INTERIM
PROPOSAL

2009 / 2013

In September 2009, Calum Storrie was commissioned by the Buildings Acquisition, Expansion and Contraction Committee of the Delirious Museum to undertake a study into the feasibility of converting the adjacent disused slaughterhouse into a series of new galleries. The following report consists of the initial findings of the study. A full technical study will follow when the questions of policy highlighted herein have been agreed.

Interim proposal for a new wing to house the collection of 'installation and performance art' of the Delirious Museum, Department of Art, 2009.

Annotated and amended with no particular end in mind in the Princess Louise, High Holborn, 16th October 2013.*

Designed by Caitlin Storrie

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of how to make a new space for the display of some of the Delirious Museum's larger installation pieces and less tangible performance works has been under consideration since the 1970s. Many similar institutions have been grappling with the same question in the intervening years and this has lead to a number of projects internationally. The vast majority of these schemes have been based around existing redundant structures reassigned in a postindustrial age (Tate Modern, London, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburg and PS1, New York, to name a few). This has allowed the reuse of large scale spaces where both existing uses and the 'narratives' associated with them have become outmoded. The current opportunity for the new wing has come about only recently as the adjacent slaughterhouse situated to the west of the Department of Art has been closed. We at the Museum believe that, while working within what can now be called a tradition of reuse and recycling, this gives us the opportunity to extend the possibilities for the display of 'problematic' work.

1. ENTRANCE TO THE NEW WING

The slaughterhouse building is well serviced from the street with a sizeable yard designed to receive large lorries. This yard is also connected to a railway branch line formerly used for the delivery of live animals and for the removal of carcasses, butchered meat and waste. The Yard is linked to the tracks via a spiral ramp modeled on the horse ramp built into the walls of the Ducal Palace in Urbino. It is thought by some that the ramp is the only feature of architectural interest in the building. (see Pevsner vol. 32, page 124). The rather banal nature of the building's architecture is, however, a positive feature for its use as a new gallery space (figures 1 and 2).

The doorway to the New Wing will be situated in the west wall of the octagonal Room IV in the Department of Art of the Delirious Museum. This doorway was built to give access to the proposed J. G. Ballard archive. The curators were initially encouraged by Ballard's interest in both exhibitions and museums. In 1970 he staged an exhibition of crashed cars at the New Arts Lab in London and commented later: '...I'm tempted to say that the psychological test is the only function of today's art shows, and

