Serious Play. A Deltiology of Practice.

A research catalogue submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the research catalogue is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Nicholas Stephen Boyarsky

15 June 2016
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Finally thanks are due to my family: my son Benjamin, my daughter Elizabeth, and Nicola, my wife and partner, for their support and for putting up with my absence from family life during the course of this PhD. Nicola has helped in the preparation of this catalogue with proof reading and compiling the illustrated list of the work of Boyarsky Murphy Architects.
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Abstract - Meta View

My research has taken the form of two parallel yet interdependent discourses based on more than twenty years of practice (by practice I mean both architectural practice in the professional sense and an expanded form of practice which includes teaching, writing, editing, theoretical projects, archival work and other critical activities).

The first discourse, **Serious Play**, is a speculation on ludic practice and how this is evidenced by the design processes which are at the core of our practice. Here the adjective **serious** is critical because it situates play as an instrumental device that offers terms of engagement into the actual, the material and the political. The outcome of this research into our practice has been the recognition that the **other**, that which is beyond the discipline and profession, can and should have as much relevance as the normative. By way of example I will argue that, in the development of a project, the accidental, the contingent and the unexpected can reveal their own distinct logics that can, if discerned and followed with sufficient wit and imagination, lead to new divergent worlds of inventive possibilities.

The second discourse, **A Deltiology of Practice**, represents the research methodology for this PhD that I have developed to interrogate my practice and to form a multi-facetted structure to identify its many different components. It has been, by necessity, a ludic method that has evolved through the PRS process from an initial demonstrative and gestural technique to a way of structuring the research according to the deltiological devices of recto and verso. I will demonstrate how deltiology (the collecting of postcards) has enabled me to understand and chart my mental space and my spatial histories. It has provided a framework to clarify and address issues that I consider critical to our practice such as representation, narrative and the informal. Furthermore it has become a vehicle to explore how the uncanny and the ambiguous provide clues to uncover new readings and relationships between seemingly disconnected elements and events.¹ **Deltiology** (ancient Greek for small texts) has provided the form of this PhD and allowed me to fashion a structure of multiple independent parts that reflects both the dynamics and the contradictions of my practice.

The development and interweaving of these two discourses and the research that they have generated has lead me to the discovery that, similar to the way that play is dependent on continuing reinvention, role playing and a constant testing of the rules of the game itself, ludic practice operates existentially at the edges of a continuously expanding field.²

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1. Refer to Greetings from... page 19.
2. Refer to Practice. Bees and Architects... page 35.
User's Guide

The document is divided into five discrete sections. The first, State of Play, describes the two themes within this PhD: Serious Play and A Deltiology of Practice. There is an illustrated interlude which explores the notion of the uncanny in relation to practice through a ludic interrogation of three postcards. A concept for practice as an enabling structure in an expanded field is described.

The following three sections examine the work of Boyarsky Murphy Architects (BMA) at three scales: the city, the house and the detail. They explore how the broader themes of this study can be evidenced at these different scales of practice.

The second, Urban Tactics, describes BMA’s work at the urban scale and introduces the five strands of research and project work (Measuring Emptiness, Active Landscapes, Scatter Plans - How Things Settle, Micro-Urbanism - Survival Tactics, and Ludic Cities) that form components of my argument for Serious Play at an urban level.

The third, Fitting. Three Case Studies, examines three building projects and explores how the tactic of fitting has emerged as the creative trigger for each. Play is explored at the scale of building together with the idea of automatic design.

The fourth, Nomadic Details - Methodologies for Ludic Construction, is a study of the construction detail in the architectural work of BMA. It concentrates on one material, glass, and the different uses and innovations that have developed across a range of projects.

The fifth, Conclusion, describes the origins, development, and the practice methodologies of Boyarsky Murphy Architects alongside the discoveries that I have made during the course of the research. There is a list of over 250 projects, which is partly illustrated. There is also a record of the exhibition for my examination which took place in the Archiefzaal in Ghent on April 22nd, 2016.
Reproductions of postcards that I have found, made, written messages on, altered and animated appear throughout the first four sections. They were all made for the six PRS presentations in Ghent and Barcelona and they are intended here to provide a parallel but sometimes tangential reading of the text. They are, to quote Longfellow, intended as ‘Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing’.

1. Henry Longfellow, Tales of a Wayside Inn, part 3, section 4

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1. Photographs of my pre-presentation in November 2012, where I presented a ‘scatter’ of postcards.
2. Excerpt from animated postcard ‘Cumbernauld’ presented at PRS 3, April 2014.
Serious Play - Introduction

This PhD has a number of components to it that reflect on both the nature and range of my practice and the research that I have produced alongside this to present at the twice yearly Practice Research Symposia (PRS). The PRS process, where research is presented to a panel of critics and an audience of colleagues, is a key component of RMIT’s Invitational Design Practice Programme which I commenced in 2013. In many ways the PhD has become an integral part of my practice over the past three years: as a reflective device for understanding the various dimensions of practice and how they co-exist; as a lens to criticise and understand past, current and future work of the practice; as the means to sift through two decades of material and then prioritise and speculate on future directions; and, in response to the dilemma of how to represent and structure this research, the spur to find creative means of expressing it. The opportunity to participate in the wider community of RMIT’s PRS programme with its blending of rigorous debate and conviviality has been both stimulating and nurturing in the development of my research.

This research led me to identify a central theme, ‘Serious Play’, which I presented at PRS 4 in November 2014. Serious Play is at the core of my practice, and this PhD will explore and describe how this set of guiding tactics has both been formed by our work and has in turn informed our projects. ‘Serious Play’ is the outcome of my PRS research and it represents the methodologies of our practice of architecture. It is the overarching contention of this exegesis and I will trace its evolution through our earliest built projects and theoretical projects to current work. The subtitle, ‘A Deltiology of Practice’, refers to the research methodology of this Practice based PhD that has evolved as the means to give form, content and structure to PRS presentations, this exegesis, the exhibition and my final presentation.

At the PRS 5 session in April 2015, Michael McGarry (I believe with a twinkle in his eyes) commented that my work had ‘the nimbleness of the agnostic’. I have always considered myself to be an atheist and the black and white assertion that ‘there is no God’ has always been at the core of my freedom to question and challenge authority and preconceived ideas. But the concept that ‘nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God’ is perhaps an equally liberating position and

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Fig. 3 - PRS Timeline. Key Moments & Discoveries.
Michael’s comment led me to consider Thomas Huxley’s assertion that agnosticism is not a ‘creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle...in matters of the intellect follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration.’

