



what might happen when we build together?

short document of TEMP Winter Arts Emporium, a three-day workshop on improvised shelter building in disaster times

July 19-21 2016
Corban Estate Arts Centre

TEMP / CEAC / xin cheng & chris berthelsen

compiled by chris berthelsen and xin cheng

more: small-workshop.info/temp/wae2016

“Thank you for a wild three days!

I learnt heaps - so many ways of joining/disassembling of things, making of corners, democracy, entropy, chaos and joy!

The photos helped me remember the many small moments of sharing and pleasure - one could have made a whole documentary about it...

And it's so great that some of the junk from my garage are now being used in other homes...”

xin cheng

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- “what might happen when we build together?”
- pamphlets on improvising shelter
- essay *Art-Based Approach for Developing Disaster Impvisation Capabilities*: Notes from a research trip to Japan and a call for interested parties

There might come a time when you have the power to build your own shelters - places to hang out, sleep and play - from the things around you.



Your buildings would be a kindness to the world and they would be generous to you, too.



Simply having money wouldn't guarantee that you could get what you want. Water and food would have to be appreciated. The best playthings would be made by you and your friends.



In time you would be able to work out how to live and do ~~the~~ everything you want to do, with the people that happen to live nearby.

3

This life would be different from your normal life at the moment.

But your powers of self-reliance and cooperation would mean that you would enjoy your everyday challenges, and seek to solve dangerous problems.

You would laugh with your neighbours and dance in storms.



4

Actually, you have these powers right now.





what might happen when we build together?



people will gather useful stuff from their natural environment.





you might find starting points by hanging off existing infrastructure.



or by playing with methods you already know.





you could discover various gentle ways to create privacy and cosiness.



and you will notice that creating decoration makes you feel good.





and is often more important than being strong.



you might find that 'covering' can produce surprising shapes from strong foundations.





super-strong constructions will make you feel satisfied and safe.



and spending time to take them apart will teach you about how to build for easy re-use.





tiny and easy-to-break constructions will be places of rest and concentration.



the things you make might not be strong but they will often be made together, with care and attention.





you may make many plans and later find out how other people feel about them.



people will discover their own ways when they are asked to implement your plans.





you may discover pleasurable and useful things by playing with junk.



often these might be things you can't see. like sounds, textures, and weird stories.





you may have discussions, many of which will be casual.



a lot of the time you will concentrate on details.





simple plans may be executed.



and other people will probably play with stuff that you make.





things will often be a total mess.
sometimes you will notice. you might need
to reassure adults that everything is OK.



you will spend time in cosy environments.





people will often work together. sometimes they will not know each other. given enough time it will work out OK.





you will find new ways of doing things.





some things will feel completed.



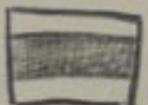
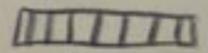
and other stuff will be constantly collected and reused.