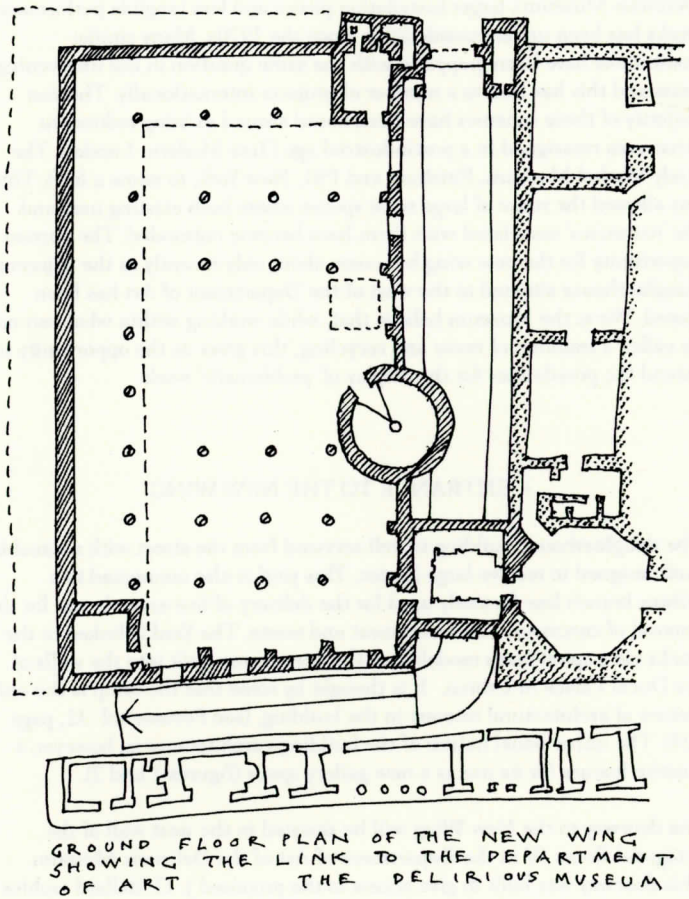

Figure 1

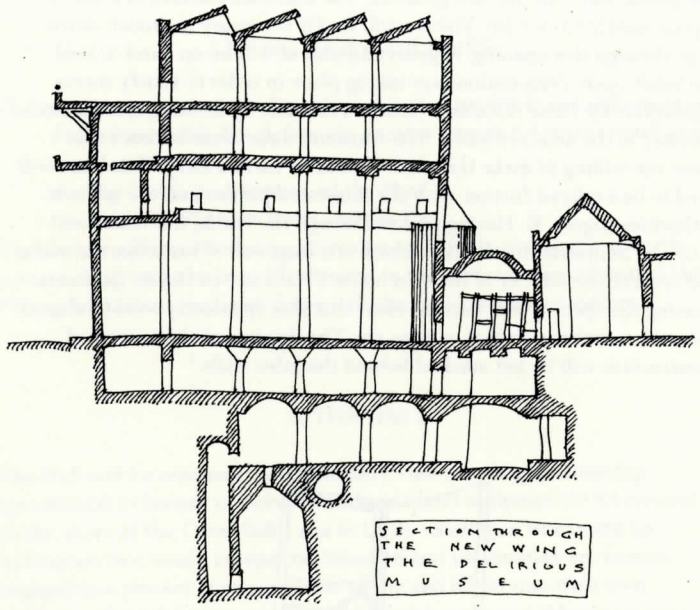

Figure 2

that the aesthetic elements have been reduced almost to zero'.[1] Plans for the archive have been abandoned since it became clear that Ballard was engaged in a continual programme of destruction of his papers and there is now nothing to house. ('There are no Ballard archives. I never keep letters, reviews, or research materials. Every page is a fresh page'[2]).[3] As this project has now been abandoned new possibilities have opened up for use of the space that will integrate it into the plans for the slaughterhouse building. The space of the current opening will be filled in and the entrance to

1 *www.abitare.it/featured/hans-ulrich-obrist-intervista-j-g-ballard/. Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist conducted by fax in January 2003. Originally published for Becks Futures (ICA). Reprinted in Abitare.*

2 *Ibid*

3 *It subsequently emerged that Ballard had overstated his lack of interest in documentation. The J.G. Ballard archive is now housed in the British Library (2013)*

the work 'Cellar' by Gregor Schneider will be inserted. This will be the sole public way into the new galleries. The entrance consists of a hatch approximately 1m x 1.5m. Visitors will find it necessary to crouch down to go through this opening. A gallery attendant will be on hand to hold the hatch open. Negotiations are taking place in order to satisfy access regulations for those not able to enter in this way by creating a concealed doorway in the adjacent lobby. The Museum directorate believes that those not willing to make the effort should be turned away. This issue will need to be explored further with the interested parties and the relevant authorities (figure 3). Having passed through the hatch, the visitor will enter the Schneider installation which is a fragment of his project to make and remake the interior of his own house ('Haus ur') in Reydt, Germany. Leaving the space it will become clear that this apparently solid (if abject) domestic interior is, in fact, a stage set. The detritus of the process of construction will be left stacked behind the false walls.[4]

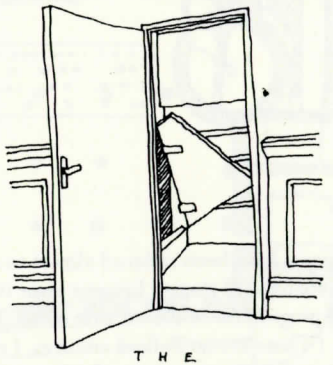

Figure 3

4 *Like a number of other installations mentioned in this proposal this piece was shown in the Royal Academy of Art's exhibition 'Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art' (2000). Calum Storrie was responsible for the 'design' of this exhibition. Other works mentioned here and shown in the exhibition are those by Angus Fairhurst and Maurizio Cattelan.*

2. THE NEW GALLERIES

The main components of the display space in the slaughterhouse will comprise:

- the Hall (accessible directly from the entrance through Schneider's installation)
- the Mezzanine
- the Top Floor, the Terrace and the Roof
- the Yard, the Platform Level and the Pit.