This process of following a thought as far as it will take one has many similarities to my own practice of architecture and perhaps it is a better starting point to admit you can know nothing rather than that you know one single thing. In these matters I am a fox rather than a hedgehog according to Isaiah Berlin’s famous essay ‘The Hedgehog and the Fox’ which is based on a fragment attributed to Archilocus: ‘the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing’. As opposed to hedgehogs who can relate everything to a central vision and objective, for Berlin foxes:

‘lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision’

Serious Play is conceived in the spirit of the fox yet, as its title suggests, it is at heart an antithetical proposition that sets up a framework for practice to manipulate and enjoy the infinite and variable contradictions and oppositions that we face as architects. On the other hand I will also be arguing that Serious Play need not be an oppositional construct and that the two poles ‘serious’ and ‘play’ may rather be deeply complementary, resulting in an approach to architecture that both respects the craft of designing and building and yet draws strength and inspiration from the informal, the automatic and the uncanny. This can be evidenced by the way this PhD attempts to reconcile the scale of the detail and the individual home with the constantly changing dynamics of the urban field.

Serious Play

I am not arguing for a rule based architecture nor for an architecture predicated on game theory. Serious Play is rather an exploration of how the practice and making of architecture and the critical processes of urban design might be triggered and then sustained by tactics of play.

When young children play they invent, or discover, a new world that is sustained and elaborated by the development of characters, situations and rules, which are agreed upon and subsequently broken. Everyday objects become props in increasingly complex scenarios that can dissolve, reconfigure and then revert back to everyday life at a whim. Whilst mimicry of the adult world is omnipresent, it is the suspension of disbelief that is required for play to unfold that leads to the creation of parallel worlds.

I would like to define Serious Play as the following: whilst play occupies parallel worlds of fantasy and make-believe, serious play offers terms of engagement into the actual, material and political world. I will argue that, with regard to a more traditional view of the architectural profession, this might mean that ‘the other’, or that which is beyond the discipline, can and should have as much relevance as the accepted canons of architectural culture and practice and that, at a cultural level a constant dialogue between the two should inform critical practice. This engagement can instrumentalise the accidental, the contingent and the unexpected to address issues both within and outside of our discipline.

Whilst a debate about the nature of architectural culture will inform this study and many personal pre-occupations and predilections of cultural practice will crop up as sub-plots and narratives, this is a study and reflection on contemporary practice in general and specifically research into my own practice of architecture and the work of Boyarsky Murphy Architects. In light of this experience I will also argue that the role of the architect in neo-liberal society is one that needs constant redefinition and reinvention in order to survive, to have influence and, ultimately, relevance and that this is a serious game with such high stakes that it must be played to the last stand.
Let us return to play. To observe closely the innocence and self-preoccupation of a child playing without distraction or self-consciousness is to understand that a state of reverie is triggered as the child focusses purposefully on a few elements to the exclusion of all else. This framing is a structural device that eliminates that which is superfluous so that the habitual and everyday become strange and fresh narratives can be created. Learning from the child’s ludic gaze we can see that a problem can be turned on its head so that it looks different and therefore accessible. Accidental discoveries and unexpected references and associations can reveal new structures and relationships which can lead to new processes of design that might solve a particular design problem.

**Towards Serious Play - Communities of Practice**

The reading of my practice as Serious Play has been based on my reflection on a series of projects which are referred to in detail in the different sections and appendices that comprise this exegesis. The PRS sessions and presentations have provided me with the opportunity to test out certain ideas and pre-occupations which I will refer to. PRS methodologies and concepts such as spatial intelligence, mental space, and Richard Blythe’s three orders of knowledge, have led me to delve into my past and uncover formative moments and places, in particular aspects of the cities of Chicago and London, that I realise are key to my development as an architect. In parallel to this has been the realisation of my strong affinities, or perhaps complicities, with the automatic and collage techniques of the Surrealists, the Situationists’ tactics of dérive and psycho-geography, John Hejduk’s poetic use of narrative, theories of the everyday (De Certeau and Lefebvre), Bernard Tschumi’s early practice and his interest in transgression, and also Kazuo Shinohara’s notion of ‘progressive anarchy’ and the city.

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5. Notes from a Skype conversation with Richard Blythe in which he described the epistemology of PRS and the three orders of knowledge: ‘1 - knowledge about projects; 2 - knowledge that emerges at the the level of practice (constellations); 3 - Other practices - knowledge about our discipline.’
I have also drawn on earlier writing such as our book ‘Action Research’ of 1998 (fig. 4) which laid the foundations for much of this on-going research in particular discovery that:

’simple everyday actions (to throw, to cut, to stack, or to layer, for example) could generate coincidental models capable of responding to the complexities of architectural production. Moreover the logic of each action could accommodate chance and the accidental. Procedures of action, observation and further action then led to moments of crossover: questions of appropriation, decisions about scale, the weight of matter and the politics of a situation. At an urban scale rules and structures to sustain dynamic growth are brought into play. This process is contrary to techniques of automatism where the presumed loss of authorship can result in the replacement of one formal structure with another. It is informal in the sense that there is no hierarchy, no weighting of value on any particular moment’ 6

In 2003 I guest edited an issue of AD Magazine on the Urban Flashes movement and tactics of resistance in the Asian city in which I introduced the concept of ‘Dirty Cities’. 7 However, whilst urban projects are an important component of our practice, smaller scale building projects have been key to the development of Boyarsky Murphy and the differences of scale and degrees of detail between these two fields of experimentation have created a lively dynamic that continues to sustain us.

Key questions in my research into Serious Play have been: How can this apparently private and personal design methodology engage society at large? How can adult, professional and societal concerns be addressed? How can others engage in the process? and How can we as architects and designers continue to be ahead of the game? I will enlarge on these questions throughout the text in relation to specific projects and the communities of practice that they have engendered.

7. This term references the writings of the anthropologist Mary Douglas and is discussed in more detail in ‘Serious Play’ was triggered by my reading of Johan Huizinga’s text of 1949 ‘Homo Ludens’ ( ) in which he challenges architecture that it is not a truly playful creative art.
The term ‘Serious Play’ was triggered by reading a passage in Johan Huizinga’s ‘Homo Ludens’ in which he throws down a gauntlet to architects by challenging us that architecture is not a truly playful creative art form:

‘the architect can only work by means of diligent and painstaking labour... The absence of any public action within which the work of plastic art comes to life and is enjoyed would seem to leave no room for the play-factor... The man who is commissioned to make something is faced with a serious and responsible task: any idea of play is out of place. He has to build an edifice - a temple or a dwelling - worthy of its function in ritual or fit for human use’

This charge of worthiness had surfaced earlier in Adolf Loos’ assertion of 1910 that

‘Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art’

More recently Sol Lewitt echoed these sentiments in 1967:

‘Architecture and three-dimensional art are of completely opposite natures. The former is concerned with making an area with a specific function. Architecture, whether it is a work of art or not, must be utilitarian or else fail completely.’

