LOBBY

No 1 | Autumn 2014 | The Bartlett School of Architecture

Un/Spectacle

Le ROYAL

HOTELS & RESORTS

Space Syntax[25]

Created at the Bartlett in 1989. Working together for 25 years. Delighted to support LOBBY.

Approaching
Wates House
black bricks,
Yellow windows
white tent flapping

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LOBBY

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DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION studio 4

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Contributors

Can we experience something spectacular through senses other than sight? To answer the riddle we handpicked four of this issue's contributors and asked them the following question: **What's the most spectacular thing you've ever felt, tasted, smelled or heard?**

Fame Ornruja Boonyasit, Contributing Writer
@FameOBoonyasit

Fame is pursuing her Masters of Architecture at The Bartlett's Graduate Architectural Design programme. Apart from writing for LOBBY, she's also involved in art direction and writing for *Numéro Thailand* (though we want to keep her for ourselves). You can easily recognise her by her geometric bob which she admits is the product of her own cutting. Feel free to turn to page 48 in the Exhibition Space to read Fame's article.

"Without any sense of sight, the taste of an ice-cream is always a spectacular feast. As a sense conductor, its taste flourishes as soon as it loses structure, while at the same time calling for the emergence of other sub-senses. A spoonful or a scrumptious bite brings about a sense formation comparable to that of a tree, with taste as a core, touch, smell and temperature fluctuation branch out in an immediate venation of causality."

Laurie Goodman, Editorial Assistant
@_LGOODMAN

Laurie is a masters student in Spatial Design here at The Bartlett, and she's got a background in architectural history. She is a very, very serious and very clever academic, often using words such as 'phenomena', 'paradigm' and 'ubiquitous'. In between that, she enjoys naps and cat videos on YouTube. Laurie was a recurrent face in the very official meetings between the magazine's editors, who felt compelled to invite her due to how fired up she was about being involved in the editorial process. We were dubious at first, but now we don't regret it. You can read the article Laurie's written for us on page 68 in the Lift.

"A potent combination of gin and Beyonce."

Nick Elias, Contributing Illustrator
nickelias.co.uk

Nick is your boy-next-door-type, apart from being a little more scared of bees. He's a truly gifted architectural illustrator, and we're lucky to have him on our team, especially since we nearly missed him. Nick is now an official Bartlett alumn, having just finished his Masters in Architecture; it's a relief that we caught him in time before he made an escape. If you're curious about Nick's contribution to the issue, be patient, you'll see his illustration in the Toilets. No pun intended.

"I think it's probably a smell. Smelling something is known in science to have a stronger connection to memories than any other sense. I guess I find it more 'spectacular' when a sense like this exposes otherworldly sensations of nostalgia and situation. It sort of tells a story, meaning that a poo could be more spectacular than a piece of Mozart."

DaeWha Kang, Crit Room Contributor
@daewhakhang

DaeWha is one of the non-Bartlett, external contributors we were keen to have on this issue. He studied architecture at Princeton and Yale University and is an Associate at Zaha Hadid Architects, where he's worked since 2004. You can read through his insightful, contributing student-critiques throughout pages 84–95 in the Crit Room.

"Smell is considered to be the sense most deeply linked to our emotions and our memories. I think of the smell of moist wood and dust in the air after a short spring rain in the stone garden of Ryoan-ji temple in Kyoto. In a culture that increasingly privileges the visual over our other senses, our connection with the scent of architecture might reacquaint us with the deep essence of materiality and the pathos of history that is so fundamental to our discipline."

Photography: Josh Redman (Nick & Laurie)

Editor's Letter

First Impression

Dear Reader,

I'm not a particular believer in the phrase "First impressions are the most lasting." However, I'm aware that as humans we put a certain degree of effort into making sure we are charming, look good and maybe even smell absolutely delicious; we want to say the right thing, to leave our mark, have a pleasant vibe and have others find us enjoyable. The thing is, whether you believe they're lasting or not, first impressions are filled with immense, untapped potential. And although at times they can be completely natural and unfeigned, let's be honest: most of the time, we're putting on a little performance where we're the stars of our own show. What we're essentially doing is creating a form of *spectacle*. Through these first impressions, we often become an image or product that we want others to accept, enjoy and—I'll be bold here—consume. Now, dear reader, it's very likely that we don't know each other, but I'm certain that the one thing we can agree on is that on this, our first encounter, we want to make a good impression too.

Deciding what LOBBY was going to be, what it would represent and what it should say were among the major topics of discussion in the early months of this issue's formation. LOBBY was, then, a tabula rasa offered to us by The Bartlett School of Architecture to empower its students and give us a voice—something that we had perhaps missed in the past as a collective. But what LOBBY lacked in precedent it made up in expectations. The prospect of a new Bartlett magazine was and still is a cause for celebration, and so, in an attempt to maintain this optimism, this celebration of architecture, of the material, of the intangible, of ideas, of agency, somewhere along the line, LOBBY itself became an event; it organically grew into a *spectacle*.

Aside from being a multifarious, catchy word, do we really know what 'spectacle' implies? Upon its mention, the word is as situated as it is situational—it's place-based, visually oriented and heavily loaded with immense expectation; expectations that it will blow the viewer away or that at the very least, will make a lasting impression. With so much riding on first impressions, LOBBY takes its cue from the subjectivity of what is and isn't spectacular, fully realising that 'spectacle' is completely dependent on the viewer and on the particular lens through which its framed and viewed.

From its very origins, the architectural discipline has been reliant on the visual as its primary form of communication. From drawings and floor plans to the actual concept that drives the design, it is through its aesthetics, iconography, perceived materiality and proportions—to name a few—that architectural works make their first impressions and come into fruition. An inhabitant does not simply *appear* inside a building, rather they must first approach it from the outside. And this is their first impression. This is the beginning of the spectacle. It's no wonder, then, that the discipline gives so much weight to the sense of sight.

Ancient Greeks gave the Parthenon's viewers the impression that its proportions were perfect by creating optical illusions; the Gothic cathedrals were coded with colourful stained glass windows and detailed sculptural elements that narrated stories and depicted dogmas, to compensate for the inaccessibility of the Bible to the masses; and now, contemporary architecture practices use sophisticated visualisation software, high-end renderings and striking forms to seduce clients. But with the ubiquitous nature of these types of images/forms and with the growing number of visually stunning structures that keep emerging, has the role of spectacle been reversed? Has the spectacular already become unspectacular? After all, it's happened before. When Mies Van Der Rohe uttered the modernist mantra of "Less is More", the world went along with it until the Post-Modernists, with Robert Venturi at the helm, decided that less was actually a bore. Un/Spectacle, the theme of this launch issue of LOBBY, explores how the notion of spectacle perhaps contains within itself its own counterpart—*unspectacle* and how the spectacular is situated within the happenings and spaces of every-day life.

LOBBY is structured very architecturally: it combines spaces found in The Bartlett School of Architecture's Wates House with the themes within the magazine. A read through LOBBY is a journey through the building, with its Reception, Exhibition Space, Seminar Room, Lift, Crit Space, Staircase, Library and Toilets. Although in the Foreword you'll read how each of these spaces/sections were initially conceived, a 'walk' through the magazine will prove most enlightening to show how, in the end, these spaces evolved.

In the thematically curated Exhibition Space, Bartlett alum Thomas-Bernard Kenniff highlights how optimistic design intentions can be failures, by discussing how Montreal's 'District of Spectacles' actually gave way to an unsuccessful urban transformation. The complexities of spectacle are then uncovered in a conversation with philosopher Dr. Sadie Plant, where we look at the Situationists to discuss the social role of spectacle and attempt to highlight how the mundane might be more spectacular than we might have anticipated. On another note, it's impossible to talk about the unspectacular without delving into the dull. We reached out to Christian Parreño, whose on-going research depicts how boredom, as both a word and a phenomenon, is a spatial construct. And for our main feature, we talk to BIG founder Bjarke Ingels about everything from his meteoric rise to fame in a spectacularly short amount of time, to his long-standing affinity for Lego blocks.

LOBBY is also a platform for inspiring Bartlett student work. First in the line-up of our eight selections, Felix Faire and Andrew Walker present their astounding and sophisticated designs for performative machines that reconfigure the relationship between materiality, light, sounds, space and visual perceptions, while Kate Slattery addresses how something as unspectacular as a leg splint can give way to something as transcending as the Eames legacy.

As you walk into our Seminar Room, *The Standards*—a reprinted interview between German architects Arno Brandlhuber, Muck Petzet and Florian Heilmeyer discussing a project called the Antivilla—gives insight to how thin the line between spectacle and unspectacle actually is. Four young academics subsequently react to this through a rich set of essays, before they all—in true seminar room form—sit down to have an intellectual pow-wow rooted on how spectacle needn't only be overtly evident but can also be a nearly imperceptible—yet carefully crafted—intention.

Flick through the next pages and make your way into the Lift, where the next of the published Bartlett student projects, by Tamon Sawangdee and Eizo Ishikawa, presents us with an innovative, political machine that literally launches digital content in a physical form. Then, carrying on and capitalising on the lift's relation to mobility and ascension, we'll take you on a cross-global ride to Las Vegas, the Mojave Desert, Granada, Seville, Detroit and Barcelona, where our Bartlett student writers paint us a mosaic of their lived experiences and offer their take on each place.

You'll encounter the Crit Room as the Lift's doors close behind you, where the final four of the Bartlett projects are being showcased. Here, Chiaki Yatsui and his teammates, along with Bernadette Devilat, Claire Taggart, and Francois Mangion all prepare to be critiqued by pinning up their individual design projects on LOBBY's walls. As you make your way through LOBBY, take the Staircase, where architecture is discussed in terms of its different strata and its overlaps to other disciplines—from literature's correlation to Cedric Price's practice, to how dancing can be linked to the production of space.

At the top of the staircase you'll find the Library. Ironically, in a space where silence is encouraged and upheld, we throw caution to the wind and engage in multiple conversations with the likes of Barbara Penner and Peg Rawes, picking their brains and getting exclusive insight to their latest books.

And because we know that after all this you probably need a break, I'll point you to the Toilets, a space that is simultaneously public and private, as well as regulated and unsupervised. Though it may seem very odd and perhaps even contradictory—that we'd say goodbye by leaving you in the Toilets—especially after making an effort to be charming, look good, leaving our mark and have you find us enjoyable—I assure you it's where you'll want to go. It's in the toilets where afterthoughts are organised and collected, usually scribbled on walls and doors; it's where we so often find ourselves daydreaming, thinking about what to do next and maybe even talking to ourselves in the process!

After journeying through The Bartlett School of Architecture's LOBBY, the Toilets redirect us back to the very beginning of our thought process, compelling us to put things into perspective through a set of musings and wonderings, of doubts and fears, of hopes and aspirations, all accompanied by a 'scribbled' illustration on the space's wall.

So dear reader, I hope that in this, our first encounter, we'll make a lasting impression that'll make you want to grab a chair, feel at home and leave you wanting to come back. After all, we created this rather *un/spectacular* LOBBY just for you (and maybe, a little bit for us too).

Enjoy the issue,

Regner Ramos, Editor-in-Chief

Foundations (Wates House 1975, Lobby 2014)

Lobby is conceived on the eve of the destruction of Wates House as a response to historic and contemporary criticisms. In this foreword by the originators of *Lobby:* Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, Christian Parreno, Mariana Pestana, David Roberts, and Danielle Willkens, quotes from the *Architects' Journal*'s damning review of the building in April 1975 are presented in bold.

As you enter this **architectural mumbling,** there is no **absence of wit** at the gates of Wates House. Don is the face of The Bartlett, welcoming coffee-infused constituents through steel turnstiles to the **ill-defined spaces** and **horrifying junctions** where the **decent grubbiness and indecent graffiti obscure the worst features**.

Don't forget to sign in before entering. Welcome to Wates House; welcome to *Lobby*.

Note to LOBBY editors and graphic designer (and maybe a shorter note within the text itself): this Foreword is presented as an annotated layout of archival documents from the originators of LOBBY. The images, quotes and captions of this spread are composed within visible printer's mark, to represent the 'behind the scenes' nature of the Foreword and how LOBBY was intended to be a response to historic and contemporary criticisms of Wates House.

LOBBY_CONCEPT

Lobby is a noun and a verb. The verb itself derives from the practice of frequenting the noun. Lobby takes the building and dematerialises it through print. Its spaces are reflected in the structure of the journal and used as a platform from which to critically discuss what is missing from the institution - opportunities for exchange, internal communication, exposure to the outside world.

The publication intends to open a common space to discuss and showcase work produced at the Bartlett in dialogue with the outside architecture context. So far we developed a self-editing structure based on the floorplan of the Bartlett building, which allows for the voices of different students, from undergrad to PhD, to be heard.

It will be divided into sections named after and informed by the character of the rooms and transitional spaces of the school. So, for example, the lobby is the space to receive guests - where we invite external collaborators, the lift is a space in which one travels at a higher speed - where we conduct quick interviews, the toilet where all demarcations between teachers and students get diluted.

LOBBY_STRUCTURE

We came up with six rooms (in no particular order):
1) Library: reading lists, recommendations, contents
2) Lift: conversations, 60 seconds aphorisms
3) Staircase: serendipitous meetings
4) Exhibition space: design work
5) Toilets: gossip and graffiti, the great equaliser
6) Crit room: imbalance and injustice
7) Seminar room: essays

The inaugural issue of *Lobby*, printed nearly forty years after the *AJ*'s denunciation of Wates House, is composed of work from the **socially aggressive students** [who] **commandeer the carpeted spaces** [and the] **more passive students left out on the lino**. Lobby was founded to revel in the **accidents which disgrace the interior** of the building, to question the **drastic mistake of sharp demarcations** within the faculty, to bask under its **harsh overall lighting**, to challenge claims that work has **a lack of rigour**, and to celebrate the (un)spectacular of the **simple brick box** that houses the The Bartlett.

Surfing the Wave

An interview with Bob Sheil, Director of the Bartlett School of Architecture

Words by Regner Ramos and Sophie Read

In January 2013, Bob Sheil took the reigns from Marcos Cruz as Director of the School of Architecture. In a year when the school must relocate its 1,500 students to new premises and simultaneously uphold its international reputation, the challenges of this role are significant. Here, Sheil speaks to Regner Ramos and Sophie Read about why he is continually drawn to the school, his faith in architectural education and the joys of grappling with a bottom-up institution.

When you were appointed Director of The Bartlett, you said that it's an exciting time to follow on from Marcos Cruz. What's your vision for The Bartlett now?

The next phase of the school's life is to start to build very explicit relationships with what goes on outside the institution. We're coming out of a 15 or 20 year cycle that established our reputation as the world's leading school for experimental design. That's a great place to be. The next cycle is to see what we can build on such a reputation. What do you do with that resource? What do you do with that talent? We're not building a reclusive monastery here, we're building an institution with global reach and impact. We're in a great position to develop more direct relationships with the way the world operates and is reshaped.

As a school, you mentioned that we can be perceived as quite insular in terms of relationships with other institutions —how do we create solid ties with other schools? Are there any schools in particular that you'd be interested in aligning The Bartlett with?

The previous Director, Marcos, reignited the exchange programme with Sci-Arc. It was very vibrant when I was a student and it was a very sought-after thing. But it went to bed for a while, because we felt like we were getting out of sync. The Bartlett became so intense and driven to deliver its own curriculum that students that went on exchange programmes found it very difficult to return and get back in the groove. My view on this now is not to look for inter-institutional relationships, but more intimate relationships, like a unit in one school and a unit in a different school. That really works, and I've seen it work, and that's where I would like to push us now.

When any student goes on exchange, either one of ours or from another place, it's important that their experience ties back in with their home institution and that they've not simply been jettisoned somewhere else and left to survive when they come back. There has to be continuous flow, and it also has to be built on the individual, rather than an international set of clubs passing students from one member to another. Exchange has to be at a granular level.

Bearing all this in mind, what's the message you want to send to students?

I think the main message is 'think hard about where you want to be in ten years time, or less, and prepare for it now.' When I was a student, what you had in your head in terms of what you thought you were going to be was pretty consistent. In all probability you would be in architectural practice, hopefully your own, designing and hopefully building buildings to commission or through competition. For students now, it's completely different, the market is a lot wider and more diverse, and this is good. You have to look at your education as an extraordinarily rich resource for all kinds of career paths, that either focus on architecture or stem from architecture.

The other thing you might want to consider is how an architectural education and an architectural qualification may be exploited in a different industry, like

Photograph by Richard Stonehouse 2014

manufacturing or environmental engineering for example. I say this as I'm a huge believer in the value of our education itself, frankly I think it's the best anyone could have at a higher level as a means to position human endeavour in the world: it deals with technology, history, culture, it deals with real

> "It was incredibly exciting to see how a school could change so fast. It was intoxicating, scary, addictive… it was just everything you wanted it to be."

scenarios, it deals with imaginary scenarios. It deals with the past, the present, the future. It deals with global context, it deals with environmental evolution, it deals with material science, it queries almost everything. So I'd say the other message to students is to value every minute of every day of your time as a student; the education is a foundation for what you do afterwards.

Many times industry and academia seem to have a slight rivalry. You've previously mentioned that work produced at a university can carry a level of risk (e.g. research and prototyping technology) that the commercial world can't, whereas in academia, failure has value. How do you feel about industry and academia creating stronger bridges?

I think we're in a really strong position to offer industry something that they need. At the Bartlett Manufacturing and Design Exchange (B-MADE) we're introducing staff and students to industrial standards in technology and fabrication processes on the basis they are inquisitive and experimental designers, not engineers, contractors or technicians. We're just saying 'there's stuff out there, here it is, under your nose, this is what it does.' That is a provocation. We bring technology in here to provoke ideas, not just necessarily to teach everyone how to use it.

To go back to the beginning of your question, in the commercial world, in practice, consultancy and in industry, there's very little room for error. The success of the business depends on how few mistakes you make. The high-level technologies are predominantly used to verify the standard of work, not to exploit the potential of technology for experimentation. So the technology is there, it's being used to make sure the work is consistent, meets the design requirements, is made efficiently and the business makes a profit. But if we have the same machine, we're not so worried about that side, we're not taking on that kind of work. By comparison, we're playing with this technology, and we're researching this technology. So we take risks that commercial interests may find too great for them. We can do projects where it doesn't matter if they 'fail' per say, as long as they open up new knowledge and offer a stepping stone to the next. Our business is the creation of new knowledge.

You've previously said that "The School is in fantastic shape." How is the School currently positioned on a global scale, and does this put any additional pressure on your role as Director?

Personally, the most important thing for me in this job is rooted in my memory of being a student here before Peter Cook arrived. I saw and took part in the rapid change that happened… We went from being a solid, well-respected but mediocre school, to being on the global map as a radical and experimental hot house. You can imagine what that was like for students at the time. It was incredibly exciting to see how a school could change so fast. It was intoxicating, scary, addictive…it was just everything you wanted it to be. You just couldn't wait to get here every day. It was the centre of the universe for you, at that time in your life. To me it's quite important to remember that, because I saw the mediocrity that came before.

In terms of your main question though, the world is a very big place. We are known as being the best school by all the other great schools, but in the grand scheme of things, there are nearly eight billion people on the planet. How many of them even know about the top ten architecture schools in the world? You can overstate these things. I'm very proud of the school, but, at the same time, the issue to address is where we are going.

You and I met up a few weeks ago and you talked about your desire to fuel 'the bottom-up engine' as The Bartlett emerges into a top ten world school. What did you mean by that?

What keeps me here is that I always see the next challenge coming up here first, rather than anywhere else. This is what I mean by 'bottom-up.' It happens in the studios, it happens in the conversations that exist between tutors and between students, between the themes that the units set each year: you can see it, you can feel it, you can taste the fact that people are looking for the next challenge all the time. That is not coming from the top. All we really do at the top is facilitate things in the school, give it some direction, respond to needs, and most importantly put new things in front of everyone. So a successful leader in my view, in this kind of diverse environment, isn't somebody who thinks about pulling everyone with them, but it's someone who has seen where the wave is and keeps us on top of a wave that is a sense of force and momentum that fuels enquiry, inquisitiveness, instinct, ambition and excitement. You're staying on the top to make sure you can see what's going on around you, and your job is to see what's ahead of the edge and get us through it. It's a great privilege to be asked to sit in such a position.

APPROACHING WATES HOUSE

Approaching Wates House
black bricks, yellow windows
white tent flapping

passing by the comings
and goings
dry jackets, wet shoes
and unfolding scarfs

forget the rain
and in the grey shadows
warm thoughts on the concrete

of brick, of paper, of carpet,
of mugs, of damp, of compost,
of home, of care, of taking,
of blinds.

Venetian

encounters with what you can no
longer see
a shared walk into the cold room
drawing out a past that foresees
the unknown

damp floor with all its traces
of footsteps
evaporated by an army of
warm air

view of the city
grey roofs
black roads

here, each space is translated
into a line—the curve of the
space a door makes

frames, squares, grids
thought exchange—
does orange transform?

behind the doors, beneath
the floors
we dream of cities, paint
them in gold

as far back as I can remember
the curved wall has been the only
sensuous stretch to lean up against,

over a glass of wine,
to shelter words

spot, lit, under,
a cold prize.

Words by Haig Papazian, Luisa Alpalhao, Chris Purpura, Zoë Buser, Valerie Mathis, Jane Petrie, Espen Lunde Nielsen, Nahed Jawad, Jane Rendell and Sarah Butler

A collective response to Wates House, using a poetic form called renga, as part of the MA Architectural History module, Theorising Practices/Practicing Theory by Jane Rendell and in collaboration with author and literary consultant Sarah Butler

ORANGE SPOT!

Words by Nahed Jawad-Chakouf

Approaching Wates' House:
black bricks, yellow windows
white tent flapping

people busy working, smoking,
laughing and talking,
cutting wood

searching for the entrance
feeling puzzled
probably arriving

busy lobby, Don nodding to go in,
glancing at the Exhibition

curved wall, two lifts
chattering lobby
begin searching for the room

wondering in the corridors,
reaching dead-ends
passing by toilets, the ladies,
the gentlemen

again in the lobby
a breeze of cold, slamming doors
unit 0, 11, 14, 22, seminar room G01
mentioning the stairs, the red rails
behind the double lifts!

passing by G19, Old PhD room
dark, gloomy, quiet and productive,
eventful lobby

panels, screens, and models
playing with models, still physical,
first year, fresh students
I miss those exciting times

carry on, search for the room!
room G01, cross crit
students, draped work, tutors
critiquing

wondering in the long corridors
thinking I have been through it all…

asking a random student
mentioning the hidden part
behind the other passage

feeling baffled, starting over
sensing confusion, where is
the bloody room?

Looking behind the closed doors
people in the hall chatting
is this the mysterious chunk?
Where is the room?

Long corridors with set of doors
glancing at surprisingly orange spot

usually white, grey and black
crit space, how time changes.

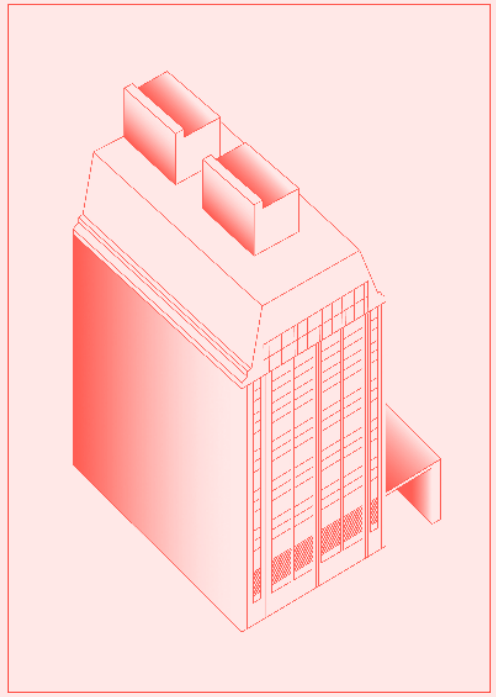


Illustration by Kaiser Ulla

Now, decent lounge, student sitting
beautiful graphics on the wall
looking at numbers,
129,128,127,125…

following the trail of numbers
stairs again, red rail

feeling puzzled, still looking
discovering another staircase
the blue rails!

getting to the basement
the workshops, opposite to the lifts

huge space, large machines
wood, metal and mask
looking up, white flapping tent
still looking for the room
the lift, exhibition space, main lobby

Number 5, the library
the smell of books
the Bartlett publications, journals
and architectural magazines

reading areas for students
quiet atmosphere, feeling calmed,
in peace

view of the city
grey roofs and black roads
rainbow in the colours of the city

rainy window, gloomy weather
English houses, red chimneys

big white Victorian windows
feeling baffled again
starting over

still looking for the room
reaching another time, the lobby

full of activity, hyper, loud
many doors, number, names
looking familiar

deciding on the door
'here I am!'

knocking on the door
'Please enter'
now, entering the room.

A renga responding to Wates House, as part of
the Theorising Practices / Practising Theory Modeule

Photograph by David Roberts 2012

busy lobby, Don nodding to go in, glancing at the Exhibition

I'll tell you a story of how wrong all-knowing architects can be. There was once a building that went by the name of Wates House. All the architecture students at The Bartlett rushed in and out of its glass doors, which one never knew whether to pull or push in order to get in; pesky doors that would open by trial and error—but maybe that's just for the limited few who find it odd that entrance doors should open by swinging out into public space, rather than swinging towards the interior.

If you for one second think that once you figured out the mechanics of Wates House's threshold you'd be free to roam inside, allow me, my dear, to point out how wrong you are.

Now I won't assume that if you're reading this you were automatically acquainted with how you were to enter our architectural fortress; either present your I.D. card to Don—a sort of guardian with the power to grant access to one of the world's most celebrated schools for architectural research and design—or find someone to sign you in and still ask Don or one of his reception-based soldiers for permission. And if you think that receiving a post-I.D. smile from Don granted you immediate access to the building, you are—without meaning to sound repetitive—wrong again.

Strategically placed in the reception laid the third barrier; this time, a terribly callous machine; a turnstile that would only grant access by the power of, you guessed it, Don's command. See, those who think the academics and administration hold the power over who is admitted into The Bartlett School of Architecture —I'm sorry to once again say—are very wrong. Very wrong indeed.

It's always the underdogs who hold the cards. It did not matter whether you were the Dean of the Faculty or Le Corbusier himself (may he rest in peace), no one could get in without Don's consent. But once you were done with these physical, pesky, tricky boundaries, all annoyingly placed within a 15 second time span of each other, you had finally made it inside Wates House. And right there in front of you… the Exhibition Space.

On its rather unspectacular walls you'd find posters, drawings, flyers, and pictures. Models, machines, materials and students all inhabited the same space, sending a message that spectators consumed while perusing each displayed project. Some projects were crude, others incredibly detailed and all of them inspiring. Arguably.

In our pages, we echo the curated nature of the exhibition space by extending an invitation to you, our dear reader, to uncover the marvels, the beauties, the grit, the brutal honesty and the tremendous complexities of the 'un/spectacle'; this time curated not by academics or notable figures who decide what does and doesn't go up on the school's walls—but by a handful of Bartlett-based underdogs who don't aim to be right and definitely don't mind being wrong.

Woof. Woof.

It's a Fine Line

Humour and stories in the work of Bureau Spectacular

Words by Ines Dantas and Regner Ramos

Jimenez Lai petting a cat

Portrait of Jiminez Lai by Jennifer Avello, all other images courtesy of Bureau Spectacular

If you're not familiar with Chicago-based architectural practice Bureau Spectacular, you need only to take a moment's glance at their website to quickly notice that the work they produce is quite possibly in the other extreme of what dominant, contemporary architectural discourses deem to be'trendy'. Bureau Spectacular's manipulation of forms, their colourful explorations, the way they give endearing names to their projects and the materials they work with have an undoubtable playful element to them which humanises their architectural output. This not only makes it appealing but also approachable to the spectator or user. Bureau Spectacular provides a refreshingly friendly—and possibly even happy —architecture, where silliness meets meaningful design; their work uses the idea of 'the spectacular' in an almost theatrical manner inherently tied to their creative process. Bureau Spectacular is an inquisitive practice that challenges orthodox methodologies in architecture, where storytelling is their vehicle to convey architectural values, and cartoons and installations are the most common media of expression towards a material manifestation. Initial thoughts are drawn into storyboards in a universe of speculation where fiction guides the process.

Bureau Spectacular describes their method of translating fragments of things into stories and fragments of stories into models/drawings through a process of fragmentary selection where humour meets an inquisition of the discipline. But it is through physical structures that Bureau Spectacular becomes most critical, when the cartoon suddenly obtains three dimensions, and experience is one of the ingredients. Could the installations be simulators of fake realities that point out possible presents? Or even invitations for the audience to enter imagined scenarios and become citizens of fictional places?

Last year the practice's leader and founder, Jimenez Lai, was attributed the Debut Award (under 35) at the Lisbon Triennale. This might make his practice involuntarily representative of a specific generation, a generation which struggles to find its place in a post-star-system. The spectacle guiding a previous generation meets its own impossibility and is replaced with criticality, where results depend on the vehemence of the questions. In Bureau Spectacular's questions, authenticity meets absurdity, crossing disciplinary boundaries in dystopic paths. And who better to talk about the practice than Lai himself? For this issue, LOBBY meets Jimenez Lai, founder of Bureau Spectacular, winner of the Architectural League Prize for Young Architects, and most recently, Taiwan's choice for representation at the 2014 Venice Architectural Biennale.

Giant Urban Toys

On Storytelling

What is spectacular about Bureau Spectacular?

I believe there is nothing spectacular about us at all. Bureau Spectacular (or BS) is something of a hilarious idea, a combination of a funny acronym and a catchy office name. But"spectacular" does perform the function of calling attention to a general area of expertise that we are better at than other aspects we are not good at—we are good at efforts related to visual and spatial effects. We simply don't go around and call ourselves Bureau Structural-Analysis or Bureau Value-Engineering.

You talk about absurd stories, fake realities… What kind of stories do you take as inspiration? If we asked you to tell us a story about something unspectacular, what story might you tell?

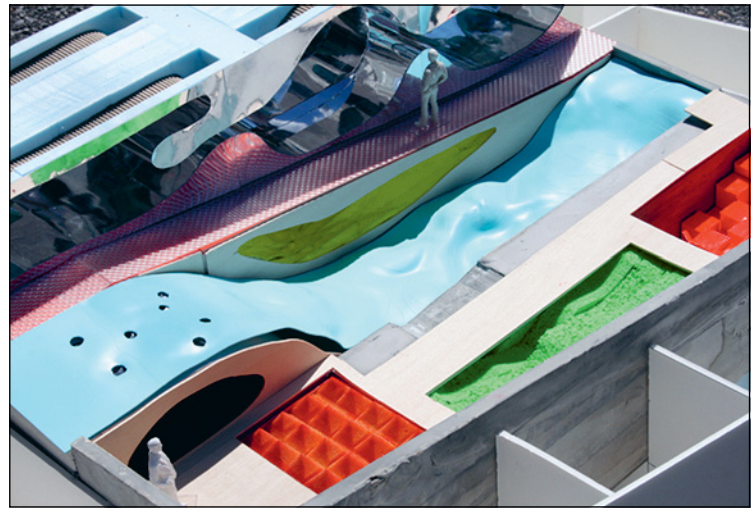
Waiting for Godot, it's one of my favourite stories.

Why's that?

Nothing in particular happens throughout most of the storyline —but the art of saying nothing is a sophisticated act I am deeply interested in. Recently, I have become infatuated with the New Testament—the same story got told four times! If the Rashomon Effect isn't interesting enough, this story structure contains the concept of repetitious representation (Andy Warhol). I can say nothing four separate times, but depending on how I say it the same nothing becomes four different things. This unspectacular feat amazes me and it inspires me to want to tell same nothings several times over until I get it wrong.

How did you start to develop your cartoon narratives? Do you have a specific methodology to get you started?

Typically I sketch out a storyboard first and fill it in with thoughts that are central to architecture. I also often think of conversations and issues I have with friends, and attempt to weave in as many "Easter-Eggs"as I can—a contexture of many storylines—but spoke in the most deadpan and reductive way possible.

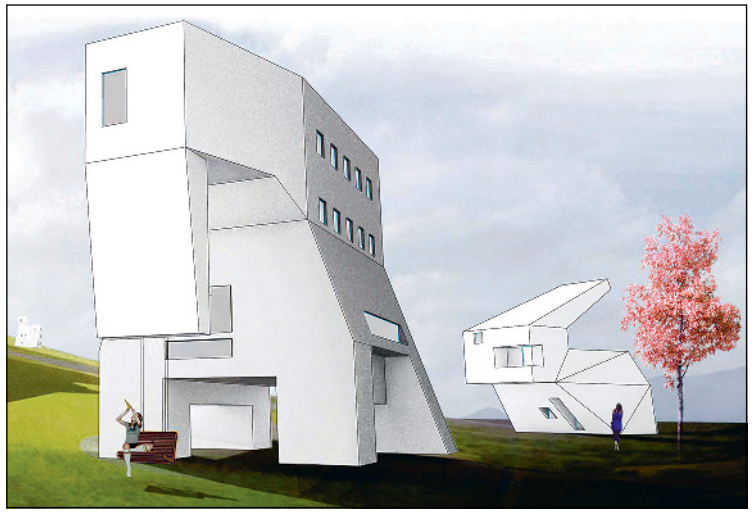


Cave House

On Unthreading

What is your favourite part of the creative process, taking as an example the project White Elephant?

We began *White Elephant* by asking three questions: What is a thing too large to be furniture but too small to be architecture? What does a thing look like when it is hard on the outside, soft on the inside? What happens to a mass when you are able to tumble it every which way? These were very interesting questions to ask, as I knew there are deeper impacts from within the discipline of architecture with each question. It performs the function of conversing with several dead—and some living— architects I look up to, and it could be my



Park Conditions

> “Recently, I have become infatuated with the New Testament—the same story got told four times!”

favourite part about the creative process. I guess talking to dead people is my favourite part?

We’d love to visit your studios and be part of the seance, then. What’s your least favourite part of the creative process?

Probably managing money, politics and logistics put me off the most—but, they are necessary and important to make anything happen.

In the project Phalanstery Module, you said you derived the project from a comic story of a group of citizens riding a Noah’s Ark Spaceship to a new planet far away. How was the translation from the comic to architecture? How do you maintain a line between humour and folly?

In a conversation I had with John McMorrough, he complimented my recent growth from Cartoons about Architecture to Cartoonish Architecture. It’s true —these are difficult lines to walk between. Things can get translated in a horrible way and become incredibly uninteresting. I think it still happens to me, and I am trying to avoid it—I still don’t think I did my best with *Three Little Worlds*. I guess the technical know-how of maintaining a line between humour and folly also exists in history—I have to upkeep a steady diet of Mitch Hedberg and Marcel Duchamp. I also think the extraction from fiction to reality might not be a whole-to-whole conversation anymore. I think I examine fragments of interesting things, write them into stories and translate only fragments of that into models and architectural drawings.

White elephant

What is the statement that Three Little Pigs makes? Does it relate to its context?

The statement that *Three Little Pigs* makes is probably closer to the biographical houses that John Hejduk used to make—it was about the relationship between people that produces the basic diagram of a domestic interior. If human relationship is as important, if not more so, as sun angles or street patterns of grade changes, then yes, it was a contextual project of three unhappy brothers.

On the Urban

There is a temptation to read your project Park Conditions in a modernist light: city in the park, volumes immersed in green… You talk on the one hand about monster houses and on the other hand about pedestrian friendly paths. What was your attitude towards scale and human experience?

I am by no means an expert of urban design—in fact, I think I am probably quite terrible when we scale up design to a city or even a park. My thoughts were focused on the idyllic lives that people may have and a sense of overly romantic joyful living of the rolling hills. In some ways, this thought might be closer to an English Garden than a Modernist Project—sure,

Phalanstery Module

> “Actually, that’s probably it—excessive drinking outdoors—that’s probably the best strategy to allow for fun nowadays”

a reaction to Wright’s Broadacre City is continued here, but I was thinking of Capability Brown meeting Parc de la Villette.

In Giant Urban Toys we read an underlying desire that cities should be more fun. Which strategies can allow this nowadays?

It is difficult for a designer to instigate fun. As soon as fun becomes institutionalised, it feels a bit more stifled. However, dark alleys, narrow streets and the organized surprises of corner-turning and large open squares may be ways of sequencing events for young and energetic people to drink outdoors. Actually, that’s probably it—excessive drinking outdoors—that’s probably the best strategy to allow for fun nowadays.

In the project Cave House you mention “the emotionality that can transform the uniformity of the urban landscapes of today”. Could you develop this into a short story?

I think I am a bit embarrassed I said that—you’d have to excuse me; I was 26 or 27 and quite a bit more serious about things at that time. I think a story can be derived from this thought—if we shut our doors, no one can judge how we decorate our homes, and the suburb is actually quite a liberating set of little worlds. From hilly homes to pink plush rooms, I imagine a translation of the City of Captive Globes from Koolhaas—the world of multiplicity is something I think we can probably enjoy a bit more. ⌂

District of Unspectacles

Since 2002, millions of dollars of funding have been pumped into the rebranding of the 'district of spectacles' in downtown Montreal. Here, Thomas-Bernard Kenniff negotiates tensions surrounding the regeneration of the area and critiques the resulting urban transformations.

Words and Photography by Thomas-Bernard Kenniff

What happens when the spectacle takes over an area of the city? From the Montréal sidewalk I am standing on, the immediate answer seems to be an expanding rift between a heterogeneous city of co-existing contradictions and a homogeneous city of controlled socio-cultural images. The contradiction between messy lived space and smooth planned space is a recurring theme, but here the notes are sharper and cutting deep into a spatial production that is nothing short of spectacular.

From where I am standing, my back to the bar Les Foufounes Électriques, just west of the Metropolis concert hall, you can see over the tired and cracked asphalt of Sainte-Catherine Street where it meets Montréal's "Main", the Boulevard Saint-Laurent. Across the street, right of the surface parking lot, stands the lone building of La Crémière with its vertical mural and a row of motorcycles. Left of the parking lot, Bar Le 281—a reminder that we are standing in the city's old Red Light District—the historical "morally light" no-man's land between the Anglophone and Francophone areas of the 19th Century, a migratory destination for prohibition-America of the early 20th Century. Beyond the parking lot, new condo buildings, Montréal's own gentrification by selective property classes, the bronze dome of a mosque next to the Société des Arts Technologiques' own dome, a 360 degrees multimedia experience. Further and just visible, the cornice of Le Monument National, one of the most important cross-cultural sites of Montréal's late 19th-century chronotope. In the distance, rising high above the rest, the commercial towers of two of the province's major companies —nationalised hydro-electricity and Desjardins credit union. To the far left, just outside the frame, a church converted into a drop-in centre for Montréal's downtown transient and most vulnerable population, the *sans-domicile-fixe*, who have always had a sustained presence in the area. To the far right, the glass façade of Le 2–22, completed in 2011 as Montréal's new "cultural storefront" and one of the flagship development projects for the area now known as the Quartier des Spectacles (district of spectacles).

Sainte-Catherine Street at Place des Arts looking east

These are the layered elements of an assemblage that materialises the chronotope of the city, tracing the past, foreshadowing the future and revealing a deeply conflicted present. In this part of Montréal's downtown, the spectacle and the everyday, find themselves to be strange bedfellows, mixing with preoccupying results.

The *Quartier des Spectacles* project officially entered planning policy in 2002. What had been up to this point a loose business plan for the revitalisation of the entertainment industry in Montréal's downtown core became one of the City's principal *grands projets*. It capitalised on the rise of the city as a renowned cultural and performing arts centre—think for example of Cirque du Soleil or the International Jazz Festival—that became its defining characteristic against Toronto's rise as financial capital of the country. The appropriation of *terrains vagues* in the downtown area by entertainment producers in the 1980s for summer festivals so succeeded in tying the image of the city with street entertainment that the two have over time become synonymous. Montréal is street closures, free shows, grittiness, *joie de vivre*, etc. What happened over the last ten years has been the materialisation of this appropriation, of capital flow —both public and private—into the industry of spectacles. The latest grand materialisation has been the construction, to the sum of 120M CAD of public

Sainte-Catherine Street at Boulevard Saint-Laurent, where the money and the pavers stop

“What more could you ask for as a reflection on the relationship between spectacle and the everyday than an entire downtown district delineated as spectacle?”

money—approximately £80M—of hard public spaces wired for outdoor performances around the province’s major performing arts centre, the Place des Arts—Montréal’s Barbican minus the residential—where those *terrains vagues* used to be.

What more could you ask for as a reflection on the relationship between spectacle and the everyday than an entire downtown district delineated as spectacle?

This is a *quartier*—a neighbourhood—not a loose network of venues. It is a centralisation of cultural interests, financial interests, an assemblage in time and space whose importance reflects back on the whole city. An area is delineated between four streets, roughly one square kilometre, that inevitably comes with internal conflicts, especially when delineation is done on a functional basis—the entertainment industry. The area, while it regroups approximately 80 entertainment venues, is unlike the habitual North-American downtown in that it is inhabited—its housing stock includes one of Canada’s only successful housing projects from the 1950s, the Habitations Jeanne-Mance (HJM), housing approximately 1,700 people—and is the location of one of Montréal’s major universities (UQAM). Walking Sainte-Catherine Street from west to east, from Place des Arts to UQAM, the contradictions become evident and perhaps most significant once you cross Boulevard Saint-Laurent, where the 120M$ stop and the once thriving commercial street shows signs of economic oscillations, boarded up buildings and brave new gentrified restaurants. Spectacle is a limited regeneration agent.

