

# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN PERFORMANCE/DESIGN

A group of performers, mostly women, are walking in a line on a city street at night. They are wearing matching black and white geometric patterned outfits, possibly dresses or jumpsuits, and bright red shoes. The background shows a city street with buildings and some blurred figures of people in the distance. The lighting is somewhat dim, with some streetlights visible.

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# PERFORMATIVE AESTHETICS IN URBAN SPACE

The materialism of the 20th century avantgarde played an essential role for my idea of performative aesthetics

Design and architecture as a performative agencies in the city...



# PERFORMATIVE AESTHETICS IN URBAN SPACE



What can urban design learn from performance?



# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE

- \* can urban design learn from performance art and how performance produce material meanings in city?

- \* A contemporary approach

- \* Through 3 cases I will suggest that we witness a new materialism in urban design.

- \* Shares similarities in the materialism of for instance, Russian constructivism, dada, futurism, situationist International and Fluxus.

*Is it avantgarde?*

Contemporary artists and designers prefer a pragmatic self-understanding and a-historical approach to acts in public space. So will I...



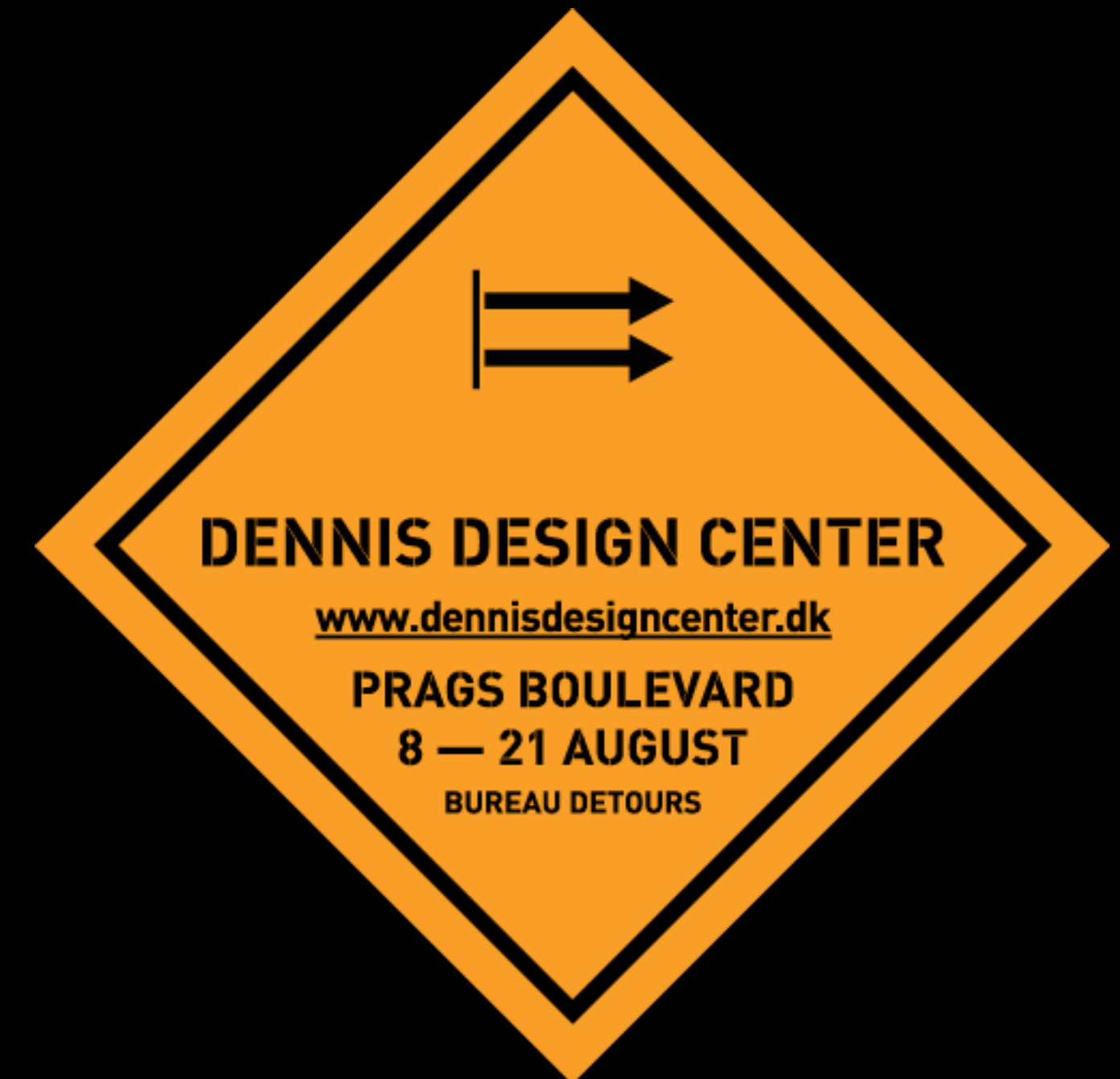
# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE



Tyler Ashley's dance performance at the Highline during Performa



Theaster Gates  
Huguenottenhaus  
in Kassel during  
dOCUMENTA



Büro Detours performance workshop  
Dennis Design Center during  
Metropolis Biennial.



# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES

A dance performance taking place during *Performa* autumn 2011



A group of people, likely a dance troupe or performance group, are standing on a city sidewalk. They are wearing matching black and white chevron-patterned pants and bright orange sneakers. The image is a close-up, focusing on the lower half of their bodies. The background is a blurred city street with other pedestrians.

# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES

Inspired by the russian constructivism, primarily in costumes and music...





# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES



Redirecting and disturbing urban flows through dance performance  
Agit pop agenda: tranformation of social life through art.





# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES

...But also by the biomediation or recomposition of materiality (the performing body, the participants acts and moves and urban flows and habits. "Fitness work outs")

The biomediated body (Massumi, Clough, 2010). Bodily sensations and the emergence of meaning *prior* to the cognitive.



# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES

Takes place in sites of consumption, tourism, gentrification...  
Performance redirects urban life through the mechanic dance performance and fitness 'work outs'



# THE HIGH LINE GENTRIFICATION BY MEANS OF AESHTETIZATION








# THE HIGH LINE GENTRIFICATION BY MEANS OF AESHTETIZATION

*“New York are in search of sites of slaughter within which to trade in fine art, music, food, and fashion. They are seeking a more visceral and haunted environment to inhabit, and in doing so they are chasing the ghosts away”...*

*... “This question of museumification extends to the city itself and confronts notions of gentrification” (Hannah 2002: 296)*



A night-time photograph taken from an elevated walkway, likely The High Line in New York City. In the foreground, a man and a woman are sitting on a wooden bench, their backs to the camera, looking out over a city street. The man is wearing a dark suit, and the woman is wearing a dark top and a light-colored skirt. The walkway has a metal railing and is illuminated by warm, yellow lights. Below them, a city street is visible with several cars, including yellow taxis, and traffic lights. The street is flanked by tall buildings, some of which have their windows lit up. The sky is dark, and the overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

# THE HIGH LINE MATERIAL AND AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE



# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES



\*Takes place in sites of consumption, tourism, gentrification...

\*Thus the performance redirect urban life and its production flows.

... at the same time participating and producing new material flows and meanings  
An overall upheaval of art into (urban) life.



# #1 HALF MYTHICAL, HALF LEGENDARY AMERICANISM: BIO-MEDIATION OF URBAN BODIES

The performance recomposes socio-cultural meanings and matters, for instance site consumption at the High Line.

The performance recomposes urban life, our socio-cultural behaviour and practices.



# SITUATIONISM



We must develop a methodical intervention based on the complex factors of two components in perpetual interaction, the material environment of life and the comportments which it gives rise to and which radically transform it. Guy Debord "Construction of Situations" 1957

Urban performance, a way to construct and reestablish situations in the functional and neo-liberal city?