Circulation will be provided by staircases and lifts in the west and north corners along with the large lift situated in the centre of the columned Hall. The spiral ramp to the lower floors will also be accessible to visitors.

3. THE HALL

The Hall will be renamed the Spiral Jetty Hall (pending sponsorship agreements) in honour of Robert Smithson's land sculpture (1970) created on the shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah.[5] Smithson was intent on making art that would escape the Museum and yet curators are forever engaged in a process of recuperation of any and all art into their own territory – the exhibition space. In 1967 Smithson wrote: 'Museums are tombs, and it looks like everything is turning into a museum. Painting, sculpture and architecture are finished, but the art habit continues.'[6] Since its completion, the Spiral Jetty has proved to be a constant source of inspiration and interest to other artists.[7] The process of 'museumisation' is not necessarily harmful to the artist's work (take, for example, the work of Richard Serra exhibited in the vast spaces of the Guggenheim, Bilbao or the immense works that have grown out of Tate Modern's Turbine Hall commissions). As it would clearly be impossible to import the Spiral Jetty itself into the gallery it will be commemorated in a series of films and other documentation compiled by other artists (for credibility) and curators

5 *See www.spiraljetty.org*

6 *In 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums'. Reprinted in Robert Smithson; The Collected Writings, edited by Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)*

7 *See (or possibly hear), for instance, Tacita Dean's audio work Trying to find the Spiral Jetty, 1997. This records her inconclusive search for the Spiral Jetty at a time when water levels in the lake were higher than at the time of the making of the work. Spiral Jetty is under continuous threat from changing industrial practices around the lake that affect water levels and salinity.*

(for veracity). The central section of columns will be removed to create a large open area. This is in anticipation of ambitious projects that will be installed in the space in the future. The columned space will lend itself to labyrinthine installations allowing the visitor to get lost. The open space will allow for large scale spectacle. A place has been reserved for the work of Chris Burden though it has not yet been agreed which work should be represented.[8] Possible installations are The Two Minute Airplane Factory of 1999, a large assembly line machine for the making and automated flying of model gliders, or the work Medusa's Head installed at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1993 which proved to be structurally problematic for the existing building. It is especially important that Burden is represented here as a reminder of the possibility of failure as an artistic pursuit. After much discussion the Board of Trustees has decided not to invite Burden to reinstall his piece 'Exposing the Foundations of the Museum', 1986, in which the artist dug into the earth beneath the Temporary Contemporary building of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Like much of Smithson's work, this had the effect, at least temporarily, of robbing the museum of some of its authority. However, by expanding the space of the Delirious Museum and by over-engineering the structure the curators anticipate they will be able to stretch the potential of possible commissions and stay one step ahead of those who want to undermine the museum. The goods lift adjacent to this space will allow for the movement of large works to upper floors so this type of work need not be restricted to the Spiral Jetty Hall.

4. THE MEZZANINE

Overlooking the Hall a walkway will give access to a number of smaller rooms formerly used as the slaughterhouse offices. These rooms will be classified by their size (XS, S, M, L). This floor, notionally called the 'Index[ical] Galleries', is seen as a way of housing smaller, more domestically scaled works or a single work split into cellular units. The walkway will allow views into small spaces in the manner of the peephole through which visitors look into Marcel Duchamp's Etant donnés (1946-66). This restricted viewing will afford the Museum some control over content deemed unsuitable or controversial. The rooms will also be linked by a series of doorways creating a suite of spaces constituting an alternative access route

