

Please cite the Published Version

Cocchiarella, Fabrizio  (2022) Neighbourhood: More Than Human Communities. In: Transformative Teaching Focus on Pedagogy 2022, November 15-17, 2022, A virtual conference: Florida State University, University of Dundee, Zayed University.

Version: Accepted Version

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Title:

NEIGHBOURHOOD: MORE _THAN_ HUMAN COMMUNITIES

How can design work with nature to steward new forms of communities, creating spaces and engagement where species meet?

Abstract:

Unit X is an Art School cross-department collaborative unit that allows students to work with other disciplines and in a professional context linked with industry, organisational and research partners. This year students worked with local and international partners, focusing on establishing new human-nature relationships in Manchester. This project aimed to create design provocations that enable biodiverse neighbourhoods, where communities meet in social, spatial and ecological ways.

Communities are formed where species come together, not only human but all biotic living organisms, plants and fungi. Together they form an intricate balance for all living systems. How can we grow our understanding of living together and reimagine, prototype and test new models and initiatives for future city spaces. Understanding how we 'garden' new communities is central. Unit X formed a research lab through creating design teams to test ideas, with input and expertise from our partners. The Noma site is a former banking district but its location is developed and social value has become the new focus. Through interventions the site has potential to host and explore new opportunities which we test hands on during the project.

The project collaborates with ArtEZ Institute of the Arts Product Design, alumni, tutors and experts through a series of workshops and fieldwork on site. Students and staff join forces as co-producers to create new ideas and initiate provocations.

Bio:

Fabrizio Cocchiarella is a designer, lecturer and researcher currently teaching on the MA Interiors programme at Manchester School of Art. Projects aim to investigate new approaches to design that contribute to innovating and shaping future scenarios for the designed environment.

Specialist expertise and experience is routed in the production and manufacture of product, furniture, artefact and installation projects. The discipline of design is viewed as an interface from which to mediate and translate critical methodologies and commercial practices.

Through collaboration as part of the design research group and platforms such as Unit X and UFØ, research aims to explore a multi-specialist approach to develop new 'ways of seeing' and interpreting the encounter of everyday phenomena. Design practice aims to produce insightful, thought provoking work, creating projects that are not necessarily using the language of design norms, but rather re-inventing ways of looking at and experiencing our relationship with the physical (and metaphysical) through 'para-design'.

Notes:

The Neighbourhood project links with the National Trust, RNIB and design studio Standard Practice on a city greening project to explore how nature can nurture new communities around the NOMA site on the edge of the Northern Quarter. This hands on project will explore new methods of community engagement, grass-roots initiatives, materials and prototyping to garden new models for socially engaged city space.