Five Unspectacles

In June 2013, I sat down with individual actors from the neighbourhood including the Director of the Place des Arts, the Director of the Corporation du QDS, the leader of a neighbourhood’s citizens’ association, the directors of the HJM Corporation, the producer of Montréal’s Fetish Weekend and the Director of an outreach organisation for the homeless. What emerged most prominently from these conversations were a series of conflicts, all founded on the identification of the area as a district of spectacles. The predictability of these conflicts was so unspectacular; effectively making the spectacle and its mechanisms appear banal, that they may best be described as‘unspectacles’. Here are five of them, as short tableaux.

Identity

Every entity within the area has to re-invent its own identity in relation to the QDS. It must inevitably position itself with respect to the project. Place des Arts cringes at being put on the same plateau as a corner bar. Voices in education, labour and dwelling, rise up to demand inclusion within the functional category of spectacle.

Public space

A series of public spaces become official outdoor venues whose image has to fit within a definition of publicness set by the Corporation. While the spectacle has been appropriated by large institutions in connection with the QDS—college and university design programs animate public spaces with digital interactive installations, “synergy” builds up between these bodies—the management of these spaces as spaces of appearance for spectacles make their use very difficult to reconcile with the neighbourhood’s everyday life.

New fence and gate between Sainte-Catherine Street and the HJM

The scale of spatial production

It is not the new murals and public art of the HJM residential project that matter—or through which we might criticise the spectacle of the area “those, to a certain extent, participate in the local accumulation of images” — but in the utterly unspectacular opening of a fence. The new gate opens up a latent connection between the residential project and Sainte-Catherine Street, a micro-intervention with huge social consequences. The action is supported by situated knowledge and a sense of scale in stark contrast to the production around Place des Arts.

Marginal groups

At the corner of Boulevard Saint-Laurent and Sainte-Catherine Street, a large mixed-use development, by “socially orientated” developer Angus, has been stopped because one of the area’s last remaining Red Light venues has refused to sell. While it divides many, Café Cléopâtre, has become a symbol for the transformation—read: cleaning up—of the area and the further marginalisation of marginal groups. Public space further loses its connection to the body.

Undesirables v. property owners

The large transient population that has been present in the area for years runs the risk of appearing out of place for new property owners, something to be removed. New condominiums advertisement cannot reconcile the allure of living downtown in the Quartier des Spectacles with the gross reality of living downtown.

What is ultimately at stake in each of these unspectacular conflicts is the heterogeneous mess of a downtown area.

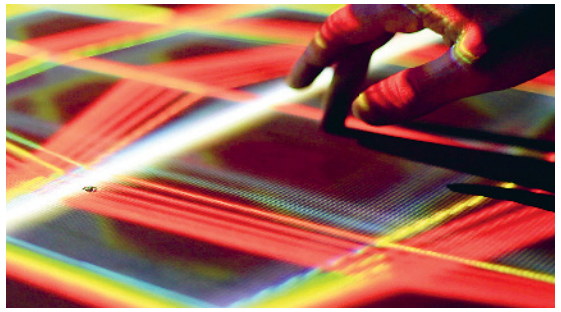
Le sac à dos outreach organisation for the homeless on De Bullion Street

From our starting point at the corner of Boulevard Saint-Laurent and Sainte-Catherine Street, the chronotope of the QDS is slowly territorialising—hitting the ground—but elements are still acting to destabilise this process. Paradoxically, for the sake of each actor in the area, developer, institution or resident, what might be best is for this spectacular territorialisation to remain continuously incomplete, continuously negotiated.

CONTACT

Augmented Acoustics

A Project by Felix Faire



The CONTACT project stems from my previous research at Cambridge University into spatial music perception and the concept of Music Aided Design, in which the neural processes of listening to music are shown to share processes of spatial navigation. This research was my first foray into creative coding as it culminated in a series of experiments utilising body tracking and audio manipulation to explore similarities with how people interact with sounds if they are given a tangible or spatial presence (paper can be found at www.synaestheticspace.com).

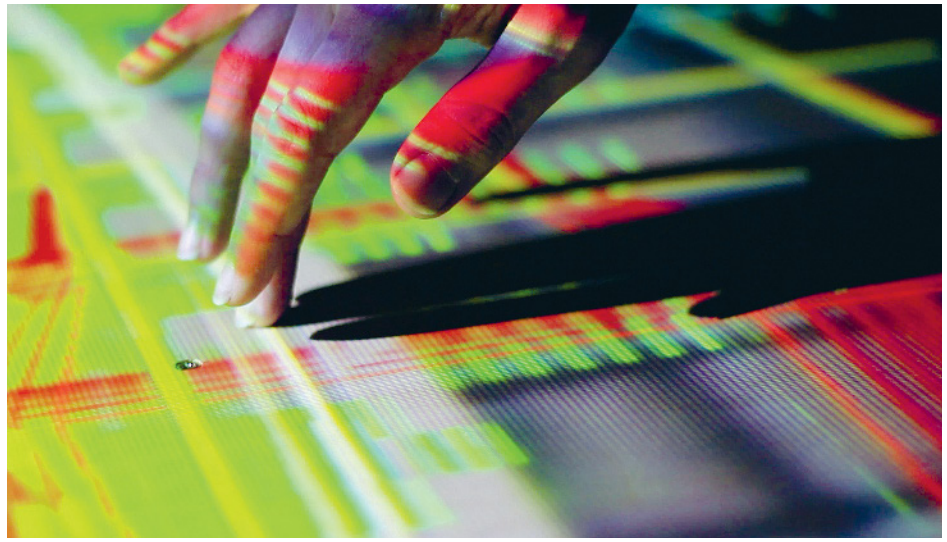
I found that The Bartlett School of Graduate Studies generally takes a less rigorously academic or theoretical approach than Cambridge and instead encourages playfulness and innovation. This allowed me to create the CONTACT project, which emerged from an amalgamation of my long standing passion for music, my previous research, and a desire to explore new mediums of interaction and experience whilst also pushing my own technical skills and abilities into areas that were completely new to me.

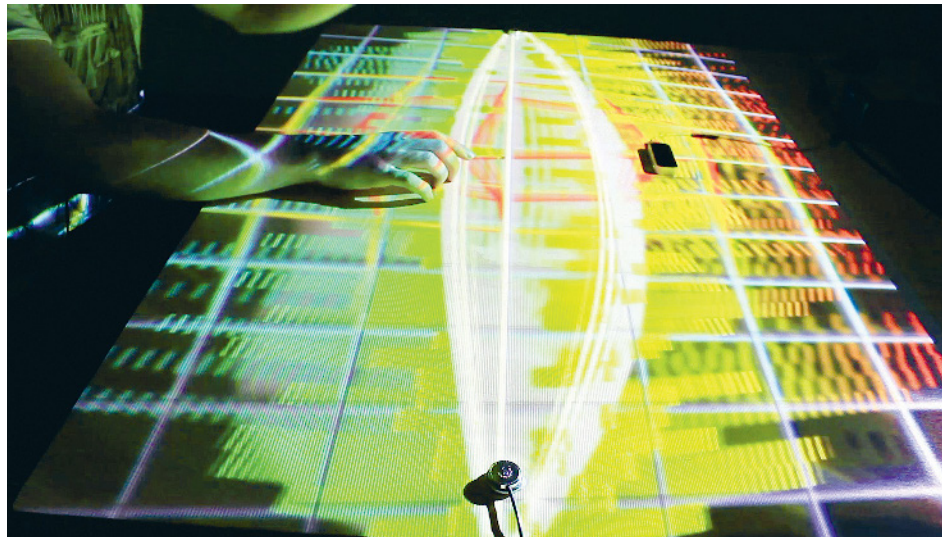
The project is essentially a simple wooden table that has been augmented as such that any touch, tap, beat or scratch will trigger a synaesthetic audio-visual response to augment the haptic interaction. These sounds and responses can be controlled and looped using non-contact "air gestures" tracked with a LEAP motion hand tracking camera and a custom foot pedal respectively. The gestures allow control of the reverb, hi and low pass filters and importantly the manipulation of the resonated pitch to create melodies. These effects change the nature of the visual responses to reflect the nature of the sound. This combined with the looping ability transform the table into a versatile and nuanced haptic-audio-visual musical instrument.

The instrument works by attaching vibration sensors to the table to allow it to listen to its environment and context. I had initially tried to explore spatial haptic interaction using Arduino and cheap piezo sensors but it was simply too primitive. I then moved towards technology already used in musical instruments, two high quality acoustic contact microphones were combined with professional preamplifiers to amplify the table as if it were an acoustic guitar or violin. I could then play with the incoming signals from haptic contact in Ableton Live to resonate the incoming sound and apply the effects. The signals were also sent to Max/MSP to extract spatial inferences from the stereo signals by comparing the waveforms of both microphones, this adds the extra dimension to the interaction. Analysis in Max/MSP also allowed different interactions such as taps, wrist bumps or sharp fingernail taps to be recognised to trigger different sounds and visual responses. This information was instantaneously sent over to the program providing the visuals (written in the Processing language) to create the unified haptic-audio-visual experience of the table. A simple tap with the fingertip would produce a soft percussive tone and displace the grid of the table beneath the finger. A deep wrist hit would trigger the classic 808 kick drum and send a shock wave through the string visually connecting the two microphones on either side. Whereas a sharp tap with the nails would trigger a Clap sound and visually *SNAP* these strings sending shards of coloured particles flying across the table.

As well as having fun, exploring new technologies and personal interests, the project is directly exploring the idea of turning ordinary objects into sensitive, contextually aware control surfaces and particularly the ability to retrofit this ability

All images courtesy of Felix Faire





to old or existing objects, buildings and spaces. This avenue has been further explored in the recent developments of CONTACT (as seen on my website/vimeo) that refine the ability for spatial interaction using structure-borne sound and even scale the project up to an architectural scale for an installation at the Sensing Spaces exhibit at the RA. However, the research is also part of a greater agenda to continue my previous work that looks for neural synchronicity in interaction. I find that improvising music is one of the most embodied actions/experiences as it relies on such a tight feedback loop between how the mind and body acts and how the world responds and influences the next action. I think this kind of visceral experience has parallels with the ways we perceive and navigate buildings, however their roles are much more passive and subtle. The project was a first step towards extending the agency of the body in the world in terms of its actions and sensory associations, thus tightening this embodied "feedback loop" even further to create unified mental and physical experiences from interaction… however in the case of CONTACT this search was playfully manifested as a haptic-audio-visual musical instrument.

The Spatiality of Boredom

Asphyxiating yet bare

Words by Christian Parreño

CHREMYLOS There is too much
of everything.
Of love,
KARION Bread,
CHREMYLOS Songs,
KARION And candy.
Aristophanes in *Plutus* [1]

"The flight took fifty minutes and seemed much longer. There was nothing to do and nothing would hold still in his head in all the confined noise and after the nuts were gone there was nothing else for Sylvanshine to do to occupy his mind but try to look at the ground which appeared close enough that he could make out house colors and the types of different vehicles on the pale interstate the plane seems to tack back and forth across."
David Foster Wallace [2]

The sentiment of unconformity with life, temporary or not, has been a constant preoccupation during more than two thousand years of Western culture. It has been expressed semantically and often structured through concepts of spatial occupation. For instance, before the emergence of *boredom* in the nineteenth century, *acedia* in the middle ages denoted a flight from the world that lead to indifference and spiritual instability. *Melancholy* appeared in the fifth century BC to diagnose a physiological malfunction that caused fear and despondency; and *taedium vitae* and *horror loci* were configured in antiquity to signify discontent with stasis, limits and boundaries. These manifestations not only coincide in describing a negative reaction to the offerings of the environment, but also gesture to the possibility of diverting or overcoming the undesired status through counteracting actions. With historical specificity that entail connotative difference, the infiltration and popularity of such words constitute indicators of deficit of meaning as well as of capacity of involvement.

The condition of boredom did not come into existence when the term was coined.[3] It surfaced to articulate and explore the redefined limits of the subject in modernity. The over-powering processes of progress, including capitalism, industrialization, secularization, rationalization and urbanization, demanded new vocabulary. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymology of *boredom* is uncertain.[4] Its meaning refers to "the state of being bored; tedium, ennui."[5] It resulted from the combination of the verb or substantive BORE and the suffix—DOM.

While the latter, from Old English, forms nouns that create domains or general conditions, the former has two possible origins—both with spatial associations. The first, supported by the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*,[6] lexicographer Eric Partridge[7] and philologist Walter Skeat,[8] suggests the figurative use of 'to perforate', probably as a reference to a forgotten anecdote. This sense can further be traced to two variations. One derives from the Old English *borian* that indicates the masculine action of drilling a solid with an auger or gimlet.[9] The other stems from Aryan roots and the Latin *forāre* that means to cut or to pierce in order to generate something new—as in ploughing—with a feminine tone.[10]

In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, these two modes of creating a void fused into *boredom* as an allusion to the result of a repetitive movement that creates annoyance as well as emptiness.[11] In a contrasting manner, the second origin of BORE, posed in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, links this component to the French *bourre* and *bourrer* that mean 'padding' and 'to stuff, to satiate'.[12] Although the two possible meanings of BORE are contradictory, they base the conceptualisation of boredom as an ambiguous space completely full yet entirely void. One capable of germinating from multiplication as well as from subtraction—from too much as well as from too little.

As a common feature in this equivocal etymology, boredom arises involuntarily, prompted by an external agent but

The Weaker Sex, by Charles Dana Gibson, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction number, e.g., LC-USZ62-123456]. Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.

concentrated on the receiving entity. It is porous and entropic. The zone affected by this condition lacks any defined quality because there is no indication of the characteristics of the missing piece or because the abundance of material does not allow the identification of a uniform essence. Although *The Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first public register of *boredom* to 1852–53, in the periodicals that composed *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens,[13] the term can be found previously in his private letters[14] and in literary work by other authors. In July 27th 1851, in correspondence with his secretary H. W. Wills, Dickens employed *boredom* to expose his concern with the effects on the visitors of the contentious architecture of The Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition in London:

> "My apprehension—and prediction—is, that they will come out of it at last, with that feeling of boredom and lassitude (to say nothing of having spent their money) that the reaction will not be as wholesome and vigorous and quick, as folks expect."[15]

The same understanding of boredom as an infliction of the environment appeared several years earlier in the first and third volumes of *Women as They Are, or The Manners of the Day* by Catherine Gore, published in 1830. In the novel—a story depicting the gentility and etiquette of the British high society during the Regency era—boredom accompanied the everyday life of Lady Lilfield, a character in physical and dimensional movement despite the monotony of her surroundings.

During her pastoral seclusion, by a careful distribution of her stores of gossiping, she contrived to prose, in undetected tautology, to successive detachments of an extensive neighbour-hood, concerning her London importance—her court dress—her dinner parties—and her refusal to visit the Duchess of…—while, during the reign of her London importance, she made it equally her duty to bore her select visiting list with the history of the new Beech Park school-house and of the Beech Park privilege of uniting, in an aristo-cratic dinner party, the abhorrent heads of the rival political factions—the *Bianchi e Neri*—the houses of Montague and Capulet of the County Palatine of Durham. By such minute sections of the wide chapter of colloquial boredom, Lady Lilfield acquired the character of being a very charming woman, throughout her respectable clan of dinner-giving baronets and their wives; but the reputation of a very miracle of prosiness, among those men of the world, who know the world like men.[16]

> "The concept-ualisation of boredom depicted an ambiguous space completely full yet entirely void."

The incapacity of these varied settings to promote immersion unveils boredom not as exclusive of a 'boring object' of a 'bored subject', but as a problematizing

Charles Dana Gibson (1867–1944), *A Drama*, 1895, ink on paper, 18" x 28", signed lower centre, Life Magazine

"Similar to an opaque cloth of neutrality, boredom covers, filters, flattens, distances and exhibits all aspects of reality in their most essential form"

relation that points to something beyond itself. This lack of own narrative borrows from the particularities of the environment in order to acquire presence; however, the encircling spatial forces become still, impeding movement. Similar to an opaque cloth of neutrality, boredom covers, filters, flattens, distances and exhibits all aspects of reality in their most essential form. Everything and everyone turn equally important and unimportant, demanding reconsideration. As in the case of Lady Lilfield and the sightseers of The Crystal Palace, boredom establishes a structural nexus between environment and experience—partly objective, partly subjective.[17] It critically questions physical and ontological inhabitation while inducing idleness and restlessness as modes of operation. While the first moment rises from the passive desire to find a space of belonging, the second occurs in the active search for a genuine place to dwell in the world.

The difference between where the subject is and where the subject wants to be not only suspends time and space but also begets a realm of latency. In order to identify a centre of gravity that sustains engagement, boredom promotes practices of transgression, experimentation and transcendence, potentially materialised in edification and/or obliteration. ⌂

1 In Kierkegaard, Søren (1992/1843) Either/Or. London: Penguin Books. 225
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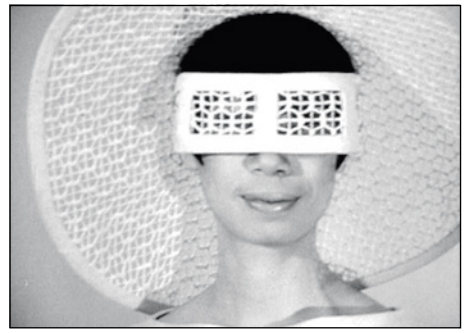
Through the Eyes of the Situationists



Film Still from *La Société du Spectacle*, by Guy Debord, 1973. No known restrictions on publication.

LOBBY reaches out to spectacle extraordinaire Dr Sadie Plant to discuss how the idea of 'spectacle' can be more mundane than we might expect

Words by Nito Ramírez and Laura Narvaez

Very commonly, the notion of spectacle is often associated with everything from brilliant performances at the theatre to a drunken individual causing a lurid scene on the Tube. Although the two seemingly qualify under the vast umbrella of 'spectacle', as a performance, we clap and give standing ovations to the former, while some of us try to completely ignore the latter. It may very well be that our understanding of spectacle is skewed. So what exactly is spectacle, and how does it manifest itself socially? Is spectacle about an extraordinary event that disrupts our everyday lifeworld, or is it something so subtle that it embeds itself in our day-to-day life almost imperceptibly? Is spectacle fabricated, scripted and performed like that which we see at the West End, or is it spontaneous, unfeigned and expressed like that which we see—or try not to see—while we're commuting at night on public transport? Or is it neither?

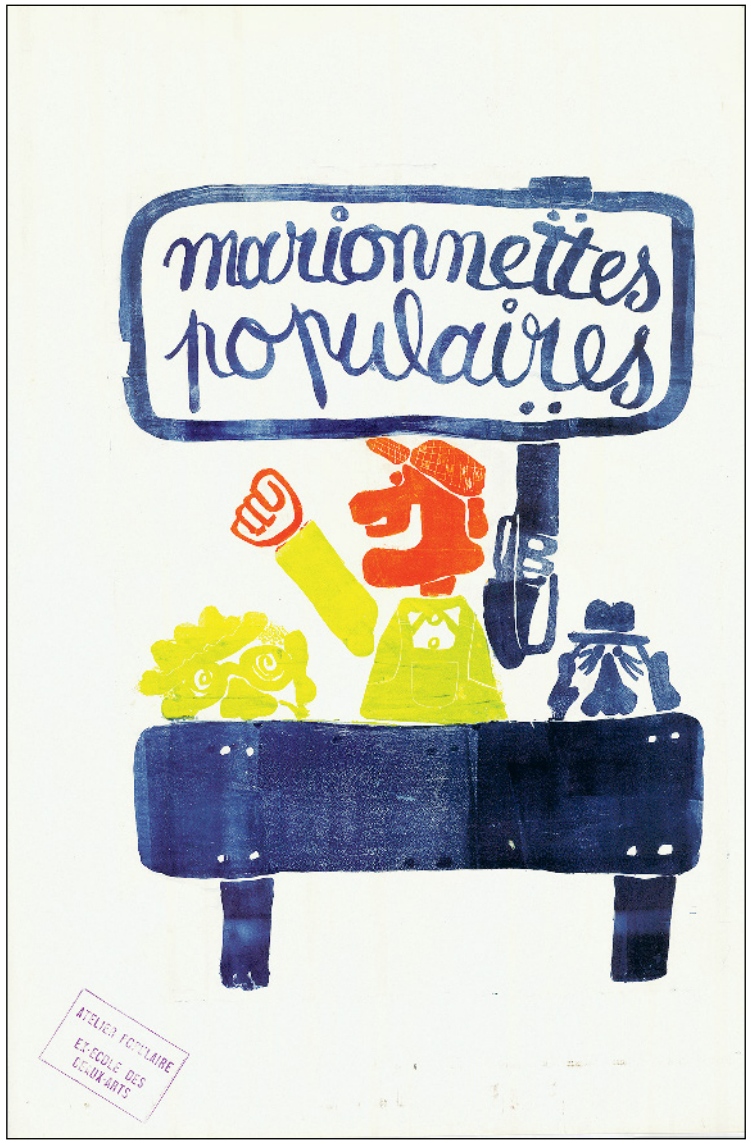
In the late 1950s, a group of revolutionaries composed of intellectuals, artists and activists began formulating a term called 'the society of spectacle', in an effort to draw attention to the ways in which capitalism extended not just to the realms of production and finance, but the entire cultural experience of twentieth century life; they called themselves the Situationist International.

To discuss where spectacle as a theoretical construction originates, LOBBY teams up with British author and philosopher Dr. Sadie Plant, who opens up in a two-on-one interview about the theory of 'spectacle', as developed by Situationist Guy Debord in his book, *The Society of the Spectacle*, and the influence of this critical theory in architecture, urbanism and society over time. Sadie Plant is a writer based in Birmingham, she holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Manchester and is the author of *The Most Radical Gesture*, *Zeros and Ones*, and *Writing on Drugs*.

How did the Situationists socially define 'spectacle'?

The situationist notion of the spectacle as a social phenomenon came in part from Marxist analyses of advanced capitalism as a profoundly alienating system—a world in which not only relations of production and consumption, but those of everyday life as a whole have been commodified. They could have simply referred to 'capitalism' or 'advanced capitalism', but they wished to show that the capitalist tendency to turn everything into commodities—things to be bought and sold—knew no bounds and was reaching into every aspect of daily life. This was the late 1950s, early 1960s, the first years in TV, the advertising industry, and a culture of conspicuous consumption. But it was clear that people were not just caught up in the system when they were at work, nor even simply when they went shopping—they were buying off-the-shelf lifestyles rather than living their own lives—and worse still, that when they wished to go back to doing their own thing, they no longer knew where or how to find it or what it might be.

Both needs and desires are packaged and sold back to us as spectacle—images, appearances, and superficialities. The life drains out of things and experiences, which become flattened and remote, rendered equivalent to each other —a world in which we know 'the price of everything and the value of nothing',



Marionnettes Populaires, by Atelier Populaire, 1968. *Beauty Is In the Street*, image thanks to Four Corners Books

experiences which have all the appearance of real engagement but none of the reality. The treatment of 'news' in the mass media, for example, renders a civil war, a celebrity haircut and a corporate takeover equivalent: news is packaged, stories are covered… but what's inside the package, under the covers? Even political rebellion is reduced to a matter of wearing the right T-shirts—the right image is all that matters.

Tell us about Guy Debord's idea of 'urban spectacle'.

Architecture was extremely important for the Situationists: they saw the social and psychological significance of the material context in which one lives, and wished to explore the potential of buildings and built environments to facilitate the expression of passions and desires, rather than answering to the functional demands of state and capital. In the work of an architect like Constant —who sketched out plans for modular, labyrinthine spaces which could be altered according to the passing whims and changing desires of their inhabitants —the Situationists saw the material possibility of literally building a new world. At its most spectacular, they saw the city becoming a zone of appearances in which everything seems possible but nothing is actually permitted. People can meet, but only at designated meeting points. Parties can be held, but only in particular venues and circumstances. Life can be watched, consumed, enjoyed through a filter of commodity relations, but not directly lived. You want true passion? It's what you'll get if you wear this perfume, drink this fruit juice, buy that car. You want freedom? Just get the right jeans, open a certain bank account, use a particular face cream. You can get the feeling that even the most intimate moments have been hijacked by this world of images, as you wave goodbye to a lover at a railway station and realise you are following the script of an advert. For the situationists there was no escape, no possibility of dropping out—but there were opportunities to subvert the spectacle by playing it against itself. Then again, it starts to become difficult to see what's working to support the spectacle or against it: when Barbara Kruger's slogans—"I shop therefore I am" were hung in Selfridges, for example, it wasn't easy to know who was fooling whom.

"You want true passion? It's what you'll get if you wear this perfume, drink this fruit juice, buy that car."

as the saying goes. Everyday life was impoverished; people were trapped in a world of false needs which could only be countered by a 'revolution of everyday life'. In more immediate terms, the key to this lies in the creation or facilitation of disruptive, subversive situations —hence the term 'situationist'.

So 'spectacle' actually goes much deeper than its association with grandiose performances.

Yes, the situationist spectacle refers not simply to large-scale, dazzling visual events, and does not necessarily map onto them—it is rather a matter of empty gestures, hollowed-out, flattened

How has the notion of the spectacular shifted for contemporary audiences? How are today's ubiquitous technologies affecting participation in our daily lives?

The interactivity of many new media has enormous potential to destabilise and contest the spectacular nature of many older media and cultural forms. TV, for example, was the epitome of a spectacular medium: centralised broadcasting to entirely passive spectators. With the

"The Situationists saw the city becoming a zone of appearances in which everything seems possible but nothing is actually permitted."

advent of the internet and mobile telecommunications, however, as well as social media such as blogging and twitter, new possibilities of decentralised, more horizontal and less spectacular communications come into play. They are cheap, accessible and lend themselves to much of the spontaneity and immediacy beloved by the Situationists —and they have indeed had an impact on many recent political situations, introducing a vital element of self-organisation and creativity to upheavals from Tunis to Kiev. None of these developments are enough on their own to rock the spectacular nature of social relations: for the Situationists, even the most radical gesture can be recuperated, and in a similar vein one might say that even the most grass-roots, participatory network can be packaged, sold and turned back into a spectacular form. Flash mobs organised by mobile phone companies… that says it all.

So what would their critique be? The spectacle produced spontaneously by media technologies is positive, but when those devices are used to sell us an idea/spectacle it's negative?

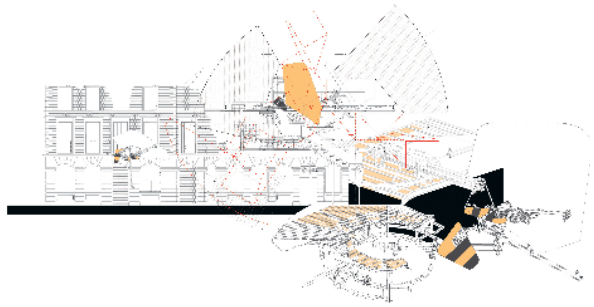
The one is about creating autonomous situations, the other is a matter of following instructions. But the fact that it has become so hard to tell the difference says a lot about the extent to which any notion of autonomous activity has become lost, or at least highly problematised, by the advances of capitalism. Mobile phones, in this example, really can be used to orchestrate spontaneous, truly participatory, self-organising and potentially extremely destabilising events—the kind of thing that might really shock people out of their daily routines, waking them up to the thought that another way of life is possible. Social media really have played their part in many big upheavals over the last few years, and interestingly enough these have not just been about instituting political change: their occupations and camps have involved building environments and establishing temporary spaces in which people could experience and experiment with alternative forms of social organisation—in Tahrir Square, for example, people camped for weeks, organising themselves and perhaps learning and experiencing things during this time which were far more powerful than anything that was to happen later in more standard political terms. This wasn't spectacle—of course it looked great—but its appearance was merely a side-effect of something effected precisely not for the sake of appearances, but rather a process of self-organisation, an autonomous movement as opposed to something orchestrated from above. But a flash mob organised by a mobile phone company—that has all the appearance of a self-organised experience, a spontaneous emergence, but none of the reality—at least not intentionally.

Do we still have a society of spectacle similar to what Debord depicted?

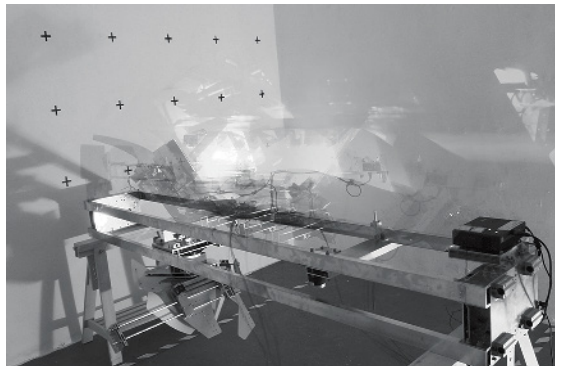
Much of Debord's description and analysis of the spectacle has only improved with age, as people have become increasingly enthralled by celebrity culture, superficial pleasures, corporate dreams, preformatted social media and mass surveillance. On the other hand, much of the Situationist analysis rests on a way of thinking which is, from a philosophical point of view, difficult to sustain. With all its talk of participation, spontaneity, desire, radical subjectivity and so on, some more 'authentic' way of life is inevitably posited in opposition to—and in order to critique—the inauthenticity of the spectacle. The Situationists were sophisticated, and this was not a naïve trust in some 'truth' as opposed to the false consciousness of capitalism—indeed, their 'radical subjectivity' was a product, a kind of surplus, an excess, of capitalist relations, rather than some natural externality. Situationist activism was a matter of détournement, literally the 'turning around' of the status quo—hence their penchant for subverting advertisements, for example, and other pranks designed to expose the otherwise normalised workings of the spectacle. ⬟

SUPERIMPOSED LANDSCAPES

Edges of misperception



A Project by Andrew Walker



This experimental project began with the question; how do we navigate indeterminate architectures, uncertain territories of blurred edges and illegible enclosures? How as occupants, can we orient ourselves without unambiguous visual cues of depth, surface and relative motion?

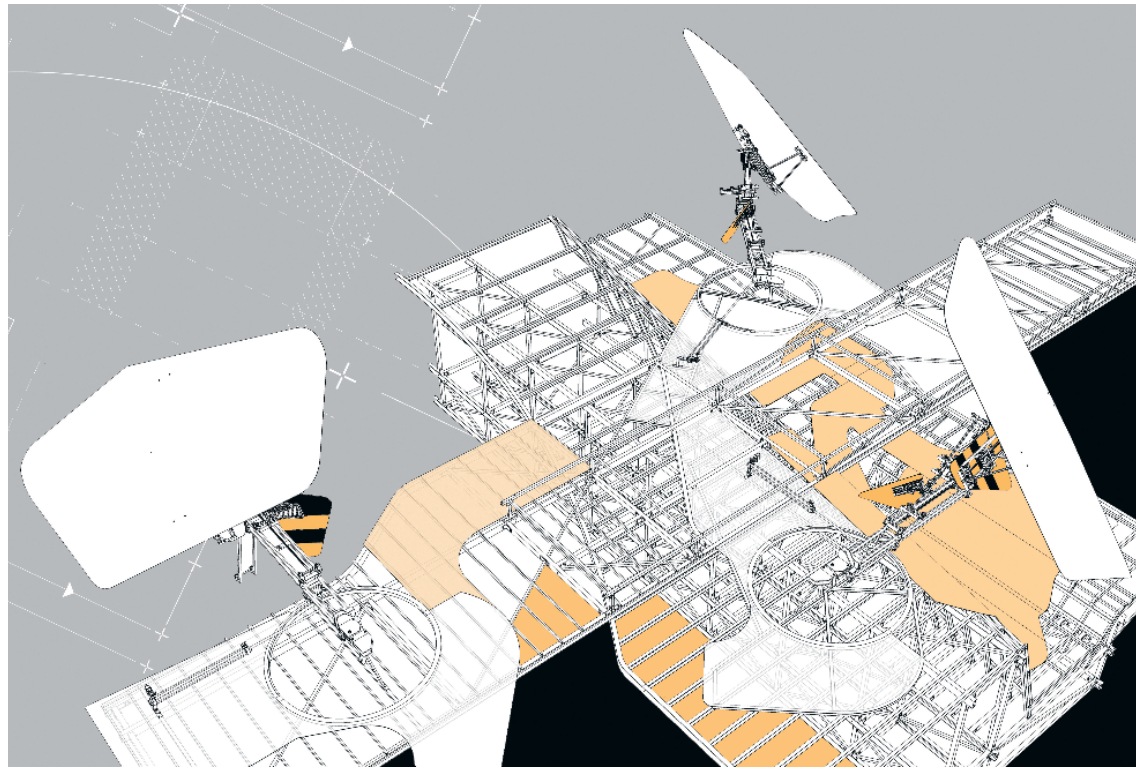
The question originated in my fourth Year DR report, a technical document describing the potential realisation of a homeostatic brewery, for which I won the school's prize. The report speculated upon a dynamic building component—a roaming, robotic projector screen which through interaction with occupants would playfully distort the building's edges. The funding from the award allowed me to develop the project from an imaginary architectural fragment to a physical artefact.

The process of investigation was still highly speculative, a maiden voyage through a world of coding, electronics and digital fabrication, collaborating with artificial intelligence programmers and light-installation artists alike. In order to investigate the relationship between spatial distortion and occupant disorientation one began occupying various nooks and crannies within The Bartlett, from anechoic chambers to dark, narrow corridors in an audacious Black Mountain college spirit.

Development was highly heuristic. There were many flaws, glitches and the odd electrocution along the way. The accompanying images document the development of the project from drawing to artefact to effect in the first term of my fifth year.

The first iteration was an embedded drawing machine which through video projection would draw out an interactive choreography between the observer and the space in which they occupied or moved within. Its operation was simple. A series of motion detectors would work in unison to give approximate information about an occupant's location and momentum (speed and direction). The device would translate this data in anticipation of where the observer would: a) be looking, and b) be heading toward. Once calculated, the device would attempt to 'hack' into the perceptual mechanisms of the observer through the animation of the space's surfaces.

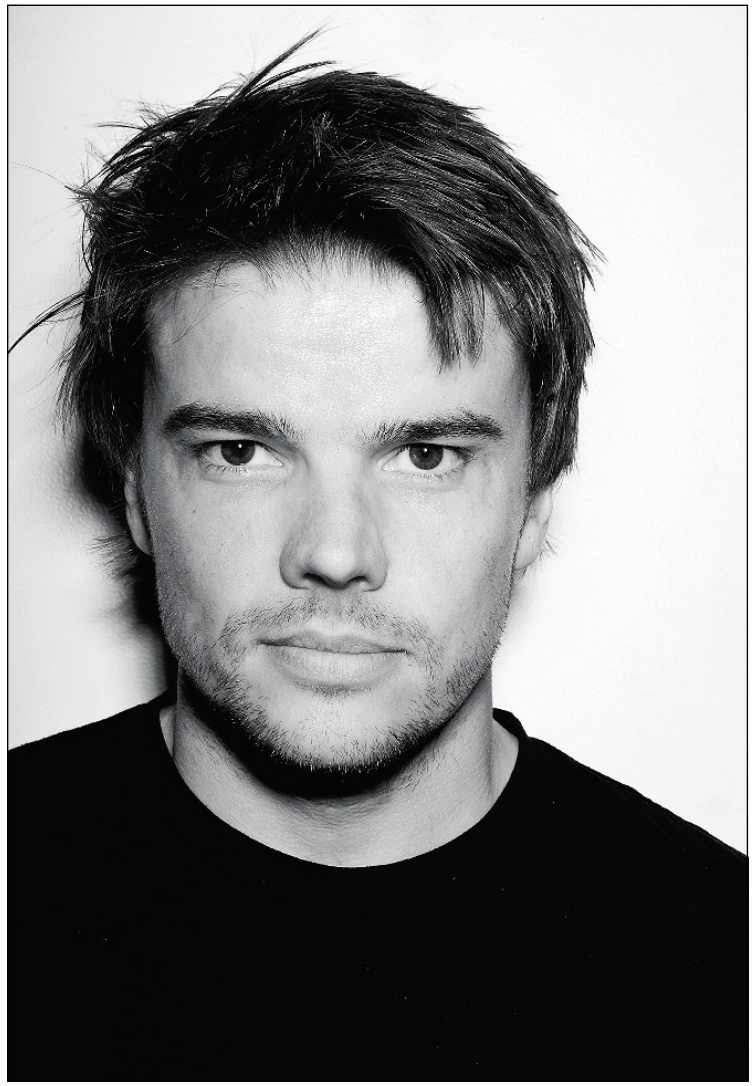
All images courtesy of Andrew Walker



A camera—aimed parallel to the observer's line of sight—would be activated and what it 'saw' would be projected—live—onto a flexible surface which could be twisted and bent by a series of servos and motors. This warping 'surface' with its undulations and resultant anamorphic distortions of the first camera's field of view would itself be captured by a second video camera and re-projected (overlaid) onto the initial scene recorded by camera one. Immediately the scene becomes fractured—illusions of infinite regression, superimposition and edges pulsing in and out of focus appeared in front of the observer. As they tried to navigate the space, the effect would oscillate in intensity as a direct drawing out of the choreography between the space and the occupant's movement.

Additional behaviours were built into the system as the project advanced and the devices became more robust and portable, being deployed in a greater variety of settings. The first experiment in genetic algorithms were embryonic and exceptionally simple, based on Braitenberg's theories of synthetic psychology. Could the device display qualities of boredom and curiosity? These were expressed through interaction with occupants and the time they spent within certain proximities of the device. The device would lure people in, through offering pockets of greater visual clarity and constructing potentially less confusing pathways through the site—however dwelling too long at certain points would result in a 'disinterest' from the device which would then seek other occupants to engage with. A process of learning the associative speed and 'imagined' proxemics of the device allowed observers to modify their environment to be more or less legible as they saw fit. Progressing from the earlier feedback loop which translated disorientation into greater distortion.

One can observe from these experiments that by manipulating a space's surface—through luminance contrast, stereoscopic shadows, superimposition—and creating blurred edges and uncertain depth, a diagram emerges—an *inhabitable diagram* of indeterminacy—in both *movement* and *perception*. Since these toe-dipping follies the project has evolved into an investigation of contours and edge recognition which will be on display at The Bartlett Summer Show along with a more detailed analysis of the experiments hinted at here.



All photographs courtesy of Bjarke Ingles Group

When the acronym spells BIG, you'd have no doubt the work is most certainly spectacular. But there is much more beyond the spectacle, as LOBBY has a tête-a-tête with Bjarke Ingels about their incredibly young origins, meteoric rise to fame and how architecture is a lot like playing Lego and Twister.

Big, BIG Ambitions

Words by Regner Ramos

The clock strikes three in London town and I excitedly give him a call. Like a bucket of cold water splashed all over me, I'm briefly overcome with a sudden rush of disappointment and my exhilarated state veers towards panicked nervousness; there's no reply. "Hello Bjarke," I texted, "this is Regner Ramos from LOBBY calling for our 10 am interview. Let me know if I can call you again." It's 10 am in New York City where Bjarke Ingels—head of the world-renowned architectural firm Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG)—currently lives, and I was wondering if he had forgotten about our pre-arranged chat. But within ten seconds of my tiny and rather unnecessary emotional crisis—*mea culpa*—the iMessages box on my iPhone displays the grey bubble with three dots indicating that Bjarke Ingels is typing a message. "Call again," he replies.

Danish-born Ingels has stories to tell. After studying architecture and landing a job at OMA under the tutelage of good-old Rem Koolhaas, Bjarke was 25 years old when he and former partner Julien De Smedt founded PLOT, the architectural practice that would lay the foundations for his enormously successful career with BIG. His work has been widely celebrated, and despite any personal feelings of awards as a measure of an architect's value and genius, his collection of 68 of them—yes, I had to count; more than once, I might add—over the last 13 years must surely mean that whether you agree or disagree with his vision, he's done something right in his career. A whopping twenty-four projects are already completed, and with eight under construction, 26 in progress, and countless other proposed designs, it's hard to believe that Bjarke Ingels Group is only eight years old. And when you think about the fact that Bjarke himself is 39, turning the big 4-0 in October, it's evident that that the only thing small about BIG is its relation to age.

After a short exchange of pleasantries takes place between us, I thank him for letting me to talk him, to which he warm-heartedly responds with, "Of course, I heard this was the inaugural issue, so congratulations! It's a historical moment in your lives!" If there's one person that could see the value of starting up a project and ambitiously launching an idea, no matter how young it is, it's Bjarke Ingels. With his clever design solutions, creative proposals, inspiring career and his fresh, youthful outlook on the architectural discipline, there really is no other notable architect out there who would be more suitable to feature in this maiden issue. From his recent projects to his passion for fiction, LOBBY picks the mind of Bjarke Ingels to discuss his playful philosophies, his views on perfection, his advice to students, his larger-than-life ambitions and of course, on how these then become 'spectacular'.

☎

Let's start by talking about PLOT. What did you feel was unique about it?

One thing that was objectively unique was that PLOT quite quickly attracted quite a bit of attention and was given some significant commissions at a relatively early stage in our lives. We were almost convinced that it was impossible to get anywhere in architecture before the age of 50, because that seemed to be the norm. So I think maybe PLOT played a role in showing that a younger practice can actually quite fruitfully create a platform for autonomous work.

How much of PLOT's method/ philosophy/execution do you feel is present in BIG?

In some ways I would say it's pretty much the same idea. From my perspective, I feel like I've had my own office for 12 years, just with different partners. For me and Julien, after leaving PLOT, I think our goals are pretty much the same, but we've evolved. Each time you make a building you discover things, and you also find out which things you know. You start to build an organisation that can actually handle complexities. So I'd say one of the designs that you are always working on, refining, perfecting, tweaking and modifying is the design of your own organisation.

Usually architects—and the discipline in general—are regarded as very serious, and there's little to no room for humour. But when I first became acquainted with BIG, it was actually through YES IS MORE, so it's refreshing to see that you find a happy medium between architecture and comics. How do the two inform each other?

