

**THE HAPPENSTANCE.08**  
One A-Z of Making Connections

Scotland  
+ Venice

Erskine Stewart's Melville Schools Chamber choir  
Image: Peter McCaughey

**ANSWER**

RESPONDERE  
UNDECESSARIUM.

Parade at the The Sagrat Festival wearing Peeter and Rossi costumes

**QUESTION**

# THE HAPPEN STANCE

**The Happenstance was Scotland's contribution to the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice, 2018**

In this dispatch, anti-curator of The Happenstance, Peter McCaughey, charts some of the relationships that evolved through the project, exploring the variety of ways The Happenstance helped weave connections between individuals and organisations, tracing some of the learning around this, and also how the space itself became a medium for generating maps, amplifying capacities and encouraging community networking. He considers how important the concept of freespace is to this process of cultivating community in light of the growing privatisation of public space.



**Issue 1**  
An Introduction



**Issue 2**  
Venice Reflective



Scotland  
+ Venice



**Issue 3**  
Into the Mouth  
of the Wolf



**Issue 4**  
My Experience  
as a Fellow at  
The Happenstance



**Issue 5**  
Venice /  
Local Context



**Issue 6**  
Play



**Issue 7**  
Tools of the Trade

**This publication is one in a series of twelve reflections on The Happenstance. Click here or go to [ads.org.uk/the-happenstance-archive-dispatches](https://ads.org.uk/the-happenstance-archive-dispatches) to access the other publications.**



**Issue 8**  
One A-Z of  
Making Connections



**Issue 9**  
Participatory Practice



**Issue 10**  
A Conversation,  
A Workshop  
and Afterwards



**Issue 11**  
An External  
Perspective



**Issue 12**  
On Legacy



year of young people  
bliadhna na h-òigridh  
2018



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

Architecture &  
Design Scotland  
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba



BRITISH  
COUNCIL



**‘through offering a freespace  
we watched new networks  
emerging, new possibilities  
taking shape’**



**‘35,000 visitors -  
7,000 directly engaged  
in events, workshops,  
screenings and various  
colloquia’**

**‘this emphasis on  
inbetweening was one of  
the most valuable aspects  
of The Happenstance’**







Group photograph of some of The Happenstance team and others  
Image: Brian Hartley



Piper Andrew Bell on a bridge during the parade for The Sagra Festival  
Image: Brian Hartley



Inter Milan team from 1979



The drawing by Peter McCaughey of Minas L'Orain before meeting him



04 Report

愛沙尼亞

- 01 愛沙尼亞建築師認為，紀念碑與人行道的關係其實很複雜。目前，他們因此特別在愛沙尼亞維爾蘭德的人行道地磚，鋪設象徵《原為教堂》中對比猶太人路徑的、圓形紀念碑模型照片，分布在該地。
- 02 安多尼亞，打碎了原有宗教場所的使用模式。廣場中看台混凝土的牆，其實是與教堂的羅馬本體，象徵性的象徵紀念碑與愛沙尼亞空靈地地地地地，凡人的狀態佔其佔其佔其，象徵紀念碑式建築的牆面。

蘇格蘭

- 03 蘇格蘭戶外電影節與地景上的英文，對照「what」、「strong」，不是用好玩的，而是用出趣的「強」字；或者，也能是好玩的，因為他們正主張「強」建築。
- 04 到底不一定只能在室內，還能吸引更多人，尤其是學生，只要多玩，蘇格蘭就認為其為其，其其其其，其以蘇格蘭建築師大轉其其其其。
- 05 威尼芝子亞爾特爾與自由穿鞋，他們經常玩到不想回家，蘇格蘭與此決定與專業與而所以一文「真」，這其其小學，讓其其其其其其其其其其其其其其。



03



04

05



01



02

04

抗議者的行動或僅是忽略它的存在，一剎那即能模糊紀念碑與人行道的「界線」——前者變弱了。

相對而言，本來似乎很弱的建築物上對的時空，也可能一剎那成為紀念碑。該國歷史悠久的「歌唱節」，曾於1980年末藉著歌聲柔性表達追求自由之心，最終「唱倒」了共產黨，而在該節專書中有張歷史照片，一位指揮者是站上戶外一座簡陋的木架子，就有了指揮台。那時候，這座小木台猶如「紀念碑」了。

