

Draw In/Draw Out: Participatory Experience Maps as Event Urbanism

The Place Pavilions accomplish their goal of actuating experience via translating map readers into actors and conversely transforming their environs into perceptible bits of data. These pavilions, as designed and built experiential devices, tectonically mediate between the reader and the read in a haptic and individualized, participatory manner.

MAPS AND MAPPING: UNPACKING A SIMULATION OF PLACE

“If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where the decline of the Empire sees this map become frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts — the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an Imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing) — then this fable has come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra..

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation of models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory—PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA—it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire but our own: The desert of the real itself.’¹

Jean Baudrillard’s explanation of the precession of simulacra critically relates Borges’s fable as unusable in its reductive description of the reactionary, narrative map of the Empire, wasting into the soil it so inadequately simulates in spite of its extreme detail. While much of postmodern thinking and practice falls under scrutiny today, a lasting truth from Baudrillard’s work (this piece being more than three decades old) is this decoupling of the acts and products of drawing (whether map, plan, rendering, sketch, etc) from a limiting definition of merely reactive and representational relics of an assumed, more tangible reality. In describing the simulacra, he proposed that the map comes first and many times, outlasts the territory which it communicates. He describes a map that in many ways is more ‘real’ than the territory it is conveying. However, not just any map can yield such enduring value; it must be both generative and constructive in nature. In order to understand the potential of a map, one must first understand mapping.

JOSHUA M. NASON

University of Texas at Arlington



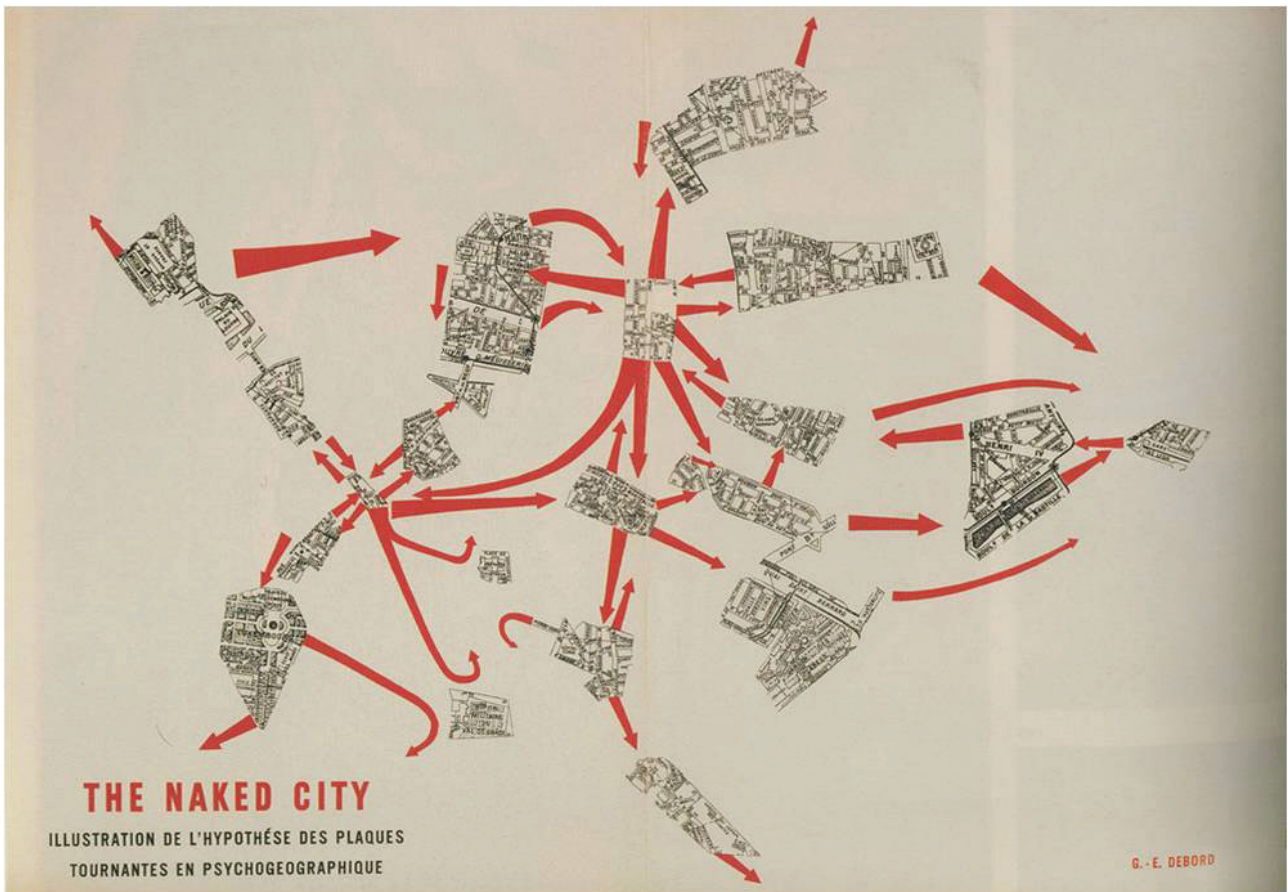
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Innumerable definitions of mapping vary greatly depending on what is being mapped and its specific execution. However, many concur in explaining mapping as a method of diagramming complex relationships through simplified means. Usually understood as flattened illustrations for orientation, maps need not be limited to mere givers of direction, nor are they relegated to perpetual flattening. A purpose of a map is to clearly communicate information that orients one within a context, whether a building, city, landscape, concept, social/economic/political group or a culture. In many ways the role of the cartographer is that of informational curator, a role that requires experience and precision when making editorial decisions that add focus. Principles of reduction and editing are key characteristics to heighten clarity in mapping. This simple, yet crucial process includes four of Corner's five commonly accepted key processes of map making: selection, omission, isolation, and distance (codification is the fifth).²