Hut
Building

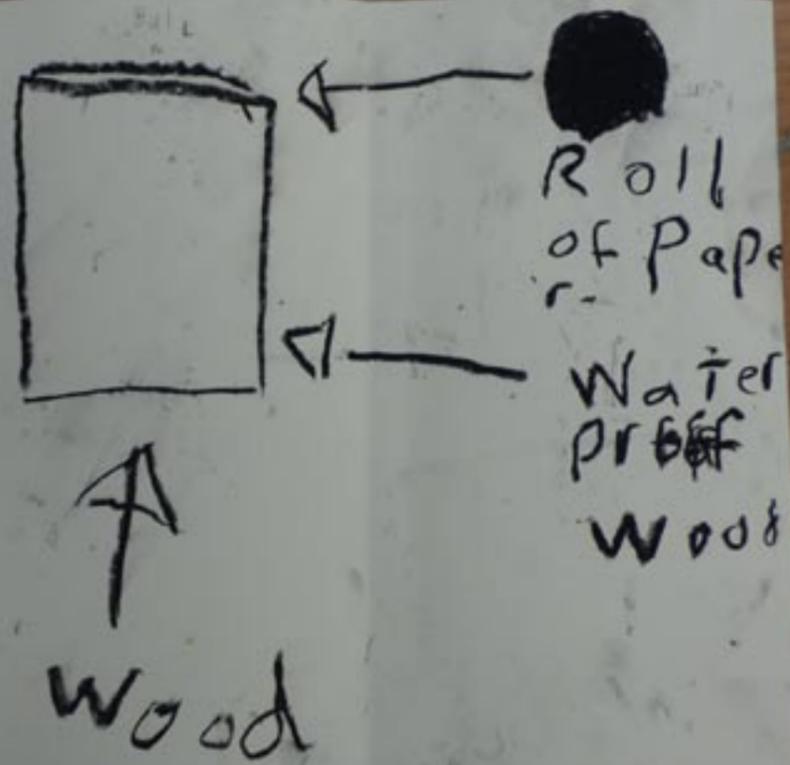


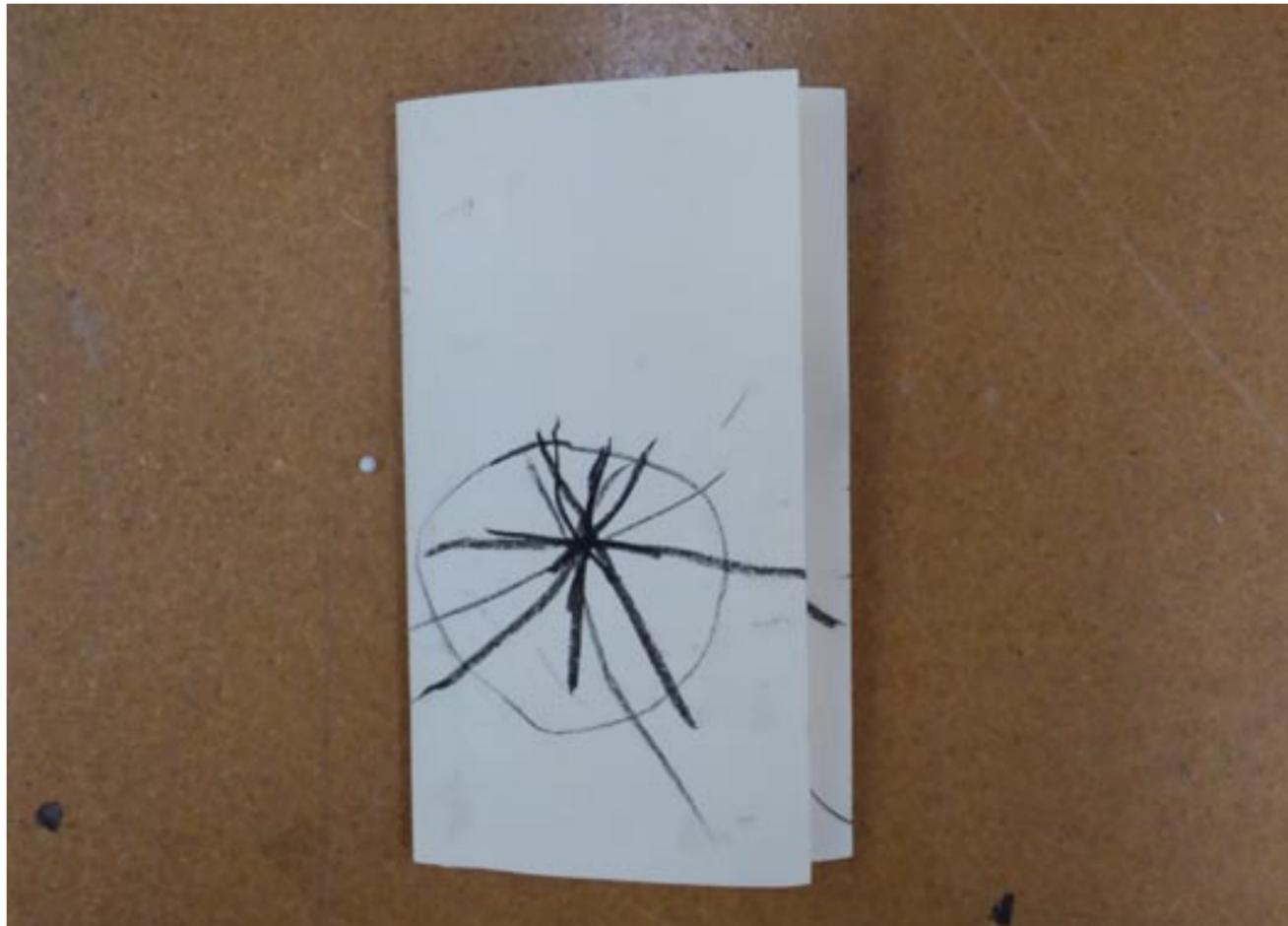
short pamphlets on improvising shelter.

