

# BLUEPRINT

## CAN ARCHITECTURE BEAT CANCER?

MAGGIE'S CENTRES 10 YEARS ON

**INSIDE:**  
DODGY FOUNDATIONS AT GROUND ZERO  
TERENCE RILEY AT HOME IN MIAMI  
A FLOATING CITY FOR THE THAMES



zone between the memorial and the commercial. It was crucial for those living downtown that they weren't confronted by a graveyard every day, but that there was life next to death, especially on such a large surface. We were living through the trauma and we were part of that community, so it was essential we participated." From then on the institutions were to work together through the whole process to knock the plans into shape.

For two years we worked with the IFC as we were sharing the same building," says de Zegher. "We did feasibility studies and business plans, and we chose the architect, working together to make a fascinating building. I felt that Snaheeta succeeded in making a yin-yang environment. The IFC is an ideological institution, and we are an artistic institution. Instead of excluding each other, the building was designed so we complemented each other. Snaheeta worked beautifully with that. We reflected different opinions without antagonism." For a while it seemed all was going well. But shortly after the announcement both institutions began to draw fire from the media.

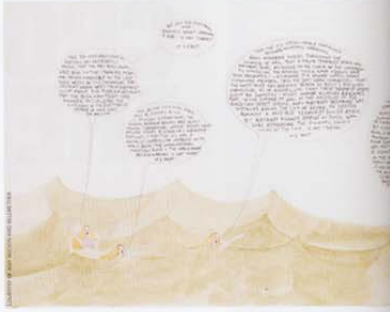
The IFC was always going to be a contentious choice. For an organisation that drew from global history to use a site that had become a symbol of Americanism generated a wave of criticism, most notably the rumours of references being made to the infringement of civil liberties in places such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. At the beginning of the IFC was seen by some as the mission of the US government, now it was seen as overly left wing.

Plucked from relative obscurity and now firmly in the glare of the public eye, the same fate was befalling The Drawing Center. Past exhibitions were being researched, and challenging work by artists such as Amy Wilson, Chabrel Ackermann and, perhaps most famously, Mark Lombardi were being paraded as examples of the kind of exhibitions an outraged public could expect. One-sided editorials and vehemently emotive articles were littered with expressions of disgust from the relatives of the victims.

In June 2005 Pataki's office responded with a call for The Drawing Center to offer "an absolute guarantee" that it would only display exhibitions that weren't "anti-American." But in the past few years of planning had anyone asked The Drawing Center to provide assurances about its exhibition plans? "No," says de Zegher. "We created a business plan, answering hundreds of questions, and gave them everything that they wanted. They got all our publications, everything. We were never asked anything like that directly. We would have left if we'd been asked to comply. They did ask us if we would show major artworks to attract more public interest, but we show everyone, from marginalised artists to major figures. We had Vietnamese reportage drawings in the proposal alongside Van Gogh and Goya."

That was that. As de Zegher puts it, it was "a very exciting project that turned out to be Utopia." In August 2005 The Drawing Center was removed from the project without an official announcement. De Zegher is remarkably diplomatic about the affair, refusing to blame the LMDC, and mainly expressing concern about the building. "Now we're out, we don't know the fate of the building we helped design. I think they want site relics in there – but that's not culture, it's an extension of the memorial." At the time of going to press, there was news of only one organisation that might become the occupant of Snaheeta's building: Wal-Mart. One designer involved in the development commented to Blueprint that: "In America, ironically, shopping is easier to allow on sensitive sites than culture."

The treatment of The Drawing Center raises important questions about the visibility of partnerships between artistic and political bodies. However, if you introduce a third group, one whose presence is required merely by circumstance – in this case, a few of the victims' families – things can go from bad to worse. In 1965, when the US government rubber-stamped the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts, President Lyndon Johnson said: "We fully recognise that no government can



call artistic excellence into existence... nor should any government seek to restrict the freedom of the artist to pursue his own goals in his own way."

Catherine de Zegher, above left, and The Drawing Center, above, were attacked for displaying artworks by Amy Wilson, top, and Chabrel Ackermann, right, which were deemed politically inappropriate for the new WTC Cultural Center, far right.

This statement was conveniently forgotten in 1980 when Ronald Reagan petitioned unsuccessfully to abolish the organisation. It was also ignored in 1989 when state grants were withdrawn and funding decimated due to certain exhibits catching the disapproving eye of a member of the Senate. The work of Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, Annie Sprinkle and others was labelled "openly anti-Christian, anti-American, nihilistic" art and culture or, more plainly, "morally reprehensible trash". Is history repeating itself?