This brings us again to a common misunderstanding. While reduction is important for a map's clarity, clarity is not always the goal. Assuming that maps must be singularly focused is erroneous and limiting, wielding sparse information that subsequently dilutes efficacy. Simple or complex, it is important that maps maintain specificity and intensity. As the cartographer refines content they must carefully retain the ability to research enigmatic and identifying traits in contrast to larger contexts that often evade understanding. In such instances, myopic cartography results in a cursory scan of placement detached from a comprehensive exploration of place. This is especially poignant when the map must communicate the experiential. In such instances, a flattened map negates the very essence of its investigation.

James Corner—agreeing with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's assertion that fruitful maps must project new understandings³—describes the ability of the map to employ its agency to 'unfold.' He writes that since maps are both analogs to physical places, and simultaneously, abstractions of information related to those places they exhibit the ability to reveal (or 'unfold') new information.⁴ It is this unfolding that holds the maps potential to deal with the unknown in rich and inclusive ways. Truly projective maps, as designed entities, have been a topic of interest for many others over several generations. Nollis's 1748 map of Rome

Figure 1: Giambattista Nolli. Nollis Map of Rome, Italy, 1748. The Nollis Map interestingly conveys all public space as "open" whether interior or exterior.



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communicated public space and its potential in a revolutionary way. Charles Joseph Minard's map of Napoleon's Russian Campaign, while historic at its creation in 1869, poignantly conveyed the human cost of the march as a grim warning of the consequences of war. Many of the graphic works in Rowe and Koetter's *Collage City* explored potential juxtapositions in the urban fabric. Contemporarily, the complex and layered urban design and research processes of Morphosis are beautifully conceived and published in *Combinatory Urbanism*.