It appears that, in broader cultural terms, we architects are all tarred by the brush of functionalism and that we must therefore be inextricably dull to everyone else. Clearly I may be exaggerating this perception but, as I argue in the section ‘Ludic Cities’, the persistence of the monumental in discourse about public space and urban design, the uncritical acceptance of the autonomous, iconic building, and our willingness to take responsibility for leaking shower trays or faulty cladding panels do all tend to reinforce this characterisation. At this level the argument for an architecture of play is one of the battlegrounds of Serious Play.

Gadamer, on the other hand, proposes a more inclusive and immersive notion of play that is more helpful to the case of architecture. I understand from this a broad and interactive set of relationships between the author, the players, and the spectator (or user), who is predisposed to a particular art form (or building) because he recognises certain intuitions and feelings within the piece that he already identifies with. The invitation to play is to enter into and experience an autonomous world that is not subjective but subject to its own rules and logic: ‘The playing of the play is what speaks to the spectator, through its representation, and this in such a way that the spectator, despite the difference between it and himself, still belongs to it’. Here is recognition that architecture communicates to the spectator’s experience of a building or space on intuitive and phenomenological levels and that it is therefore open to play.

By way of introducing the Deltiology of Practice and the constructs of recto and verso I conclude with the observation that, in order for Serious Play to commence, a degree of mutual understanding and trust needs to be developed between all the players concerned. Whilst complicity has negative and even criminal connotations, the word collaboration does not take into account either an understanding of existing rules and systems of control or the shared desire to challenge, and if necessary break them as the means to develop practice. The definition of complicity, for the purposes of my argument, is based rather on 17th complice ‘an associate’ and the latin complicare ‘fold together’.

Deltiology of Practice

From the mid 20th century Deltiology has been defined as ‘the study and collection of postcards’. The word derives from the ancient Greek deltion which is the diminutive of deltos, a writing tablet, and, in the context of this study, I have taken it to mean ‘small texts’.

Whilst the argument that Serious Play is the means and modus operandi for practice represents the content of this exegesis, the Deltiology of Practice is the form and structure of the research, and the PhD has emerged as a dialogue between these two strands.

Searching for the means to present the work of BMA for my pre-PRS presentation in Ghent in November 2012, I wanted to find a non-linear way of representing what I considered to be the key components of our practice where the different elements could be re-arranged to suit different narratives with infinite variations. (figs. 1 & 5)
At the back of my mind was the scatter plan, a process that we have used to generate two projects for large scale housing settlements but the elements had to have more than one dimension. The postcard presented itself as the perfect medium - it has two faces, recto and verso, which allow for a dialogue between image and text. It is rooted in mass popular culture and the individual citizen’s direct shared experience of the phenomena of the city and landscape without being mediated by any high cultural readings or associations. The subject of the postcard could be either mythic, when depicting a famous building or, more commonly, banal when the image is of a tunnel or a railway line. Walker Evans, an inveterate deltiologist, described the postcard as capturing ‘The very essence of quotidian U.S. city life got itself recorded, quite inadvertently, on the picture postcards of fifty years ago...“Downtown” was a beautiful mess.’

The postcard was at its height of popularity between 1900 and 1915, for example in 1908 677 million cards were mailed. Recording the American city as it came into being the postcard focussed on infrastructure such as bridges, elevated railway lines, tunnels, parks and factories, marking a natural and unselfconscious acceptance and celebration of the 20th century city. It spawned infinite anonymous narratives of the city as the postcard writer took ownership of such a generic urban view by adding a few pithy and personal remarks that would resonate with a friend or loved ones.

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12. Refer to the Den Haag and Westry projects in ‘Scatter Plans’ in the section ‘Urban Tactics’.
13. Walker Evans, Fortune Magazine, 1962 quoted in Rosenheim, Jeff, Walker Evans and the Picture Postcard, Gottingen, 2009. There is also a description by Evans of his childhood memories the profusion of postcard stands and the crowds at them.
Mental Space
I began to explore how the postcard’s view and the writer’s message are mediated by a number of frameworks: the display and selection of the card itself, the discipline of recto and verso, the addressee, the stamp and its date mark, titles, graphic constructs, captions and information. The image itself was often enhanced and touched-up, there was in fact little interest in photo-realistic representation. The postcard was thus a medium to create urban myths and stories, and to perpetuate these as the cards were mailed, delivered, shared, saved and collected.

Fascinated by these questions I began to make my own postcards and to experiment with different techniques and methods. My experiments with the medium have continued throughout the PRS process and I realise, in retrospect, that the postcard has been the mental space of the PRS and my practice. The postcards that I have made and altered represent a mapping of this mental space and the overlaying of my personal narrative with the work of practice.

Community of Practice - Deltiology
The postcard has been the lens for the creative work of numerous artists and those who have had an influence on my research include Susan Hiller and Zoe Leonard who have both worked with multiple copies of postcards, often depicting the same view, in order to raise issues to do with the mass reproduction of images. Zoe Leonard’s installation ‘You see I am here after all’ comprises hundreds of postcards of Niagara Falls from the 1900s to the 1950s that draw attention to the transformation of natural sites into tourist destinations. Alighiero Boetti made a series of postal works which includes La Mole Antonelliana postcard series from 1970 to 1975 in which he sent cards of the Turin’s La Mole back to his friends in Turin from countries that he had travelled to. Tacita Dean has painted over pre-war postcards of Kassel in order to illustrate what has changed in each view. John Stezaker has used postcards to collage and cut to produce uncanny juxtapositions. In many respects

14. The postcards by the British photographer John Hinde (1916-1997) provide an example of how colour photographs, in this case large Ektachromes of Ireland and Butlin’s holiday camps, were touched up and enhanced. These postcards were partly responsible for the explosive growth of tourism and holidays in the second half of the 20th century.
15. In the work Dedicated to the Unknown Artists, 1972-76, Susan Hiller collected over 300 postcards depicting waves crashing onto shores around Britain, each one called ‘Rough Sea’.
17. Godfrey, Mark, Alighiero e Boetti, New Haven, 2011. Godfrey describes Boetti’s postal works in general including his fascination with stamps. La Mole Antelliana is illustrated on page 204.
19. Stezaker started by altering and collaging promotion photographs of minor Hollywood stars from the 1950s before adapting similar techniques to postcards. This is achieved by extreme economy - cutting and conjoining postcards to alter the message entirely.
Walid Raad’s work with ‘archival’ documents has influenced my own appropriation of the medium of the postcard, in particular his notion of ‘hysterical documents’ which, much like the postcard, ‘are not based on any one person’s actual memories but on fantasies created from the material of collective memories’.  

