

**Author:** Penelope Haralambidou with tessera  
**Research Output 4:** *Athens-scape: The 2004 Olympics and the Metabolism of the City*

**Co-Authors:** Anthony Boulanger, Yeoryia Manolopoulou, Eduardo Rosa

**Output Type:** Design

**Design of Exhibition:** *Athens-scape: The 2004 Olympics and the Metabolism of the City*

**Location:** The Royal Institute of British Architects, London

**Dates of Exhibition:** 22 April – 24 May 2003

## 300 Word Summary

tessera was invited to design an exhibition exposing the transforming urban landscape of Athens in preparation for the 2004 Olympics, with exhibits for all three RIBA main galleries. I was involved in the general design of the exhibition and particularly the installation in Florence Hall, the central gallery.

### Questions/Aims/Objectives

The design aimed to strengthen existing visual links between the three galleries and conceived of the visitor's experience as an allegorical journey, reflecting my own research interest in architectural allegory.

### Contexts

The design provided an opportunity to test two research interests, architecture as inhabited drawing and the expansion of the picture plane, which here found an incarnation in the Florence Hall central window, dominating the space. Through anamorphic projection, a hinged reflection of the window's grid arranged the exhibits on a horizontal surface at table height, representing Athens' shifting architectural landscape.

### Methods

During the design process, I used animation as a research method. Directing space through time became a tool for drawing forth themes of transformation and metabolism, key to the Athens Olympics, and an allegorical journey leading to the design of exhibits that integrated solid objects with moving images.

### Dissemination/ Esteem

The exhibition catalogue includes a short text by tessera: 'Exhibition Design', *Athens-scape: The 2004 Olympics and the Metabolism of the City* (London: RIBA, 2003).

Reviews: Clare Melhuish, *Architects' Journal* (15 May 2003), pp. 24–25; Thomas Muirhead, *Building Design*, 1577 (2 May 2003).

I was invited to guest-edit a special section of *Blueprint*, looking at the past/present/future of Athenian architecture, and to include an authored essay: Penelope Haralambidou, 'New Architecture in the City of White Noise', *Blueprint*, 222 (August 2004), pp. 46–49.

### Authorship

'Drawing FIX' is a design project by tessera, an architectural collaboration of four members, each of which contribute equally: Anthony Boulanger, Penelope Haralambidou, Yeoryia Manolopoulou, Eduardo Rosa.

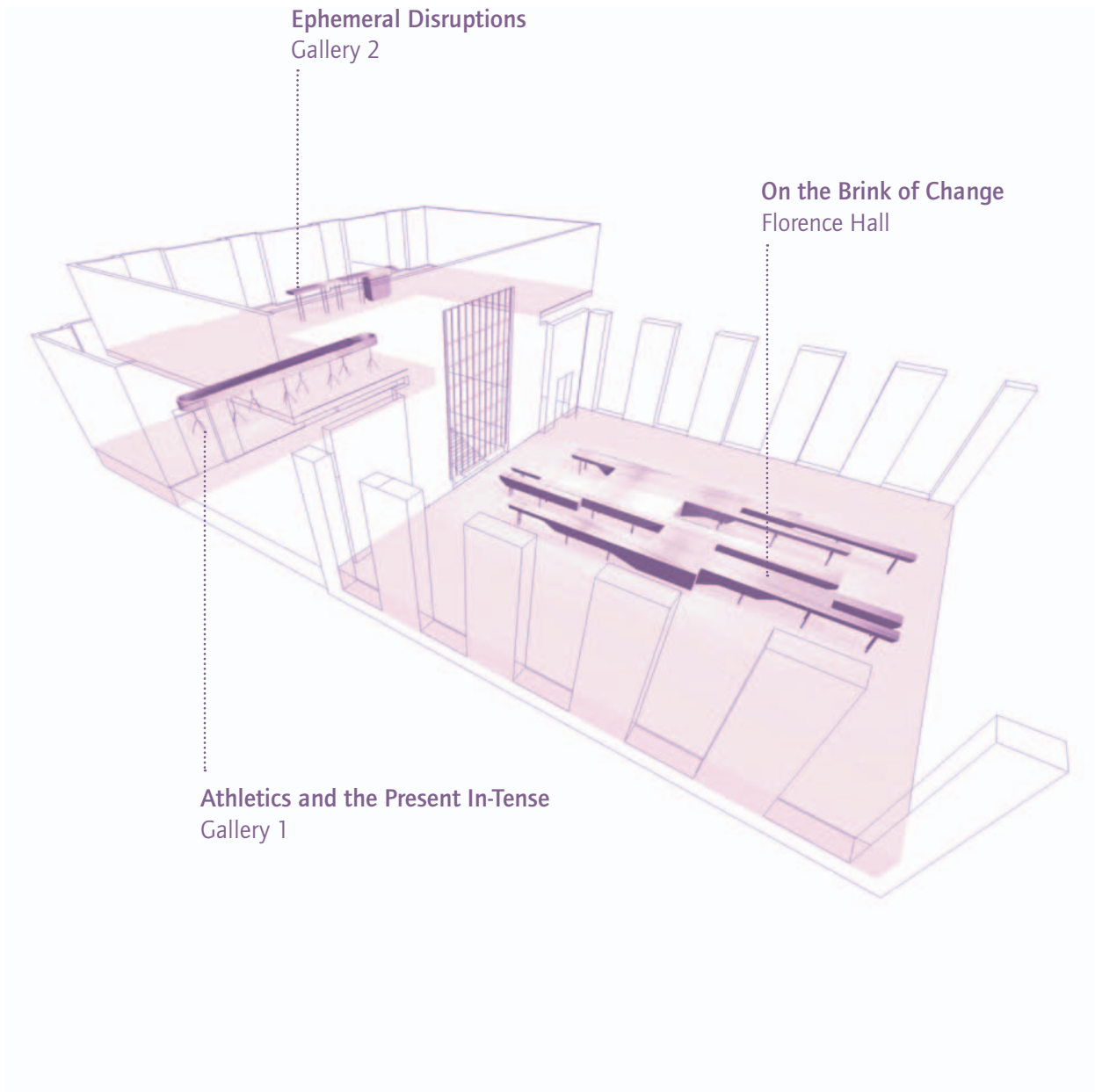


Image 1  
Perspective view of the three  
galleries.  
Digital model: Tom Holberton,  
2003.