愛沙尼亞館布展的手法，也完全呼應該節主題，他們租了一座不再使用的巴洛克式教堂，以構造外

露的簡易木板在中間隔了一道牆以區隔展區——也遮住了神龕。在這些類裝置藝術之外，新舊的模型製作與照片編選，則點睛式地呈現另類紀念碑代表，假於義大利法規，以上任何臨時構件皆不能損及古蹟。厲害的是，愛沙尼亞館讓那道木牆完全不碰觸原有石牆，兩者之間有一條極細的縫，而這當然也隱喻了原有的宗教性紀念空間有多麼脆弱。

這些位於威尼芝年展所謂「大門」之外的國家館或平行展，往往也正如其地理位置，身處邊緣反而來去自如，挑戰起主流建築價值時，力道更為強勁。

# One A-Z of Making Connections

Peter McCaughey

**Alberto Lago.** September 2017. It's submission time for our application to the Scotland + Venice project. We are proposing radical interventions and need to check the by-laws in Venice. I pick up the phone in Glasgow, call the Comune di Venezia. No joy. Lizzy suggests we try the School of Architecture - Università Iuav di Venezia. I get through to the department of tall buildings. The phone answers... it's Alberto. I ask a few questions. He's interested. On a hunch, I ask him if he'd like to be involved. This is the guy who will become the beating heart, the engine and the conscience of the project.

**Beccaria** We are invited to bring the tools from The Happenstance to the

Art and Theatre project in Beccaria, the Juvenile Prison in Milan (17th November 2018). That workshop is featured in a new book published through Milan University. The invitation comes from Margaret Rose, playwright, academic and actor, who brings the Associazione PER to perform Il Mercato Di Venezia in the garden on the night of 15th September 2018.

**CCC Connecting Cultural Connectors forum (23rd November 2018).** Immediately a more resilient infrastructure. The idea- so simple! Supercharge existing initiatives, and support emerging ideas and networks, through connecting connectors: influential thinkers and makers from a wide

spectrum of disciplines attended and shared interests; science, art, theatre, architecture, anthropology, health and wellbeing, education, environmental studies, filmmaking, journalism, entrepreneurship and activism.

**DO.VE** 15th June 2018, the new Associazione DO.VE launches in The Happenstance garden. The goal is to consolidate and to unite the remaining artisans in the San Barnaba area, to create a support structure that helps them connect, share resource and market themselves. Antonella Maione, local designer, came through the door on 24th May, made a 7-hats postcard map, articulated a need, framed an idea. We just said Aye aka Yes aka Si. Let's do it.

**Event Nature.** The project is a six-month long event. Day into Night. We ran workshops, colloquia, screenings, performances, exhibitions, a two-month summer school, printmaking, concerts, festivals, puppet making... There were AGMs, political rallies, night-time theatre, the Passinetti film festival, a school choir, the Open Stage. The project demonstrates the power of an iterative processes - which then becomes self-replicating.

**Fellows** The inaugural programme of the Scotland + Venice Fellowships – five Scottish schools of architecture provide Elish, Iga, Lucia, Rob and Theo. Theo's essay, in Dispatch 4, fills me with hope that the ideas explored together will endure through them, our young team.

**Giovanni** Of all the great Giovannis we met, Giovanni Leone was Best Gio. On Refugee Day, through his association Scendiamo in Campo, he organises a meal in Zenobio for people across Venice. When he can't attend the Connecting Cultural Connectors forum (because of his work in India) he sends a great letter, (see link) full of insight about the value of The Happenstance at this precise time. I say to the team, "if all we do is support him, the project will have been worth it."

**Happenstance** named by Morag, Project Lead from Architecture and Design Scotland, as we sought a title to declare our intentions - the Happenings of Allan Kaprow and the invitation to take a stance but most of all, the invocation to the project to be an engine of serendipity. Morag Bain and Sam Patterson (Architecture and Design Scotland), work directly with the WAVEparticle core team - myself, Lizzy O'Brien, Judit Bodor, Elizabeth Murphy and Harald Turek, to deliver the project. Together, with the extended Happenstance team, we face many hurdles - we begin with no venue, no confirmation of the full funding required, no Collateral Event status and a very tight timeline. One by one, with a great collective effort, we get there (and then some).

**Inbetweening** This emphasis on in-betweening was one of the most valuable aspects of The Happenstance. Through offering a freespace for people to gather and exchange, we

watched new networks emerging, new possibilities taking shape. In the context of an Architectural Biennale, I framed this in-betweening as 'Architecture Plus', where the emphasis is on the 'Plus' with the expanded field of Sculpture in mind.