Photographers Walker Evans and Stephen Shore have worked with the anonymous yet populist phenomenon of the postcard in different dimensions. Evans described the postcard as a ‘Lyric Documentary’ and it is relevant to note his argument for the contingent, which he describes as ‘lyric’, in his lecture of the same title in 1964:

My thought is that the term ‘documentary’ is inexact, vague and even grammatically weak as used to describe a style in photography which happens to be my style. Further, that what I believe is really good in (the) so-called documentary approach is the addition of lyricism…..(which) is usually produced unconsciously, and even unintentionally and accidentally by the cameraman.  

Walker Evans prepared a series of photographs to be published anonymously by the Museum of Modern Art in 1937 as postcards, however they were never released and one suspects that Evans may have ultimately resisted the anonymity and loss of authorship that the mass produced postcard entailed. Stephen Shore on the other hand embraced this anonymity when he produced a series of Texan postcards, ‘Greetings from Amarillo: Tall in Texas’ in 1971. (fig. 5)  

In the frame of architecture and urbanism my community of practice is with my late father Alvin Boyarsky, with whom I shared an early passion in collecting postcards in Chicago in the late 1960s, and whose ‘Chicago á la Carte. The City as Energy System’ of 1970 has been deeply influential. It was from Alvin that I first learnt of the term deltiology. Bernard Tschumi’s ‘Advertisements for Architecture’ took the form of postcards and they reference the work of New York artists such as Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince using the medium to polemicise architectural discourse.

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20. ‘none of the ‘documents’ produced by the Atlas Group is essentially faked: these photographs, texts, and videos are appropriated from original sources, such as newspapers, or from Raad’s own street photography. But when Raad rephotographs or scans them and mediates their presentation through story lines, literary titles, narrative wall texts and engaging performances, they move into the imaginary realm.’ Eva Respini in: Respini, Eva, Walid Raad, New York, 2015, p 32.
21. ibid. p. 22.
22. op. cit. p. 103.
23. op cit.
24. refer to City Rat in Urban Tactics
Greetings from Chatham Square, Le Havre and Brasilia...... Urban Myths and Messages

‘Something is uncanny - that is how it begins. But at the same time one must search for that remoter “something”, which is already close at hand’
Ernst Bloch ‘A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel’

I would liken deltiology, in the context of Serious Play, to following a train of thought, wherever it may lead, much as a detective in a novel stalks his prey. Here the trail is littered with clues, discoveries and observations that allow a hunch or intuition either to develop and then transform itself into the unexpected or to be derailed and become a dead-end. The genesis of this search often starts with the gradual realisation that an everyday occurrence or object may not be what it seems and is rather an enigma, something that is uncanny and unfamiliar.

David Hemming’s chance discovery of a what appears to be a dead body in the corner of a grainy blow-up of a contact sheet of shots of two lovers in Maryon Park in Michelangelo Antonioni’s film ‘Blow Up’ is a telling example of how such an enigma can lead to the unravelling of a narrative. Postcards are a source of the uncanny because they represent everyday yet familiar spaces within the city that are highlighted and thus made extraordinary by being published and then widely disseminated.

Greetings from...... is a short sequence of postcards that I have put together to illustrate how the everyday can be a source of the uncanny. The images can be read either on their own or alongside the short texts below. They are a random sampling.

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Chatham Square

Description on postcard:

‘Chatham Square showing doubledek elevated, New York City

Chatham Square is formed by the intersection of the Bowery and 3rd Avenue. The 2nd and 3rd Avenue Elevated, crossing at this point is the most complete of any in the world. The station here is the transfer point for the 2nd Avenue Line, also transfer point for passengers from South Ferry to 3rd Avenue and Bronx Park. The Elevated contains 3 tracks, one for express and two for local trains. During the rush hours the trains are run on a 3 minute schedule.’

Postage date: 10 October 1926

Message:

‘I am Down at Coney Island 12.45 am riting this I wish to you fine day Here over 10000 people here Moma’

The message, written by ‘Moma’ to her daughter in Queens and posted on October 10 1926 in Brooklyn, is from the crowded Coney Island beach at 12.45am. Now there are hundreds of postcards of Coney Island, its beaches, fun fairs and amusement parks all of which celebrate aspects of New York’s popular beach yet this card depicts an opposite condition: the collision of a huge piece of infrastructure with Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Moma in her cryptic message is very precise about timing and also the exact number of people (10,000) on the beach, who must have been enjoying an Indian summer for the beach to attract so many people in October. I find it strange that Moma was not celebrating her actual experience by buying a postcard that depicted her location. It could be that Moma was suffering from anthropophobia and that she chose this card because it shows the opposite condition to Coney Island. For ‘Chatham Square’ is almost romantic in its vision of a sparsely populated metropolis and I have highlighted the handful of passengers on the different platforms to reveal this. Chatham Square was a transfer point for passengers heading to Coney Island so it may be logical to assume that Moma was recording a moment on her journey to her ultimate destination as one might purchase a postcard of a steamship, a border crossing or a suspension bridge. If this is a momento of her route to Coney Island via Manhattan is the point of purchase significant? Did Moma dash out of the station to find the card? Perhaps stores on Coney Island sold postcards of all of New York transit system’s popular transfer points so that visitors could record and memorialise the steps along their journey to Coney Island? One will never know! The card and its message have become uncanny. Perhaps it is even a coded message and the 10,000 refers to a cash drop-off. Putting this speculation aside, Moma and her daughter are using representations of the city to triangulate between each other and the experience that they wish to convey regardless that the verso message has very little relevance to the place described in the recto image. Images of the city have become familiar backdrops to the intimacies of daily life and these seemingly random views depict popular moments that celebrate complex urban moments of infrastructure and congestion. The strangeness of the message and its mismatch between view (recto) and experience (verso) together with the mix of typos and extremely precise data are relaxed, just as the progress daily life coincides with urban progress.
Greetings from...

1. Coney Island

I am Down at Coney Island 12.45 am riting this I wish to you fine day Here over 10000 people here Moma
‘A Typical Crowd On A Hot Day At Coney Island, N.Y.’
Le Havre:
Description on postcard:
Postage date: No date
Message: No message

The second myth is more nuanced. It is a view of the French port city of Le Havre which was devastated by bombing in the Second World War and redesigned by the great French architect of concrete Auguste Perret and completed some ten years after his death in 1954. It is a view from the early 1960s showing an example of the New Europe that was emerging out of the ruins of the war. I discovered this card amongst a small collection of views of Perret’s Le Havre that my father bought when he was visiting Le Havre with Cedric Price on one of Cedric’s annual holidays. In those days Cedric would take a day trip to a port town in France to have lunch and then return to London in the evening in the company of cronies such as Alvin, Ron Herron, David Alford and the engineer Frank Newby. This was basically a day of drinking copious amounts of beer, wine and brandy interrupted by a sumptuous meal. On one such outing the drinking had reached such a point that, by the time the ferry had set off from Dover (or whichever port it was), everyone was pouring pints of beer over each other.