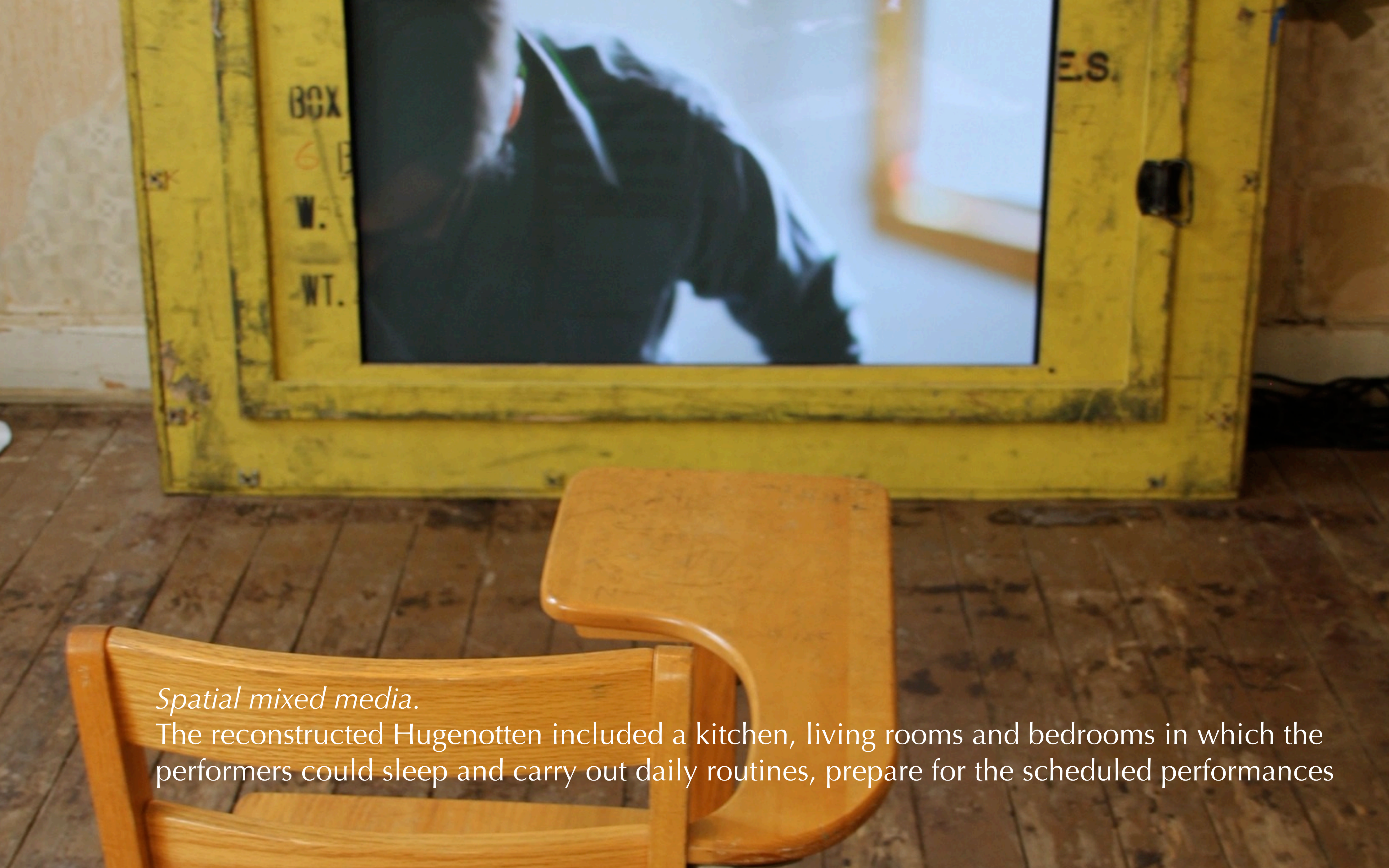


## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS PERFORMANCE AS URBAN REGENERATION

**Theaster Gates** is an artist and cultural planner. In his performances, installations, and urban interventions, Gates transforms spaces, institutions, traditions, and perceptions.

As a part of dOKUMENTA (13), Theaster Gates has restored the historic Huguenot House into a communal and culturally uplifted space for consideration, exploration, talks and performance





*Spatial mixed media.*

The reconstructed Hugonotten included a kitchen, living rooms and bedrooms in which the performers could sleep and carry out daily routines, prepare for the scheduled performances



## #2 HUGENOTTEN HAUS



Materialism, collage and found objects.




## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS



Mixed media... space, screen, wallpaper, sound  
Different materials form a spatio-temporal montage, linking past medias with present technologies.



## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black and white patterned dress, stands in a room. She is holding a yellow envelope. The room has a wooden table, a radiator, and a window. A thick rope is visible in the foreground.

Every day performances  
The house is a 'walk-in' collage  
Performers live in the house and perform every day tasks.  
Bedrooms are both bedrooms *and* installation art.  
The reconstructed Hugenotten includes a kitchen, living  
rooms and bedrooms in which the performers prepare for  
the scheduled performances.



## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS

Concrete art, found materials, spatial montage

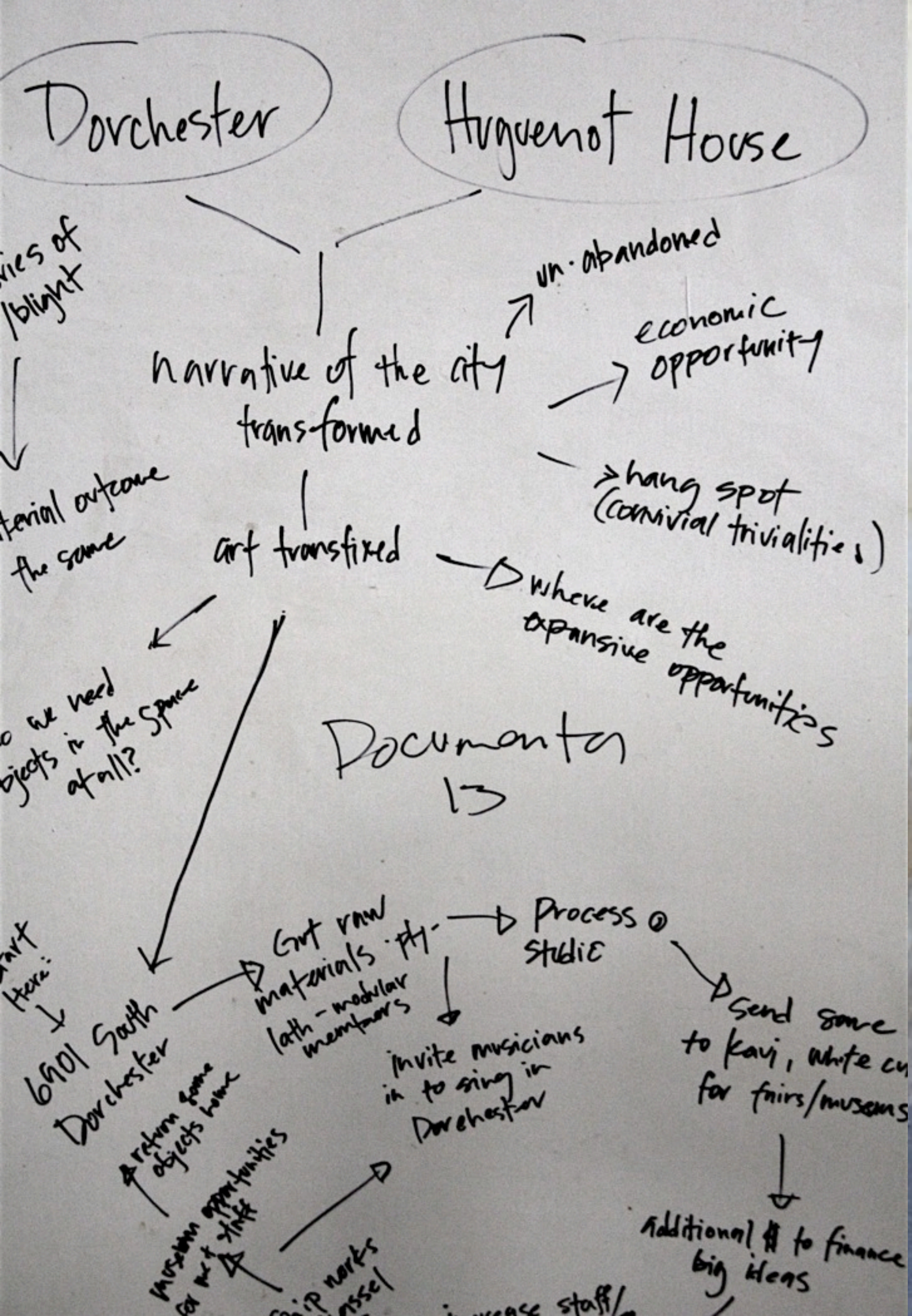




## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS

Recomposition of found materials into furniture





## #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS

Diagrams and event scores





# #2 HUGENOTTENHAUS

## PERFORMANCE AS URBAN REGENERATION

\*Art and performances become transformative catalyst for the city (Kassel)

\*Urban blight transformed into art through spatial montage. The material outcome is the same.

