Network Rail
The Quadrant:MK

in·ter·lock (ntr-lk), in·ter·lock·ing

*Adj. linked or locked closely together
interlacing, interlinking, interwoven , and complex -
complicated in structure;
consisting of interconnected parts; a complex set
of variations; a convergence.*

*v. of two or more things that engage with each
other by overlapping or by the fitting together of
projections and recesses; to interweave, intertwine,
interlace, cross,
intersperse, reticulate, interrelate, connect, unite,
link, join, couple, associate, combine*

v

embankment
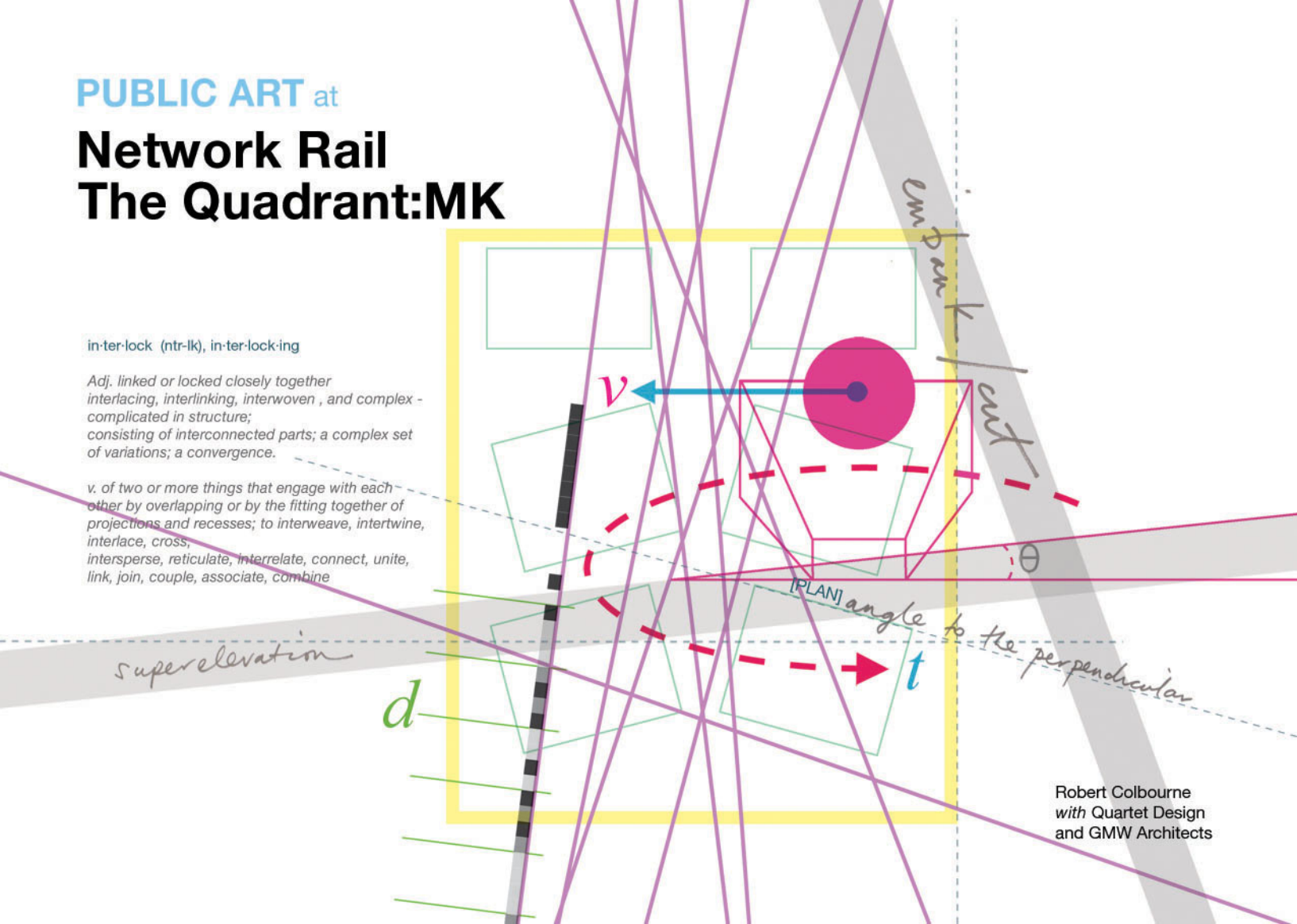
[PLAN] angle to the perpendicular

