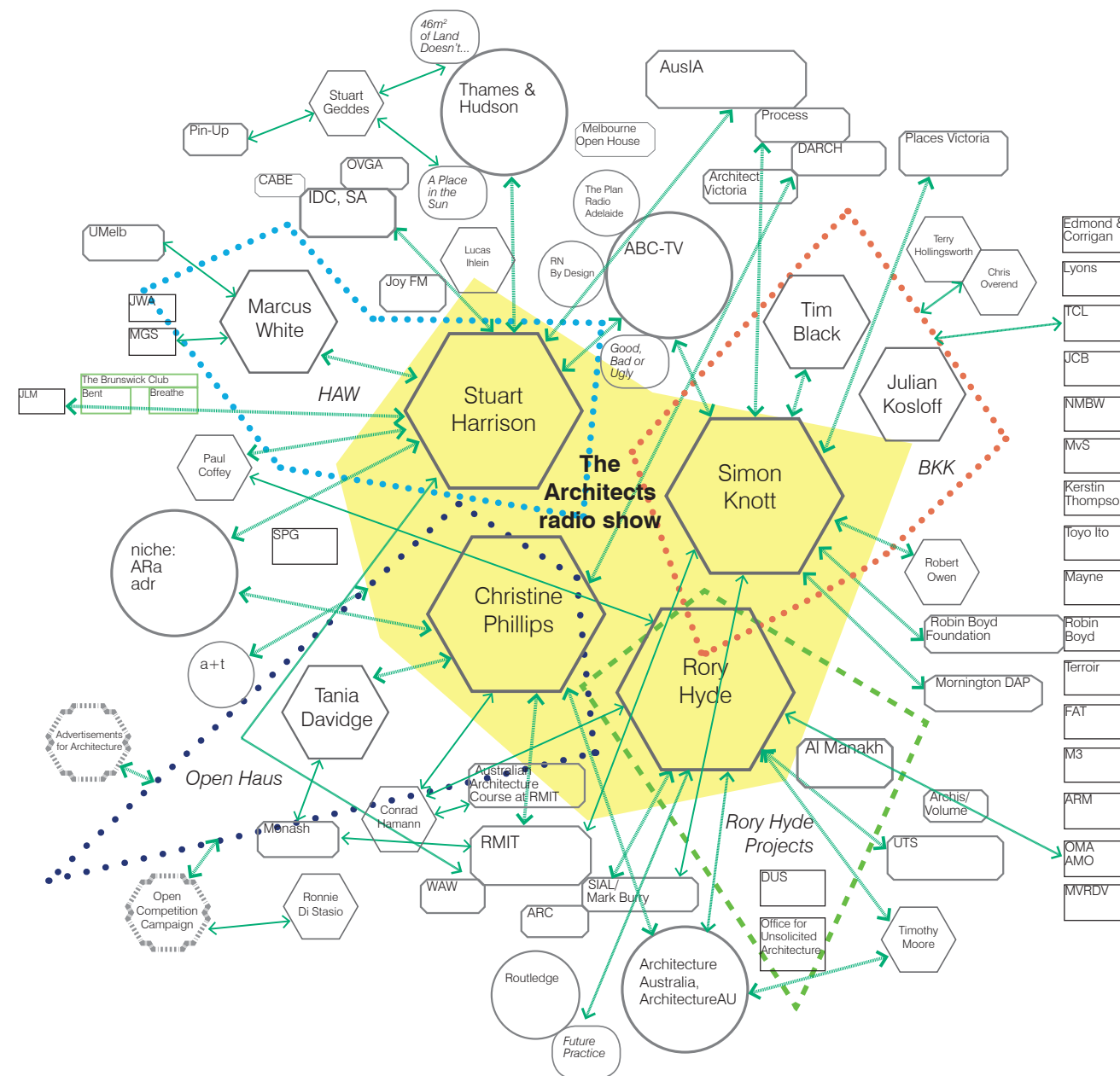


Formations

The Architects Radio Show

Exhibition Design
21 February 2012



Overview

Our formation exists as a media-based collaboration aimed at expanding the agency of the profession itself. At its heart are four architects working in different practice and research environments, including internationally. Our radio show is event and discussion based. Whilst the scope of the formation is large and has intersected with many people through years of broadcasting, the core of the radio show is a compact and efficient nucleus. Hosted on a non-government funded independent community broadcaster in Melbourne, 3RRR, the show is a voluntary project that broadcasts both locally on FM radio, and globally via the web, through both streaming and podcasting.

