benches
tables
grounds
**Benches, Tables, Grounds** are familiar elements of the public realm which are critical in most projects that we undertake, but which are often re-interpreted through collaboration, research and engagements with people on site. This taxonomy of objects explores the conventional typologies of street furniture and public space, but from an alternate perspective. This is a language of furniture as specially made, intimate and distorted, as opposed to standard, generic and off the shelf.
Shared Ground Southwark: An image of the completed pilot project showing the raised road table across Thrale Street, formed from in-situ exposed aggregate concrete constructed with Thames river shingle. The precast concrete bench, gingko biloba tree and embedded precast concrete signage create a moment to pause on the sunny side of the street.

1:100 Plan of the Pilot Project: One hundred and fifty metres of Southwark Street beginning at the junction with Borough High Street. The strategy was to widen the sunny side of the street to form a beach-like pavement 'like the foreshore of the Thames turned inland'. The pavement is constructed from exposed aggregate panels which swell at road junctions to make places to sit and which rise to meet the ground floors of buildings.
3 Shared Ground Southwark: An original survey drawing for Southwark Street, London, from the 19th century, illustrating a large central brick arch tunnel below the full length of the street intended for water and sewerage services. All properties along the street have brick arch basements extending under the pavements to link with the service tunnel.

4 Precast Black Concrete Bench: An image from the factory on completion showing the inset white concrete 'childs' seat.

5 ‘Posh’ motif formed from cast glass and embedded in the bench. The motif originates from a child’s drawing completed as part of the consultation process.

6 Drawing of the Bench in Section showing the inset white concrete for the childs seat.
materiality

1 The Pleasure Garden of the Utilities: Two benches constructed from precast concrete with bespoke porcelain-glazed top seats. The specialist panels were constructed from standard urinal slabs in the Armitage Shanks Sanitaryware factory in Stoke on Trent as a collaboration with factory workers.

2 A View of the Completed Benches installed on the site: The bench top was shaped to evoke fragments of an oversize dinner plate with curved raised areas to reveal it 'as the place where the hands of the person sitting next to you on the bus are the hands of the person who shaped the plate from which you eat your dinner': to make visible the lost industrial culture of the pottery towns.
The Pleasure Garden of the Utilities
A Horses Tale: Proposals for a Community Garden on the Broadway Estate Tilbury: The garden acknowledges and makes space for the diverse and contradictory demands made on limited space. The design ensures both security and pleasure through an undulating landscape of shared and discrete spaces to accommodate horse riding, the under fives, robust play and sitting in the sun. The edges of the park are secured against car, bike and pony joy riding with barriers.
of planted gabions and other structures in order to avoid a language of fenced enclosure.

2. A Montage View of the undulating landscape.

3. The park proposal was for a robust yet bucolic topography of scented garden, meadow, dressage arena, play equipment and public steps, all enclosed by trapions (turfed gabions). Initial users of the new park include not only residents and their ponies, but also members of the local pony club, who have no free dressage space in the local area.

DIY Park Community Event:
As part of engagements with children on site, and to counter the poor sense of safety and security, a ‘theatrical BBQ’ event was staged on the weekend for local school children in which RMIT students collaborated with muf_aus to produce a series of six follies that examined the idea of rubbish and creative reuse. The ‘Plant Your Park’ Installation was an activity focused on environmental improvements. The Shire nursery donated...
one hundred tube stock shrubs of an appropriate species native to the Hastings environment, and the purpose of the exercise was to plant close to the fence boundary, as a way of disguising and protecting fences from graffiti. The distorted bench-seat was a structure which acted as a prop for the days planting, doubling as a seat and plant support.

2 Children jumping on the ‘Plant Your Park’ Bench.

3 The ‘Make Your Park’ Table was a ‘prop’ conceived for multiple public engagements and designed by muf aus at the start of the project. Formed as a 1:500 Scale model of the Park, it can also be re-purposed as a table, offering - at this event - a place for making model cubbies using recycled rubbish.
1 ‘Adjustments for a Child’: A Design Studio. The speculative project, the ‘Unseat’ was a project produced by students at London Metropolitan University in Diploma Unit 7 in 2001. Traces of children’s occupation of space were used as the starting point for adjusted furniture. Here the design of the London Routemaster Bus seat is shifted to allow standing and leaning by school children.

