

From Bauhaus to Social Sculpture.

The Shaping of Humane Societies as an Aesthetic Challenge

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Course Leaders:

Shelley Sacks and Hildegard Kurt

Petra Johnson

Petra Johnson, artist and project manager, is currently working on the KIOSK/Xiaomaibu project, a collaborative and interdisciplinary work linking the cities of Shanghai, Liverpool and Cologne.



Since my work caused some controversy, here is a text written by one of the participants, Janhavi Dhamankar (centre in the photo on the next page)

Petra's work was led by two statements: *"An architect can build a tower of wonders"*, and *"A building is not complete until the carpet has been woven."* First she asked us to make a brick out of paper and thread.



Then she gave us 6 strips of coloured paper and precise guidelines asking us to write down specific recollections on four of these strips. Everything was to be written in the present tense and the last 2 strips of paper were to be kept blank. We then pushed strips 1&3 to the person on the right and strips 2&4 to the one on the left. Out of the 4 strips we in turn received from our neighbours and our own 2 blank strips, we wove a mat, placed it inside the brick and then built a tower of all the bricks in the centre of the table.

I felt like silently grasping and accommodating the feelings of others and connecting them in a special way by weaving something as warm as a mat/ carpet which cannot be made with my own two strips. It's even better that my two strips are blank: I am needed but not the "I-ness" of me, I am needed as a support. And being blank opens many possibilities.

Placing the mat inside the brick and building the tower was also a collective activity - providing the awareness that without each other's brick, the tower cannot be completed!