The structure of the formation is both multidirectional and collaborative, with many links to Australian and international practices, local Universities, government bodies and design centres. Its focus is on promoting discussion around architecture rather than the architecture of its broadcasters.

This formation is unique – as one of the only regular architecture radio shows in the world, the wider formation has intersected with hundreds of architectural practices, researchers and academics through the act of discussion – vibrant interviews based conversations that have occurred both in and out of the radio studio.

There is an inherent immediacy to the work of the formation – both in terms of generating content; through live broadcast and guerrilla interviewing; and in the quick broadcast of material via radio and webcasting platforms. The discussion occurs at two levels: the immediate, intimate conversation in real time; and the longer conversation that occurs in a wider context, at Venice and internationally. The radio show is an agent of wider inclusive architectural discussion; it is directed and explanatory, informal and informative. 'The Architects' is a potent formation of discussion.

Conversation



The first RRR Outside Broadcast for 'The Architects' from Eureka Skydeck, 2007



Unsolicited Sydney - an installation produced for the 2010 ALA conference in Sydney by Rory Hyde. Used to obtain interviews from conference speakers.



Venice Biennale coverage by 'The Architects', 2010, in and around the Australian Pavilion and the Giardini.

Broadcasting with the super-minimal radio studio - a single landline phone. Coverage of Venice Biennale in 2008 by 'The Architects'.

Positioning

INHERITED THEMES

Our intervention sits within (and will be inevitably interpreted as a response to) a series of themes imposed from above at various scales, all interconnected and occurring in parallel:

1. The state of architecture today and the public's expectation of it: time of crisis, age of austerity, post-icon, social engagement. The ethical pendulum has swung away from forms toward ideas and ethics.
2. The Biennale itself and its inherent characteristics: 'World's Fair'-style national representation, media-frenzy, self-promotion, attention deficit disorder.
3. 'Common Ground', overall theme determined by Biennale creative director David Chipperfield: "to celebrate a vital, interconnected architectural culture, and pose questions about the intellectual and physical territories it shares."
4. 'Formations: New Practices in Australian Architecture' theme determined by Gerard Reinmuth and Anthony Burke for Australian Pavilion: "to highlight the remarkable versatility and innovation of non-standard practice types and their design outputs that are expanding the role of the architect."

Taken together, these themes present a contradictory challenge for year's Biennale: *stand out and be humble*. It is, however, one we are well-placed to address: Chipperfield's focus on 'interconnection' implies a discourse, a discussion; and our practice Formation is unique in that its product is immaterial ideas; we address the state of architecture today by chronicling its participants through interviews.

Broadcasting



The studio environment at 3RRR, Brunswick, Melbourne.



Taking the conversation to a wider audience: 'The Architects' radio show was built out of conversations outside of the Academy and to a broader realm. Broadcast weekly on FM in Melbourne and globally on rrr.org.au the show is pitched between the discipline and the wider public - it does not seek to dumb down, but to explain, to discuss ideas, cities and buildings. This recent outside broadcast was part of the 2011 State of Design festival and sought to dismantle the radio studio all together, to return it to the open conversation.



'The Architects' radio show has since 2005 undertaken several Outside Broadcasts (OBs) for 3RRR. The studio environment is taken into a new environment, where discussion is between both people and the immediate environment.