8 *His piece 'Samson' with its turnstile, and 100 ton jack is currently in the process of demolishing the Main Hall of the Department of Art, the Delirious Museum. See Storrie, Calum,* The Delirious Musem: A Journey from the Louvre to Las Vegas *(London, I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp 66-68.*

avoiding the walkway. These rooms will be fully wired for audio visual installations and will have individual sound proofing. They will be left 'as found' and it is anticipated that this will become a matter of some difficulty in years to come (if not immediately) as the rooms take on the character of time capsules rather than 'art spaces'.[9] Initial research into how these spaces will be approached by invited artists suggest that incremental change will be the dominant tactic utilized but no one has yet addressed the question of how to change the spaces from the installation of one artist to another. Two options are under discussion:

- The return the spaces to their 'original' condition between installations.
- A cumulative programme of artists installing work on top or within the work of their predecessors. This would be a novel proposal, though not without difficulties.

It is proposed at this time that at least one of the more 'neutral' rooms should be put aside to house stalled or aborted artworks to be identified through a process of curatorial archaeology. This might include the cement mixer that was hired (for its sound accompaniment to the looped video of a section of a Bruce Lee film) but not used by Angus Fairhurst in his combined piece 'Imagine you are top banana & Normal/Distorted/ Superimposed' (2000) (figure 4).[10] In another room in this area the curators have proposed to house the Delicious Museum's Health and Safety archive. This will be unique amongst collections in recording the particular problems created by the display of difficult and awkward works of art. A fund will be set up to acquire reports of installation incidents and accidents involving members of the public in other institutions. This resource has been inspired by information released by Tate Modern under the Freedom of Information Act regarding the recreation, in 2009, of the Robert Morris work 'Bodyspacemotionthings'. When first installed in 1971 the piece,

9 *This is a quandary that will be faced by the MAK in Vienna as its displays become older. Its policy of commissioning artists to represent historical artefacts, such as the Baroque Gallery designed by Donald Judd, will leave museum directors and trustees with awkward decisions in the future. These are site specific works by respected artists and yet they are also didactic displays that are subject to changes in exhibition fashion and use. If the museum is thought of as dynamic, the only options will be to alter or destroy existing installations or to expand the museum infinitely.*

10 *The author of this report would like to acknowledge the pleasure of working with Angus Fairhurst in 1999-2000. He has especially fond memories of standing in a north London plant hire warehouse listening to the sound of various cement mixers and then dissolving into mild hysterics with Fairhurst at the absurdity of the situation.*

which was made up of ramps, swings, seesaws and climbing walls, had to be closed after 4 days as it was in a state of delapidation. Its rebuilt version using more finished materials and constructed to modern safety principles resulted in reported injuries to 23 people..[11]

Various interlinked spaces on the mezzanine floor have been identified as being 'of an interstitial nature' and invitations will be issued to a number of artists to adapt and install pre existing site specific works here. A large financial incentive will be offered to test the integrity of this specificity.