θ

superelevation

d

t

Robert Colbourne
with Quartet Design
and GMW Architects

".. where we sit, how we interact with others, which side of the road we walk on, whether we walk or drive, at what speed, are all decisions which have 'artistic' implications for the shape, colour and texture of public space."
[David Engwicht]

location
distance
connection
direction
time

GRID

INTERLOCKING [art-as-landscape]

The 'Interlocking' system at Network Rail ensures the safety, reliability and efficiency of rail and rail travel. However, the term became a poetic approach on how art can enrich the day-to-day experience of the new National Centre. Within rail and rail travel we found an array of ideas and notions that could connect the new development to Milton Keynes, whilst revealing the city to both newcomers and resident communities.

It became a way of thinking to overlap public and private spaces, to enrich landscape compositions right down to the finer details and provide practical functions with a sense of place.

We began to work playfully with interconnecting ideas of location, distance, connection, direction and time, always mindfully infused with the identity of Milton Keynes and the sensibilities of its development.

Therefore, the art-as-landscape vision is, in itself, a convergence: where expanding someone's experience and feeding their imagination is prioritised over what separates art from architecture from landscape.

[2]
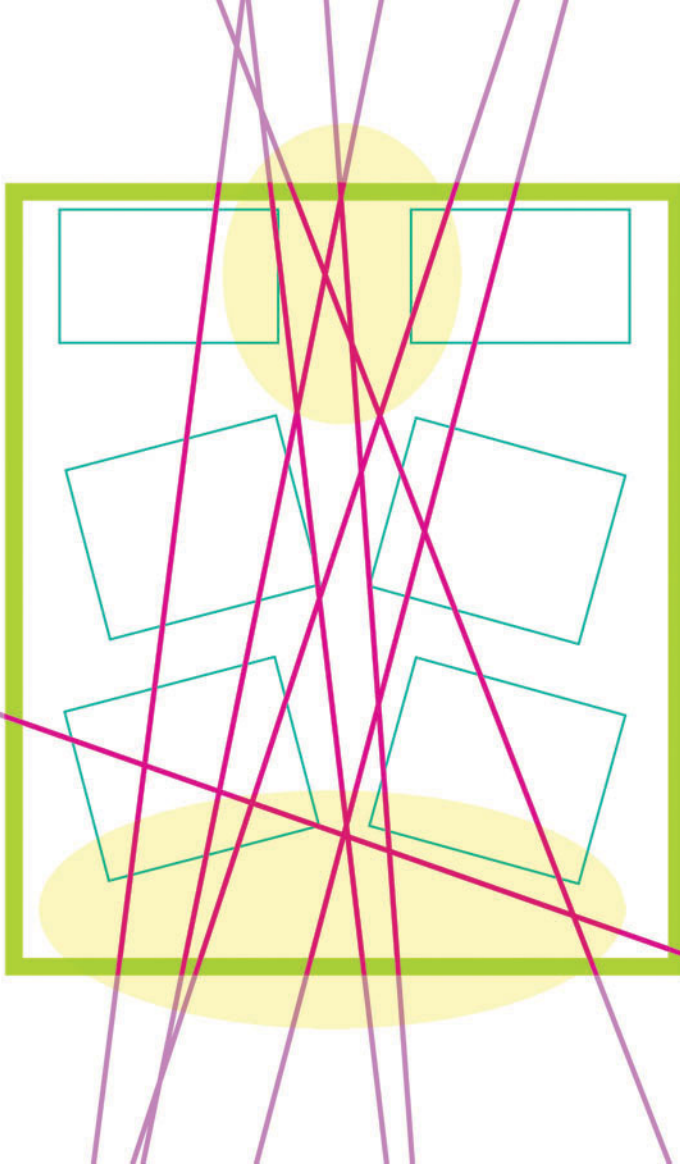
location

A 'network of threads' arrive, depart and converge at a central location, disappearing and reappearing at the edges and throughout the site.