**Joyce's Epiphanies** occur in common, everyday moments, the explosion of meaning in something quite normal, "the sudden revelation of the whatness of the thing." Play Me Something, Timothy Neat's 1989 film, is being screened, to a full house under the stars, by team member, architect, Fergus Purdie. The film connects Barra in Scotland to Guidecca in Venice. Midway through the screening, in a packed audience, an exclamation in Italian: "Quello è mio zio! Quello è mio zio!" One of the gondoliers in the film is the uncle of someone in the audience.

**Korvack** the carpenter who works with Talai (whose workshop is temporarily our library of ideas) presents me with a Scottish whisky miniature. It was his father's, one of a selection of ten. This is a big deal. A family heirloom. He wants me to have it, and his story, for The Happenstance. Lucia includes this in her book of objects and stories from the project.

**Learn** What the Biennale Cultural Office needs to learn: in their insistence that we remove our engagement with local events (like the Sagra Festival) from our 'Biennale branded' programme listings, they failed to grasp the repositioning that

was so obvious to the international reviewers. Our success in placing the local at the heart of the international, despite the Biennale interventions, was in particular what garnered The Happenstance its 'loved locally, lauded internationally' rider, and its cultural clout.

**Minas** It's February 2018 and we are venue hunting. We've had a good day and 'expecting to be lucky' is proving its worth. The waiter places us at a small table already occupied by a local guy. "Wait 'til you see", I whisper, and Sam and Alberto snort - I'm pushing my luck. Thirty minutes later, I've made a drawing of Minas Lourian from the description his friend has given. We will use this to identify Minas the next day in the square where he takes a coffee. He is President of the Union of Armenians of Italy, and is based in Ca' Zenobio, the venue we hope to secure. At the end of the project Minas records a fantastic testimony. (see link)

**Nino** the 10-year-old boy who visits the space every day. Rob builds him a small skate ramp, extending the armature. Basharat Khan, our resident filmmaker, makes a great film with him, discussing his idea of freespace. (see link) Kids bring their parents. Nicola, Nino's dad, offers to cook for us and we bring Zenobio's underused industrial kitchen into the frame. It's the first of a series of large dinners for between 50 and 100 people at a time. Our only obstacle, the tetchy chef who cooks for his German film crew, also resident in Zenobio.

**Napulé** Tobias ran the fantastic wee pizzeria, Napulé, in our nearest Campo. We talked football in sign language (apparently I looked like Roy Keane, LOL). He, Antonella and Luigi cooked for 300 for our opening and received the biggest round of applause when we projected their portraits in their Campo.

Tobias's daughter lost her firstborn in September, the same month I lost my mother.

When I returned to Venice, he came to Zenobio on a quiet morning in October, and we walked the garden side by side, in silence, with our sorrows. Tobias spoke no English and I no Italian. I took him to see the wee shed. Inside, on a rusty locker, someone had their sticker collection of the Inter Milan team from 1979. We shared a smile.

**Others** For a while, between funding, we ran The Happenstance on a skeleton crew. Me, Alberto and Bash. Bash hunts treasure and finds it in Maestre, where he makes a series of beautiful portraits of refugees who have formed The Soul Liberation Cultural Gospel band. They perform in the Garden and Bash makes Others, a film of portraits. (see link)

**Poveglia** The association Poveglia per Tutti has over 4,000 members who are trying to buy the abandoned island of Poveglia, 5k due south of Venice. There is no bigger issue around freespace and Venice. We want to work with them to share the knowledge of Eigg, an island in Scotland, subject of a community

buyout, and to make connections to Scotland's community empowerment process... But the Association is so suspicious of big culture, doesn't trust the Biennale... it's hard. Lorenzo Pesola, president, agrees to tell their story on film. Ultimately, this becomes one of our richest connections. The Association organises four large meetings in The Happenstance garden. On Sunday, 1st July, at their the shareholders' meeting, we screen the documentary. (see link) A great friendship grows, we are taken to water fruit trees on the island, to fish in the bay, to eat great food in their homes in Guidecca.

