



# INFORMAL

SYDNEY PHNOM PENH

# OVERVIEW

## CONTEXT

In a moment of time when the balance between the public and the private is shifting in favour of the latter, it is important that a close eye is kept on the status of the public spaces in our cities. Vital public space tends to emerge as a product of numerous competing forces. Planning guidelines, regulations, and political attitudes can either strangle or let flourish the behaviours which enliven these areas which are so key to thriving cities.

This course is an opportunity to better understand the potentials and limitations of these diverse conditions.

It can be argued that the vitality of public spaces hinges on their ability to facilitate a diversity of, often unexpected, usages and interactions, by a broad spectrum of people over varied time periods. This course suggests that the street, as the fundamental public space of the city, is where this activity can and should occur.

Not without their challenges, the streets of Phnom Penh are a clear display of diverse urban dwellers playing out their lives in the public domain, much appropriated and loosely regulated. In Sydney, this kind of mixed informal activity is much less apparent and the centre of the city is largely a vehicle-dominated zone for weekday commerce. The current revitalisation of key CBD zones proposes a shift from this.

## PROCESS

Learning centres around the role of design in activating street vitality. There is an emphasis on evidence-based design thinking from 'real life' observation, cross cultural comparison and critical analysis.

Students conduct a series of observational studies in two key city thoroughfares in Sydney and Phnom Penh. They observe, analyse and graphically communicate spacio-behavioural patterns in each location.

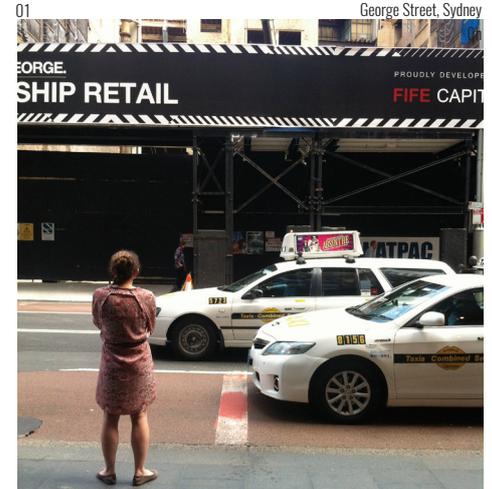
This comparative analysis presents a series of opportunities for small scale urban interventions in each location. How can precedents from Phnom Penh be intelligently translated to inform design ideas in the new Sydney CBD and vice versa?

## FORMAT

Content is delivered via lectures and tutorial workshops, held both in the street and in studio spaces. Supporting this, students visit a series of urban sites and meet a number of cultural actors in which and for whom, public space plays a key role.

Both individual and collaborative work is undertaken, with opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and cross cultural collaboration between Sydney and Phnom Penh design students.

Classes are held in the summer session. They begin and end in Sydney with two intensive weeks in Phnom Penh between. The Phnom Penh trip culminates in a public exhibition at the French colonial RUFA campus in the centre of the city.



# PART 1 STREET OBSERVATIONS

A set of observational exercises are undertaken in George St Sydney and then repeated in St 19, Phnom Penh. Students are directed to record differing aspects of the interlinked physical, behavioural and systematic patterns of the street, monitored over varying time periods.



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- 01 Street diaries for daily observations
- 02 Phnom penh street scene
- 03 Tutorials take place in the street and the studio
- 04 UNSW student, Leviang Teng, recording in Street 19, Phnom Penh



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Students observe components such as the planned and the unplanned, appropriations in terms of object and activity, built and behavioural relationships between interior and exterior, sidewalk and road.

Analysis of data follows observation. Why do certain patterns emerge? What does this indicate about the interplay between human behaviour and the built environment? How can this begin to inform design decisions in a manner which contributes to creating vital street spaces?

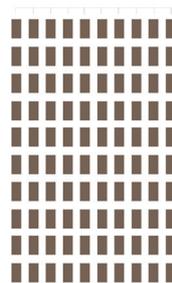
# PART 1

## STREET OBSERVATIONS

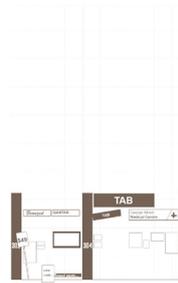
### EXERCISE EXAMPLE

#### 'Appropriations'

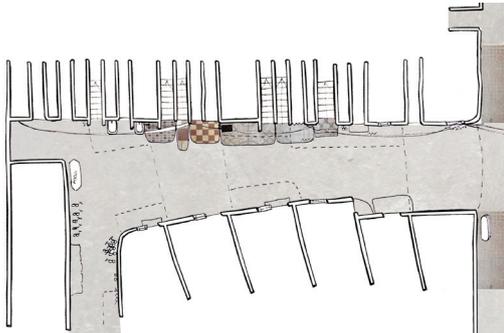
Observe and record the planned and unplanned elements of the street plane and street facades. How has the built environment as structure, object, and materiality been adapted to suit varying users and usages? How does this change over time?



