed along the wider market site and potentially beyond.

The project worked at 'making visible' the process of production within the everyday life of the city but also aimed at developing the most functionally efficient stall-construction system possible to accommodate all of the requirements of the market traders, including increased security and theft-deterrent techniques. Furthermore, the library was to offer an educational facility specifically aimed at aiding the construction processes and increasing the possibilities of self-build retail units. Ultimately, this is aimed at facilitating the extension of the market concept beyond the current users of the space and expanding 'ownership' of the temporary shops. In conception, it had numerous similarities to Walter Segal's self-build initiatives of the 1970s.[36]

The physical architectural intervention all this involved was relatively humble. It involved the use of hoists and cranes, like those of nineteenth-century warehouse storage spaces, or plug-in, exchangeable service devices that have been employed by many contemporary architects to give a flexibility of function. Here the proposal was to use these elements to 'glean' materials from previous market stalls which could be lifted into the new 'factory production space' where they could be re-configured and reassembled before being returned to the city. The architecture envisaged, then, like the *Gleaners and I*, is modest. It is barely visible as an architectural insertion into the street. However, it offers up the conception of 'user' as architect–builder and potential trader of goods and also raises questions that Varda brings up in her film, such as: 'how can one live off the leftovers of others?'[37] Consequently, it can be said that it directs thinking and discourse about 'the social' on various levels: it raises questions of ownership and authorship, on the one hand, and the potential of re-using and reconstituting materials, on the other. It is both social and ecological in outlook and intent.

Another project developed rooftop squatting cities where detritus from the metropolis might begin to form the framework for a 'high-level urban pier', a form of viewing platform that gives public access to new landscapes and terrains above the city streets (Figure 4). This proposal emerged from an engagement with an existing site that had

Figure 3: Non-Commercial House, Commercial Street, London, Tonia Carless, 2010

already been squatted and re-used, as well as being re-named 'Non-Commercial House Free Shop' (Figure 3). It already had its own website that described the site as a 'squatted social centre and free shop with an emphasis on sharing'.[38] A black flag flies defiantly on the roof, graffiti declares the space 'open' and a strip of found tape demarcates its entrance as 'fragile': like the economy upon which it depends. In the case of this project, the question of who finds a use for society's leftovers had already been foregrounded in the space of the building itself.

The second life that had already been gleaned from the site in the form of the squat was used to develop further the concept of architectural gleaning in this project by adding to, rather than replacing, what was already existent. The material gleaning involved in the proposal was most evident on the re-use of urban debris such as tire rubber – an example of an urban and material excess and a potential landfill problem as well. Here, it was used together with scrap timber in the creation of a form of 'pleasure pier' above the city. The rubber gave the practical possibility of a grip to the surface of the structure proposed but also added to 'comfort' through the creation of a soft-surfaced landscape – a technique that made it more like a park.

The proposal involved using Non-Commercial House as the entranceway up to this rooftop city which was envisaged as opening up other 'gleaning' opportunities such

Figure 4: Rooftop squatting city, Commercial Street, London, Charlie Palmer, 2011

as facilitating access to other empty buildings and spaces and aiding in tapping into potential nearby heat sources such as chimneys which could be 'capped' to allow for the extraction of heat. These interventions were all proposals for a functional and material gleaning but, more significantly, they were also a form of social critique: a rejection of the values prescribed under consumer capitalism.

Another program developed for Commercial Street was seen as an 'aural architecture'. In this case, what was gleaned was both the physical substance of the city and its audible and sonic conditions. The proposed function for the project was as a 'menagerie and manufacturing laboratory' for spider silk. The 'body architecture' project from which this design proposal emerged was a 'sonic scarf' made out of hessian cloth (Figure 2). This emitted sound through simple bell attachments and was intended for use in blizzard conditions or 'whiteout visibility conditions' of extreme cold. It was seen as also potentially functioning as a barrier to be used in sand storms and was capable of offering protection under extreme sun-exposure conditions.

The scarf was developed through a layering up of drawings at 1:1 scale, some of which had been 'retrieved' and were repeatedly used in the creation of a type of layered collage. The Hessian cloth used for the body project was gleaned near the site and re-used again for the site model of the larger architectural proposal of the menagerie sand silk lab; only this time other found fragments, materials and drawings were also incorporated into the creative making process. In the architectural model, found cable ties were used to represent reclaimed railway tracks – the main structure of the building