Recognizing that the plethora of exemplary maps as projective research, design, and communication supersedes the length of this paper, we will focus on uniqueness of the Situationist's psychogeographic investigations of Paris. In the "Naked City," and other derive based urban explorations, S.I. sought the haptic, experiential city. For Guy Debord and crew it was the lesser known parts of the city that drew them in. It was the tactics of their participation and misinterpretation that gave them an authentic perspective. Such methods still pay dividends as blatantly experiential methods of mapping draw out similar moments and enlightenment in mappers and map readers, alike.

A CONSTELLATION OF DEVICES: INHABITABLE/PERCEPTIVE MAPS

Effectively employed maps can lead to substantive understanding of place in (and therefore have a relationship/responsibility to) context rather than just placement within. So, what if maps were used to explore the nature of place-ness of context and its identifying qualities? What if the map was something looked through, rather than at? What if the map was a designed, engaging and haptic experience?

For designers to tap into new understanding, new methods must be advanced. An example of this is found when considering the possibilities of maps operating at dimensions greater than two—maps to be inhabited. Maps that thereby frame, generate and inspire unfamiliar spatial

Figure 2: Guy Debord. *The Naked City*. Paris, France, 1957. One of many psychogeographic maps conveying the an experiential wander through Paris.

awareness and activation. Maps that activate through experience thus generating transformation from information.

The goals and benefits of inhabitable maps are realized in their propensity to foster haptic connections, author linkages, design experiences, and give opportunities to qualitatively assess effectiveness. Using relatively small-scaled architectural projects as precedents for inhabitable maps provides ample evidence of this. While these projects were possibly not intended as maps, they share an intent to engage individuals at a personal scale that results in a familial connection to an inhabitable map, offering insight and inspiration. Here, such projects will be complimentarily referred to as maps, not as a definition of their initial intent, but as a means of inferring their capabilities to operate in a multiple ways.

Haptic Connections

Haptic connections between the inhabitant and the map allow for a sensorial and intimate connection. When one can touch a detail of the piece, see how it's made, feel its weight or movement, they are connected to it in a significant way. These haptic connections effectively develop relational reciprocity both within and without the componentry of the projects. Connections between person, project and place give the work a particular and lasting ability to influence those that visit and interact with the work. Through this connection, the role of the map as an experiential device is realized more readily. The work of Diller, Scofidio + Renfro gives visitors and viewers specific sensory connections to the projects. From their set designs, such as the kinetic set for *American Mysteries* (1983), to the processional section drawing for the *Slow House* (1989) and its associated drawing device, to the inhabited fog and required slicker suits of the *Blur Building* (2002), DSR has long appealed to the senses and particularly the haptics of those that witness their work. Similarly, Lewis, Tsurumaki, Lewis (LTL Architects), have done several small-scaled projects connecting people to spaces in haptic ways. One example, the *MSK Lobby Wall*, bisects a lobby as genesis for developing visual connections through the piece. It's the very divisive nature of the wall that makes such curated connections possible. Further the constructive method, stacked metal cubes housing a visual boolean array, fosters a tectonic awareness of the connection between through-lookers and the porous wall.

Reef, by Rob Ley of Urbana and Joshua Stein from Radical Craft, an intriguingly responsive bio-kinetic project, engages passersby through activating their immediate setting. Commissioned by the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York (2009), *Reef*'s materiality of aluminum, shape memory alloy, and translucent fiber reinforced composite, is not only visually intriguing but also inviting to engage. When recognized as motile, visitor's interaction with *Reef* becomes a near cybernetic/haptic experience—a proximal dance of person and pavilion—where a physical connection is experienced, even if one does not actually touch the piece.

Authored Linkages

By authoring both physical and phenomenal linkages between user and context, an inhabitable map is an extension of the human body. As evident in Oskar Schlemmer's *1927 Slat Dance*, a device used as a corporeal extension can enable one to relate to their surroundings in new and unusual ways through both inhibiting normative movement and increasing the awareness of such as a new method of contextual relation. This duality generates tailored methods for marking the measurement and presence of humanity in a space similar to the conglomeration of graffiti around a fire stair—what one can reach, one can tag.