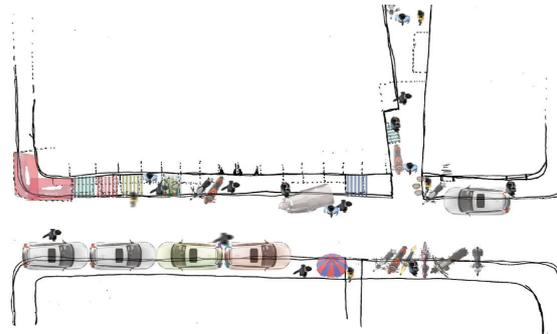
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- 01 Facade as planned and unplanned.  
Sydney  
Sarah Tanson, yr 2 interior architecture
- 02 Alleyway floor finish appropriations.  
Phnom Penh  
Vanessa Crookson, yr 3 interior architecture
- 03 Sidewalk and alleyway midday usage.  
Phnom Penh.  
Dominika Dome, yr 3 interior architecture
- 04 Facade object appropriations.  
Phnom Penh.  
Phoebe Nicol, yr 3 interior architecture

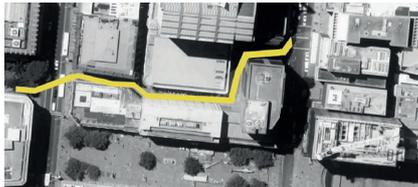
# PART 2

## URBAN

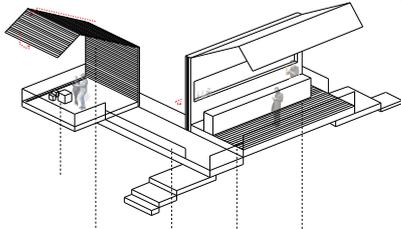
### ACUPUNCTURE

#### BRIEF + STREET INTERVENTION

Respond to observational data with a design brief and a concept level idea. The overarching focus is on ways in which the built/systematic environment can support street vitality. Identify a focus area, issue and design aim. This brief outlines the parameters for a small scale urban intervention aimed to improve street life in the new George St pedestrian/light rail zone.



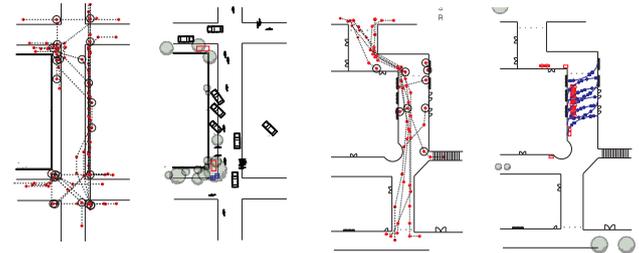
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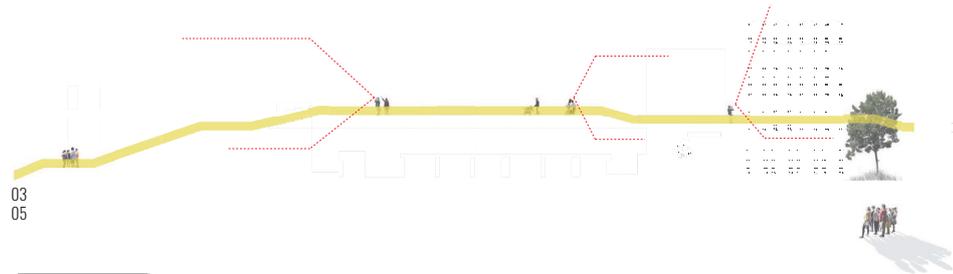
*Holly payne. yr 2 interior architecture.*

Raised paths and platforms in alleyways to improve underutilised pedestrian routes, connect to upper level activity, and offer views to key city spaces.

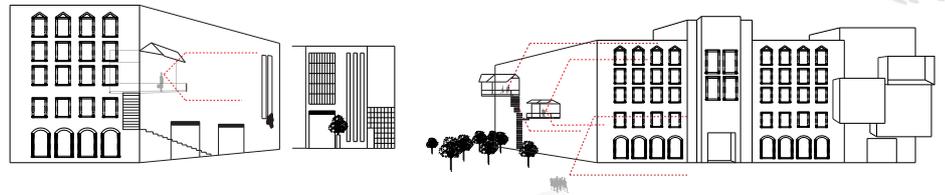
- 01 Necessity only alleyway usage in Phnom Penh and Sydney
- 02 Angel place raised walkway site map
- 03 Angel place raised walkway
- 04 Raised platform as bar
- 05 Raised platforms at strategic locations



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# WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

## LECTURES

provide visual precedents and theories surrounding course themes as well as outlining exercise tasks.

## TUTORIALS

held in the street and studio, where observations, analysis and design ideas are discussed in small groups with a tutor.

## GUEST TALKS

by a series of urban and cultural actors in whose work public space plays a key role.

## SITE VISITS

present 'real life' examples of well functioning public space expressed in differing ways.

## COLLABORATIONS

with a mix of design disciplines and with Phnom Penh design students. Students work together on street exercises, studio sessions, final exhibition curation and social outings.