## General Description

This exhibition captures a snapshot of Athens, a city in an intense state of change, and attempts to represent this by creating spatial analogies between the RIBA galleries and the Athenian topography. Perceiving the interior of 66 Portland Place as a landscape, the design attempts to strengthen existing visual links between the three galleries and design the exhibitors' experience as a journey. The large window between the central atrium and the Florence Hall plays a key role in this process. It filters the views between the galleries and establishes the module for the design pieces. The displayed material in all three galleries is a collection of fragments exposing 'Athens-scape' as a complex shifting terrain. Sound and moving image construct time-based representations, reinforcing the notion of transformation.



Image 2  
Florence Hall with views of  
Gallery 1 and Gallery 2 through  
central window.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.

## **On the Brink of Change**

Florence Hall

A large horizontal surface at table height operates as a hinged reflection of the Florence Hall central window and displays an assemblage of works portraying Athens' changing architectural landscape. The surface is an abstract representation of the Athenian topography and incorporates a scaled model of Athens showing the unification of the archaeological sites. Visitors read the exhibits at an intimate scale by walking around the table inlets through illuminated screens and integrated projections.



Image 3  
Layout of the table's illuminated  
surface.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.



Image 4  
'Reading' the exhibits between  
the table inlets.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.



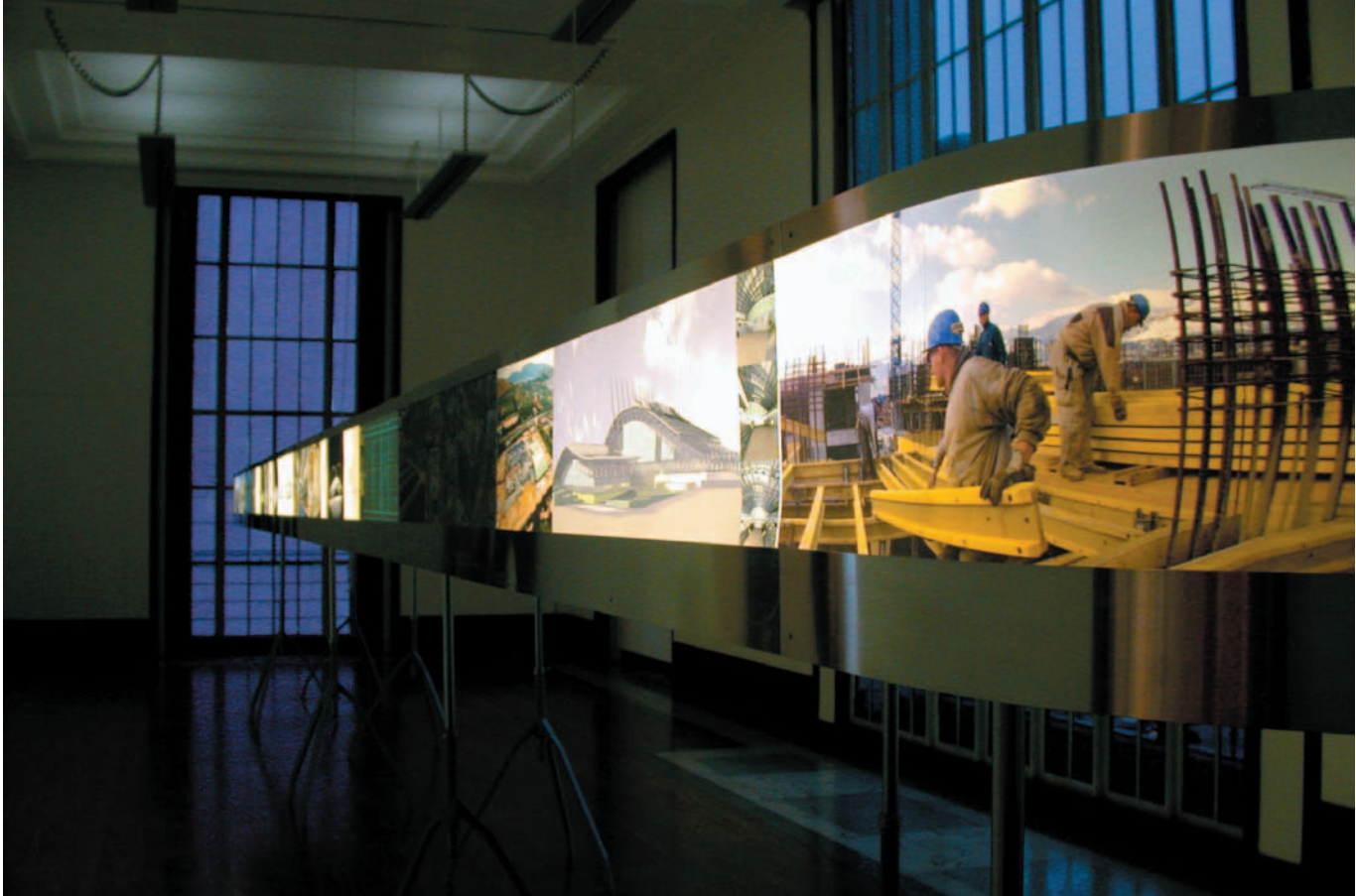


Image 5  
Construction process of the  
athletic venues as displayed in  
Gallery 1.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.

