

## ARCHITECTURAL AMBASSADORS

Exploring Fantasy in Architecture

RIBA

**northumbria**  
UNIVERSITY NEWCASTLE



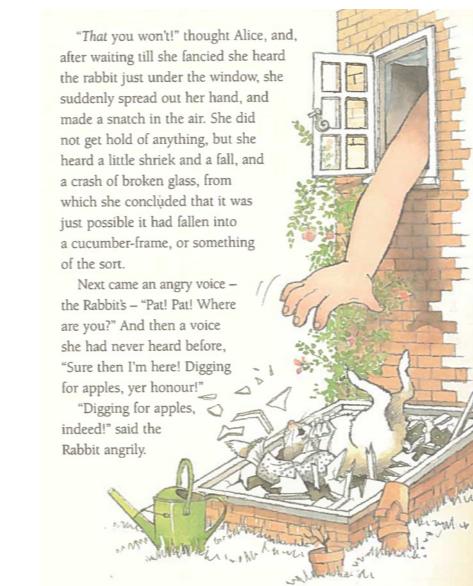
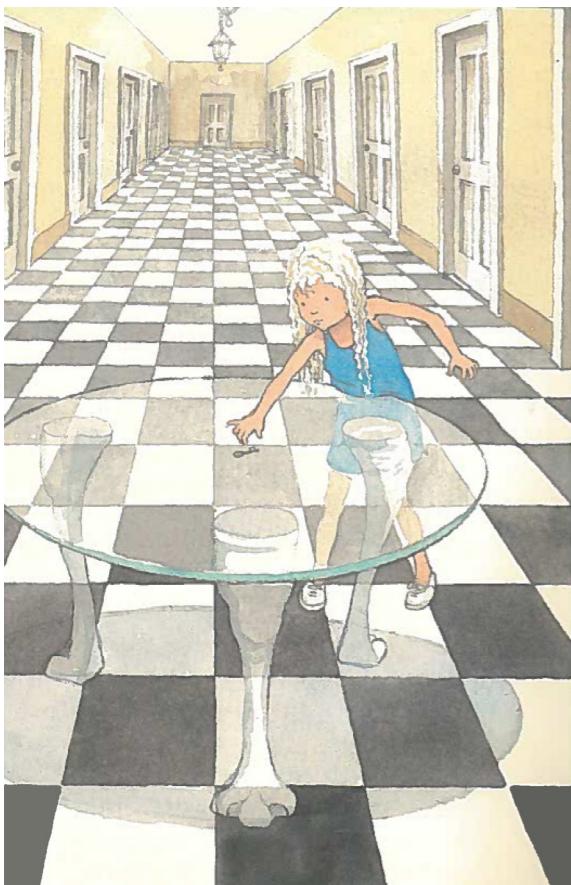
## introduction:definition

In the past the program has incorporated city mapping, exploring the surroundings and creating a response. However with this exercise we are going to explore from an internal perspective, navigating a known route through your school and surrounding area, exploring and changing things within our own minds.

Fantasy as a genre in the creative arts, most notably in literature is a common form of escapism for people; this escapism is created by the law that creates fantasy, that a fantasy is the description of a world where the rules are reversed. In this context, the rules can be ones that society has created for us, outlining what is deemed as being respectable ways to behave. Therefore we can see that through escapism we are challenging what is deemed as proper or suitable in terms of our behavior.