I think it's very simple. I've noticed a few times that when you actually walk with an architect through their office you get all the behind-the-scenes stories, and the work comes to life. But in exhibitions

YES IS MORE

the work often seems dead, stale and sterile. That's essentially the challenge we tried to set: what if we could make an exhibition and publication that really feels like walking through the construction site, the office or the finished building with the architect?

We tried different ways. We tried printing out the Powerpoints from my lectures and putting post-its on them with what I would say about each image; it became a bit impromptu, and it dawned on us that's exactly what graphic novels are. A graphic novel is a form of publication that is created to combine words and images into an almost cinematic narrative experience. Essentially what we did was, we captured the form of a graphic novel and used it as a way to tell stories about architecture.

BIG is very distinctive name, and although at first glance naming a firm "BIG" runs the risk of sounding pretentious, you downplay it through your playful diagrams and even through your funky typeface, thus introducing a jovial element into your brand. Apart from it being a clever acronym, what's big about BIG?

Well, firstly, PLOT was linked to this idea of having a double entendre, mostly around the plot of the narrative. So when Julien and I decided to split up, we decided to leave PLOT as as the name of our collaboration and pursue architecture under new names. It was kind of hard to come up with something that would have any credibility, because suddenly we were no longer PLOT. Now we're…

{lets out an exasperated scream}

We didn't know! We needed to be able to call the group something that that you could refer to in the first person. Even though an acronym sends a simpler message, I still wanted it to have a name that people within the office as well as outside could refer to as an entity on its own. And that's BIG, Bjarke Ingels Group! I also like that it's somewhere between a band and a large corporation, so it sounds both corporate and almost like a band. You know how sometimes they're like called 'The-Name-of-the-Person Band'!

Like Dave Matthews Band.

Yeah! Also, there was something funny about being in Denmark, one of the smallest countries in Europe and in the World—where everything is understated

> "We were almost convinced that it was impossible to get anywhere in architecture before the age of 50"

—and then to call your office BIG.

{starts tittering}

it was one of the most least likely things that could ever work!

And in terms of your architecture, where does the bigness come into play?

Similar to what we did with PLOT, what we tried to do was bring the 'big ambition' back into architecture. If you look at the big picture, architecture is the art and science of making the world you live in a little bit more like you would want it to be. I'm fascinated when I look at the world of computer games, like Minecraft and Warcraft, because they're these parallel universes that people are drawn to, where they can live in another

8 House

kind of world. In Minecraft you can even create a world that you dream about or that you long for, and inhabit it. There's an incredibly fundamental urge for people to mould their own environments, which is why Lego is the biggest toy company in the world, and Minecraft is becoming one of the most successful computer games in the world. There's some kind of fundamental urge in this, and that's exactly what architecture is… except it's not pretend.

Architecture actually gives human beings the capacity to design and modify planet earth so that it fits with the way they want to live. It's probably one of the greatest potentials humankind has. Darwinian evolution shows us that life has evolved by adapting to the surroundings; once human beings invented tools and technology, we acquired the capacity to adapt our surroundings to life, so in a way architecture's almost a reversal of evolution. Rather than life adapting to the world around it, the world adapts to life.

Let's pick up on that topic of technology. Even though drawings and images have always been an inherent part of the discipline, now we have sophisticated computer visualisation softwares that magnify—and in some cases, misconstrue—the architectural project. Do you think that with the advent of sophisticated computer capacities, the architectural discipline is reinforcing a visual fetishism for buildings?

I'm not sure. Architects have always worked with whatever tools they had, and I think that nowadays there's a greater demand to predict the design's outcome. That is both stifling and enabling, but the capacity to pre-visualise things allows you to create a more informed discussion. What I think is interesting in computer technology is the fact we have the capacity to turn design parameters into something that can literally inform the design. The reason why we spend quite a bit of time in analysing the project's condition, diagramming the parameters, trying to establish what the greatest potentials are and what the greatest problem is, is that once you've identified the key criteria, you can turn them into the driving force of the design process. You can use that information to inform your design decisions so you don't make them just for fun.

For some, a 'spectacular' architectural project equates to a finely crafted, carefully detailed, formally stunning work. But I wonder if the spectacular aspect of architecture transcends this simplistic perspective. Is the 'un/spectacular', in architecture, merely a visual expression, or is it something more? Where do you position your work regarding 'the spectacular', if at all?

{takes a moment to think}

One thing that's important to understand about our office is that a lot of the work that has given us the platform we have today is essentially affordable housing in the outskirts of Copenhagen: VM House, the first project by PLOT, hosts affordable apartments in a developing neighbourhood; The Mountain, the first BIG project for the same client, combined a parking structure and homes, and it provided the homes with some form of suburban lifestyle, with gardens and views in the middle of the city; the 8 House, takes the idea of a local community and puts it into three-dimensional urban form. So unlike a lot of the architects that we compete with, who really come from the spectacular mentality—like doing art

8 House

museums or opera houses or whatever — we actually come from taking the everyday and modifying it in a way that creates more possibilities for the people living there.

Multi-family housing hasn't really had a tremendous amount of innovation, because it's incredibly difficult to do anything with those constrained budgets for very tight space programmes. You also have the building regulations assigned to ordinary buildings, so you don't have the regulatory leeway that cultural landmark buildings could have. The biggest project we're doing in Copenhagen today is a power plant that turns waste into electricity and domestic heating, and we are simultaneously producing it as

> "You have to find ways to hack the system to deliver buildings that seem almost like they're from science fiction"

a manmade topography to create the first alpine ski slope in Denmark. In many ways, part of our agenda is to uncover the potential of amazement, enjoyment and expression of life within the constraints of the everyday.

Often 'spectacular' designs become unspectacular if repeated. Although your work varies formally, you don't seem to often stray far from the loop and the bends. Where do you draw the line between having a signature style and being repetitive?

We all have certain things that interest us, and I have certain things that interest me and that I do return to. In architecture you have a limited amount of geometries that you can play with, and I think a major part of it is to try to put that vocabulary to work in different ways and to make some cross-breeding of typologies that can enable a whole new lineage or family of typologies.

Is that how you see your West 57 project in New York City?

West 57 is a sibling to the 8 House in Copenhagen. It's the offspring of a European courtyard and a Manhattan skyscraper. What we try to do is identify successful species of urban typologies and try to see if you can sometimes combine the attributes of what seem to be mutually exclusive ideas and merge them into new hybrids.

How do you personally define 'spectacular'?

To be honest, it's not a word I use much, it almost reminds me of the spectacle of Guy Debord and the Situationists theories. I can try to describe it in relation to the architecture BIG does… On the one hand you have the classic functional architecture, where you have the consultant that makes essentially boring boxes that work. They may satisfy a function and its logistics but maybe nothing more beyond that. Then you have the *Avante Garde* that makes spectacular, expensive and sometimes, unpractical designs that are good for attention but maybe not so good at solving problems. BIG tries to explore the middle where it's through rigorous analysis of the requirements and hard working performance of the project that we end up with something that goes out of the ordinary.

For BIG, what makes us design a building that *looks* different is because it *does* something differently. The building should express that something in its nature, that at the core of its being, it is different. We try to take on a whole other set of requirements that are crucial ingredients to creating a successful community or neighbourhood or city. Essentially it's the same when you play Twister, the family game.

…It is?

In the beginning the task is you have to stand on a particular place and keep a pose—nothing tricky about that. As the game progresses, you load on more and more requirements, and you find yourself having to put your hand and your feet on rather distinct places, while becoming entangled with your family members. It becomes back-bending and enjoyable.

That's what we try to do in architecture; we strive towards the spectacular by caring about the everyday and the habitual. We actually take on more and more practical demands—social, cultural, environmental demands — so that eventually the 'standard solution' doesn't do the job anymore. We force the architecture into something that looks sometimes strikingly different but not despite its function; it looks strikingly different because of the way it performs.

Tell me, what's the most spectacular space you've been in?

Having studied Architecture in Barcelona, a good old-fashioned understanding of 'spectacular' is the Sagrada Familia. Gaudi was a spectacular architect. Also, the Sydney Opera House's urban podium has this incredibly generous gesture inviting people to invade the roof scape of this sort of high brow institution. It's an amazing space! I've been in a lot of cool spaces, so it's hard to say!

And in terms of your own projects?

The most spectacular space we've done, I would have to say is the Danish Maritime Museum.

I can see that. It must have had quite a few challenges with it being a UNESCO heritage site.

Yes. And when you walk around in it, it is completely mind-blowing and incredibly abstract, expressive, simple; a clash of the old and the new; the lightness of the glass and the heavy submerged vessel in the concrete dock. It is a really, really profound experience and way more expressive, way more spectacular than anything we've ever done before.

Recently you designed a maze, which seems like a very fun project to do; but then again, you've also won the commission for Lego House, which sounds like an architect's/child's dream! Which of BIG's projects has been the most fun to work on?

You cant really ask a mother to choose between her children, because she loves them all! But no doubt that the Lego project really felt like a calling. You know, I honestly couldn't see another architect who would be as prepared to take on the design of the Lego House.

Did you ever play with Legos as a kid?

Yeah, but I think I share that with a substantial part of the population of planet earth.

{*laugh*}

Lego House

My first Lego set was the yellow castle from 1978/1979, which was one of the corner stones of Lego culture.

And why do you say you can't imagine another firm other than BIG to be more equipped to work with Lego?

This idea of 'serious play', which is the philosophy of Lego, is in many ways how we approach architecture at BIG. We take it incredibly serious, but a major part of any kind of development or breakthrough is that you experiment through playful experimentation. One of the geniuses of Lego is that it is actually through incredible perfection that it becomes possible to *make* Lego. If you take a Lego brick from the 60's, it's going to fit together with a Lego brick that's just came out of the factory today.

It's only because of this incredible perfection that it actually works and that it remains an unlimited resource of possibilities. Our work is done so with so much attention to detail! People tend to not understand that the only way affordable multi-family housing turns into architecture is by paying an incredible amount of attention to detail and execution and by really understanding how things are put together—what drives costs. You have to find ways to hack the system to deliver buildings that seem almost like they're from science fiction: a power plant where you can ski on the roof, a housing block where you can cycle to the penthouse; these things I feel are almost too good to be true, but they are built within the exact same parameters that all of the other sad boxes or apartment blocks are built with. It's actually perfection that makes the playful possible, to be serious in order to be able to play.

I want to go back to something that you said earlier, when you were talking about PLOT. You've been heralded as one of the youngest rising architects out there; you've accomplished so much, and you're not even 40! That's really refreshing to see, because younger generations are made to feel like they're placed inside a long, long tunnel where they'll emerge successful after a 30-year drive. Through your success you've either shown us that either everyone's tunnel is a different length or that you're driving at a really, really fast speed. So for Bjarke Ingels, which one is it?

That's interesting. I mean I really don't know exactly what went right, right? At first, I didn't want to become an architect, I wanted to become a cartoonist, then I got fascinated by Architecture. So at one point, I got an internship and later a job at OMA, which was the only place I wanted to work, it was my dream. And in a way when that dream had been lived, there was nothing else for me. I was in a real way, out of options. There was nothing else to do except to try start on my own.

I think one of the beauties of doing it early in your life is that I had no expenses, I had no children to provide for, and me and Julien could share a 40 square meter apartment. That was where we both lived and worked. We could live off my measly salary from teaching at the Art Academy in Copenhagen. So I think that's definitely one business plan: *{lets out a chuckle}* to be able to start up at a point in your life where you can live off a rock. ⌂

The Eames Leg Splint

Organic solutions for modern architecture

Words and Illustration by Kate Slattery

In the 1920s, Europe saw the beginning of the modernist movement. Fueled by the Second World War, it was further progressed as a result of the interdependency between social necessity and the architect. Countries were in debt and lacked material resources and labour. The role of the architect changed to address the socio-economic needs of their countries and with this, the way in which they designed changed. Society was looking for functional, affordable designs that were available to the masses; and with the Government's support, it enabled this. American designers Charles and Ray Eames, were forerunners in modernism with the manufacturing of a leg splint for the United States Navy. With military support, they had unlocked the key to mass production of designs that were both beautiful and functional. Until then, the US Navy during WW2 had been using their regulation metal leg splint, but it was heavy and over-exposed the leg, and due to the reverberations and unenclosed nature of them, shock and gangrene were common. They sought an easier and lighter alternative for use on the battlefield.

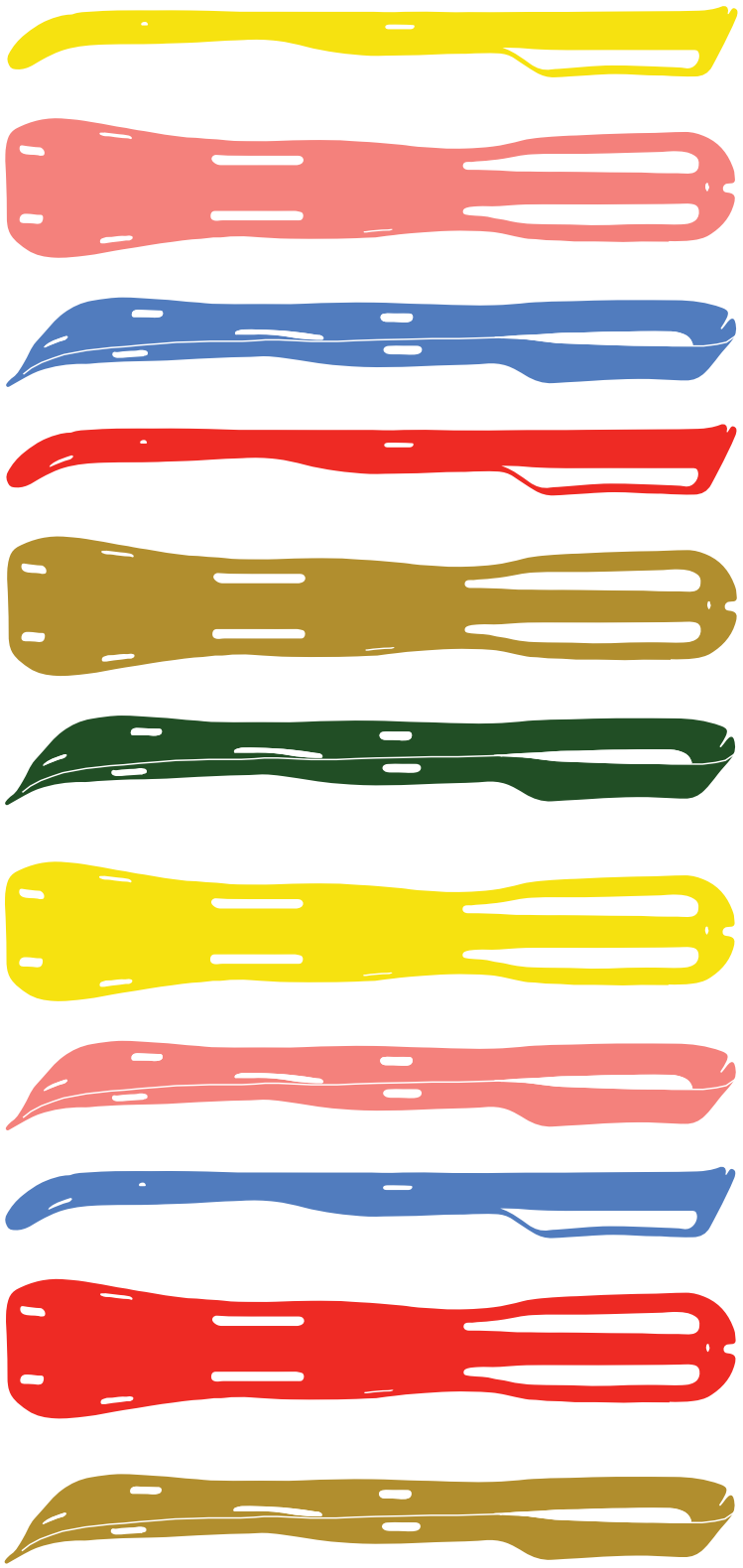
The Eameses, until this point, had been researching ply-forming techniques, and along with colleague Eero Saarinen, they had submitted some of this work for the *Organic Design in Home Furnishings* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1942. For this, Charles had created a machine that allowed them to form three dimensional compound curves in a single molding operation. Other architects such as Alvar Aalto had already been using this ply-forming technique, but they had only been forming in two directions. This meant that Charles had prototyped a process, which in theory, could mean easily replicating and manufacturing designs. In 1941, Dr. Wendell G. Scott, a Naval Doctor and friend of the Eameses, suggested they propose a new, improved leg splint with their technique.

In their brief, they wanted to create something that was supportive, functional, light and compact that could be mass-produced, and the end result was the outcome of highly considered prototyping. The Eames decided that in order to meet the *needs* for the leg, it was best to follow the leg; the organic forms they were able to create with their machining meant they could encompass and support the leg. With 'organic' literally meaning "derived from living organisms, being close to nature and constituting an integral part of a whole", the curvilinear qualities may not be the only sense of organic. In his book *Mechanization Takes Command*, Siegfried Giedion stated that: "we want objects round us that bear the trace of life." The materiality of the ply encouraged how the user interacts and *approaches* the object.

Beatriz Colomina's essay, *The Medical Body in Modern Architecture,* speaks about the idea of pseudo-functionalism, which applies to the leg splint: "we must strive from the outset to satisfy the psyche of the dweller". The leg splint not only serves a physical function in its form, but also a mental. The Navy wanted a light, compact, clean and reusable alternative. The clean lines of the design lend themselves to creating the image of lightness in the capacity of both weight and aesthetics, whilst the timber portrayed the durability. With materiality being key to understanding the object, it was also key in the design outcome. The holes in the splint are not only there for holding and bandaging the splint, but the carefully considered placements of these are to relieve tension and buckling whilst pulling the ply around the former. The Eameses were exemplifying how the utilitarian was becoming the forerunner of design.

Why was this shift happening? With another world war imminent, the progression of the modern movement was calling; the government were willing and ready to support new ways of thinking. The Craftsmen era of statement objects and pre-war decadence needed to be questioned and the designers were there to answer. The way of working changed and in itself became more organic. There was the analysis of the need, and through identifying the problem people developed the solution along a journey of application and testing for the best result. This meant being driven from experience and intuition to create a resolved answer.

The Eames's work on the splint unknowingly was preparing to answer an evolving need in society during the war. There was a comparison between what previously was being made available to the people and architecture and resultantly what architecture made to become available to the people. Charles always said "design admits constraint", but now the designer had been enabled to decide where that constraint lated by pushing the boundaries of technology through government funding.



Through having the resources to create their own tooling they eventually managed to manufacture 200 splints per day and resultantly supplied the U.S. Navy with a total of 150,000. With the war ending, it called designers to turn their attention to what was now needed and how this productivity could be achieved and used elsewhere. With thousands of war veterans returning imminently, America would need to address affordability and production in homes, and while the Eameses' furniture had been on hold, they would now be revisited; the techniques that they developed with products for the war had now meant that they have found a solution as to how to advance.

Their submission for the exhibition at MoMA had encompassed the idea of creating a single shell plywood chair, but this design was difficult to mass-produce, as there were points of weakness in the shell where there was increased pressure from bending. From understanding this and learning to admit to constraints, they designed chairs with individual components that would be pieced together. Being able to step back and address the *need* of the chair meant that many other issues were resolved. For instance, having a separate back and seat was more economical for production; if one part were faulty the whole seat would not have to be replaced. The dismountable nature meant that it allowed parts to be reconfigured and not to mention, was more practical for packaging and storage. Like with the leg splints' holes, they are listening to the material whilst creating more functions. Form and function were married in the utilitarian. They were cooperating without impeding the other.

As quoted from John Newhart's, *Eames Design,* Charles set out to achieve with the furniture pieces "that would be simple and yet comfortable. It would be a chair on which mass production would not have anything but a positive influence; it would have in its appearance the essence of the method that produced it. It would have an inherent rightness about it, and it would be produced by people working in a dignified way." The 'inherent rightness' is relatable through the organic nature of the furniture as it tries to achieve it

through the honesty of the design, the clean lines and the appreciation of the material. Although it is coming from the hard ideas of industrialisation through mass-production, the Eameses managed to still achieve the described organic. Ralph Caplan's *Connections: The Work of Charles & Ray Eames,* quoted Peter Smithson as saying, "Eames chairs are the first chairs which can be put into any position in an empty room, they look as if they had alighted there… The chairs belong to the occupants, not to the building." Formulating design in the natural overlap

> "Eames chairs are the first chairs which can be put into any position in an empty room… They belong to the occupants, not to the building."

of the client, the designer and society in order to satisfy each entity made the furniture successfully answer to the *need*; making its own statement. It has answered and questioned constraints to come together as a resolved piece. This showed that constraints don't inhibit successful design and these philosophies were furthermore explored in the Case Study House Program.

In 1945, John Entenza of *Arts & Architecture* magazine, announced a programme that sought for architects to design and build houses using new technologies as a proposal for housing in post-war America. Once construction began in 1949, and now out of the war, steel had become readily available. The Eameses sought to design a home out of standardised steel components, so that is was affordable and reconfigurable. Though there is an obvious distinction between their housing and their furniture, and the rectilinear nature of the building contrasts to previous curvilinear 'organic' forms visually, in essence there are many similarities drawn from their plywood forming work.

They started by using themselves as the clients to outline the brief; a creative couple that wanted a place of living and working that would house them and the objects, which inform their daily lives. In the same way that their furniture follows the need of the body and the needs of the consumer, they outlined first what needs the design should encompass. They operated under the idea of a guest/host relationship informing how the design should support the experience, and this is not only seen in the housing work, but in the furniture and the splint with how they accommodate the user.

In allowing the house to serve the needs of the client, they designed a set of parts to be freely orientated to address the individual, echoing the development of their furniture and how they decided to not form the chair as one fixed entity. Thus the house was reconfigured several times from its first proposal to the end construction, incorporating rearrangable screens and partitions in the design. Although there was visual rigidity in the steel, it enabled an organic movement and development throughout the design process.

Their Case Study House had become a scaled version of their leg splint. They were both enabled by what the war could provide. The war freed the materiality of the leg splint through new machinery, and the war freed America from its housing situation with the release of labour, technology and material (steel) once finished. These examples of the Eameses's work proves how organic modernism has been heavily influenced by social necessity and by learning from precedents. The initial military support in the design of the leg splint was essential for prefabrication and mass production and for developing the marriage of government, society and designer to find the best solutions. But it was also the Eameses's ethos that was key to the success in marrying functionalism with good design. The guest/host relationship shows comparison with the analysing of the need (guest) thoroughly to result in the solution (host). The splint, furniture and house ultimately influenced one another, and the scalability of ideas can be recognised.

So one must question the timing of the war and the role it had to play with modernism. If there had been no war, would architects have found themselves needing to question their role; would there have been the same needs that needed addressing? These needs in turn led to the leg splint that unlocked their future work. The Eameses sought to always address their design to the need and admitted to constraints. The movement may have progressed more slowly if there had been no war, but surely designers like themselves would have found other problems that needed solving, even if it were just to address the questions they came across within their own work. Can architects today operate under the same role or in the same way as the designers of the 1940s? The scenario has vastly changed; technology has become so advanced that any material can very nearly been manipulated into any form with the progression of machinery, and organic has a very different meaning in relation to earlier processes. Curves are easily achieved through computation in construction; there are fewer constraints.

Design can still be the sum of all constraints but this means that the future designer must put particular emphasis in the analysing of the *need* and drawing most of the constraints from there. The three entities of client, design studio and society may have expanded with new resources and questions but the key would be to still focus in the area of the natural overlap. The idea of organism transcends through the Eameses's work. Today architects, if they choose, can still be organic in the same way, by being fluid in constantly reassessing and answering the needs and questions of society. ⌂

Indivisual

A meditation on rogue visualist ontology

Words by Fame Ornruja Boonyasit

(adj.) A person whose visual style or portrayal goes against that of the norm.

"[…] The Furniture gallery is a long rectangular room, some 60 metres long and 12 metres wide. It is an elegant and lofty, black and white space. The high ceiling is barrel-vaulted with skylights, which are fitted with white shutters. These are controlled automatically to regulate the amount of light falling on to the displays—you may hear the mechanical sound of them adjusting. Looking down the gallery, the furniture is arranged on a series of 40cm high plinths edged with black, ribbed oak, which create a spine down the centre of the room. Each plinth is two and a half metres wide and about six metres long. More plinths line the side walls of the gallery. The same ribbed black wood frames the displays to either side, contrasting with the white walls, and allowing the furniture to stand out. The central plinth nearest the stairs displays 20th- and 21st-century furniture. The subsequent central plinths go back in time to the 15th century. There's a large padded bench that you can sit on between the first two plinths and another between the last two.[….]

Audio descriptions for the blind and partially sighted visitors for the Furniture Gallery, Rooms 133–5, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

However a creation of pure dedication to the blind and partially sighted, the narrative above with great intensity of details, would also drive a pictorial sign for a sighted person. The human is a visual being. More fundamentally, the eyes are crucial instruments that guide the sensorimotor through space; they originate the act of seeing. Nonetheless, without the performance of the eyes, the visually impaired still see in a unique manner. As Derrida manifested in his book *Memoir of the Blind*, even visual art is the product of the artists'blindness, an interpretation from his internal vision alone. Such a fascinating concept of blindness as the spirit embedded in the visual art, that the imagery of great masterpieces are in fact interpretations from the artists'mind's eyes. Derrida stated, "The subtitle of all these scenes of the blind is thus: the origin of drawing. Or, if you prefer, the thought of drawing, a certain pensive pose, a memory of the trait that speculates, as in a dream, about its own possibility. Its potency always develops on the brink of blindness."Counting on the invisible, the blind is implied in Derrida's term as an agent of daring moves, running at a risk, drawing from memory, drawing in a space in a cautious yet absolute manner. In this sense, the blind in reality would perceive of art, and maybe space, with a much higher level of imagination than the sighted, given that the *cogito* is achieved merely through vision for the sighted, whereas spatiotemporal appreciation of the visually impaired is usually narrated through audio communication. Rather than post-perceptual judgment, the way that everyday scenes appear in the mental image of the blind is much more intriguing. Insofar that a space is a multiplicity of elements, and an artwork is not a complete entity in itself, they are retransformed into fragments to be reconfigured by subjective attention of the blind's individual cognition.

The worldview of the blind and sighted are not better or worse than one another, they are merely different. A blind man's seeing is recorded as a mental image. He will not see what a Gothic edifice or a Modernist Brutalist building look like, but he could feel the roughness of the stone figures carved by the hand of stonemasons and the smoothness of the concrete surface produced by the application of wooden formwork. By the sense of touch and audio perception, the congenitally blind see the world in an extraordinarily different way, through a private cosmos embodied with their own individual schemata. Tactile and audio perception is constantly disrupted and supported by semiology. In complete darkness, millions of images choreograph in oscillation.

According to the classic conception of cognition, the perceptual systems are resource-limited. In a world full of imagery, perceptual behaviour of the

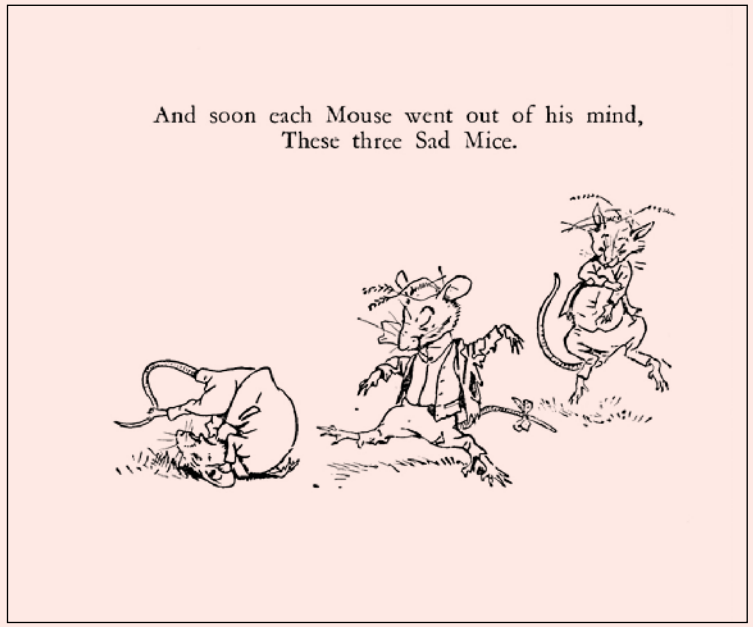
Three blind mice, illustration by Walton Corbould. Published by Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd

"The blind in reality would perceive of art, and maybe space, with a much higher level of imagination than the sighted."

sighted requires selectivity and attention. The way we perceive space is therefore in relation with the body, surrounded objects and motions. This is no different to the visually impaired's movements through urban space in everyday life. The spatial coding of nearby space of the blind is executed through allocentric and egocentric manners. In early stages of blindness, an egocentric approach refers to surrounding objects, according to the person as a main point of reference. The perception of space and relationships to objects could only be obtained through a rough understanding of their position. The allocentric approach provides a more successful perceptual system, with information on relationships between objects in space. With allocentric view, a blind person could approximate the location of different objects and create their own schema. This schema is the basis of spatial structure, which guide the haptic realm; it is the very essential root that makes traveling in urban space possible for the visually impaired, for the cognitive map must be perpetually updated. Allocentric relationships of spatial reference allows internal mapping of different nodes without any relationships to the viewer. For instance, "the school is in the north of the hospital" or "the sculpture is next to the sofa." With this method, the visually impaired moves through space, and consciously records the relationship of things into the mental map. The ability to move independently and fluently is correlated to the haptic strategies.

On the subject of sensory perception and spatial cognition, various studies of object recognition experienced by the visually impaired yield paradoxical results. As French philosopher, art critic and writer, Denis Diderot, put it in his famed *Lettres Sur Les Aveugles*, the blind is with full capability of object recognition by touch. His protagonist detects a shape and records it in his mental image. Once he retains his vision, he could recognize the object from the memory that he previously obtained from the sense of touch. This, nevertheless, is not a universal knowledge. As each individual's perceptual schemata differ from one another, the cognitive ability of space and object are different according to the condition of visual impairment. It is possible that a congenitally blind person would not be able to envision an object and find that it is difficult to distinguish shapes. An interview with two visually impaired men, one with ophthalmic condition from birth and another blinded from a young age, unveils all curiosities about visual impairment experience. Both men in their middle age are employed. By allocentric cognition, they could navigate through space without any help, and could indicate the spatial character with a high level of ability to distinguish different spaces. There is no problem in spatial recognition whether or not they have been in a certain space before. However accurate, their spatial memory has to be developed, recorded in a slow gradient of acceleration. In this case, pure tactility

> “The white cane carried by the blind interacts with the environment; it is an extension of the body.”



Three blind mice, illustration by Walton Corbould. Published by Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd

becomes instrumental in the dialectic between form and content. Hence Merleau-Ponty’s supposition regarding the phenomenology of perception that all senses are spatial, proves to be true. It would be unfortunate to demarcate vision to a single mode of cognition, solely by seeing. In this manifestation of *cogito*, vision could be considered as a thought subordinate to sense and spatial cognition, where each one of us has a unique manner of being in a space, of making space. Imagine a blank white canvas that begins to transform into an automated cartography.

Spatial perception for the visually impaired is therefore achieved solely by tactile and audio data. Voice information that is unique to objects and the way they interact is also a crucial collective realm of navigation. For the blind, objects are constantly updated though familiarity. According to Marius Von Senden’s *Space & Sight,* the learned pattern of repetition and reproduction in sequences of tactile and kinaesthetic impression is then created. The sharp echo sound indicates that the blind person is walking beside a wall. The sound of activities and the breath of fresh air implies an open space, whereas feeling of the hardscape underneath the two feet with chaotic flashes of different sounds suggest an urban scene. It could be true that audio data alone holds no power of spatial depth indication, but together with the allocentric approach, audio data turns into a functional soundtrack for the mind.

Perception of the haptic realm is often achieved through an extension of the sensorimotor. The white cane carried by the blind interacts with the environment; it is an extension of the body, as well as a mediator between the body and the built realm. To aid their ability to navigate through space, the concept of computer vision for the blind has been introduced during the past two decades. A visual prosthesis pursues the tasks of enhancing information processing capability of sensory organs for the blind and allows them to have artificial seeing capability. Images through the application of scene analysis are converted into voice information. The system operates in a real-time manner, providing safety aid for the blind pedestrian.

Despite the lack of visual ability, Chris Downey, a San Francisco architect who developed sudden visual impairment, continues his occupation as an architect. With the aid of a tactile printer, plans and designs are printed with tactile quality for him to walk through the building by running his fingertips through the drawings. He feels the world around him with the classic white cane, no high-tech, just pure empiricist experience. Once the space is wholly understood, he continues working on imagining the space surrounding him. The sound, the acoustic and the tactile palette of material, in the creation of a multi-sensory architecture. For him, architecture for the blind has the same quality of appearance as normal architecture, but only that it is a great deal more sensible.

Blindness, as being depicted in antiquity of art history, in biblical characters, as well as through the writings of Diderot and Derrida, has been the focal point in the fulcrum of the visual world. Paintings of the blind as a figure of metaphor that transmit subjective meanings in Medieval period; blindness of an icon; the blind guiding the blind; blindness as a special mark; blindness as the origin of memory, all make reference to the power of vision, while suggesting its fragility and limits. With the ability of seeing, one comes back to question the notion of spectacle. Two eyes blindfolded, one must wonder, is this a novel possibility of blissful spectacle?

again in the Lobby a breeze of cold, slamming doors unit 0,11,14, 22, Seminar Room G01

Seminar Room G01 was a ramshackle; it was rough around the edges, with chairs piled in corners, and awkward shutters that didn’t actually keep the light out for viewing the projector screen. You might even say that it was an unremarkable environment, but then again no matter how tidy, or new, or technologically equipped, it’s the discussion that happens in a seminar room that really counts.

Is it possible to speak about non-spectacle? The pages before you now restage a seminar in writing. They consist of a pre-set text—a reprint of an interview from 2012 called ‘The Standards’—and a series of four commissioned responses to this text, which in turn, we’ve entitled ‘The New Standards’. Following this is the transcript of a conversation held in person between the four contributors.

Now, you will see that different formulations of un/spectacle arise in this seminar—including as critical lens or mark of human effort, of a process of drawing-attention-to, and as a ‘flicker’ or change over time. Whilst these musings start with the projects and issues in the original interview, as with all the best seminars, it is in the further articulations/ questions that are generated between the provisional arguments where it becomes most interesting.

Or not. As a participant, you too, dear reader, will make up your own mind.

The Standards

Photography by Constanze Haas

Arno Brandlhuber in conversation with Muck Petzet and Florian Heilmeyer

Originally published in M. Petzet, F. Heilmeyer (ed.) (2012) *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*. pp.82–86 Berlin: Hatje Cantz. Text of interview reproduced with permission of the authors.

In 2012 German architects Arno Brandlhuber, Muck Petzet and Florian Heilmeyer had a conversation about some of Brandlhuber+'s recent adaptive reuse projects, including the Antivilla in Krampnitz. This reprinted interview that forms the pre-set text for LOBBY's first Seminar Room draws out some of the slippage between different forms of architectural spectacle and un/spectacle.

Muck Petzet Together we've visited the Antivilla in Krampnitz, on which you're currently working. How would you describe the two buildings located there, which you want to retain as part of this project?

Arno Brandlhuber They're two very unpretentious buildings that housed a state-owned knitwear factory in GDR times. One of them was built in the late 1950s and the other was built by a group of building apprentices around 1980. To begin with, they are not particularly attractive buildings. Especially the building from the 1980s, which become the Antivilla, is exceptionally ugly —it's an overgrown single-family house, a monstrosity with absolutely no remarkable features. But on closer inspection some remarkable idiosyncrasies become evident, like the unnecessarily large number of small windows that were built; they're all the same size, but made with different techniques: lintel, arch, and so on. It was the trainees who did the building.

Muck Why are you retaining these ugly buildings?

Arno First of all, it's simply cheaper to use what is already there than to build something new. The anticipated demolition costs for both buildings had actually already been deducted from the price of the real estate. Conserving them has, as it were, paid off for us threefold: we saved the costs of demolition, the property was nevertheless cheaper, and we no longer had the necessity to erect a new building.

Secondly, and to us this was at least as important, there was a chance here to have significantly more useable floor area since the area of the two existing buildings is much greater than what we would have been permitted to rebuild after demolishing them. The building code would have permitted three small new buildings with a total of only 250 square meters. By contrast, the buildings that already exist there have 250 square meters per floor. So by retaining the existing buildings, we got approximately 750 square meters of additional floor area.

Thirdly, there was also an emotional factor. That the two buildings had survived over the years with their obvious shortcomings, and that despite everything they had not been torn down long ago—that had honestly touched me. They are the survivors. Demolition would have meant all the emotional energy would have been lost along with the total embodied energy of production.

Florian Heilmeyer Which of the arguments you mentioned was the decisive one? Asked hypothetically: if it had been possible to construct the same amount of space in new buildings of exactly the same size and shape, would you have preserved both buildings anyway?

Arno Yes, we definitely would have worked with what already existed. Forty percent of the costs of a new building go into the shell and core work. So it's pointless to tear down something that could just as well continue to serve as the basis for something else. Of course it's necessary to carefully examine what can still be done with the existing building. That's an interesting reversal of the question: suddenly it's less about what I want, and more about what the building can achieve.

Florian So what abilities did the existing building have in this case?

Arno In Krampnitz we have a building with tiny or missing windows, load-bearing walls, and a corrugated-fiber cement roof contaminated with asbestos. That raises certain questions in relation to adaptive reuse.

Florian Sounds like a good reason for demolition. So what are you doing?

Arno The roof is being disposed of and we're replacing it with a slightly sloped concrete slab that has several functions: we're using waterproof roofing. Beyond that it's suitable for walking on, so it serves as additional space. In addition, as the slab independently spans between the exterior walls, the load-bearing interior walls become superfluous and an open floor plan is possible. We also no longer need all the exterior wall for structural support, so we're able to remove two thirds of them. We'll just get jack-hammers and invite friends to a demolition party. Towards the woods of the lake? Clear it out! The rough holes that result will be sealed afterward from within glass panels. And voila —the Antivilla is finished. One single move—the new roof slab—makes it all possible.

> "We'll just get jackhammers and invite friends to a demolition party. Towards the woods of the lake? Clear it out!"

Muck And the other building?

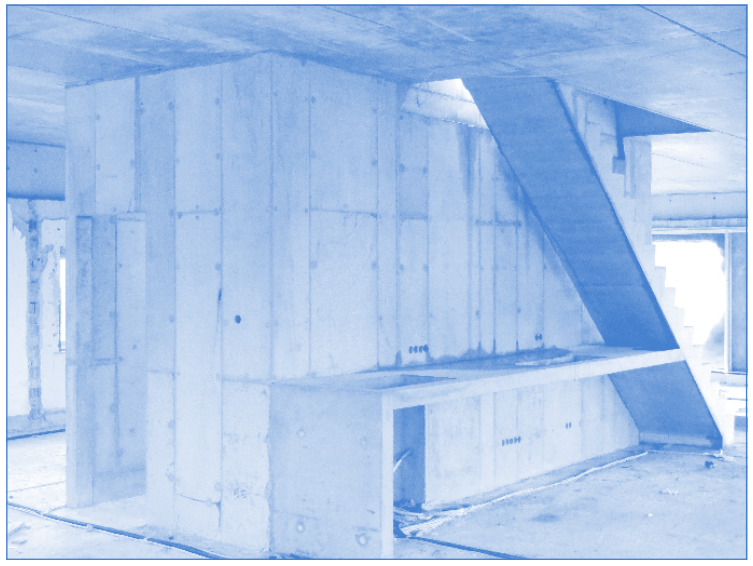
Arno That has a lot more going for it. A well-functioning roof, columns instead of load-bearing walls, and large windows at the ground floor, but also here there are tiny windows on the upper floor, and just one single staircase. All the needed features still exist. But they aren't always in the right place. So we developed a strategy of direct self-empowerment. We asked the two future users to move these features: the large windows from the ground floor can be copied to the upper floor, and the existing stair can be shifted. These stipulations raise interesting questions: where do you need a staircase, and where a large window? Would the small existing window be sufficient in this location? All the changes are "copy and paste" within the existing buildings—the existing elements are the kit of parts; nothing new may be added.

Florian That sounds as if the two ugly buildings are ultimately being retained not only because it makes

economical and spatial sense, but also because it would be fun.

Arno There's actually something else, too, which I think is essential. The question of excess: it's a typical situation for small weekend cottages. For weekend use, seventy square meters is more than enough. Our project work creates two buildings that are a total of 430 square meters too large. That raises questions about the follow-up costs, especially for insulation and heating. With the Antivilla, we reply by establish-ing different indoor climate zones. We don't heat the entire building evenly; there's a hot core, the sauna, as a central heat source. Then there's a warm zone: bathroom, shower, kitchen, and other areas with flexible climate requirements. We create these with curtains. Like an onion they surround the core; with the curtains, the zones can be adjusted and readjusted, again and again. And we don't need any thermal insulation: during the summer everything can be used without difficulty, in the spring and fall almost everything, and in the winter, you need to settle for a smaller area. In the remaining area, you need to wear a thick sweater. Incidentally, we stay within the legal requirements, we simply construe them differently: we don't upgrade the building; instead we reduce the area in winter, defining different heat and use zones.

Florian What do you do with the space you don't need?



Arno We don't know that yet. That's precisely what's so fascinating —the excess space opens up new questions about use and accessibility. By retaining the existing, a "plus" emerges, one that would otherwise never have been considered for financial reasons. Suddenly, an indeterminate generosity emerges: we have too much space. Who wants to use it? For what? It's a by-product that has arisen only from retaining and working with existing space as a resource, and it costs nothing.

Florian A "luxury of the void." That suits Brandenburg very well.

Arno Ordinarily something like this doesn't happen with architecture as it never produces "too much"; everything is precisely calculated. In this case, however, we came upon a completely different economic model: the added value doesn't emerge by creating something new, but as a result of doing less. Instead of investing in more thermal insulation, we invest in more room.