## **Athletics and the Present In-Tense**

### Gallery 1

Gallery 1 displays the construction process of the athletic venues around a hovering linear track. Inspired by the figure of the athletics stadium, the piece is wrapped by illuminated images of the sites showing work in progress, and including moments of moving image. Sound relays of sporting events generate a feeling of expectation for the forthcoming Olympic Games.





Images 6-7  
Mirrored views of the *Track* in  
Gallery 1.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.



Image 8  
Illuminated extension of the  
balustrade at the balcony of  
Gallery 2.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.

## **Ephemeral Disruptions**

### Gallery 2

The 'Ephemeral Structures' competition results are exhibited in Gallery 2, the upper floor balcony overlooking the atrium and Florence Hall. The design includes an illuminated extension of the balustrade incorporating a digital, interactive search engine for the competition results. Standing in front of the balustrade, the visitor has a panoramic view of the table in Florence Hall, an experience similar to overlooking a city from a hilltop. From here the layout of the table surface anamorphically matches the grid of the central window.



Image 9  
Display of the 'Ephemeral  
Structures' competition results on  
the balustrade.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.



Image 10  
View of the table from above  
through the central window.  
Photograph: Penelope  
Haralambidou.





Image 11  
Early animation showing the  
visitor's journey through the  
gallery and the visual links  
between exhibits. ©tessera

## Questions, Aims and Objectives

The design aimed to strengthen existing visual links between the three galleries and conceived of the visitor's experience as an allegorical journey, reflecting my research interest in architectural allegory. Allegory, from the greek *allos*, other, and *agoria*, speaking, expresses a doubleness of intention inviting interpretation. *Landscape*, *Track* and *Viewpoint*, the allegorical names of the structures in each of the three galleries, invite different imagined topographical interactions.

(1) 'Docking' around the table's inlets, which resemble Athens' intricate boundary with the sea in the horizontal *Landscape*.

(2) 'Running' along the continuous strip of images of the hovering *Track*, inspired by Athens' ancient Stadium.

(3) 'Surveying' from the high static position of *Viewpoint*, as if on a hilltop, like Lycabettus.

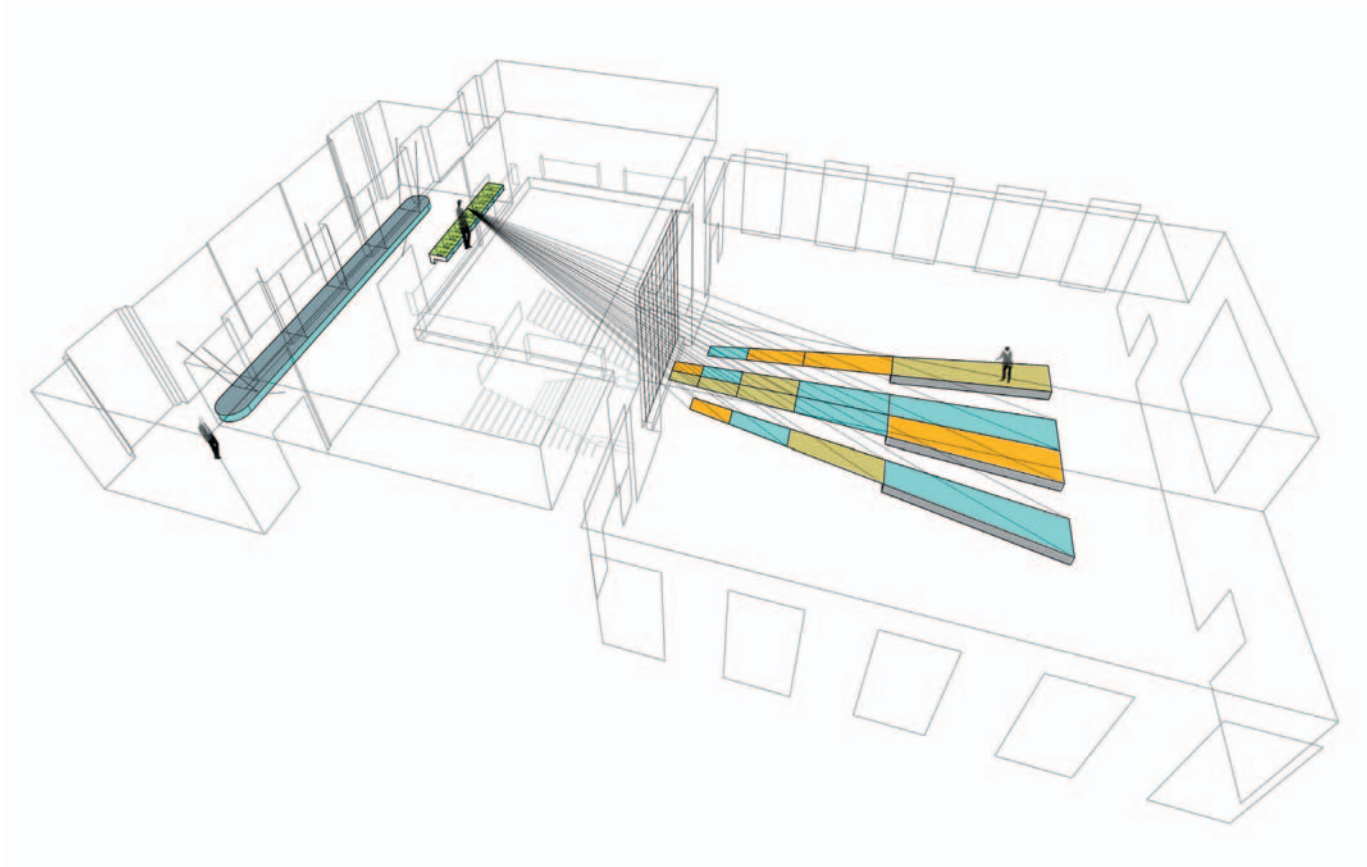


Image 12  
Perspective view of early design  
showing the table as anamorphic  
projection of the window.  
©tessera