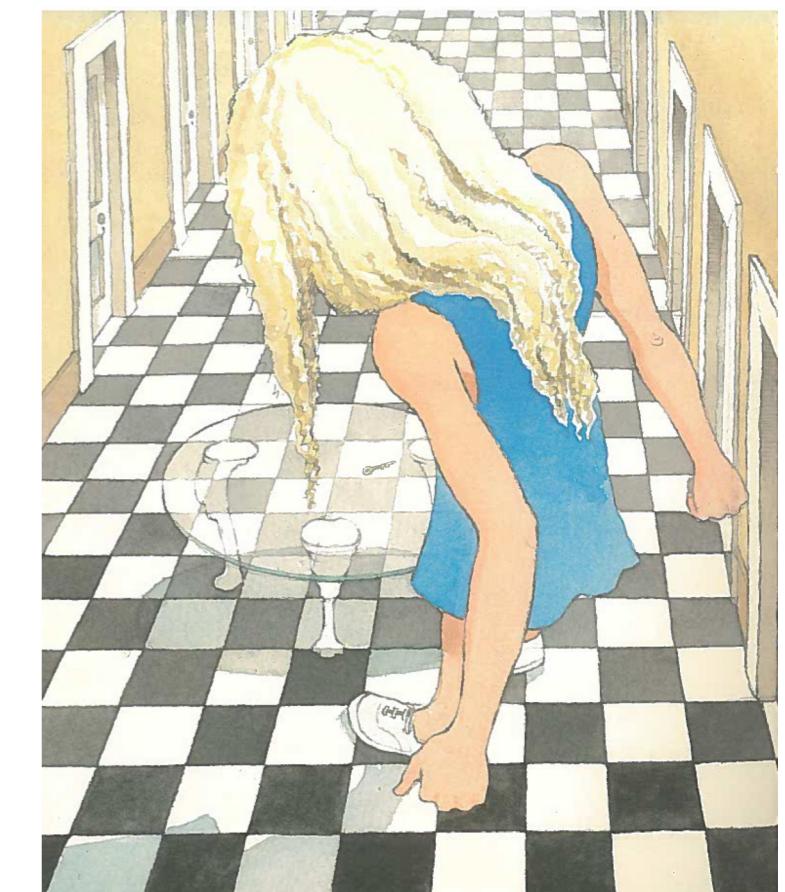
We aim establish whether the application of fantasy, as a design tool in architecture can alter human perception of place, in order to form a good relationship with created space. It is important to make it clear the in this case we understand that in this context:

*fantasy is referring to rule reversal.*



Helen Oxenbury's illustrations of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

For instance, in Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll commonly used scale as a fantastical device. This was mainly because he was drawing on his own experience. He suffered from a disease that caused his perception of the scale of objects to be warped, which in turn affected his perception of his own size in relation to his surroundings. The disease has since been called *Alice in Wonderland Syndrome* after the success of the story.



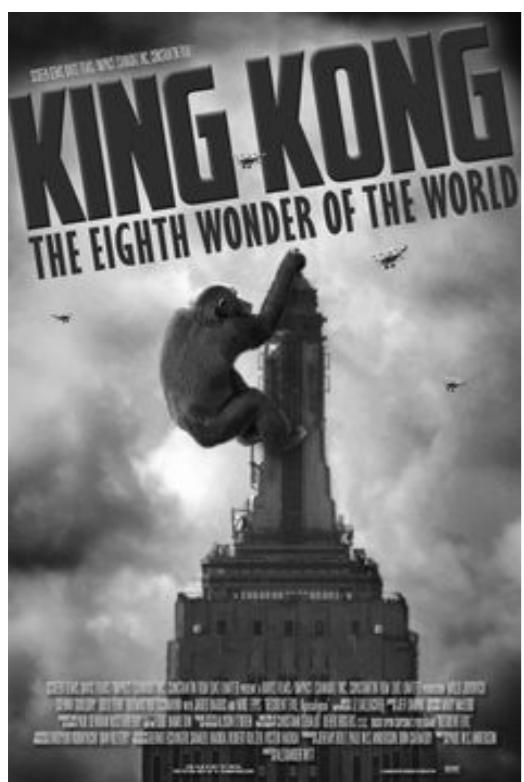
## inspiration:scale:anthromorphism

Fantasy is a popular media genre, with classic examples synonymous with periods in time, creating a timeless quality. Scale is quite often used as a fantastical devise; and it conforms to the definition of fantasy mentioned previously:

