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Making Place

Federico II and CUHK Design Workshop

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Making Place: A Joint Summer Workshop

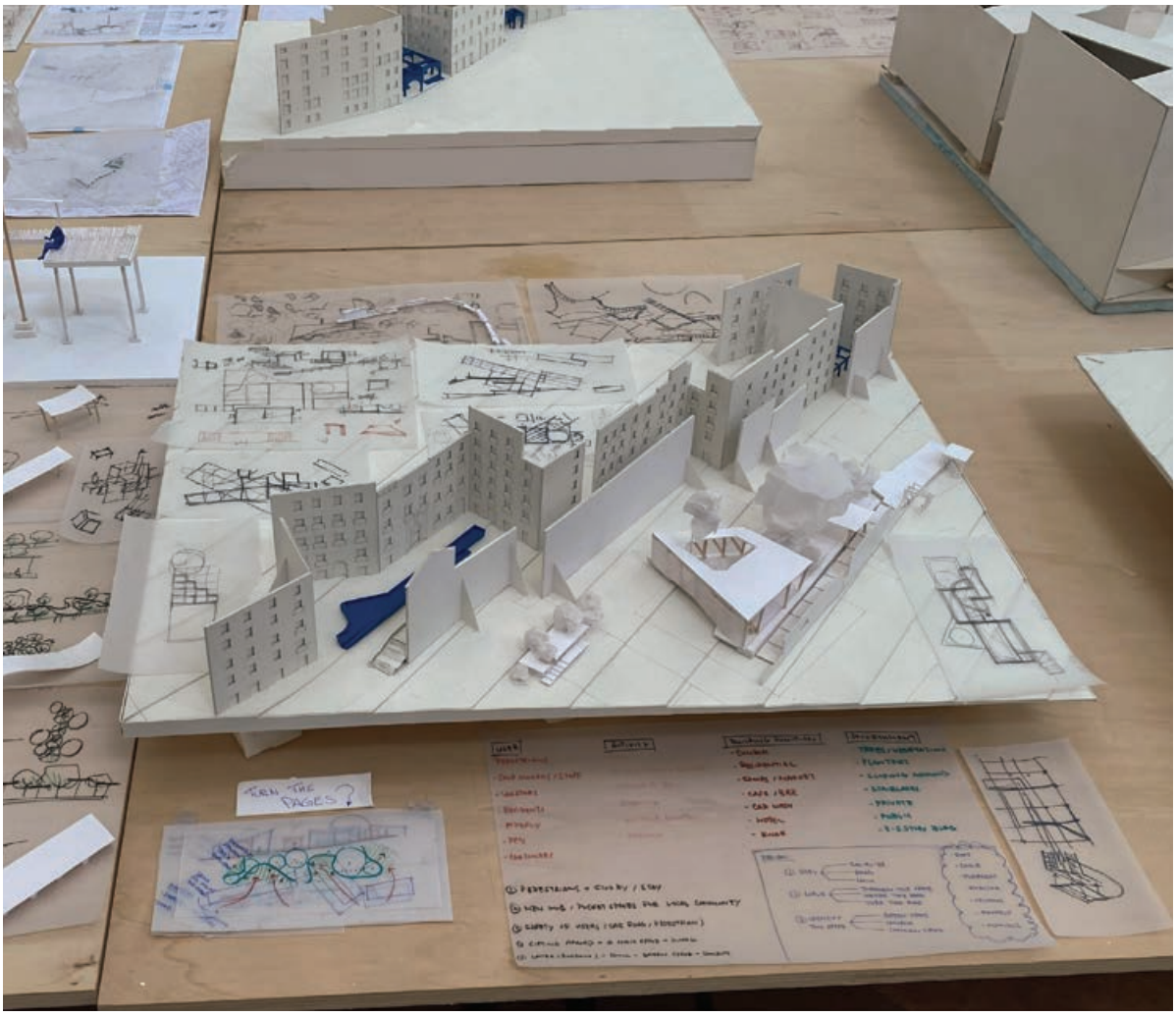
Giovanni Multari, Francesco Rossini

This summer, the University of Naples Federico II hosted the Making Place workshop, a unique initiative that explored how temporary architectural interventions can help reconnect people with their city's public spaces. The workshop aimed to tackle fundamental questions about the potential of public open spaces: How can alternative uses be promoted? How can existing urban environments be repurposed through pilot urban projects? And, most importantly, how can such experimental interventions positively influence the city and its local communities?