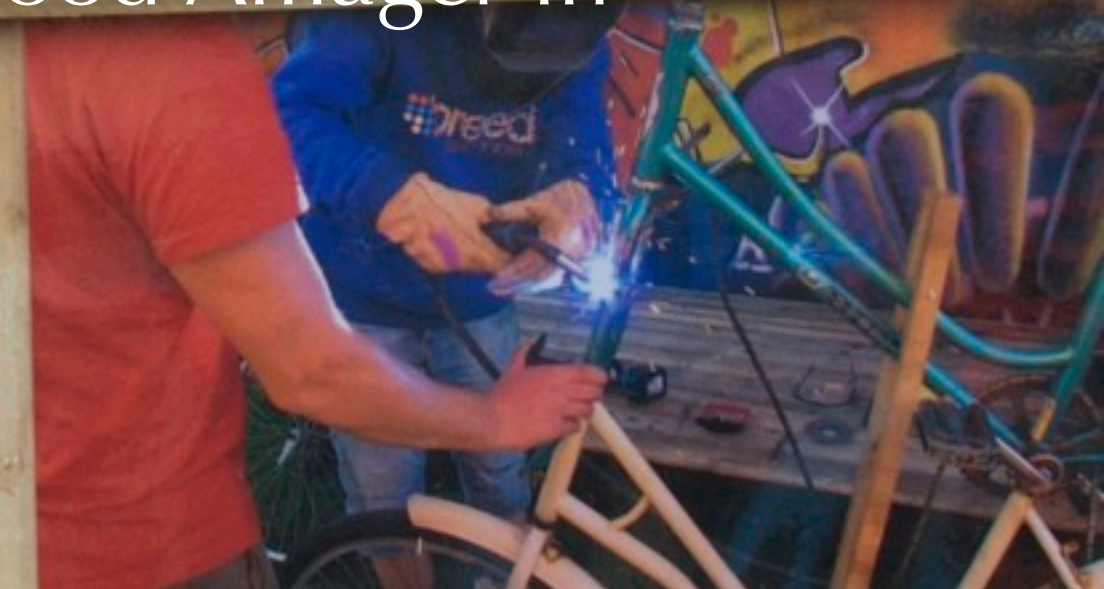


# #3 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM ARENA

DIY design aesthetics at Büro Detour's Dennis Design Center



Dennis Design Center is an **art, design and theatre project** by the handicraft art group Büro Detours. As part of the Metropolis Theatre Biennial in 2011, a festival for performances and art in urban space, they installed a workshop space / design offices at Prags Boulevard in the neighbourhood Amager in Copenhagen





# #3 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM

FURNITURE

TALL BIKE  
ARENA



**DENNIS DESIGN CENTER**

[www.dennisdesigncenter.dk](http://www.dennisdesigncenter.dk)

**PRAGS BOULEVARD**

**8 — 21 AUGUST**

**BUREAU DETOURS**

Detournement of Danish Design, brand and logo



# #3 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM

In opposition to Danish Design, design is a free street event  
Designs can be produced by everybody in the wood shops for instance





# #2 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM



Do your own every day design objects.  
The artist as a teacher and instructor for every day practices and aesthetics.



## #2 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM

Engagement with the stage and its materialities are more important than the formal expression.  
*The creative act.*



# #3 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER

## DIY MATERIALISM

- \* Engagement with and staging of materialities are more important than the formal expression.
- \* The creative act.
- \* “meaning is in the use”
- \* Unfolding of designs and DIY materialism in time... process aesthetics.
- \* Opens up for participatory design and the death of the author/designer/artist.



# Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." South.  
3. Med. To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

**flux** (flŭks), n. [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See **FLUENT**; cf. **FLUSH**, n. (of cards).] 1. Med. a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. b The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, **PURGE** the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — **PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM" !**

2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.  
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.  
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. **REFLUX**.  
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. Rare.

**PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,**  
Promote living art, anti-art, promote **NON ART REALITY** to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. a Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, e.g. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and lime-stone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). b Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as to in-

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

## #3 DENNIS DESIGN CENTER DIY MATERIALISM

*Non-art reality to be grasped by all peoples*





# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN PERFORMANCE/DESIGN



# MATERIAL MEANINGS

## 1. PERFORMING COUNTER MOVEMENTS

- \* Performs in places of consumption (The High Line, Kassel Exhibition platforms)
- \* Performs against and with urban planning and economical growth
- \* Performs within cultural mainstream Dennis Design, Fitness work outs).
- \* Performs through the biomediation of bodies and people: children from the neighbourhood (DDC, visitors at the High Line)



# MATERIAL MEANINGS

## 2 RECOMPOSITION OF URBAN MATERIALITY

- \* The work of art reassembles found materials, objects and fabrics (Hugenotten Haus)
- \* Recomposes socio-cultural relations in the city by inviting people to participate in the work of art (Hugentotten Haus, Dennis Design Center).
- \* *Participation* is the preferred tactics for changing existing urban materiality (reassembling socio-material relations in the city)