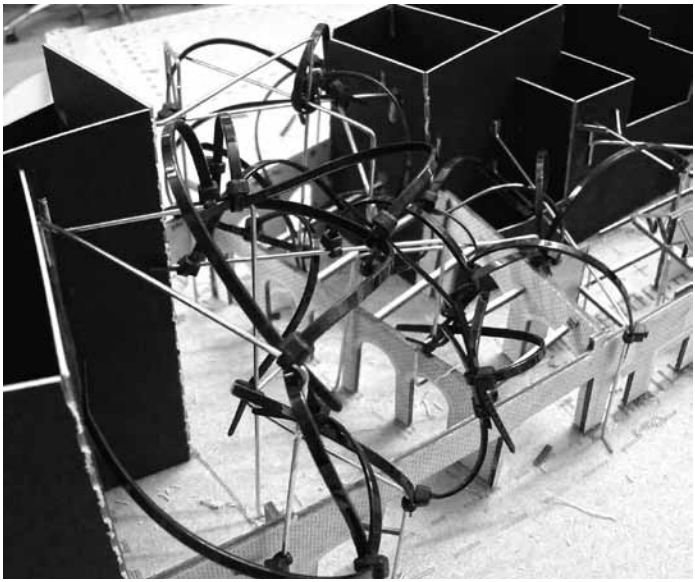
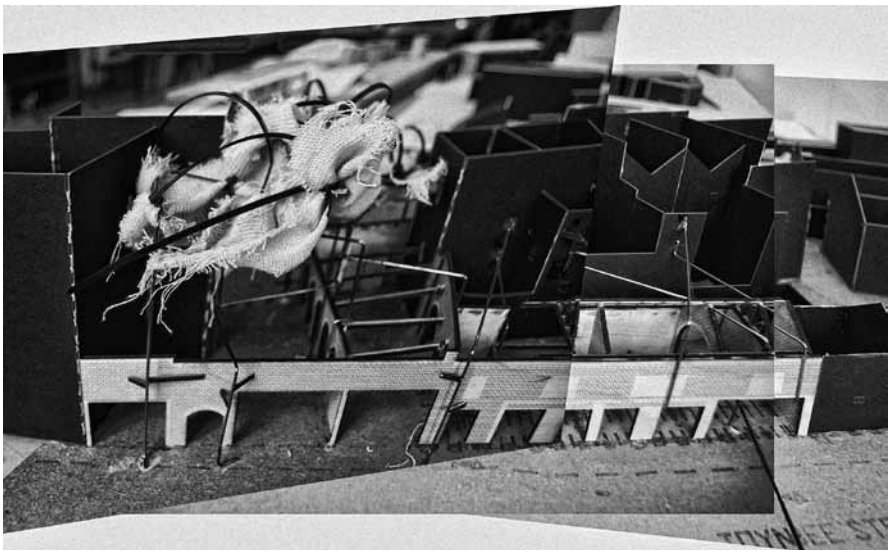


Figure 5: Hessian-and-cable-tie model, retrieved drawings and materials, Kah Shuen Lee, 2011



proposal. The flexibility and tightening collar of the cable ties in their turn fed back into the project by becoming the inspiration and a prototype for a changeable structure finally proposed.

This structure would allow the acoustic properties of the space (the noises of the people, animals and insects inside the menagerie and exterior noises of the city) to

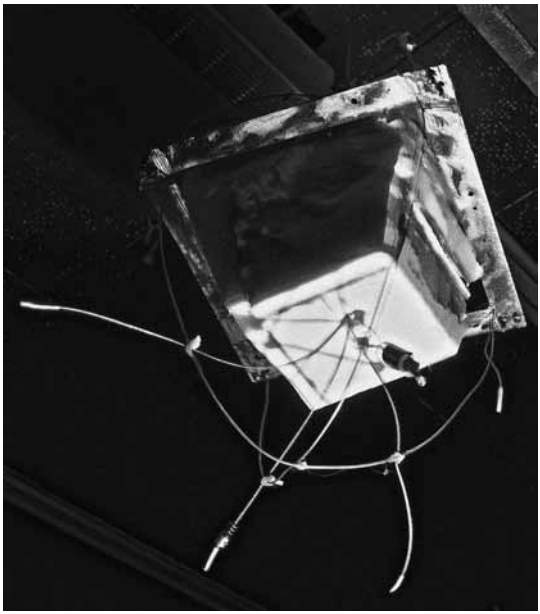


Figure 6: 1:1 model acoustic skin element and interior view of menagerie with vertical aural skin and roof, Kah Shuen Lee, 2011

produce vibration in the building's skin. It was to expand and contract according to the level of absorption required by the particular sound in question (Figure 5). The aim, then, was to use found materials and debris to develop a responsive architectural skin: an acoustic or aural skin.[39] The project also envisaged a giant redwood tree which would function as a structural element by growing in situ and pushing the skin of the structure into new formations as it aged. Nature was to be 'gleaned' in numerous ways.

