

# GUNPOWDER PARK / ROBERT WILSONPROJECT STAGE A WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

SERGE VON ARX



Gunpowder Park The Field Station Sewardstone Road Waltham Abbey Essex EN9 3GP UK

## PROPOSAL FOR GUNPOWDER PARK

Proposal for a future involvement of **Serge von Arx**, dipl .Arch.ETH / SIA, in the Gunpowder Park project / development by Robert Wilson

I could imagine my involvement in Gunpowder Park in terms of Robert Wilson's artistic and curatorial park development in 3 different functions as described below. The third represents, apart of a suggestion for a singular architectural project, a long term involvement as a consultant in Gunpowder Park's suburban planning development towards a socially and ecologically sustainable future.

### **1. Involvement of Serge von Arx as Robert Wilson's artistic collaborator**

My close collaboration with Robert Wilson over the last 8 years in more than 20 projects allows me to operate as his trusted design collaborator in the sense of an artistic supervisor for the entire project involving different artists, as Mr. Wilson suggested himself. That includes the artistic coordination of entirety of all different artistic projects in Gunpowder Park in close cooperation with Robert Wilson. The spatial and functional linking of the individual artistic projects, be they installations, landscape architecture projects, performances or exhibitions, would be one of the main focuses in order to guarantee the cohesion of Gunpowder Park as a whole. This comprises the design of the consequently remaining areas as the linking elements between the individual projects in the role as Robert Wilson's design collaborator.

### **2. Involvement of Serge von Arx in terms of the engagement as a teacher at the Norwegian Theatre Academy in Fredrikstad**

My engagement as a guest teacher in the Academy for Scenekunst in Fredrikstad in the Southeast of Norway and a still pending commitment as the school's head of the scenography department as of January 2007 for a four year term would allow me to organize theatre and other performance productions with international students at Gunpowder Park as one of the artistic events. I would like the class of the bachelor degree students to develop within the Norwegian Theatre Academy a production, either as an independent guest performance or alternatively in closer relationship with Gunpowder Park as a site specific project.

The Akademi for Scenekunst (Norwegian Theatre Academy) is an undergraduate education in theatre under the auspices of the University College of Ostfold in Fredrikstad in Norway. The school focuses on a visual approach to the arts, especially performing arts. International performing artists and scenographers who wish to explore the interaction between visual art and theatre, between theatre and society, and between theory and practice enrol in the school. It emphasizes collaboration between the two degree programs: scenography and acting.

### **3. Individual project by Serge von Arx**

In third place I would also like to express my strong interest in doing an architectural installation on the Gunpowder Site which reacts to existing surrounding myself. I imagine a precise spatial statement which reveals its impact only to carefully observing visitors. Taking up instruments from the traditional English Garden Architecture and bringing them into a contemporary correlation could be the focus of this project. By working with means of artificially created points

of reference spanning a far reaching network a cohesion of the entire park can be evoked. At the same time this installation should allow visitors to indulge into yet another layer (sic!) of experiencing the park.

With my background in architecture comprising town-planning at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich I offer to be involved in the large scale future planning of Gunpowder Park / Lee Valley. Two essays being part of my diploma project, one on urban identities and the other on the use of the grid as one of the main tools in town-planning throughout history may highlight my focal point on the urban and suburban development of contemporary cities. The combination of this architectural background with my artistic experience, be it together with Robert Wilson or on own projects, is exceptional and permits me to reflect collective issues of town-planning, architecture and art from a unique point of view.

The common means of zoning as still today's main instrument for town planning – unabated for over 70 years, still based on principles stated during the CIAM congress in Athens – may be put into question. Not by merely substituting them but by starting from their very basic principles, the separation of the different functions in a town in order to create a sustainable and controllable urban entity, and adapting them to today's constraints. Though dealing with the suburban conditions of contemporary cities has slipped into the interest of architects and town-planners for several decennia, most of those studies remained merely analytical or observational. Developing tools on how to address the suburban sprawl and its social consequences still is needed.

By establishing a recreational “zone” which is not conceived as a physical area with boundaries but more constituted as strings linking the different dissolved patches a linked suburban unity can be created. Those suburban strings should be of a recreational function in the small scale, bringing into dialogue existing communities and hence creating more extensive ones, should be the objective on the large scale. No mean is more appropriate to achieve the mentioned above than the arts. People are congregating for theatre performances, concerts, exhibitions, readings, etc. The artistic urban event is a highly concentrated dialogue of social entities. The artistic projects link the different communities and help to shape an identity of yet separated neighbourhoods.

Based on the naturally evolved path of River Lee an artificial landscape can be created. The decomposed suburban settlements can be brought into a unity, linked together with artificial spatial creations being artistic expressions within the natural surrounding. An arrangement on a regular structure evokes a space which spans further than its physical constituents manifest. All of Lee Valley could be covered by a network which reveals its visibility only at specific points of artistic events while knitting together a large area.

Please understand the mentioned above as a rough collection of thoughts on the topic. I would be honoured and delighted to do a research in depth and to develop possible means of addressing the actual situation.

Serge von Arx, Oslo, June 16th, 2006