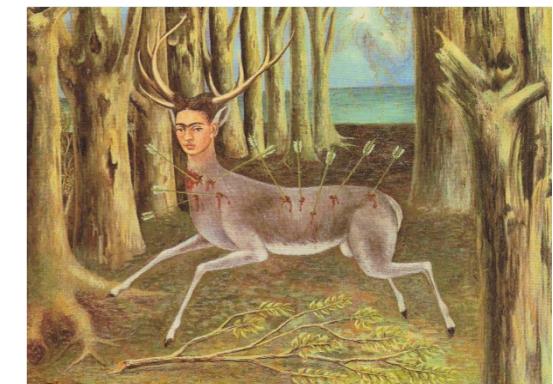
*That it concerns a world where rules are reversed*

Classic examples of scale being used to fantastical effect, as shown below, include King Kong and Gulliver's Travels. Gulliver's travels in particular was read by everybody at the time of publication, rich and poor, young and old. As the relatability of the story was not exclusive to certain groups.

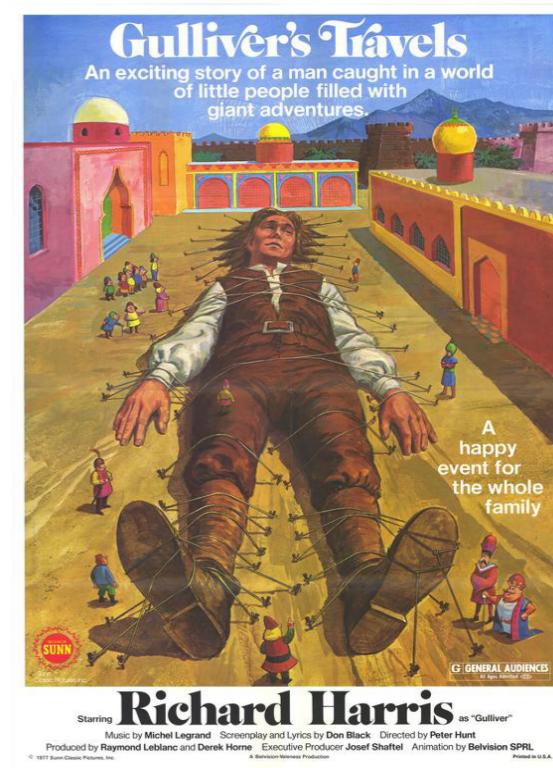
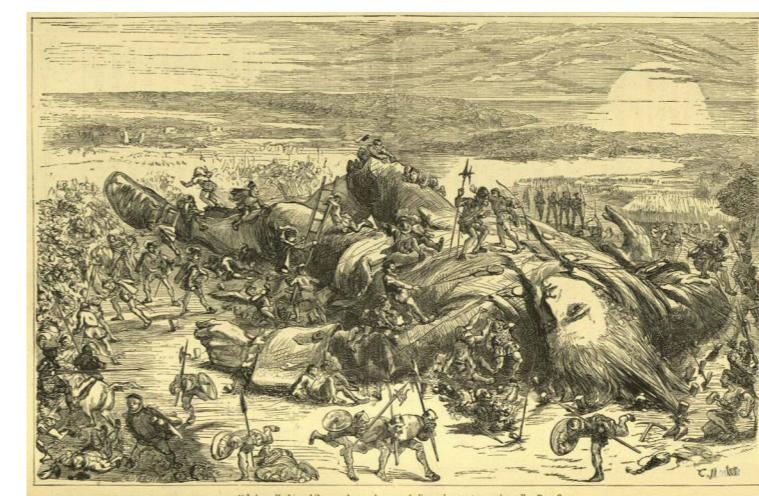
Another commonly used fantastical device is anthromorphism; where animals are given human qualities, like speech and wearing clothes. This is an extremely relatable way to present the concept of fantasy, as the element of a known being acting differently to what is expected of them, is something that can be understood by anyone, transcending age and culture.



The Moomin series by Tove Jansson is renowned for its use of anthromorphism to create fantasy. In the early twentieth century Frieda Kahlo used surrealist anthropomorphism in self portraits to represent how she felt at different times in her life; using symbolism to represent different emotions and life events that affected her.