# MATERIAL MEANINGS

## 3 SOCIAL REFORMATION

\*Changing social habits through the art work (Half Mythical, Half Legendary..., Dennis Design Center)

\* Not against mass culture but uses mass culture as the out set for transformation (Half Mythical..., Dennis Design Center)

\*Changing planning practices proposing performance art and DIY urbanism



# MATERIAL MEANINGS

## 4 GESAMTKUNSTWERK

- \* Integrated drama
- \* Performance is everywhere: in everyday acts, in the design and in the use (Hugenottenhaus).
- \* No borders between the performer on stage and participant (DDC, Hugenottenhaus)
- \* Art integrates all art forms in one house /Hugenottenhaus.
- \* The performance directly intervenes in every day life and socio-spatial meanings.



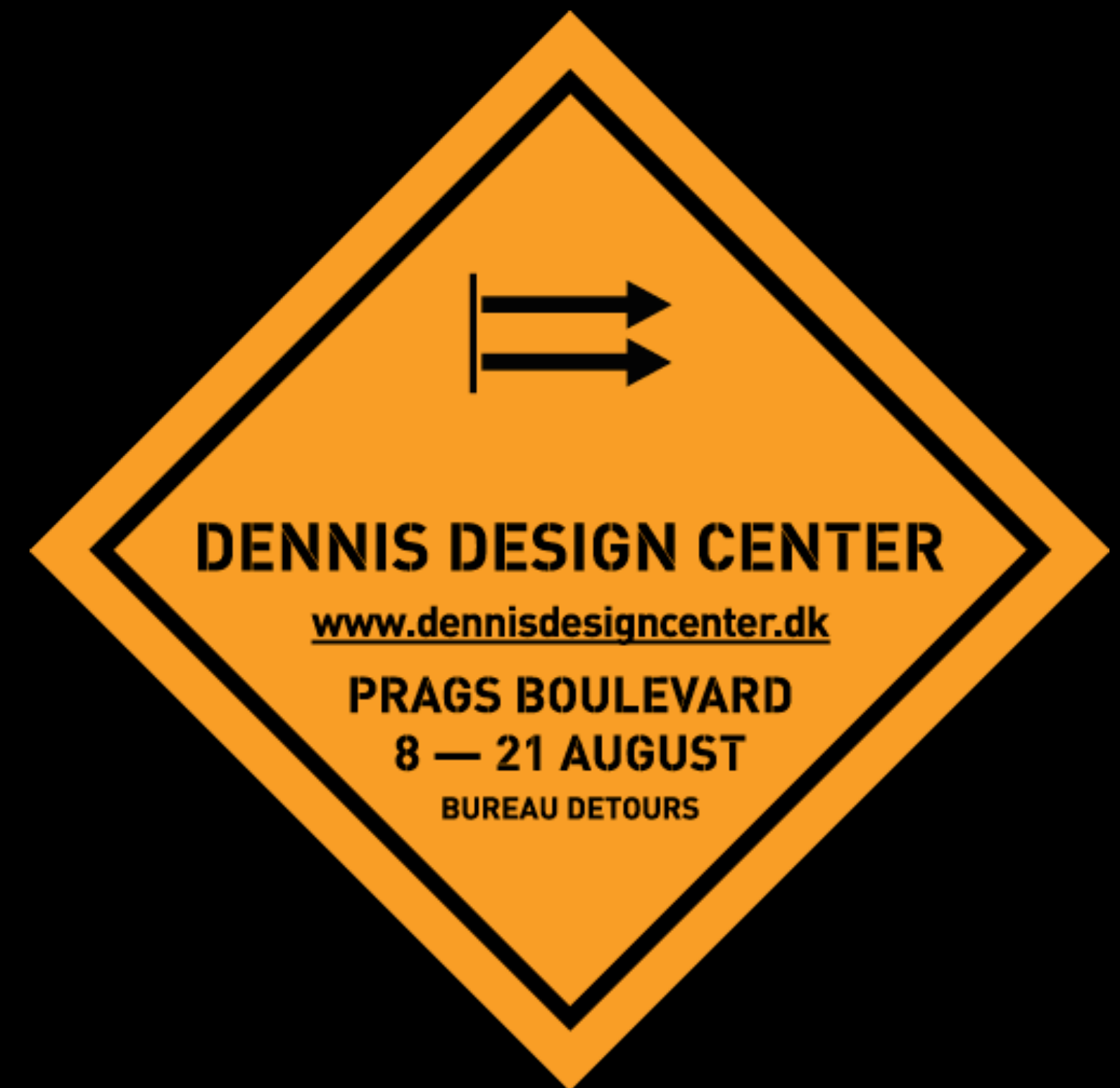
# MATERIAL MEANINGS

## 5 ART AND URBAN LIFE

- \*no distinction between performer, participant and viewer.
- \* upheaval of art ,design and every day acts
- \*all performances take place in real time urban life.
- \*show real time performance, live performance and the creation of situations in urban life.