Muck With these indoor climate zones, you question established notions of standards. You don't create a fully insulated house in which all the rooms have the same climatic conditions. Instead, you actually create extreme differences. The residents then have to find out when they need what.

Arno Yes. Why should everything always be equipped with the same standards? There are enormous costs associated with this and, as a consequence, a need to refinance through continuous use and specifying functions. Why can't we just say, no, for different uses and different users there are naturally different standards, and these exist well side by side?

Muck Do you think that would also be transferable to a different scale? Aren't we dealing here with a very specific individual case for a very specific clientele? To begin with, in this case you yourself are the client, and it's also easy to imagine that other artists, architects, and designers would have fun with such a concept…

Arno Of course, it's ideal when projects demonstrate new options in an exemplary way. I hope very much that from time to time we create examples that are transferable. Our projects think about the relationships between living and working in new ways; we call into question building standards that are rarely challenged. A building like the one on Brunnenstrasse—as we quickly realised—could be built twenty times over Berlin and there would still be enough interested buyers.

Florian On Brunnstrasse you also challenged the standards that one would expect to see in a new building. You can do a maximum amount, but leave it largely undefined and unfinished. Unlike in Krampnitz, however, Brunnenstrasse is largely a new building only using the ruins of the existing cellar. So to what extent are the two projects related?

Arno In both cases the place and the existing condition prescribe certain bonds. Generally speaking, I like the notion that ideas already exist in one place. There's so much information in what already exists that there's never really any reason to develop entirely new forms. You simply need to discover the information and synthesize its complexity. In Brunnenstrasse it was initially very tangible information, namely the remains of the basement of the house that was left uncompleted after an investor went bankrupt in 1994. Similar to the situation in Krampnitz, the property was somewhat cheaper because of the ostensibly unusable, abandoned construction site; the costs

Photography by Constanze Haas

"Our projects think about the relationships between living and working in new ways; we call into question building standards that are rarely challenged."

for its demolition were already deducted. And we didn't tear it down, but continued what existed instead.

Florian Not building *within* what exists, but *upon*.

Arno You could say that Architecture is always "within a context" anyway, and there's a surrounding environment that "exists" and defines certain bonds. The purchase of the Brunnstrasse site was tied to the condition, among many things, that the rear building had to receive sunlight down to the first floor. That resulted in the slope of our roof. Those are compulsory bonds. There are also voluntary bonds, such as the floor-to-floor height and the cornice height. We could have defined these freely. But we decided to orient ourselves on the neighbouring buildings. The story heights of the two neighbouring buildings are different, and connecting them resulted in offsets within our floor slabs and the roof edge. You could say that's nonsense, we don't need that. Or you deal with the consequences arising from it. In this case, the differences in height provided the opportunity to organise the floors without prescribing too much to the users. In addition, the result is a kind of folded structure, which is effective in bracing the house and carries the external staircase in the courtyard. When we take the constraints seriously and think through the consequences, productive strategies for the design can emerge.

Florian You're using the term "bonds", which was also used by Oswald Mathias Ungers.

Arno Yes, but I want to expand the term beyond the formal consequences that were the essential aspect for Ungers and his students. Let's stay with the Brunnstrasse example: beyond the formal and legal considerations that we had to meet, there were other bonds. We wanted to move into the building together with the gallerists from *KOW*, who are friends of ours, and the magazine *032c*. These aren't tenants who can ensure maximum profits, so we had to offer rents that are relatively low for this area. We reversed the usual economic model and first established the rental price. From that, we derived how much the building could cost at most. Many decisions became easier, also for future users: how much floor area do you want? How much will that cost with burnished concrete floors? How much with parquet flooring? With lower ceiling heights, we could take on another tenant—how much could we save by doing that? We discussed all of that quite openly with the tenants. Interesting discussions arose about what's *really* needed and wanted. Many then prefer more floor area or space with a more basic, robust, and well-usable fit-out standard. Then it was easy to decide touse lots of inexpensive polycarbonate for the façade, especially since it scatters the light, producing a very good quality of light for studio or office use. And the exposed concrete doesn't have a Tadao Ando quality. If we had provided the "normal residential standard" here, we could have only built a much smaller area with our budget. It's about what is possible beyond the usual standards. It's about offering options that can be appreciated and are neutral with respect to use, ones that also meet future changing conditions.

Muck What fascinates you about such bonds? You say it helps when you have constraints. What's wrong with a tabula rasa?

Arno There's nothing wrong with a tabula rasa. But: it doesn't exist. Everywhere there's something already there. What's more, in Germany the population is steadily declining. Except for some inner city areas we can hardly afford to continue spending money for new buildings! It's already all there. We actually have too many. From an overall economic perspective, it's completely senseless to keep constructing new buildings. Of course there are situations that are not suitable for reuse, ones that really have no positive qualities whatsoever. Demolition should not be forbidden. But it could be sensible to evaluate certain buildings or typologies to determine whether they are generally useful as models for certain forms of reuse. What could churches become? What about gas stations? The result could be a very inspiring guide.

Florian If, as you say, solutions beyond the prevailing building standards would be interesting for many of these cases of adaptive reuse, why aren't these standards conceived to be so much more liberal or at least discussed more, especially in a city like Berlin, which still has a large reservoir of derelict sites and unused buildings and spaces?

Arno There's simply no interest in building cheaply—especially not in urban areas that are easy to market. The users who would be dependent upon it don't yet express themselves effectively enough. Why should the private sector do it? High-priced products are much more lucrative for everyone involved in selling or creating them: developers, investors, real estate brokers, and, of course, architects as well. For architects, it's even less attractive, because searching for solutions beyond the standards results in more work and, as long as our fees are based on the construction costs, lower fees.

Moreover, there's also a certain bias in the public debate, because the established stakeholders often present any questioning of the standards as meaning that something would be taken away from the underprivileged. This knee-jerk reaction of discrediting the standards doesn't bring us any further if we sincerely want to try to offer affordable living space in inner city areas, whether as rental apartments or as owner-occupied condominiums.

Muck That's right. We must have the courage to seek solutions beyond the standards. Otherwise the whole field will be determined only by industrial standards.

Arno But as architects, we then quickly start operating in an area that's not consistent with the "state of the art". Such experiments can lead to dramatic additional costs…

Muck … or to court. The mere fact that a solution doesn't comply with the standards is sufficient to compel the architect to rectify deficiencies.

Arno Exactly. That's naturally a negative aspect of our strategy. In Brunnenstrasse and for the Antivilla in Krampnitz, we are our own clients after all, so we could venture into a complex process and then wait to see what solutions the analysis of the bonds led us to. But normally a builder wants to know right at the beginning of the project how it will appear in the end. Our strategy is also of little value for competitions. We can't depict a simulated final state. We can only suggest analysing the site and the surroundings during the entire planning and construction period, and to develop rigorously consistent decisions along the way.

Florian By and large, architects are still trained in college to build something new. Shouldn't we also start there and give much more significance to this concept of continued building?

Arno I think it makes sense that students first learn to come to terms with themselves and a defined area of space. That's a big step and is simply more fun. I, too, avoided all the seminars where the subject was building services, construction law, or adaptive reuse. They simply weren't particularly attractive.

Muck The topic simply isn't sexy.

Arno But that only holds true for simulated projects in college. In the real world, rebuilding becomes sexy. Then there's a specific situation, a relationship, an exciting building. Then it's immediately exciting. Construction law is nothing exciting in the first place. Not until it becomes a tool you can work with, then it's productive and exciting.

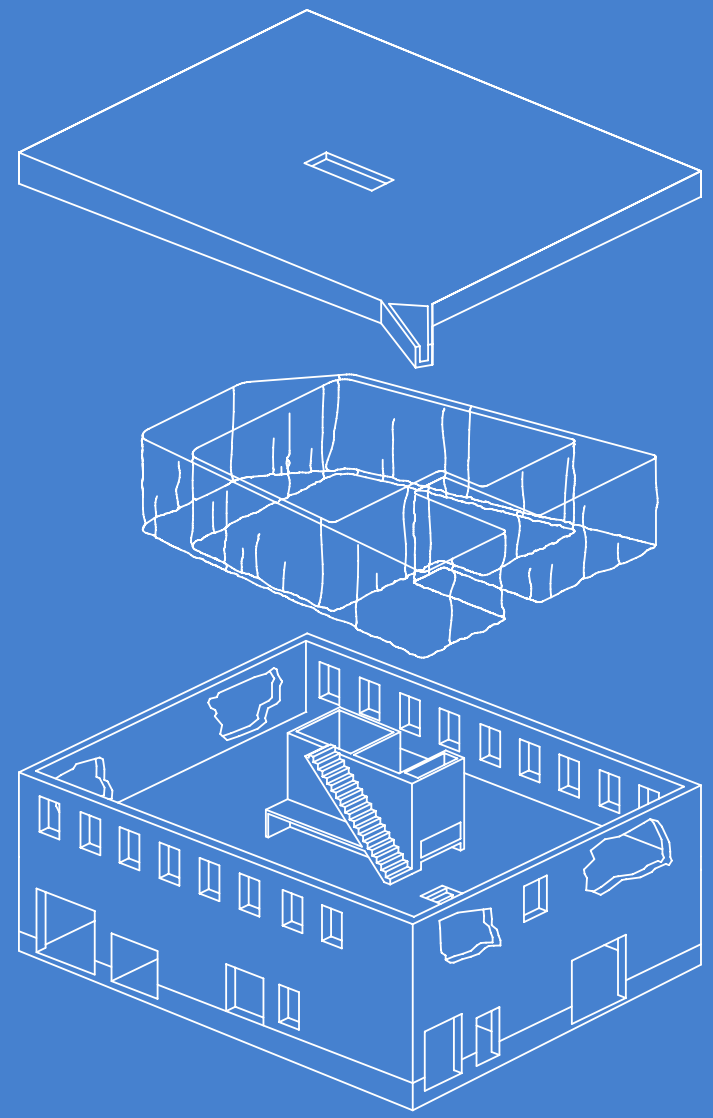
Muck That brings us to the profession's self-image, which sees itself as a master builder and less as a master rebuilder.

Arno The image of the architect has been heavily influenced—at least in the last ten or twenty years—by images of iconic architecture, most exclusively of new buildings, and especially parametric design and its promises. It has meanwhile been proven that this formal parameterisation is a dead end. Because it's simply not capable of factoring in complex bonds—social, cultural, and political ties, but as architecture, ultimately of low complexity because so much is not taken into consideration. In this respect, the finance crisis comes at just the right moment for architecture, since it forces us to deal with our resources more economically.

Muck Does that lead us to a new, more prudent attitude in terms of what exists?

Arno Today's architects cannot, in any case, simply present ingenious sketches that are meant to resolve everything, whether it's with a thick pencil or an automated computer process. They have to deal instead with much more complex existing situations. Architecture can then also be a partial solution or a temporary improvement. It's no longer about permanent solutions or the eternal setting. I find the loss of this architectural aspiration towards permanence to be a great relief.

The *New* Standards



Drawing: Brandlhuber+

Photography by Constanze Haas

Viewing Aid

Words by Kieran Mahon

As a relative newcomer to lecturing in Interior Design History & Theory, I am keen to understand how ideas facilitate new engagements with the past in order to generate different outputs for the present. I aim to think of history as a creative, material practice that involves actions and techniques in the production of what can be known. The Interior Design programme I teach on—like many across the UK—endeavours to promote a progressive understanding of the discipline and its history which encourages students to build relationships with existing buildings and to insert new possibilities into existing contexts. For me, the continual questioning and developing of what interior history might be is necessary to ensure students are able to bring sensitive and sophisticated readings to sites they propose to remodel.

With this in mind, the conversation with Brandlhuber, Petzet and Heilmeyer helped me reflect on how spectacle has both impacted on the reputation of interior courses as well as how the term might be used to understand a more progressive reading of the subject. Probably awkwardly, I interpreted spectacle as having two different associations. Either as vacant, consumerist spectating, looking at the visually striking or the public performance, or something more active and engaging—the sense of a critical lens that brings these events closer to the reader's questioning.

The visual pre-occupation with interiors and their subsequent consumption through mainstream media, I think, plays a significant role in maintaining a misperception that interior courses are quick and easy. Older histories, visually and stylistically driven, have served to underpin an aesthetic understanding of the interior as a series of containers rather than an expansive and fluid idea of what interiority might mean. Refreshingly, in this conversation Brandlhuber's projects replace these aesthetic and formal standards and show how adaptive reuse sheds light on a range of cultural, social and economic issues, rarely explored in mainstream media coverage of interior design. Bypassing external aesthetics, I saw the architect's approach as a type of interiority, encouraging the designer to develop new economic and social solutions for the extra space that new build architecture would not have facilitated.

Throughout the dialogue I was drawn to the implication of the spectacle's reversal as a type of public show or performance. Instead, a series of quieter events and hidden relationships were uncovered which a new build would have erased. Writers such as Rodolfo Machado have frequently used the palimpsest as an analogy for how the remodelled interior connects physically to its past. Alongside such tangibility, I saw value in retaining an intangible emotion—how the architect empathised with both buildings' survival. Having accepted the ugliness of their form, the architect was able to relate to the site in a seemingly more subjective manner. The notion of un/spectacle was also suggested by smaller scale social interactions the architect orchestrated. I thought the mention of demolition parties and discussions with future tenants to what type of space they really needed created a performance that was inclusive and co-operative rather than exclusive and individual-istic. Both points can shed further light on what a strategy of interiority might mean in relation to an architectural approach.

The discussion of place I thought was revealing and perhaps demonstrated a third way of inter-preting the idea of spectacle—not as the visually striking object or performance but as a viewing aid. The spectacle of adaptive reuse allowed the architect to not only question received wisdom of free-market building practices to generate cheaper and more efficient construction, but also as a strategy in the reading and writing of the site. In this sense the architect used the existing buildings to mediate between their previous uses and history (both emotional and physical); the character of the surrounding landscape; and their new uses. I found myself wanting to know more about these complex relationships—how did these former GDR buildings relate to Germany's political history and the local disused military base? What was the implication of intervening with historically political fabric? It is this intriguing complexity about how we interpret and synthesise meaning upon an existing site that new build architecture can never replicate. The spectacle as critical lens might therefore facilitate new ways in reading interiority—for buildings as much as ourselves—and is something, which this conversation continues.

Monstrous Quality

Words by Freya Wigzell

The Antivilla's massive window that looks out onto the woods reminded me of Pantagruel's gaping mouth in its disproportion and seeming devouring of the rest of the house. It has the effect of deviating the old factory building from its unspectacular —or *unspectacleular*!—ugliness into an overt spectacle of grotesqueness.

The monstrousness is employed into the factory buildings on many levels. In the creation of an architectural hybrid through the mixing of new and old; in the malformation and over population of the windows; in the taxidermic preservation of the old factory's shells but internal stripping; and the enduring presence of empty space which allows a continuation of the buildings' spectral potential and of course in its very name 'Anti'. The monstrous ugliness of the old factories is in fact pitched and inflated to such a high degree in the new Antivilla that the buildings have become sensationalized with ugly-monstrousness, an odd inversion of Brandlhuber's comment on the current architectural paradigm for building new iconic architecture.

What has been created after all is a very odd building and not just because of its carnivalesque aesthetic. The "void space" that has been left/created is completely counter-intuitive to the logic of purposeful reuse and recycling of architecture—irrationality is a very monstrous quality—and as it is, you cannot get any closer to void space in an inhabited property then a second home, which is assumedly empty for the majority of the time. The building processes brought about by reuse also created a monstrous subversion in normative building regulatory systems and economic models, and the final comment, "I find the loss of this architectural aspiration towards permanence to be great relief", is an ethos indicative of the Rabelaisian grotesque body, a body that is never autonomous and fixed but always changing or latent with the potential for changefulness.

A monstrous mutability is even present within the discussion between Brandlhuber, Petzet and Heilmeyer. The conversation contains a continual schism as different architectural demands are manipulated to try and fit in with one another. The raw ugliness of the factory aesthetic is interchangeably pitted against an emotional sensitivity towards the buildings and a far more candid and impassive way of describing the partial demolition of walls—there is a continual tension between the ugly monstrous aesthetic and more pragmatic building concerns. By the end of the conversation I wasn't sure what ranked highest with the architects; the ugliness of the buildings and its aesthetic implications, the economic gains made possible through the preservation of the old building, the users needs, or the attempt at the radical-reorganization of the building regulation system. The conversation's unconscious—and I believe it was unconscious —ambivalence towards these architectural hierarchies and value systems and its destabilizing of categorizes, acts as a *leitmotif* of the monstrous buildings' own deviant architecture, as it very awkwardly grapples to reconfigure architectural and building conventions and move outside of clear established categories.

The monster's ability to question architecture and building genomics is talked about by Marco Frascari in his book 'Monsters of Architecture'. Frascari defines architectural monsters as a particular type of architectural trope that emerges wherever there appears a perceived erosion of conventions and structures. Monsters, to quote Frascari "stand at the margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing rationally the world into determinable parts and details". Brandlhuber's buildings, I would argue, were highly orchestrated and deliberate pieces of monstrous deviance. Through the conscientious creation of a monster the Antivilla, and the Brunnestrasse building in turn, attempt to derange and make a spectacle of the normative and standardized architectural and building systems discussed in the article, systems, which are often invisible in the finalized built form. Monsters are, to quote Comaroff and Ker-Shing's '*Horror in Architecture*', gleeful dismemberments whose "deviant physicality, oppose the creep of reification and the comfort of well-tempered surfaces".

But the Antivilla and the Brunnestrasse building are not simply acting as commentators on a pre-existing system, they are propositions that propose an idea of what architectural and building practices could become in the future beyond a rarefied group, a dystopian looking architecture with a utopian prerogative.

Illustrations by Kaiser Ulla

Storm and Stress

Words by Tim Normann

I keep coming back to the windows of the Antivilla, the 'sturm und drang'—Storm and Stress—of taking the power drill to the foam core model and grinding out the apertures. The reduction of the relentless practice of architecture to an immediate emotional expression via such a wide gauged tool is so relaxed, so 'cool'. The scene painted at the demolition party "where do we want the holes in the walls? Where do we want to look out? Towards the woods or the lake? Clear it out!". The broad expressive strokes of architecture normally yielded at conception prior to a project's long gestation are here taken at the death with decision, act and result all occurring in a maelstrom of jack-hammers.

It is a spectacle, of the original kind. One of performance, ironically mixing the high arts of architecture with the low arts of demolition. But it isn't the theatrical preliminaries of the project I want to pick up on; it's the goings on behind the proscenium, the installation of the window casements.

Researching the project online there are further images of the Antivilla. From outside, you can see the openings (see image on p. 65); and from the inside, showing the new window frames laid up to the wall, oversized, so as to reveal the aperture's coarse silhouette (see image on p. 52). There are two impressions that strike me. Firstly, the external appearance is one of absolute clarity. The wall of the building is cleaned up to create a black and white distinction: between where there is wall, and where there isn't. And then, where there appears to be nothing, the faintest specular veil, taut and perfect across the void. A passerby might not notice the sheen, but may read the casual domestic inhabitation of a building through the blasted opening. Especially at night, the warm glow from deep within might illuminate the interior, captured by the black rugged outline of the hole. What does the Krampnitz passerby make of this?

The spectacle of inhabitation behind such a façade is as intentional as SITE'S string of post Z-Day retail units. How does the first-time shopper feel as they approach the crumbling ruin? The careful piling of rubble. The casual wielding of jackhammers. Both precisely calculated acts. The concept, procedure and final effect are all carefully planned and both seek to challenge their archetype. It is the subversion of 'standards' that Brandlhuber+, the architects behind the Antivilla aspire to, and it's a practice that attempts to beat further bounds, testing conventional building economics and regulations.

This forms part of their conscientious and sometimes high-risk labour intensive effort, to reveal and/or unlock overlooked existing spaces. An approach that is in-sync with the German Pavilion's meme, 'Reduce, Re-use, Recycle' at the 2012 Venice Biennale, of which Antivilla was one of the exhibits. The cause is a noble one, and is cited in contrast to the unsustainable, 'tabula rasa', sexy, iconic architecture that we have grown a custom. The Antivilla, Brandlhuber+ and the German Pavilion appear pitched against the inefficient and economically fatty construction of these modern spectacles. But as I think it is clear, the Antivilla in particular performs its own brand of spectacle, one of subversion, and makes its stand by defying the norm. What interests me however is not what makes these opposing spectacles different, but what they have in common. This I believe is an embodiment within the architecture of human effort.

Your built icon is often spectacular for its complexity, and to construct such colossus is no mean feat, often requiring the invention of building techniques. The moves and decisions at the Antivilla too are I have no doubt, part of a long process of thought and consideration. The detailing and effect of the window is so deliberate and careful it doesn't quite match up with the impulse suggested. It reminds me of the windows on Sigurd Lewerentz's St Petri Church, oversized and gummed with silicon onto the exterior creating a remarkably crude detail from the outside. From the inside however the view is clean and uninterrupted, just a hole in the wall, save the awareness of a slight reflection. It is these moments that stand out, that make us aware explicitly of effort, or even, human presence. It is this explicit awareness in a viewer that I believe is the spectacle, be it through a high magnitude of steel placement or the careful consideration of a window.

The Flicker

Words by Danielle Hewitt

Illustrations by Kaiser Ulla

(by what standard(s) can we understand change?)

It was Spyros Papapetros in his book *On The Animation of the Inorganic* who said something about change that really articulated the problem.
And the problem here is that in the sense of a riddle rather than a hindrance. Papapetros refers to Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and to the story of Daphne and Apollo. Daphne is a woman who, in fleeing from undesired sexual attention, turns herself into a tree. She becomes a tree, as a tree has no chastity to violate and thus is safe from the advances of lust-sick Apollo. Papapetros remarks how as a child in school he grappled with the problem of how a woman who has become a tree is still most definitely, also, at the same time; that woman. And there is the question I suppose, *by what standard can we understand change?*

(continuing yet inconstant)

If it were possible to assume a position of omnipresence from where all time could be seen at once, it would become apparent that all buildings flicker. Ruskin and Le Corbusier saw this in their own different ways while in Venice regarding the pigeons upon St Mark's Basilica that created animated modules and varieties of colour upon its façade. On a diurnal scale buildings flicker by use and activity and in the long present this flicker might be seen through the processes of change acting upon materials. In this long present we also see the flicker of regeneration, conversion, aggregation and extension. And the iconic buildings identified by the voices in the interview, as set apart from their architecture of the continuing, are also seen to flicker. Though in their projection of continuance the iconic hold resistant and rigid for longer.

(some-thing somehow other than the sum of processes and substances)

Within the UK Building Regulations are listed ten possible cases of change with respect to the use of a building, set out by description and each named as a 'material change of use'. 'Material' lain next to 'change' offers a promise of something somewhat alchemical; a transmutation of matter; dusty kaolin clay under intense heat becomes fine, stone-hard chiming porcelain. Slow-black viscous oil transforms into plastics that may be moulded, or knitted, or turned invisibly transparent with little resistance to the lift of the wind. But a vase or bowl is of porcelain, not of heat and clay. And a dressing room tidy[5], if such a thing were to be manufactured today, is not forthcoming that it is in fact "sublimated as movement"[6]. Things are perhaps by definition some-thing somehow other than the sum of their processes and physical substances.

(some-thing somehow alters the sum of previous states)

But the change that our attention has fallen upon is not of matter. The change is that of use, of deployment, of purposes accomplished and potentials exploited. The Antivilla has changed from a factory to a house. Daphne-as-Tree retains no material vestiges of Daphne the woman—except in the mind of Apollo who hears her still-beating human heart beneath the rough bark—but the tree has a history of being Daphne, and a thread of narrative-happening forever links Daphne and Daphne-as-Tree. The standards of change set out in the Building Regulations follow along the lines of:

'the building is used as a _some-thing_[7], where previously it was not'

'the building contains a _some-thing_[8] for _some-or-other purpose_[9] where previously it did not'.

Unlike the bowls, the vases, and the dressing room, a building is to be understood simultaneously as all it ever is and was.[10]

({not} in anything like original condition)

Here in England the obligation to retain buildings comes about following judgements bound by parameters relating to heritage significance. Working in addition to these parameters of judgement is the obligation to retain any buildings that have continued "in anything like their original condition"[11] since the year 1700 (and to retain 'most' of those that have continued from between 1700–1840). These are the survivors. Such is the greater of the demographic that we permit to follow us into the present's image of the future, and *particular* care must be taken in assessing whether any of the post 1945 population makes it through the gates[12] . It is a delicious thought to speculate if, when, and under what circumstances these dates of obligation might be amended.

The emotional appeal to retain the Factory —Not Yet-Antivilla—resulted from its position as a survivor; an anti-hero who defied the odds stacked against it in spite of its wanting for charm and good looks—a flabby face with features too small—and too many—and an embarrassing case of asbestos.

Changes undergone by the buildings at Krampnitz, changes brought in service of both desire and need, make it feasible for these buildings to continue beyond what had been considered the end of their deployable life and the bearable limits of aesthetic judgement. Should, in the distant future, Our Date of Obligation[13] be brought forward to some year in the second half of the twentieth century, is it possible that a strategy of continuance such as that undertaken at Krampnitz might as fallout ensure the further retention of these 'ugly buildings', but this time in the name of conservation? In something not but not unlike the original condition, these buildings resist such *spectacular* fate.

1 Papapetros, S. (2012) *On the Animation of the Inorganic. Art, Architecture and the Extension of Life,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
2 Elder and Co. 67 and Le Corbusier (1987) *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning* New York: Dover 69 quoted in D. Gissen *Subnature. Architecture's Other Environments* (2009)New York: Princeton Architectural Press 185
3 M, Petzet., F. Heilmeyer. (ed.) (2012) *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.* Berlin: Hatje Cantz
4 United Kingdom, (2010) *Building and Buildings, England and Wales The Building Regulations 2010* London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office
5 being a "shiny and fluted {…} finished human object" transmuted from "raw, telluric matter" as observed by Roland Barthes in Barthes, R. (2009) 'Plastic', in *Mythologies* London: Vintage 117
6 Ibid., 118
7 dwelling flat hotel boarding house institution public building shop
8 room (in greater or lesser numbers)
9 residential
10 "There's so much information in what already exists that there's really never any reason to develop entirely new forms". A, Brandlhuber 'The Standards' in M, Petzet., F. Heilmeyer. (ed.) (2012) *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.* Berlin: Hatje Cantz
11 'Listed Buildings. Listing and Designation' Available from http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/listed-buildings/
12 "Particularly careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945." Ibid
13 Or Germany's equivalent

Discussion held on 27 March 2014, Festival Hall, London

Sophie Read, Kieran Mahon, Freya Wigzell, Tim Norman and Danielle Hewitt met up to discuss The Standards, The New Standards, and the reversal of architectural spectacles

Sophie Read To begin with, I thought it would be worth mentioning again the reasons why I was first drawn to the interview I gave you all to respond to. What interested me was the way the text that discusses various adaptive reuse projects could in a simple sense be taken as promoting one form of unspectacular architecture. There obviously is a really strong case for the kind of adaptive reuse, refurbishment and re-servicing of buildings that the German architects put forward also in the UK and in general. But what I was additionally drawn to was the way that somehow through the course of the conversation, one of buildings discussed called the Antivilla seems to gain an iconic status, whilst the attached design practice actually becomes sexy and almost heroic. Bearing in mind LOBBY's first themed issue, I was interested in this process that occurs as a sort of 'reversal of architectural spectacle', a point which I think you all drew out in quite different and interesting ways.

Kieran Mahon After reading everyone's writings I felt quite naive in my response, which is exactly why I enjoy group discussions because you go in with your pre-understanding of something and then you see it sort of dissolve and alter. I think I really believed, what you just picked up on there, how they're dressing up low-fi or DIY architecture, but that during that process they're actually making it something a lot more visible. But it was what Tim mentioned in his piece that made me realise I was perhaps too quick to run with this. You {Tim} used the words—it was all about impulse, but that it was also highly orchestrated and they {the architects in the interview} were highly aware of the image they were creating. When I first read it, I just didn't question that veneer thoroughly enough…

Freya Wigzell I did completely the opposite to you because I never assumed they weren't trying to make a spectacle. The Antivilla is such an overt piece of architecture, and I never got anything from the text that they were trying to do anything other than draw attention to it. They were setting themselves up as some sort of anti-heroes here, and it was indicative in the language of the article. Which was highly emotive in places, but also quite contrary—they never quite decided—and they didn't have to, but they never quite decided what their hierarchy of values was.

Tim Norman I think though, from an architect's perspective—it's always going to be in some sense a spectacle. They're putting in so much consideration before and also in the act of doing it, and the thing is that they will always try to communicate a particular impression. But the background intention behind the Antivilla is in theory, noble. I agree with what you're saying, that they are trying to communicate a sense of—what is it?—of being unspectacular. But they're also tapping into this worthy, casual thing, and the thing is, that's part of their masquerade as well, it's the face they're selling to the public.

Freya I think actually, Danielle's piece articulated better what it was I was trying to get at, and that's the idea that things aren't constants, that there aren't ahistorical values—through this idea of 'the flicker'.

Tim Yes.

Freya It's a really good way of putting what I think I ended up saying in a harsh language.

Danielle Hewitt Yes, I have since gone back to the Spyros Papapetros book that I began with {'*On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Everyday Life'*, 2012} and this idea of *where* is the change located if a thing becomes a completely different thing? You know, in the story of Daphne and Apollo—a woman, to a tree —where is the change? Two separate objects perhaps? Papapetros says: 'her'

(as in Daphne)… 'her body represents a model for an anachronistic history that juxtaposes in a single frame what was before, and what came after'. I think he articulated very well in that sentence what I was thinking about through 'the flicker' in my piece.

Tim Did you {Danielle} decide what/how we can understand change? …
Did you answer the question you posed of 'by what standard can we understand change'?

Danielle No, but I think that's kind of my long-term pre-occupation! But this was a really nice exercise, in something like this, I'm sure everyone felt the same, you end up bringing your own agenda to it.

Tim So really early on, I thought what *could* reveal the change? For me, change was spectacle in your {Danielle} writing, where change is a moment of difference and therefore a sort of an event.

Danielle So the moment of the transition?

Tim What makes the spectacle of those two things is the event and also the frame or the stage. It's any sort of frame of reference I suppose. And so here, in your writing, I thought it was Apollo.

Danielle Oh that's interesting.

Tim Apollo is the frame. Because the only reason why the tree is still Daphne is because he wants it to be, because he believes it's Daphne.

Sophie Which links in with what you were saying {Kieran} that you saw spectacle on one hand as a consumerist, visually striking, 'looking' but that in another sense, it could also be understood as a critical lens.

Danielle Yes, exactly.

Tim You said there was the idea of a lens that I thought was really nice and also it being a kind of device for articulating the event that happened in the past.

Kieran Yes, but I hadn't linked that with Apollo.

Tim But I was only interpreting Danielle's piece in that way, as a result of how explicit you {Kieran} made the idea of spectacle as a viewing aid. I only focused on the event that one was seeing, whereas you focused on what was actually making it a spectacle, the actual things surrounding it.

Kieran Yes, it was just a very literal way of taking the word spectacle. There was this way they were trying to read architecture in the interview that I thought was relevant in terms of social relations and constructing things in a collective and cooperative way…. You didn't buy into that did you? {Freya}

Freya I just don't agree with you {Kieran}. I mean, bits of it I did, I really liked. For me, the spectacle was very much orchestrated. If you like, they *knew* that this way of designing was public spectacle. And it was only by making it so overt, that they could draw attention to invisible structures that were lying behind it e.g. the Building Regulations, and the reuse and recycling of architecture—and how that doesn't usually happen as a general premise in architectural practice. The communication of this so-called 'unspectacular architecture' always had to be loud….

Kieran But I think it depends on how you see scale and time, isn't it, because for me I was reading the actual intervention to the Antivilla as being quite quiet.

Freya Big hole, for a quiet intervention!

Kieran But I think when compared with what I was imagining architectural spectacle as being—the Antivilla was in fact quite off the beaten track. I had never heard of it, and it had a relatively low impact.

Tim But this is the thing, I think, that this task {of writing for LOBBY's Seminar Room} made a lot of the things discussed in the interview spectacle, that perhaps wouldn't otherwise necessarily have been if you had been reading the text cold…
{people agree}

Tim At the start it made me be really cynical about everything they said, and that's because for some reason I saw spectacle as negative. I kept challenging the architects' intent, which I found a little bit abrasive, I couldn't read the interview in a natural way.

Danielle Yes, I've not satisfied myself in settling upon it, I suppose I kind of avoided the theme of spectacle, or felt that because it kept slipping for me.

Tim But I thought in yours spectacle was this flicker idea—you went through the scales, and it was like every scale of flicker was a different spectacle —like the pigeon, or the change of materials decaying—you went through each of the different timescales and I thought each of them as a spectacle.

Sophie Exactly, you {Danielle} locate the process of making spectacles or 'making unspectacular', in time. And through the piece—you don't say it directly—but through the piece, you say that the building and approach conveyed in the interview is but one moment among many spectacles.

Tim I don't really know where that leaves spectacle.

Photography by Constanze Haas

Kieran Yeah, what is spectacle?

Tim Firstly I think it's a spatial construct—between a viewer and an event.

{agreement}

Tim So the viewer is as important as the thing, and you have a frame of reference.

Freya It's to draw attention to something.

Tim Yeah, and it's the frame of reference that shows you there's a difference.

Freya So I don't think anybody's wrong—the interview drew attention to a lot, and we all picked up on different things that our attention got drawn to, which is your {Tim's} 'frame of reference'.

Tim Yes.

Kieran And you also say Tim that it was—I like this point—that it was about a mark of effort.

Tim Yes, I suppose, but that's getting into a type of spectacle again.

Kieran A type of what sorry?!

Danielle Yes, but the embodiment of human effort—is that what you're referring to?

Kieran Yes, and that we notice that human effort. I was wondering—are we relating between whether it's a small scale or a large scale effort?

Tim Yes.

Kieran That's how I read it—that it's a spectacle when you notice that interaction in the intervention. But I was just wondering if there wasn't a spectrum involved as well? Doesn't the impact of the effort depend on the scale of the effort, or the meaning of the effort, or the social relations within that human effort? What would make it resonate differently I was wondering?

Tim I suppose it just depends on the context.

Danielle But if we said that spectacle is a frame of reference and a drawing attention to something, but then at the same time it seems like anything could be a form of spectacle—I was thinking I found it more useful to try to think about spectacle by thinking about the category of the everyday. And I suppose, for me that's framed by practices in contemporary art that are seen as addressing the everyday, and the strategy of these practices is often to draw attention to it, by framing it —by making slow motion for example, or just making a close study of something apparently ordinary. That drawing-attention-to can't help but becoming a poetic or drawing out a poetic sense in some way. And then that becomes a spectacle. Therefore is it possible then to speak about a non-spectacle? I don't know, it just still doesn't feel satisfactory to me.

Tim Yes, what is a non-spectacle?

Kieran Is it the same as un/spectacle?

Danielle I don't think it is.

Kieran Throws it into chaos!

Tim Just going back to this human effort thing—I've got this preoccupation with the idea that we can tell when there is human effort embedded in something. It's the thing we like about certain things, for example if someone's arranged something carefully on a table.

Freya But what about the fact people love ruins—our romantic history is all about ruins—so people also love a sort of lack of care?

Tim It's a recording still of that action. I saw a ramp for example whilst I was in Israel. There's this place where Israelites work and Jewish people were trapped for a number of years, surrounded by Romans, and were all eventually killed. The Romans built this ramp up this mountain, and the ramp is still there. It's incredible, but it just sits there and I know that a thousand

> "it was only by making it so overt, that they could draw attention to invisible structures that were lying behind"

Romans built that. That's spectacular because of the recorded effort inside that thing. It had probably changed shape a bit, but for me it was still this reference and record of human effort after all those years. A record of human existence. The act. So what I think about spectacle is that it keeps coming back to this simple idea of performance—I mean we're so social that we just read that in everything.

Sophie But equally I think being able to read human effort can also be the thing that repels people.

Tim If it's too overt you mean?

Danielle Yes—that something *must* be good, because it looks like it took a long time!
{all laugh}

Freya It's such an interesting idea, because it's so not what historically a lot of spectacle has been about. I'm trying to think about ideas of the sublime for example—which are very much tied up with grandiose pictures of nature, and ideas of terror… And which is kind of something beyond human and human effort. I've never thought about spectacle as a human effort. It's really interesting.

Kieran I agree, I was totally seeing this as human production but it was also about the iconic images that kept flooding into my head about what architectural spectacle was, specifically, linking into the personal bug-bears that I often have in explaining what interior design is about.

Sophie I think you articulate that really well in your piece.

Freya Yes, I do too.

"is it possible then to speak about a non-spectacle?"

Kieran It is a matter of fighting against that surface and how humans produce that surface, and how and what relations organise what those surfaces mean. I can see the contradictions that Freya and Tim point out in the Antivilla regarding the windows. But I still think there was an alternative and alternating architecture in the discussion that resonated with how I saw a more interesting approach to thinking about interiors.

Danielle And you talk about history as a material practice, a small suggestion, but that's very interesting.

Kieran Yes. And I was a bit frustrated actually that they seemed to leave out all that history—that there could have been much more about why that place, why that moment, what was this factory before? How do you build up a conversation and a relationship with the previous uses of the building etc.?

Sophie Yes, but we have to remember that it is only one interview, originally published in a book full of other interviews and texts, and with a particular remit and the intention to accompany a specific exhibition that was part of the Venice Biennale.

Tim I find you quite often get students doing a project about new technologies, and this is a different example—but they, say, try to answer the problem of flooding. But the project isn't really about trying to find a solution, it's about creating a discourse around it. And the architects in the interview do that really successfully. Maybe it's not practical or economical or doesn't make complete sense or quite stack up, but the Venice Biennale is just about the message isn't it? So it is a spectacle. It's part of a one anyway, which is the Biennale. They're just trying to communicate a set of ideas. But as you say, it's so emotive, and you get so sucked into it…

Freya No I think you're right, within the context of the Biennale it probably really worked, but when you get further away it operates in a different way. It's unfortunate, I'm pro-heritage and the reuse of existing structures, but here I feel the concept of adaptive reuse becomes a bit of a label.

Danielle But then I wonder why it happens that categories of reuse and heritage seem to slip into each other? I mean, what is heritage and if you're working in terms of working with existing structures in heritage, is it in the service of monuments in some way? Thinking of that particular idea, Kieran, you said something about the value in retaining an intangible emotion and as soon as I read that, I thought that is just exactly what a monument was to me. It's something that fixes an abstract idea or intangible emotion, and you know, if their intangible emotion was feeling a little bit sorry for something a bit ugly…

Kieran I think structures are inherently emotional and we make attachments to the weirdest things. But I reviewed this after reading some of your responses. I think there's a difference between cynicism and criticality, but I think a lot of what the interview is talking about did resonate for me because I haven't come across the project of the Antivilla, that it was new to me and therefore I was willing to go with it. I think emotional resonance is important and if someone says they feel it.

Sophie But I very much liked how 'the emotive factor' or the way one could feel sorry for an ugly building slipped into a conversation that was otherwise quite practical and empirical in describing things, building standards and construction law. I also think that there's a sort of weird intimacy in meeting up to talk about a text that you've read and written about separately, that you wouldn't get if you just turned up to a conversation first.

Freya It's odd familiarising yourself so acutely with people's written responses before meeting them, there's a spectacle idea there! I feel like I've got to over-know someone too much on text. ⬟

curved wall, two Lifts chattering lobby begin searching for the room

Doors opening. Lift going up.

This isn't the first time you've been inside one of these before, surely. But just in case, here's the protocol so you know what to do:

Press the floor number you want to go to

Quietly mind your own business

Whatever you do, do not make eye contact with anyone

Don't talk to strangers, as that would be considered 'weird', unless you bump into someone that you actually know; then it's okay to talk to them…

Kind of.

Sort of.

While this small space reduces your personal bubble due to its physical proportions, it inversely increases the intense desire to hold on to as much personal space as we can. The brief, temporal aspect of being inside of a lift places sociability/conversation in a very odd dynamic, where a ticking clock makes you limit what you say, because at any moment you'll have to pop out in mid-conversation. What's worse is that you might reach your destination before your acquaintance has finished their sentence and you'll be trapped behind the lift's open doors. How ironic.

Don't they know you have things to do and places to be? "Wrap it up, mate," you'd be thinking. "Please stop talking."

But LOBBY talks.

And we think that's a good thing.

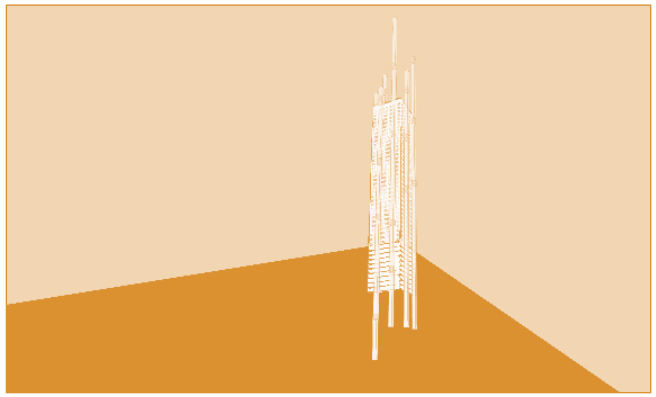
We want to break the uncomfortable silences and fill in those awkward gaps by engaging with those around us, empowering them, giving them a voice. In this section, the content is inspired by brevity informed by the nature and culture of the lift: movement, mechanics, logistics, time, discovery, inhabiting, togetherness, alienation. There is something powerful in projects that are brief and simple but convey a strong message. Lift celebrates mobility, the act of going up and down, of propelling something—or someone—forward, of launching, of going places, of arriving. After all, using a machine to ascend and descend, to reach other places, is something that Bartlett students are not foreign to.