King Kong, made famous by the early twentieth century film and Gulliver Travels, in the 19th century by Jonathan Swift's novel, both create fantasy by using scale as the fantastical contingent.

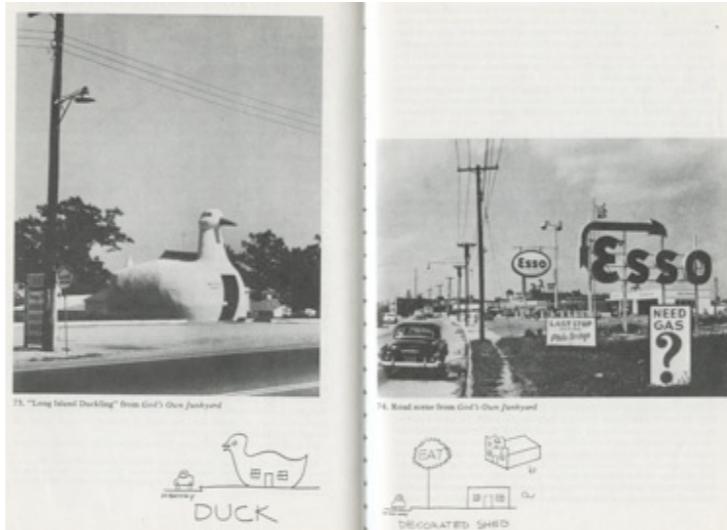
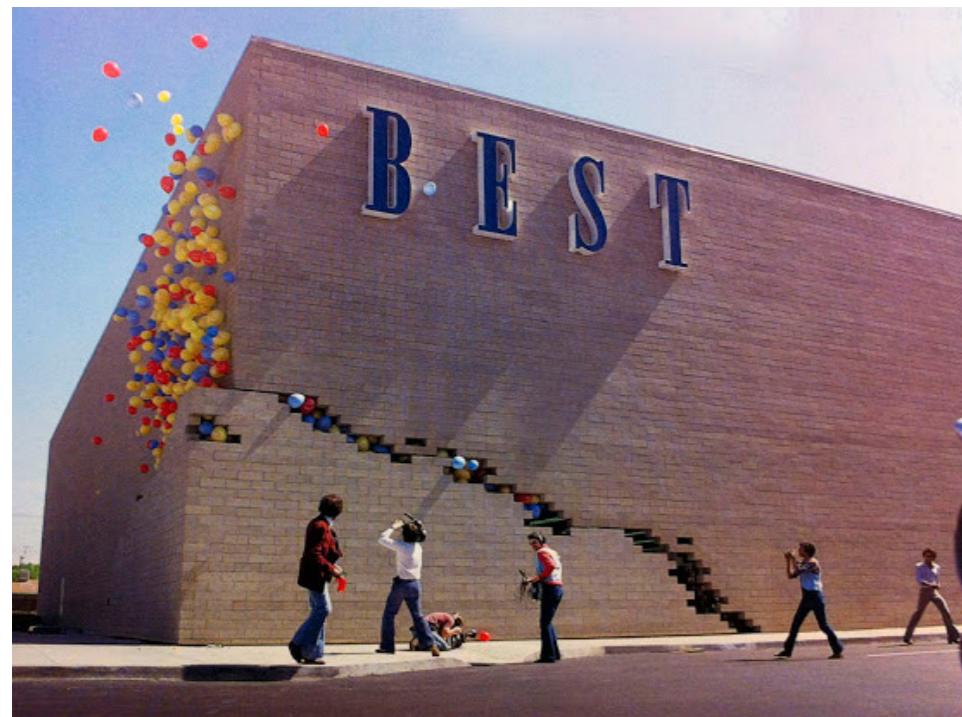


# inspiration:art:architecture

Examples of fantasy can be seen in the arts world and in architecture as well as a literary and cinematic genre. In Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's 'Learning from Las Vegas' they documented the exaggerated store fronts of american shops, seeing the form of the buildings being used as advertising, to draw people in. As a devise, the appeal of fantasy is one that consciously or subconsciously appeals to a wide audience, something that architects can use to their advantage.