**Quid Pro Quo** To keep the project going, beyond its expected timespan of one month, we needed to achieve four things. To deal with the rent of the space. To arrange ongoing invigilation. To provide a programme with content. To find additional resource for lodgings and travel. Thanks to a fantastic relationship with the Armenian community who run Zenobio, we zeroed our rent by the passing of The Happenstance armature into their ownership for 1 euro. Unbelievably, from this point on, I was never asked to pay for my lodgings in the palazzo. In an unprecedented move, Scottish Government approved additional funding to extend our run to November 2018. The resident Armenian students, Lilit, Danny, Avo and Hamlet, became our new Fellows and supported Alberto to invigilate our show. Alberto carried this part of the project on his back, and the

space programmed itself, with various groups taking ownership, and over 100 events, screenings, workshops...

**Ronna Bloom**, Canadian poet, wandered in, mid-November, to our autumnal garden.

Loved it, performed a poem on the spot, to the delight of my sister Anne and her fella Mark, who were visiting. The Cultural Connectors forum was the next day, so of course I invited her to contribute and of course she was great.

**Sagra** By coincidence, the Biennale will launch on the same day as the local Sagra festival, taking place in Campo dell' Angelo Raffaele, which is a three-minute walk from our back door. On a recce to Venice in February, we meet local organiser, Corrado Claut, to discuss interweaving our events. He toured Scotland as a student and loves the bagpipes, could we bring a piper? We open on 25th May, with 14-year-old piper, Andrew Bell, piping our full team and audience in a procession from Palazzo Ca' Zenobio's front door, through the streets of Venice, to join the Sagra, lead a ceilidh dance, cause some creative mayhem and return over the bridge, through our back door, with new audience in tow, to open our garden. (see link) What a start! A month later, when things are getting tough financially, Corrado and his wife, Marilisa, bring an envelope from their committee with 500 to keep us going.

**Taiwan** The team from the Taiwanese Pavilion come round to visit a few days before we open. Their response is delight - they really get it. So much so, that they request to show their beautiful Tian Zhong documentary on 26th May. Yes. Of course. Two days later they bring their entire entourage to this event. We also screen a range of our films, and Francis Thorburn's, (one of The Happenstance artists), film *Walking on Water* really makes them laugh. Afterwards, Taiwanese journalist, Sharon Ma, writes three loving articles ((see link)( with the rider "The Scottish Pavilion is very rare in this Biennale. Go the the Free Space Pavilion."

**Unconnected** During the project, Alberto shares one of a thousand useful insights - that the local associations have become disconnected from each other. At the end of the project, impelled by Alberto, we leave our precious projection kit as a free resource to all, forming the Association of Associations in the hope of aiding reconnection.

**Venetian** The Happenstance had 35,000 visitors, of whom over 7,000 directly engaged in events, workshops, screenings and various colloquia. The vast majority were Venetian. We worked with over 30 local organisations, mapped (see map).

**Word of Mouth** established that we really were a free space - a space for everyone, in which all people,

without any distinction, could interact, collaborate, take the stage, use the resource, tell their stories. Local shopkeepers made posters telling folk about us, and painter, Silvio Pasqualini, (our biggest fan) made us a flag and took a vacant window space in a nearby campo to spread the word.

**X Marks the Spot** Hunting the treasure in the people you meet and expecting to be lucky. This is such a simple idea. Please try it - it seems to offer such a recipe for successful encounter. But, as Theo points out, it's not always anti-curatorship in the sense of anything goes, it's also an active exchange - you hunt for what you value, or alternatively, you learn to revalue something through its importance to another person.

**Year of Young People** Architect, Graham Ross, and myself, were invited to represent The Happenstance at the Scottish Parliament, with the Children's Parliament in attendance, chaired by Linda Fabiani MSP. As described elsewhere in these dispatches, the Year of Young People was one of the cornerstones of the whole project. Two representatives from the Youth Parliament, Jack Dudgeon and Danny Raja, travelled to Venice to contribute to the symposium on education. Scottish Government took ownership of The Happenstance, embraced it, referenced it. Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, opened the Glasgow iteration of The Happenstance at

The Lighthouse, Glasgow. Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, came for a tour of the show, and gave the project full support, citing it regularly at cultural events.

