

Speaking Places: How to work

Matthew Galloway / Ella Sutherland
23 April – 15 May 2015

To coincide with the opening of *Speaking Places* — a public art project taking place throughout 2015 in Hamilton's Citygate Plaza, RAMP Gallery presents an exhibition of the collaborative practice of graphic designers Matthew Galloway and Ella Sutherland.

The *Speaking Places* series mediates our experiences of place: living in a city or visiting it as tourist, observer or outsider. Our relationship with place is neither objective nor rational, it is formed by personal experience and changes over time, along the way we collect signposts and markers that shape how we feel and what we remember — city signage, geographical landmarks, favourite buildings, kissing corners, short cuts and walking routes. *Speaking Places* serves as a strange and assorted inventory and analysis of some of these signifiers. Blending the things a city is outwardly most known for, its sports teams, civic logos, or famous buildings, with the immutable knowledge that accumulates with personal experience.

The Citygate Public Art Project is a new initiative supported by Hamilton City Council and Wintec. It sees the annual commissioning of major temporary public art projects in the newly developed Citygate Plaza in Hamilton's CBD. The projects commissioned for Citygate seek to engage with the intrinsic elements of public space: open access, usability, recreation and so on. Exploring how artists and designers might contribute to finding new mechanisms for the planning, development and use of the public spaces that we occupy.

Kim Paton
Curator
Ramp Gallery

Focusing on the ways language may exist and collide within the context of a specific location, *Speaking Places: How to work*, looks at the different ways in which the by-products of the natural and constructed environment can be understood, highlighted, traced and proposed. This presentation seeks to question how graphic design might offer up alternative perspectives; continuing to draw upon historical, cultural and social precedents whilst also claiming its own identity as an autonomous form.

The *Speaking Places* series is intended to continually evolve and adapt in response to Hamilton's local context and the fluidity of the urban environment. Through multiple interactions with a place and its people, the project aims to expose the potential for unique languages and universal archetypes to co-exist in the same space.

At Citygate the outcomes of these interactions with Hamilton will be structured into four major lines of inquiry, each falling under one of the following pre-determined categories:

1. The Event
2. The Lifestyle
3. The Domestic
4. The Geography

Works in the Plaza will evolve throughout the year, each line of

inquiry represented by a flag pole and flag and associated newspaper-style publication, distributed at the site and through local dairies, cafes, community centres and art galleries—all have a simple materiality informed by their purpose to convey information and to communicate in a direct and simple manner.

As a primer for the Citygate work to be installed in late May, *Speaking Places: How to work* focuses specifically on the subject of the project's first line of inquiry—Hamilton as an Event. This inquiry aims to examine present and historical examples of how Hamilton has attempted to brand itself, focusing specifically on its attempt to be known as *The City of Fountains* in the late 1970s. From this starting point, the fountain becomes a symbol, representing the intangible values of power, hope and identity—values that the exercise of place branding often attempts to reign in. This being the case, *Speaking Places: How to work* is an early opportunity to introduce the structure of the project, unveil the first phase of works, and begin conversations.