Several other questions arise from these events. Is there a place for cultural institutions in such a politically charged atmosphere? Would any institution



February Studio David Leonard selected by LMDC as guiding design planner

April Governor Pataki invites cultural institutions to submit proposals for a place on site as part of the design plan's cultural element

October Selection process begins

November The Drawing Center exhibits Global Networks by Mark Lombardi

2003

# CROSSING THE LINE

From the rubble of the World Trade Center rose a new conflict – how to rebuild downtown Manhattan and create a memorial to those who died on 11 September 2001. Dennis Maloney reports on how The Drawing Center, a modest Manhattan art gallery, found itself caught in a PC crossfire

When a \$10m grant was awarded to a relatively obscure Manhattan art gallery jealous eyebrows were raised in New York art circles – which are not in the habit of receiving public finance. The Drawing Center, a not-for-profit institution which opened in 1977, was previously housed in a tight-fitting gallery in Wooster Street, SoHo. As its name suggests, it solely exhibits drawings, both historical and contemporary, by artists and architects. On the face of it, the grant from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) in November 2005 seems a generous bonanza. To the cynic, though, it's a payoff for The Drawing Center being an unwitting political football in the unfolding saga of Ground Zero. And to New Yorkers, it is the embarrassing conclusion of just one of an ongoing series of PR disasters surrounding the redevelopment of history's most controversial plot of land. More than four years after the 11 September attacks, the site of the World Trade Center is conspicuously lacking a memorial. It was perhaps fitting in the intervening four years that the should be the case. At the edge of Ground Zero people stood, still dumbfounded by the

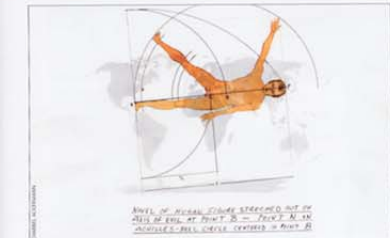
enormity of the site itself, witness to the largest unplanned project the world has ever seen. The debate regarding the style and construction of the main buildings has been well publicised and still continues. In late 2005 Donald Trump called for the total scrapping of the newest set of plans and proposed his own Twin Towers. The Port Authority also said that it would take the mantle for building the memorial – alongside a huge mall. Silverstein Properties still carries the original plans. What is even less clear is what is happening with the rest of the site. The story changes daily, and changing plans make the actual construction linger at the very end of a long queue. One issue that has been at the heart of the redevelopment is that of remembrance. The winning design for the memorial, Reflecting Absence by Michael Arad and Peter Walker, has attracted its fair share of controversy, but it is other aspects of the plan that have led to an argument that begs a greater question, one about the place of art and culture in memorialising. In June 2004 the LMDC, the organisation created by New York state

governor George Pataki to oversee the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan, announced the winners of another competition – to find cultural and artistic institutions that would relocate to the site to help form a living memorial, complementing Reflecting Absence and a planned museum of remembrance. Two of the four selected were the International Freedom Centre, an institution dedicated to "celebrating freedom as a constantly evolving world movement in which America has played a leading role" and The Drawing Center, which aims to "demonstrate the significance and diversity of drawings throughout history". These two would share occupancy of a building designed by Norwegian architect Snaheeta. The Drawing Center's director Catherine de Zegher explains why its involvement was so important: "As most of New York's cultural institutions were based downtown, a lot of us were shocked by what happened on 11 September. As we were all part of the wider community, we felt we had to join in, to do something. I thought the LMDC initiated a bold visionary project – very New York – to have a site of cultural activity as a kind of buffer

June International Freedom Centre (IFC) and The Drawing Center officially selected, alongside the Lower Theatre Foundation and the Signature Theatre Company

September Snaheeta selected by a panel including the LMDC, the IFC and The Drawing Center to design the Cultural Building

2004



critical, in the same place, especially when a memorial has been polarised? Everyone knows the situation at Ground Zero. Silence reigns. Nobody contradicts. But one should hear the voices of the families – the people against. The Drawing Center are very few. There are others who disagree but they don't get a voice. What does inoffensive mean? New York was meant to take risks."

Tom Healy, the president of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, throws responsibility for the scandal back to the artistic community: "If artists are so touchy and the arts matter so much, why didn't more community, philanthropic, and art world leaders rally when a small number of angry individuals egged on by the tabloids were able to derail major plans for the arts at Ground Zero? The fact is not enough people – artists included – believed the Ground Zero cultural plan belonged to them."

If this is true, whatever the subtlety of the artworks exhibited, it is ironic that a site that was meant to say so much about community, shared loss and triumph through adversity looks more likely to become the vision of corporations, politicians and a few – however well-meaning – ill-qualified and disproportionately powerful spokespersons. ■



With no confirmed tenant for the Cultural Building, at the time of going to press Snaheeta was working on various options. Construction of the memorial, Reflecting Absence, is due to begin this spring

June Debra Burlingame of the WTC Memorial Foundation, the sister of the first of American Airlines Flight 11, sends an editorial for the Wall Street Journal heavily criticising plan for the IFC. An article is also printed in the New York Daily News criticising The Drawing Center

June Governor Pataki demands guarantees from all cultural institutions including the consent they intend to display in the WTC site

2005

July The IFC votes the institution would never relocate the USA

July Daily News reports that, due to the controversy, fundraising efforts for WTC have suffered

August LMDC announces it is "fully The Drawing Center will be going up its targeted space"

August 40,000 signatures on the petition on www.talkbacktothe memorial.com against the IFC

September Senator Hillary Clinton and ex-major Governor declares their opposition to the IFC. Governor Pataki visits the IFC from the site

October IFC withdraws from the Cultural Building

November LMDC announces a \$10m grant for The Drawing Center to relocate to a new site