They contrast with the formality of the Milton Keynes grid system but are bound by the limits of the rectangular plot.

Where do they go? Where have they come from? What do they align to? Perhaps the threads simply locate us at a 'place' or help us to imagine that where we are is always relative to where we have been and where we are going.

The threads also locate all art-as-landscape within the public spaces at the front and rear of the buildings.

" someday...the spaces you live and work in will be organised as beautifully as the spaces have been in some paintings."
[Ad Reinhardt, artist]

[3]

distance

Thread surfaces have equal spacings of light and dark and establish a sense of equal distance, like an underlying constant rhythm.

Seating and planting structures are programmed to the threads, overlapping in sequences with varying distance between them, but never clashing.

Crossing points and juxtapositions combine momentarily to create a communal seating area near the front entrance, where two main threads intersect.

Elsewhere, structures also allow for more contemplative, quiet spots.

'of two or more things that engage with each other by overlapping'..

intersection
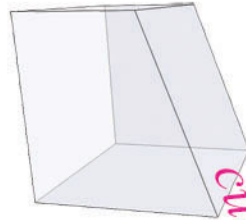
seat/tree/hedge

d

LIGHT/DARK/LIGHT/DARK

"What office workers do in their lunch hour is more important than my pushing the limits of my self-expression." [Scott Burton, artist]
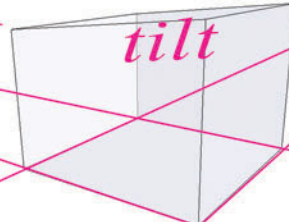
[4]

connection

embank cut
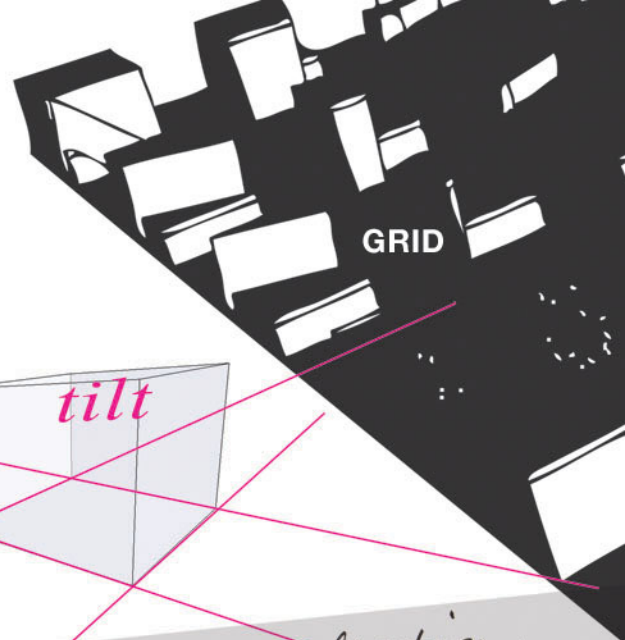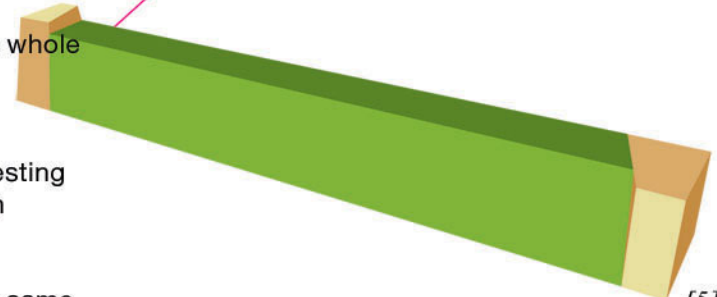
combine