2 The Diorama Bench: The Diorama Bench is an installation that moves between the scale of the architectural model, and the scale of the gallery; between the 1:100 and the 1:1. It both refers to design proposals for a small public reserve, as well as speculating on broader and more difficult ideas about the values of un-designed space, feral land and the rural urban fringe: a world of transgressions, making cubbies, having fires and behaving badly.
furniture
bespoke

2 Diorama Bench Plan at 1: 20. The bench is a large piece of outdoor furniture constructed from steel and timber sleepers. The Diorama Bench is intended as a permanent installation in the West Park Reserve, and a venue for further engagements with young people and adult residents. It is one component of the design framework ‘Do-It-Yourself Park’ completed in 2008, but yet to be initiated on site. Taking its cue from the ‘diorama’ - three-dimensional miniature scenographic models - it is in part a microcosmic representation of scenes from the everyday life of local children in peripheral and feral ground beyond the public reserve. These scenes are transposed into the reserve as provocateurs: Why are young people unwelcome occupants of public space? When is misuse seen as misbehavior?

3 DIY Park: Images from the films by children showing rubbish.
4 DIY Park: Signage Paving from the 'Kit of Parts'.

5 Diorama Bench Detail: An image of the diorama scene.

6 Diorama Bench Detail:
An extract of the transcript accompanying the model: “It’s the start of the backtracks. That one is me, DJ, Crystal, and Brodie Ray, and maybe Rose built a cubby. Me and DJ found that stuff when we were walkin, and we dragged it for like 2km. It’s a good thing coz snakes and stuff live there. And there’s more shelter for everything. That’s the cubby that they live in. Nah... we built it better before we wrecked it. Then we wrecked it built it again, wrecked it, built it again and then someone trashed it. It’s what they call the ‘bum’s’ mansion. Bums think it looks like a mansion to them.”
installation
1 What Do You Do And Where Do you Do it?: An image of one of the micro-sites from the Action Plan for Kings Creek, illustrating a new entry proposal ramp with signage.
“muf understands that the ground is not just a canvas to be coated with grass or asphalt but a complex map that marks out territories, rights of way and uses that have to be reconciled if they are to succeed”

Marcus Fairs *Icon Magazine* May 2003

“To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it. The world, like every in-between, relates and separates man at the same time”

Hannah Arendt ‘*The Human Condition*’ 1958
benches
tables
grounds

Objects and Things Book
theatrics + hospitality
Theatrics and Hospitality is a typology of interventions which form the physical ‘props’ which stage interactions, hospitality and events. Evident in all projects with socially-engaged and dialogical processes, these objects – masks, costumes, cakes, parades, follies, food – are explicitly designed, or co-designed as provocations to conversation and engagements: objects which support and catalyse collaboration and exchange.
1 Bench Decoration: 1:1 image of the porcelain transfer, a traditional blue and white floral pattern, printed at large scale on the seat

2 Bench Seat: Factory image of bench mould under construction

3 Bench Seat: Factory image of bench form being adapted from a standard urinal panel to form upstanding ‘plate’ edge
transformation

The Pleasure Garden of the Utilities

4 A traditional blue and white porcelain plate: ‘to make visible the lost industrial culture of the pottery towns and reveal it as the place where the hands of the person sitting next to you on the bus are the hands of the person who shaped the plate from which you eat your dinner’

5 Bench Casting: Factory image of Armitage Shanks craftsmen pouring the porcelain into the mould to construct the seat of the bench.
play
**A Horses Tale**

1. Gymkana: A community event was held at the inception of the project, on the site in the middle of the Broadway Estate; a means of foregrounding and testing the presence of ponies in the landscape of Tilbury.

2. + 3. Gymkana: Images of competitions on the day, and decorated horses.

4. Horse Riding Arena: Standard Size 40 metres x 20 metres. This became an integral component for both the gymkana event, and the final design of the community playground.
games

5 Mask Making Workshop: Children from the local primary school construct life size masks and costumes of horses to construct photographs and posters.
A group of young people from both local primary and secondary schools come to Tilbury Fort for three days to create a life size effigy of a horse. On the final day the children dressed in their horse costumes follow in procession behind a real horse across the marshland into the town and to the arena of the Broadway Estate, both symbolically and literally a space is made within the landscape for what is otherwise strategically suppressed.
performance

7 Lifesize Costume: Final adjustments to the costume happen on the estate prior to the inaugural procession.

8 Children playing on the site of the new park after the event

9 The Procession from Broadway Estate to Tilbury Fort
food

What If?
1 Tea and Cake Day: RMIT students host tea and cake in the shop on White Street Mall in central Frankston. This is part of What If? - a three month occupation of a shopfront in the town, investigating local responses to urban change as part of Melbourne 2030 Activity Centre plans.