## Contexts

The design provided an opportunity to test two research interests:

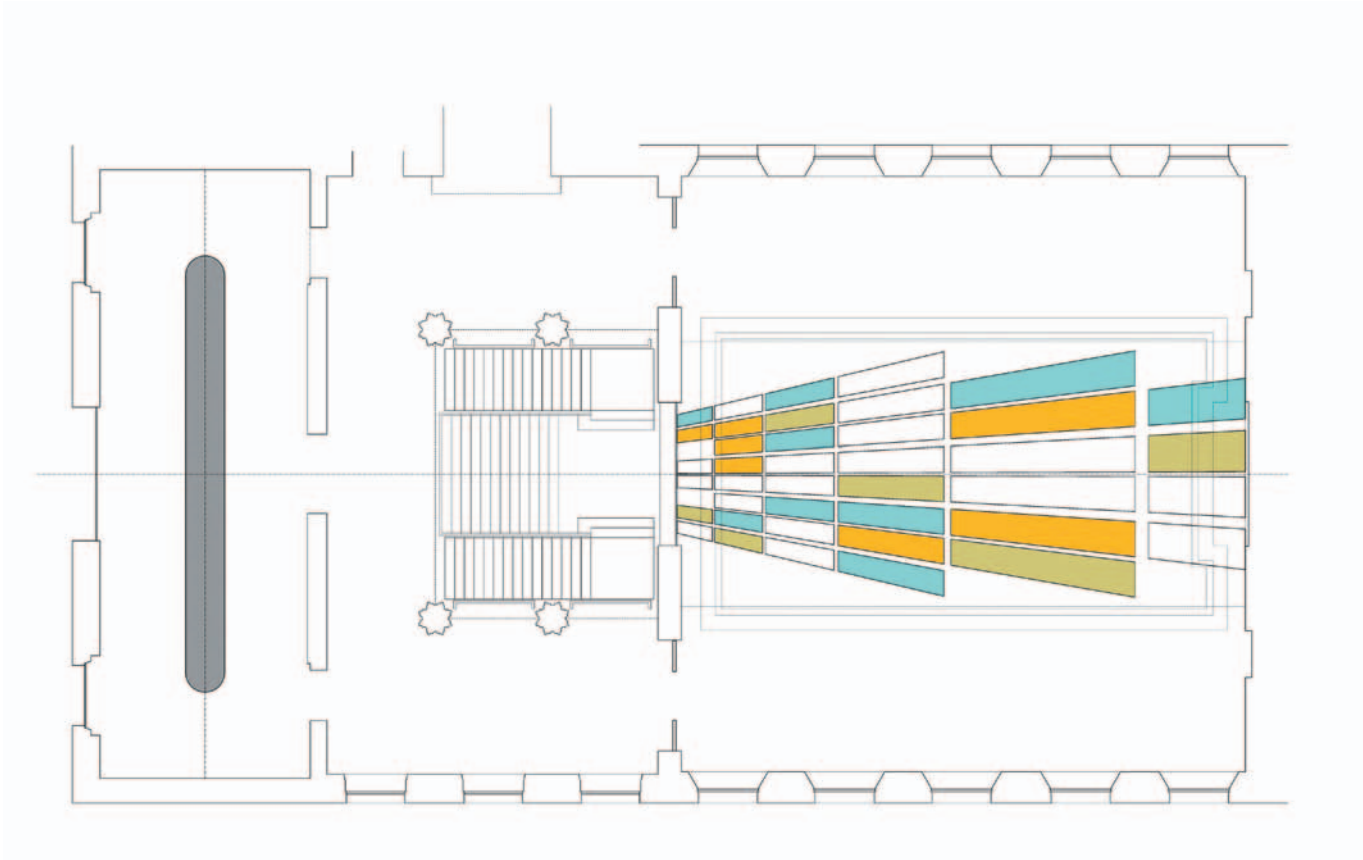
(1) Architecture as inhabited drawing.

(2) Expansion of the picture plane, which here found an incarnation in the Florence Hall central window, dominating the space.

We saw the grand central window intersecting the space as the equivalent of Leon Battista Alberti's picture plane, which in his *On Painting*, 1435, he metaphorically described as a 'window' and he physically constructed as a taut veil, a grid made out of string. According to perspective treatises the picture plane is indispensable in constructing vision 'correctly' and leads to an understanding of space as a precise homogenous continuum bounded by flat planes. This window/veil is also connected with orthographic projection – drawing in plan, section and elevation – and has dominated architectural representation since its invention during the Renaissance.

The project exposes and celebrates, but also challenges, the perspectivist window/veil by using the actual Florence Hall window as an abstract drawing device, and as the mediator of a physical experience in real time. Through anamorphic projection, a hinged reflection of the window's grid arranged the exhibits on a horizontal surface at table height, representing Athens' shifting architectural landscape. Using the window as a projective device we 'gave matter' to a new physical object, the table, which was experienced close up, and as a projected drawing from a distance through the window/picture plane.