cut

tilt

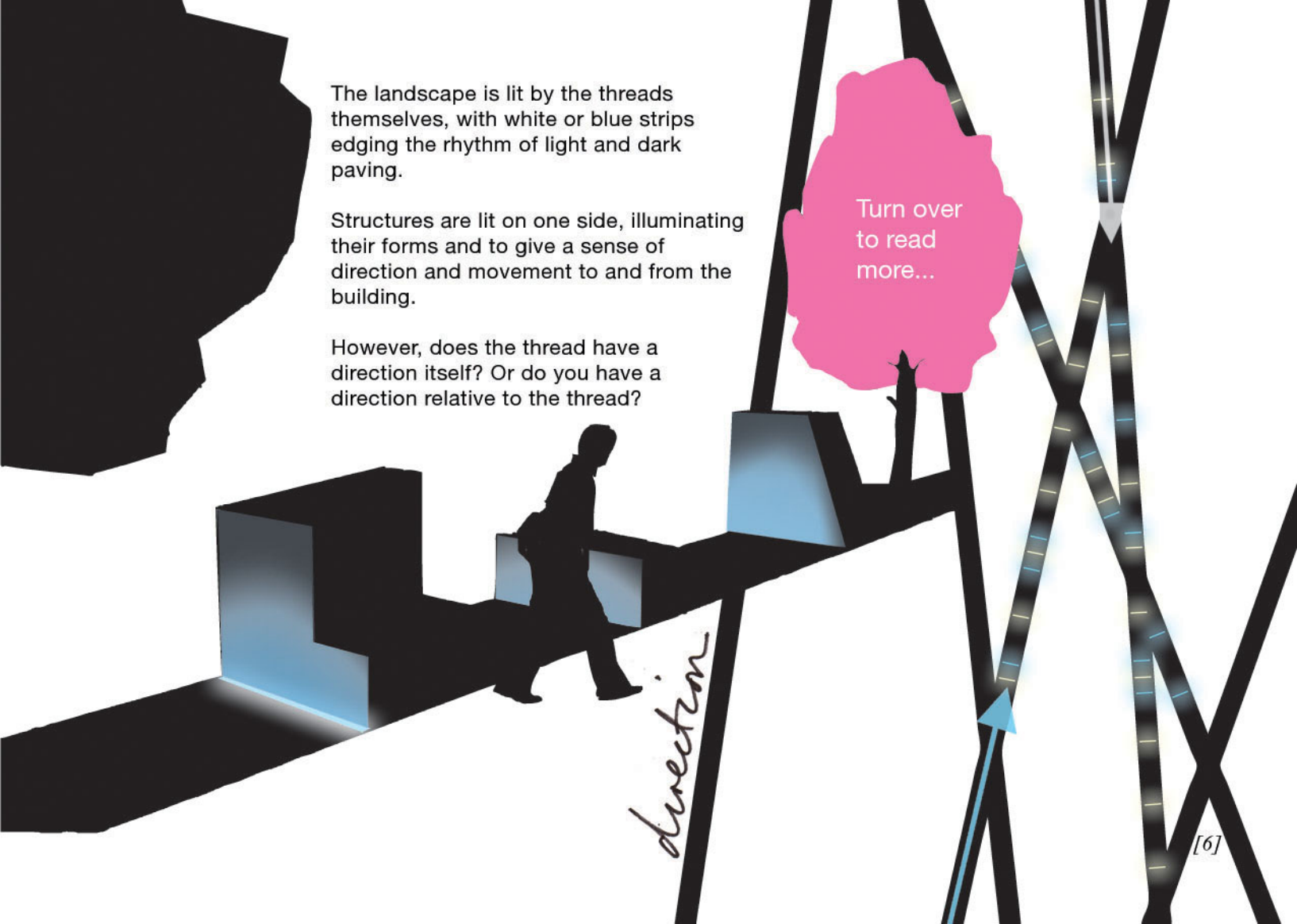...a tilt to offset centripetal forces developed as a vehicle goes around a curve

superelevation

A simple relationship of an angle of superelevation and an embanked cut, was applied to a cube to create a whole dictionary of dynamic forms. The cube was also cut vertically to the same angle of the new building.