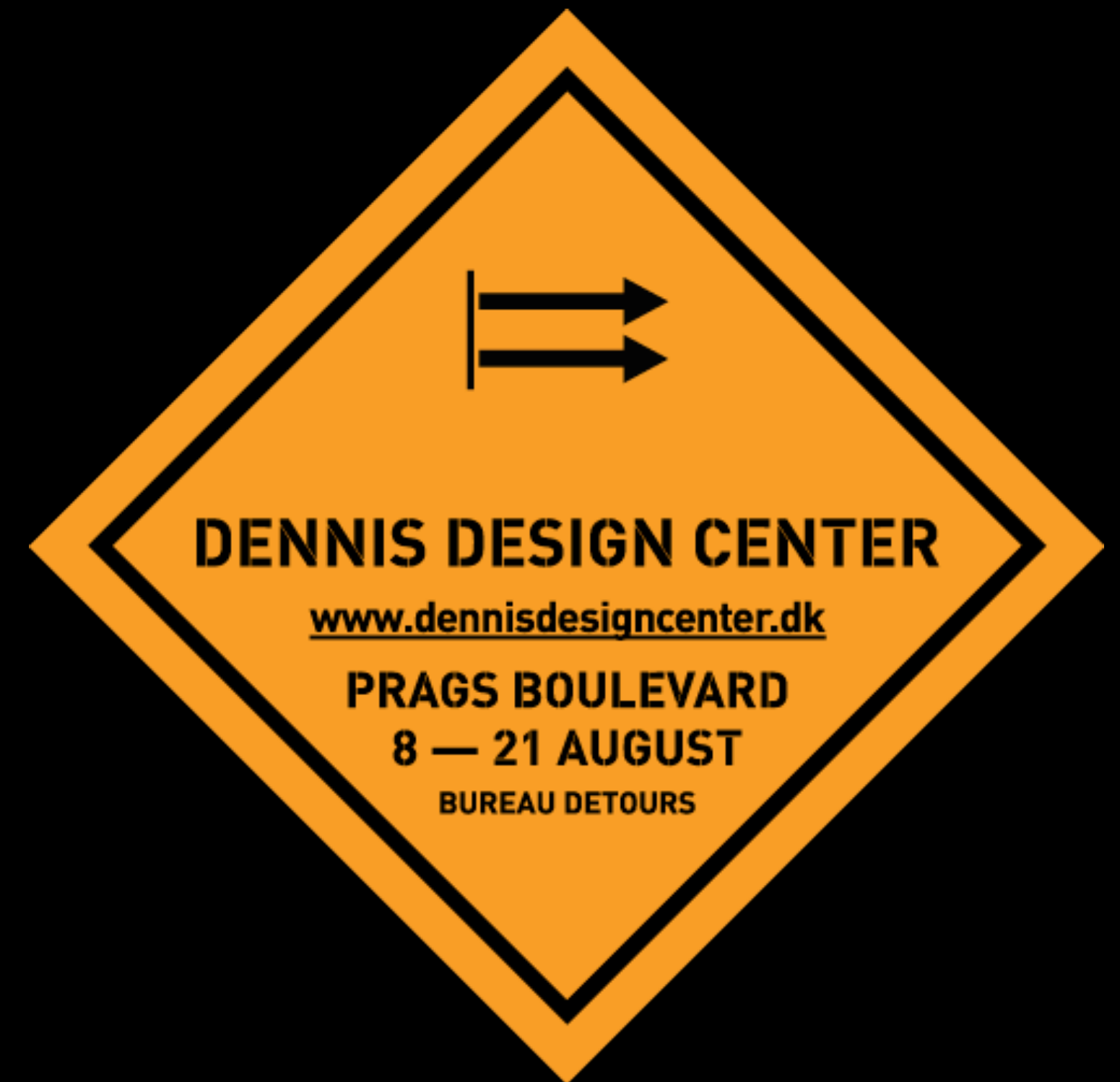
# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN PERFORMANCE/DESIGN



What can urban design learn from performance?