Set against the rich historical backdrop of Naples, the workshop found its home in the baroque church of Santi Demetrio e Bonifacio. This remarkable venue, now repurposed by Federico II University for cultural and educational activities, offered an inspiring and thought-provoking setting for the students. Its layered history and architectural significance echoed the workshop's theme of revitalizing spaces while respecting their heritage.

The program brought together students from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and the Department of Architecture (DIARC) at Federico II. Working in small interdisciplinary teams, the students tackled six distinct sites across the city, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities. Over ten intensive days, the workshop followed a structured and immersive process that began with in-depth on-site research. This phase encouraged students to engage directly with the urban fabric: they explored the spaces, interacted with local residents, and conducted a detailed analysis of the social, cultural, and physical dynamics at play. By immersing themselves in the life of these sites, they were able to identify specific needs and aspirations, laying a robust foundation for their design proposals.

The conceptual phase transformed their find-

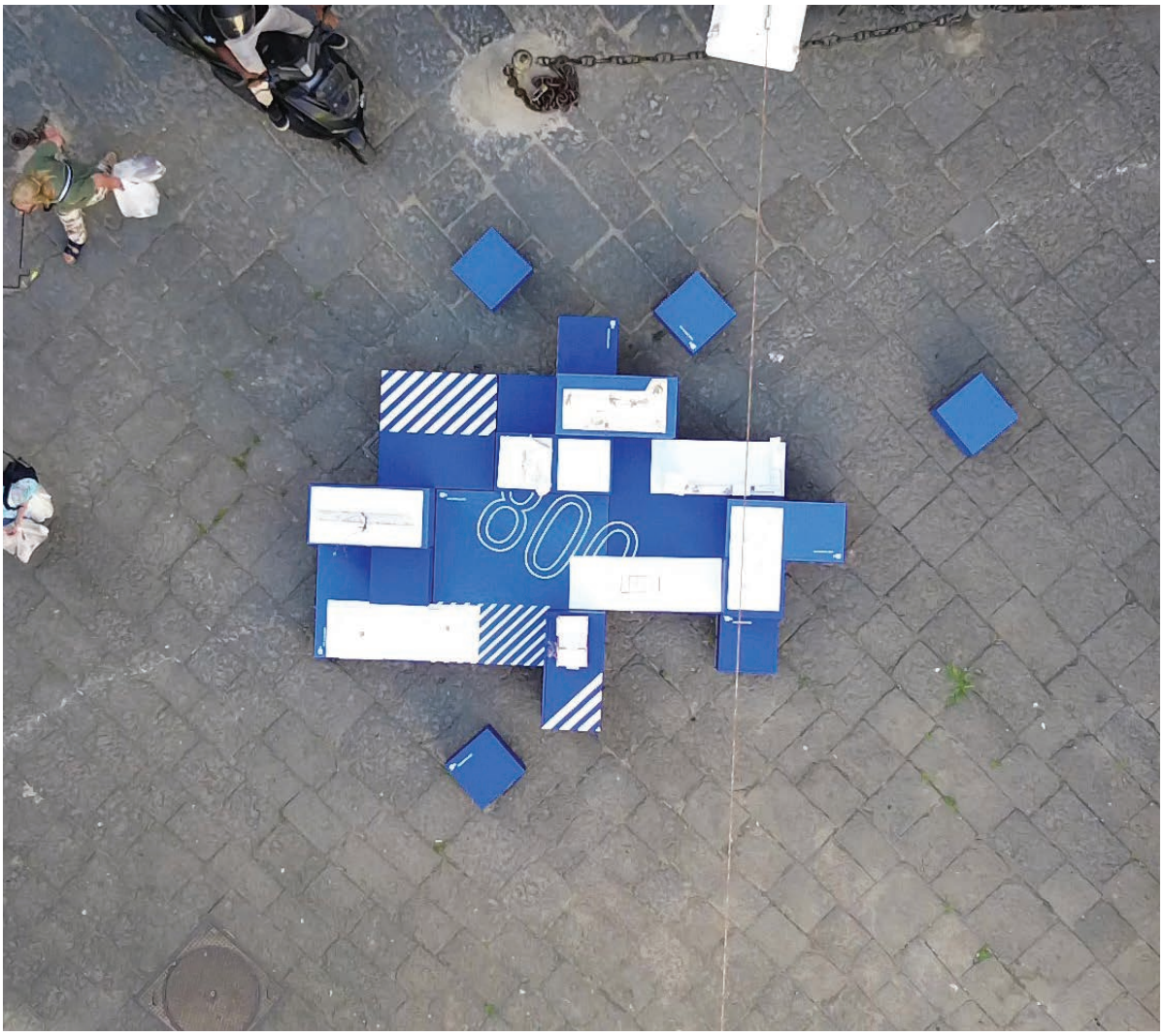


ings into creative design ideas for temporary architectural interventions. Each team worked collaboratively, addressing the physical, social, and cultural dimensions of their sites. They engaged in iterative design processes, using model-making and discussions with peers and instructors to refine their concepts. The workshop treated the city as a living laboratory, challenging students to think critically and holistically about urban contexts. The approach underscored the transformative potential of temporary interventions in activating underutilized spaces and promoting more inclusive and dynamic uses of public areas.

A key component of the workshop was its emphasis on participatory design. Students collaborated with local residents and community organizations, ensuring their proposals were not only innovative but also responsive to the needs and voices of the people who inhabit these spaces. This collaborative approach contrasted with traditional top-down urban planning methods, instead promoting a grassroots ethos that embraced inclusivity and adaptability.