Needless to say there is no message on the verso and if there had been it would no doubt be beer-stained and illegible. However the encounter between a small group of drunken London architectural visionaries in the mid 1960s with the neatly-ordered French new city and its rationalist concrete-framed buildings must have generated countless epithets that were then relegated to oblivion. By coincidence Jacques Tati was shooting his epic film on the futurist city, Playtime between 1964 and 1967.

The above is anecdotal in a way that only a blank verso can be because, in its immaculate state, there is no interaction between the image, the message and its addressee, much as an unbuilt architectural project has no relationship with builders, clients and the public. Like an incomplete work of architecture a blank postcard is a provocation but, until words have been inscribed and a stamp licked down, it can easily be an empty gesture.

The postcard’s view is complex and reveals a number of different layers. In the distance the sky meets the Channel and within the port we can see the state of the art passenger liner the “France” possibly arriving from America. The middle ground reveals the newly reconstructed city clustered around Perret’s over-scaled yet stunning St Joseph’s Church. The foreground depicts the municipal camping ground with tents and caravans, a place for tourists to stay and contemplate the achievements of the city rebuilt from the ashes of destruction. Here two technologies sit side by side: mobile and temporary structures such as tents and pressed and rivetted steel caravans alongside reinforced concrete buildings. The relationship is uneasy, the camping ground is for transients and the dispossessed, it is for viewing the city and the port as entertainment and this parasitical relationship is not reciprocated by Perret’s solid and inward-looking buildings which sit solidly within the city’s gridiron.
Close examination of the postcard reveals the campers’ urban vista to be an uncanny form of entertainment because, as the excerpt shows, the campers, such as the man in the foreground wearing very short shorts, are looking at their tents rather than the view on offer. Is the postcard’s view then completely staged in order to present a coded and subliminal message that the tent will replace the building and the campsite the city, in a similar way to Frollo’s prophecy in Victor Hugo’s novel *Notre Dame de Paris* that ‘the book will kill the building’? Is the man staring at his canvas a portent of this imminent transition? Evidence of this, and a direct influence of this card, might be found in Ron Herron’s iconic ‘Walking Cities’ collage produced in the same year as Cedric’s annual holiday to Le Havre or, a couple of years later to Price’s own Potteries Thinkbelt project. The mute blank verso of the card gives nothing away.

Arrivée du ‘France’ also has political nuances: to the ‘Jungle’ at Calais where, at the time of writing, thousands of illegal migrants in makeshift campsites are trying desperately to break across the UK border that has been relocated to Northern France. Also to the Nazi’s use of racial stereotyping to discredit modernist architecture. A 1927 postcard of the Weissenhof Siedlung in Stuttgart shows a young woman in a white dress overlooking a park with an array of buildings by Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Scharoun, Gropius, Hilberseimer etc. Some five years later the National Socialist Party issued a heavily montaged version of this card entitled ‘Araberdorf’ (Arab Village) which replaces the single white woman with scaled-up images of arab looking men and women with camels, rugs, trays of dates and even lions. Scharoun’s house in the foreground has been badly cropped and Max Taut’s beautifully curved elevation has been squared off to look more arabic. The view is now a piece of propaganda with a simplistic and crudely racist message that discredits both Islamic culture and modern architecture as degenerate and ‘medieval’. ‘Le Havre’ does not talk of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, it is celebrating progress yet its juxtaposition of static and mobile architectures refers to a continuing tension in architecture. Jacques Tati expressed this differently in an interview about the making of *Playtime*:

‘For the entire beginning of the film Playtime I direct people so that they are following the guidelines of the architects. Everyone operates at right angles to the decor, people feel trapped by it….In modern architecture an attempt as been made to ensure typists sit perfectly straight and that everyone takes themselves seriously. Everyone walks around with a briefcase which seems to give them the appearance of being well-informed.’

Postcards commonly depict monumental buildings which represent the physical manifestation of structures of political power. Here the postcard works at a subliminal level to embed and perpetuate the status quo within the popular imagination. This is far from the low-life of a camping site on the edge of Le Havre or everyday experiences of a multi-layered subway intersection in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. The monumental postcard facilitates tourism and the mass consumption of cities and landscapes by reducing them to visual momentos, snapshots that, by being touched-up and enhanced, have become super-real and ultimately a substitute for the authentic experience. It reinforces popular perception of the serious and responsible role of the building and of architecture that is ‘worthy of its function in ritual’ that Huizinga, Loos, Sol Lewitt and others would have us believe.

On the face of it National Congress and Ministries Esplanade subscribes to the monumental view yet it is not a straightforward momento. The aerial view of Lucio Costa’s Monumental Axis is misaligned, badly cropped and strangely foreshortened so that more emphasis is placed upon the grids of traffic infrastructures than on the Plaza of the Three Powers. The relationship between the Supreme Court Palace and the Planalto Palace with the Plaza and the National Congress is underplayed as is its relationship with the surrounding landscape. It is, in Walker Evans’ words, an image of the quotidian life of the city that inadvertently records the ‘beautiful mess’ but does not celebrate Costa and Niemeyer’s ensemble according to their design intentions. The postcard is troubling, almost subversive, because it appears to be undermining Brazil’s civic capital and the architects’ iconic ensemble.
The card becomes stranger when we look at it purely in terms of colour. The native soil of Brasilia is bright red with a high iron content which makes it extremely fertile. The card exposes a conflict between the red soil and the green planted areas that define the monumental axis. It might therefore be argued that the card is highlighting the artificiality of Brasilia and the Brazilian government’s attempts to plant and inhabit a landscape with green that is naturally red (ironically, aerial views of the city in 2016 show that much of the green axis has reverted to red). The card ‘Platform of the Bus Station’ shows a more ordinary view of Brasilia at a point where an underpass undercuts the raised podium of the bus station. It reveals a more authentic experience of the city, here the red dust is omnipresent, staining walls and coating the roads and there is no attempt to introduce any green. Of its kind the anonymous image is surprisingly ambitious for, in order to show the different layers of infrastructure, the card is at once an aerial view, looking down at the underpass, and a worm’s eye view that gazes up at the towers above the podium of the bus station. (The use of this multi-point of view can also be seen in ‘The Stack - an outstanding job of modern highway engineering’ in Los Angeles).