An inhabitable map capitalizes on this duality of restriction and extension by both framing and enabling one's presence while marking that very presence in space. In his series of portable plastic shelters, called *paraSITE*, artist Michael Rakowitz offers the homeless a warm place to sleep through the project's attachment to buildings and appropriation of heated exhaust. This



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connection of person to building and city, through the paraSITes, begins to map not only the placement of those looking for a bed, but it also draws attention to the state of the homeless and their relationship to empowered establishments.

In recent years, Aarhus School of Architecture has teamed with several notable individuals through a series of interesting and productive workshops. In 2012, one such partnership with Professor David Gersten and a host of talented designers culminated in Aarhus Arc: Three Acts. It beautifully explores the relationship and connection between students, memories, classmates, abilities to communicate, experiential narration, processes of construction, drawing, projection, and the animated layering of event creation. The result is a temporal map of sensory superimposition that authors innumerable linkages and allows for a multitude of interpretations. While such a project could be categorized in several ways, it certainly attains many of the qualities of an inhabitable/perceptive map.

Designed Experiences

Inhabitable/perceptive maps are ostensibly designed experiences. They require one to design not only the project or product but the process that produces such output. They also must have a presence that again is a design opportunity. The designing of the processes, projects, and their presence relies heavily on the development of personal and communal reciprocities. What is given? What is taken? How is that exchange authored/designed? Several questions must be asked by the designer when deciding everything from the build details to envelop an experience to the codification, cataloguing and dissemination of the results. Screen Play is a good example of an architectural project as a designed experience. The Oyler-Wu Collaborative, a bustling Los Angeles firm, recently completed Screen Play, a wall and bench constructed from rope woven around and through varying steel tube profiles. As with all of their projects, Screen Play is beyond beautiful; it extends to its users a unique and specific

Figure 3: Aarhus Arc workshop was Directed by David Gersten and co-taught with Chris Thurlbourne, Anette Brunsvig Sørensen, Tine Bernstorff Aagaard, Ann Bush Hansen, Jane Willumsgaard, Anne Romme, Ben Clement, Sebastian de la Cour, Aida Miron, Uri Wegman, Thomas Lillevang, Mads Hulsrøj Peterson and Laura Genes with Alberto Perez Gomez and Juhani Pallasmaa via skype.

function. In this case a seat allows the body to rest while the mind plays in the visual field of light and void dancing along the walls undulating surface.

The web-based work of Aaron Koblin may be more obvious as mapping than previous examples yet reflects similar qualities through its inhabitable and perception-generating ability. His work not only allows one to view the maps and understand the research; it relies heavily on user participation for its creation. From The Johnny Cash Project, to drawing sheep or flight patterns, to developing interactive music videos such as The Wilderness Downtown, Koblin and his collaborators invite web-users to inhabitant their maps through participation in the process of making the maps and collecting the data that results in compelling displays of information and communal talent. These experiences are also designed, even if curated as open-source and interactive processes of simultaneous making and viewing.

Qualitative Assessment

In order to qualitatively assess the effectiveness and consequences of inhabitable/perceptive maps one must ask some key questions to test the efficacy of maps and mapping devices that elicit experience and populate experiment. What is meaningful, fruitful, communicable about the map(s)? What is the relationship of place and placement being explored? What is place-ness in this instance? Can it be experienced? Does the presence of the map merely reveal person-to-place interactions or does it alter it? Central to this inquisition is that the maps—in whatever their form—engage the users and viewers in ways that help them better understand the places they inhabit and their relationship to them, whether those places be public, private, physical, digital, or imaginary.