**Zenobio** There was a complex dynamic with our Armenian hosts. To the small number of Armenians, students and staff, who are resident at Zenobio, to the 'Keeper' of the building, Samuel Baghdassarian, and to the monks from San Servelo who own the building, the grounds of Ca'Zenobio are virtually sacred land. For a significant period of our initial relationship they oscillated between loving our presence and embracing the openness, activity and excitement that The Happenstance brought, and struggling with the invasion of this 'sacred ground'. They crossed this Rubicon when they bought the armature to keep us open. It was the clearest statement you could ask for. In a city where everything at Biennale time is monetised, this became about friendship and respect. We worked with them to harness the success of The Happenstance to try to develop a future where their garden was kept open to all, where their amazing print works could be activated, and in which they would gather an archive of the Armenians who visit from all over the world. (see link) We prototyped all these things. But as so often happens with event nature work - the power focused in relationships dissipates with distance and the future for Ca'Zenobio is unclear.

As I complete this last essay in early April 2020, the world is in the grip of an unimaginable pandemic, with Italy at its epicentre. This month, I will join an online conference organised by friends met in Venice in 2018. Venetians are particularly confounded. They have seen loss of life at scale, and they have also seen their streets reclaimed, their waterways cleansed, and the devastating effects of the Grandi Navi curtailed.

In any reset that emerges, the memory of the great days of The Happenstance remain vital and sustaining - simple principles of localism, of listening and of acknowledging the resource of each other. As society battles this disease, it has never felt more important to rise to Scottish author Alasdair Gray's invocation to "act as though you are in the early days of a better society".

## RESOURCES

- [WAVEparticle Website](#)
- [Taiwanese articles translated text](#)
- [Cultural Connections handout](#)
- [Related Films](#)



# Map of Key Connections

Encore Heureux

Confluenze

Venice Resiliency Lab

Fontego Media

European Cultural Forum

Andrea Martini

Poveglia Per Tutti

ABOUT Organisation

Corrado Claut and Marilisa

the Sagra Festival

Venice Open Stage

The Liechtenstein Pavilion

ANPI

Bloom University Toronto

Grest

Collegio Armeno

Handiciel

The Taiwanese Pavilion

Alberto Lago

The Garden of Unaccompanied Children

DO'VE

Kanz Studio

The PER association

The Danish Pavilion

Paolo Obli

Pasinetti film Festival

Giovanni Leone

The Becarria Juvenile Prison Programme Milan

Grand Navi protesters

Biennale Urbana

Were are Here: Venice

AWAI

Cyprus Pavilion

Paradiso perduto

The French Pavilion

Austrian Pavilion

FRULLATORIO

North Lands Creative

Venice Municipality

squat at Theatre d'Anatomy

Venice in Peril

Bocce Ball boys

Minas Lorian

Scendiamo in Campo

Wigwam

Viviamo Venezia

Micro Clima

The British Pavilion



# THE HAPPENSTANCE



## Cultural Connectors Forum 23 November 2018 10am – 10pm

The Cultural Connectors Forum is about bringing together influential thinkers and makers from a wide spectrum of disciplines and interests; science, art, theatre, architecture, anthropology, health and well-being, education, environmental studies, film-making, journalism, entrepreneurship and activism.

The forum is built from inspiring people we've met in Venice, and from across Scotland, people who all think about the role of building, bridging and reconnecting relationships within, and beyond, their specialist fields.

The HAPPENSTANCE is Scotland's Project for the Biennale  
The HAPPENSTANCE è un progetto Scorzono per la Biennale



This emphasis, on inbetweening, has been one of the most valuable aspects of The Happenstance. Through offering a *freespace* for people to gather and exchange, we have been delighted to watch new networks emerging, new possibilities taking shape. In the context of an Architectural Biennale, this inbetweening has been described by The Happenstance Curator, Peter McCaughey, as 'Architecture Plus', where the emphasis is on the 'Plus'.

Palazzo Ca' Zenobio,  
Collegio Armeno  
Moerat Raphael,  
Dorsoduro 2596,  
Venezia 30123

[ads.org.uk/scotlandvenice2018](http://ads.org.uk/scotlandvenice2018)  
[thehappenstance.org](http://thehappenstance.org)  
#happenstance18 | @happenstance18



The Learning Spaces colloquium in the ballroom of Palazzo Zenobio  
Image: Alberto Lago



One of many music events that took place in the garden  
Image: Alberto Lago





Peter McLaughlin inside a Pester and Rossi inflatable at The Sagra Festival  
Image: Brian Hartley

# Exploring the variety of ways The Happenstance helped weave connections between individuals and organisations.



Alberto Lago presents The Happenstance at the Shaping the City conference, Venice  
© Venice Documentation Project