The research inaugurated my interest in exhibition design and curating art, architecture and design, which was explored further in subsequent curatorial projects such as: *Heart Illustrators*, Art Director's Club, New York, 2003; *Spatial Imagination*, DomoBaal Gallery, London, 2007; *The Blossoming of Perspective*, DomoBaal Gallery, London, 2007; and *Research Projects*, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, London, 2007.



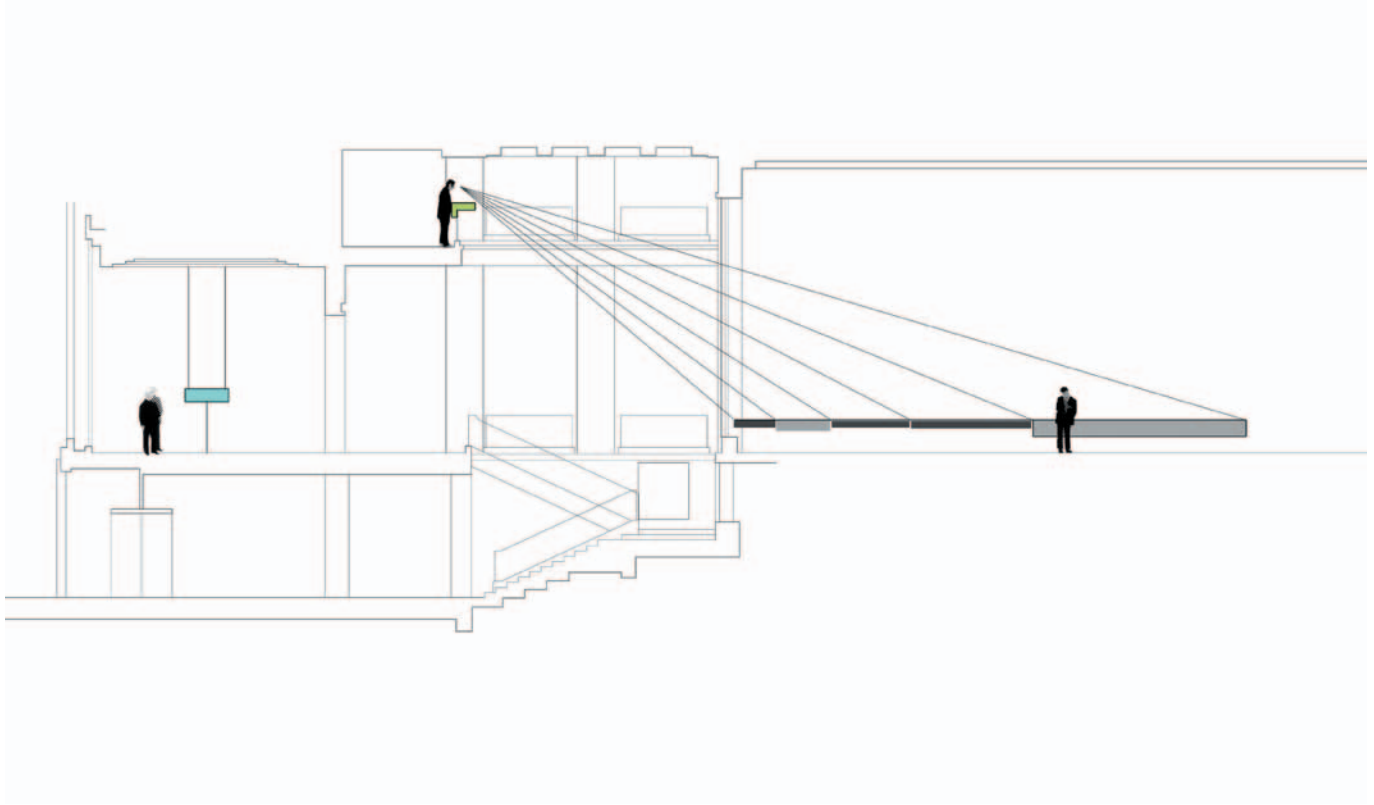


Image 13-14  
Plan and section of general layout  
and anamorphic table. ©tessera

