



GETTING CLOSER...

The third Lisbon architecture triennale takes place against a backdrop of hardship. However, as Anne Bellamy discovers, its 'belligerent spirit' promises a socially charged programme full of surprise and delight

Lisbon's third architecture triennale, titled *Close, Closer*, starts in September. Under guidance from chief curator Beatrice Galilee and her team of Liam Young, Mariana Pestana and José Esparza Chong Cuy, this year's edition takes a left-field and speculative view of spatial practice, shaping a city-wide programme of events, discussions and installations.

Although an infant on the circuit of worldwide cultural events, with its first edition only in 2007, the Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa has secured a reputation as a thoughtful and engaging addition to the architectural calendar. This year's addresses ideas close to the bone for Lisboetas. Split into four main programmes of Future Perfect, New Publics, The Real and Other Fictions, and The Institute Effect, it will take civic interests and Lisbon itself as the focus for discussion.

To bring spatial practice (of which architectural production is just one element) 'closer' to new and broad audiences, the exhibitions, talks and fringe events organised by the curatorial team examine the political, technological, institutional, and critical contingencies.

Manuel Henriques, executive director of the Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa, recognises that attracting the attention of the architectural audience is not a problem; the challenge lies in engaging the imagination of local people. This aim has moved the Trienal away from the formal discipline of architecture and towards embracing broader socio-political issues. Lisbon Open House, introduced last year, invited Lisboetas inside the city's landmark buildings, often for the first time. The number of visitors was twice what had been expected, demonstrating a growing interest among locals in engaging with their built environment.

Henriques recognises the particular hardships that Lisbon and Portugal have faced following the Eurozone crisis but says that this edition of the Trienal can suggest ways in which one can act on the city despite constrained circumstances.

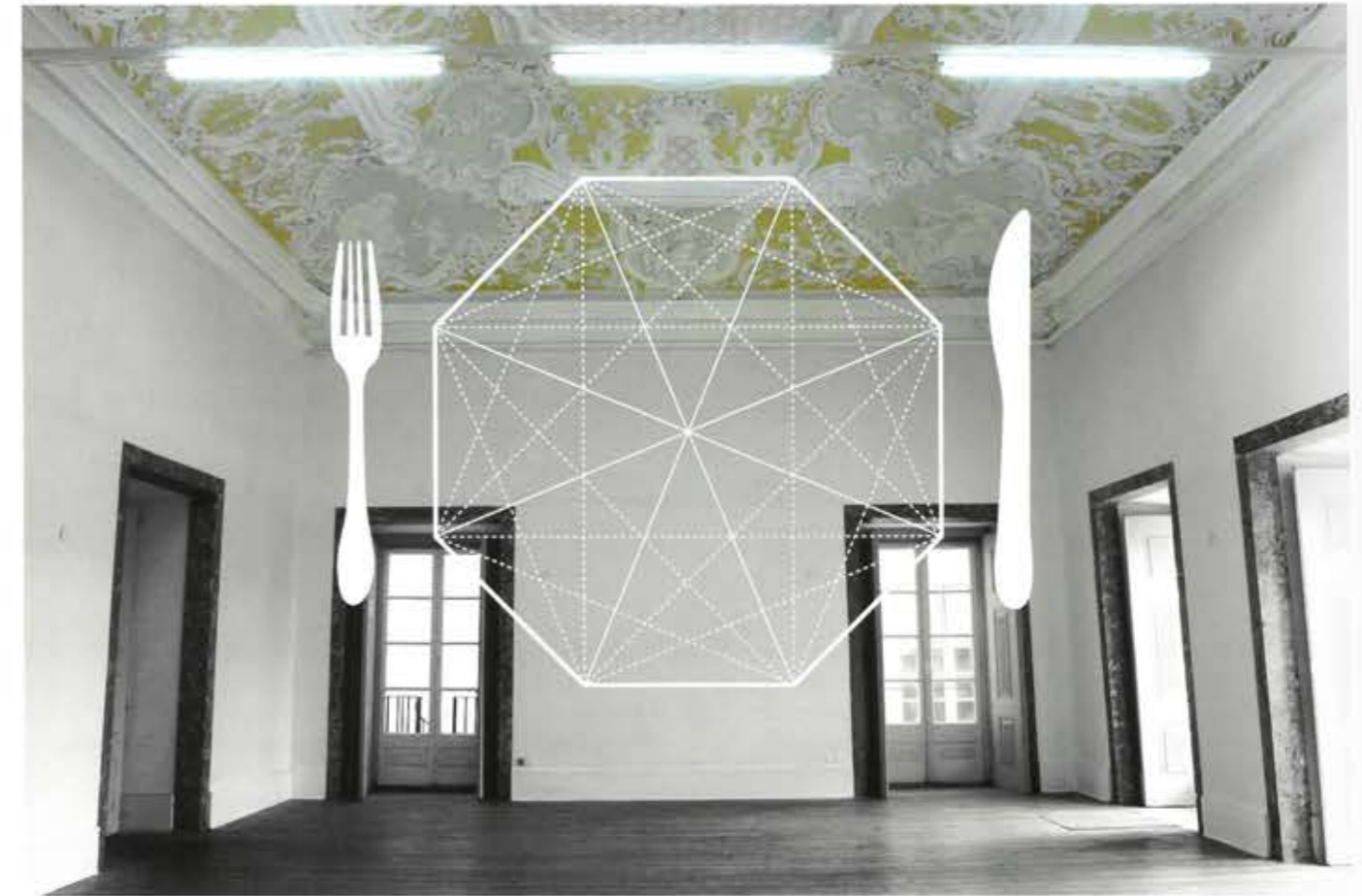
In conjunction with the main event of the Trienal, Henriques promises 'crisis busters', an array of funding prizes for community-focused initiatives; these run alongside the Good Neighbourhood scheme, 'a hyper-local programme of cultural events... which breaks boundaries between the institution and the people.'