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01 'Boodin' (The White Building). An appropriated piece of New Khmer Architecture from the period of Independence, now a thriving laneway building home to a large urban poor community.

02 Site visit and guest talk at 'Skateistan', an NGO providing support and services to urban youth through the tool of skateboarding.

03 Street art by artist El Tono in a domestic and business alley.

04 Olympic Stadium designed by Van Molyvann in the 1960's, a free public space widely used by locals for aerobics, eating, music...

# CONCLUDING EVENTS

## PRESENTATIONS

Students pin-up and discuss their work at the end of each of the four assessment tasks.

## COLLABORATIVE ARTWORK

Students contribute to a streetscape art piece created by tutor and practicing artist Richard Briggs. This forms a backdrop to the exhibition and is donated to RUFA.

## EXHIBITION

Students setup and curate an exhibition at the end of the trip, hosted by RUFA in their central city campus space. At this, students work is displayed.



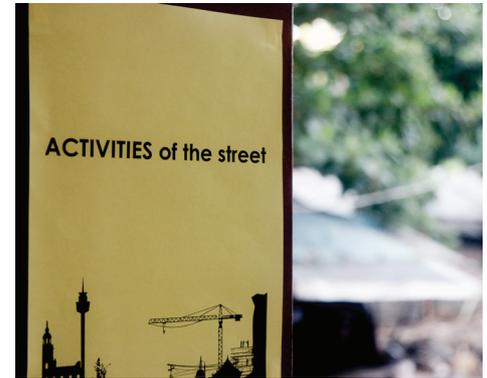
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- 01 Exhibition night
- 02 Collaborative artwork by Richard Briggs and UNSW/RUFA students
- 03 UNSW student Phoebe Nicol adds to artwork
- 04 Street exercises organised into focus areas
- 05 Student works in the RUFA terrace space

# CREDITS AND CONTACTS

A sincere thank you to:

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The Royal University of Fine Arts, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, for hosting the Phnom Penh contingent in their offer of space, staff, student volunteers and logistical help.

All students involved, who worked with dedication and rigour.

The guest speakers and city of Phnom Penh, who offered invaluable insights and opened their spaces to us.

## UNSW STUDENTS

Aaron Lauder Jones  
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Dominika Dome  
Ellen Williams  
Geran Atkinson  
Grady Wang  
Henry Zheng  
Holly Payne  
Lalitha Balasubramanian  
Leviang Teng  
Lucy Chen  
Madeleine Lloyd  
Madison Fay  
Peter Mitchell  
Phoebe Nicol  
Samuel Phan  
Sarah l'Anson  
Tatum Hayek  
Vanessa Crookson

## UNSW STAFF

Eva Lloyd: course coordinator  
Richard Briggs: course tutor  
Giacomo Butte: course tutor  
Bruce Edward Watson: Director  
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## RUFA STUDENTS

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Sok Sopheap  
Hun Sokagna  
So Vitou  
Seang Satya  
Lim Bunhak  
Sing Bunny  
Tiv By Kimlean  
Mean Pisei  
Ly Sreypitch

Sok Sovannara  
Moeun Phollida  
Hor Daro

## RUFA STAFF

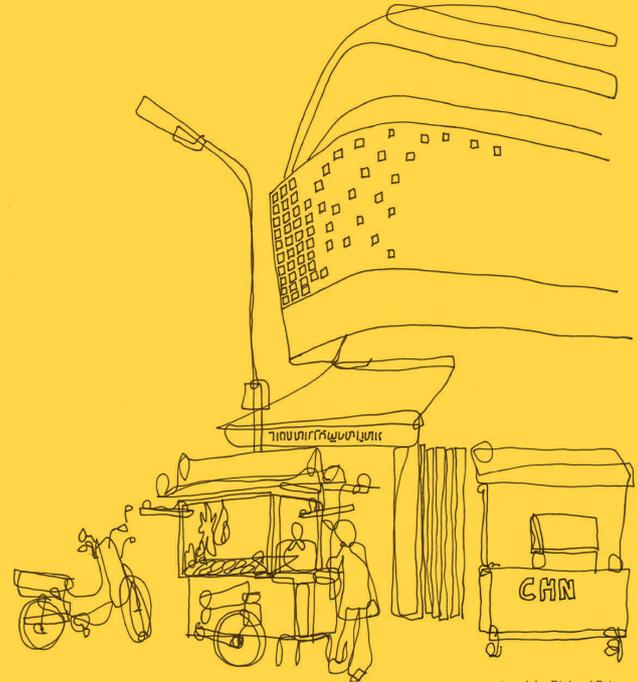
Professor Kong Kosal: Dean of Faculty  
Karno Chay: Vice Dean of Faculty  
Phal Piseth: logistical assistance  
Hong Leakhena: logistical assistance  
Paul Robinson: logistical assistance

## GUEST TALKS + SITE VISITS

Skateistan  
SaSa Art Projects  
Develop Boeng Kok Arts  
Khmer Architecture Tours

## PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

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artwork by Richard Briggs

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## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