Architectural photographs of Brasilia, and of the vast majority of all 20th century architecture, are predominantly black and white. This enabled the photographer to record and enhance architectural form and its abstract features in terms of light and shade, black and white, and the multiple gradations of grey in between. They cannot, however, account for red soil, the colour staining of dust or the exigencies of planting and sustaining vast areas of grass lawns. Heavily authored, edited, and framed, the architectural photograph is not a tool for the chance discovery of the accidental that the anonymous and everyday postcard can offer.
Greetings from...

3. Brasilia
The Stack - an outstanding job of modern highway engineering

Platform of the Bus Station
Greetings from...... Urban Myths and Messages has been a vehicle to use the deltiological method tease out three of the underlying themes and questions of Serious Play:

- the discourses between the individual and the city, between the formal and the informal, between the sedentary and the nomadic, and between urbanism and micro-urbanism;

- how to define an architecture of play in opposition to the commonly accepted monumentality of architecture;

- what we can learn about architecture from the postcard as an anonymous and populist critique, and what roles can the the uncanny and the everyday play?

I have not been able to establish why Jacques Tati called his film PlayTime. I can only speculate that his use of parody in depicting the modern city is to stimulate the audience’s imagination towards a more playful future.

Postscript - the Ideal Palace
On a hot and dusty day in 1879 in the middle of his rounds the postman Fernand Cheval stumbles across a strange shaped stone. This stone triggers in him a chain of associations that inspire him to construct his Palais Idéal near Hautrives over the next thirty three years. The structures are all based on his readings and misreadings of images from the rectos of the postcards that he was delivering and it is no coincidence that the first known printed picture postcard, with an image on one side, had been created in France a few years previously. His motivation and the narratives for his extraordinary structure must surely come from his illicit readings of the versos.
Bees and Architects - Forms and Parallels of Practice. A Model for Expanded Practice.

.. a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. 28 Karl Marx.

As this PhD is written under the rubric of ‘Practice Based Research’ I will now be interrogating the meanings and definitions of practice in order to put forward my own conception of practice as an enabling structure that seeks to create a fertile ground for Serious Play. This concept is of an expanded practice that is far from centred on the notion of professionalism. Practice for me revolves around three areas:

- the making of architecture, in particular the work of my practice Boyarsky Murphy Architects;

- the teaching of architecture, the questioning of architecture and the city, and the writing of architecture;

- ‘the shuffle of things’ 29 by which I mean the inner workings of the architectural imagination that are activated by chance combinations and associations triggered by the physical action of shuffling and re-combining books, objects, artefacts, models and images. 30

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29. Bacon, Francis, A Device for the Gray’s Inn Revels, 1595. ‘so that you may have in small compass a model of universal nature made private . . . a goodly huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine hath made rare in stuff, form, or motion; whatsoever singularity chance and the shuffle of things hath produced.’ I first learnt of Bacon’s text from Peter Wilson who gave a lecture of the same title in 2014. It references the Cabinets of Curiosity from renaissance Europe where artifacts, samples, books and manuscripts were collected in a room, the Cabinet, as a repository of knowledge that was stimulated by the juxtaposition of objects. Horst Bredekamp has argued that this ‘shuffling’ was instrumental in effecting a ‘cultural change from a world viewed as static to a dynamic view of endlessly transforming
natural history and a historical perspective that led in the seventeenth century to the germs of a scientific view of reality’ (Bredekamp, 1995). ‘Shuffle’ is a term that I refer to often, it is a physical action that can initiate an idea for a project, it can then lead to self-arrangement as the objects that are placed together, accidently or by device, take on a life of their own. What I found particularly interesting in Bacon’s text is that he is referring to the physical act of mixing things together.

30. Before I studied architecture I worked for three years for Ben Weinreb, the legendary antiquarian architectural book dealer, where I was involved in buying books and manuscripts from the early 20th century from all over the world, cataloguing them and placing them in great collections. Collecting books has been an obsession for me ever since.

31. These definitions of the word practice are taken from a variety of online dictionaries.

32. ibid

Karl Marx has argued that it is imagination that distinguishes architecture from the pragmatics and exigencies of the construction industry. For Marx the highly personal act of creating an image, concept or idea from the the realms of an imaginary parallel world then sets in train a modus operandi to which the architect ‘must subordinate his will’ and carry out his design ‘steadily in consonance with his purpose’. In prioritising imagination over form Marx was inadvertently laying the foundations for the development of conceptual art and architecture in the 1960s and much process driven work that has been prevalent since then. In relation to practice, if we follow Marx’s thesis that architecture resides first in the imagination (because without it architecture cannot be brought to life) we have to differentiate between this creative and personal practice and the notion of professionalism which represents both the formal and technical methods of implementing architecture but also the means by which the architect distinguishes himself from an amateur.

I have always been confused by the word practice and how it relates to architecture. Yes, it is ‘the business of a professional person’ and also ‘the exercise or pursuit of a profession’ but further definitions seem to tarnish its potential into something quite perfunctory and banal: the ‘habitual or customary performance’ and the ‘repeated performance or systematic exercise for the purpose of performing or doing something’ or ‘the action or process of performing or doing something’. 31

All this seems far away from Marx’s neo-platonic case for the imaginary and the ideal and something hard to identify with. There are other possible terms and definitions to bring into play, for example: if we profess architecture, dictionary definitions tell us that: we lay claim to it, we pretend it, we announce or affirm it, we have allegiance to it, we are an expert in it or we teach it. 32  Perhaps practice is the wrong word?
In the context of this debate Serious Play, which is based on some twenty years of practice, seeks to reclaim the imagination and the seemingly irrational processes of play for the discipline of architecture and to speculate as to how it may broaden architecture’s fields of interest and communicate to a wider audience. This position is one of deep contradictions and potential compromise: as professionals we hold a license to practice according to the codes and regulations of the United Kingdom, whereas I will argue that playful architects must also have license to make mistakes, to misinterpret, to speculate, to deviate, to break rules and to challenge the status quo. But Serious Play is not advocating the licentious for the sake of it, my contention is more complex and nuanced for it must also hold an ethical position, one that is, for example, distinct from the base profit motives of developers and other commercial interests that seek to profit from loopholes within a system. I will explore this dilemma and how we have negotiated different positions and roles throughout the duration of particular projects further in the section Fitting. Nevertheless, implicit to practice must be self-critical processes for constant redefinition and exploration of its outer boundaries and this form of play will constitutes a key part of my Practice Research.

**Forms of Practice or Professing**

If we hold onto Marx’s concept of architectural practice as ‘structure in imagination’ for a little longer we can infer that ‘practice’ is both protean and imminent: a fluid mix of possibilities that are waiting to be given form. The question then arises: How does it work? and What are the mechanisms and processes for architectural imagination to take form? Marx was clearly using architecture as an illustration in a larger political quest about the nature and structure of society and therefore we can only really take his words as a provocation to further questions.