Boxes  Wood  Sticks Tables 	Bottles  Paint Brushes sleeping bags Pillows 	It was hard to build my hut becau- se it cept Brack Ing. smash 
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How^w to Build a
shelter

HOW
to build
a shelter





By Innois
How
to build
a shelter



Hut
Building
by Aanya



1. find things 2. put it together 3. get inside



I made a
hut out of
boxes and
Fabric
and wood

- * Fabric
- * Boxes
- * Wood
- * String
- * Sticks



~~hut~~
Hut
Building
big
by AKIV



Hut
Building
by Ada



BEHAVE

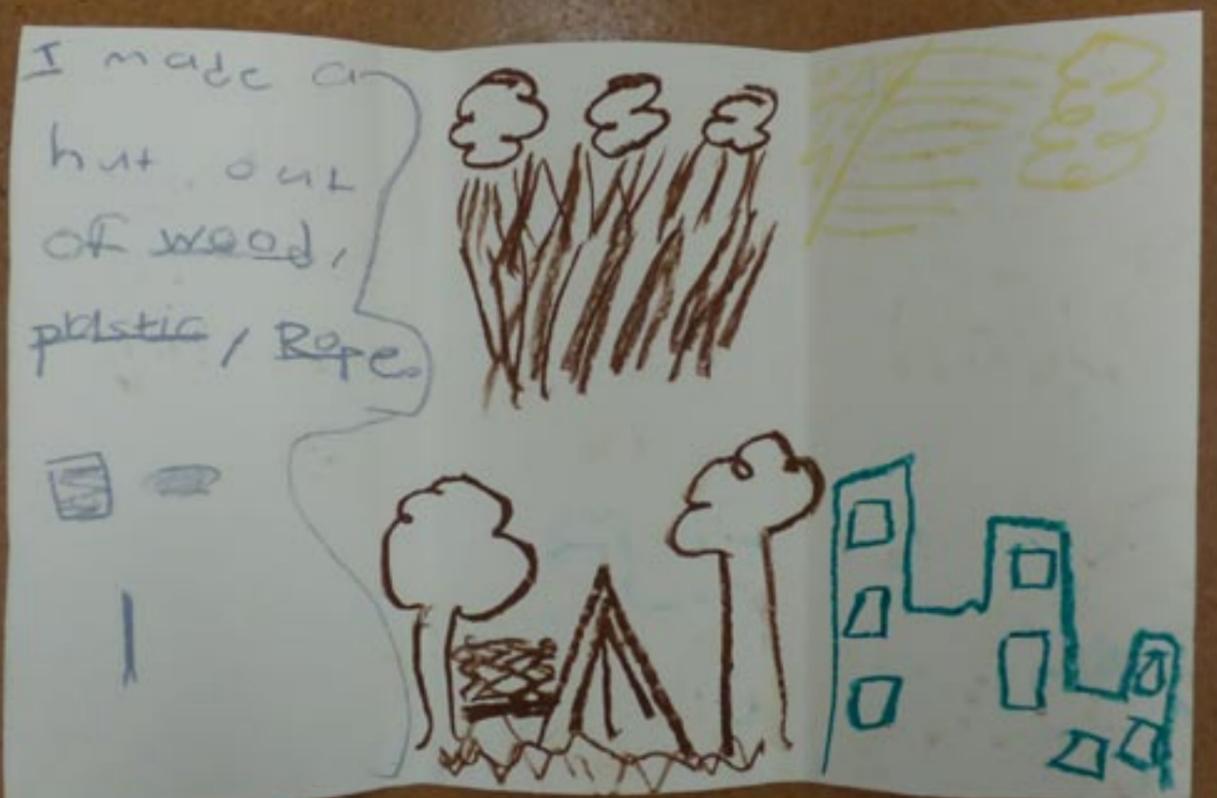
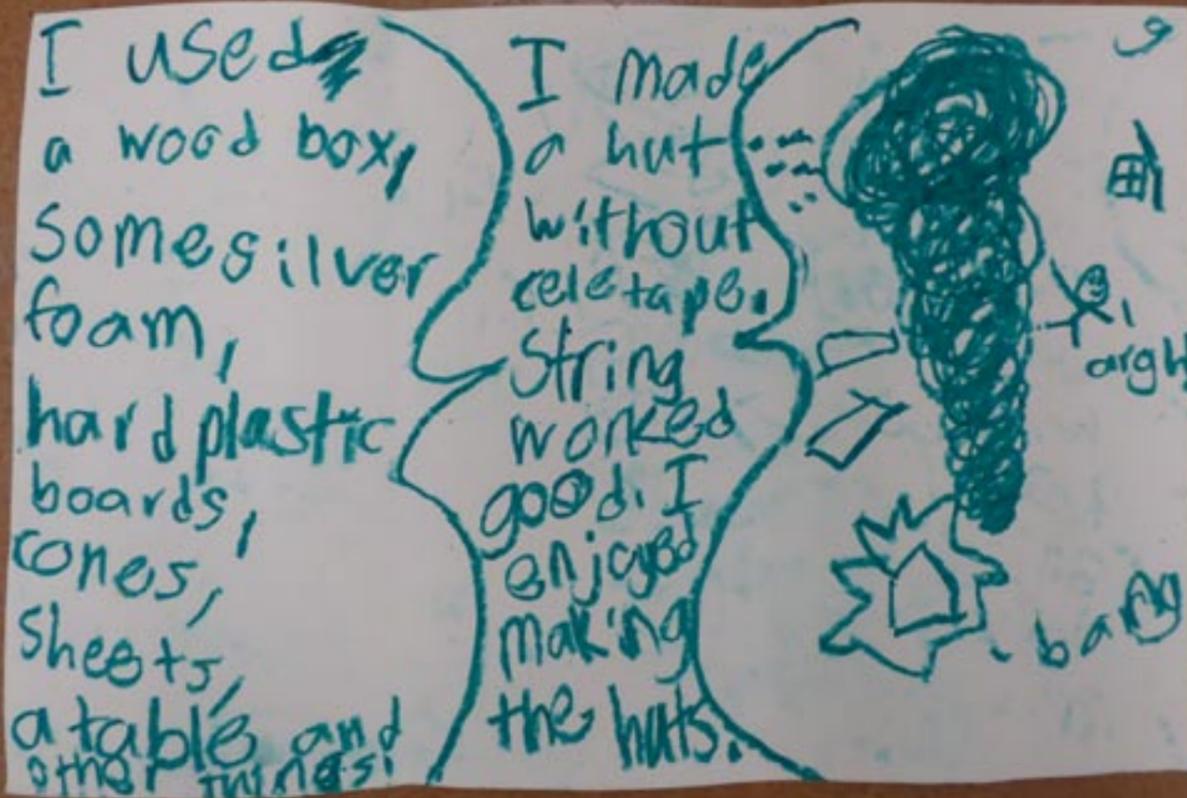
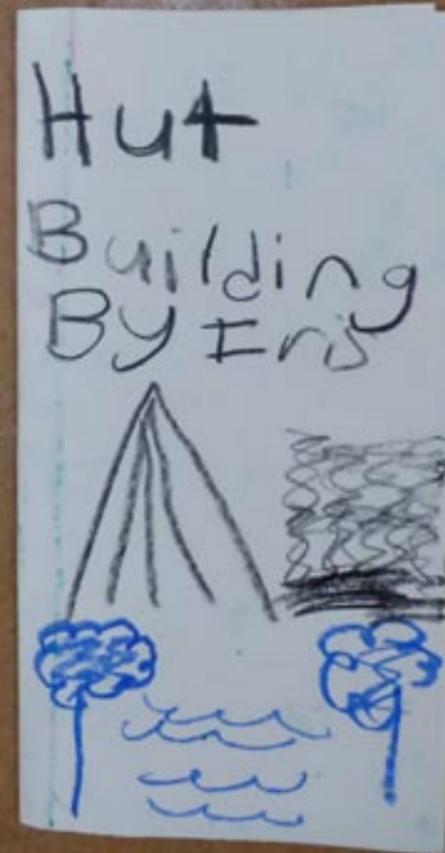
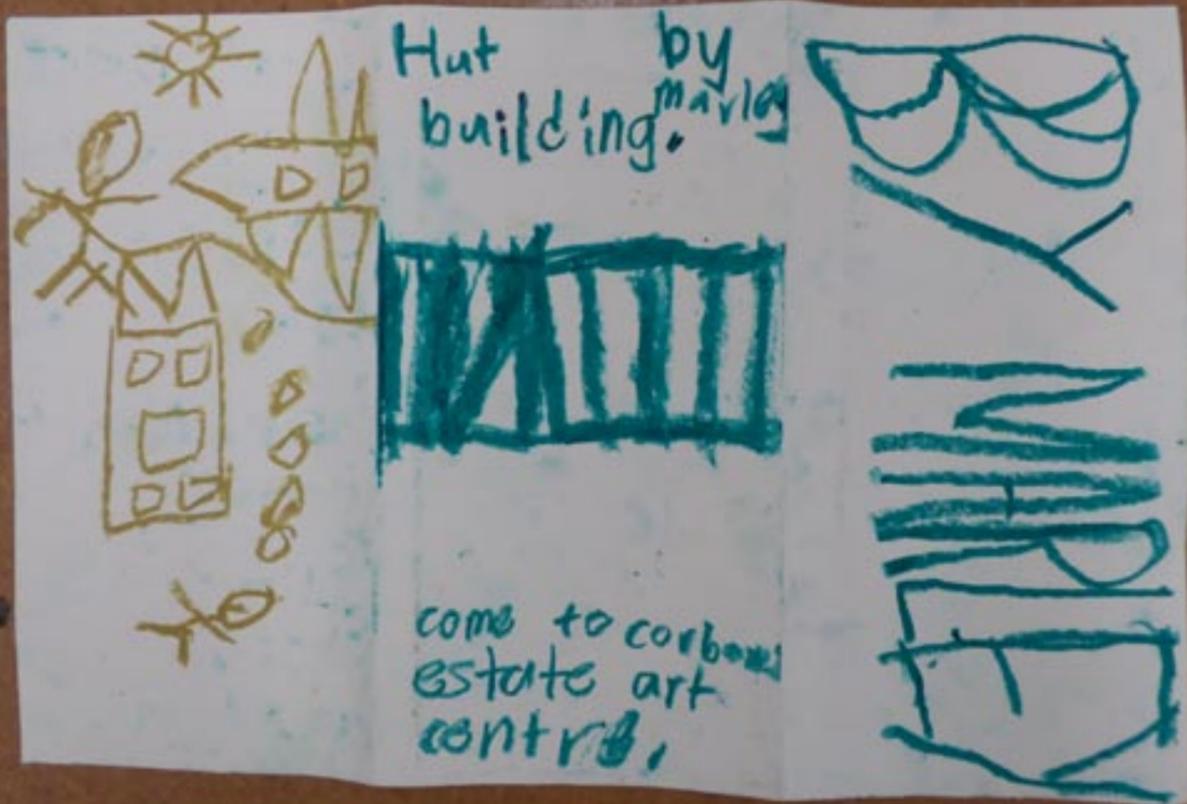