SENSORY EXPERIMENTS IN INTERACTION: PLACE PAVILIONS

The Place Pavilions attempt to bring together the explorative qualities and informational benefits of everything an inhabitable/perceptive map can be. They are individually scaled constructions built as maps and mapping devices, simultaneously and are thus aimed at investigating perception as a means of spatial understanding. They are rooted in the previously stated philosophy of architecture's specific role and cultural responsibility to mediate between people and their environment. Through affording inhabitants the opportunity to experience their context freshly by framing the sensory perception of surroundings, the pavilions reveal through regulation, stimulate through stipulation. By restricting the customarily pervasive experience of a place, the pavilions allow one to focus on specific elements around them in order to notice that which is usually ignored. Each individual pavilion focuses inhabitants interaction with the environment via governing specific senses, offering individualized habitation through fostering regulated interaction of person and place. Thus allowing the map to be experiential and the reader to be informed through the map's generative and constructive nature and its cultivation of action.

A few fundamental design parameters govern the pavilions. The pavilions are made from limited geometry and a restricted material and color pallet. The pavilions are kinetic in very focused and specific ways. The pavilions are intended to be experienced as an event. They should be easy and pleasurable to use. And finally, the pavilions should leave markings of their presence and the event of their usage.

Restricted Material Pallet and Geometries

First, their geometry, material and color pallet is restricted in order to keep them visually simple. Since they are intended to move from place to place in an effort to map multiple environments, it is important that they maintain their object identity (being noticeable) while not distracting from the space in which they are placed and will map. They are not the focus but need to be inviting enough to engage visitors. Formally, the construction is limited to a few basic Euclidian geometric forms, namely circles, rectangles and triangles, constructed in an

effort to read as assemblages of essential, recognizable forms. Making each pavilion as straight forward and approachable as possible allows inhabitants to understand their simplicity as manifestation of their role as measuring and mapping devices.

Focused Kinetics

Secondly, each pavilion must be specifically kinetic. Each pavilion is assigned a sense to heighten or frame in order to gather specific spatial data through the participation of inhabitants. In order to allow each inhabitant authorship over the perception-mapping of their space, the pavilion must move. However, it is crucial that each pavilion move only as much as is absolutely necessary to maintain focus eliminate extemporaneous distraction or too much gadgetry. This balance allows for inhabitants to adjust the pavilion to their perception of the site without diminishing their ability to gather site data. Through simple rotation or other rudimentary movements, the inhabitant points the pavilion to specific sights or sounds as discretely as possible so as to keep the event focused on the experience of place and not the place pavilion, itself.

Eventfulness and Ease/Pleasure of Use

The next two points are inseparably connected. The pavilions are intended to be experienced as an event and should be easy and pleasurable to use. Each pavilion provides a private, interior space from which invited guests perceive their environment and share in the event. Open to all and benefitting from extensive data collection, the pavilions must be safe, fun, and inviting. One should feel comfortable to get inside and willing to use it and increase their environmental and spatial intelligence. To do this, the pavilions use their build quality and object identity to attract people as a billboard to their own extent. Crucial then is allowing the experience to take precedent once someone is inside. Thus, the pavilion needs to then give way to the setting and the event for which it exists.

