

*Adaptations* examines the complex, sometimes contradictory relationships between new forms of independence and infrastructures rooted in existing social relations. While architecture and planning have often been privileged as sites for utopian projection, the potential of small scale adaptations has remained largely overlooked. The initiatives in this exhibition use such small-scale adaptations to re-function existing features of the city, a thrust that seeks to avoid the problems of large-scale design. A mixture of emerging and established artist/architects, *Adaptations* brings together first-hand investigations, practical projects and hypothetical models, all of which bring to light the crucial status of infrastructure as a site of technological and social transformation.

In the European context, two collectives made up of artists and architects examine the ways in which minor transformations create greater alterations in an environment. The Wild City project by Stealth Group (Rotterdam/Belgrade) has used photography, maps and models to trace the urban forms that have emerged from the post-1992 boom in Belgrade's unregulated street-trade. Responding to the contemporary antagonisms marking post-war housing projects, the members of Cudi (Copenhagen) took up long-term residence in a Danish housing complex, creating collective projects from that space. Both ventures suggest ways that small-scale adaptive actions can take over existing architectural and urban functions. Other artists have used the space of their own practice to design projects that transform existing infrastructure. Specifically targeting the HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) systems of buildings, Michael Rakowitz (New York) has developed low-cost collapsible micro-shelters that parasitically inflate themselves using the waste air produced in the urban environment. Peter Fend (New York) has developed *Ocean Earth*, a corporation developing ways to transform algae farming into a renewable energy source.

The drive to become independent of systems of centralized infrastructure has been key to many of the grass-roots utopian projects of the twentieth century and informs the work of Oscar Tuazon (New York) and Nils Norman (London). Obtaining plans for geodesic domes through the internet and field research, Tuazon creates replicas out of cardboard scavenged from the streets of New York, an adaptation that strips the domes of their utopian promise and yet fulfills the radical economy of their design. In a similar spirit, Nils Norman's extravagant and miniature proposals for adaptations of public space deliberately defy realization. With equal part humor and critical intent, both artists rework utopian legacies so as to reflect on past failures while fuelling our ability to imagine different ways of adapting existing environments.

Cutting across traditional definitions of center and periphery, other projects look at the possibilities and limitations attending new infrastructures in the sphere of communication. The Arnait video Collective (Igloolik, Canada), an organization dedicated to the production of video by Inuit women, has created the Nanatinnit Nomadic Media Lab. A wireless facility for the production and broadcast of video to the Internet, it represents an experiment in adapting new media and traditional practices to one another. Sarai (Delhi) is a multi-layered organization that brings together artists, activists, scholars and urbanists. Responding to the changes brought about by the boom in new technologies, Sarai examines the ways in which these forms of technology can be used as a tool for coordinating dialogue (in the form of symposia, exhibitions, screening, poster campaigns, copyleft software) about the transformation of public space in Delhi.

In conclusion, the aim of this project is not to produce a comprehensive survey, but to bring together artists and architects along with a consideration of the arenas in which they work. Alongside the goals of establishing new networks and enabling further research, the project aims to create productive debate about the direction and political status of adaptive strategies in various environments.