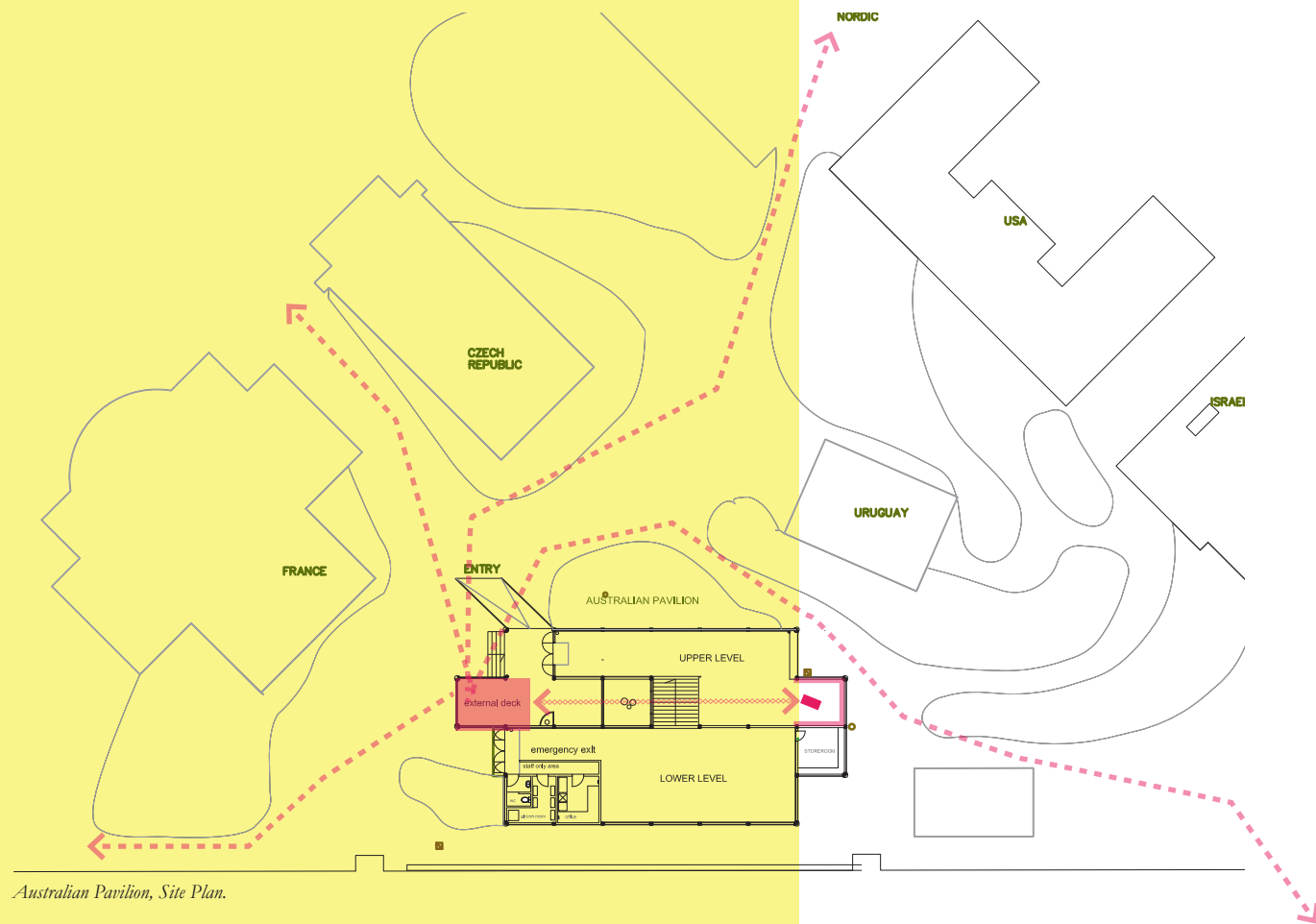
KEY THEMES

The radio show has over its duration developed several key themes, these include:

1. Press as Project: We are architects first and journalists second. The show is conceived of as an architectural project itself, not as a separate job on the side. It expresses an understanding of architectural practice as one defined by ideas, discourse and engagement; and of the role of the architect as one with a responsibility to the public to expand these ideas beyond the insulated profession.
2. Advocate or Activist: An enduring sub-theme of the show exploring strategies for enacting change, either by working from within the established systems, or by challenging them from without. The show adopts both these positions without contradiction, through the promotion of good work and ideas on the one hand, and by challenging poor decisions on the other, such as the procurement process of the new Australian Pavilion for Venice.
3. Future Practice: The show also has an ongoing interest in the processes of architecture. In the absence of images, our focus is inevitably redirected toward the *how* and *why*, not the *what*. This is particularly relevant today, as architects all over the world are seeking new expanded roles and new agendas for architecture, as a means to reclaim its relevance and status in the face of deepening recession.
4. Real Radio: Broadcasting informally on unregulated frequencies, often from international waters, or squatted headquarters, informal radio sends out the ideas and the sounds that the authorities don't want you to hear. To define ourselves as 'informal agents' is a statement of an agenda. It conveys a sense that we are outside of the established media institutions, the independent nature of RRR, and the volunteer basis of the show.

A consistent theme is an expanded interest beyond the established and traditional: architecture as media, not building; the architect as activist, not professional; practice as process, not product; media as unregulated, not established.