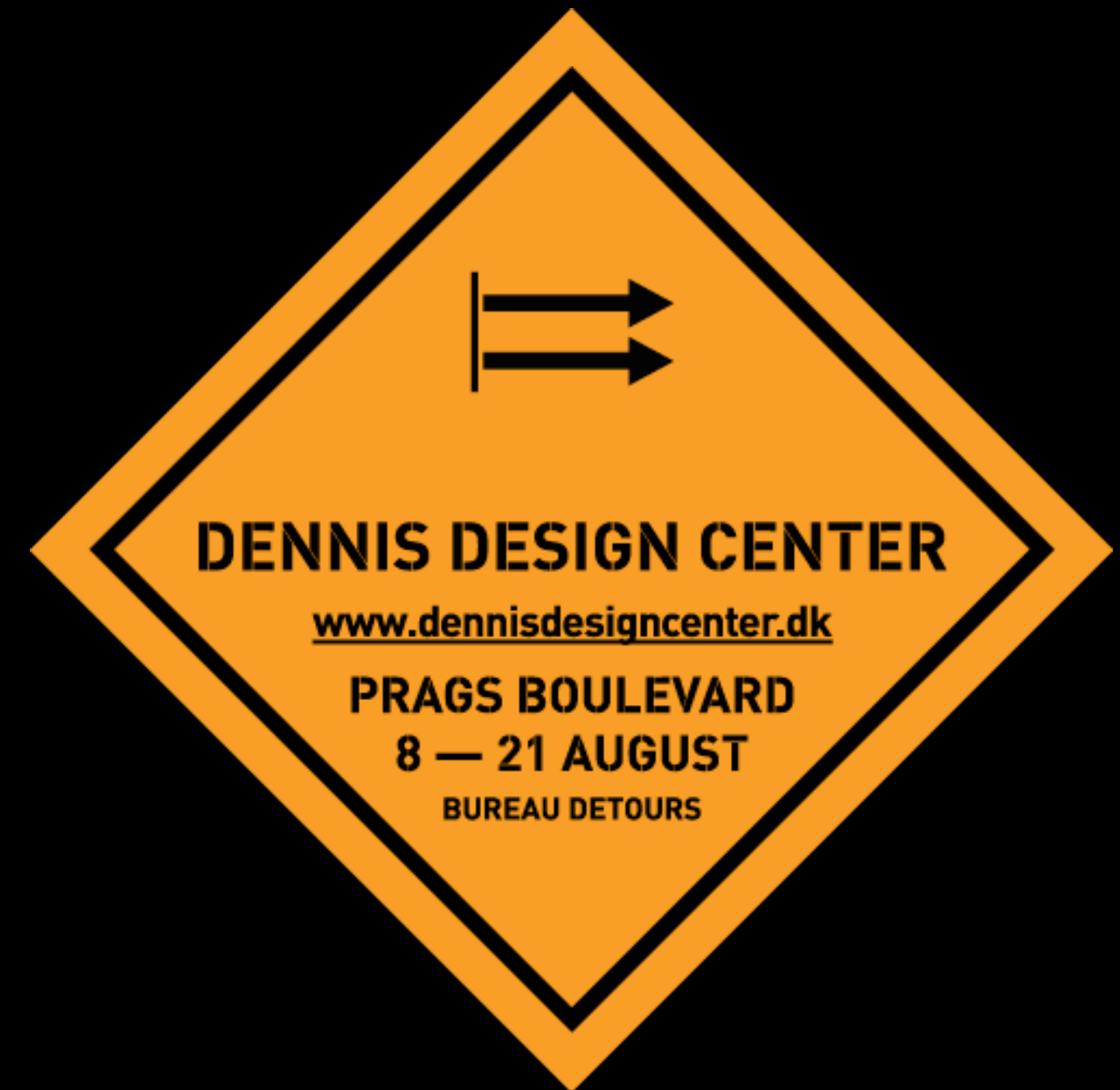
# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN PERFORMANCE/DESIGN



To sum up, the three performances bridge *performance art*, *every day life* and *urban design* in a thought provoking way...



# MATERIAL MEANINGS IN RECENT URBAN PERFORMANCE/DESIGN



Material meanings are here to be understood as *agencies* not directed towards the formal and aesthetical place (site specific performance as mentioned by Miwon Kwon)  
Instead they perform directly into urban matter thus transforming existing material meanings in the city.