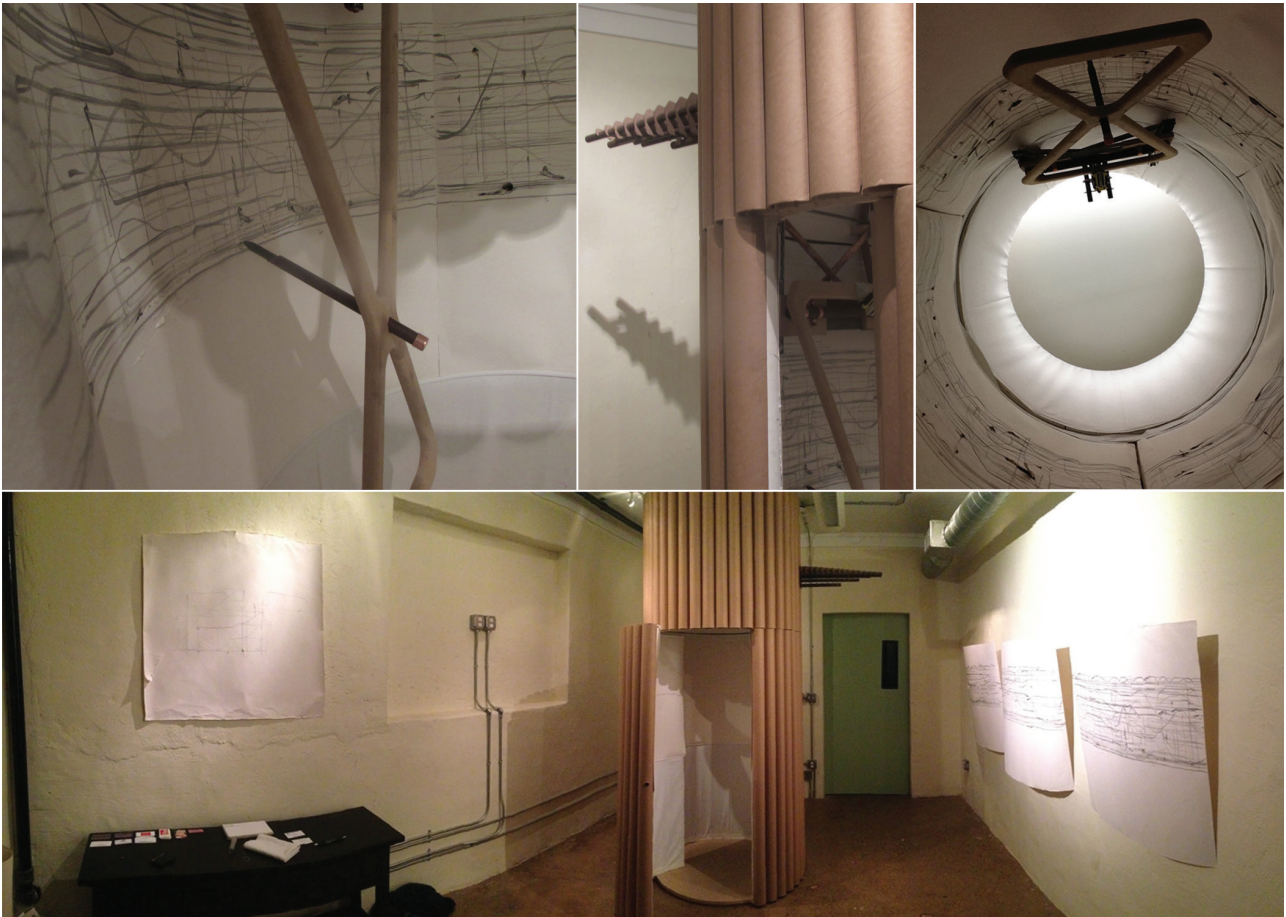
Left Markings

Lastly, the place pavilions are mapping devices and should leave marks in/on the space(s) they occupy. These markings are hopefully as permanent as possible. However, this proves to be a difficult point of acceptance for hosts if they do not want a permanent trace of the event on their exhibition space. Since galleries are the usual hosts to such events, this is a common concern. Thus, the pavilion can leave markings in a couple of ways. The map can be removable, or the markings can fade, but they should be distinct during the duration of the event and able to be traced and catalogued afterward. These markings, as the map of the event in that particular space, are crucial to the pavilion's role as a research device.

The pavilions themselves act as maps of the design language, making process, and goals of the exercise simultaneously collecting a patina from the mapping activities and visiting cartographers. As such they should accept markings of the place and event—meaning that it should collect overspray from the markings as well as develop a patina during its use. These are not permanent constructions and should show age, wear, and effect over their life-span. When moved and re-used, they should take traces of previous events with them as maps themselves and as catalogs of the studies.

