

Report for the 2009 Travel Bursary for CHEAD in memory of Dave Keskey.

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The travel bursary I was awarded in the summer of 2009 has enabled my practical work in Fine Art to expand in many different directions. When writing my proposal for the bursary I explained that my work was largely sculpturally based but that photography played an important part in getting inspiration for, planning, and completing my sculptures. Influences from Architects such as Daniel Libeskind and Frank Gehry gave me the idea to use the bursary to travel to Berlin. Architecture has been a key theme to my work throughout the years at university and I believe the best way to research and explore an Architects work is to visit the buildings themselves.

The main place of interest for me was Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum. I decided I would take a week off work in August and use the money to fly to Berlin; I would also need to pay for accommodation, gallery costs and extra travel and living costs once in Berlin. A friend from the Fine Art course, Laura Desai, decided to pay for herself to come with me as well, it was useful being with someone who had been to Berlin before. The Libeskind building is one I have wanted to visit for a long time and after researching other places to visit in Berlin I came across work by two more influential Architects, Norman Foster and Frank Gehry.

The Libeskind building was amazing, it looked like it could have been a giant sculpture but it had a very important architectural purpose as well. I managed to take some really interesting photographs of different structural compositions. I decided to take a film camera as well as a digital SLR. I really enjoyed how the architect had incorporated the older more classical building next to it. In a way it reminded me of what I had already seen travelling into Berlin, a lot of old buildings next to a lot of new ones, but how Libeskind had connected the two here was very clever. There was no entrance from the outside to the main building; you had to go into the old building and through a tunnel underground to get to the main part of the museum. The building was making reference to a completely enclosed chamber. Libeskind had also designed the courtyard in the older building which consisted of a glass roof and wall making a very light and airy place to relax in and also included solid, sharp, overlapping lines consistent with his artistic style. In a way it was like an opposite to the main building which was a large, solid, jagged, metallic structure with sharp cuts taken out of it where the light comes through. The different levels and lack of windows made walking round pretty disorientating. I think this really worked, you didn't know when, how or where you were going to get out. I had always known the Jewish museum was going to be an interesting and inspiring building from photographs and drawings I had seen but what I hadn't expected was how much the actual structure of the building was vital to the overall experience. The different levels, corridors, use of shape and space, voids, lighting and material all relates back to the history of Jewish people in Germany. In this way I feel that when planning the construction Libeskind must have been thinking much like an artist as well as an architect.

Another structure that interested me while in Berlin was the roof of Potsdamer Platz. It is visually interesting and I enjoyed the experience of being partly inside and

outside at the same time. In this way it reminded me of the Libeskind courtyard and also of Foster's roof of the British Museum which I have taken inspiration from previously in my work. Visiting the Reichstag was also another amazing experience as we were able to walk around Foster's dome on the roof of the building. The sense of scale and impact of material can't be fully explored and appreciated without first hand experience. I was also able to see but not look round some of Gehry's interior architecture. As well as art in the art galleries we looked round I noticed there was a lot of public sculpture around the city. Much of the art was interactive with the public, for example, the holocaust memorial art which consisted of a labyrinth of grid like concrete blocks varying in size on an uneven floor.

I had a small amount of money left over after returning from Berlin, however, not enough to travel to Bilbao as I had previously thought about. I did however use it to travel to London for a couple of days where I was able to see the latest pavilion project at the Serpentine Gallery, The London Metropolitan University Libeskind building, Eva Rothschild's work in the Tate Britain and Dan Graham's permanent architectural project at the Hayward Gallery.

Previously I have written essays on the relationship between art and architecture and Berlin is a city which shows clear links between the two subjects and how they can strongly overlap. However, it is also a city which has opened my mind more to the subject of the importance of art to the general public. I was interested in knowing more about what can be classed as Public Art. It was an interesting experience to come into contact with pieces of the Berlin wall at the East Side Gallery and generally scattered around the city. There are constant references and reminders of the city's past through art. The holocaust memorial sculpture is minimal and conceptual, very far from traditional memorials of soldiers of heroic characters. All these subjects I was thinking about at the time just before entering my final year at university lead me to write my dissertation on the subject of public sculpture. Seeing the Reichstag helped me to comprehend the impact of Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag*, an artist whose work interested me enough to be one of the main focuses in my dissertation.

The experience of travelling independently as a whole was a very new experience for me. It was extremely exciting and felt good to be travelling, experiencing new things and learning and working at the same time. I would really like to return to Berlin, but it has also made me want to start travelling to new places while at the same time including my own art. The opportunity has caused me to start looking into artist residencies abroad and in this country as a possible next step after graduating.

I got a lot of images over the week I was in Berlin and my head was buzzing with ideas of being more ambitious with my practical work. I have made large sculptures before but in comparison to some of the work I had seen they seemed very small. One of the things to come out of the whole experience which I never thought could have happened was mine and Laura's shared interests causing us to want to combine our ideas into new joint work. In Berlin we were constantly talking about the work we were seeing and our own ideas and found that we had many links and each others ideas motivated us. It is a risky decision to make to decide to collaborate in the final year of our degrees, however, we are confident that we have the motivation to make it work. A lot of our ideas would be very hard to carry out without two people and the

collaboration came about so naturally that we believe now is the right time to be working together.

The aspects that we wanted our new work to include as a result of the work we had seen were, spatial, large scale sculptures/installations, interactivity, perception altering, site specific and site responsive.

The majority of the first term back at University for Laura and I was focused on completing research for and writing our separate dissertations. However we managed to complete some exciting practical work as well. We began by thinking about materials that we could build with and we have kept to a theme involving industrial, wooden pallets. Pallets are a good material to build with, they can be fixed together, walked on, stacked and they can be relatively cheap and easy to acquire. Their hollow and semi-transparent nature is ideal for us as the viewer is able to look through and we are able to project through and build up these voids. We have explored using other materials to add to the interactivity of installation such as mirrored glass and perforated metal. Using projections and video cameras in a surveillance and live view style also brings the viewer into the art. The way that the installation is lighted is also very important to us. We have already experimented in a controlled lighting studio how light can affect the feel of the installation. We have also made work in our installation room and taken part in an exhibition in the corridor. All of these ideas are influenced by our experience of Berlin and the artists we have researched further.

We have also found that image making using photography have become another vital theme to our work which is linked to and running alongside the 3 dimensional structures. The sculptures are driven by construction and deconstruction and I feel that also comes across in our images. Looking forward to the end of the year, we imagine our degree show to involve large scale sculpture/installation as well as a large body of images which will be just as important.

I have been very fortunate to have been given the opportunity that CHEAD has made possible. I strongly believe that the travelling experience made possible with the bursary was what I needed to drive my work in a new, more confident direction. I am now a strong believer in making work from experiences and would recommend travelling to anyone as a way of inspiring artistic creativity. I hope that my experience has fulfilled the expectations and requirements of the project.