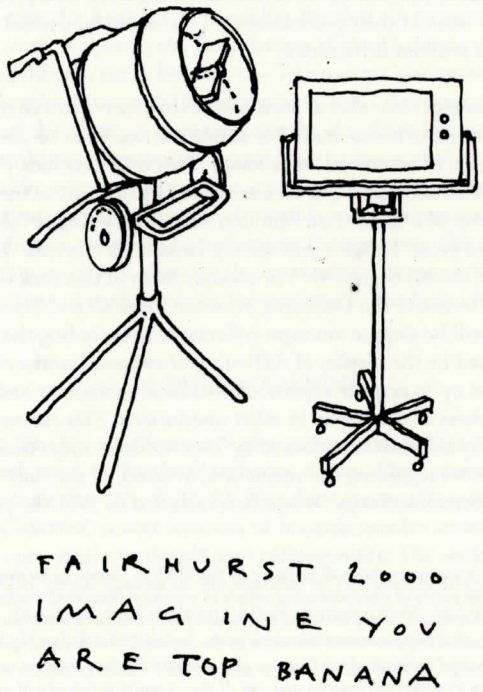

Figure 4

11 *The Guardian, 'Tate perfects the art of living dangerously.' 13 July 2009.*

5. THE FIRST FLOOR

The floor above the Mezzanine has the same footprint as the Spiral Jetty Gallery though the number of columns is smaller and the ceiling height is much lower. This space will be used as an open archive of installation art. At any one time there will be a single significant work on display in the central space. This will be installed within a clearing in the forest (as it were). Surrounding this will be the shelves, crates, refrigerators, shoeboxes, solander boxes, plan chests, vitrines and machinery that form parts of the works held in the collection. Visitors will be invited to browse this space and imaginatively reconstruct these work from the visual evidence. It has not yet been decided to what extent the curators will provide basic installation photography and/or diagrams to assist the visitors in this experiment. At the time of writing, there are still discussions within and between the curatorial and educational teams over the extent to which interactive electronic media should be used here.

6. THE TOP FLOOR, THE TERRACE AND THE ROOF

The top floor of the building will be dedicated to work that attempts to break down the barriers between the exterior and the interiors of the Museum. Works under discussion at the time of writing include: 'Conical Intersect', 1975, by Gordon Matta-Clark, 'La Nona Hora (The Ninth Hour)', 1999, by Maurizio Cattelan and 'Turning the Place Over', 2007, by Richard Wilson. The acquisition and display policy for this space has yet to be properly defined and a number of questions have been raised in developing ideas for this space:

- Should the space be handed over to invited artists from time to time? In which case, what is to be done with the work of previous invitees? Perhaps, the curators should attempt to negotiate acquisition of the rights to the works and install them as they see fit, without the involvement of the artist.
- Should the work, or more accurately the installation of the work, of a dead artist be regarded in the same light as that of a living artist? It might be possible to recreate a particular piece but when the work itself

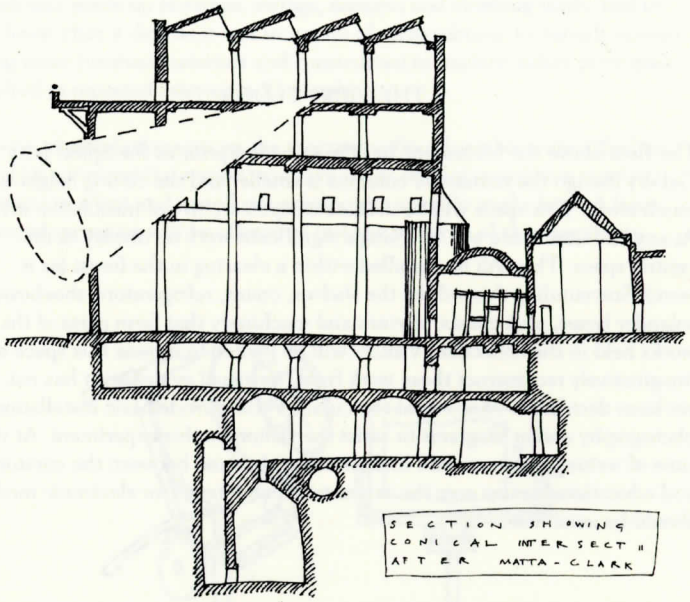

Figure 5

is an act of destruction does any later version have any validity.[12] Is this the artistic equivalent of re-enactment societies such as the Sealed Knot whose members dress in the costumes of Cavaliers and Roundheads in order to recreate battles from the past at the weekend?
- How far should the structural and environmental integrity of the building be pushed? Taking a specific example, is a grainy video transferred from 16mm film footage the only possible way to view 'Conical Intersect', Matta-Clark's large scale cutting and slicing of an apartment block adjacent to the Pompidou Centre, Paris? Does the fact that Matta-Clark died in 1978 mean that there can never be a 'Conical Intersect II'? (See figure 5.)