Transmission



Australian Pavilion, Site Plan.



Giardini, Location Plan.



Joseph Cindric, the 'Trolley Man'
Photograph by Raymond de Berquelle. Collection: Powerhouse Museum



Barmobile, N55, 2005-



Australian Antarctic Territory is the remotest part of a remote country, connected to the world through transmission. We see the Australian pavilion as a outpost of Australia, another station of communication.



OUR PRESENCE IN VENICE

As one media body among the dozens covering the Vernissage circus, we articulate what we do as a project.

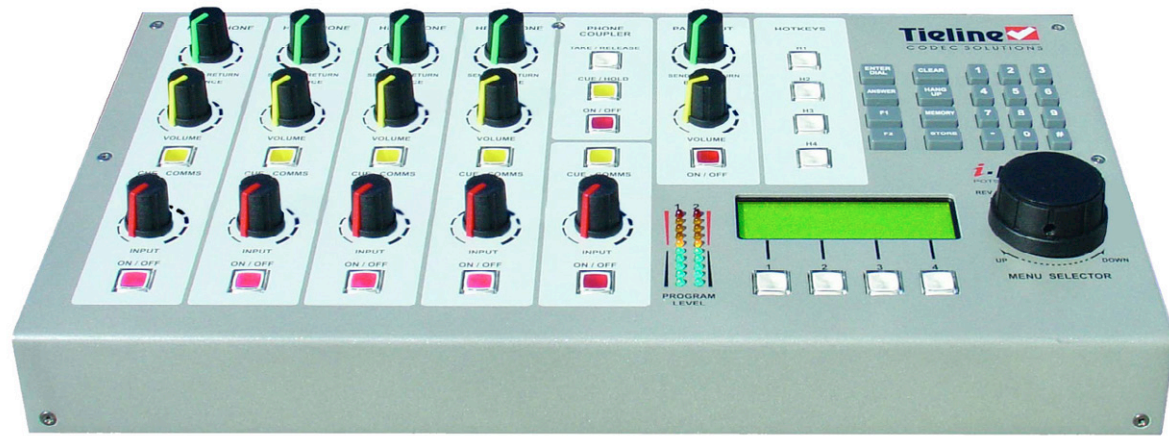
1. Promote Agenda: One way to do this is to bring our own clear agenda, to assert our own interests, rather than just react to the interests of others. This could take the form of a series of consistent questions (on top of 'who is your favourite architect?'), a performative identity, or a series of announcements. What idea do we want to promote? What do we want to change? What is our criticism of architecture today? To be an 'agenda' it should be provocative on some level, to run against the theme of the biennale: 'contested ground', instead of 'common ground'?

2. Physical Presence: Where in past years we have explored the idea of a minimal radio studio: just one person with a microphone; this year we explore a *maximum* version with real physicality and technical capacity. The thing will have a scale and be designed, to act as a focus and hub for a live audience, and to offer the all-important photo opportunity, as a hook to turn the media back onto ourselves.