I made a hut
out of cardboard
and fabric, brown
netting, boxes.

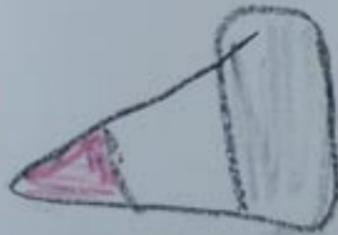
- * Cardboard
- * Fabric
- * plastic
- * String
- * wood
- * boxes



I've enjoyed
making
new
friends
finding
ways to
build a
hut without
glue.

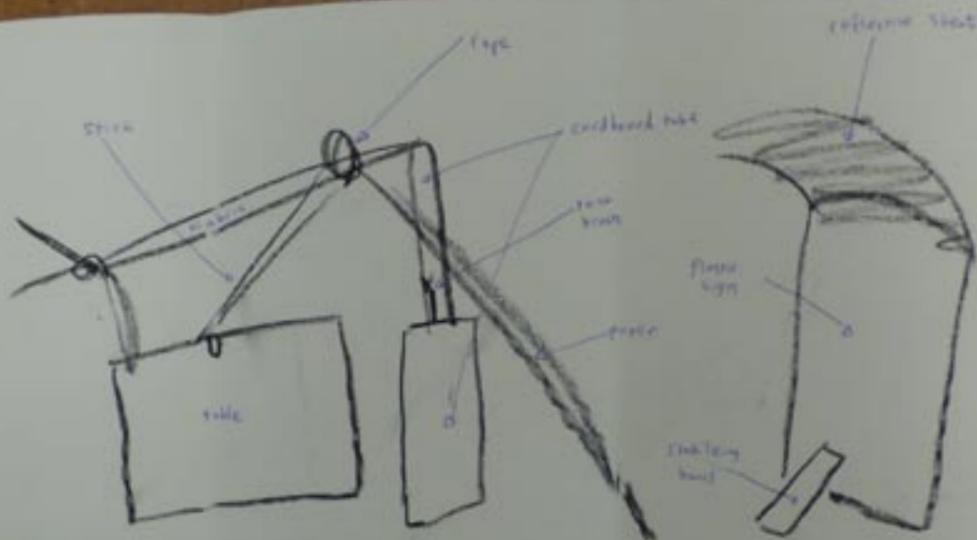


shelter
help
sheet



(with a fire)

huts survive
disasters



- Recommended materials
- fabric or canvas
 - plastic tarp or tent
 - ropes or string
 - bags or containers

- Decorative stuff
- paint
 - markers
 - markers
 - markers

- Final Projects
- design
 - build
 - test
 - present

to survive disaster
in your hut
your shelter roofing
usually should be
something water
proof

by NICOL

Materials: Fabric, Tables,
Crates, Rope/Strings,
Thick wood, plastic
Signs Frustration. Hut
Kept falling apart felt
Good about finishing out
tip type