There are different ways of presenting fantasy, whether it is in an obvious way or in a more subtle way, here are some examples below:

In the 1970s, James Wines of SITE Architects challenged the American publics' perception of what commercial architecture should and did look like, by faking disjunction and creating false broken facades on a range of super stores called Best. The purpose, as Wines describes was to, "Open up questioning of the typical commercial environment; meaning a process of motivating people to react differently to their routine environment." (Wines, 2016)



Property developers often fill show homes with small furniture to give the illusion of space; Point Supreme Architects played on this fact by making an instalation where the rooms created were half the size of normal size rooms. The rooms are big enough for people to walk around in and interact with.



*"If writers could manipulate the structure of stories in the same way that they twist vocabulary and grammar, couldn't architects do the same, organising the program in a similarly objective,"*

Artist Rebecca Horn made her fame photographing the effects of artificially elongating her limbs and the shape of her body. The effects when these photographs are taken inside, are



# aims:objectives:make

## task 1

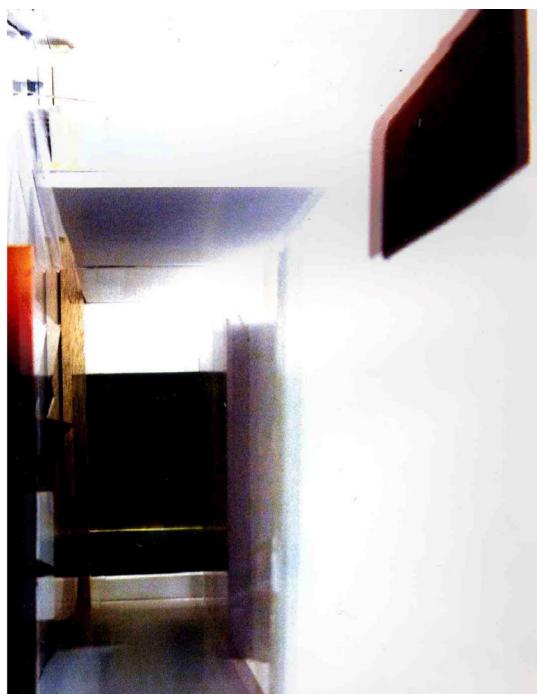
The exercise is going to explore two separate elements.

Firstly it is an opportunity for you to use your imagination and create a character based on the definition we defined previously. Think about scale, deformation and

anthropomorphism, what do you want your character to be and what story do you think it has behind it?

The second half is about thinking about how we connect to our immediate environment. By creating your character you now have to think about how a character would think about and live in a space, we have chosen to suggest places in and around your school in order to help you make the comparison between how you feel about a space and how you think your character will feel.

scents and smells/sounds, reverberations/dimness, brightness, shadow, light enclosure and exposure/openness and containment, intimacy and spaciousness, density and looseness looking out, looking through, being inside/composition of materials, textures/sequence of atmospheres, colours, reflectivity, hues, thresholds, seams, joints tactile qualities/touch, smell, shadow and light/what your hands touch and what your feet walk on.



Could your character see a space like this?



The intimidating cycle helmets from the olympics

- 1) Get into pairs or small groups and design your character, discussing how the body modifications you will go on to make will alter how you relate to and experience the space you are going to interact with.
- 2) Make your modification, remember this is a quick exercise so don't be too precious, be expressive, don't dilute your initial spark of inspiration with erroneous detail.
- 3) Experience your known space as your character, think about your experience of the space you are within now that you are different, does it feel the same? What can you see, hear and feel.
- 4) Then we will have a question and answer session, in which you can reflect on the experience and let us know what the key differences were.

Scribble, draw, talk.

Think about how your character would live in the space.

Does the space take on a different quality now that you have reversed the rules and created your own character?