A few combinations were chosen to create a variety of resting opportunities. Contrasting smooth and rough textures on different faces suggest where to sit, lean or recline.

Structures and hedges *converge* to become one and the same.

[5]

The landscape is lit by the threads themselves, with white or blue strips edging the rhythm of light and dark paving.

Structures are lit on one side, illuminating their forms and to give a sense of direction and movement to and from the building.
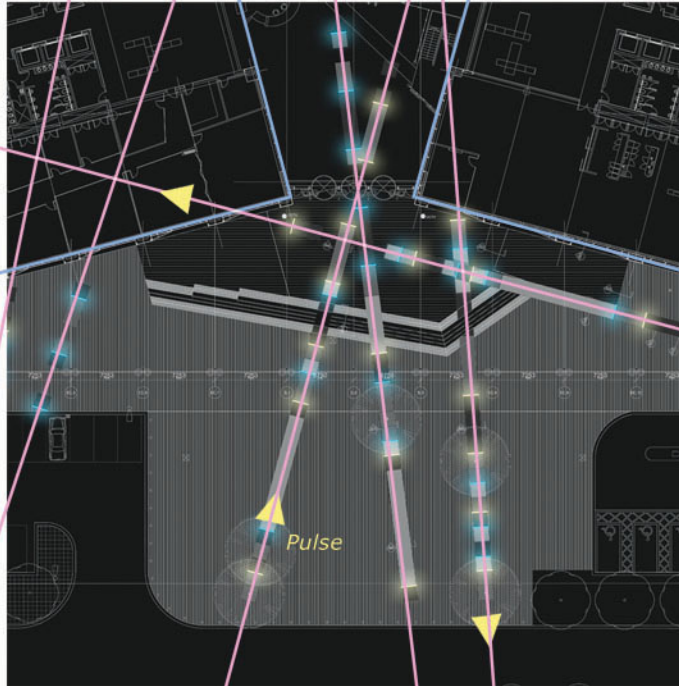
However, does the thread have a direction itself? Or do you have a direction relative to the thread?

direction

'External time is objective, universal and absolute.
It is physical clock time measured by instruments
and expressed within a conceptual framework.
Internal time is subjective, individual and relative.....'
[Heinz E. Lehmann]

time

Pulse

Rail was the major factor in national time keeping and the movement away from the sun, or our localised experience of time.

Being a convergence of a workplace and public space, the embedded threads pulse every quarter hour as a way of the landscape itself keeping 'external time' for all users of the plaza.

[7]

.. but what of internal time? What about those pause moments?

Scattered within the thread surfaces are twenty 'vignettes' that function in pairs.
Ten trees in the 'city in the forest' were chosen. Each vignette tells us either where the tree is located in relation to the National Centre or how that tree might allow us to think about our experience of time itself.

However, the information is buried in equations or curious riddles. A simple equation of motion using average walking and cycling speeds, might help you imagine how far the tree is away, or help you solve the ten riddles that tell us something about its life.

The vignettes also allow you to identify a tree. It may be that visiting it might help you connect the pairs of vignettes together or even lead to new discoveries. Did you know that the cherries near the Peace Pagoda were donated as a gift from the Japanese town of Yoshino? Or that the Giant Sequoia at Bletchley Park was used as a radio mast during World War II?

However, perhaps the vignettes simply intrigue you enough to stop, relax and ponder the notions of distance and time. Their intention is that they don't give up their secrets instantly, rather they reveal their meanings over repeated and even daily visits.

d

Willen Lake

time

'...a district where you can wander for a day, or days, in a green and gracious country side'

[LNER Rambling Guides 1923-1947]

$t = \dfrac{}{1}$

v

5 km per hour

and in a straight line

[8]