Beyond the idea of gleaning as re-use, however, this introduction of a natural element such as a tree as a building component suggests a structure with a life span to be measured in hundreds of years – the time required for the full maturation of the tree(s) (Figure 6). This introduces an ecological opposition to the notion of a temporary structure as sustainable, as well as an opposition to the idea that construction and re-use in the city needs to involve 'indestructible' materials with infinite life spans (the opposite to the notion of built-in obsolescence). Here, gleaning takes on the condition of slow and continuous change that contests the designation of the category of waste as a material that has come to the end of its lifecycle.

Shared Practices

The tactic of using found debris in architectural models such as the ones built during this project has often been taken up by students of architecture and interior design as an economy of means. Here, however, it takes on an additional significance: it underlies the whole ethos of the project being presented. Similarly, the gleaned materials proposed for the projects themselves, the reclaimed rail tracks for example, take on another significance beyond that of just the recycling of local materials: they become memory traces, histories that embed themselves in the architectural project that reveal how gleaning can produce its own particular connection with the world.

The gleaning processes applied to the architectural proposals described here all involve picking over and retrieving things that remain. The menagerie project embraced this process through 'listening to the space' over a period of time so as to re-use its sounds and, in this sense (as with the 'market factory – construction library' project and the 'squatted city' project), it allowed the architectural space to evolve as a result of occupation – albeit an occupation of natural elements in this case. The idea that these projects could and should evolve as a result of occupation over time is of course another aspect of the philosophy of gleaning and is evident in each of these projects. In each case, the role of the 'consumer of space' becomes that of the architect: a force or figure that can change the space over time.

Similarly, all these projects share another possible characteristic of gleaning: a diversity of approach and interpretation of the concept and ethic of gleaning itself. In the case of the rooftop squat, it is seen as revolving around the necessity of survival in the city whilst, in the menagerie, it was seen as opening up a new, technologically derived, cultural reading of the city and buildings as material objects. The first project imagined an economy of need coming from the desperation of homelessness and vagrancy in the city whilst the latter emerged from a reworking of the aristocratic menagerie.

Beyond the specifics of each project, however, the nature of the process itself was one that was completely immersed in the concept of gleaning. Developing an exchange across these projects was seen as vital in this regard. Gleaning is, after all, a shared practice that has the potential to operate across class and cultural distinctions. In the case of running these projects, it was thus essential that exchanges between participants, both students and potential clients, were facilitated and encouraged so that ideas on ownership, authorship, control and whose voice is worth listening to could all be challenged.

Returning to the starting point, *The Gleaners and I*, it is possible to identify how Varda demonstrates this fundamental point explicitly. We have already dealt with how she questions notions of authorship through her introduction of the 'accident' and ceding of the act of reading to the viewer. However, through her bricolage technique, she also asks the question of whose voice is worth listening to. The technique allows her to move from one story to the next, each carrying its own socio-cultural critique.[40] Bonner describes it as 'one of Varda's key political strategies'; a strategy through which 'she strives to dismantle the lines that separate poor gleaners from higher classed or recreational gleaners'. In presenting us with these diverse people, Varda shows us that despite 'their different life conditions' there are 'remarkable social connections among them'. Such unusual connections, Bonner suggests, not only show us a diversity of people, they 'question and upend conventions concerning subjects worthy or not of documentation'.[41] Nobody here is given privilege.

This resonates with the words of Amateur Architecture's Wang Shu with regard to a repositioning of what, or rather who, is considered to have value in the architectural context – an issue explicitly dealt with by the projects we have documented in this text. In these projects, there is no regulatory space of hierarchy and control owned by the architectural designer. There is merely a framework for occupation: a ladder to a wider use of the city and a responsive habitat for living. Their intention is to allow for other people (or nature) to develop the projects in the future. In a sense, it is an attitude that makes us connect with the world beyond our own wishes and desires as designers – a connection that energises those normally outside the architectural design and decision process.

That this may be a prerequisite of potential activism is poetically indicated in Varda's film in a scene in which the director and the curator of a small museum in Ville Franche struggle to take a painting out of the 'leftover' archives of the museum stores. The painting by Pierre Edmond Hedouin (1852) is titled *Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm.* As they bring it out into the open and hold it up against the wind, with a real landscape as backdrop, the gleaners in the painting are energised. They no longer stoop humbly as they flee. They are pictured as active participants in their surroundings: critics of the society around them. Although gleaning is a gesture on the margins of survival, it is underlined by Varda as having activist and revolutionary possibilities, as being a critique of waste and a socialist dream.

Notes

[1] Varda, A. (director) (2000) *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* [*The Gleaners and I*] [DVD], France: Zeitgeist.