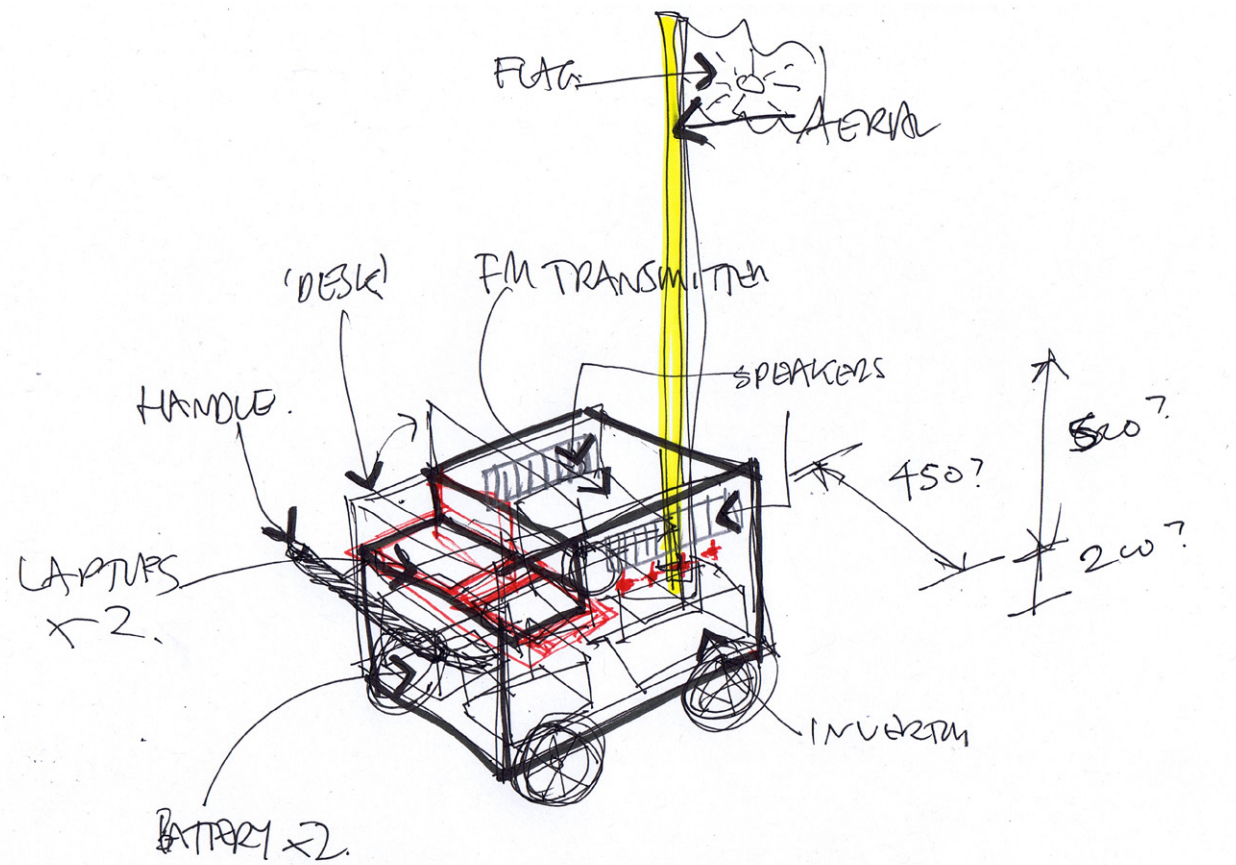
3. Waves as Material: Broadcasting locally is a strong idea, but difficult to convey spatially. How to illustrate the emanating waves of information? Anthony Dunne in his book 'Hertzian Tales' describes electronic products as 'post-optimal objects', where the "real challenge for the designer lies not in the technical functionality, but in the realms of metaphysics, poetry, and aesthetics". One approach may be to over-emphasise the technical elements: a giant aerial, a satellite dish, a solar panel, a sound-proof booth, etc.

3. Respond to Venice: The other way to distinguish ourselves is to react to the condition of Venice. Sean Gladwell's Mad Max car on the car-free island of Venice made a great statement on its own. Or Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo, abstracting the Renaissance duomos into a low-res polygon model. There is plenty of history to build on. There is a strong history of informal radio in this region of Italy.

Materials



The Tieline I-Mix: G3 mobile mixing panel and ISDN/IP/PSDA Codec uplinker. Australian made and designed.



The 'Trolley' - all equipment incased in a mobile radio studio and transmitter, for both broadcasts, interview recording and exhibition display.



The Silent Disco, developed in Australia at the Big Day Out, 2006.



Outfits for broadcasters are to be considered as part of the exhibit.