'Because of all this activity, local people are starting to take a renewed interest and even take pride in where they live,' he says. The speculative nature of *Close, Closer*, with its focus on challenging established organisational structures and the formation of new forms of exchange, resonates at a time of volatile economic conditions and tough consequences.

It is not just the people of Lisbon who have been feeling the strains of living and working in the city; getting the Trienal itself up and running was a considerable challenge. Having worked on the Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism & Architecture in 2009 and the Gwangju Design Biennale in 2011, Galilee is no stranger to the organisational challenges inherent in international cultural events. However, where the culturally aspirational and robust coffers of China and South Korea afforded relatively large budgets, the situation in Portugal presents 'an extremely uncertain terrain.' Challenging constraints and financial volatility have formed, rather than destroyed the Trienal's spirit, claims Galilee: 'We're in guerrilla warfare, and have been quite belligerent about maintaining the quality and diversity of our programme.'

11 - *Close, Closer* curators, from left to right: Liam Young, Beatrice Galilee, José Esparza Chong Cuy and Mariana Pestana

12 - Located in a public square, Frida Escobedo's Tilting Stage is a precarious platform for civic discussion



That her team's clarion call has been heard is evidenced in the diversity of associated (that is to say, independently funded) projects, as well as an imaginatively curated programme. 'We have this incredible array of projects and participants, our foot-soldiers; it has a sort of fighter spirit!'

Despite financial worries, the programme has been developed as planned; the overall aim of its provocative initiatives not only pose questions for the present state of spatial and architectural practice, but will hopefully set up examples for future communities, as a legacy for the city. Galilee reveals that for her, 'that sense of a legacy is really positive and productive. It's not just about remembering beautiful things you have seen but also having something slightly more humane and civic'.

The four curated sections will be playing host from 12 September to 15 December to a wide variety of events, installations, discussions and publications, as well as the independent associated projects.

Future Perfect, curated by architect and educator Liam Young, offers up an 'interactive iceberg' by the deliciously named Marshmallow Laser Feast, equipped with GPS sensors that tracks your movements, and adjusts its own landscape and soundscape, for an immersive sensory experience; other confirmed participants include Bruce Sterling and Neri Oxman.

For physical and intellectual nourishment, curator and spatial practitioner Mariana Pestana has curated *The Real and Other Fictions* which, among other participations, features the Planetary Sculpture Supper Club. Collaborators from the Centre for Genomic Gastronomy will cook up a series of extraordinary thought-provoking feasts; for example a sauce made of plants

bred from mutations – which questions how we use and abuse intensive agriculture and bioscience in the kitchen. Dinners will be attended by artists and architects as well as prominent members of the city government and media commentators.

Led by Dan Hill, FABRICA will be transforming the MUDE (Museo do Design e da Moda) into a space that will house a constantly rotating programme of new 'institutions' for *The Institute Effect*. The Benetton-funded communication design academy will be designing and furnishing the space with all the expected – and some unexpected – accoutrements of a cultural institution, in order to frame questions towards the validity of such organisations.

But it is José Esparza Chong Cuy's *New Publics* that should provide the most gripping series of events – quite literally. Visitors may have to grab on to something (or someone) to keep a balanced perspective atop Frida Escobedo's Tilting Stage. The hemispherical central platform is installed at Praça da Figueira, and forms the location for a provocative programme of public discussions, performances and talks. ■

The Blueprint series Post World's End Architecture will feature as a *Close, Closer* Associated Project at Lisbon Architecture Triennale. On 14 September *Blueprint* will host an informal round-table discussing innovative approaches in architectural practice across the Iberian peninsula. Guests include Portugal's Polígono and ateliermob, plus Andrés Jaque and Zuloark from Spain.

For further details and a map of Lisbon Architecture Triennale venues, please visit blueprintmagazinebeta.co.uk

13 - Space, menus and discussions complement each other at 'The Planetary Sculpture Supper Club'