

PRESS RELEASE

BUILDING: **An exhibition under construction**

3 April – 18 August 2024

Farrell Centre, Newcastle, UK

Admission Free

@FarrellCentre

www.farrellcentre.org.uk

The Farrell Centre presents ***BUILDING: An exhibition under construction*** which will transform the exhibition galleries into live making spaces in an exploration of the process of building. Rather than open fully-formed, the public will witness the exhibition taking shape over four months via two live build projects, installations created by students and apprentices, audience participation, and a programme of workshops and events for all audiences.

Building sites are ever-present in our cities. Yet we are always separated from them, experiencing them at a distance and from behind hoardings. There are important practical and health and safety reasons for this – building sites can often be dangerous. But this separation has the effect of disconnecting us from the construction process that exists almost in a separate world, where questions about how buildings are made and who they are ultimately for can struggle to get heard.

This exhibition aims to help change this. It recasts *building* not as object, but as an action. When you do this, everything the hoardings obscure comes into view: who builds our buildings, the conditions they work in, the tools they use and the skills they employ; the materials buildings are made from and their environmental impacts both locally and further afield; the money that funds buildings, where it comes from and what it wants in return.

In its exploration of the process of making buildings, the exhibition also turns a light on the process of making exhibitions. In contrast to the conventional ‘big reveal’, which often serves to obscure or erase the very many hands involved in favour of the artists or curator, ***BUILDING*** comprises a series of collaborative projects that will take place during the exhibition’s run, inviting the public to reconsider how exhibitions are made and the ideologies they reflect.

The exhibition opens with ***Stage Directions***, a project by Sweden-based artist and architect **Andjeas Ejiksson** and **Joanna Zawieja**, which explores written instructions as an alternative architectural tool. Local artist and technician, **Peter Evans**, will build a waiting room from a set of instructions written by Ejiksson and Zawieja. Reframing the tools by which architecture is conceived and communicated, this is the latest iteration of

an ongoing project putting forward an exploratory architecture that allows for change and subtle shifts in public life.

Working with and empowering communities to shape the architectural and building process is core to the exhibition. **Lee Ivett**, founder of architecture and design studio Baxendale, and Head of the Grenfell-Baines Institute of Architecture at the University of Central Lancashire, where he also runs Other People's Dreams, a live-action participatory research and teaching studio, will work with a group from **North East Young Dads and Lads** – a unique youth support service that is dedicated to helping young men and young fathers to play an active and meaningful role in the lives of their children, within families and wider society.

The project aims to establish a community design space within the Farrell Centre and then utilise it as a resource to conceive, develop and produce a new mobile community workshop that can be used to facilitate participatory making activity throughout the city. The design will be open-source and be made available free of charge to other community groups, charities and third sector organisations.

Local architecture studio **Mawson Kerr** will work with students studying building trades from **Sunderland College** to create an installation in the Farrell Centre's shop window. Inspired by the 'apprentice pieces' that aspiring craftsmen would make historically to show off their skills, Carpentry & Joinery, Electrical and Plumbing apprentices and Level 3 students will look beyond the functional grounding of their trades to explore the expressive and creative possibility of their skills. Underlying this will be a focus on retrofit and the impact of modern construction on the environment, with the students making use of recycled materials.

The 3D design for the exhibition will be undertaken by local designers **AND+Studio** who will create a series of spaces that will adapt and evolve over the course of the exhibition's run. **Foundation Press** will be responsible for the exhibition's graphic identity and 2D design, which visitors will see them develop and install during the exhibition. Both studios will offer various opportunities for visitors to get involved in learning new skills and techniques, actively shaping the resulting exhibition.

Alongside the various projects and installations, a programme of workshops and activities will look to include as many people as possible in making the exhibition, as a way of broadening the conversation about how we can re-imagine the built environment as something we can all positively shape.

The exhibition emerges from the major research project ***Translating Ferro / Transforming Knowledges of Architecture, Design and Labour for the New Field of Production Studies (TF/TK)***, work from which will also be on display in the Farrell Centre. Reflecting the ethos of that project, the exhibition has been conceived through a collaborative curatorial process involving Katie Lloyd Thomas, Professor of Architectural Theory and History (and Principal Investigator UK of TF/TK); Will Thomson, TF/TK Research Associate in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape; Lorna Burn, Assistant Curator, Farrell Centre; and Owen Hopkins, Director, Farrell Centre.