Jo van den Burgh in his PRS PhD ‘Theatre of Operations, or: Construction Sites as Architectural Design’ 33 has offered a critique of Marx’s position concluding that ‘the creation process in architecture all too automatically is considered as a unidirectional process that starts with the poetic image that subsequently is substantiated on the construction site’. Van den Burgh’s research reveals ‘that this assumed unidi-

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rectionality is false, that the process of creation, which includes the substantiation, is much more negotiated, two-directional and that...the poetic image is often more triggered by construction practice’. 34 He argues for a reciprocal process between the idea and the pragmatics of making that is empirical and based on a growing body of personal experience.

Van den Burgh’s argument that his practice of architecture can be understood as a theatre of operations which is informed by a constant dialogue between intention and the actual production of architecture is an important one for it posits the architect as one who negotiates between the abstract world and the pragmatic world of construction in a perpetual balancing act, which I would argue is inherently playful.

However, from my research into practice and the development of the notion of Serious Play through the process of PRS, I will argue for a position that is not dialectical but rather one in which the practice of architecture has the structure of a three dimensional field in which a myriad of individual and distinct elements of equal weight and signification float in a suspended flux, or state of play. This field is activated as different elements come into play by clustering and defining themselves in response to specific events, requirements and constraints. As architects we respond to these infinite configurations by adopting different roles and implementing appropriate actions; sometimes we are in control, sometimes we are not.

I can identify a visual analogy to this state of play in the paintings that Joan Miro produced between 1925 and 1927, partly in the context of his interest in the automatic writings of Andre Breton and others published in Les Champs Magnétiques. 35 In these works, for example ‘The Siesta’ of 1925, Miro transforms representational elements into weightless, disembodied forms. Derived from a sketch of two people on a beach, the horizon line between sea and sky is undermined by the uniform blue background and against this dematerialised background the distant mountains of Montroig peel away into a floating blue form whilst the two figures are abstracted into ideograms and the space and time for sleep emerges as strange white organic form. Numerals, lines of desire and directionality and other symbols float within the blue field suggesting potential relationships. Rosalind Krauss has described how

34. ibid.
Miro creates a floating ‘world of signification rather than a world of mimesis’ where, for example, the written word ‘is stripped of weight to become the non-descriptive, non-pictorial carrier of meaning’.  

Krauss’ description of ‘the space of a consciousness which can contemplate an endless chain of associations moving from verbal to visual symbol systems and at the same time never lose a grip on its own objective identity…the simultaneous use of image as sign and structure’ is close to the flux of Serious Play. This is, needless to say, an image of a personal and poetic reverie with benign elements and forces unlike many of the realities of daily practice. Nevertheless it has provided a bridge for me from Marx’s ‘structure in imagination’ to forming a mental model of Serious Play.

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37. ibid. p.20.
For Serious Play the architectural detail is one such component and, similar to the spatial structure of images that Krauss has discovered in Miro’s paintings, it represents both sign and structure and is at the same time physical and conceptual. The detail is an irreducible element that forms the highly personal vocabulary of our practice. It is hard won and a victory of collaboration and craft that is usually achieved in spite of the sea of indifference of the construction industry with its generic solutions. I will be referencing our construction details throughout the PhD and the section ‘Nomadic Details. Methodologies for Ludic Construction’ will argue for details that have an independent life from their buildings. Marco Frascari has identified the essential ambiguity of the detail and has described it as both generator of innovation and invention and as ‘the minimal units of signification in the architectural production of meanings’. Frascari’s ‘The Tell-The-Tail Detail’, which I refer to later, concludes with a study of Carlo Scarpa’s details in which he raises the question of representation. For Frascari Scarpa’s details are ‘the result of an intellectual game performed on the “working drawings” that are the result of the interfacing of design and draughtmanship. That game is the matching of the construction of a representation with a construction of an edifice’. That Scarpa was alive to the play of architecture is undeniable; his attitude to ludic practice, which is perhaps less appreciated, is evidenced by the quotation below where he articulates the multiplicity or roles and mindsets required:

‘There are mistakes which one makes in thinking, acting, and making and therefore (it) is necessary to have a double mind, a triple mind, the mind like that of a robber, a man who speculates, who would like to rob a bank and it is necessary to have that which I call wit, an attentive tension toward understanding all that is happening’.

39. ibid.
40. ibid.
The role of representation is another component of Serious Play: how a work is understood, how it is communicated and then perceived, and how it is used, experienced and enjoyed. Here the mechanisms of the postcard come close to unravelling this nexus of reciprocation between an idea and its eventual realisation. For PRS 2 I made a series of Detail Postcards (figs. 7 - 10) to explore these conundrums. In each case the recto is a photograph of a detail of a BMA project by the architectural photographer Helene Binet and the recto is a construction detail of what is shown on the recto. My intention was to use the postcard to reveal the difference between two modes of representation. The construction detail represents intention and instructions to build. The finished photograph represents an image that communicates the phenomena of the space such as light and shade, shinyness and reflection. This led me to what I called everything in between, or that which is not described by our two traditional means of representation: the drawing and the photograph.

The derivation of the word diptych is from the Ancient Greek ‘any object with two flat plates attached at a hinge’. The postcard therefore becomes a diptych because recto and verso are constantly turned as the reader pieces together all the different bits of information on each side. Jo van den Bergh challenged me, at PRS3, to describe the messy bits between the recto and verso of my Detail Postcards and, at some point, recto, verso and everything in between became a ‘three-fold’, or triptych.
Addressee (fig.12) is a mapping of practice that I prepared for PRS 5 in 2015. My intention was to give form to the floating field of operations that I have been describing above. The black words, linked by two-way arrows, or hinges, represent the recto and verso of the tactics, actions and concepts that inform my practice. The output of this swarm of black arrows is addressed to the addressee (and this had been one of the recurring questions at my previous presentations: ‘to whom are your cards addressed?’). The addressee has evolved to comprise ten distinct characters, or groupings, including myself. Some are from my communities of practice, some represent authority and legalities, some represent the stranger, the client or broader constructs such as the city or the future. The addressees, who I consider to be clients, demand their own loyalties (although very few of them pay fees) and give constant feedback which agitates the swarm. I have noted ‘everything in between’ above but it is not depicted, it represents a complex, three dimensional obstacle course with the capacity to filter or block transmission between the red and the black.