PLACE PAVILION_01: THE VIEW FINDER

The first built place pavilion, The View Finder, is focused on framing ones visual understanding of an exterior space. A mobile and inhabitable wedge-shaped device, it frames inhabitants' centrifugal views through a 2- inch vertical strip. A triangular inner space is defined by two large constructed panels held in place by a thin steel frame. As one enters and uses the flanking horizontal cuts as handles, they rotate the device around its pivot. Focus is drawn to the narrow views of the surrounding context, disclosing the sight one vertical strip at a time.



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This decontextualization of the surroundings reveals specific, visible slivers of accentuated moments in the environment usually under-appreciated. It is through this focusing that one sees their surroundings differently. For one visitor it may be a smoke stack on the side of a warehouse, for another a piece of sculpture in the distance. When such a moment is realized, the inhabitant triggers a marking device, leaving an orange trace of their gleaned awareness on the ground around the pavilion. As the number of visitors accrues, the accumulation of their individual markings collectively denote the character defining elements of the site. Once the pavilion is removed, it leaves a map in its wake showing its anchor point, its carved, circular path of rotation, and the paint denoting the spatial experiences of the event participants.

PLACE PAVILION_02: THE SOUND BOOTH

The Sound Booth, the second place pavilion, is a 9' tall cylindrical structure built to restrict sounds heard by its inhabitants. Built primarily of paper products (shipping tubes, MDF board, drawing paper...) and copper accents, the brown tubular exterior and white canvass interior express the duality of inside-and-out, signifying the contrasting roles of those hearing and those to be heard. Once closed inside, a painstaking refinement of disappearing details allows one to focus on their connection to the marking handle and the paper ready to be mapped upon. One steers using the handle, in search of sounds with the copper-tubed analog microphone above. The marker traces on the mapping surface the rotation of the pavilion's top 3' while simultaneously demarcating the chosen height of the marking handle—the two kinetic components. The participant, upon noticing sound they find compelling, pushes the handle penetrating the map, an unequivocal registration of the presence of the exterior event. As the number of visitors increases so do the markings of rotation and elevation and the punctures of choice leaving a detailed account of the event enveloping the pavilion. Once full, the maps

Figure 4: Iterative Studio. *Place Pavilion_01: The View Finder*, on site in Lubbock, Texas, 2012. *Designed and Built by Joshua Nason, Alexander Bingham and Evelyn Valdez.*



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are removed from the pavilion and displayed in the very space they depict while the pavilion is ideally moved to a new location to begin again this process of spatial, auditory mapping.

A Projection

The Place Pavilions accomplish their goal of actuating experience via translating map readers into actors and conversely transforming their environs into perceptible bits of data. These pavilions, as designed and built experiential devices, tectonically mediate between the reader and the read in a haptic and individualized, participatory manner. The goal is tactical introducing viewers to atypical readings of their surroundings by presenting to them detailed, specific, loaded and yet personalized experiences of what they otherwise take for granted. The projects attempt to use public spaces as researchable canvasses of human and urban activity, as spaces to be read and understood through framed the personal experiences of visitors. When layered, as recorded strata, these experiences become doubly mappable as expansive data sets of the interaction between visitors and space. Reading this interaction, as the graphic memoirs of a place’s relationship with its inhabitants, tells us much more than how many people visit a place or why they came, but exhumes from their perception the qualities and characters of place-ness that arouse in them the desire to connect with the world around them. As connection to place is investigated, an awareness of place-ness is cultivated. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of the mediative role of an experiential, inhabitable map inseparably links creator to process to visitor to environment through the vitality of a designed experience.

Figure 5: Iterative Studio. *Place Pavilion_02: The Sound Booth*, on site in Dallas, Texas, 2014. *Designed and Built by Joshua Nason, Jonathan Essary and Elizabeth Hurtado.*