Every year students fly to culturally stimulating locations that test their boundaries, their sociability, their feeling of belongingness, their understanding of cities, places and people. It is under these conditions, where humans are challenged to bond amongst themselves and engage with others; we discover that making eye contact and talking to a stranger isn't as terrible as we thought it'd be. In experiencing foreign places, personal space is simultaneously reduced and expanded and displaced, but unlike the space of the lift, there's no awkwardness; rather, it's meaningful and enlightening and scary and life-changing and beautiful and exotic and spectacular and alien.

And brief.

Doors Closing. Lift going up.

Fallen from Grace



Tracing the spectacular in the evolution of the lift

Words by Laurie Goodman
Illustration by Rayka Luo

The everyday experience of using an elevator, for the most part, is not an emotionally uplifting one. Elevators are predictable iterations in our daily routine and monotonous spaces of regimen. Like staircases, lifts are between-spaces, simultaneously occupiable and facilitating transition from one space to another. The difference, however, is that the elevator provokes peculiar behaviour in its passengers: a single thirty second ride can evoke an entire spectrum of tensions. Unless previously acquainted, elevator passengers rarely speak to each other. Eye-contact is strictly off-limits.

However, when the first secure passenger elevator was unveiled in the nineteenth century, the lift was at once a spectacle of technological innovation. In 1853, encased within New York's crystal palace exposition, inventor Elisha Otis stood on a platform high above an enraptured crowd. After being handed a knife on a velvet pillow, the engineer dramatically severed the cable that appeared to support his elevator stage. The platform dropped: but only by an inch, before being caught by Otis's newly developed safety brake.

Forty years later, this time in Paris, three separate elevator systems installed at the newly opened Eiffel Tower allowed visitors panoramic views of their city, with an eighty mile radius on clear days. The significance of these events should not be underestimated: writing in 1979, Roland Barthes described how this exercise in technological wizardry resulted in passengers becoming drunk on 'the euphoria of aerial vision.' The obsession with extreme elevation also led Barthes to identify the Eiffel Tower as symptomatic of a 'Babel complex', in which the monument became an expression of a desire to become closer to communicating with the divine. Soon, physical elevation also became analogous to an intellectual, secular enlightenment, with engineer Robert Thurston anticipating that man 'may profit, by all opportunities of advancing himself to loftier and loftier planes, perfecting himself.'

What then happened so that the space of the lift began to provide users with such different experiential qualities? Firstly, it is evident that lifts are now so ubiquitous they have become commonplace, often implemented in structures where the inhabitants could easily haul themselves up several floors to reach their offices —the passengers of elevators are less interested in divine communication than, say, the water cooler on the third floor. Instead of being confronted by a panoramic cityscape, users are more often faced with a bleak corridor and a trio of recycling bins. Additionally, the elevator has been commodified; rarely a case for innovation or speculative design, and placed into the 'utilities' category during the design process, much like an air conditioning vent or a drainage pipe. It is evident that the elevator has experienced something of a fall from grace—despite the fact that these inventions were responsible for profound effects on the morphology of our cities in the nineteenth century.

While the steel frame is frequently credited as the construction innovation that allowed skyscrapers to flourish, the impact of the elevator is often overlooked. These two components, coupled together, were major catalysts for growth—not only upwards, but also inwards, creating increasing density and diversity in city centres. Writing for The New Yorker, Nick Paumgarten stated that, without the elevator, "the population of the earth would ooze out over its surface, like an oil slick, and we would spend even more time stuck in traffic or on trains, traversing a vast carapace of concrete."

The same urban transformations were a source of apprehension for Rem Koolhaas in *Delirious New York*. Here, Koolhaas diagnoses a condition, described as 'Manhattanism', in which the city's agenda is to exist in an environment entirely fabricated by man. Koolhaas presents his own historical framework for this phenomenon, known as The Machine Age, characterised by the city perceived as "a factory of man-made experiences." The elevator was the liable protagonist in this dialogue. The introduction of the elevator allowed it to be plausible that multiple floors, each a replica of foundation plot, could be stacked on top of each other *ad infinitum*, each containing some kind of activity without any relationship to its neighbours. This was the typical process behind the creation of the skyscraper. Koolhaas writes, "each of these artificial levels is treated as a virgin site, as if the others did not exist, to establish a strictly private realm [...] these create at each elevator stop a different lifestyle and thus an implied ideology." The result, for Koolhaas, was a kind of 'unknowable urbanism'—an unstable situation in which the architect is no longer able to determine programmatic function.

> "The elevator is the ultimate self-fulfilling prophecy: the further it goes up, the more undesirable the circumstances it leaves behind."

The prevailing presence of the elevator had further implications for Koolhaas's diagnosis of the city. Quick to draw upon Elisha Otis's spectacular unveiling, Koolhaas describes the moment when the inventor cut the cord supporting his own platform as "an event in urban theatricality: the anti-climax as denouement, the non-event as triumph." However, the elevator is also a 'great emancipator', providing catharsis and escapism for its passengers: "The elevator is the ultimate self-fulfilling prophecy: the further it goes up, the more undesirable the circumstances it leaves behind."

We most commonly see the spirit of Otis's unveiling and Koolhaas's elevator-as-fantasy recaptured as a narrative device in film and fiction. To take a particularly idiosyncratic example, in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Roald Dahl describes a lift constructed with glass walls, lined with thousands of buttons. The elevator propels its passengers sideways, 'longways' and 'slantways', hurtling through corridors of invisible chocolate bars and exploding sweets.

In *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* this same lift is released, erupting into the skyscape and streaking away from the earth. Willy Wonka, a frenzied inventor and galactic guide all at once, mans the elusive contraption. As the tale unfolds, Wonka and his passengers encounter unsightly aliens, partake in an engagement with the president of the United States and enjoy a short spell at a floating 'space hotel.' As the elevator climbs beyond the earth's gravitational pull, its passengers begin to float; gently bobbing inside its transparent walls. His passengers become anxious, bickering and cowering as the elevator's elevation and speed increase. Others gleefully stare out into the quiet abyss.

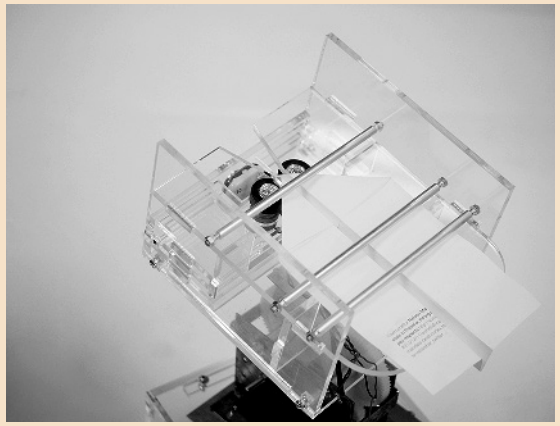
The brilliance of Dahl's narrative is that it allows the lift to become the setting for unpredictable and fantastical events. While the novels are intended as pure fantasy, the reader catches glimpses of the everyday anxieties of using a lift, namely in the fleeting claustrophobia experienced by this small group of characters clustered together in a compact space. However, Dahl also draws on an experiential quality of using lifts that has been largely lost in our typical use of these spaces. Further, the characters involved in his dialogue are from such widely divergent backgrounds that the elevator seems to act as a gravitational device in the construction of Dahl's narrative.

From Charlie's tale, one cannot help but ponder that in those five minutes spent in the elevator every day there is such potential for intellectual abrasion, curious encounter and unexpected spectacle. This manufactured environment—of suppressed emotion and interaction—is particularly peculiar. It provokes the question: if you found yourself in an elevator standing next to the President, would you conform, staring vacantly at the back of his bodyguard's suit? Or, would you say hello?

AEROCRAFT

Physical manifestations of social media

A Project by Tamon Sawangdee and Eizo Ishikawa
Photography by Tamon Sawangdee

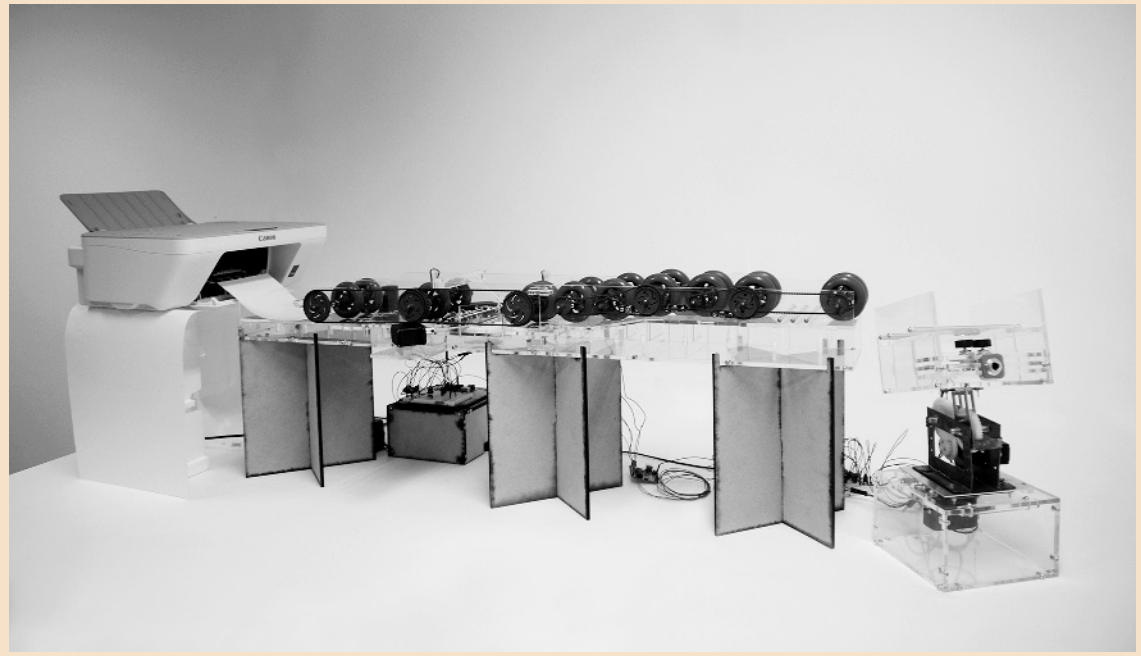


Depicting how our lives in the age of ubiquity are intertwined between the physical and digital space, Internet-enabled devices promise us the ability to be autonomous, mobile and connected, thereby, submerging the notions of distance, time and space. Thus, they transform the way public opinion is communicated and transcended to form our society. The role of how ubiquitous computing could act as an instrument for expressions was explored and contended in the project, AEROCRAFT, to further understand how machinery, craft and puppetry could play a part as linkage through the cloud, by being a social representative for public voices or contemporary happenings.

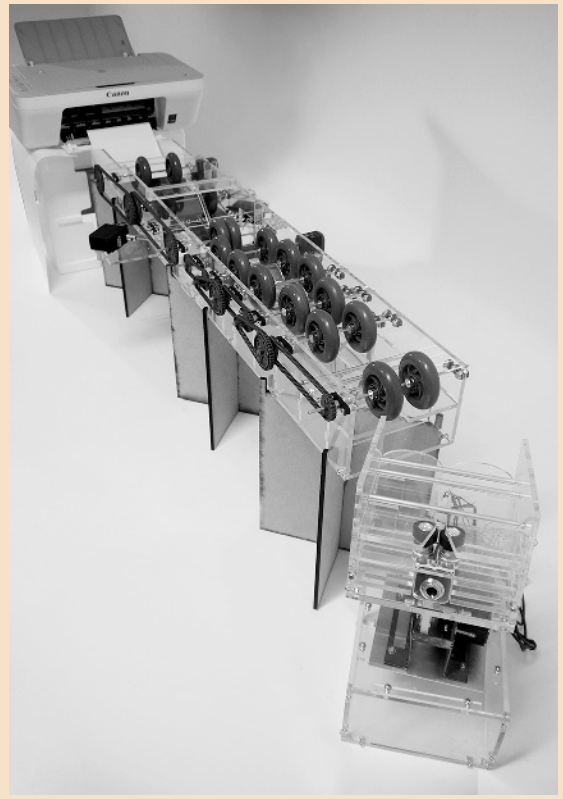
People today live, communicate and feed upon social media and wireless connections for information and instant interactions. The importance of information, either from an existing source or originating from an idea, led us to look at how people are using Twitter and other forms of online communication to spread news, ideas, and campaigns about what is happening around us. The availability of this data swarming through the Internet, permits us the opportunity to track, extract, disseminate and convey instantly our thoughts, messages, speeches or novelties of information that concern us. The use of the Internet as an infrastructure to broadcast and control public opinion, to spark uprisings or guide mass social movements has never before been such a powerful tool.

AEROCRAFT was used to organize an understanding of how online practices over certain situations can shape social space and be processed to confound physical space. We chose to distribute information of topics that some disregard but are also the topics that are globally active online —most notably about political struggle and resistance. We took advantage of how the Internet space, being an online public space, functions as a place for social gathering and world democracy, to look at how people may be influenced by propaganda and leaders or how they may choose to resist against these currents. The outcome of our transmission was implied in the form of paper aeroplanes inspired from our previous project AEROBOT, the paper aeroplane launcher. From experimenting with AEROBOT we found that, in order to spur and stimulate interaction within physical space, the transformation of digital information into provoking physical objects can be our key methodology to prompt attention and encourage participation.

AEROCRAFT extracts the messages tweeted to him from Twitter and prints them out onto a sheet of A5 paper. Being guided through an industrial-like manufacturing process, the A5 paper, gets folded along the composition of the machine, then gets launched via the targeting part at the end of the process. The folding process of the machine is composed of three modules controlled by actuators and sensors commanding from the Arduino to achieve the fold. Similar to that of the Rube Goldberg machine and the meta-mechanics of Jean Tinguely, each module functions separately, and serves a different folding task. When the paper is initially



printed out, the first sensor will detect it by reading the white colour of the paper and tell the motor to start running, once the paper is sent to its first folding position, the second sensor will tell the motor to stop, and activate the servos to fold the top of the paper as the first step of the paper aeroplane folder. Once the folding is completed, the motor is turned on and the paper gets passed on to the second module and continues with the next folding stages. The third module of the machine, works as the targeting part, in targeting, the machine can turn its head in the X, Y and Z axis. The paper plane is then shot from two rubber wheels positioned on the face of the machine. In term one, we got to experiment with it by targeting our colleagues in the studio. This experiment using perceptive data to de-confine space and boundaries of self-expression through social interactions, was conceived in AEROCRAFT as a puppeteer. It opens the potential of further exploring the spatial outcome of how, in the future, we can integrate the use of ubiquitous data feeds in formulating interactive spaces or sentient architect-ural environments that respond to human thoughts. AEROCRAFT responds to global trends to form social emergence that corresponds to a complex system via communication processes among people across cyberspace.



Mojave Desert and Las Vegas

LEAVE NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS

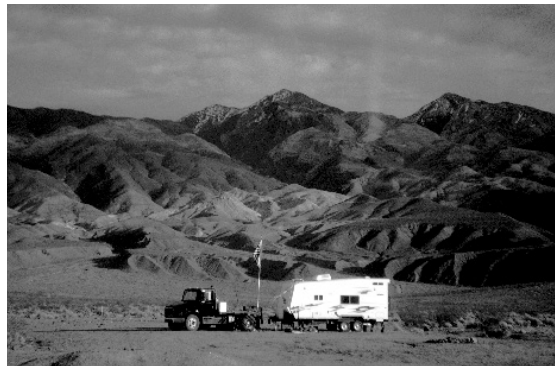
Words and Photography by Patch Dobson-Pérez

In November 2013, I went on an 'off-grid' expedition spanning three states of America with my unit from The Bartlett. Beginning in Los Angeles, California, we passed by minivan through the Mojave Desert and Death Valley, camping in ghost towns, sand dunes and military zones in bespoke structures hand-crafted by ourselves, which during the day functioned as transient laboratories. There were a range of scientific interests specific to the area being explored, from the transit of the sand dunes, to the seismic activity of the San Andreas Fault. The primary aim of our devices was to settle them in a variety of natural landscapes without disrupting the natural order of things, aiming to discover something about a desert which takes nothing from us in return.

Midway through this journey we spent one night in Las Vegas, and by so abruptly entering such a polar opposite of where we'd been, the prior 'off-grid' nature of the journey was put into perspective; it was the most contrasting spatial transition I've ever been a part of. Surely there aren't many other such vividly disparate places coexisting in the world. From surviving in the classic American desert with sporadic inhabitants, no connectivity and no showers, we were plunged into a glittering consumerist metropolis at magic hour accompanied by Frank Sinatra. It was an awe-inspiring experience and difficult to assimilate fully at the time. For the previous five days and nights, we'd had an unusual focus on 'nature' due to the scientific and investigative intent of everyone's projects; a full appreciation of the details of the landscape, in a pure and peaceful context. Suddenly, the details became much more difficult to take in with the overwhelming backdrop of Vegas. The intensity had gone from that of a head torch to the thousands of blinding neon lightbulbs of the Stratosphere tower. We were now in a microcosm of financial lust surrounded by the untouched wilderness we'd been living with.

Las Vegas was originally Native American land and through gaming profits, the tribes now have the economic means to exercise their "inherent sovereign powers." At first this sounds wonderful, but over time, their culture has been effectively destroyed. For me, this is analogous to the relationship between the casino and the gambler; they are lulled into a false sense of security and then have everything taken from right under their noses.

The imposition of Vegas in the Mojave Desert, on what was once the land of a people who had a symbiotic relationship with the earth, is what struck me most. We had been living lightly on the earth, taking nothing but readings and photographs, and leaving nothing but footprints, but within a few



hours we were—once again—living heavily on the land, eating entire plates of Alaskan Snow Crab legs at the $40 Bellagio buffet. This perfectly illustrates the nature of Las Vegas; a resource-hungry conglomeration dropped in the middle of a resource-scarce context.

To me, Vegas was very much an illustration of corporate America, a world only kept alive by the many interpretations of the good ol' American Dream. The mantra that "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement", is what prompts the hordes of token-hungry people to arrive for their one hard-earned holiday of the year in a gambling frenzy and sit like robots for hours on end playing slot machines which ultimately never pay out. They're tricked into thinking they're winning, when—as in the entire consumerist culture—the casino always wins. From first-hand witness, I find it difficult to believe that their life is any richer than that of the Native Americans who previously lived in harmony with their context—as the American forefathers would have them believe.

Unlike our careful mindset out in the desert, there is a wild madness in Vegas; it's a city that exists comfortably in the company of drunken vagabonds and prostitutes. This is a stark contrast with the delicate balance of the surrounding desert which can only remain intact with the help of deliberate frugality from its inhabitants. Vegas feeds off irrationality and mindless spending and actually prospers from the *nouveau riche* cohorts of young American bankers and lawyers who go and frivolously spend, in a desperate affirmation to themselves that they are living the American Dream. I would argue that, in Vegas, this dream has evolved into a maligned parody of itself. Whereas before it was about anybody being able to prosper through hard work and determination, Vegas is a corruption of it—a shortcut where you win through luck.

One could say it's a gamble in itself, to plant such a devouring scheme in such a desolate landscape in the hope that it will survive. For now, the great machine of Vegas keeps rumbling on, but I wonder if, like the indigenous settlements that came before it, there will come a day when it returns to the desert from which it sprang. ⌂

Granada and Seville

A CULTURAL OBJECTIVE

Words and Photography by Nick Elias

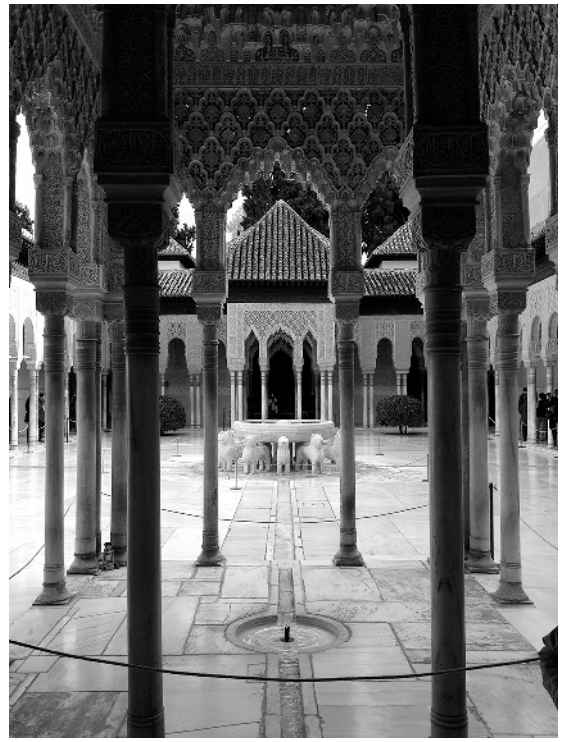
Field trips remain playful, as intended, and bring out something more valuable to an architecture student when visited with an army of like-minded critics. Gathering cultural knowledge abroad is half of it, and the other half seems to be what you make of it. Drinks, unexpected building of relationships and inside jokes that never leave the design unit become the focus of the memories, but in most cases what you take away are truly breath-taking architectures that add cultural wealth to your design ethic.

My unit saw the Alhambra in Grenada and then roamed around various cultural gems in Seville. Originally constructed as a small fortress in 889 AD, the Alhambra has been adopted by a variety of deities since. In the 21st Century, however, its primary role is that of a museum, and it is clearly bombarded with tourists happily paying to receive their dose of culture. This is nothing new, yet it is interesting to bear witness to not just historic architectures but the marketing of memories and cultures that these structures encourage in our society today.

The Alhambra has been a highly flexible architecture, made so by the various occupants throughout its history. It rests as a statement of this today, permitting us to reflect on its purpose for purpose. Following and photographing the tourists photographing the Alhambra became a new experience in itself and exposed its commercialised function of today, either a credit to its flexibility or a superficial demise? Still, the gift shop was highly recommended by the ticket officers.

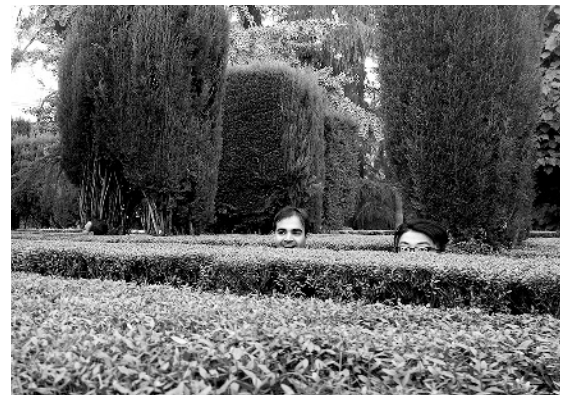
Seeing the Alhambra, as a cultural and touristic hotspot, contrasted greatly with other architectural sites in Seville, such as the remnants of the '92 Expo. Over 100 countries were present representing the theme of 'The Age of Discovery'. The total amount of land used for the Expo was 215 hectares, and nearly 42 million visitors attended. It gave an impressive architectural tour of the world, with many countries vying for the position of the most inventive or creative Pavilion structure. Outstanding amongst these was the Pavilion of Japan—the world's largest wooden structure—the Pavilion of Morocco—a re-creation of a Moroccan Palace-Mansion—and the modernistic cube and sphere of the flagship Spanish Pavilion, to name a few.

Visiting the '92 Expo site in 2014 Seville was most astonishing, as the vast landscapes of monolithic architectural forms still resonated pride and patriotism. However, never can one feel more of an alien abroad when the architecture hosts no occupants. The Expo site was once teaming with plugged-in activity, situational hustling, yet now there is barely indication of this. It seems the post-modern archi-landscapes now offer a mere suggestion of their once gratified appropriateness from their scale and boundaries. The varying archi-types once acted as statements in a shared landscape, but they now



rest in their obsolete plots like fanciful gravestones playing host to a few make-do offices nestled in the depths of the Expo. Needless to say the ambiance in the Expo site was deadly still and—unlike the Alhambra—it offered little to the average tourist void of an architectural bias. The visitor of today notices the structural landscape as decay in waiting —waiting over a decade now for a public use, a private use or for a ticket officer at the gate.

In light, the Expo site actually permitted the 'playfulness' that architectural field trips can offer. In void of its primary function to serve 42 million people, it only took 11 of us to overwhelm the graveyard. We didn't just come as tourists marking off the Expo as a site seen but rather as a new generation of playful occupants, reimagining and reinventing the site as an architectural playground. In hindsight, the historic factoids and site statistics have become hazy, but what remains clear is that architectural pedagogy extends beyond the walls of Wates House, outside of the computer screen or an A2 sheet of paper and thrives in the ephemeral relations between people.



Detroit

MORE THAN A FASCINATION OF DECAY

Words and Photography by Louise Bjørnskov Schmidt

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past"
T.S Eliot

"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from
uneasy dreams he found himself transformed
in his bed into an enormous insect."
Franz Kafka

The Packard Plant is the largest abandoned industrial complex in the world which grew out of the long-term implications of capitalism in post-industrial Detroit. The factory complex, which are contemporary ruins abandoned since 1958, was designed by Albert Kahn in 1911. Through its column grid and reinforced concrete frame, Kahn's structure allowed for the use of curtain walls that could be changed over time and that ironically, today, set conditions for the unpredictable. Light, cheap and disposable design, were architectural elements that breathed the characteristics of modern capitalism. The structural intervention became modernisation's dogma of industrial architecture and was hugely influential in the metropolitan architecture that followed. But when the optimistic days of the car industry in Detroit lost economic momentum, the city did as well. The heyday of automobile-manufacturing of luxury Packard cars ended in the 1950s and left the Packard Plant for several decades in decay, leading to the question: what are the contemporary ruins of today?

Along with my unit, I theoretically approach the Packard Plant through Franz Kafka's 'metamorphosis', a concept introduced in his story about Gregor Samsa —a man who wakes to find himself transformed into a large, monstrous insect-like creature. Kafka uses the symbolism of Gregor becoming a bug to represent the tragic life that Gregor was leading and as a critique of the modern lifestyle in the early 20th century. The word 'metamorphosis' is a term originating in the study of natural processes—in contrast to modernisation's industrialised mass production. In this view, cities are living organisms —as a 'body', untended and starved of resource. Parts of a city can die, leading to inevitable decay and to the exodus of its host society. Yet also like a body, these parts can be healed and cared for, bringing change and rebirth to dying areas. Our agenda is to see beyond the highly visual aesthetic of ruination, and seek to replant the seed of sustainable growth in the urban environment. To transform a site in the state of dereliction as the Packard Plant, it is fundamental to understand

all facets of its history and embodied symbols in order to answer the million dollar question of how we should respond to the ruins of today: demolish or rethink?

> "A ruin is defined as the disjunctive product of the intrusion of nature upon an edifice without loss of the unity produced by human builders (…) A ruin has a signification different from something merely human-made. It is like no other work of art and its time is unlike any other time"
> Florence M. Hetzler

Today the Packard Plant endures as a half-mile stretch of broken concrete, bricks and trouble. In fact, firefighters—so often portrayed as cities' modern-day heroes—won't venture inside it when it catches fire. Scrappers have pretty much picked it clean, urban spelunkers still explore it and graffiti artists see it as a massive canvas. Similarly, the rave culture in Detroit originated from now-famous underground parties in the empty structures in the 80s and 90s. Furthermore, the site has been attractive as a film set, and has been used for *8-Mile* and the Hollywood action movie *Transformers*. The crime and underground raves, side by side with art-installations and film shots, are all calling out the extreme circumstances of the site as an expression of frustration in the area, reinforcing the idea that Detroit is a city in desperate need of transformation. Thus, the demolishing of the Packard ruins will not heal the illness of the city—only temporarily numb the symptoms.

An obsession with ruins can risk a fall into mere sentiment or nostalgia: ruin lust was already a cliché in 18th century Romanticism. The ruins of the Packard Plant have worth because of the history they express in the lost dreams of the future. The present structure evokes an aesthetic of disorder, surprise and sensuality, offering ghostly glimpses into the past and a tactile encounter with space and materiality. It is precisely their fragmentary nature and lack of fixed meaning, that render the ruins somehow deeply meaningful. They blur boundaries between rural and urban, past and present and are intimately tied to memory, desire and a sense of place. From this point of view, the fascination of Packard Plant is more than fascination of the aesthetic of decay, but a window into the past, while questioning the future of the post-industrial city.

Barcelona

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

Words by Heidi Au Yeung, Photography by Lester Cheung

Between old and new Barcelona, the sun paints the Mediterranean sea red and orange as it sets, the street lights flash with the stars at night and Gaudi unleashes his creativity and marks his name. But Barcelona is also a place where companies look for new development opportunities, a place where sky-high buildings tower over humble 3–6 story blocks, and it's a place where curtain glass walls show reflecting images of its Catalan past. Although Barcelona captivates us with its natural beauty and its rich history, it is undergoing rapid change, because architecture as a visual is key to its socio-economic metamorphosis.

The neighbourhoods in the centre, such as Las Ramblas, capture the vitality that Barcelona is famous for. It is defined by wide roads, along which you can freely stroll from end to end, while entering shops and cafes that serve local delicacies. Benches are purposely scattered throughout these broad, pedestrianised streets for tired walkers to rest upon before continuing their street explorations. Located above these al-fresco cafes and local shops are colourfully patterned facades, decorated as people appropriate their particular space by hanging their individual country's flag across their balconies or adorn it with pots of plants.

Yet just a few stops away on the Metro—Barcelona's underground train system—a very different scene is revealed. Pockets of deprivation—areas left behind by the economic development—are found besides the vibrant centres. Behind the sounds, colours and flavours of Barcelona are the forgotten remnants of its formerly industrial past. In these areas stand buildings that are scarred with graffiti rather than flags; paths that are littered with remains of demolished buildings rather than trees and flowers; streets that echo with emptiness rather than the noise of the crowd. In particular, the monolithic apartment blocks and factories built amidst the excitement of the economic boom—1945 to 1957—are now becoming the modern ruins.

In recent years, Barcelona has begun to re-image itself into an area of economic opportunity. As development plans are introduced, tall commercial buildings are springing up across the city. For example, Barcelona's new landmark, Torre Agbar, has been constructed as part of the '22@Barcelona' redevelopment scheme in the neighbourhood of El Poblenou. This scheme aims to convert a previous industrial centre into a central business district and has drawn in architects and planners to redesign the area. Amidst this race towards modernity, the soaring heights of the buildings disrupt the harmony of the low-rise local blocks, whilst flags and pots of plants are lost in their clean curtain glass walls. These neat square windows, flat concrete walls and empty balconies form a sterile streetscape causing the sense of community to dissipate. No longer could people talk to each other across the balconies, proclaim their pride for their country with their flags or take part in designing the building façade with their plants and deck chairs. Instead, everyone's life is hidden in flats efficiently fitted into apartment blocks.

Beneath the postcard pictures of Barcelona's vast Mediterranean sea, relaxing al-fresco cafes and busy streets, is a patchwork quilt of diverse developments, which exist but don't interact, all existing as autonomous units. The legacy of Barcelona's industrial past is signposted by old factory chimneys, derelict land, boarded up sites amongst the commercialised streets and budding new developments. Barcelona has undergone and is still undergoing many development projects as it strives to become more "inspiring". Just as the *Sagrada Familia* Cathedral has taken more than 100 years to build, Barcelona still has a long journey ahead of it. What will it become—another globalized city with an abandoned past? A city in conflict with its past? Or a city which celebrates its past with the new?

Usually white, grey and black Crit Room: how times change!

Early mornings are common for the sleep-deprived students at our Wates House, though it should be said that sleep-deprivation is universal in architecture schools all over the world. On one particular day at 9:30 am the walls were white and empty, bare and exposed. This, however, would change dramatically, as it was the dreaded crit day. In they came after a long night working, with their coffee or tea, ready to cover the bare walls, ready to hang their work.

On crit day, students arrive with their ideas, prepared to hear it all from their tutors, visiting critics or practising architects. Criticism in architecture—as well as in general—is not only about expressing opinions; it's also about judging and evaluating. Architecture students come to each crit expecting to be criticised and judged —and in some cases slaughtered. Although positive feedback is always appreciated, at the back of their minds there's always a hunch that there will be a 'but' at the end of a flattering sentence. You wait for it, you anticipate it —and almost always you're right: the pat on the back never comes without a slap on the wrist. So you stand there, exhausted and drowsy, wondering whether to say something and defend your work or simply nod in agreement.

Often, even though we pretend to welcome criticism, it's hard to receive it without becoming upset, defensive or even furious. Admittedly, for us zombies who are watching in the audience, outward expressions of anger displayed by those who are being criticised always provide us with a fleeting moment of entertainment that jolts the life back into us. Some critics are able to offer criticism in a kind and helpful way without coming across as offensive, and are respectful of the student's efforts, but these, alas, are very few.

LOBBY's Crit Room is essential for opening a discussion and creating an interaction between students, tutors, researchers, scholars and practising architects. For this reason, dear reader, we use this paper-based Crit Room to unfold analytical and critical debates and dialogue between architects of all sectors. We sent out a call for submissions to current Bartlett students, and patiently waited for emails to come flooding in. From master plans to performance pieces, we narrowed down the projects based on their un/spectacular nature and the theoretical thinking that sustained their designs. In a crit-room manner we asked Zaha Hadid Architects' DaeWha Kang and The Bartlett's very own PhD Candidate and Teaching Fellow Luke Pearson to offer their critiques. Don't worry, they were kind.

So, my lovelies, after searching far and wide from a pool of LOBBY submissions, we present The Bartlett's Brightest: our favourite four architectural projects from The Bartlett School of Architecture in 2013. Feel free to disagree with us—and we know you will, you bunch of know-it-alls, you.

TIMESCAPE

Morphing geometric sculptures with nature

A Project by **Chiaki Yatsui, Bernardo Dias, Qiuying Zhong**
Course **MArch Graduate Architectural Design 2013, RC6 (previously Research Cluster8)**
Academic year **2012–2013**
Supervisor **Daniel Widrig**

A series of autonomous sculptures and structures stand along the riverbank in Coimbra, Portugal. The sculptures try to connect with the urban fabric and the local National Park, which has been forgotten by the local authority and planners. The physical characteristics of the site, coupled with nature and the city, play a key role in the abandonment and decay of the space. Timescape is a site-specific project especially in common geography along a river. The vernacular materials and shapes can be customised, depending on purpose and situation. In this instance, the project is located in between the city and the Choupal National Park, which has been neglected for more than two decades owing to the fact that a main infrastructural road was built over it and a national railway passes further down the river. These constraints, combined with a regular city grid overlapping the organic edge of the park, generate a peculiar site. Timescape is a landscape design and building system that aims to bridge those conditions.

The project explores the picturesque and the potential of decay in a setting intentionally immersed in nature over time. Architecture must embrace its own decay and forget about perfection, because the only truly finished building is a heap of rubble over time. There are, however, some contradictions to this, once systems and materials have a tendency to decay by themselves. As part of our design, the complexity, even contradiction, embodied in the process of building, intensifies the sense of humanity. The specific site conditions, the sharp/edgy urban fabric and the morphogenesis of nature have helped to define a boundary for developing a digital craft able to interface the transitory moment created by this in-between space. The digital side of the project explores the idea of a brick able to interlock, be structural and clad. Spaces such as the park entrance, grotto and canopy have been shaped, based on primitive geometries by a simple interlocking system that brings them together.

The digitally generated pieces by different 3D software were cast with concrete and other materials such as earth, cork, sand and cement which, when used in different ratios, led to new textures and materiality through deliberate decomposition by waterjet. Thus, the transition between clearly defined and morphing junctions can be achieved within the same system. Some of the more concrete-based parts kept their structural purpose while other more porous parts, because of the amount of cork in their composition, have generated a textured skin and became more fragile when exposed to water pressure. Casting shapes generated digitally with natural and local materials can build pieces and allow decomposition. This means that understanding the digital environment as much as the natural one is truly important in the future for architecture. The complexity of digital and parametric design and its real materialisation will open architecture to new fabrication, shapes, textures and materials.

By focusing on the ability to control material energies, the project is interested in the debris

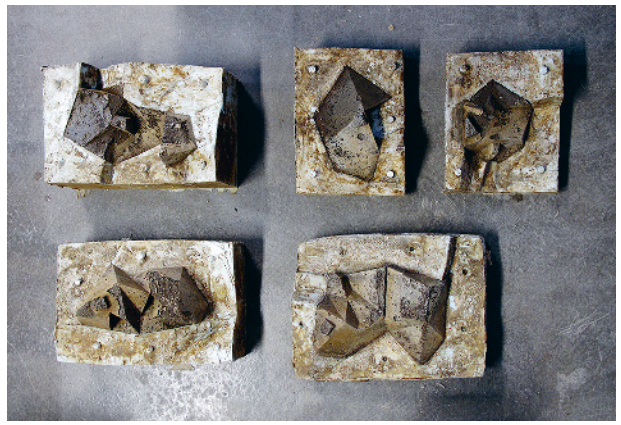
resulting from the relationship between handmade, digital fabrication and sculpture. We want to provoke a particular architecture that is transformed by its own debris and decay, architecture of accumulation of varying material energies, some spent and others vital. It will have structures that initiate the form, but over time concede their role to other structural components.

During preliminary experiments, styrofoam was added to the concrete mixture for enriching texture and reducing weight. Subsequently however, synthetic materials seemed not right to use owing to the site condition and their long process of biodegradation. We then realised that cork is a great material because it is 100 per cent natural, light and would allow us to reduce the amount of concrete in our structures and create great texture.

The main structures of any building, for instance, park entrance, café, etc, will last because they are made with concrete. Thus, there are parts and structures, which can be appropriated by nature or used in any other away. It can be a skeleton or any other design you can fit in by using the same building process. We proved this by using a different ratio of concrete and cork in the same mixture; we could sand it by water jetting and obtain a system that could be structural and cladding.

As one material energy saps away and others take over, the architecture may begin to rake and twist, whatever shape it takes, to reveal its origins in the landscape. In this way, the space may eventually

be sacrificed to the wider landscape. This is an architecture of informal spaces, intriguing and uncertain. It is not known when one structure will collapse or be taken by other natural structures. The structures and sculpture sitting along the park make people feel they want to explore their own imagination. ⌂



DaeWha Kang:

The plaster casts, abstract renders and rigorous methodology of choosing the mix of the casting medium are excellent. However, translation to the 3D printed model and large-scale prototypes lacks diversity and control. The in-place renderings depict a broader diversity of erosions and carvings than shown in the actual larger-scale casts. Could you deploy site-specific, or object-specific, performance criteria, explicitly to create conditions you hope to achieve or that will emerge naturally? The relation of the sculpture to plants lacks development; in the pontoon rendering, for example, certain porosities could be deployed to allow plants partly to take over the structure. In the 3D printed model the relationship between plants and print is weak. The interlocking of the volumes and 'cracking' of the voxels is interesting; is there also a structural logic to them? It would be good to see this in three dimensions and relate it to techniques and sequences of construction.

Luke Pearson:

The project appears to discuss the potential for a controlled romanticism emerging through the structured interplays between digital fabrication and natural processes of decay. There are some interesting moves, but I would like to understand the different typologies of 'brick' within the system and how their form is derived from their place within the process of controlled decay. If there are types of building prone to a more seductive ruination than others because of their material composition, I would like to see more about how these roles are controlled, and how this decay is ultimately modulated. I would also question whether the project should operate only as 'uncertain' spaces or whether this act of ruination can be combined with the precision of digital processes to make more specific typologies of space that move beyond the folly. In engaging supernatural decay to create a 'romantic procedure' of design, they might actually create something defiantly unromantic.

RECONSTRUCTION AND RECORD

Exploring alternatives for heritage areas after earthquakes in Chile

A Project by **Bernadette Devilat**
Course **PhD Architectural Design**
Academic year **2014, ongoing**
Supervisors **Stephen Gage and Camillo Boano**

Earthquakes have progressively destroyed Chile's built heritage over the years. Even though building codes are constantly updated, thus leading to buildings being safer in earthquakes, the built heritage is nevertheless significantly affected. This is mainly owing to the age of the buildings, lack of maintenance and accumulated damage over the years.

Built heritage has also been affected because of applied reconstruction methods. There are three main reasons for this. First, the lack of an integral approach that does not allow for the reconstruction and repair of whole heritage areas, but only certain buildings; second, the indiscriminate demolition that takes places usually immediately after the disaster; and, third, the design of reconstruction projects as new 'heritage' constructions that try to imitate the appearance of previous buildings without understanding that heritage should include a sustainable mode of design and construction. The question of authenticity arises where previous records are sometimes non-existent. In this context, accurate recording technologies such as 3D laser scanning become relevant for future conservation and repair of historic buildings and to question the nature of the re-construction. This is being explored in the author´s PhD thesis, the aim of which is to explore new architectural and design alternatives to address reconstruction in heritage villages.

3D laser scanning can be a powerful recording tool for architecture and landscapes. It combines a laser that measures distances in millimetres and a photo camera to capture colour information. The result is a three-dimensional point cloud of the reality that can be obtained in a short period of time. The data collected can be edited, sectioned, 3D-printed and used as a basis for drawings and designs. It allows an accurate assessment of damage, cracks, deformations and other existing conditions of buildings and ruins. This also allows speculation with regard to a type of record that has never previously been so comprehensive, at least not on such a wide scale. Independent historic buildings have been 3D-scanned before in Chile, but not complete historical areas.

To develop these reconstruction approaches, three case studies in Chile were 3D-scanned in January 2013: San Lorenzo de Tarapacá, Zúñiga and Lolol. Each study allowed three days to scan as much as possible. It was an experiment to see how much data could be obtained in a similar time frame available in a post-earthquake situation before changes or demolition take place.