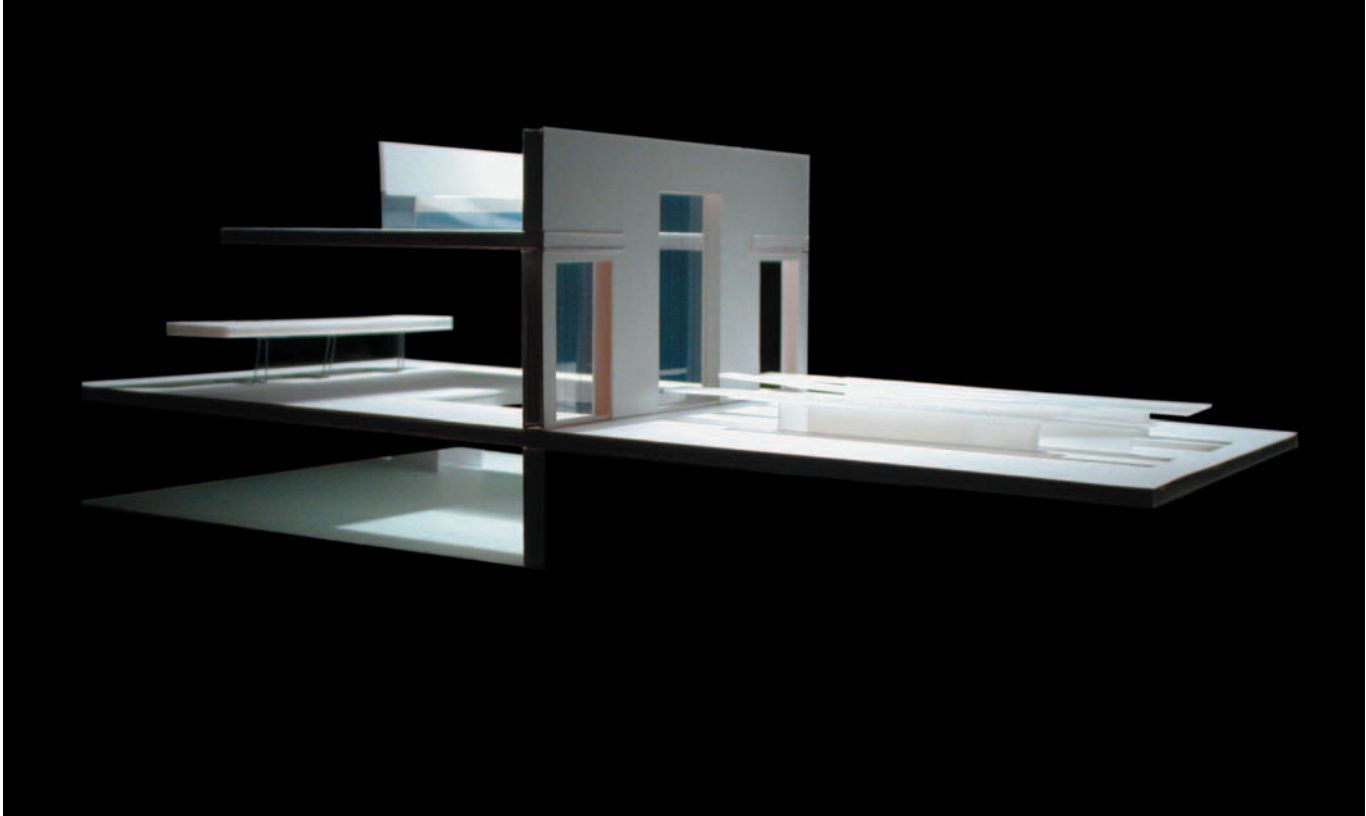


Image 15  
Early model showing the three  
objects – *Landscape*, *Track* and  
*Viewpoint* – each occupying one  
of the three galleries. ©tessera

## Methods

### (1) Animation as a design tool

Animation was used not as a representation technique but as a design tool to capture and develop the theme of the allegorical journey through the gallery. Furthermore the use of animation inspired the idea of incorporating moving images with static objects which we developed further later in the design.

### (2) Anamorphic projection calculated through perspective drawings and model-making

A first stage of the project shows an anamorphic table, designed to match perfectly the grid and perspective distortion as perceived from the balcony of Gallery 2. In the developed design we opted for a more 'orthographic' table, whose horizontal separations still match the window grid when viewed from the balcony in Gallery 2.

### (3) Incorporating moving images with static objects

During the design, and in collaboration with the construction company, ADi Solutions, we developed a system of incorporating video projection within the table in Florence Hall and the *Track* in Gallery 1. Using mirrors and calculating the projection distance and angle, the objects were designed to provide the necessary space to accommodate the video projectors and DVD players.