The workshop's framework was firmly rooted in the principles of temporary urbanisms, a methodology that blends bottom-up grassroots initiatives with top-down institutional strategies. It highlighted how creative, participatory projects can serve as powerful tools for addressing urban challenges, particularly during periods of crisis or disruption. These incremental, small-scale interventions showcased the potential for revitalizing neglected spaces while fostering a deeper connection between communities and their urban environment.

The culmination of the workshop was a collection of innovative proposals that demonstrated the catalytic role temporary architectural interventions can play in urban transformation. Each of the six sites — Cloister of Monteoliveto, San-



ta Chiara Complex, Santa Maria la Nova Square and Ecce Homo Square, Banchi Nuovi Square and Monticelli Square, Cloister of Salvatore, and Maria Giuseppina Castellano Lanzara Square — became a platform for exploring creative solutions. The results are documented in the following pages, offering a detailed look at how academic research, design, and action-oriented initiatives can converge to reimagine urban spaces.

In addition to their design work, students actively participated in building an exhibition to present their models and drawings from the workshop. The exhibition design, conceived as a modular system, allowed for flexible assembly and the creation of multiple spatial configurations. This hands-on process involved cutting, painting, and assembling over 200 pieces of plywood.

Through this effort, students bridged the gap between conceptual ideas and tangible construction, gaining valuable insight into the complexities of translating theoretical designs into physical realities.

Ultimately, the Making Place workshop provided participants with an immersive and transformative learning experience. By engaging deeply with the city's social and architectural fabric, students explored how temporary architectural interventions can shape more inclusive, adaptable, and vibrant urban environments.

It was not merely an academic exercise but a reflection of architecture's potential to respond to and enhance the complexities of contemporary cities.