San Lorenzo de Tarapacá is a vernacular settlement located in the north of Chile, with

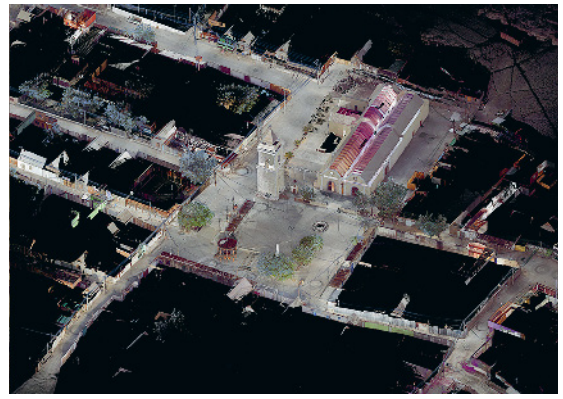
constructions that have been mostly built using traditional building materials such as adobe and *quincha*. An earthquake of 7.9 affected the village in June 2005. By the time of the 3D survey in 2013 the village was considered 'reconstructed', although most of the houses were in fact still in ruins. This is because governmental reconstruction following the earthquake only considered the construction of new dwellings that replicated 'traditional' houses, not the reinforcement or retrofit of reparable buildings. A number of abandoned and ruined constructions were recorded in the 3D scans process. In April 2014, another earthquake of 8.2 affected the area. Although its effects on the buildings are as of yet unknown, it is highly probable that the 3D scans obtained in 2013 recorded ruins and constructions that might not be there anymore.

Zúñiga is a heritage village dating from 1765, located in central Chile, and characterised by adobe constructions organised in a continuous facade. Despite the 8.8 magnitude of the 2010 earthquake that affected the area, houses were not severely damaged but were in need of reinforcement. Inhabitants were still occupying their dwellings despite the potential danger in forthcoming quakes as no repairs had been undertaken at the time of the survey.

Lolol is an area located in the centre of Chile. In most cases, the houses were built using adobe characterised by continuous porticos that generate a distinctive spatiality to the public space. The 2010 earthquake also affected this heritage village, but here the reconstruction was in progress when the 3D scanning record was taken. A record was taken of the village in this intermediate stage of reconstruction, in between two different moments that will be part of the area's history.

In this research, the visual understanding of heritage is contrasted with a visual record of the actual built environment. The role that the record may play in the definition of what is considered to be heritage, and in the design of reconstruction projects, is being explored by asking inhabitants and by using 3D laser scanning. ⌂

DaeWha Kang:



The premise is rich with possibilities. The renderings have character and mystery that complement the topic. I like the blurred boundary between design and documentation —could you explore the interplay between the two in more depth? At present the work seems mainly focused on generating evocative renderings from 3D scanning technology. Could you simulate or extrapolate future destruction of some of the scanned architecture, and imagine in more detail how the ghost image of the previously intact architecture would be instrumental in the next stages of reconstruction? Could you also scan another village, with some of the buildings partially destroyed, and use the scanning technique to inform a reconstructive design process? How would you fill the gaps when a scanned memory of the intact architecture does not exist? The two cases add challenge, complexity and richness to the project, which should also be instrumental, not merely representational.

START-UP CITY

Re-Activating Coventry City Centre with Micro-Economies

A Project by **Claire Taggart**
Course **MArch Architecture, Unit 22, Year 5**
Academic year **2012–2013**
Supervisors **Izaskun Chinchilla and Carlos Jimenez**

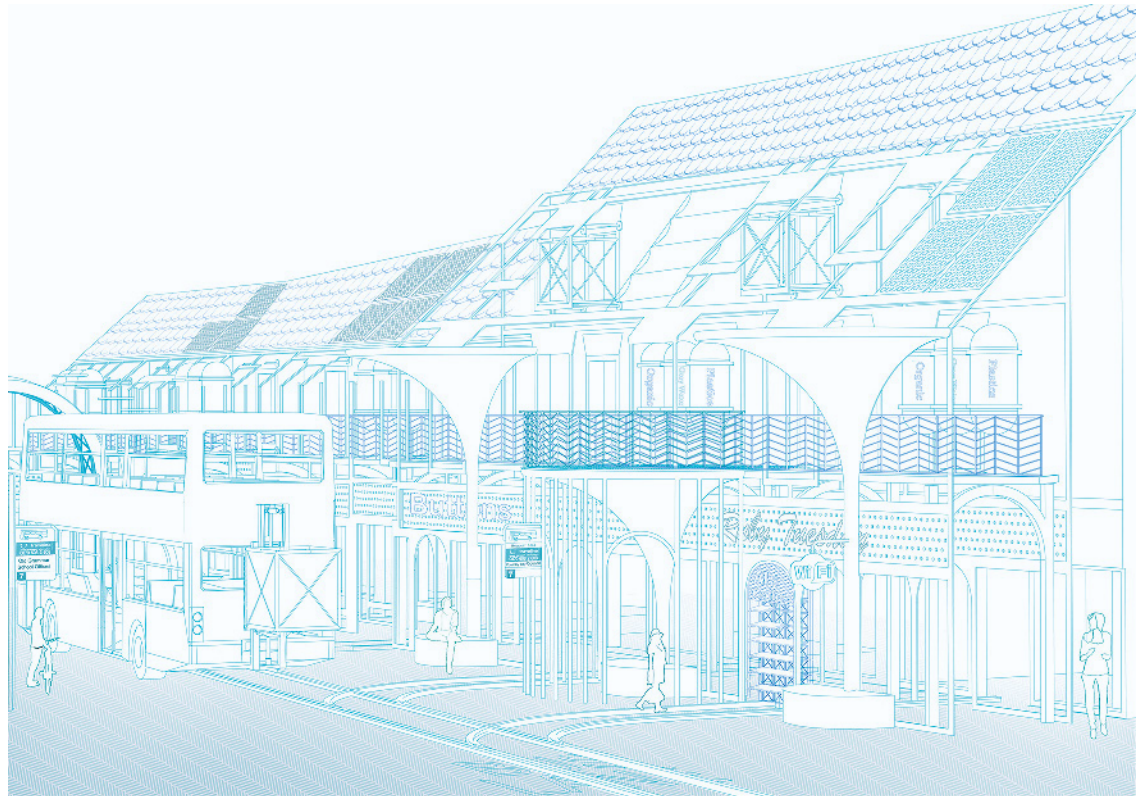
As our regional town centres and high streets gradually drain away up and down the country and as retail trade moves steadily out of town —with online shopping continually on the rise—questions are raised about what is to be done with these increasingly redundant urban spaces and how they might be revived in a feasible and sustainable way.

Coventry represents a prime example of a post-war, post-industrial city with a struggling commercial city centre. Although Coventry's history stretches back to Saxon times, the 1940 Blitz, followed by fairly ruthless tabula rasa post-war planning, has swept away the majority of the city's built heritage. The latter half of the twentieth century re-built the city centre as an island of pedestrianised precincts, high-rise office blocks and multi-storey car parks, collared by a hefty concrete ring road of flyovers and underpasses.

Coventry city centre—along with other similar UK town centres—has been left bereft of its industrial purpose and its architecture has come to represent all that was wrong with its modernist vision. Following subsequent financial crises and recent high street demise, the city centre stands drained of trade and life, and questions must be raised, therefore, as to whether urban centres such as Coventry have a real purpose any longer. As the high street is lost, so is a key social focus of the city, and, as the CBD fractures and disperses, so too do vital business and trade connections and networks. Since the redevelopment of the city centre post-war—and throughout several proposals and redevelopments since—Coventry's planners have all too often approached the city centre as a singular overall 'problem'. This has resulted in this assumed 'problem' being automatically brushed over all associated physical architecture where any abandoned, 'out-dated' or otherwise 'undesirable' spaces are automatically condemned and wiped out.

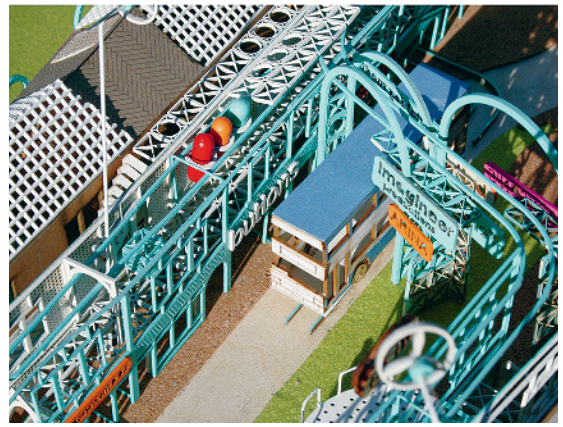
As big brand retailers drain from the centre, new economies are emerging in their place. Specialist supermarkets, delicatessens and restaurants are appearing alongside new tailors, designers, salons, media, service and design companies. These emerge from new migrant populations as well as entrepreneurial graduates, setting up for themselves in a time of poor job prospects. Smaller, successful and regularly busy businesses in Coventry's centre, such as indoor markets, salons, fairs, cafés and coffee shops, often have a social, rather than purely material/economic draw. In an increasingly digital age with online economies providing more visibility for small businesses than ever before, it's unsurprising that they accounted for 47 per cent of private sector employment in 2013. Acceptance of the inevitable death of the high street as we know it today, and a re-definition of what it might become based on support of previously overlooked aspects of the city, provide the basis of the Start-Up City proposal.

Start-Up City proposes building on these emerging social and economic aspects of the city: the 'micro-economies'. As opposed to the tabula rasa approach, smaller-scale interventions are to be introduced incrementally within the city's existing urban fabric where abandoned spaces are re-appropriated to house and support the city's new micro-economies.

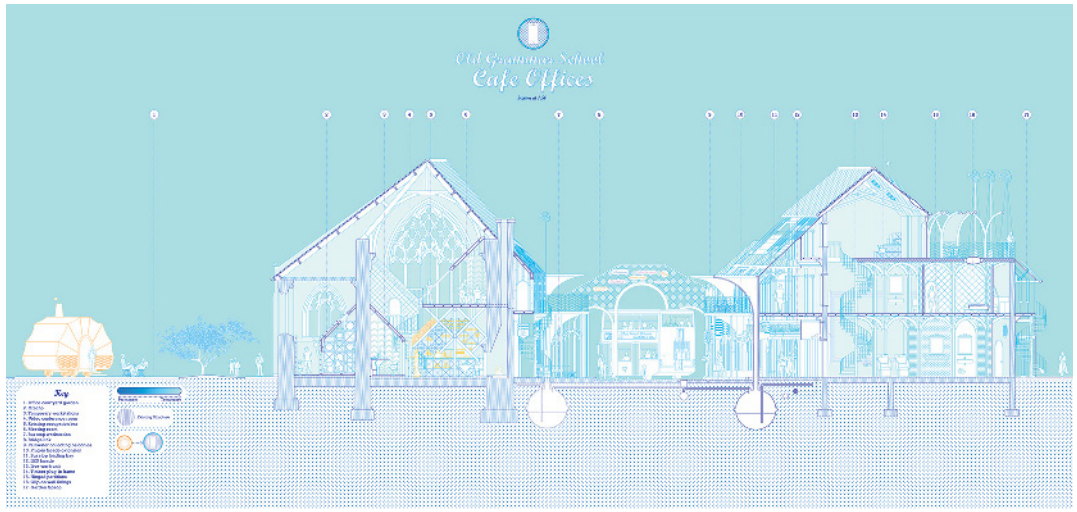


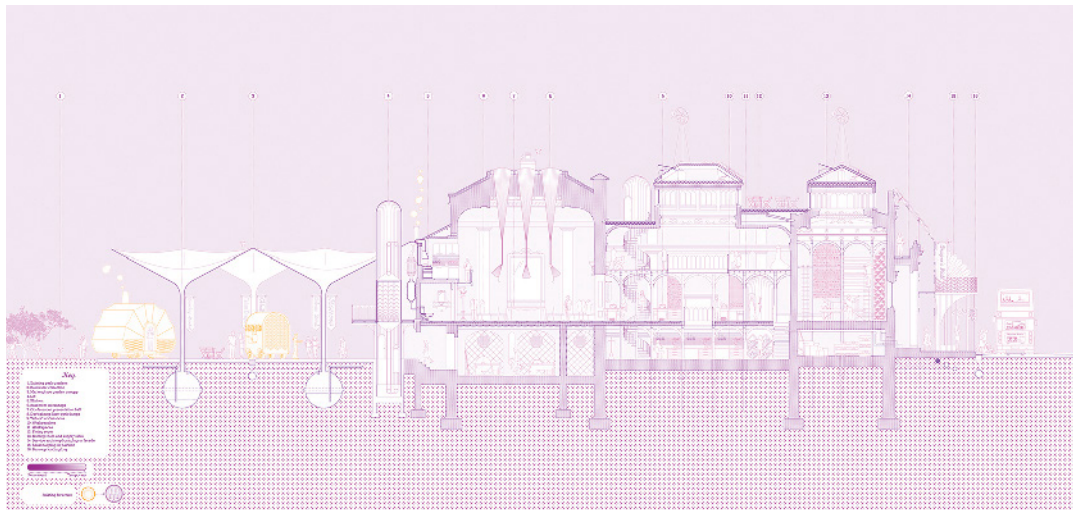
Empty retail units are converted into rapidly modifiable home/workspaces, with flexible modular structures and adaptable layouts for temporary or long-term occupation. The brutalist face of the city is addressed through a breaking up and scaling down of spaces to a more human scale, making the city centre more welcoming and inhabitable, as well as making spaces more easily rentable.

Abandoned city landmarks are converted to house guilds for growing micro-economies and catalyse their growth through anchoring them in the existing city fabric. Business incubation spaces, shared and short-term rented facilities, workshops, kitchens, supply shops and market halls support the development of existing businesses and new start-ups. Shared shop front extensions also provide a framework for temporary habitation or extension. Accessible, legible and adaptable services allow units to be plugged-in and changed day-to-day for daytime /night time uses and to test business locations for short periods of time. Bus stops and public seating are integrated into the façades to merge public spaces with business space. Public buses transport plug-in units around the city and bus stops become loading bays for deliveries. This helps to integrate businesses into the public space and vice-versa, supporting and promoting new micro-economies and creating mutually beneficial spaces.



Through support of previously overlooked micro-economies, Start-Up City hopes to create a model for revival of the high street through unearthing and embracing new developments in the social and economic life of the city centre, whilst integrating them with existing spaces and long-established habits of city life.





DaeWha Kang:

The drawings and models are beautifully rendered and create their own aesthetic world. Could the building-scale architectural implications of the project be more developed? One might imagine this creating an extendable architecture running on tracks and opening and closing like an accordion, or groups of carts locking together to create larger structures for more specific events. The space generated between them and the sense of place is also important.

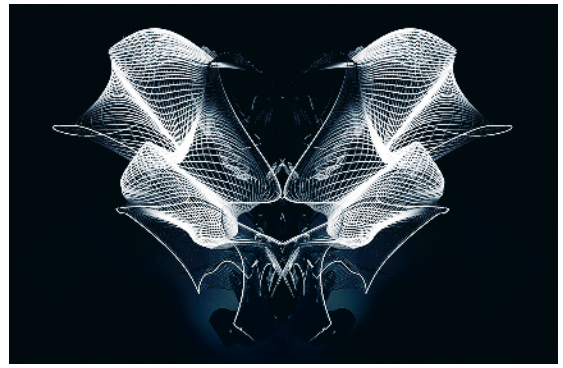
I very much enjoy the overview plan. Could you create a more accessible avenue for a critique and an evaluation of the project? It would be great to have a series of drawings that would allow someone to evaluate or measure the success or failure of your work according to its stated goals. This might be done by creating a set of criteria relating to usage over different times of the day, or to diversity of occupants, or to business feasibility, or cost.

Luke Pearson:

The project raises interesting questions about the role of architects as agents for social change. If unwieldy large-scale modernist developments such as those discussed here in Coventry are seen as remnants of a past, where do architects sit as part of a more diffuse approach towards urban regeneration? The role of form and materiality is questionable, and can the scheme function as both an adaptable kit-of-parts and also as a signifier of a new community initiative? I would be interested to learn more about the precise ways in which the proposed architectures interact with the 'heft' of its environment and how these new structures deal with the facilities required and the creation of new communal spaces. How does the form and materiality directly respond to the cultural and climatic context of Coventry? Could this initiative be applied across the country, or would each Start-Up City introduce a new and particular locality to its host towns and cities?

CAUSTIC ARCHITECTURE

Architecture of Light



A Project by **Francois Mangion and Shuchi Agarwal**
Course **MArch Graduate Architectural Design, Research Cluster 2**
Academic year **2012–2013**
Supervisors: **Marjan Colletti and Guan Lee**
Words by **Francois Mangion**

> "[A]rchitecture condenses light to its most concise being. The creation of space in architecture is simply the condensation and purification of the power of light."
> Tadao Ando

This research questions the next architectural invention, which will bring the architect closer to other architectural contributors, such as artists and physicists. Between optical art and optical architecture lies the gap of these two distanced, yet mutually beneficially related, manifestations of light as an architectural medium. This study sets a continuation to optical art and a starting point towards optical architecture, inspired by Man Ray's own style of camera-less photography and Moholy-Nagy's visual exploration of light and space.

Caustic Architecture does not aim to give an answer to a new definition of architecture, because uncertainty can only be defeated through extensive experimentation. Instead, it represents the first steps towards a new way of looking at natural phenomena, providing hints of previously undiscovered inspirations for designers and architects towards a further flexible and dynamic richness of designing a complete architectural experience through nature. Caustic Architecture argues for an architecture that learns from the behaviour of light and explores the emergence of optics as a generative architectural tool.

This research also proposes to challenge the use of technologies available in the architectural field, overcome historical limitations and conceive an all-round tool of form, function and experience. The computational translation of light generates multiple formations with an 'inbuilt' spatial quality of caustics that previously has remained hidden. Now, however, the natural focusing of light into form generates not only a flat 'virtual' projection but also an architectural language where form, matter and function co-exist through one cohesive process.

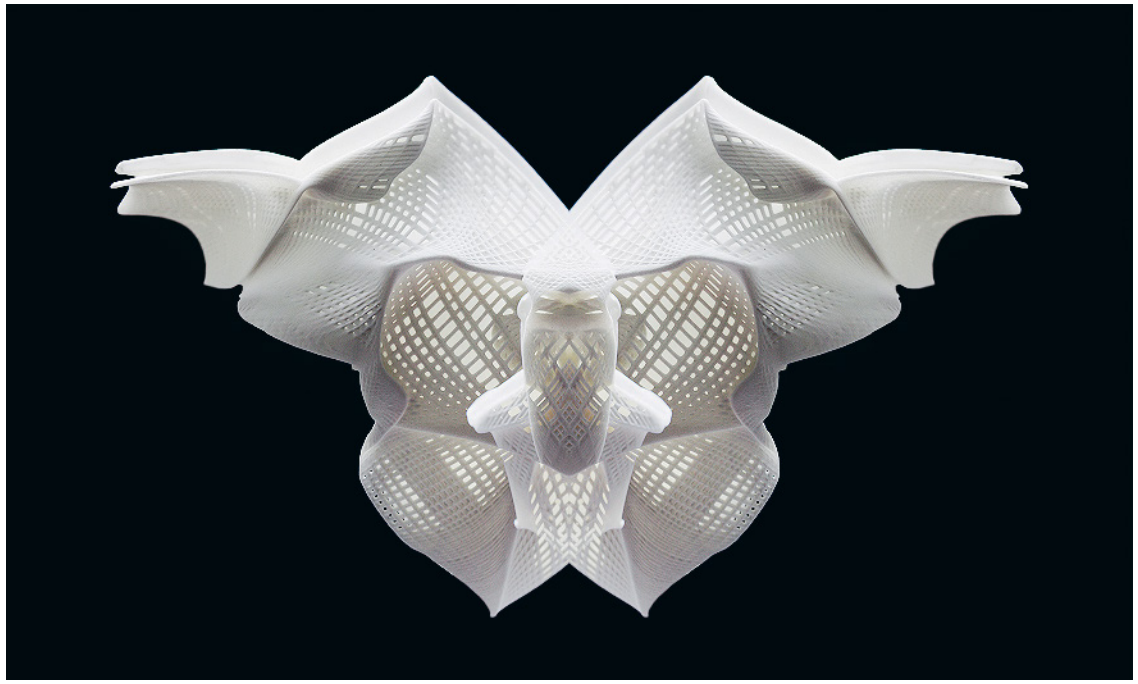
Caustic Architecture is in an early stage of a long-term personal research that goes beyond the aesthetic or function and begins to explore the interaction, experience and performance of a space. Yet it does so by providing a series of small investigative design applications that explore the caustic's poetic potential and re-boost a forsaken dimension of light into contemporary architecture, achieving exceptional spaces.

The experience of light caustics is based on the opposing polarities of light and dark, virtual and matter, which, with respect to enclosed space and openness, become ideal and appropriate for their engagement in generating an architecture of light: a Caustic Architecture.

HARM(O)PTICA

Taking the name from the combination of form through optics and harmonic string proportions, Harm(o)ptica represents a prototypical scenario. Focusing on the effect of refracted light and its generation in daily life, one starts to control and 'choreograph' a caustic 'dance routine' through a palette of infinite combinations of light projections and sound, generated through the vibration of harmonic strings.

Harm(o)ptica reverses the relationship between solid and light and delves into a design methodology structured around the interaction between



optical rules and architectural reality. The generated surfaces are instantaneously caustically referential and seem to evolve, overturn and bend into a dynamic caustic representation. Space is formed into multiplicity of directions where the contrast between surface and space nourishes the desire to form light physically but which has never yet been achieved architecturally.

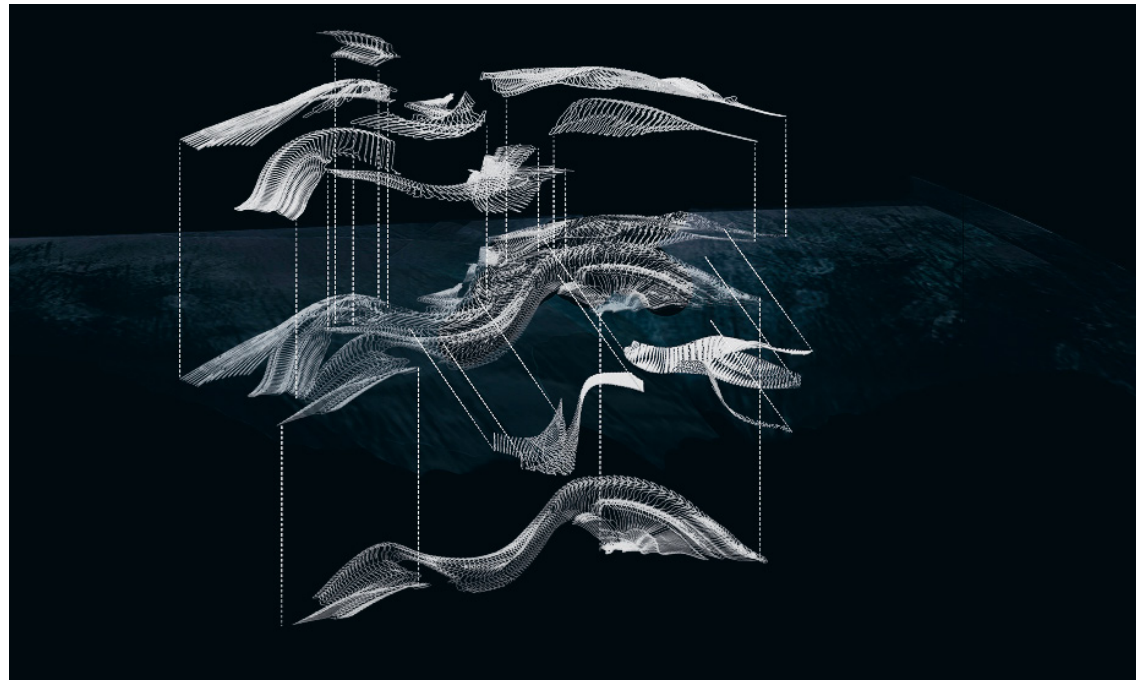
SYNAESTHETIC MUSEUM

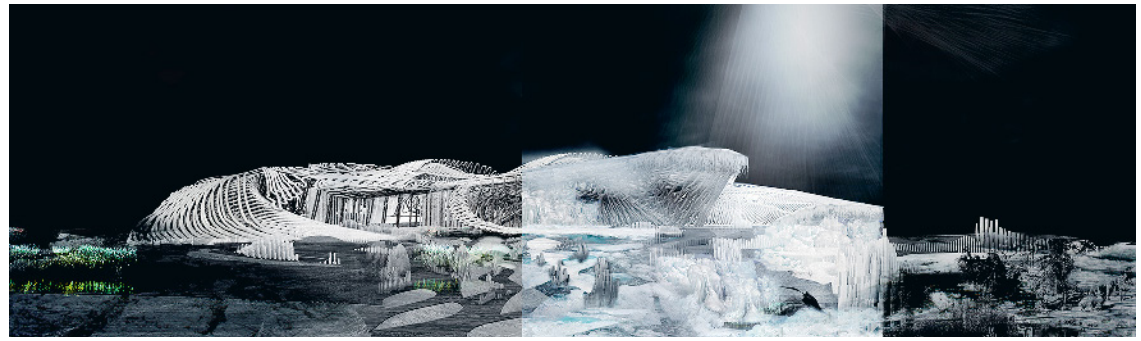
The Synaesthetic Museum project seeks to find a harmony between visual and aural perceptions applied architecturally. Using light as the architectural generative tool in creating form, it exemplifies the relationship between the form and aural qualities it can create.

This project speculates on sound generation through wind on a riverside, located on the opposite side of the historic French-Canadian city of Quebec City in Canada, across River St. Lawrence. The sophisticated apprehension of light rays as harmonic strings form an Aeolian harp that uses wind energy to generate pleasant sounds. This project aims to translate and to re-interpret a combination of sound and light through form to better understand how to create one unique performative experience.

The transition of light caustic patterns was investigated through a custom-built ray tracing engine and a fully functional physical generative model. Multiple light sources were computed individually, providing arrayed projected curves that were further refined and optimised, thus providing a scaffold for the formation of ice in winter.

Operating as a sensorial extension of the city, the Synaesthetic Museum engages the users in a full optical and harmonic experience. The building's sounds played by the wind unify the riverside's environment, acoustically transforming the full character of the juxtaposed natural sound of the breaking frozen river in the harsh Canadian winter.





DaeWha Kang:

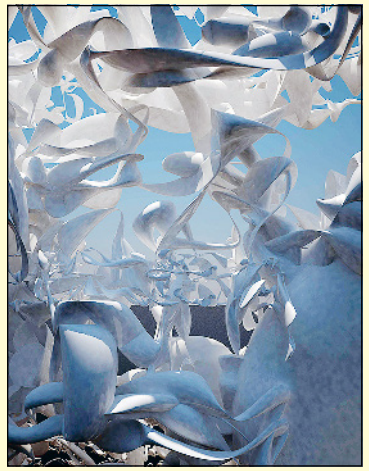
The aim to find new methods of morphogenesis is good, but does the methodology produce forms, spaces and atmospheres not seen before using other techniques? What is the fundamental value of these morphologies for evoking architecture? The possibilities are certainly there, and it is just your task to find them. The master plan drawing shows the most caustic effects, with the sharp nets of light seen in the centre of the drawing and at some of the peripheries. The project could have a more rigorous experimental cataloguing, represent a generative methodology for creating caustic shapes, and a more rigorous testing of different ways of translating the caustic image into physical form. It would be useful to run a design investigation with a specific program.

I think the technique is capable of creating very evocative and beautiful spaces and forms. If you could add another layer of systematic rigour to the process, the project could really get to the next level.

Luke Pearson:

By developing a simulation of the properties of caustics, the project seems to be dealing with the quantification of architectural conditions into other forms, taking the generative possibilities of light transmission and deriving new approaches from this. Does the project draw from the artistic practices of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy? What historical architectural approaches to the manipulation of light are suggested for the wider application of this research? The project also raises issues of how these approaches might allow for the modulation of 'gallery conditions'. The building is an exhibit in itself, but it would be interesting to see more clearly how this new 'caustic materiality' is manifest around the internal conditions required for the exhibition of works. Being able to quantify light properties in this way also hints at the wider proliferation of new technological 'eyes' that allow us to see and draw data from ever expanding phenomena.

Lobbying for the Spectacular in Architecture



Teaching, practicing and critiquing

Words by Nahed Jawad-Chakouf

All images courtesy of Marjan Colletti

Between recently publishing his latest book *Digital Poetics*, running his 14-year-old London-based office (marcosandmarjan), and teaching at the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL and at the University of Innsbruck, LOBBY is delighted to have had a quick chat with **Marjan Colletti**. Join me on this journey to see his view on un/spectacular architecture, life, architectural influences and other issues regarding his practice, teaching, and, most importantly, his own crit experience!

Marjan, you are an architect, an educator, an author and a researcher. Which role do you enjoy most? To what extent do these roles feed into each other?

There is no clear division between the various roles. They complement each other; their boundaries are very fluid and blurry. I am a practitioner interested in education, an educator concerned with writing, an author investigating design research and a researcher striving to bridge the gap with practice and the industry.

However, 'architect' is certainly the umbrella term that distinguishes my disciplinary affiliation and feeling of belonging. In research, writing and education, I strive for hybrid feedback mechanisms of transferring knowledge, fostering communication, and debate. You may say that I am therefore a generalist, OK, but I would like to believe that I am somehow a specialist in managing the transition from line (that is, drawing) to pen (writing) to word (educating).

What do you feel is 'spectacular' now in architecture? And what is not?

A thesaurus suggests the following synonyms for spectacular: 'remarkable, huge, great, enormous, mighty, outstanding, almighty, stunning, impressive, amazing'. However, I would prefer to link the word to spectacle and therefore performance: to be understood as show as much as task. Something 'spectacular' therefore arouses and satisfies sense (intellect) and senses (desire). In my opinion, such spectacular tendency in contemporary architecture as described above provides one additional testimony for today's Neo-Baroque tendency in various disciplines.

When did you realise that you wanted to be an architect?

I believe in autobiographical influences. It makes some sense that I became a digital architect: my dad was a self-taught software programmer for Italian banks; my mom worked in a technical office with many drafting tables.

How did the city that you grow up in affect your architectural awareness?

I was born and grew up in a bilingual (Italian-German) town in Northern Italy: Bolzano-Bozen, which taught me about hybridity and how to accept impurity. Listening to me suffices to understand what I mean: I speak English with an Austrian accent, Italian with an English intonation, and German with an Italian, South Tyrolean dialect…

What is the distinctive role of architecture nowadays? What are architects contributing to society?

Exhuberant and Sublime Flesh, curated by Marjan Colletti.
Unit 20 projects at the Austrian Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2010

> "Something 'spectacular' arouses and satisfies sense (intellect) and senses (desire)"

Architecture is (production of) culture and communication. It is the culture of communication (and production). Architecture is a team sport and a good arena for creating, transferring and hybridising knowledge and technologies between disciplines. Architecture is also the communication (and production) of culture: it reflects and shapes our way of living, and individual and societal behaviour.

You are the co-founder of the London-based architecture studio marcosandmarjan, founded by yourself and Marcos Cruz in 2000. Does your university teaching feed into marcosandmarjan and its research?

Vice versa. It would be fairer to say that we 'feed' our personal research, professional expertise and individual interests into the teaching (although I am a bit disturbed that the term 'feeding' lets me think of mommy bird and daddy bird regurgitating food to their chicks). I would prefer to think of a two-way feedback system: let students/scholars push and develop ideas and concepts further to open up new streams of investigations, which get us going again. Like ping-pong (table tennis). If you play a rookie (or your young son), initially it is frustrating as the ball hardly gets back to you, as it ends everywhere else but your table side. But if you are a dedicated teacher or parent, you keep up the spirit as you are looking forward to a good match—and even being beaten. Design education is more coaching than teaching, really.

It has been fourteen years since you founded your practice. How did the work mature and the studio evolve over this course of time?

If you are suggesting that the work is as mature as a 14-year-old teenager you are probably right…

You teach at The Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL, but you still manage to be a university professor at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Tell us more about your teaching practice at the University of Innsbruck. How does it differ from your teaching methods/interests at the Bartlett? Is there any correlation between the two?

The system, the people, the students, the briefs, the context, the fees (no tuition fees, but, interestingly, partly the same instructors who teach in expensive renowned EU, UK and US universities) are different, but the intention remains the same: to open students' eyes and to make them do architecture more intelligently, more sensually and more spectacularly.

We are reviewing the 'crit space' in this section of LOBBY. It is a place where students exhibit, pin up and post their work and simply get feedback about it. In which do you find more pleasure: in giving or receiving criticism?

Seriously, who gets pleasure from being criticised or being misunderstood? On the other hand, receiving advice, or annoying someone, is sometimes fun but also necessary (a lot of critical writing is so generic and flat because nobody wants to irritate anybody else). It is true that you have to be cruel to be kind, to open someone's horizon. It is part of the job.

I am sure in your teaching involvement you have attended countless crit sessions in different crit spaces. How do you find architecture students take criticism these days? Similarly, how do you find that practicing architects take criticism?

It is noticeable that high fee-paying students have higher expectations in receiving a fair amount of propositional criticism and suggestive coaching. A delicate balance between tuition fees, service provision, facilities and expectations should be guaranteed.

There is an issue of self-referential, scale-related indifference involved with practising architects. Local architects are criticised (sometimes congratulated) locally; otherwise, they mostly obtain total indifference.

Commercial architects are criticised commercially (and politically) but they appear indifferent to it all as long as the business runs. Signature architects are criticised globally for their work —but at least it is a stylistic, qualitative and intellectual debate—relevant, and not indifferent, to the discipline.

Can you take us down memory lane, and tell us about one particular impression that you remember during a crit in your earlier years when you were an architecture student? And how about from the other end, as a tutor during a crit?

> "Design education is more coaching than teaching, really."

Well, I remember my first and last crit as a student at the Bartlett. In my first crit I wrapped a few soft toys in a blanket and velcroed them on to my freshly shaved head. The tutors (Sir Peter Cook in their midst) enjoyed it as much as I did. My last crit, my PhD Viva, was less enjoyable. I was well prepared and relatively agile on my (argumentative) feet, but the external examiners immediately asked a really difficult and aggressive (so I thought) question. Feeling unbalanced, I mumbled away and immediately thought I would fail. After a while I regained equilibrium, and I was now hoping for major revisions. Then I managed to respond to their blows: maybe I might get away with minor revision, I thought. Eventually it turned into a good debate and it was over relatively soon: no revision required. What a relief! Retrospectively, I am thankful for the hard time: it made me think about the research and the work, and I trust that it had a good influence on me. However: it was not nice at the time…

As a critic. Last year, one of my students danced his way through his final crit in a 3D printed costume. Certainly entertaining—it attracted quite an audience. And a few days later another one did a vivisection of a mouse: it was extremely smelly. Disgustingly smelly… Everybody: please do not do that again. Not to me. ⬟

Allgae-Cellunai, by Marcosand Marjan, Guan Lee, Richard Beckett, 9th ARCHILAB–Naturalizing Architecture, FRAC Orlean France

feeling puzzled, still looking discovering another Staircase the blue rails!

I go upstairs. I stop. I look around… and I find a floor.

What appears to be a space that offers the means to get from one floor to another—that's if the lift is too busy or slow to work—is perhaps the most spontaneous space in good old Wates House, with people going up and down, in and out from different doors. Some sit on the steps while having a chat, others talk on their phones where no one is watching—or at least that's what they think. In staircases you have the liberty to pass through them anytime to engage in any act. Well, almost.

That's the beauty of a stairway in a building: the transition from one space to another and the surprise of discovering something new every time you enter to a floor. You don't know what you'll encounter, what people you might meet between floors and the multiple or unexpected things that can happen in between. And this is what LOBBY's Staircase is—a platform where architecture can be approached, discussed and studied in a variety of ways. It's a space of interdisciplinary discourse that combines architectural thinking with other arts and sciences ranging from the scale of the building, to the urban. The diversity of The Bartlett is presented here, where other fields of the built environment—ranging from urban planning, urban design, fine arts, performing arts, spatial design, narrative environments and literature—are encouraged to contribute.

But, as stated… this space is spontaneous. Staircases can lead us to the seminar room, the crit room, the library or even the toilet space. The staircase is an open space, always connecting and certainly, marking the steps available to discover new doors. Therefore, I invite you, my dear reader, to explore architecture in its different dimensions as well as the possibilities of dialogue that architecture can establish with other fields of knowledge.

N-visioning the Elusive (t)HERE

Reflections on fragmented space

Words by Italia Rossi

"There are in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias."
Michel Foucault

"The new is the actual. The actual is not what we are but rather what we are becoming, what we are in process of becoming, that is to say the Other, our becoming-other."
Gilles Deleuze

In his essay *The Utopian Body*, Foucault mentions the paradoxical condition of the'fragmented'body, arguing that while we are always literally attached to our own body, we can never perceive it in its totality. The back of our head, for example, is an area that we can only see in the distorted image of a mirror. I feel that a similar elusiveness rules the way we relate with the space.

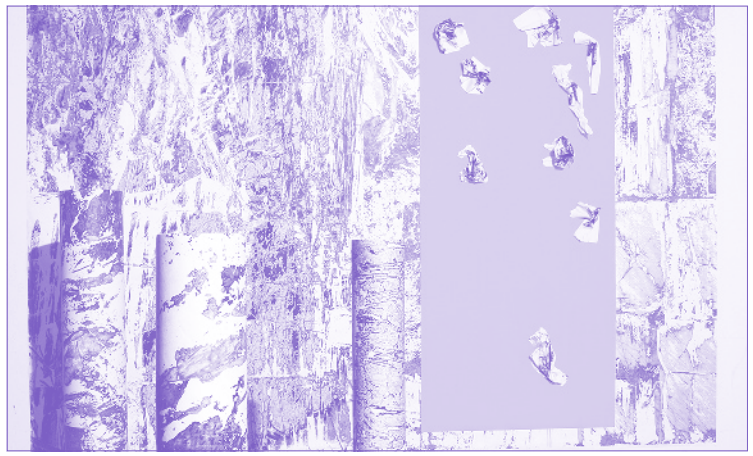
I constantly reflect on our understanding of the space. It combines a math /objective organisation of the space and a body/subjective experience of it; from geometry and physics, to physical experiences, movement, proprioception and psychology of perception. The words HERE and THERE define fundamental features of the space: "in, at, or to this (or that) place or position" (Oxford English Dictionary). The first referring to the nearby, the second to the remote—these two words indicate specific positions in space by evaluating relative proximity to our body. Truly, when defining'where'places /things are in space, they express'relative' positions—relative in fact to us—rather than absolute ones. Similarly but exactly for the same reason, the concepts of HERE and THERE reveal concerns about our own presence and placement. By measuring our own distance from things, sites and events we are in reality operating a self-detection, seeking where WE are in space.

As a fact, the word THERE indicates a utopian site, a place that we can only experience in distance, a concept/site that vanishes the more we approach it (as it progressively becomes HERE) and we can never grasp. Clearly, there must be a place 'in between', a switch between HERE and THERE, a point of inflection in the progressing space-curvature (similarly to the'present'like elusive instant-point between the future and the past).
A (T)HERE must exist, a place that constantly oscillates between proximity and distance, a flickering condition where opposites coexist in vibrating ambiguity and co-presence, where conditions are in the process of changing from a real tangible place (HERE) into an impalpable elsewhere.

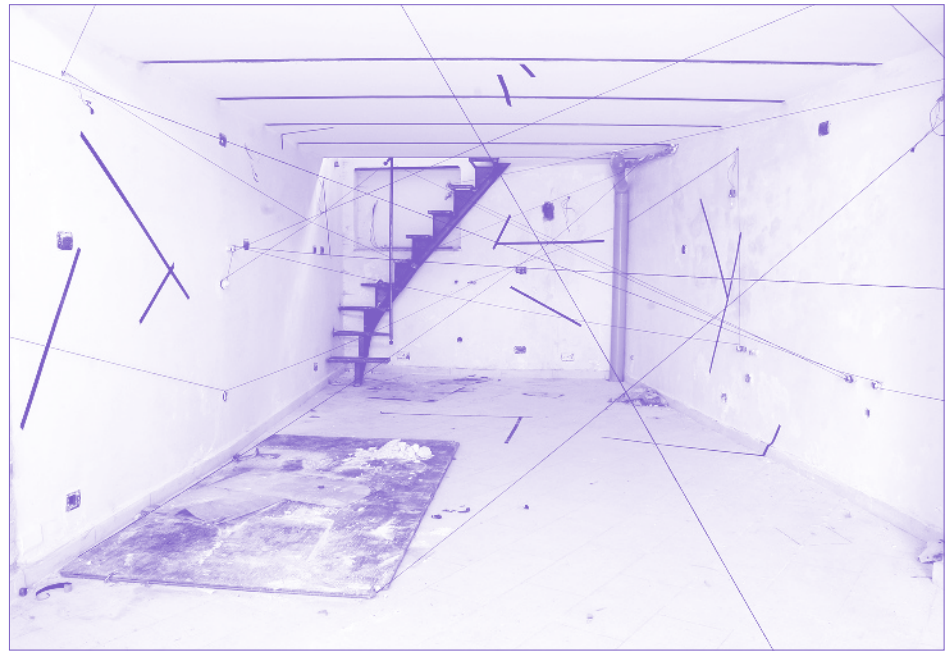
This nervous fluttering between space dichotomies moves in my whole work and never finds—or wants—resolution.

Distortion, repetition, symmetry, cuts, folds and other optical effects are used to manipulate archival images, like strategies that aim at cutting across temporal borders. Not with nostalgic feelings, but instead with the attempt to merge different realities, projecting a mediated space into a real one that is available to the body/audience to be experienced.