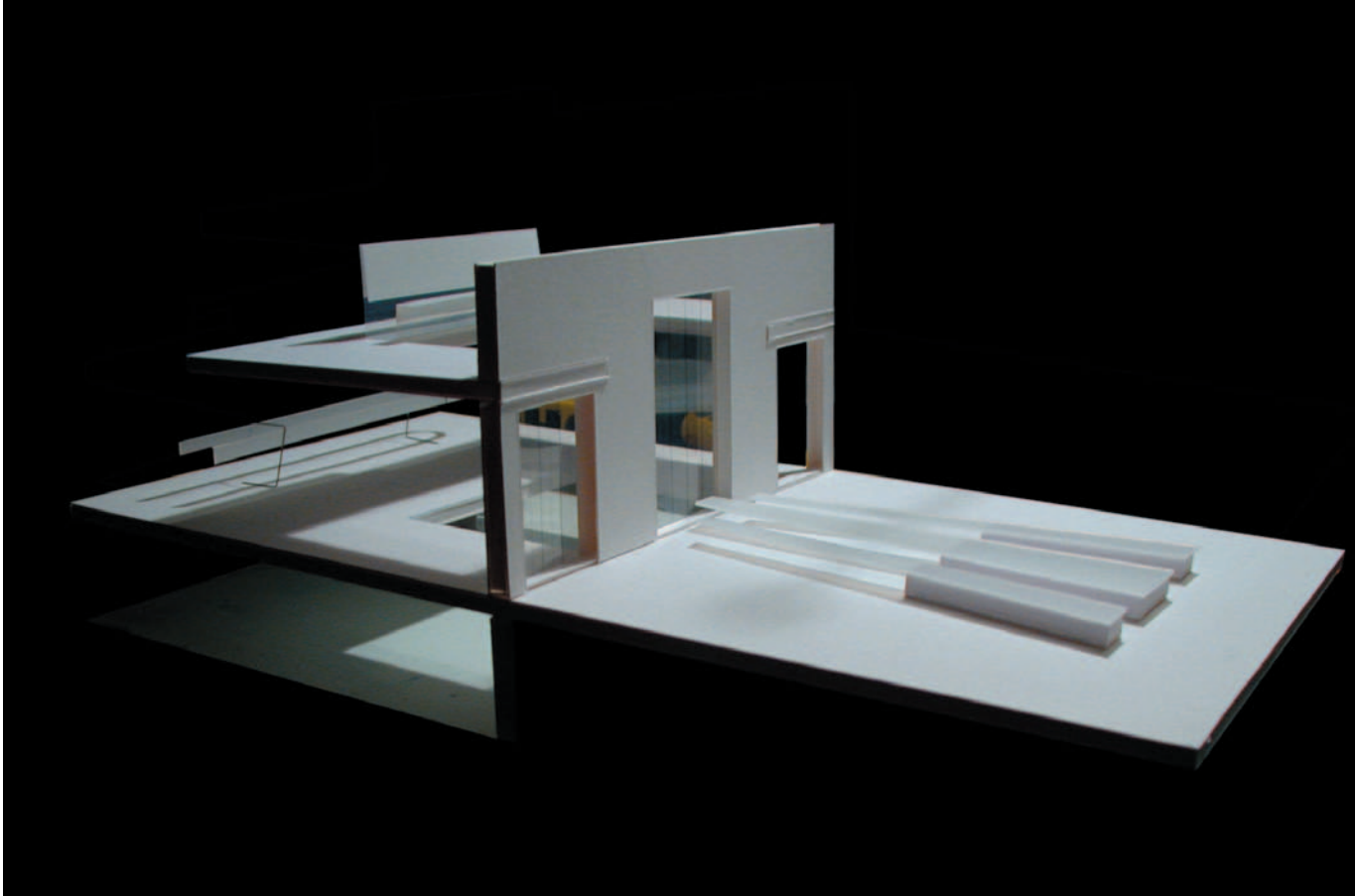


Image 16  
Early model with anamorphic  
table. ©tessera

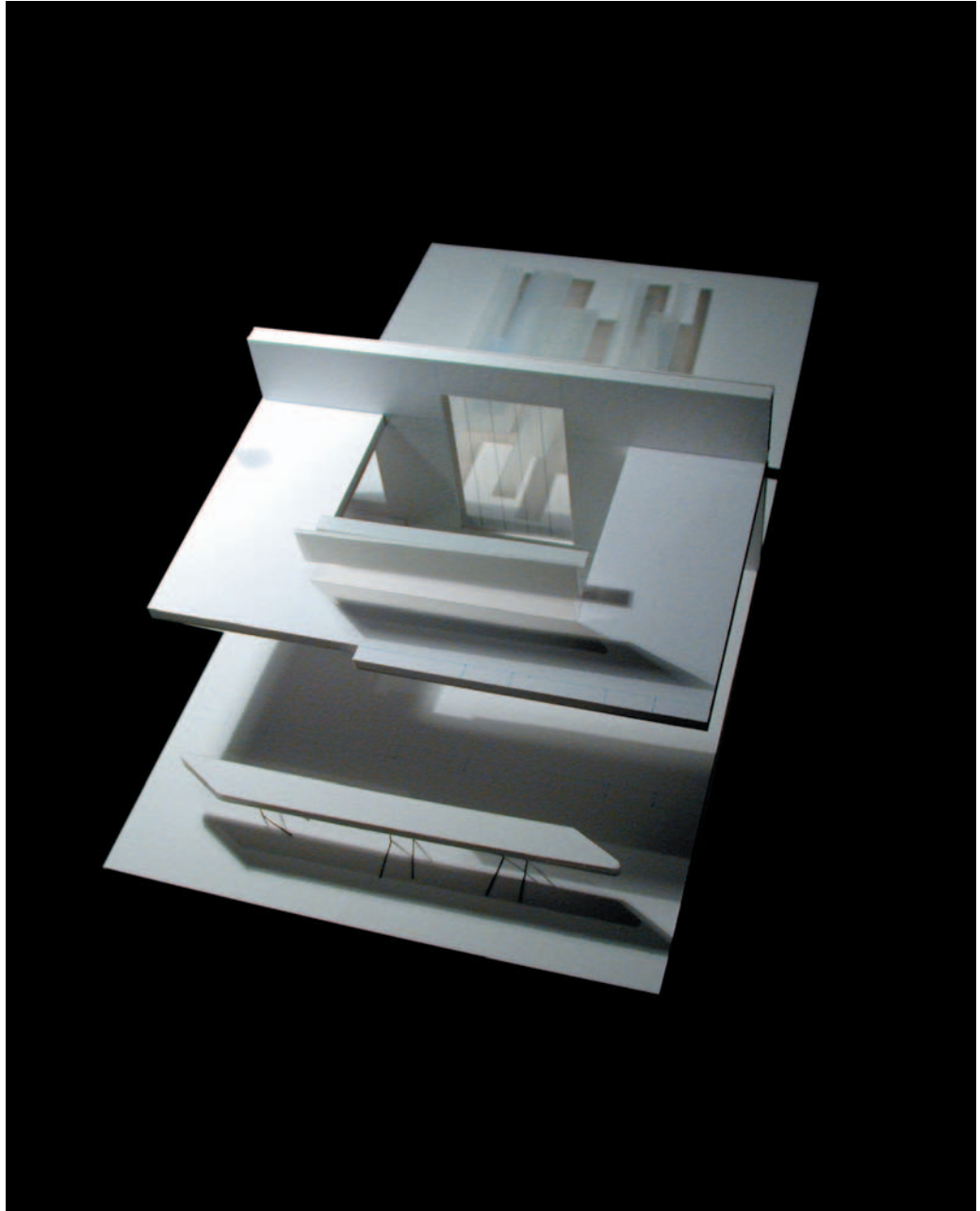


Image 17  
Early model with orthographic  
table and view through the  
window/veil. ©tessera



Image 18  
Stills from an early version of the  
animation by Souli Spiropoulou,  
2003.

(4) Collaborating with the animator to translate the theme of transformation and metabolism into a moving image.

The animation, which remotely resembled DNA tables in metabolism, was also a play on the window grid and the transforming perspectivist veil.