2 Tea and Cake Day: Cakes are made as scale models of speculative proposals for Frankston. They serve as provocations for what architecture might be if it broadened its scale of engagement beyond built form alone. Cakes make a critique of ‘top-down’ forms of urban planning in favour of the ‘bottom-up’.

3 Tea and Cake Day: Conversations are recorded to form videos.

4 Tea and Cake Day
events
DIY Park

1. **DIY Event**: As part of the project DIY Park, muf_aus + RMIT students hosted an event for children on site. The ‘Make Your Park’ Table, designed by muf_aus, a 1:500 Scale model of the Park reconstructed as a craft table, offers a place for making model cubbies using recycled rubbish.

2. The ‘Wishing Booth’ Installation with storytelling was an activity for younger children, involving a small cubby and ‘wish’ space.

3. The ‘Worm Farm’ Installation made an activity from collecting rubbish, using props from domestic settings.

4. The ‘Tree Farm’ Installation under construction by RMIT students.

5. The ‘Make Your Park’ Table

6. The ‘Worm Farm’ Installation - a constellation of props from domestic settings.
The ‘Tree Farm’ Installation was a trading game, where rubbish collection was exchanged for a chance to build an artificial tree. The more items of rubbish collected allow a bigger tree.

The ‘Plant Your Park’ Installation was an activity focused on environmental improvements. The Shire nursery donated one hundred tube stock shrubs of an appropriate species native to the Hastings environment, and the purpose of the exercise was to plant close to the fence boundary, as a way of disguising and protecting fences from graffiti.

Food for Thought was a trading activity based on an exchange of freshly cooked food for public consultation feedback.

The ‘Tree Farm’ Installation
1 Barking Town Square: A plan of the spaces designed by muf.

2 ‘Barking Central’ is a multi-million pound regeneration project for Barking in the Thames Gateway, London by AHMM Architects. muf’s ‘Town Square’ literally nestles beneath and amongst the large scale buildings: here the ‘Arcade’ is visible beneath and adjacent to the Library.

3 Barking Town Square by muf:

The ‘Arcade’ recalling both arcade grandeur and paths of London’s Edwardian villas, the Arcade is paved in black and white terrazzo tiles. Large ‘diamond light’ chandeliers designed in collaboration with, Tom Dixon light the lofty arcades. The Arcade looks onto an Arboretum which makes places for reading adjacent to the library.
Barking Town Square

‘A city sidewalk by itself is nothing. It is an abstraction’
Jane Jacobs

4 Barking Town Square by muf: ‘The Folly’ is a public art element which screens the flank wall of Iceland supermarket and completes the fourth elevation of the town square. Constructed from 19th century architectural salvage material by master bricklayers and Barking College apprentices, the wall recovers the texture of the lost historic fabric of the town center and stands as a memento mori to this current cycle of regeneration. The Folly provides a ‘setting’ for performances and public events in the Square.

2 The Drawing Studio: will host school children’s art classes, run by artist Lotte Child. After the Show is dissembled the Studio is re-housed permanently in a Venetian School.

3 A childrens pond breaches the Pavilion walls to provide a place to play.
Diorama Bench:
The Diorama Bench is an installation that moves between the scale of the architectural model, and the scale of the gallery; between the 1:100 and the 1:1. It both refers to design proposals for a small public reserve, as well as speculating on broader and more difficult ideas about the values of un-designed space, feral land and the rural urban fringe: a world of transgressions, making cubbies, having fires and behaving badly.

Taking its cue from the ‘diorama’ which are three-dimensional miniature models, sometimes enclosed in a glass showcase and often used for museums, the installation is in part a microcosmic representation of all the messy details of everyday life - an antidote to the formal models of architects and designers.

The installation provides a place to sit, a place to rest from ‘the eye level of the child’ on the opening night.

‘The younger the child is, the closer his eye level is to the ground’
Colin Ward
“Utopia is now experienced as a day to day subjectivity, in the real time of concrete and deliberately fragmentary experiments. The artworks now look like a social interstice”

Nicholas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* 1998

“Cities need urban animators that link, weave, stir and stimulate.....The urban animator has to communicate reinvented spaces and solicit participation and complicity”

Raoul Bunschoten *Urban Flotsam* 2001
theatrics + hospitality

Objects and Things Book

HELPED BUILD NEW FACILITY