

The Riverside

THE ARTIST'S STORY

A recent edition of CUE featured the redevelopment scheme for the Riverside Studios Arts Centre in Hammersmith. The project has a number of unique features not the least being the presence of an artist on the design team.

The usual practice, of course, is for an artist to be involved, if at all, at the end of an architectural scheme, illustrating the designs of the architect or adorning the building with an art work. This limited and traditional contribution is decidedly not the case at Riverside. The artist Gareth Jones has been involved in all aspects of the scheme from the beginning and will continue until the building is completed in 1984.

It was his initial collaboration in 1979 with the architect Will Alsop which forms the basis of the current scheme. Two major awards from the A.C.G.B. have sustained Jones's involvement through the times when it was impossible to predict the full extent of his worth and the Arts Council are to be commended for backing their judgement that an artist's role is not limited by traditional precedent. The fact that the collaboration is successful and the scheme about to come to fruition amply justifies their risk.

Throughout Jones has kept a diary of his observations on the scheme, attitudes to drawing and the behaviour of the collaborators. This will be given in full in a lecture at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in February 1982. There follow some extracts.

COLLABORATION

September 1st

Today I began to consider how colour might be used in the scheme, especially how it affects the light and mood of the place. Whereas there has been a certain amount of questioning of my involvement in the form of the building, my role as colourist is received almost enthusiastically. The pre-conception exists that form is the architects domain and colour the artist's. It is something I question strongly because it reinforces role playing and thus undermines the collaboration and its free exchanges.

September 2nd

Now that I am working in another context there is a freedom to use any artistic style. Every artist feels constrained by the concept of originality and makes an effort to avoid a multitude of styles or similarity to another artist's work, but the context of architecture releases me from these considerations. I am a stranger and can assume any identity I please. In architecture everything artistic is original because it is new.

September 4th

It has become clear that I have entered another art form and that the collaboration is not a balanced entity. The hard fact is that the architect has the means to employ the artist but not *vice versa*. Therefore the architect is always 'at home'.

I am continually in the position of asking questions of the architects and they only find out about art by the nature of my questions on architecture.

October 13th

Architectural practice has provided me with a renaissance context, something I find suited to the broad range of my own work. In practice you are called upon to provide everything from structure to signs and from colour to spatial layout. These diverse skills so often frowned on by the art establishment have an outlet of expression here.

October 16th

Having made a considerable number of gauches 'playing' with colour, ie having no deliberate or intended use in the scheme, I am surprised how appropriate the paintings are when considering specific aspects of the scheme. When the application is 'unforced'

as it is here I know that my role in the practice is right. My work is relevant and effective without losing its identity in problem solving.

October 30th

Will and I discussed the collaboration this morning. He is concerned that in designing the art gallery I have come close to doing his job. I agree, but we differ in our interpretation of this fact. He regards it as usurping his role whilst I see it as proof the collaboration is working.

There is no doubt that the pressures and deadlines have forced us, to some extent, to revert to type. (In this instance, however, Will is simply role playing.) If the gallery I have designed is good then it really does not matter who is responsible and there is no discussion that it is other than good. Instead of worrying that he is not responsible for the form and structure as an architect usually is, he should be delighted to be released to consider things architects normally have not sufficient experience of, such as colour.

DRAWING

August 10th

When you take a photograph everyone knows it is a record of something already in existence, but in a drawing no one can be sure whether it is imagined or observed. Drawings are always original in this sense.

August 15th

Leger only chose subject matter that would fit his drawing technique. That is why he drew urban and industrial life, the geometry of the subject being suited to the geometric method of representation. There is an interesting parallel with architectural drawings. The predominant use of mechanical pens in conjunction with rulers and mechanical curves means you can only draw a limited type of image.

August 18th

Architects either cannot draw natural form or they regard it as unimportant. People, trees, etc., when they appear in drawings are always ciphers.

August 24th

In the midst of a drawing I drew an ink line around a shape enclosing it. It looked exactly right. Then as I inked in the surrounding area the shape got smaller. The line had been 'captured' by the ink surround; it was part of the surround not the shape. The status of line is fascinating. I am reminded that in football the line belongs to the surround whilst in rugby it is part of the field of play.

September 8th

I have been told that architects' drawings are accumulative in effect, ie it may take several drawings for an architect to represent what he wants. The artist, on the other hand, will attempt to do what he wants within one drawing. It is this that leads to