(5) Collaborating with the graphic designers for the design of the logo and the exhibition brochure

The design of the logo was based on a successful sub-theme of the design of the table/landscape in Florence hall. The brochure, a single A2 sheet, presented images of the exhibits, on one side, and texts relating to all the different parts of the exhibitions, on the other. Following the theme of the journey through the gallery, it was folded like a map.

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture –  
General Secretariat for the Olympic Games  
presents

**Athens-scape The 2004 Olympics  
and the Metabolism of the City**

RIBA Gallery, London  
22 April – 24 May 2003

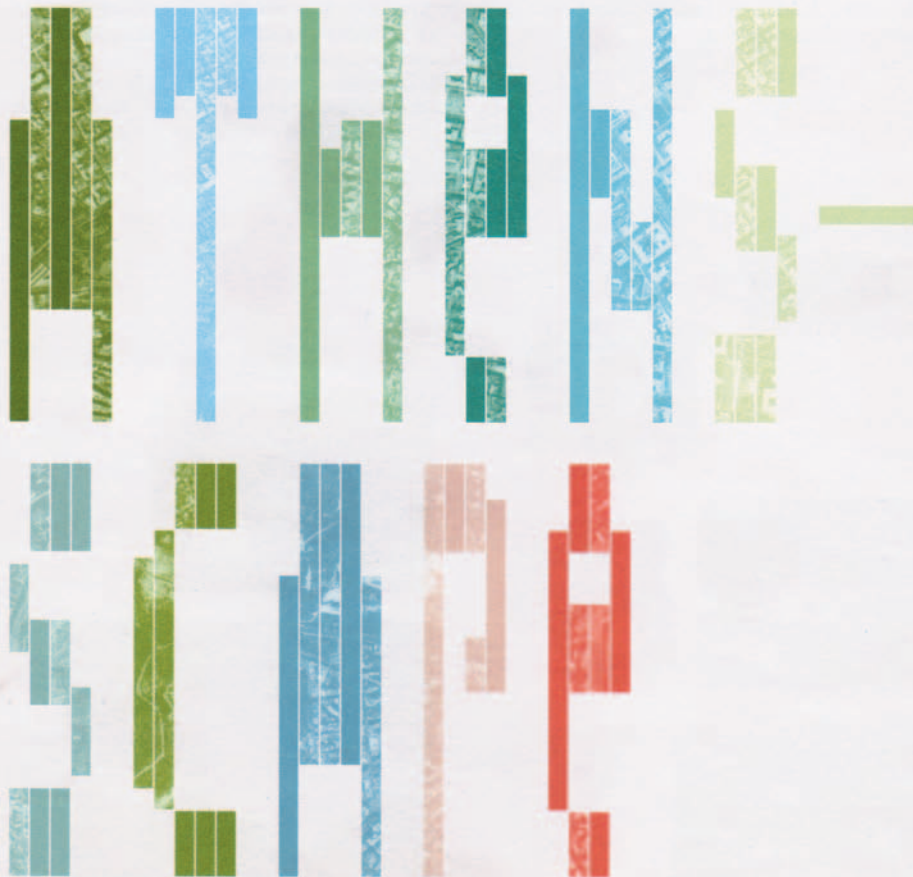


Image 19  
Flyer design by automatic, 2003.



Image 20  
Exhibition catalogue design by au-  
tomatic, 2003.



Image 21  
View of Florence Hall during  
Private View, April 2003.

## Dissemination and Esteem

The exhibition was planned by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and organized by the General Secretariat for the Olympic Games 2004 in association with the Royal Institute of British Architects. A series of talks was organised in conjunction with the exhibition: 'Ephemeral Disruptions', with Zaha Hadid, Elias Zenghelis and Mark Cousins; 'The New Acropolis Museum', with Bernard Tschumi and Professor Dimitrios Pandermalis; and 'Athletic Infrastructure and the City', with Alexandros Tombazis and Anna Markopoulou.

The exhibition leaflet included short texts by tessera, Dr Maria Theodorou, the exhibition curator and Head of the Architecture Network Greece, Evangelos Venizelos, Greek Minister of Culture, Constantinos Cartalis, General Secretariat for the Olympic Games 2004, and the President of the RIBA, Paul Hyett.

The exhibition catalogue includes a short text by tessera: 'Exhibition Design', *Athens-scape: The 2004 Olympics and the Metabolism of the City* (London: RIBA, 2003). The exhibition was reviewed by Clare Melhuish, *Architects' Journal* (15 May 2003), p. 24, and Thomas Muirhead, *Building Design*, 1577 (2 May 2003). I was invited to guest-edit a special section of *Blueprint*, looking at the past, present and future of Athenian architecture, and to include an authored essay: Penelope Haralambidou, 'New Architecture in the City of White Noise', *Blueprint*, 222 (August 2004), pp. 46–49.







Images 22-23  
Views of Florence Hall during  
Private View, April 2003.





Images 24–25  
Views of Florence Hall during  
Private View, April 2003.



## Appendix 1: Related Articles by Penelope Haralambidou

tessera: 'Exhibition Design', *Athens-scape: The 2004 Olympics and the Metabolism of the City*, London: RIBA, 2003. [see original enclosed]

Penelope Haralambidou, 'New Architecture in the City of White Noise', *Blueprint*, 222 (August 2004), pp. 46–49.



## Appendix 2: Critics' Reviews

Thomas Muirhead, 'The Show Must Go On', *Building Design*, n. 1577 (2 May 2003), p. 18.

Clare Melhuish, 'A Task of Olympic Proportions Played Out On a Cultural Plane', *Architects' Journal* (15 May 2003), pp. 24–25.

Maria Theodorou, 'Athens-scape', *Architektones: Journal of the Association of Greek Architects*, n. 39 (May/June 2003), pp. 31–32.