Owen Hopkins, Director of the Farrell Centre, said:

“Architecture is so often something that is ‘done’ to places, with little involvement of the communities who will be directly affected by developments. *BUILDING: An exhibition under construction* aims to change this by shining a light on the building process and inviting the public to get involved. It is only by putting people at the core of how the built environment is produced and sustained and that we can create a city that works for everyone.”

Katie Lloyd Thomas, Professor of Architectural Theory and History, Newcastle University, said:

“It’s very exciting to see the architect Sérgio Ferro’s critique of the design/labour separation as the starting point for this innovative exhibition. Our research in the four year Brazil-UK project TF/TK has tended to focus on how this plays out in architecture – looking at widespread disregard for the construction site and know-how of builders, whilst promoting more emancipatory forms of building. This exhibition explores the same separation in the field of exhibition making, turning the galleries into spaces where design is returned to the fabricators and the processes of production are made visible.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Visitor information:

BUILDING: An exhibition under construction

Farrell Centre, The Sir Terry Farrell Building, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RD

3 April – 18 August 2024

Opening times: Wednesday–Sunday, 10am–5pm

Free entry (no booking required)

Images

Due to the nature of the project, images will become available over the course of the exhibition’s run and can be downloaded [here](#)

General shots of the Farrell Centre and the exhibition’s graphic identity by Foundation Press are available now.

For further information, images, and interviews, please contact the Farrell Centre press office: press@farrellcentre.org.uk

About the Farrell Centre

The Farrell Centre is a public centre for architecture and cities located in Newcastle, UK. Opening in April 2023, it was instigated by renowned architect-planner Sir Terry Farrell, and forms part of Newcastle University’s School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. The centre’s mission is to engage and involve the broadest possible audience with the

forces driving urban change to help bring about a built environment that is more inclusive, sustainable and democratic.

The Farrell Centre is admission free and offers a variety of experiences for visitors of all ages. Its programme is wide-ranging and inclusive, comprising temporary exhibitions, public talks and debates, workshops and activities for schools, young people, community groups, events for built environment professionals, as well as publications, podcasts and other digital projects.

About Newcastle University

Newcastle University, UK, is a thriving international community of more than 28,000 students from over 130 countries worldwide. As a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities in the UK, Newcastle has a world-class reputation for research excellence in the fields of medicine, science and engineering, social sciences and the humanities. Its academics are sharply focused on responding to the major challenges facing society today. Research and teaching are world-leading in areas as diverse as health, culture, technology and the environment.

Newcastle is committed to providing students with excellent, research-led teaching delivered by dedicated and passionate teachers. Newcastle University is ranked 122nd in the QS World Ranking 2023 and joint 139th in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2022. Newcastle University is ranked first in the UK and eighth in the world for sustainable development in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2022.

About *Translating Ferro / Transforming Knowledges* (<https://www.tf-tk.com>)

Translating Ferro / Transforming Knowledges of Architecture, Design and Labour for the New Field of Production Studies (TF/TK) is a four year collaborative project between researchers in Brazil and the UK funded by FAPESP and the AHRC with generous support from project partners School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble and Central St Martins, and Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo – IAUUSP and Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo – FAUUSP. The project commenced in October 2020 and is organised around two main research activities:

- **Translating Ferro:** TF/TK explores and translates into English the single most sustained and rigorous enquiry into art, architecture and design from the perspective of labour in any language – that of the still active Brazilian-French historian, theorist, and architect, Sérgio Ferro, whose work demonstrates that architecture's very existence is predicated on the separation of design from the construction site. The first of three translated volumes of Ferro's work published by [MACK](#) (2024–25), *Architecture From Below: An anthology* will be launched at the Production Studies conference on Monday 25 March 2024 (see below).
- **Transforming Knowledges:** In the context of the depletion of resources and ever worsening and increasingly disconnected conditions of contemporary construction across the globe, TF/TK looks to Ferro's work to advance the critical understanding of relations between architectural design and the production and labour of building,

with the aim to foster, responsible and just alternatives and develop urgently needed field of Production Studies. The Production Studies Series – twelve Case Study full colour booklets by TF/TK researchers – will be launched and available throughout the period of the exhibition together with eight audio plays produced by the theatre company [Cap-a-pie](#) with TF/TK researchers. The edited collection *Building Sites: Architecture, labour, and the field of production studies* is forthcoming (Routledge, 2025).