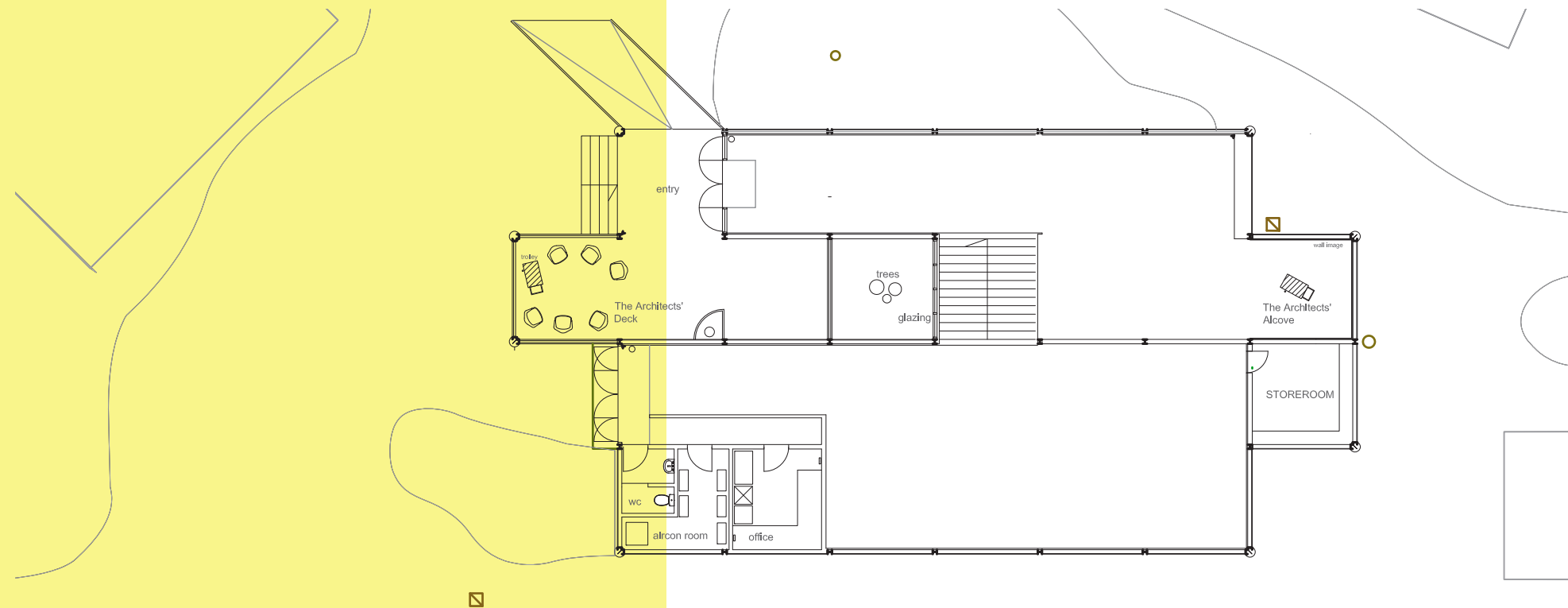


Project

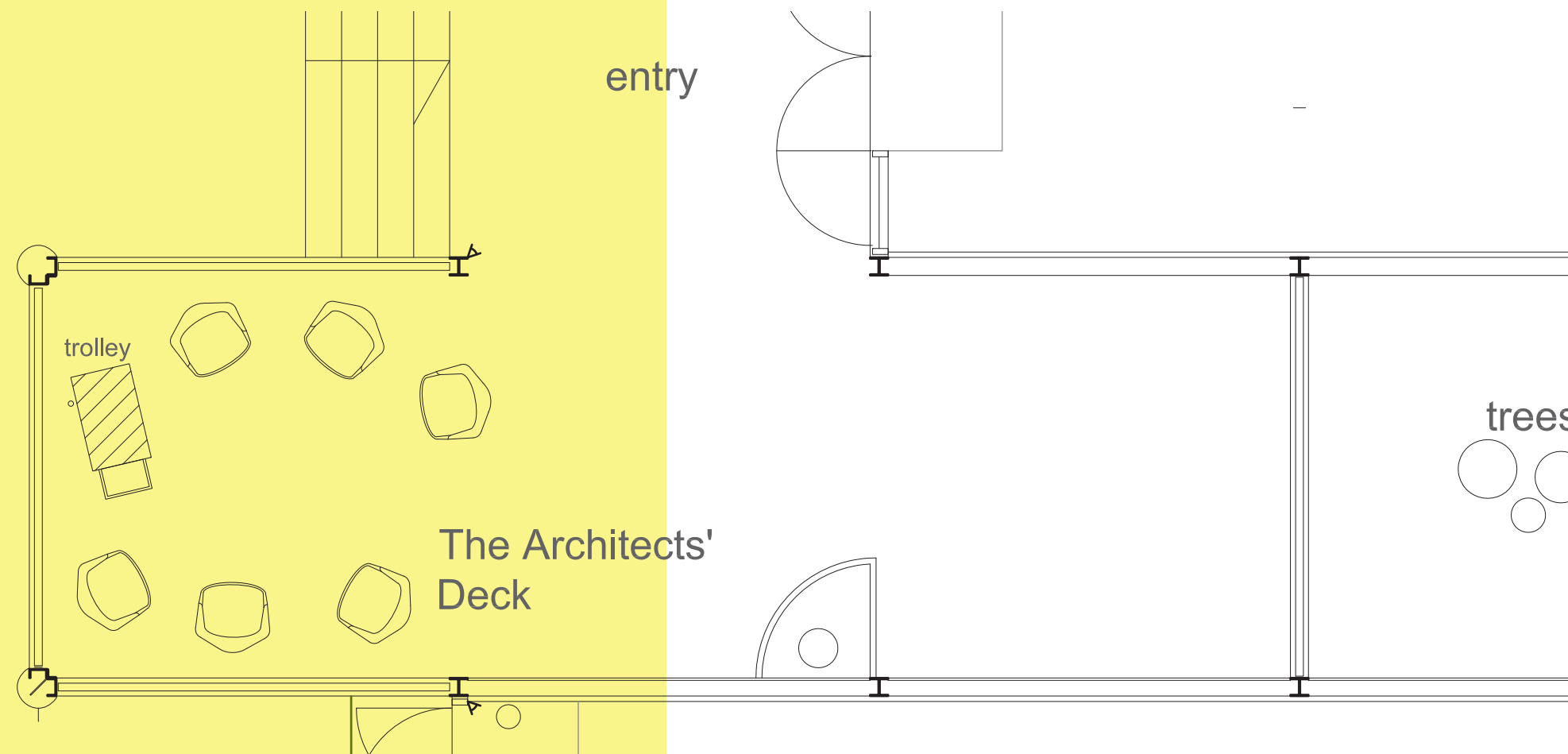
We propose to exhibit the radio show by sampling and showcasing the act of the radio broadcasting in Venice - both local-casting and broadcasting discussions that are held in and around the Australian pavilion. This builds on both a series of outside broadcasts and previous coverage of the Venice Biennale in 2006, 2008 and 2010. We propose the use of the Australian pavilion as a base for our activities, but these will stretch beyond outward from the pavilion itself into the Giardini and beyond. The exhibit would de-form the radio studio into a mobile system of simple technologies, with the inclusion of both a narrow-casting device such as short-range FM radio transmitter. We propose that the 'red dot' devices being proposed by the exhibition curators are also cost effective radio receivers, so narrow-casted content – interviews, commentaries, reviews and discussion is transmitted live each day into the space of the Biennale. The broadcast equipment is to be configured into some kind of 'mobile technology cart' that is easily moved around the Biennale, allowing the radio show to infiltrate other venues and parts of Venice (the 'Trolley').

Further, we propose to mount all content generated in Venice during our week long residency onto a online archive accessible over the internet for use by visitors to the pavilion and for those back in Australia, particularly for the main exhibition period after the Vernissage. We envisage an external space on the deck at the pavilion in the form of a casual 'lounge' in which visitors can relax and engage with audio content, as well as discussing the pavilion itself, an informal and Australian statement of entry. This deck space at the pavilion can host discussion and interviews on-site during the Vernissage and immediately afterward, including a live broadcast.