Images of three-dimensional spaces are digitally manipulated; then printed; then'constructed'in 3D objects/ configurations to be disposed into the real space; then sent back again to a digital flatness, in a constant back and forth. Experimenting with ink jet printers



Italia Rossi, *The inevitable projection from (t)here to her(e)*, 2014. Paper and Crystacal. Detail.



Italia Rossi, *Me, You, The Usual Dissection*, 2012. Mixed media.

"This nervous fluttering between space dichotomies moves in my whole work and never finds—or wants —resolution."

is the deliberate action of connecting the space of digital images with a tangible one, built with real pigments. Conceptually, the act of printing is nothing other than the'projection'from one dimension (the virtual) to another (the physical).

Chosen materials are often simple and perishable—like paper and cardboard. They are pushed to express a sculptural physicality, through simple actions (such as folding, rolling and smashing), those being (again) operations that enact a jump from the two-dimensionality of the paper—traditionally associated with flat techniques like painting and drawing —to a three-dimensional context.

Moreover, the use of simultaneous multiplied perspectives, while reaffirming the centrality of the viewer, makes uncertain notations about the topology of the space around, creating a disturbed reality that fluctuates ambiguously between real and fictional spaces, pushing the viewer to negotiate new body/space configurations.

Even when believable, spaces in my work show always elements of the sinister, odd and disturbing, as if the place is in a transitory and suspended state. Different elements are displaced in space, like constellations of interrelated objects / local events. The narrative is fragmented and dispersed. It is kaleidoscopic.
As a result, diverse equally powerful centres coexist at the same time, following a compulsive need for "intensity", "an overcome of attention, as a new idea of attention {which} is required by new media," as Katherine Hayles describes in her work *How We Read*. This accelerates even more the perceptual vertigo already embedded into the work.

My work constantly oscillates between fragility/instability and geometric precision, in progress and momentarily. Always, there is a feeling of unstable 'becoming', as if things are not at their definitive stage and are about to progress. There is a programmed tension between creating structures and getting lost, controlling and releasing; between understanding and losing focus and blur.

As much as the body, we can never completely comprehend the space.
They are both receding notions, evasive concepts. They are slippery images into our daily life.

The Ashmolean Museum

Analysing atria through Space Syntax

Words by Athina Lazaridou

Museums explore the relationship between the creation of the spectacle and the representation of the everyday life. They constitute particular environments where human movement is intrinsic in architectural design. The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford is an atrium building conceptualising the idea of the human spectacle through permeability and visibility relations.

The museum was established in 1683 and renovated by Rick Mather Architects. Its atria spaces are intended to aid the exploration through three-dimensional visual relations. The three main circulation spaces facilitate the vertical movement offering the potential for route choices (figure 1). The ways the atria influence visitors and enhance their visual interaction in three dimensions will be explored; firstly, through the route choices they offer (vertical and horizontal), secondly, through the ways in which they enter people's visual fields comparing accessibility and visibility relations and thirdly, through on site observations of human activity.

Rick Mather claimed the atria would drive visitors "to look down and around to see different pieces of work that they did not know about their existence in the museum and they would want to visit them without using a map." The intention was to create visually generous spaces opening up the core of the building. Moreover, natural light permeates the interior from one of the atria, atrium A, through large windows on the roof, spreading out to the single and double height galleries.

The analysis of the museum using 'J-graphs' illustrates the relationship between the atria and the galleries based on continuous visibility and permeability rings. Two J-graphs have been constructed for the whole building with the visibility being six steps shorter than the permeability one. The transparent facades of the atria enhance the galleries' intervisibility by shortening and widening the graph. Bill Hillier, in his seminal work *Space is the Machine* describes four topological types of spaces. He explains that the majority of spaces become 'd' type ones, showing more potential to attract people (figure 1). Looking at the permeability J-graph we realize that 43% of the ground floor spaces are 'd' type and 45% of them are 'c' type ones. In the visibility graph 88% of the spaces become 'd' type ones due to the extensive vistas. Therefore, the ways in which the galleries and the atria are configured through ring-like circulation patterns result in a museum environment which is acting as a place for continuous movement and circular navigation.

The museum creates a sense of unity and continuity in its arrangement of the various galleries. Kali Tzortzi emphasises that the Ashmolean is based "more on visual rather than movement relations." The strong visual axes interlink the galleries between the floors through the atria (figure 1). Isovists drawn from the centre of each atrium show that the views are not restricted to the local scale of their adjacent spaces but they enter up to 14 continuous convex spaces. Atrium C offers the biggest number of linear visual connections compared to the atria A and B which are surrounded by galleries. The type of isovist every atrium creates results in different ways of appropriating it as the observation studies show. By combining the fact that the landings of the staircases (atria A and C) are 'd' type spaces and their isovists cover distant galleries, this constitutes them as orientation places for continuous movement also facilitating vertical connections.

> "The museum creates a sense of unity and continuity in its arrangement of the various galleries."

Space Syntax was appropriated for the syntactic analysis of the building. The Visibility Graph Analyses (VGA) in terms of permeability (knee-level) and visibility (eye-level) capture the spatial attributes of the museum (figure 2). In the permeability VGA, integration is distributed along the intersection points of the front to back axes with those running along the east-west direction. The topological structure of visibility picks up the geometrical structure of the building illustrating the architects' intention to enhance human navigation and interaction. When the atria are analysed, the integration values concentrate around them creating a strong core which surrounds the main body of the building dominating the spatial experience. The rich cross-visibility strengthens the probability for visual encounters among the visitors. Moreover, the visual integration is higher overall since the atria enhance the values. Analytically, atrium A presents the highest visual integration compared to atria B and C, strengthening its role as an important visual core in the museum.

The observed traces of 50 people, structure movement patterns directly affected by the spatial configuration of the museum (figure 2). The atria, with their strategic locations, attract peoples' activity towards and around them. The axis connecting the entrance to atrium A enhances higher movement rates than the one leading to atrium C, located at the far west end of the building and presenting relatively low values. Every atrium illustrates different usage patterns although they all offer extensive vistas and are highly integrated. The third dimension which is used from the visitors when they approach the atria could illustrate—as an additional element to peoples' spatial behaviour—why visually high integrated spaces do not show high occupancy rates. In general, the amount of route choices the Ashmolean offers creates a feeling of unexpectedness and excitement while exploring the museum.

In conclusion, the atria enhance peoples' orientation, exploration and circulatory movement, by offering visual information strengthened by the third dimension. More particularly, each atrium presents different usage patterns; atrium A shows the highest concentration of people due to its configuration and open vistas, attracting people upon entering the museum. Atrium B is used as a through-movement space offering rich visual connections, thus assisting peoples' navigation. Atrium C is well integrated, though not acting as a reference point. The voids engage people visually upon approaching them, creating varying individual and collective everyday experiences.

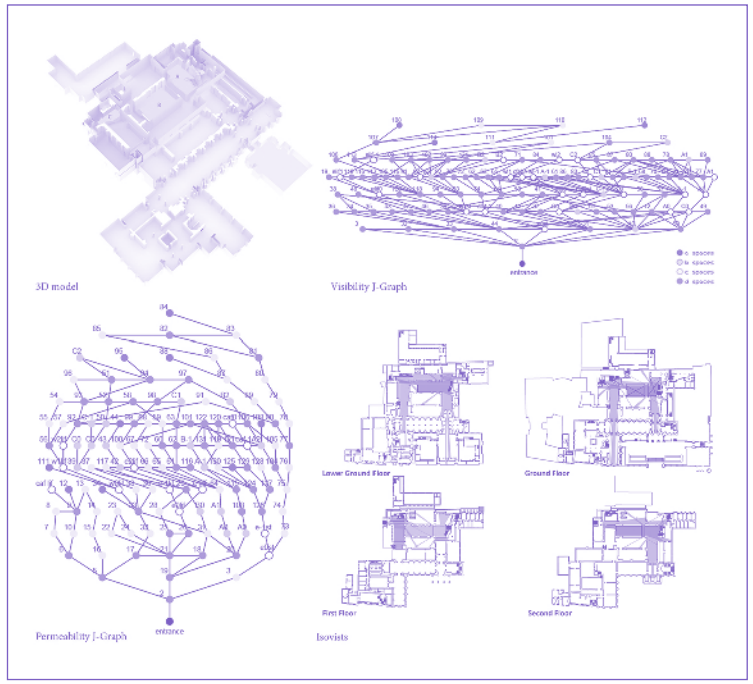


figure 1

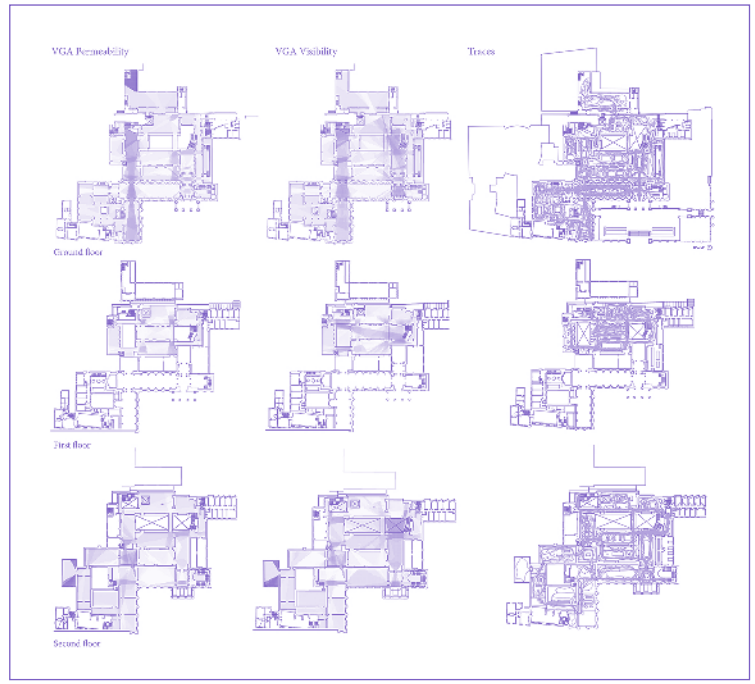


figure 2

Cedric Price

An insight into literature and architectural knowledge

Words by Marcela Araguez

During the post-war period in Britain, the rise of the middle class and the conceptualization of everyday life restructured a nation that —after years of destruction—started to be anxious to reach the status of the so-called 'welfare society'. Gradually accessible for almost all sectors of the population, the literary production was once again an instrument through which social reality was interpreted. Thus it served to establish new social identities of all kinds, from the New Right to the left-liberal 'intelligentsia'. With the growth of knowledge in technology, science and industry and the consequent loss of certainty with respect to the problems to be solved in architecture, Cedric Price showed up as an unclassified alternative. His literary affinities are an interesting source to find out some clues about his main concerns. Price privately collected more than 2000 books on a wide variety of topics. Besides the books directly related to the built environment, his library had an important section of works that do not specifically talk about architecture. Three of these books clearly have connections with Price's thinking: *The Uses of Literacy* by Richard Hoggart and *Cain's Book* by Alexander Trocchi, which were written in the 60s, and the first novel of Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*.

Richard Hoggart describes in *The Uses of Literacy,* with an unadorned style, the grey world of back-to-back houses and impoverished families after WWII. Price thought about leisure as a generative and permanently changing activity that would enable workers to get out of their anodyne routine. In this sense, the perception of 'present' described by Hoggart might have led Price to think about indeterminacy as a design tool for his Fun Palace, which was intended to be a redemptive facility for escaping the workers' everyday life. Hoggart argued that the economic situation of the working classes contributed "to a view of life among working-class people which can from some angles look like a kind of hedonism, which finds life largely acceptable so

Price's personal library

Image from Eleanor Bron and Samantha Hardingham (eds.), *Cedric Price Retriever*, London: inIVA, 2006.

long as the big worries keep away, and so long as there is adequate scope for 'having a good time." The Fun Palace was about creating good times, it was, in essence, about praising hedonism.

Alexander Trochhi was a Scottish 'beat' writer that represents the emerging of the counterculture in Britain, and the friendship between the writer and Cedric Price can be seen as an influential relationship. *Cain's Book* is an autobiography that describes —without filters—the living experience of a drug addict. There is no sense of joy in the experience of urban space, maybe because it is only seen as the trade centre of survival but also because the atmosphere of the working classes described in the story represents, once again, a grey and unchangeable panorama. In 1963, Trocchi translated the metaphysical experiences of *Cain's Book* into the built environment framework with the essay *A Revolutionary Proposal: Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: Invisible Insurrection of the Million*

Cedric Price with students

Images from Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, London: Black Dog, London, 2007.

Mind, which would suppose the foundation of the Project Sigma, a genuine concept of university that certainly helps to explain the nature of the free university proposed by Price in the *Potteries Thinkbelt*.

Maybe the most remarkable issue about Price's library are the 15 copies of Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. The novel relates a series of misadventures with a satirical tone to draw an in-depth picture of the English society and the everyday life activities at the beginning of the

> "For Price, the power of decision-making should not be privileged to a selected group, but to every human being"

nineteenth century. In a time where the lower classes were suffering from precarious working conditions resulting from the industrial revolution, the equality of classes is paradoxically present in every chapter of the book. Moreover, a call to the right of leisure among all classes is also a clear message in the novel. According to Lollar in her article *Restoring Faith in Pickwick*, "this novel attempts to reassure the working and middle classes by creating a way to escape the trials and tribulations of everyday life and live momentarily in a world removed from reality." The omission of social differences *vis-à-vis* the creation of an imagined reality for people to get rid of their ordinary lives, makes the plot of *The Pickwick Papers* a suitable reference in Price's thinking.

It seems that Price's social concern was supported by his readings. In the search for understanding of the social structure, Price explored the points of view of authors whom he found to have gained a special insight into human nature. For Cedric Price, the power of decision-making should not be a privilege of a selected group but rather a condition that every human being has on its own right. He believed that preservation and control were to stay in the users' domains. Decades later, people are used to exchanging their experiences virtually, but the material world still remains in the domain of the pre-established and the fixed. The 'architecture of the enabling' proposed by Price still retains its utopian value.

Performing Installations

From private experience to public space

Words by Lea Collet

One of the most striking aspects of contemporary culture nowadays is the increasing theatricality in our everyday life, which seems to pervade the public and the private sphere. Indeed, the aesthetics of *mise-en-scène* have become the dominant paradigms of our social relations, public and private. There is an idea of 'spectacularisation' of our self-presentation. In her text *The World as Stage,* Slovej Ovesen argues that we live in a culture where people stage themselves and their lives: "Life is performance and art is life." There is a "theatricalisation of life taking place in the media today that is being challenged in the arts."

And this is particularly what intrigues me as an artist. In my practice this is the subject of investigation and exploration. Through the use of time based media and live performance, I am exploring the concept of 'staging', in order to create an interchangeable space and invite the audience to re-configure the relations between private experience and public space.

It is interesting to look at how physical and virtual lives are now overlapping with the increasing of online reality. Indeed, it is important to ask if the word 'intimacy' is still relevant in this context. The new communication modes lead towards a disengagement from the social sphere, expressing a social withdrawal on an intimate level. However, in his book *The Absolute Eye*, Gerard Wajcman argues that there is a veritable art of exhibiting the intimate, which is now developed in gallery space and museums: "Today the intimate is not stolen, it is displayed openly." Equally, my intention is to play with this idea of a shift between public and private in order to resolve and reaffirm a collective intimacy, a new form of intimacy. New sites of exploration are possible: virtual bodies, connecting bodies, collapsing spaces and temporal ubiquity.

Chorus for One, ©Lea Collet & MariosStamatis. Live Performance. Video projection, screens, mike, smoke machine. SMASHLAB XIII, The BookClub, London 2014.

In the piece *Sofia, Emilia, Rossana and Chloe* I asked four girls to film themselves with a CCTV camera. The capitations of their bodies and their faces are diffused simultaneously on a TV screen. The performer poses and films her own body moving slowly into space. She becomes the producer of her own image where she invites the viewer to penetrate into her intimate space.

The woman records the movements and the details. The body becomes abstract. We become participants in the web of a dancer's slow mobility, a dancer's intimate conversation with her body's image. The use of the camera as auto-observation mode disturbs the idea of video-surveillance and the controller of voyeurism and exhibitionism. The screen becomes a source of desire for the user/voyeur who has to make the effort to look for the image and to provoke its appearance. She plays with the desiring gaze of the viewer. In doing so, she takes control of the gaze. The body works, and it is the work.

The question is centred on the body and the idea of the lived: the connection between passive and active, between bodies, which appear temporally and spatially in the present moment, as well as those appearing through a mediated image. By using these elements the space for the performance, and the installation becomes a stage. In fact, I intend to construct site-specific events by choreographing different components: the architectural set up, the juxtaposition of live video performance with pre recorded videos, as well as live video feedback. Thus, every detail of the work becomes a component of the narrative, creating uncontrolled situations. An element of chance takes place within

"It is interesting to look at how physical and virtual lives are now overlapping with the increasing of online reality"

the installation/performance. In the work *Respiration*, 2014, we find ourselves in a real space, physically aware of our environment, from the green lighting as well as the light from the projection, to the objects that surround us. Through this concrete opening, the work invites the viewer to become a participant. The viewer's own physical presence is stitched back within the seams of the installation itself.

I also like to think that one work can take different forms, finding new ways to re-configure the screen (private, confined, flat) and the gallery space (public, open, layered). For instance, the performance/installation *Chorus for One*—in collaboration with Marios Stamatis—is an extension of the work *Respiration* that also explores the concept of 'staging' performances. The audience is invited to become a part of the actual content of the projection by occupying the space between the movable projection and the screen as well as by projecting their shadows onto the screen. The 'compatible' elements of staging are subverted creating a non-hierarchical way of encountering the live performance and the mediated image. All these proposals taking place not for the audience but with the audience. This idea of staging becomes a means of re-thinking the relationship between body and image, immediate experience and mediated information, a projected image and a performed body or even a movement without a body.

That is why the use of the *green screen* has become apparent to my practise. It is interesting to think that its purpose

Sofia, Emilia, Rossana and Chloe, ©Lea Collet. Live Performance. Performer: Emilia Gasiorek, CCTV camera, monitor. Camberwell College of Arts Degree Show, London 2013.

is to actually disappear, which creates an effect of infinite fields. In using the *green screen*, the viewer is able to experience an imminent presence and absence. It is designed to be removed and yet it becomes the subject of a film, an installation, a performance. This could call into question the future of technology in entertainment and the state of the human imagination.

By deconstructing the spectacle as an exercise, the role of the artist and that of the public are challenged. Thus, it is constructed with the bodies that pass through it: those of the performers, the artist and the public who activate the artworks and bring it to life. Shifting back and forth between participation and observation, my projects encourage a dialogue between public and exhibition space, between artist/performer and audience, between art as object and art as action. The installation, performance or the video, fully inhabit the space while playing with receptive attitudes around the production and the exhibition of the artwork.

. . . And Space as the Storyteller

Dance as a physical narrative

Words by Laura Narvaez

"I become a great believer in telling stories differently. Telling stories in a way that doesn't kill ambiguity, poetic, abstraction; telling stories in a way that people who hear it (or in choreography also watch it) can bring their own life into it. I believe this is a more ancient way of telling stories and we lost it a bit. These days, stories are an exchange of information rather than sharing an experience."
Hagit Yakira

Let me begin by telling you how I found myself caught in between dance and architecture. As an architect and as a dance enthusiast, I began thinking about how space can be created for and by the body as much as the dialogue that a space is able to produce, between the narrative and the storyteller or what space creates as an experience. In his article *Dance and Architecture*, Steffen Patrick elucidates that essentially both practices use their artistic expressions to satisfy two basic necessities of life: physical movement and the need for physical shelter. Yet, the common perception in the realm of these two arts is that both claim a shared vocabulary and ethos likely because they also share something immediately apparent: space.

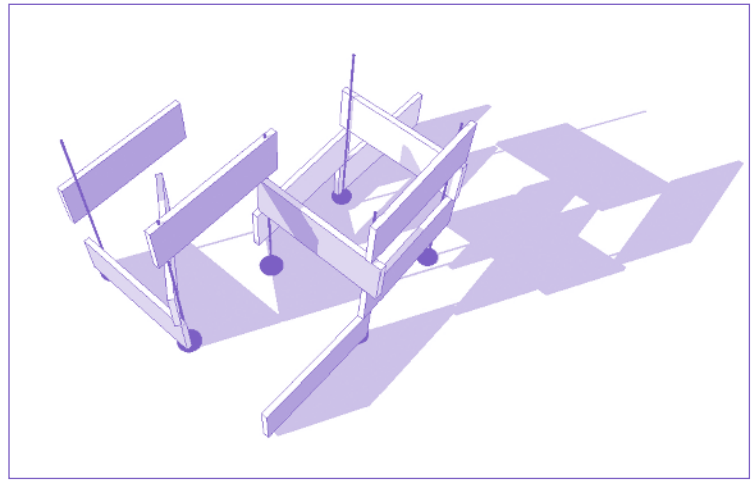
What is often constructed—and at the same time experienced in space—is an array of events of different qualities and meanings. Manijeh Verghese wrote in *Spectacle: An Architecture of Experience* that such events would generate "an effect for all users involved and that aim to remain memorable for the experience it creates." Whilst spectacle may imply drama and theatricality, it also encompasses a process that engages an audience to experience something that is shared, responsive and active; it allows a constant participation within a given space, bringing the "social relations between people mediated by images," as Guy Debord defines in *The Society of Spectacle*. What is in-between the experience and the information conveyed to the viewer is the process of storytelling and, therefore, the message that is being communicated or performed. Telling stories becomes a matter of how people can connect to a shared experience by being immersed in a space for a period of time.

What I believe is essential in the two disciplines are the ways each other use the same material in order to tell a story: space and the body. These two qualities also relate to aspects of movement and time that shape the artistic work. In dance, movement defines space and it manifests the experiential qualities in architecture. In *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*, Laurence Louppe describes time in dance as "a vector for 'an act'; the 'objective' of work created through movement emerging as a poetic force; as moment; as rhythm; an interval in which dance transcends time through experience and memory." Architecture transcends time through the collection of memories deposit in archetypal spaces as much as revealing a physical narrative in the design and structure of a site itself.

It is also in the human subject that the production of time and space —and hence of architecture—is sought. Central to Henri Lefebvre's thinking in his philosophical work *The Production of Space*— in dealing with the different forms of social constructions in space —is the human body. In *The Unknown City*, Iain Borden discusses Lefebvre's analytical formulation about space, explaining how "the body is particularly useful for thinking about the triad of the spatial practices (the perceived), the representations of space (the conceived) and the spaces of representation (lived experience)." What is perceived, conceived and experienced within space is dependant on what is observed and what is being communicated to the observer. The triad helps render a story to be concrete, revealing a sequence of events. In any story, however, there is implicitly a 'theme' and 'intention' in order to create a composition. The theme makes "the basis upon which an understanding can be shared; the intention is the temporary ideas that flow during the creative process and dissolve in the emerging work", according to Louppe. But why and how is space able to become the storyteller itself?

Hagit Yakira dance

Photograph by Rachel Cherry



Installation by Laura Narvaez and Lea Collet, 2013.

Here is a story… the project I'm presenting here was done in collaboration with Lea Collet to create an interactive installation based on the work by Hagit Yakira, called *'…In the Middle with You'*, a dance piece presenting five dancers exploring the boundaries between moments of "boredom and depression", between the highs and lows of our lives and the constant negotiation of it. Yakira's idea was to create a piece that engaged the audience into different moments through the use of storytelling, elements of repetition (expression of the everyday life) and time (transitions between moments to present the subtleties of human emotions).

The piece is structured in sections in which the dancers portray different tasks, such as moments of joy, fear, laughter and struggle. These fragments make the narrative very visible yet very ambiguous to the audience. Yakira says, "I didn't want to force my story on the dancers nor on the audience. I want to find a way to leave the subject matter very open and see how the dancers develop relationships to the subject, to one another and to me. Only when I felt there was enough depth, did I start to structure the piece. The structure is there in order to allow the audience to go through an emotional journey."

What also became visible in the structure of the piece is the simplicity of its presentation. There is no set design, and has nothing but the five dancers occupying the entire space on stage. The transition between the tasks is revealed in the repetition of the movements of the dancers, in their physicality to create the rhythm of their stories, combined with text, dance and music. Yakira's intention was not to create a spectacle presenting characters in the piece rather letting the dancers be themselves: "I don't want to create a spectacle. I try to find a way to let the dancers look human. It is a contradiction, as the dancers are on the stage, which is not an ordinary thing, but then I strive to keep the ordinary of what is being performed."

There is a constant invitation to the audience to be active, however, which also intended to capture people's reflections of what they experienced from the dance. According to Yakira, "some people search for the story and maybe they can't find it. Sometimes I feel I can give them the permission of not to look for it. There is a sense that we want to get the answers or be ahead of a question." The person who watches the dance does nothing but perceive the performance they experience. In the same way, we can experience architecture through an installation that provides a temporal space that the observer can be active with it.

The design concept of the installation was based on stories from the dancers as part of the 'intention' in the making of the piece. The design of the installation had the flexibility to change its configuration in order to have the freedom of re-structuring the object in different ways. The structure was made using eight vertical lampposts intercalating moveable panels. Working from the lived experience of the dance, the representation of the space, combined images and film, expanding the perception of the object through the spread of paper envelopes and light on the floor. The brevity of this spatial construct encouraged the viewer to reflect and imprint their thoughts within the images exposed in the panels. In a sense, the installation generated a new kind of spectacle that became a "format of architectural opportunity," as Verghese suggested.

As I was watching *'…In the Middle with You'*, I became aware that I wasn't watching only a performance or a story about the struggle with repetition; I wasn't watching only dancers; I was watching people sharing stories, indulging an audience to take part on a journey and using dance, structured or improvised, as their medium of expression. The way of fostering this sort of dialogue using dance and storytelling made me realise the poetics of space.

Space becomes the storyteller of a generative process that allows communicating a story, unfolding an experience that takes place between the use of movement and the visual; the temporality and the memorable of an event; between the teller and the listener. Storytelling is a means of understanding our times and both the architect and the dancer constantly search for new material to create their work that will still capture the imagination of a general audience. Stories are important because it is through these episodes that a project's intentions are outlined, whether it is to form the foundation of an architectural proposal or choreography. The challenge is not only in telling the story or the sequence of events, but also in how to construct the narrative, the structure of events that builds the architecture of the story, and therefore, learning how tales are told.

Urbanism as a Product of Repetition

Fast architecture, fast becoming a problem

Words by Fani Kostourou

"You know something? If I'm copied well, I don't mind. Unfortunately, most of the time I seem to be copied badly."
Rem Koolhaas

What if the last personal pronoun "I" in Koolhaas' quote was substituted by words like 'buildings'? Single elements that are copied either well or badly, form entire homogeneous blocks, neighbourhoods, districts or regions. A mass production of repeated built environments leading to vast territories with identical bird's eye views. Wouldn't that be close to whatever happened to Architecture after the Industrial Revolution? Some of the most known ideas and projects from the end of nineteenth century until today have followed repetitive patterns: high-rise tower buildings inspired by the Unité d' Habitation, simple standardised concrete skeletons following the symbolic Domino prototype or strict urban grid patterns as Manhattan or Barcelona's example.

It began with the dramatic population increase and the great demand for housing and sanitary urban conditions after World War I and II, in the United States and in Europe. These urgencies together with the technological advancements of the time, transformed architecture and urban planning into a product of repetition by regulating it massively in favour of political agendas and economic interests. Land was previously subdivided and sold to individuals who developed it on their own establishing a certain degree of diversity. As soon as private developers, local governments and housing associations became the owners of the land and financed large-scale residential developments, repetitive built environments emerged.

On one hand, repetition could ensure some order in the ever-growing complexity of urban systems that architects were struggling to grasp as a whole. On the other hand, architectural design could not escape the automatisation imputed by the industries. First was the assembly line of production initially applied in the Ford factories in 1914; an aftereffect of a deliberate political decision to increase efficiency and speed of production. One year later and due to a housing deficit in Belgium, Le Corbusier came up with the idea of a standard two storey concrete structure that could be repeated endlessly in a possible housing assembly line. This proposal was never realised but it was extremely influential to all mass housing projects realised ever since. In fact, often utopias proposed by the avant-garde intellectuals such as Hilberseimer's proposal for a vertical city or Jefferson's early plan for Washington, conditioned architecture even more towards repetitive patterns. Gradually, architectural production became more standardised with the aid of technology and computer-aided programs. Repetition now became possible in a single copy-paste move resolving any dilemmas of critical reflection and choice making, leaving room for a *fast architecture* of the twenty-first century to grow.

It should be stressed here that repetition is not the problem per se, but a reckless product of urbanism driven by factors that exclude architectural qualities from the design. When repetition in design is used as an instrument to satisfy real estate interests and political agendas, the danger of a fast architecture arises, a rapid architectural production with unforeseeable consequences. American suburbia, British New Towns and Shanghai's 'One City, Nine Towns' plan are such examples. Worse than that, mass housing projects such as the Bijlmermeer (Amsterdam), the 'Alliance for Progress' (USA), the Sarcelles (France), the Sun Chui Estate development (Hong Kong) or the 'Two Million Homes for Mexico' (Mexico) highlight the consequences of a universally spread, reckless and blatant repetitive design:

Minha Casa Minha Vida Settlement with 800 unites named 'Buena Vista' in Goiás, Brazil

Photograph by Leorian

a condemned future for the prospective residents as a result of thoughtless planning which fails to respond to the local conditions.

It seems that repetition can very well be a means to an end. The question is how? The Brazilian mass housing programme 'Minha Casa Minha Vida' was initiated in 2009 amidst the financial crisis in order to face a 5.8 million housing deficit and to boost the construction industry. One million homes were constructed for the low-income population during the first phase and in 2011 and a second phase was launched during which another 2.4 million houses will be built.

Interestingly enough, real estate industry and construction companies were the first to benefit by this programme and repetition was not only an optimisation tool but also a militarized means to overcome the perceived risks. Since houses and new settlements are considered high-risk investments due to the uncertainties and the consequences involved —new location, new friends, new neighbours— repetition is used to minimize their influence. In this sense, Brazilian private companies presented similar profit-based housing typologies sticking to the program's minimum regulations. Then by repeating them without much wisdom on the territory, they implicitly proposed equal standards of living to all the residents relieving their uncertainties and creating what economists would call a homogeneous product—a low risk investment.

Unfortunately, despite its initial noble cause, the MCMV program has already been detected as being defective only just three years after its launch. Local residents look dissatisfied, private investors have either lost interest or focus solely on housing for higher incomes within the subsidy scheme and severe demonstrations against the social, economic and political reality of the country like those of June 2013 take place. It has been argued that the responsibility lies on its realisation, which is of poor quality, inflexible and unsuccessful in generating life in the long run. Its mass repetitive design erases any urban life qualities, ignoring the given cultural patterns and failing to create well-used spaces that promote interactions among those who live there. Therefore, we need to understand that such repetitive urban projects—without essential architectural and urban qualities—are doomed to fail and if not done otherwise, they will fail again. With or without copying, it is time to again create mass housing that succeeds.

Stairway to HEAVEN

Words by Sophia Psarra

Space as a means to communicate knowledge

Buildings are more complex environments than metaphors about them express, but metaphors make ideas visible, bring concepts and language to the service of architecture and make its messages widely intelligible. LOBBY stems from 'the desire to create a common (lobbying) space, opportunities for exchange, internal communication, and exposure to the outside world'. The magazine is organised in sections, each section being about a space in an architecture school; there is the 'exhibition space', where design work is showcased, the 'crit room', where design work in progress is intensively debated', the 'seminar room', where external correspondence may come in', the 'lift', where brief interviews take place, the 'library', 'toilets', and so on. Distributing visual and discursive work along this organisation, LOBBY maps thematic categories of knowledge on the elements of a building programme, and areas of architectural programme on the sections of the publication. The magazine becomes in this way a metaphor for an architecture school and vice versa, in a close association of building to language and architecture to knowledge. This mapping of spatial order into intellectual order instantly conveys the organisation of content. It expresses the idea that the magazine is the students' own, in the same way a school building belongs to its students, a vital component of their social and intellectual life.

Writing for *Staircase*, "where interdisciplinary perspectives momentarily meet" therefore, is relevant to the discussion of the key role that buildings have historically played in the making and communication of knowledge. Frances Yates offered a history of the relationship between space and knowledge founded on the ancient technique of impressing 'places' and 'images' on memory. "Mnemotechnics," Yates explains, "is today a rather unimportant branch of memory activity, but in the ages before printing a trained memory was vitally important."[1] Yet, she concludes that the art of memory, or the relationship of space to knowledge, is everyone's matter. It is one of the greatest manifestations of our culture, touching at vital points on the history of religion, ethics, philosophy, psychology, art, literature and the scientific method.

In the nineteenth century this matter was associated with the development of disciplines and building types in specific sites where knowledge construction evolved. Through the shape and organisation of their architectural spaces—so often top lit—museums, libraries and university buildings, which were then housed in one site, opened to new groups of people and shifted pedagogical regimes. In addition to making knowledge widely available, these buildings spatialised knowledge operating like 'library books'. The layout of the Natural History Museum in London for example, was organised around the notion of taxonomy,[2] "which assumed that the all possible variations in type of species could be incorporated and simultaneously observed in one complete classificatory table."[3] Another striking example was the Jermyn Street Geological Museum, which was "laid out stratigraphically, so that the natural order of rocks might be apparent in a general glance around the main hall."[4] As collections grew over time, university campuses expanded, and laboratories displaced the central role formerly held by collection-based sciences, museums and libraries ceased to act as total encyclopaedias, adopting a selective approach to display. More recently, they have begun innovating and pioneering new sources of knowledge by connecting with various artists, scientists, communities and people.[5]

In *Buildings and Power,* Thomas Marcus places museums and libraries in the category of 'visible knowledge'. University buildings on the other hand, belong to the section of knowledge, which he calls 'invisible'.[6] Historically, the essence of teaching space is one in which the performer presents a fragment of knowledge to the audience as a dramatic spectacle. In this sense, the teaching space is close to the theatre where performances are staged. In fact "the ancient actor-audience relationship gave its name to the first teaching space—the anatomy theatre."[7] Whether founded on one typology or another, architecture school buildings mix many space types, exhibition spaces, teaching spaces, social spaces, office spaces, studios, or laboratory spaces. Today, like other building typologies, university buildings are changing from within. Digital communications, pervasive computing and social mobility makes a wide range of building types more flexible in terms of programme and function, while they

"Sociality is about itineraries and trajectories of bodies meeting in space, from the studio to the office, from the exhibition up the staircase."

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri Plate VII—The Drawbridge,* 1761 edition. From The Imaginary Prisons (Le Carceri d'Invenzione), Rome.

have also ceased to define themselves as encyclopaedic, pedagogical, moral or ethical regimes.

Historically, knowledge was developed and represented on the building by a group of experts as though the building was a book. Today universities, libraries, museums and learning environments increasingly define themselves as 'laboratories' or places of intellectual intensity, continuously favouring controversy and encouraging taking risks. Buildings are social spaces; particularly in buildings in which knowledge is constructed and exchanged, socialisation becomes a form of learning, sharing and producing new information. Knowledge is no longer seen as static entity to be mapped on the building's physical body, but as a dynamic enterprise, commonly shaped by those who are socially involved. Rather than regarding buildings as bodies onto which knowledge relationships are symbolically mapped, today we shift our attention to bodies in space, the choreography of the ways in which they come together, depart from each other and interact.

Marcus explains that buildings house bodies in space entering in social relationships, those of power and those of bond. Robin Evans put forward a similar proposition. Taking human figures in paintings and house plans from given times and places, he looked at them together as evidence of a way of life, connecting everyday conduct and architectural organisation.[8] Everyday conduct can either take the rigid form of social power, of mapping social categories, schedules and itineraries in space and keeping them apart, or the fluid and negotiable form of a society "that recognises the body as the person and in which gregariousness is habitual."[9] Architecture is different from art, painting or writing, "not simply because it requires the addition of some extra ingredient such as utility or function, but because it encompasses everyday reality and in so doing inevitably provides a format for social life."[10] Looking at Rafael's Villa Madama in Rome and Roger Pratt's Coleshill at Berkshire, Evans explains that the former was permeable to the numerous members of a household whose paths would intersect during the course of the day. In contrast, the latter inscribed a deep division between social categories of people in the building, separating commodity from delight, utility from beauty and function from form. The justification of Klein's *House for Frictionless Living* in which paths never cross was to eliminate accidental encounters, which caused friction. For Evans, this kind of logic is buried in the desire for tidiness, consistency and order. For Hillier and Hanson this model assumes socially identified groups through spatial domains, together with asymmetrical relationships between different categories of users.[11] The larger ramification of this arrangement for a creative environment such as an architecture school would be a conservative building, territorialised and utterly dull.

Reading Aldus Huxley on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison and Piranesi's metaphysical prisons (*Carceri d'Invenzione*),[12] one can gain insights on the impulse for tidiness, clockwork rituals, and itineraries in buildings and human affairs. Bentham, for Huxley, had "the logician's passion" for social efficiency and order. The former is often made an excuse for the concentration of power in the hands of few experts and the regimentation of social structures and institutions. Bentham spent large amounts of his own money and more than twenty five years of his life devoted to the design of the Panopticon,[13] the perfectly efficient prison in which prisoners would pass their life in solitude under the surveillance of a warder at the centre. On the opposite side to Jeremy's prison, are Piranesi's enigmatic prisons made of incomprehensible complexity and labyrinthine emptiness: the staircases lead nowhere, the arches and vaults support nothing but their own weight, enclosing not rooms but vast spaces that can almost continue indefinitely, defying any sense of scale, orientation and purpose. Conceived by the imagination of one of the greatest eighteenth century minds, the *Carceri* spoke to the condition of Coleridge and De Quincey at the height of the Romantic reaction[14]; and they speak no less eloquently to Bentham's utilitarianism in the nineteenth century, in his attempt to design mechanisms to change social behaviour, reform institutions for those that had been deformed by various pathologies, and turning the subject of the reforming regimes into agents of their own reformation.[15]

Arguably, Bentham thought of individuals as real people and held unpretentious intentions that led to real benefits—'the repeal of antiquated laws, the introduction of sewage systems, the reform of municipal government, almost everything sensible and humane in the civilisation of the nineteenth century'. However, his extreme impulse for mechanical efficiency has little to do with real life and real people in buildings. In addition, it is the enemy to freedom. Significantly, 'efficient' workspace shares in origin something with the orderliness and tidiness embedded in this idea. Jeremy had borrowed the notion for the Panopticon from his brother, Sir Samuel Bentham, who, while employed by Catherine the Great to build ships for Russia, designed a factory along the Panopticon model for getting more efficient labour out of workers.

For Marcus, the *Carceri* represent two extreme worlds that never meet but are secretly mirroring and excluding one another: romantic chaos and classical order.

> "One is subterranean, dark, massive full of ambiguous machines which could be instruments of torture or machines for construction, and paradoxical spaces … Through an opening there is often visible an upper world where normal Classical buildings sit in the light of day. He seems to suggest that it is their order and reason, which sits on, {that} truly imprisons, a hidden world of dangerous freedom. He may be saying more than this—that the creation of order (…) has a paradox at its core. The rules, classifications and systems needed are alienating and imprisoning."[16]

Piranesi's metaphysical prisons remind us that stairways to nowhere are equal to those that rise to a purpose that is obsessively desired and mechanically conceived. On the other side of these cyclopean labyrinths—or efficient workspaces—that diminish the human figure and annihilate bodies in space are buildings that are human, drawing people towards each other, an architecture that 'recognizes sociality'.[17] Sociality is about itineraries and trajectories of bodies meeting in space, from the studio to the office, from the exhibition up the staircase and through the balcony overlooking the studio to the library, and from the library via the crit space to the seminar room. The plan of a building should include—drawn in different colour ink—all these routes by students, staff, visitors, academics and other users. The role of the architect together with the many and diverse users is not to distribute functions, programmes and territories, but—like in a neural-network model of interconnectivity[18]—maximise the opportunities and the spaces where the network of these lines intersect with each other.

If education is about supporting the growth of thoughtful professionals—so as to develop the capacity to redefine the state-of-the art and change their discipline—its buildings and journals should enable the development of the unknown and the unexpected, endlessly generating serendipitous socialisation, un-programmed encounters and ways of engagement over and above those that are programmed and foreseen. LOBBY seems to be one of these 'spaces' and it is with pleasure that we welcome it in our Faculty and our fields. ⌂

1 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 11.
2 John Peponis and Jenny Hedin, "The Layout of Theories in the Natural History Museum", 9H, 3(1982): 21–5.
3 Sophie Forgan, "The Architecture of Display: Museums, Universities and Objects in Nineteenth Century Britain, History if Science, 32(96) (1994): 139–62, p. 148.
4 Ibid. p. 148.
5 "Arts Council of England", last accessed 30 March 2014, http://www.artscouncil.org.uk.
6 Thomas Marcus, *Buildings and Power* (London: Routledge, 1993).
7 Ibid. p. 229.
8 Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawings to Building and Other Essays*, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1997).
9 Ibid. p. 88.
10 Ibid. p, 89.
11 Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
12 Aldus Huxley, Prisons with the Carceri Etchings by G. B. Piranesi (London: Trianon, 1949).
13 Phil Steadman, *Building Types and Built Forms*, (London: Toubador, 2014), http://www.troubador.co.uk/book_info.asp?bookid=2509.
14 Aldus Huxley, ibid.
15 Thomas Marcus, ibid.
16 ibid. p, 318.
17 Robin Evans, ibid.
18 Barbara Stanford, "Reconceiving the Warburg Library as a Working Museum of the Mind", Common Knowledge 18:1 (2012):180–187, p. 185.

number 5, the Library the smell of books the Bartlett publications, journals and architectural magazines

If Richard Francis Burton was right to assert that "home is where the books are", then welcome home, indeed, dear reader.