The opening of *BUILDING: An exhibition under construction* coincides with the major international conference *Production Studies: Transforming Knowledges of Architecture, Design and Labour* which is taking place at Newcastle University (25–28 March 2024).

About exhibition collaborators

Stage Directions is a collaboration between Andjeas Ejiksson and Joanna Zawieja, which started as a letter correspondence and has been ongoing since 2013. **Andjeas Ejiksson** is an artist, writer, and researcher. His artistic practice explores how ideologies and cultural imaginaries are established. Ejiksson is currently a researcher at the Gothenburg University. **Joanna Zawieja** is an architect, critic and curator, working in between public art, architecture, and urban planning. Since 2014 she's also Head of Urban Development at the Public Art Agency Sweden.

Peter Evans is a multi-disciplinary artist and can best be described as a specialist in non-specialism, working across art forms in his practice and as a technician highly regarded as someone who finds solutions to problems, rather than ways of describing them differently. Exhibiting and installing both across the UK and internationally, he has engaged in residencies and shows at Kiasma, (Finland), Tokyo Opera City (Japan), The Armoury (USA) and B39 (UK). He studied Visual Performance at Dartington College of Arts, followed by an MRes in Digital Media at Newcastle, where he now lives and works.

Sunderland College is part of Education Partnership North East (EPNE), the largest college group based solely in the North East. It spans from Sunderland to Hartlepool and all the way up to Northumberland college in Ashington. It is the highest performing college in the North East and second highest nationally. With strong strategic links with Sunderland City Council, the Department for Education and a large number of high-profile employers across the region in sectors such as Construction, Engineering, Health & Social Care and Digital, it delivers high quality technical skills, training and qualifications that meets the needs of the local and regional employer base. Whilst at college, learners are also provided with support to pass or further develop their English and maths and an extensive wrap around of pastoral support to help develop young people into well-rounded and informed individuals who can make a real impact in their local communities.

MawsonKerr are an award-winning architects based in Newcastle. Sustainability, creativity and meeting the clients' needs are at the core of their work and have delivered a variety of buildings in sectors such as residential, heritage, education, commercial and leisure.

Lee Ivett is Head of the Grenfell-Baines Institute of Architecture at the University of Central Lancashire and founder of architecture and design studio Baxendale. He is an

award-winning architect, designer, maker, and urbanist with a track record of developing transformational long-term projects with third sector organizations. His mode of practice is intensely generative, developing low-budget, socially focused projects from scratch with marginalised communities within the UK and beyond that develop local agency and capacity.

OPD – Other People’s Dreams is a live-action participatory research and teaching studio established within the Grenfell-Baines Institute of Architecture in Preston. We explore that which is often ‘unseen’ within architectural education and the wider culture of architectural production. We are interested in everyday life as experienced those people, born and often made peripheral through background, identity and circumstance. OPD has an emphasis on ‘Making as Care’; proposing new forms of neighbourhood typology that situates hyper local, individual and collective acts of making as the primary means of creating well being, resilience and sustenance.

Foundation Press, led by Adam Phillips and Deborah Bower, develops community-publishing and collaborative art & design projects. Founded in 2013 by Adam Phillips, Joe Woodhouse and Tom Madge as an experimental risograph printing studio, today, they create publications, educational projects, collaborative artworks and graphic design.

AND+ Studios was founded by Dan Civico and Jack Nockels in 2021. With thirty years of industry experience in commercial & residential design between them, Civico and Nockels have expertise in several areas including interior, furniture design, 3D design, and architectural design. They work closely together, and with their clients to craft spaces that are both creative and functional.

11 March 2024

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