Does the space take on new characteristics as well, when you think about it from your character's point of view?



Playing with light and being creative



Joe Standing in a 1:20 scale room unable to talk

Charactarisation in different cultures...



Mexican 'Tiger' Wrestling Mask



Papua New Guinea,  
Indigenous Fertility Festival

When thinking about how you could transform yourself into a fantasy character, these examples of traditional masks that people dressed up in to celebrate religious and traditional events, could inspire you.

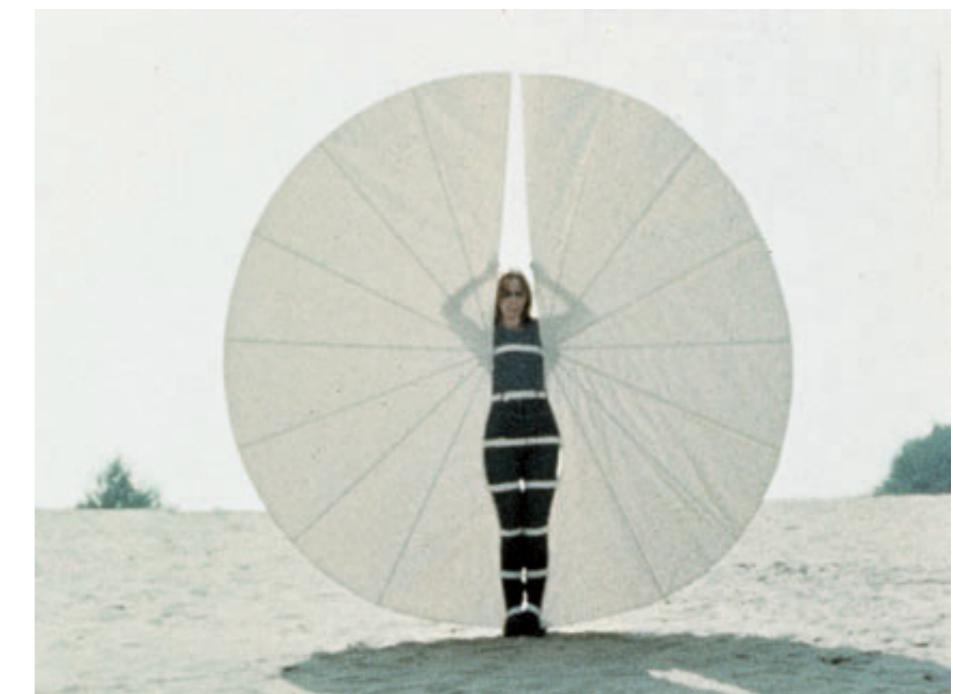
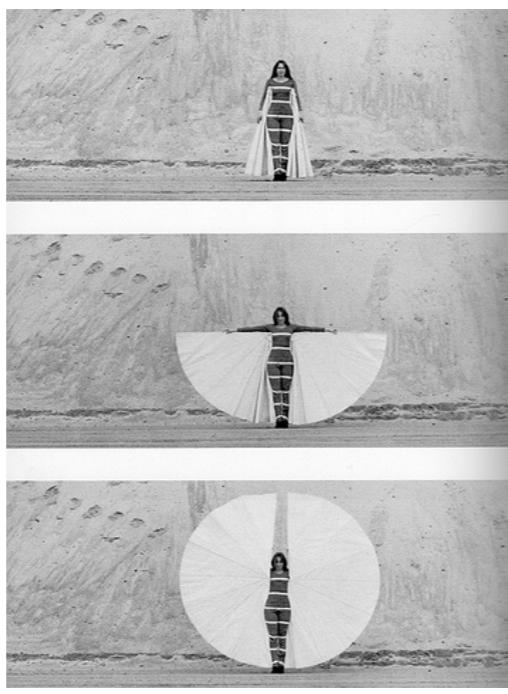


Iberian Spring Festival, Lisbon

Relevant Artists...