[2] Cruickshank, R. (2007) The Work of Art in the Age of Global Consumption: Agnes Varda's Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse, *L'espirit Createur* 47(3): pp.19–32.

[3] Baudrillard, J. (1993) *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, Verso, pp.100–5.

[4] See Louis Pons the assemblage artist in *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* (Varda, 2000, op. cit.).

[5] Baudrillard, 1993, op. cit., p.102

[6] Ibid.

[7] Bonner, V. (2009) The Gleaners and 'Us': The Radical Modesty of Agnes Varda Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse, in Columpar, C., and Mayer, S. (eds) *There She Goes: Feminist Film Making and Beyond*, USA, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p.124.

[8] European Graduate School Website (1997–2012) Agnes Varda Biography, retrieved from: http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agnes-varda/biography [accessed on 10 July 2012].

[9] Smith, A. (1998) *Agnes Varda*, Manchester University Press, p.83.

[10] King, P. (1992) Legal Change, Customary Right, and Social Conflict in Late 18th century England: The Origins of the Great Gleaning Case of 1788, *Law and History Review* 10(1): pp.1–31.

[11] Hay, D., and Rogers, N. (1997) *Eighteenth Century English society: Shuttles and Swords*, Oxford Paperbacks, OPUS, pp.86–7.

[12] King, 1992, op. cit., p.3

[13] Mazierska, E., and Rascaroli, L. (2006) *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and The European Road Movie*, London: Wallflower Press, pp.128–9.

[14] In this sense, a parallel can be seen between how Varda presents ideas on the 'capitalization of custom', or of 'turning custom into crime', and the ideas described by the historian E.P. Thompson, who focused on the progression of capitalism in England through *Customs in Common*. (See: Thompson, E.P. (1993) *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*, London: Penguin.)

[15] Painting by Jules Breton, *Calling in the Gleaners* (1859, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

[16] Varda, 2000, op. cit.

[17] Berger, J. (1991) *Keeping a Rendezvous*, London: Granta Books, p.84.

[18] In Pearsall, J. (ed.) (1998) *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Oxford. Clarendon Press, p.225.

[19] Varda, 2000, op. cit.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Hottell, R. (1999) Including ourselves: the role of female spectators in Agnes varda's Le Bonheur and L'une chante, L'autre pas, *Cinema Journal* 38(2): pp.52–72.

[22] Varda, 2000, op. cit.

[23] Lefebvre, H. (1991/1974) *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell, p.49.

[24] Lukacs, G. (1990) *History and Class Consciousness*: *Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Merlin Press, p.264.
[25] Anstey, T., Grillner, K., and Hughes, R. (eds) (2007) *Architecture and Authorship*, London: Black Dog Publishing.
[26] Anstey, T. (2007) Architecture and Rhetoric: Persuasion, Context, Action, in ibid., pp.18–29.
[27] Ledrut, R. (1986) Speech and the Silence of the City, in Gottdiener, M., and Lagopoulos, A. (eds), *The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp.114–34 and p.125.
[28] Certeau, M. de (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell, Berkeley: University of California Press.
[29] Ibid., p.93
[30] Debord, G. (1983) *The Society of the Spectacle*, London: Rebel Press.
[31] Oppenheimer Dean, A., and Hursley, T. (2002) *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and sn Architecture of Decency*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p.9.
[32] Wang Shu: Local hero [2008]: An Interview with Wang Shu (Amateur Architecture Studio), 28 December 2008, Moving Cities.org, Monitoring the Metropolis, retrieved from: http://movingcities.org/interviews/local-hero-an-interview-with-wang-shu/, [accessed 20 June 2012].
[33] Chrostowska, S.D. (2007) Vis-à-vis The Glaneuse, in *Angelakai, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 12(2), Routledge, August, p.130.
[34] Bonner, 2009, op. cit., p.120
[35] Varda, 2000, op. cit.
[36] Walter Segal (1907–1985) was the most significant architectural proponent of self-build in the UK, developing timber-frame methods for rapid and low-cost self-build projects during the 1970s. (See later section of *The Labour of Gleaning* and McKean, J. (1989) *Learning from Segal: Walter Segal's Life, Work and Influence*, Basel and Boston: Birkhauser.)
[37] Varda, 2000, op. cit.
[38] Whitechapel Anarchist Group (January 2010) *Non-Commercial House: Grand Re-Opening!*, retrieved from: http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/2010/01/14/non-commercial-house-grand-re-opening/ [accessed on 14 July 2012].
[39] This project was more akin to that of the recreational gleaners of Varda's film, where gleaning as an economy is practised for its cultural value, as a recording of the city.
[40] Bonner, 2009, op. cit., p.125
[41] Ibid., p.119

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