12 *See, for example, the remade versions the 'Large Glass' each sanctioned by Duchamp himself. One was made by Richard Hamilton and is in the collection of the Tate, London, the second is held by the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and was carried out by Ulf Linde. To what extent should it be necessary to reproduce the damage to the original piece and Duchamp's subsequent repairs? Is it the work of the remakers to restore the piece to its original condition?*

Like 'Conical Intersect', Richard Wilson's 'Turning the Place Over' would have the effect of opening the building to the elements and though this is an obvious difficulty it is not one that the Trustees and the Museum's architect's wish to shy away from. Wilson's piece, originally made for the Liverpool Biennial, takes Matta-Clark's work and introduces precision and high end engineering.[13] In its original location a large circular piece of the building's façade was sliced out and attached to a series of revolving arms. These rotated the cutout piece within the aperture, swinging it out beyond the building line and then returning it to its starting point leaving a neat incision in the fabric. How it could be incorporated into a building with public access and how the Museum can be made watertight and secure remain problems to be solved.

Cattelan's piece provides fewer difficulties as it merely looks as if it is breaking through the building's envelope. In this work a lifesized waxwork of Pope John Paul II lies pinned to the floor by a meteorite that has crashed through the ceiling. By making a false ceiling within the space and hiring an experienced modelmaker to reproduce the shattered fragments of the roof it is possible to reproduce the effect of the collision. This work is not generated by the same set of ideas as those of Matta-Clark and Wilson and yet it is a reminder of the way that the 'external' can intrude in the 'internal' in an unsettling and violent manner.

7. THE YARD, THE PLATFORM LEVEL AND THE PIT

These underground spaces will be split between functional and display requirements. The Yard and the access route to the ramp will be reserved for deliveries. An adjacent vaulted space will be put to use for a state of the art conservation studio. Another vault will become a resource for the whole Museum in the form of the Department for Obsolete Technology. This will act as a store, display and workshop for such media as 35mm slides and projectors, 8 track cartridges, wax cylinders, piano rolls, Betamax video tape, laser disks, Super 8 film and 3.5" floppy disks. The archive of defunct websites will also be housed in this space. Other vaults in the area around the former train platforms will be used to house the 'collection' of performance art. The form that this archive and display will take is unknown. One suggestion is that the work should be made available to the public during an annual carnival or 'happening'.

13 *See www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBXwA0gcBm4*

The possibility exists that in the future the rail connection to the building level can be reinstated. This would allow parts of the Museum to become truly nomadic and possibly even viral.

The Pit is currently undergoing a difficult and lengthy process of detoxification. Access to this space is extremely restricted and it is suggested that eventually it should be used as a room in which works made to be viewed by one person at a time are installed. The tortuous route down the long spiral staircase and the claustrophobic bottle shaped enclosure of the pit itself make it ideal for artworks of an immersive nature.

8. PLANS B AND C

Fallback plans exist for the new wing which, after careful consideration, it has been decided, should be recorded here. 'Plan B' would be put into place were the raising of funds not to proceed at the anticipated level. Recent experience (2009) suggests that the flow of sponsorship capital to cultural projects might not be as robust as previously thought.[14] The alternative plan would be to reclassify Room IV as an audio visual space (some kind of cinema) and acquire the rights to screen the documentation of various works that might otherwise have been displayed and/or archived in the large new wing. The slaughterhouse site would then be sold with planning permission for partial demolition and conversion into luxury 'loft style' apartments. It is proposed that funds raised through this process could then be redistributed into the acquisition of new works of a type that could be more easily housed in the conventional space of the Museum such as so called 'Thrift store' art or the oeuvre of the 'Stuckist' movement.

'Plan C' would be put in place only as a last resort. This would involve disposing of the slaughterhouse building and putting the whole installation and performance art collection online. There would then be a gradual programme of closures of the existing galleries of the Department of Art with the contents of each being digitally recorded before being archived on the Museum website. This would allow eventual total reallocation of the Delirious Museum and its buildings.

14 *A situation that persists in 2013.*

** Against the better judgement of the editor, the author insists on recording that it was to the Princess Louise that Pete Townsend would retire during breaks in recording sessions of the album that would become 'The Who Sell Out'. He used his time in the pub to write the advertisement jingles that appeared between the 'real' songs on the record. Apparently.*

Calum Storrie
Per and Pro the Trustees of the Delirious Museum,
September 2009/2013