More from Rebecca Horn, body modifications that alter the model's direct interaction with the environment

Antonio Giacometti



## aims:objectives:make task 2

As well as the previous task, in which we encouraged you to experience space as a character, we are proposing to encourage you to draw the body modifications you create as a part of your life drawing sessions.

Think about the change in the relationship between the model and the surrounding area; what has your modification made the room feel like; has it taken on a new characteristic due to the presence of the character? The succession of sketches you create will not only bolster your portfolio but encourage you to think about the relationship between the body and the built environment.

key words to think about:

scents and smells/sounds, reverberations/dimness, brightness, shadow, light/enclosure and exposure/openness and containment, intimacy and spaciousness, density and looseness looking out, looking through, being inside/composition of materials, textures/sequence of atmospheres, colours, reflectivity, hues, thresholds, seams, joints tactile qualities/touch, smell, shadow and light/what your hands touch and what your feet walk on.

Consider how different a room or a corridor would feel if your body was altered in some way; would you have the same appreciation of scale, would you see from a different perspective?

Remember your character in fictional, you can choose whatever you think will produce the most interesting results and inspire you the most. Think about relationships with light and the negative space that you feel will be the most interesting. Imagine how you would feel enclosed, how you would feel if you were the one being drawn by other people.

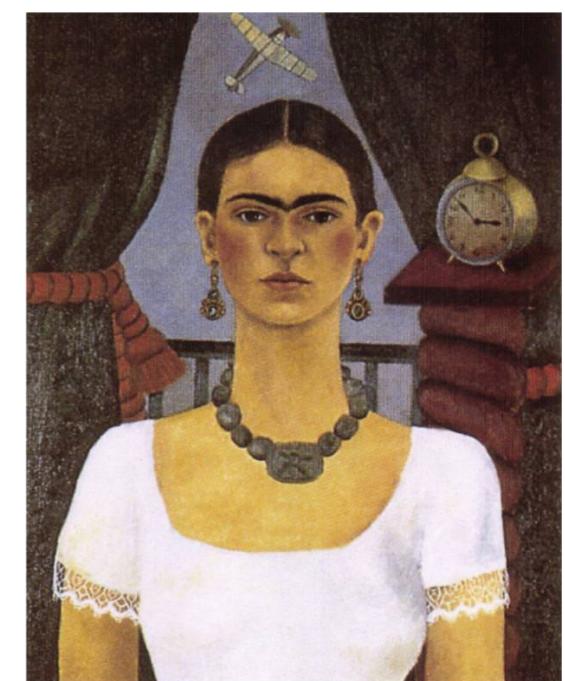
Rebecca Horn



Melanie Bonajo



Frida Kahlo



# aims:objectives:make exhibition

After all your hard work throughout the week, curating an exhibition to display what different takes you have had on the tasks set will be fascinating. You have all responded to the tasks set in completely different ways, so comparing the outputs you have created and listening to your individual responses will be enlightening. It is also a good opportunity to ask any questions that you may have thought of after time to reflect on your session.

It will be a fun was to showcase all the outputs you have produced this week and will bring to light how varied our imaginations are. Displaying outputs at the end of a project is commonly used throughout design industries in order critique and improve on what has been done previously.

Exhibition of participatory project in Berlin



Photographs from a Die Bauplitan Exhibition at Erika Mann Elementary school in Berlin



Our end of year degree show at university

Photograph of a previous group's walk through the Civic Centre



# bibliography:ideas

Northumbria Architecture tumblr: Quite a lot of photographs from previous sessions can be found here

Interesting artists and architects to look at

Site Architects, Best Supermarkets  
Frieda Kahlo  
Point sumpreme Architects  
Rebecca Horn  
Antonio Giacometti  
Melanie Bonajo  
Helen Oxenbury

Interesting authors and books

Alice in Wonderland, Lewix Carroll  
Gullivers Travels, Jonathan Swift  
'Duck' and 'Decorated Shed' from Learning from Las Vegas, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown  
The Baupiloten: Susanne Hofmann  
The Moomin Series- Tove Jannosson