**Ongoing Practice**

I have described the spatiality of expanded practice and the dynamic three dimensional field within which it operates in response to a multitude of different events and elements. I have also described how the practice of Serious Play engages with an expanded field of activities and research ranging beyond the professional. In the course of my research I have also discovered how this practice evolves and operates over time and in particular how certain themes and pre-occupations that are embedded in a particular tactic or theme re-occur at intervals. I call these seemingly cyclical patterns ‘Ongoing Moments’ 41 and this can be evidenced, for example, in the way that the play tactics that were triggered by Den Haag project from 1996 resurfaced in the Westry project of 2009. As they resurfaced they took a different direction yet the ability to ground Westry in Den Haag provided a context and critical discourse to develop and sustain the project. As I write we are beginning work on a project for a temporary settlement for up to six thousand workers on the site of the proposed Sellafield nuclear power station. The setting in the open landscape and the utopian references within the brief suggest a pattern that is triggering memories and associations to these past projects.

At the level of practice Serious Play can be understood as an enabling structure that allows for these patterns of interest and inquiry to be nurtured and tested. This structure provides a shelter for the many ‘moments’ to be cultured in readiness for shuffling, further development and application.

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41. This phrase is borrowed from the title of Geoff Dyer’s book ‘The Ongoing Moment. A Book about Photographs’ in which he outlines a narrative for 20th century photography which is structured around the recurring scenes and objects that different generations of photographers have shot, such as the blind man, hands, hats, benches and roads. He describes how, whilst images of these subjects have changed over time, they remain curiously consistent. Dyer, Geoff, The Ongoing Moment. A Book about Photographs, Edinburgh, 2005.
Contribution to Knowledge

I have referred to the analogy of the hedgehog and the fox earlier where I positioned myself by temperament and character as a fox. My research is fox-like precisely because it is based on practice and grounded in over 250 projects that Boyarsky Murphy Architects have completed to date. It is a knowledge that proceeds fox-like in a centrifugal manner rather than according to the logic of traditional scientific method which might be more like that of the hedgehog. As will be evidenced in the research, fox-like knowledge is necessarily nimble and responsive because it deals with complexity, interrelation and interdependent knowledge on a daily basis.

The contribution to knowledge of this PhD is focussed around five themes:

Play
The discourse around play takes as its starting point Huizinga’s contention in ‘Homo Ludens’ that because architecture is ‘a serious and responsible task...any idea of play is out of place’. From here I trace a route from the Surrealist’s automatic tactics to the writings of Rosalind Krauss on Bataille and the informe tand then to the tactics of the Situationists. I reference architectural and urban precedents such as the early work of Bernard Tschumi, Oskar Hansen and the concept of Open Form, and the Roman group Stalker.

The contribution of Serious Play is an argument evidenced by research into the methods and tactics for design that I have developed over the past 20 years. This research has revealed how ludic design tactics allow for the incorporation of chance and the accidental into practice and how the tactics of fitting, layering and shuffling underlay our work. From this discovery I evidence how the challenges of practice have lead to my conception of an expanded, ludic practice where the architect must constantly reinvent, and often assume, multiple roles and where transgression and the breaking of rules are necessary to survival.

42. refer to page 10.
43. op cit.
**Deltiology**

Deltiology, the ‘collecting of postcards’, has become the methodology for my research. My community of practice is rooted, in architecture, in the work of my late father Alvin Boyarsky, Rem Koolhaas in the 1970s, and Venturi and Scott-Brown where, in varying ways, the postcard was adopted as a medium to understand the contemporary city both from an ‘everyday perspective’ and as the critical means to speculate on alternative, future and mythic cities. In art practice the postcard was vital to Walker Evan’s documentary work in the early and mid-20th century. It has also been adopted by contemporary artists such as Susan Hiller, John Stezaker, Zoe Leonard and Tacita Dean. The contribution of deltiology is four-fold:

- I have identified how the structuring devices of recto and verso can be a lens to understand the complexities of my practice and the critical role that representation plays;
- The postcard has become the medium to mediate the narratives of ‘everyday life’ within architecture and to facilitate a dialogue with these bottom-up narratives and popular culture;
- Readings and misreadings of postcards and their messages have revealed to me how the ‘uncanny’ and fictional narratives can be essential components of ludic practice;
- Deltiology as a research methodology has developed as a contribution to RMIT’s PRS community of practice in a dialogue with current and previous candidates, my supervisors and other faculty members and visitors.

**Urban Tactics**

Urban Tactics are a core element of our practice and this PhD engages with a broad community of practice of design research into two primary fields: the asian city and informalism, and contested and border territories. This community of practice is referred to elsewhere. The contribution to knowledge has developed through teaching practice and through over 50 urban projects that have been completed over the past twenty years.

The contribution to knowledge is drawn from the specifics of individual projects and also my engagement with different schools of architecture, workshops and conferences. My research has lead me to identify five distinct but interrelated categories that provide a framework to understand critical aspects of the contemporary city and urban landscape: measuring emptiness, active landscapes, scatter plans - how things settle, micro-urbanism - survival tactics and ludic cities. A critical aspect of this contribution is my argument that the analysis and identification of resistances within a site (the traces, fragments, embedded qualities and latent potentials of the existing urban fabric) can provide design tactics for its transformation.
Nomadic Details and Fitting
Smaller scale construction projects are another core element of Boyarsky Murphy Architects’ practice and this work contributes to the discourse around the role of the architectural detail, the insertion of new structures into complex historical buildings and sites, and the poetics of private space within the city. The community of practice encompasses fabricators and craftsmen, builders, specialist engineers, and consultants. In seeking to define the ludic detail I have traced a community of practice to inspirational architects such as Sigurd Lewerentz and Carlo Scarpa and I have also widened the scope to engage with ‘architectural’ practices within the work of the artists Marcel Duchamp and Walter Pichler.

The contribution to knowledge has been in the work itself and its commitment to innovation and experimentation in the development of specific details. I evidence this with reference to experiments and discoveries we have made in relation to glass. The notion of the nomadic detail engages the architectural detail at the phenomenological level. It contributes to a discourse on the detail that originates from the writings of Marco Frascari by positing it as a dynamic and multi-dimensional element within the otherwise sedentary nature of a building. The notion of Fitting is a ludic construct that teases out tactics and responses to the complexities of intervening within existing buildings or sites. The three case studies that I examine in detail stand as a contribution to this discourse.

Teaching Practices
My teaching practice has been itinerant, covering many different schools across the globe. I have a particular interest in more informal educational structures such as workshops and ‘guerilla’ schools, where I have developed programmes and briefs that are issue and context based. This contribution to knowledge will be evidenced by examples which include engagement with border conditions in Texas and Estonia, survival tactics in Athens and Istanbul, and with the ad hoc and temporary qualities of the Asian city. This practice is framed by a critique of the institutions of architectural education and its contribution to knowledge is in the new models of education that I have been involved with and the work that my students have produced. One of my key discoveries has been the extent to which my expanded practice of architecture has drawn upon my teaching and I identify how a dialogue between the two has evolved in relation to specific urban projects that BMA has undertaken.