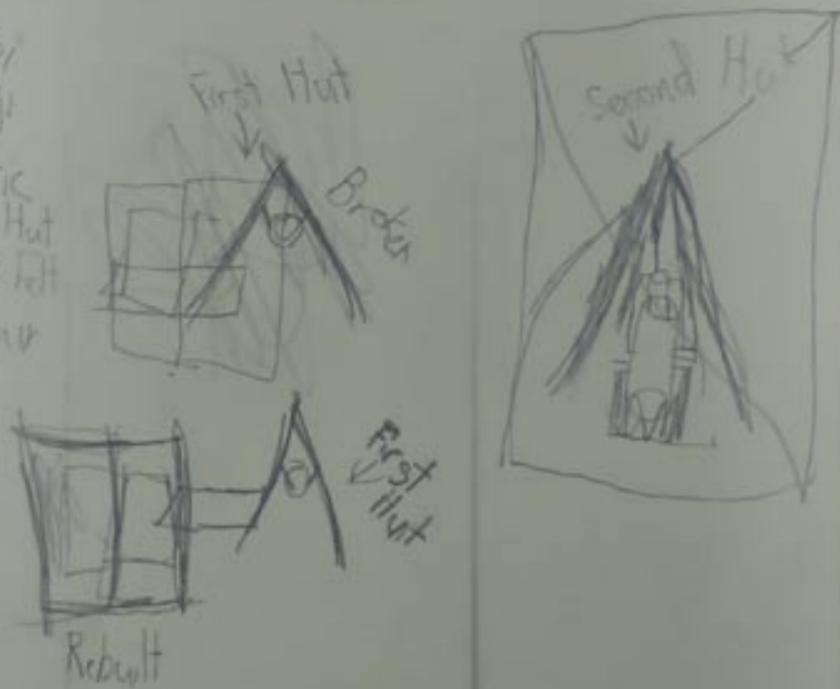
By Conrad



HOW TO
BUILD
A SHELTER
OUT OF
JUNK

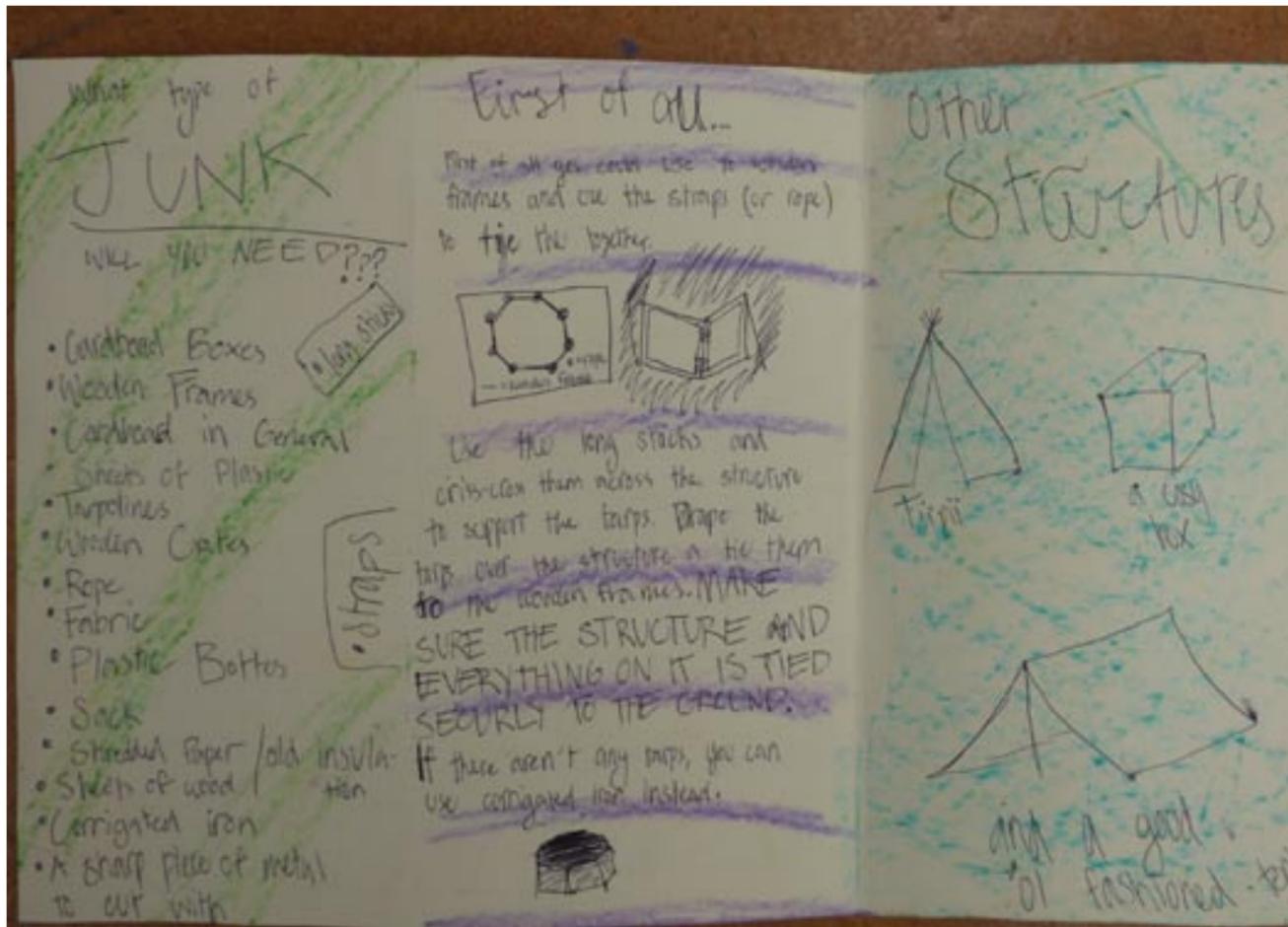
BY AVA

Materials: Fabric, Tables,
Crates, Rope/Strings,
Thick wood, plastic
Signs Frustration. Hut
Kept falling apart felt
Good about finishing out
tip type