Drawings



Pavilion Plan, 1:200



Deck Plan, 1:50

The proposal for the exhibition is in two stages, the initial open period and the post-Vernissage time. During the Vernissage, our work is centred around two parts:

1. Roaming and narrow-casting.
We cover the events of the Biennale through moving around recording conversations around Venice and at the Australian Pavilion. The 'Trolley' is the object around which this is facilitated, a mobile studio.

2. Live Broadcast from the Pavilion.
This can occur 11am-12pm, Tuesday 28th August. This would be relayed back to 3RRR in Melbourne (7-8pm AEST) for broadcast on Melbourne FM and live streaming on rrr.org.au. This would build on previous Outside Broadcast, and would have live guest, discussion in the context of the pavilion. Conversation would be with other exhibitors, creative directors, etc.

Following the completion of the opening week, the show would change to the more passive mode for the rest of the Biennale. We anticipate the 'trolley' would be located within the pavilion in the nook area on axis with the external deck. Here, the trolley would sit like a large radio itself, and would play content from the Biennale and other material we have gathered. This would be on a 'loop', and play continuously, like a radio in the background in an office or shed. Interactive access to specific archive material could be accessed via a new dedicated website for the show, which visitors could access from their mobile devices.

The deck area adjacent to the entry during the review would house chairs and the trolley when conversations were happening, during the rest of the show the chairs would remain and visitors could sit and relax at the entry, and listen to internet-based content if they wish, or just relax and talk amongst themselves.