



MELBOURNE DESIGN AWARDS  
2010

A DIA Partnership  
Victorian Council



Design  
Institute of Australia



# Matchpoint.Melbourne

## Category: Installation Design - Exhibit



### Project Overview

Matchpoint.Melbourne was an exhibition and series of events that presented the public with a novel proposal to enrich Melbourne's urban culture. The event uncovered grassroots sports like bike polo and laneway cricket, showing the potential to create a more vibrant and participatory urban environment by integrating these and other popular leisure activities into public space through architectural design interventions, and how this could extend the international reputation Melbourne already gains through hosting major sports events. The exhibition offered visitors an immersive experience that simulated how the proposal could play out in the city and enable them to become active participants.

### Project Team

#### Commissioner

**RMIT University & Universität Innsbruck. Part of the 2010 State of Design Festival** Nigel Bertram (RMIT), Bart Lootsma (UIBK)

#### Creators

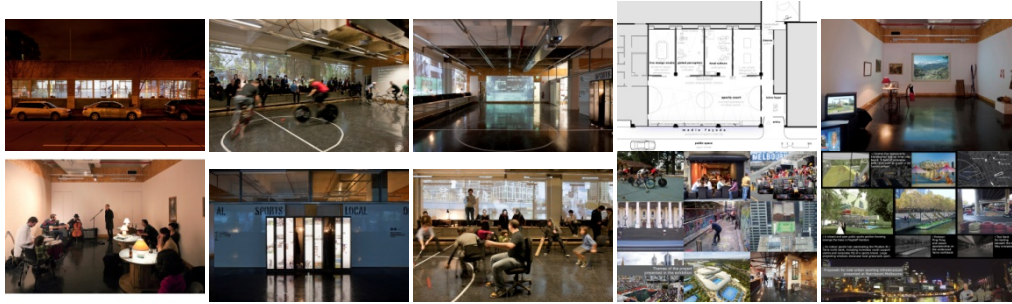
##### Matchpoint.Melbourne Team

Thomas Fussenegger

Thomas Fussenegger, DI (UIBK): project leader, author and curator

Barend Meyer, MArch (RMIT): curatorial assistance, writing and editing, conceptual support and research

Alexander Gogl: video production & post-production, exhibition design assistance and setup



## Project Brief

Matchpoint.Melbourne sprang from an urban research thesis that identified a unique opportunity in the way Melbourne currently promotes itself along two distinct paths: as a city of culture, and a hub for international sport. Major events like the Australian Open and the Grand Prix attract worldwide attention and are one of the primary ways people abroad come to know of our city. It's a surprising fact that 61% of news articles around the world that mention Melbourne are about sport. At the same time, the ability of cities to offer engaging and authentic experiences rooted in local culture has become increasingly important.

Matchpoint.Melbourne proposed we cross-pollinate these two trends by amplifying grassroots sport as a dynamic new facet of Melbourne's urban mix. Shifting sights from elite major events to informal public recreation and local sporting communities (who often struggle for space), it aimed to serve and showcase these grassroots activities through new urban sporting infrastructure. Tapping into the unique potential of their sites and oriented outwards to the city, these projects foster a vital public urban environment that supports informal participation in sport (an effective tool to promote health and well-being). Overall, Matchpoint demonstrated how we could shape urban environments to offer more to citizens, in a way that also contributes to projecting a compelling brand identity for our city.

The exhibition and symposium (part of the State of Design Festival) launched this proposal into the public domain; communicating the ideas and creating a forum for public discussion around the potentials highlighted.

## Project Innovation / Need

The Matchpoint.Melbourne exhibition design made an innovative departure from typical architectural exhibition formats, presenting the concept as an immersive experience - a prototype environment that simulated the proposition and opened it up to exploration. At the heart of the exhibition was a real sports court where popular and emerging urban sports were actually played in a series of staged events. A bank of seating enabled spectatorship, while the walls around the court were

covered by video projections of changing urban scenes - thus transporting the court to different spaces around the city. We ventured out to document grassroots recreation, filming roller hockey, bike polo and other sports in-situ. This footage was also projected at life-size around the court, giving visitors a taste of the excitement these activities can bring to public space while also animating the exhibition with sound and movement even while visitors were simply wandering around. The largest wall was actually a long window to the street outside. The projection was two-way so the imagery was visible from inside and out, creating a dramatic interface between the exhibition space and the city beyond.

The exhibition was structured to deliver conceptual cues before detailed presentation of the proposition. Large stenciled text called up key themes and slide shows on the end walls were interspersed by provocative questions, gradually leading visitors into the concept.

Overall, the exhibition design put a strong emphasis on forming an atmosphere that welcomed and enthused visitors, creating a sense of anticipation about what could unfold.

## **Design Challenge**

The first challenge was communicating the Matchpoint concept's different elements and how they link.

A series of rooms connected to the court each embodied key themes. A recreated domestic interior from a foreign country incorporated globally televised sports broadcast and foreign lifestyle magazines to illuminate how sport and culture currently project Melbourne's identity globally. Another room recreated a Melbourne café and included local design, art and live music, showing the uniqueness of Melbourne's everyday urban culture of which sport could become a vivid new dimension. To demonstrate that design is a tool to harness the potential of sport to transform urban space, a live design studio for RMIT architecture students was run within another exhibition space and showed students' proposals evolving over time. Sliding doors separated these rooms from the central court, suggesting a fluid interaction between each element.

Another challenge was to provoke Melbournians to creatively reconsider their urban environment, to claim it for social and recreational activity by becoming active participants. We signalled this by stocking the gym lockers displaying design projects with sports equipment visitors could take out and play with at any time.

The symposium brought together a multidisciplinary panel of local and international speakers, enabling discussion around Matchpoint.Melbourne to broaden. The real success was at the party that followed, when people discovered they could use the

chairs left from the symposium together with the sports equipment! Spontaneously, a new game was invented. We called it 'Chair Polo' and it was the most important message.

## Sustainability

The sustainability of the approach Matchpoint.Melbourne employed stemmed from finding ways to reuse what's already available and hence reduce resource consumption and expense.

Space is a scarce resource for any university, especially when its campus is embedded in the city. Staging the event within an RMIT design school building was made possible by tight scheduling during the semester break. The exhibition design was then developed to appropriate and exploit the space's existing features to tell the story. The long glazed façade became an animated billboard to the street; the main workspace converted into central court; the studio spaces transformed into themed rooms; and sliding doors that now regulated their interface with the court also became moving info-panels. Nearly all the exhibition furniture and props were purchased second-hand and later sold-on, minimising expense and waste. The two-way window projection was made feasible through developing a custom film from inexpensive kitchen supplies after much testing with alternatives.

Seeking maximum effect with a minimum of means, these strategies were small-scale enactments of the Matchpoint.Melbourne proposition the exhibition presented.



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