By Conrad

You can find
junk in cities,
down dodgy alleys
filled with stray cats
and rats behind fancy
restaurants.
Find a nice park
to set up your
shelter.



Art-Based Approach for Developing Disaster Improvisation Capabilities
Notes from a research trip to Japan and a call for interested parties

chris berthelsen

first published in *Community Network* (May 2016) - The official newsletter of the Auckland District Council of Social Services

The possibility of destruction is a constant element of everyday life in Japan. Television is overlaid with earthquake alerts and tsunami warnings. Disaster communication services are standard in all cellphones. Emergency supplies are installed in public parks. Monolithic canyons have been created deep under the foundations of the Tokyo megaregion, in an attempt to prevent major flooding. The first thing that children learn at school is how to react in the event of an earthquake. Needless to say, Japan is a world leader in preparedness and when disaster does strike (within predicted limits) modern buildings and physical infrastructure fare relatively well.

At the same time, we know that 'hard' technocratic approaches to disaster management are insufficient. They may be measurable and fundable, but their hypnotic facade of efficiency perversely ensures that we tend to take the risks for granted, and make less effort to bother even preparing for an unexpected event. In proposing a 'New Deal for Japan' after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, Christian Dimmer, Assistant Professor at the University of Tokyo, stressed the importance of recovery as "a continuous process through which civil society can develop more fully, communities can grow again closer, and the entire country can become more resilient and self-reliant." [1] Dimmer cited a Japanese government commission which responded to the unsatisfactory government response to the 1995 Kobe earthquake, by proposing working toward a future where "tough yet flexible individuals will participate in and expand public forums on their own initiative," developing individuals and a society that can "address pioneering challenges, and are more creative and imaginative."

Experience shows that communities cannot rely on simply 'toughing it out' until the government and other formal organizations can deliver necessary resources. Even when food, water, shelter and health needs are met, official reports and personal stories reveal that the psychosocial perceptions of those who experience disasters produce immediate effects with long term consequences [2]. While accepting that top-down approaches have their place in disaster recovery planning, Christian Dimmer recommends that policy proposals should be evaluated in terms of tangible outcomes in addition to determining the ways in which those outcomes contribute to the empowerment of civil society.

From my perspective as a researcher/designer of environments for fostering creative interactions, and as someone who often participates in activities that could be called 'art,' I have both experienced and witnessed the incremental psychological, social, and/or environmental effects that emerge when diverse people are able to enjoy unexpected encounters with everyday objects. I am aware that these 'curious encounters' can stimulate innovative thinking, and initiate conversations

that strengthen diverse community connections. Nurturing innovative and collaborative problem solving that can inform and assist people in coping with the unexpected consequences of a disaster does not ignore the necessity for safe and hygienic shelter, nor the importance of access to food, water and basic facilities. Designing opportunities for community members to practice collaborative goal setting and problem solving, in a safe environment that encourages the expression of diverse spiritual and cultural practices, can develop and strengthen crucial community capabilities identified by the Psychosocial Recovery Advisory Group (Mooney et al., 2011) that formed after the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes.

Art activities that draw people together can be more effective than pharmaceutical remedies in the short term, and top-down attempts at community building in the longer term [3]. Humans have been developing ameliorating disaster improvisation rituals since ancient times. For example, Japanese author Kyohei Sakaguchi, in his account of his family's autonomous evacuation from the recent (April 16, 2016) Kumamoto earthquake wrote:

"Music and stories, regarded as two of the most useless things in times of crisis, functioned as the best medicines for the children... Dance with the sounds. Stamp the ground as you dance. Following the banging of the Taiko [4], perhaps the act of 'dancing' was born out of the desire to soothe the fear of earthquakes" [5]. Sakaguchi recalls how he and his family dealt with the trauma during the strong aftershocks following the first earthquake: *"The kids must have been full of nervous tension. In an attempt to soothe their nerves, I took my guitar out of my study and started to sing some of my own songs. The children began to pick up stuff that had been thrown around the room and began banging and shaking them, producing their own rhythms. We danced around the room - a band of crazed and wonderful minstrels... Finally, Ao [his daughter] performed a solo at the top of her lungs and fell on the floor, laughing for the first time since the earthquakes started."*

