commission Citizen Ship. Here Johnny Golding, artist, writer, thinker and Professor of Philosophy and Fine Art at the Royal College of Art begins a conversation with Freee and Sean about this new work. A longer version of this discussion is available on the City Club website. THE FREEE

JOHNNY GOLDING: I'd like to begin our conversation by asking you to share what you mean by 'public', especially in an age when it seems to be disappearing into the netherworlds of internet supra-highways or cordoned off amongst corporate glass structures sliced through by shopping mall enclosures.

freee: We take the idea of the public from public sphere theory which foregrounds publishing, opinion formation and exchange. We depart from thinking about the public as a mass of bodies or a space, rather we think about the public as a collection of individuals and a process by which we all make and share opinions.

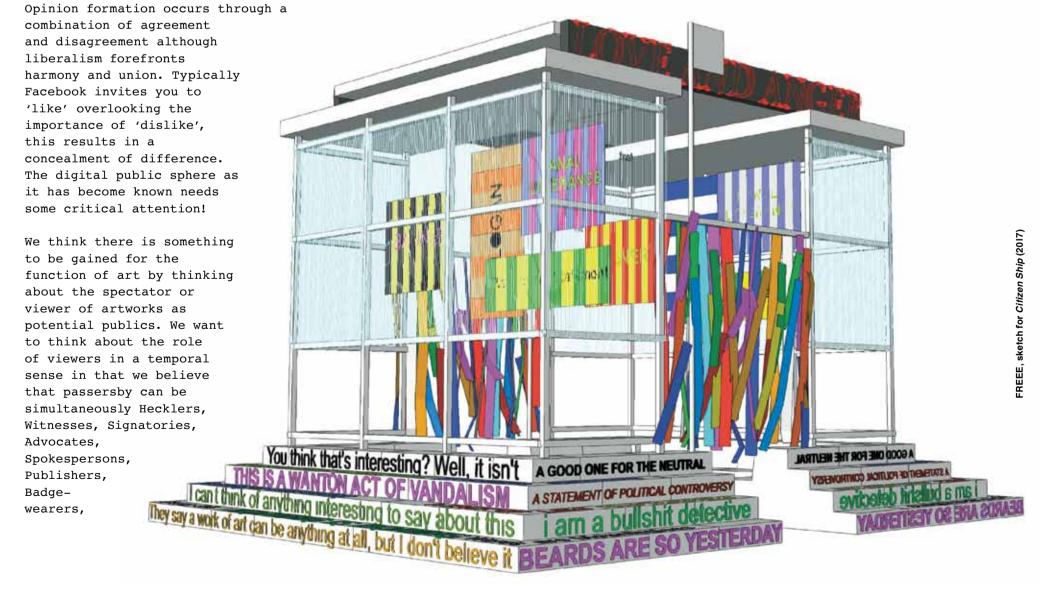
Distributors, Marchers, Recruits,
Promise-makers, Co-conspirators,
Accomplices; we all go from one mode
of being public to another. In this way
we all have the potential to act on the
world and we imagine the utilization of
our individual agency working towards
collective dreams - like making a
better world to live in.

Freee artist collective, Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan

are collaborating with artists and architect Sean Griffiths on a new

Our recent works have seen us looking at the potential of kiosks as a place in which we can exchange opinions. We have been considering how kiosks can operate as temporary meeting points in the public realm in which the passerby can develop their political ideas.

Citizen Ship is the biggest and most ambitious structure we have built to date and it has been designed to accommodate a number of people. During June and July we will place Citizen Ship in four sites across Milton Keynes. Passersby will be able to visit and partake in workshop sessions on 'how to write a slogan' in which they are invited to make and publish new slogans that will be added to the structure. We are planning to include a LED display where slogans will also be shown. We invited Sean Griffiths to work with us on the design of Citizen Ship as we were fans of the art and architecture group FAT of which he was a founding member.





FREEE, Protest is Beautif

SEAN GRIFFITHS: My association with the Freee collective goes back to the early days of FAT in the 1990's, when long before we got any architectural commissions, we did a lot of street based art projects involving the use of bus shelters, for sale signs, business card and shopping bags. Dave Beech (Freee) was involved in a lot of those projects and they were very much concerned with the idea of the public sphere and art's relationship to it. So for example, the bus shelter project involved using the in-built advertising sites of the shelters to display works of art - 200 in all.

That project also made me think a lot about bus shelters as public spaces. They are enclosures which are open on one side and hence they have ambiguous boundaries. They are used for other purposes, for example suburban kids hang out in them and they have been the locations of countless first kisses. In that respect they are important places which potentially allow for a kind of publicness in form of debate - whether about football, sex, fashion or politics - that is increasingly excluded from the kind of increasingly privatised "public" space to which you allude in your question. With the advent of

the internet and smart phones, they also become potential sites for the collective production consumption of that information.

So given that, when the opportunity to work with Freee in Milton Keynes came up, the idea of doing a pavilion

"We believe that passersby can be simultaneously Hecklers, Witnesses, Signatories..."

based on bus shelters seemed a good way forward in trying to create a public space which had a degree a familiarity and perhaps most importantly by being progressively covered by multiple texts in a number of different forms which will be the outputs of Freee's project. FREEE: Bus shelters are like kiosks insofar in Sol Lewitt's sense they are incomplete open cubes. Kiosks have three functional components: a vertical element which typically doubles as a wall and a sign; a counter - the horizontal space shared by the kiosk operator and the 'customer'; and a barrier which prevents the 'customer' from occupying the space of the kiosk operator, often these functions are performed by the same physical component. Bus shelters can have narrow horizontal elements, seats, but not counters or barriers. This is why they feel more open and less hierarchical than conventional kiosks. This means that the occupants of a bus shelter are all on the same side of a barrier that is not signalled by the bus shelter itself. When the bus arrives and the door of the bus opens with the bus driver cut off from the passengers, the kiosk if finally completed not only by the acts of payment but also by the counter-barrier that brings the 'customers' in contact with and separates them from the driver-kioskoperator.

The kiosks attempt to create consumers and producers of ideas and opinions without a commercial exchange.

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