Art offers spontaneous and tangible methods for addressing the physical aspects of disaster preparedness and response. Fluency in the flexible manipulation of everyday, non-specialised materials is helpful when confronting unexpected everyday challenges that appear in disaster areas. Prosaic examples from Kumamoto evacuation centres set up in schools and public buildings illustrate this idea. Examples include using waste cardboard boxes from relief activities to create changing rooms and partitions (addressing privacy, breast feeding, and changing concerns while decreasing congestion in public toilet areas and improving hygiene), beds (enabling older people who were unable to stand up easily after lying on the floor, to rise and take exercise), and sun shades (addressing heat and light concerns, enabling better sleeping conditions). Small-scale agricultural hot houses have been turned into

shelters, and curtains and insect nets for school gymnasiums have been fashioned from found materials. Simple handi-craft methods for delineating space have proved effective in fostering small-group formation with large-scale evacuation centres. This has measurable effects such as decongesting lines of communication with the authorities (group leaders act as go betweens), shortening waiting times for food and water rations (representatives collect rations for the whole group), and alleviating 'economy class syndrome' through the ease with which small groups can be aware of one another and organize collective daily exercises.

At the other extreme, Kyohei Sakaguchi has proposed a Kumamoto "workshop in a disaster zone" as an alternative to an evacuation centre. Here, evacuees across the age range build mobile houses that become their homes. Through a process of building, dwelling and thinking [6] disaster 'victims' develop the abilities to generate new concepts and ways of living which carry them through into a more resilient, adaptable and pleasurable future.

Artistic methods are opportunistic and exploratory. Foot-hold finding. They take existing knowledge (techniques) and concepts as foundations and jump-off points. They connect tradition and contemporary concerns, taking solace in rich cultures while seeking new paths. Seemingly simple or irrelevant acts can be surprisingly effective. We are not just talking about singing and dancing while apartment blocks crumble, but building problem solving capacities that encourage responding mindfully without needing recourse to fixed guidelines. We recognize the power of the creative individual and trust in social processes of knowledge transfer and transformation.

Art-based disaster improvisation explores organic processes that are akin to self-healing. By designing spaces where creativity can flourish, this approach to disaster preparedness values and affirms individuals and groups' evolving adaptability, rather than any repeated attempts at reconstructing their fragile permanence.

A Proposal and Invitation

The above discussion begs the questions - "what are the relevant artistic methods, how can we leverage them in practical situations, and in what ways can we foster skills in such areas?"

Auckland-based artist/researcher Xin Cheng and I would like to propose a series of workshops and discussions in the pursuit of an art-based approach to disaster response which develops the improvisation capabilities of everyday people. This approach can happen in any and all everyday environments, from schools to nursing homes, community gardens

to supermarkets.

We invite all interested parties to join in an exploration with us. For our part, we derive methods from our ongoing experiments in creating environments for creativity and working with resources at hand. Examples include a term-long self-building workshop at a local primary school, a month-long outdoor workshop at headland Sculpture on the Gulf, and a public programme in Artspace which explored ways of interacting with our Super City through a series of walks, workshops and publications.

Our mid-2016 "research and doing" exploration in Japan investigated aspects of the 'shelter crisis'. Near-future projects include a programme of shelter-themed workshops and education activities with TEMP outdoor art science forums and labs (*this winter emporium is one early example*) at Corban Estate Arts Centre, and small modifications, a five-week public programme at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery which will investigate themes such as collaboratively transforming everyday materials and spare parts to co-create alternative perspectives of living.

In the spirit of this brief text we are ALWAYS open to suggestion and conversation. Please do contact us.

Acknowledgements

> This text was developed based on the writings of, and discussions with, Kyohei Sakaguchi (Prime Minister and Founder of the New Government), Christian Dimmer (Assistant Professor, the University of Tokyo), and Judy Blakey PhD > NZJEP (New Zealand Japan Exchange Programme) support for Chris and Xin's current "research and doing" tour in Japan is greatly appreciated.

Notes

[1] <http://www.japanecho.net/society/0091/>

[2] For evidence in a New Zealand context, refer to *Psychosocial Recovery from Disasters: A Framework Informed by Evidence* (Mooney et al., 2011) - <http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/NZJP-Vol404-2011-6-Mooney.pdf>

[3] See http://artterritory.com/en/texts/articles/2166-how_art_can_heal_the_scars_left_by_a_catastrophe/ for an introduction to a number of Japanese artist's approaches to dealing with disaster.

[4] Traditional Japanese drum.

[5] All excerpts from texts by Kyohei Sakaguchi are my own translations based on texts supplied by the author.

[6] See Martin Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking": <http://mysite.pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html>