Perhaps more than any other space, the Library is both the repository of our shared Bartlett culture and the foremost gathering point of The Bartlett community. Indeed, it is precisely because we have to remain laconic and keep our voices down in the Library that LOBBY can exist today as a platform for bringing the different parts of The Bartlett School of Architecture together under the same printed roof.

Feel free to join us in our explorations of both the physical and the textual Library Space; discover not only what's new, shiny and spectacular, but also what's old, forgotten and lost in the shelves. Get a chance to meet The Bartlett people in the Library. Read the last word in architectural research by the authors of some recently submitted PhD theses. Reflect upon how that research affects both academic teaching and practices outside academia. Find books that may currently be lacking a space in the Library but help elucidate current events and developments. But most importantly, have your say on what you hear, on what you see, and on what you read here; raise your own voice to question the ways in which we design, read and write about architecture. If there is to be a 'Bartlett culture' that is also shared, it can only develop as an incessant process of cultivation, fertilised by your own critical stance and contribution to the on-going dialogues.

So, by all means, do come in—and please make sure you *don't* keep your voice down now.

Latent Dialogues in Whispering Voices

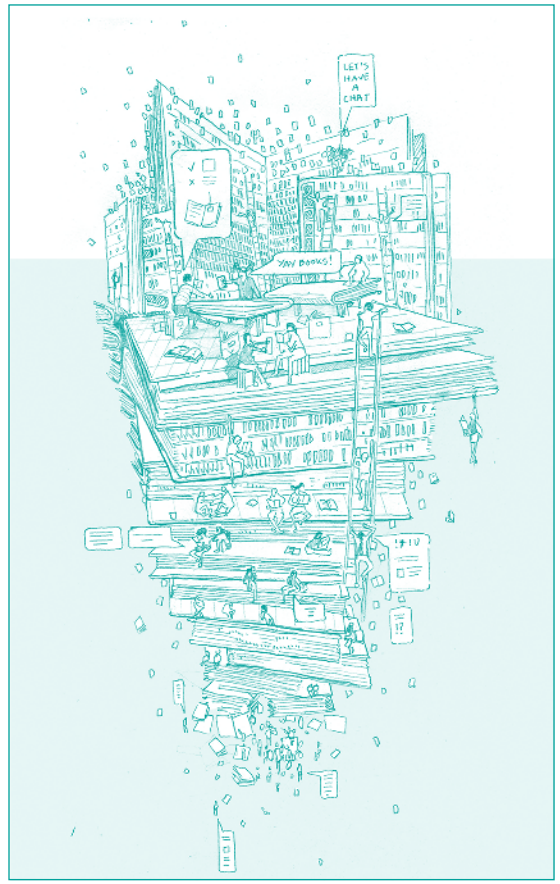
Exploring The Bartlett Library through its readers

Words by Stylianos Giamarelos
Illustration by Nick Elias

"Admit your ignorance. Forget what you think you already know about it; just go in there and see what you get!" that familiar inner voice whispers, as I enter The Bartlett Library that first morning of the February 2014 reading week. Although I eventually end up spending every single day of the week there, manoeuvring around the congested re-shelving trolleys, flipping through the pages of books and magazines left on the tables, talking with students and staff—including subject librarian, Suzanne Tonkin—and observing the quotidian rhythms of their practices as they silently transform the space, that inner voice persists in asking (both me and my occasional interlocutors): "Do you really know thy Library?" I still don't, but at the end of the reading week I can at least reply with another question: What is a library but its readers?

During reading week, the Library chairs host a veritable parade of The Bartlett community, including: undergrad students enrolled in the Architecture, Urban Planning, Design & Management, Architectural & Interdisciplinary Studies, Project Management for Construction and Civil Engineering Bachelor's programmes; graduate students enrolled in the Architectural History & Theory, Urban Design, Light & Lighting, Project & Enterprise Management, Building & Urban Design in Development, Environmental Design & Engineering, Urban Studies, Strategic management of Projects, Construction Economics & Management, International Real Estate & Planning, and Development Administration & Planning Masters programmes; research students enrolled in the Architectural Design and Architectural History & Theory PhD programmes; affiliate academics and visiting research students, alumni and Urban Lab research staff; but also students enrolled in the MSc Cancer, Politics and European Studies, Anthropology, Spanish and History of Art programmes. Around 60% of them are female; 55% Asian; 25% British; and 15% other European. All together, they are The Bartlett Library!

As I turn my gaze to the books left on the tables, I can't help but think: What if all those Bartlett readers of so diverse books suddenly broke the vow of library silence and started conversing with each other? Hidden in the silence of the printed pages lying side by side on the tables, I see: David Banister's *Transport Planning* in conversation with Iain Borden's *Drive*; John Habraken's *Structure of the Ordinary* and Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture Without Architects* meeting Nicolas Hall's *Thatching* and Gerhard Hausladen (et al.)'s *Climate Skin*; Richard Coyne's *Technoromanticism* challenging Neil Spiller's *Visionary Architecture*; a large-scale roundtable discussion with Andy Merrifield's *Dialectical Urbanism*, Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space*, Chris Hamnett's *Unequal City*, and Stephen Graham's & Simon Marvin's *Splintering Urbanism*, ready to reply to Jack R. Meredith's & Samuel J. Mantel's *Project Management: a Managerial Approach*, Nicholas G. Pirounakis's *Real Estate Economics*, Anthony O'Sullivan et al.'s *Housing Economics & Public Policy*, and Danny Myers's *Economics and Property*; but also, Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* and Robin Evans's *Projective Cast* negotiating with Edward Allen's *Fundamentals*



of Building Construction, Materials and Methods, and Stephen Prykes's *Social Network Analysis in Construction*. Alas, the majority of those readings —usually included in reading lists or recommended by tutors—form part of a solitary preparation for a single-authored essay and/or an individual quest for architectural design inspiration. Very few Bartlett readers admit their motivation to read certain books because they wanted to, "just for fun!" or to "understand the concepts behind design."

Others don't read books, but use The Bartlett Library as an ideally quiet workspace. Immersed in their laptops, students admit to either "writing a design brief" and "marking essays" or doing their "weekly homework for SSEES evening class." Those who do read a book usually skim and scan if it is useful, before considering borrowing it. In doing so, they unwittingly determine which books remain on the Library shelves and which ones end up in the Library Stores in Essex. Just taking a book off the shelf saves it from 'library limbo'. Indeed, the breadth of the material soon to be available at the new Bartlett Library has been partially defined by the way in which readers have been collectively using both the space and its books over the last 15 years.

Outside the Library, The Bartlett readers enjoy their books both in their flats—the only place where they can still read before bedtime—and in the buzzing environment of a coffee shop or the lobby of UCLU. Apart from the apparently compulsory assortment of design and architectural magazines (like the *AR*, *Detail*, *Log*, *Architheses*, *El Croquis* and *Cabinet*), The Bartlett readers "read everything from crime novels to reporter books about Africa", including: historical biographies; new, alternative fashion/music/art magazines; comic books and graphic novels; science fiction books and novels from around the world—be they literary classics, or "other social, psychological books", "romance or crime or comedy", "thriller, and

> "Those who do read a book usually' skim and scan if it is useful', before considering borrowing it."

mystery best-sellers", "novels about the history of Europe", but also "fiction by unpublished/ self-published authors"—BBC News and "anything interesting from the newspaper"—including "Italian everyday politics as a masochistic evening press" —Greek mythology and "books about the cosmos".

Their references include: Zen Buddhist monk, poet, and peace activist, Thich-Nhat-Hanh; Conrad Shawcross; 'Boris Izaguirre's articles'; 'Ballard's novels'; 'surrealistic novels by Haruki Murakami'; Georges Perec; Jean Genet; Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let me Go*; George R. R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire*; Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking fast and slow*; '*Quiet* by Susan Cain, *Londoners* by Craig Taylor'; Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*; Ken Follett's *Winter of the World*; 'short stories by Alice Munro, Harold Brodkey etc.'; 'Chinese poems from Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD) + Novels by Xiaobo Wang'; 'Chris Ryan's SAS fiction, Clancy's Special Forces fiction, *The Economist*, *GQ*, *Telegraph*'; the '*National Geographic*!' and the Bible. While supposedly external, all those readings are indeed integral parts of The Bartlett Library.

Thus, The Bartlett readers set up an infinitely expanding Library Space for LOBBY to explore. In consistently doing so, the LOBBY Library space aspires to raise the volume of dialogues that still remain latent in whispering voices but nonetheless shape our shared Bartlett culture.

Sensing Spaces at the Royal Academy

Words by Claudio Leoni

Eduardo Souto de Moura's installation in the RA Sensing Spaces exhibition

Starting off from a curatorial idea that was both simple and demanding, *Sensing Spaces*, this year's architectural show at the Royal Academy, challenged traditional strategies to represent architecture in the gallery space. While architecture usually has a purpose, this becomes obsolete or artificial in the gallery. Hence, the architects of *Sensing Spaces* were in fact asked to create a non-purposeful space within an existing space, putting them more in the role of critics or artists reflecting on architecture, rather than actually designing it.

Although the architects' approaches were all appealing, their response to the different demands posed by the gallery space were not entirely satisfying in most cases. Souto de Moura's arches were the pieces that struck me right away as most convincing. By denying the exhibition's questioning of space, he proposed a radically different approach—architecture is not space but structure, history, materiality, surface and technology. Space, on the other hand, is the result of these factors. The ornamentation of Souto de Moura's arches refer to the gallery space. By turning them off the gallery's perpendicularity, the architect clearly presents them as an intervention into the existing space. By resorting to ornamentation, Souto de Moura demonstrates the structuring moment of architecture and its historical background. At the same time, the very slender structure represents an advanced technology of processing concrete, while its high condensation gives it an ambiguously metallic look. This is not a classicist work but a contemporary installation that carries a variety of references to the realm of architecture.

Souto de Moura's piece suggests that architecture can be represented in the gallery only when it becomes an artwork. To my mind, this is the only persuasive answer to the question of representing architecture in the gallery space. At the same time, this approach needs a reader who understands those messages—and thus moves beyond immediate phenomenology. Therefore, the question of exhibiting sensing spaces remains unanswered while raising even more fundamental philosophical questions as to whether pure perception is at all possible without empirical knowledge. Hence, I can only wait for the next experiment of exhibiting architecture now, hoping it can challenge my present convictions even further.

Opening up Architectural Dichotomies beyond Sensing Spaces

Words By Costas Spyridis

Taking the baton from the Sensing Spaces exhibition, LOBBY talks with **Anastasia Karandinou** about her latest book, *No Matter: Theories and Practices of the Ephemeral in Architecture.* Starting off from similar questions, the book quickly opens up broader discussions by moving into territories that were hardly touched upon at the exhibition.

How did you develop an interest for the kind of questions you explore in the book?

That's a really interesting question; quite often some genuine questions about place, the contemporary city or architecture as a discipline lead to research investigations. In this case for example, I was questioning about the essence of architecture as a discipline —or else, about its limits. What elements of space do we focus on, as architects, and what elements remain in the background…?

Were there other architects and theorists that influenced your work?

The first few names that come to my mind is Henri Bergson and his exploration of the notion of time, as well as Walter Benjamin and the way in which he discusses the encounter with a place —through 'attention' and through 'habit'. In other words, through sight, perception, 'attention' on one hand; and in more incidental fashion on the other—through habit, through the actual everyday encounter… Bernard Tschumi I think reflects upon a similar issue when he uses the notion of 'eroticism' as a metaphor for the way place is experienced.

It is also quite obvious that this book has been strongly influenced by the work of Richard Coyne (who has also been my PhD supervisor at the time—and I feel particularly lucky for that!)

It seems that in the book there are a number of design-oriented case studies following the theory. Were they meant to support and clarify the theoretical discussion and arguments?

Not really; I would rather describe it the other way round: some of the theoretical enquiries resist the analytic method and cannot be addressed with a pre-determined method fully prescribed in advance. Hence, I attempt to address these questions through praxis; through an active involvement—through doing this and then doing that and observing what happens… I would refer to Jane Rendell's position and consider praxis (or practice) and theory as elements that throw 'trajectories'—practice in this book 'cuts through' the theoretical questions and destabilizes them—and transforms them. I would follow Deleuze's description—or argument—and claim that theory has not been used to 'inspire' practice, neither practice has been used to 'inspire' theory. Each praxis (theoretical discussion or the making of something) has functioned as an element in a process of constructing and disrupting narratives and syllogisms. Some of the main sections of the book actually emerged out of some quite experimental processes carried out quite a few years ago; one was the sound-mapping of Edinburgh conducted in 2006–07 and presented in a workshop in Chur in the summer of 2007—and this did generate a series of discussions and debates about how processes involving sound could reveal aspects of the atmosphere of a place. And another one was the performative mapping in Shanghai—started in 2005–06 in an attempt to examine how maps could generate and reveal realities that are time-dependent—rather than merely represent what is visible with the eye anyway.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book for me is your attempt to relate discussions about digital media with notions of the intangible or sensuous.

The digital has been traditionally associated with the purely visual—with the distant and almost conceptual—as the opposite of the physical, the tactile, the sensuous, the experiential. In this book I attempt to question this established dichotomy and open it up.

Indeed, the whole book seems to be structured around similar dichotomies.

That's right; the book is structured around three dichotomies. Following Derrida's paradigm, I first attempt to reverse the binary; this move brings forth the usually subordinate element of the binary; and then I introduce a third notion in order to open up—and actually break down—the dichotomy.

So, the three main chapters of the book are based upon three dichotomies: (a) the Visual VS the invisible/the atmosphere (opened up with the introduction of the notion of the sensuous/the sonic), (b) the Formal VS the Material—or form and matter (opened up with the introduction of the notion of the performative), and (c) the Physical VS the Digital (opened up with the introduction of the notion of the Hybrid/the fused/the tuned). Each binary emerged out of the current tendency to question or re-interpret the well-established notions related to architectural design. I should probably rather let you read the rest…!

Caught in the Loop of the Strangely Familiar

A Decade-long interrogation of the everyday unspectacular

Words By Costas Spyridis

Drawing upon his decade-long experience of studying everyday spaces, **Nick Beech** accepted LOBBY's invitation to revisit his 2005 MSc thesis, titled 'The Corridor of Our School: The Development of a Practice Appropriate to the Study of Everyday Space' and share his reflections on the challenges and lessons learnt from studying the most banal places of our quotidian unspectacular.

Why were you primarily interested in studying such a familiar, but also rather banal, space of the everyday life?

Whilst studying for my BA at Oxford Brookes, Murray Fraser introduced me to the work of Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill and others from The Bartlett through a series of seminars and readings. It's through their work, and particularly the Strangely Familiar group, that I was introduced to the whole idea of 'everyday life' and its relationship to architecture, the work of Walter Benjamin, the Situationists and Henri Lefebvre.

So even before the MSc , I was thinking about the issue of how we inhabit and reproduce our educational environment, primarily through a set of political questions—what was the everyday space that we expect people to learn and thrive in? What hidden, but very ordinary and even casual mechanisms of control, discipline, policing and frankly *frightening* —if I can use that as a verb—are deployed, through the production of spaces in education? I was also interested in a theoretical problem around the 'familiar' or 'everyday'—in this instance our ordinary practices of inhabitation, occupation, reproduction and use of 'space'. Look carefully at very ordinary spatial practices—how we approach a building, how we treat the pavement and the kerb, how we use minor spaces like those funny little spots by vending machines in big institutional buildings —and suddenly whole complexes of ideological, aesthetic, social and cultural practices and discourses appear.

But, in acknowledging all these complexes, which you've theoretically put into place and thought through, you still have to recognise that they're really tied up in something that is, in our daily life, just very ordinary. So you go through a funny loop—you've just taken something very familiar, made it strange, and then realised that its strangeness was always there in the familiar after all. I wanted to show everyday spaces, that we normally kind of ignore, show them for all their everydayness and only then say—look, this is an architecture, this is something that you produce and operate, all the time, and now you know that, maybe you can do something about it, maybe you could change it. And I really couldn't think of a more suitable study than Wates House. Which, as you know, is pretty… 'everyday'.

How did you work in order to achieve this?

Well, I was extremely fortunate in being able to work in Jane's seminar and who, I think, presents a very exciting possibility—that texts and readings and writings *are spatial practices*. Well, I took that as meaning a particular thing: that we can 'construct' a text which the reader can *inhabit* or *reproduce*. First spatial writing isn't a representation or a perspective on a 'something else' outside of it. I think this was frequently put, at the time, as 'try to write the wall, not write about the wall'. Second, because of that demand—that the writing should in itself be inhabitable—the attention of one's analysis shouldn't necessarily be on architectural 'design' (as the exclusive activity of architects), nor with material architectural effects (surfaces, details, all that Pallasmaa and Zumthor shit) but with *practices* that produce or reproduce space.

That's where Lefebvre came in and where Michel de Certeau became so important—Lefebvre because of the insistence on the social production of space, de Certeau because of the identification of spatial practices (walking, for example) as in some sense narrational (that we tell stories through our spatial practices) and *textual* (*not* oral). And finally, Jane's insistence that one should mark out a space for the reader *and* 'remark' on it at the same time. You're both producing the 'object' and producing the criticism of that object at one and the same time. It results in a very unfamiliar form of address.

So, I identified the narratives presented by those I interviewed about Wates House as 'traces' of spatial practices. It's those 'traces' that were cut out and montaged together to construct a text that, I hoped, could be 'used' or 'inhabited' by readers. The report is supposed to be a limited and closed text—it's supposed to be about a *particular* place, the corridors in Wates House—but it's also supposed to be very open, you're supposed to be able to read it and inhabit it as you would a corridor in a building.

Photography by David Roberts

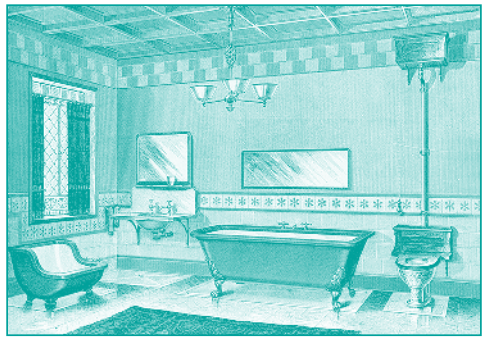
> "Look carefully at very ordinary spatial practices and suddenly whole complexes of ideological, aesthetic, social and cultural practices and discourses appear"

How do you reflect on this work now, almost a decade later, having also completed a PhD dissertation studying aspects of everyday space?

Well first, I think that the work I did was very tentative, very provisional and very awkward. More importantly, I think the political weight the report can carry is much less than I thought at the time. I'm more sceptical about the political possibilities of investigating 'everyday life' at that level of 'inhabitation' alone. I think there is some amazing work —scholarly, research and activist work —that could be put under the broad umbrella of the critique of the 'everyday life' of institutions, schools, universities and so on that is fantastic. But since my PhD research—which fundamentally took me away from thinking about the everyday as something that happens in a 'sphere of consumption' to really paying attention to processes of production —if I were to approach the report again now, I would have far more interest in the structures of financing of UCL and The Bartlett, political relationships between senior members of HEIs and commercial and political institutions, between commercial architectural practices and legal and financial organisations and so on.

Of course, that kind of work is being done—not least by Jane and others at The Bartlett—but I worry that university life has become increasingly banal—not 'everyday', but *banal*, limited, lacking in political opportunity and potential, over-determined by neoliberal financial imperatives and ideology. More positively, the critique of everyday life can't be shunted aside—it isn't really possible, though some do try, for people to write critical or historical assessments of architecture, without taking into account what the ordinary, everyday contributions are from those who inhabit and, through that inhabitation, reproduce space.

Flushing Without Forgetting



Words by Stylianos Giamarelos

LOBBY talks to **Barbara Penner** about *Bathroom*, her latest book about this most un-spectacular of domestic spaces that intriguingly raises many important questions about increasingly pressing, but usually overlooked, problems of our modern world.

How did you start developing an interest in the bathroom?

In fact, the book has a very strong Bartlett link. I did the MA Architectural History here in 1995–1996, and my thesis focused on the opposition to public conveniences for women in Victorian London. Studying these quite bizarre but passionate fights made me understand that, far from being neutral and functional spaces, bathrooms are incredibly complex. It's impossible to talk about bathrooms without finding yourself talking about so many other things too—deep-rooted social beliefs, cultural norms, religious practices, the body, sexuality…

This story is very interesting, particularly when one has in mind that the feminist-inspired architectural discourse initially seemed to focus on questions of domestic space. Yet, your own research started from a space that could be found both in public and in private iterations. How did your work develop within this duality of the public and the private?

That's a very good question, and you're right. Even when considering the domestic bathroom, I regard it as hinge or an interface space. It's where we go to perform our most private acts, yet it's the space in which we're most directly hooked up to infrastructure. It's where individual bodies, technology, infrastructure all come together in a way that complicates traditional ideas about public and private. But what fascinates me is that we rarely acknowledge that our bathroom connects us up to a larger infrastructural network. In fact, we're actively participating in *not* acknowledging it—we prefer to flush and forget.

How did you see the work developing over all those years since then?

As academics, we like to think we can always plan out what we do, but the truth of the matter is that we are often quite responsive. In my case, I only got serious about bathrooms again in 2010 when I received a UCL Grand Challenges Small Grant to go to South Africa with Dr. Sarah Bell (from UCL Dept of Civil, Environmental & Geomatic Engineering). Going to Durban and learning more about the challenges facing the Global South, in terms of hygiene and sanitation, was a 'eureka' moment for me.

It also made me question what's happening in the Global North. We've inherited systems and spaces that have locked us into certain patterns of behaviour, but we are largely blind to this fact. Moving forward, this inherited system will be under far greater pressure —just consider the stress on the world's water supplies or the rise of natural disasters (which hit infrastructure very hard)—and will force us to examine our own spaces and behaviours more closely. Is it still viable to use 50 litres of drinkable water to flush our toilets every day?

So *Bathroom* is doing two things really. First, it tries to understand how we have ended up with the bathroom and the sanitation system we have and how it's been established as a kind of global 'gold standard' for dealing with water and waste. And, second, it considers cases of what I call "unlocking" where this model is rethought in some way.

Where do you think one can go now after this book?

There's been an increased awareness of the importance of sanitation globally in recent years, as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and many NGOs address the 2.5 billion people in the world who don't have basic sanitation. So, this is where I see the challenge: how do you open up serious discussions around what are still considered taboo subjects? The areas where I see conversations developing in the future are around sustainable cities, healthy cities, and urban resilience —these are obviously conversations in which architects and urban designers should play a leading part.

Fostering these conversations has been the focus of my new projects. With my colleagues Sarah Bell and Tse-Hui Teh, we organised UCLoo Festival 2013. Its centrepiece was a rather beautiful working ecological toilet with a 0.2 litre flush installed in UCL's Main Quad. It was meant as a prompt and a provocation to the UCL community and to The Bartlett students specifically. If we can use toilets with 0.2 litre flushes, why don't we? What are the blind spots in our own practices? If The Bartlett and UCL don't tackle these questions in an intelligent, joined-up way, who will?

Catalogue G Illustrating the Plumbing and Sanitary Department of the J.L.Mott Iron Works (1888)

BOOK REVIEW

An Architectural Historian Unlocks the Water Closet

Christopher Purpura is inspired by Barbara Penner's Bathroom.

I had often made the assumption that all toilets shared analogous plumbing, until I discovered that faeces usually land on a shelf for the doctor's inspection in Germany. We often make similar mistakes by assuming the bathroom is a discrete interior bounded by four (often white-tiled) walls, sealing off our everyday bathtubs, sinks and toilets from the wider public world. Barbara Penner's *Bathroom* demystifies that singular, iconic image in spectacular fashion. On its pages, the bathroom expands into a space intimately connected not only to the realms of sewage infrastructure and government legislation, but also to social beliefs and norms that are both historically determined and culturally specific. What are the practical implications of all that? Well, consider the Anglo-American Wet Closet where human waste flush out of site and mind into the water system, for instance. Can it really be considered more normal or rational than dry toilets in the Global South where urine and faeces are farmed and productively transformed into fertiliser? And it is not only fixtures, but also people themselves, as users, that are standardised. By unpacking the assumptions behind bathroom design—especially those discriminating against gendered, disabled and ageing bodies—Penner calls attention to the need for architects, designers and consumers to understand how bathrooms were constructed in the past in order to imagine how they can be improved in the future.

Bathroom's politics are not didactic; they emerge much more fluidly through a social history illuminated by seductive material examples. The latter are a real gift to students since the visual richness of each image can sufficiently fill one essay after another. Spanning across media that challenge the boundaries between art, architecture and design, the toilet for example, is imaged both in an advertisement for the biometric curves of Luigi Conali's design from 1975 and in a studio portrait, where the inside of the toilet bowl is painted with a delicate, blue and white China-like, floral pattern from 1886. The urinal alone appears both as Duchamp's un-functional *Fountain* and as Alex Schweder's fully functional Siamese twin of an installation for two users.

Penner's attention constantly shifts between iconic and lesser-known subjects, including her protagonists of choice. While Le Corbusier and the modernist mantra that "form follows function" constantly reappears throughout *Bathroom*, so does Alexander Kira, whose 1975 interdisciplinary research at Cornell countered the assumption that the standardised forms of the bathroom were unnatural for human anatomy. However, the narratives of Le Corbusier and Kira converge in their common plea for the semi-squat—crouching, feet back, legs lifted —and against throne-style toilets. By referring to Le Corbusier and Kira as protagonists of this story, I am drawing upon questions raised in seminars and tutorials with our Bartlett tutors—including Penner —about the writing of history as a narrative— complete with characters who inhabit and contest spaces framed carefully by storytelling devices. Since history writing is neither the transparent reflection nor objective recuperation of past events, Penner clearly announces her role in its construction. Bookending this survey of incredibly diverse breadth is the figure of Penner herself who makes two pilgrimages: the first to the Kohler Arts Centre in Wisconsin and the last to Zumthor's Therme Vals. By beginning and ending in the twenty-first century, this narrative device resists a clear linear progression from past to present. The historian's active writing of history is foregrounded, and thus, the story's complex oscillations between disciplines and scales—from water-treatment facilities down to the very "shit" itself—become rooted in the here and now. As a result, we encounter history less as readers and more as participants whose agency faces a decision to support Penner's call for better bathrooms —rationally designed, ecologically sustainable and inclusive of all users.

Revising Central Constructs Through Peripheral Practices

On how I moved both north and south looking for answers

Words by Ricardo Agarez

"The past is a past present—a history that is in some sense a genealogy of the historian. What is marked is the site of desire."
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

I have always been interested in the marginal, in the peripheral, in what remains outside of the canon, in the underdog and its everyday labours. Having been educated in the art-historical recipes of consecutive movements and avant-gardes, and in the egocentric atmosphere of architecture schools (where the architect was portrayed as both the axis of built environment production and its ill-fitting, resisted inner voice), I channelled that early interest into looking at the 'others' of architectural history. What are the masterpieces of architecture, in any given point in time, without the swathes of middle-ground buildings that allow us to make sense of them; to understand, accept or refute their relevance; to interrogate their context, their origins and repercussions? Who are all those actors that define the act of building beyond the same big architect names repeated *ad nauseam*? Who are these little-known architects, engineers, builders, patrons, officials, users? And what do concepts formulated by historians, theorists and critics of architecture mean in the light of the building practices developed on the fringes—the topologic, chronologic or epistemic fringes?

Contemporary Portuguese architecture has been merchandised as being fundamentally rooted in such generic tropes as 'site-sensitiveness' and a sense of place and vernacular traditions that chimes conveniently with that most useful of post-postmodernist concepts, 'critical regionalism'. My architectural education was indeed bound by these conventions, while being nurtured by the personal experience of following *in situ* the works of the country's now-global trinity of masters—Távora, Siza and Souto de Moura—and their trajectory from design to construction and use. Gradually, I developed the conviction that these tropes and works were part of a lineage in Portuguese architectural and extra-architectural cultures, that this lineage was downplayed and that a displacement was required in order to examine it thoroughly. I believed that such a displacement should involve both the researcher and the site of research, and I decided to move. While the focus of my research moved south, away from the centres of architectural production in Portugal—Lisbon and Porto—I myself went north, towards a clearly different academic context. Captivated by the scope and sensibility of Professor Adrian Forty's scholarship, I came to The Bartlett School of Architecture wishing to look at my own circumstance detached from the—consciously and unconsciously—established viewports that shape our perception of home: I brought my solid knowledge of context and sources under the scrutiny of an engaged, open and stimulating aggregate of students, tutors and supervisors. While allowing for a revision of conventional narratives of Portuguese architecture, my research also prompted me to make a wider point on the significance of the peripheral, the hybrid and the—apparently—trivial for opening novel routes of enquiry into the built environment. The recent recognition of this work by the Royal Institute of British Architects, with the RIBA President's Award for Outstanding PhD Thesis 2013, seems to indicate that these intents might have been achieved, at least to some extent.

My PhD thesis—*Regionalism, Modernism and Vernacular Tradition in the Architecture of Algarve, Portugal, 1925–1965*—looks at the contribution of real and constructed local traditions to modern building practices and discourses in a specific region. By shifting the main research focus from the centre to the region, and by placing a strong emphasis on fieldwork and previously overlooked sources—the archives of provincial bodies, municipalities and architects—the thesis scrutinises canonical accounts of the interaction of regionalism with modernism. It examines how architectural 'regionalism', often discussed at a central level through the work of acknowledged metropolitan architects, was interpreted by local practices in everyday building activity. Was there a real local concern with vernacular traditions? Or was this essentially a construct of educated metropolitan circles, both at the time and retrospectively? By tracing circuits and agents of influence and dissemination, the thesis brings the careers of locally relevant designers to light, offering a much more nuanced and comprehensive view of architectural production.

Departing from conventional narratives that present pre-war regionalism in Portugal as a stereotype-driven, one-way central construct, the creation of a regional built identity for Algarve emerges here as the result of combined local, regional and central agencies, mediated both through concrete building practice and discourses outside architecture. Post-war regionalism, in turn, appears as more than a sophisticated re-appropriation of vernacular features by cultured architects to overcome the shortcomings of both modernist orthodoxy and official stylistic conservatism: Algarve's traditional features allowed modernism to be pragmatically restyled as locally sensitive *and* keep its fundamentals unquestioned, while the architects' authority was reasserted where non-architects dominated. Regionalism, as a consistent undercurrent of twentieth-century architecture, resurfaced and was morphed by modernism—with mutual benefit. The case of Algarve shows that vernacular tradition and regional agency are not mere footnotes in the narrative of modernism, but constituent parts of its main text.

This work suggests the value of revealing the complexity of events and processes—the polyhedric quality of history—that are too often reduced to one convincing story by identifying dominant narratives and simplifying accounts. It demonstrates the benefits of an alternative methodological approach to re-equate our understanding of architecture's storylines. Bringing all those diverse tactics together—suspending established theoretical frames, displacing the site of research to where objects were created, investing in thorough groundwork and archival research, widening the field to include practices stemming from the blurred boundaries of architecture will allow us to foster a more diverse and hopefully less self-centred understanding of our built environment.

Guerreiro house, Paderne (Albufeira), n.d. [1950]. ©IHRU/APML, Lisbon

The publication of Manuel Laginha's 'Paderne house' in the Lisbon magazine *Arquitectura* in 1950 was intended to prove the establishment of a new, harmonious relationship of modern architecture with local building traditions in the provinces. Yet, Laginha still camouflaged the presence of the adjacent 'vernacular' house in the retouched images he published, so as not to compromise its impact as a modernist manifesto.

Ecologies of Care and Architectures of Life

On the occasion of the recent publication of her latest edited collection Relational Architectural Ecologies, LOBBY follows **Peg Rawes's** intellectual trajectory from relational ecologies and poetic biopolitics towards an architectural ethics of care.

Words by Stylianos Giamarelos

How did this book initially come together?

The book is the first of two edited collections that came partly out of the interdisciplinary conference that I organised and ran with UCL colleagues from The Bartlett (Jane Rendell), French and Art History, along with other colleagues from KTH, Stony Brook and Hofstra (US), called 'Sexuate Subjects. Politics, Poetics & Ethics'. The conference looked at feminist approaches to these concerns, through issues of spatial justice and of spatial crisis. It took place at the same time as the 2010 UCL student occupation against fees, an important background setting for our exploration into how our work in UCL can have both a value inside higher education and relate to political life outside academia. This book—*Relational Architectural Ecologies*—reframes the conference (contributions from colleagues including: North-American based philosophers Lorraine Code and Elizabeth Grosz, UCL medic Anita Berlin, New Zealand political scientist Bronwyn Hayward, UK architect Katie Lloyd Thomas, and US academic Gail Schwab) into an academic publication that is situated within live discussions and debates.

How does this project relate to previous work of yours?

The book also comes out of my work with feminist philosophy and new theories of materialism, which I find very rich and active conversations about how philosophy can offer ways of thinking about the formation of diverse subjectivities' spatial and architectural relations and novel understandings of matter. So, personally, I really wanted the conference to talk about matter and ecological principles, for example, to show the relations between biological and scientific concepts of ecology, through social and architectural ones.

The other aim of the project was to open up conversations about sustainability and ecological thinking in the architectural profession, which in the main have tended to come through technological innovation and remediation of carbon emissions. Such literature doesn't talk about ecology that reflects important feminist thinking about the environment since the 1960s, including Rachel Carson and the feminist environmental political activist movements which were such strong drivers for current environmental and eco-critiques. More commonly, contemporary professional discussions are removed from this recent historical context in which ecology is concerned with culture and politics. Today however, much environmental architectural literature is still cautious of political approaches, for example, *Wheatfield—A Confrontation* by Agnes Denes and reproduced on the front cover, which I've been wanting to write about as an image of another way of architectural thinking for about 12 years. However, if you look at the Harvard *Ecological Urbanism* volume (2010) it's given a double-page spread but with absolutely no conversation about the project. It has been totally decontextualised and retrofitted in an overview to our current context, but totally removed from its site of production. Instead, I really wanted to highlight how it's an example of a complex approach that precedes more recent approaches to urban activism, city agriculture or questions around resources, yet it was done 30 years ago.

At the start of our conversation, you mentioned a companion publication to this book.

The second publication derived from the conference, is called *Poetic Biopolitics*. This book focuses more on the performative and poetic humanities-based discussions.

It doesn't include specific ecological or environmental conversations but links with the earlier publication because it argues that we need to take into account different political and poetic structures and agencies in architecture, and my personal contribution in the volume is to explore these questions in biological 'architectures of life'.

Since this is a book that retains such strong links with that conference, can you also outline your approach to the book launch symposium at The Bartlett School of Architecture last October?

The cross-school seminar was important for me, because I was very aware that this book didn't include colleagues who also work on the environment and ecology. Having developed the project where, to some extent, the interdisciplinary nature steps outside architecture 'proper', I wanted then to bring it back into the Department to have conversations with colleagues who do this work, so as to extend its architectural sensibility. So, it was a really important second phase of conversation—i.e. not just dissemination, but engagement. It was also exciting because we haven't done many public staff debates in recent years. For example, it was the first time that Jonathan Hill and Laura Allen have spoken about their approaches to ecology at the same event in the Department.

> "Contemporary professional discussions are removed from this recent historical context in which ecology is concerned with culture and politics"

So it was an example of the diverse thinking in the School, and it was also important for the book, and its contributors, to be engaged with by colleagues.

And where do you see your work going now?

The other context for this project is the work that I have been doing over the past few years around feminist critiques of technology and science, and history of philosophy, which picks up—especially—on Spinoza's ethical project, which entails a strong ecological thesis. This body of work is concerned with concepts of difference—biological, material and psychic difference—which I think has quite interesting ways of critiquing para-metricism. But the other strand it leads into is a new body of work, begun over the past six months, which is a project on equalities of wellbeing. I hope that these conversations of wellbeing, social and environmental health in housing, are something that can be looked in through the work of Spinoza and will link to the ecological conversation begun in this book—what I'm calling an architectural 'ethics of care'.

Towards a Relational Architecture

A reflection on the 'Relational Architectural Ecologies' Symposium

Words by Jaime Bartolome Yllera

Admiration for great disciplinary achievements in architecture is often overshadowed by a subsequent sense of insufficiency. This healthy and inevitable discomfort in front of, even the best examples of, architectural production is key to understanding the latent potential of relational architectural thinking. In fact, this discomfort represents the misfit between the richness and complexity of the world's contents and materials with the relative poverty of architectural objects, no matter how sophisticated the latter may actually be.

The World is a stage of complex ecologies entailing not only physical and biological matter but also cultural values and sociopolitical conditions working on different levels of equal significance. Architecture often relates with this diverse reality in a rather superficial manner.

If we are to open architectural thinking to this level of complexity, we need to overcome clichés in all spheres of design (geometric, technical, aesthetic and so on). But we also need a clear definition of the relevant cultural and sociopolitical framework for design to happen in a relational way.

Relational architecture requires fresh insights into social and cultural realities, as well as innovative approaches to design, if it is to explore the 'reflexivity' between material and cultural 'biodiversity'.

The Relational Architectural Ecologies Cross-School Symposium organised by Peg Rawes at The Bartlett on 30 October 2013, showcased great examples of both of these necessary conditions. While some of the speakers (Verena Andermat Conley, Nathan Moore, Anita Berlin and Katie Lloyd Thomas) were also contributors to the book, other presentations by prominent Bartlett scholars included Adrian Lahoud, Barbara Penner, Mark Smout and Laura Allen, Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill and Marcos Cruz. Such an impressive line-up could only ensure a plethora of well-presented material.

Although the ensuing debates are impossible to summarise in a few lines, here is a retrospective appetiser for those who couldn't be there. The discussion covered a range of topics as diverse as: the ethical implications and potential legal consequences derived from environmental visualisation and digital modelling of large-scale human action over climate; the different scales of relations between patients, health workers and students in sanitary environments operating within a complex global sanitary system; the relations between early seventeenth century British environmental awareness, liberalism and the romantic; the 'spatial' relations between critical frameworks and the interpretations and performance of a cultural agent; the very particular relations between mothers and prematurely born babies at the Neonatal Intensive Care Units (and the way in which these are mediated not only by diverse technologies, systems of objects and clinical routines, but also by a multitude of human actors, such as nurses, cleaners, doctors, technicians and family); the complex boundary negotiations between architecture and nature and the notion of seamless transition between them exemplified by specific architectural projects; and the relations between state-of-the-art technology and inter-disciplinary work methodologies that made those projects possible.

Both the symposium and the book *Relational Architectural Ecologies* are important stepping stones in our on-going pursuit of an intellectual position that aspires to grab the biggest possible chunk of reality for us to design with greater relevance. Taking them a step further is up to us now!

Transform or be Transformed

The art and science of crisis in the radical university

Words by Emilia Smeds, Pekka Piirainen and Tom Youngman

On January 16th, academics, management, students, activists and practitioners came together for a seminar entitled 'Rich Seams or Dark Pools? Fossil Fuel Funding and Research'. The event sought to critically discuss UCL's engagement with the fossil fuel industry and the appropriate role of research finance from oil, gas and coal companies. Ties to an industry at the heart of humanity's continued addiction to a form of energy production that threatens to wipe out modern civilisation would, at best, seem highly questionable. Engineers, artists, architects, politicians, writers, economists, scientists, the young, the old, the loud and the silent, all contributed to the sort of inter-disciplinary discussion rarely seen at universities, especially one so action-focussed. What you read here is part summary, part response to that discussion.

The art and science of crisis

Throughout the day the complete dissonance between artists and scientists in their manner of understanding the climate crisis was striking. A shared core comprehension of the issue at hand in all its existential complexity was conspicuously absent. Fixed rules, laws and statistical analyses abstract climate change from the society that causes it. When the complex human system has to be integrated into scientific analysis of the implications of—or possible solutions to—climate change, the assumptions just don't hold. With a fixed view of human society, put forward through neoclassical economics or through the business plans of Shell or BP, predictions, plans and analysis can still be made. But without a human approach to a human problem, precision comes at the expense of imagination for the political and cultural development of human society. While art cannot be extricated from the scientifically-enhanced world in which it is currently performed, it seems to be able to comprehend the existential nature of the threat of climate change in a far richer way than science. Without the limitations of data, quantification or impartiality, humans as artists can use our node in the infinitely complex human system to begin to imagine the societal transform that climate change makes essential. When society's options are to transform or be transformed, we all need to become artists.

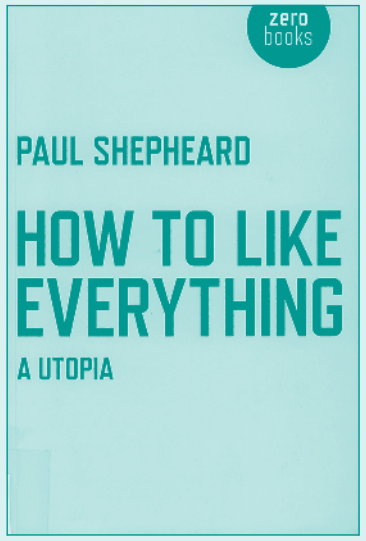
The radical university

So far, we seem to have leant on the eco-efficiency improvements of big corporations, hoping that fossil fuel companies will take a long-term perspective 'beyond petroleum' and develop the renewable energy infrastructure we so desperately need. However, despite the billions of pounds they spent trying to convince us of their efforts, the extractive industries and the consumption cult they fuel are the foundation stones of the carbon-intensive system that pushes us further towards the brink of climatic crisis—day by day, hour by hour. As humanity keeps warming the climate, going so far as to melt an icecap, Big Oil moves in the Arctic to extract fossil fuels at an ever-increasing rate.

The time for a radical stance is now. Whatever form efforts to mitigate climate change and move towards sustainability have taken at the global or national level, sufficient results simply have not materialised. We cannot afford to grant social legitimacy to big corporations or focus on foolishly trying to woo them into understanding. Change is always a complex, pluralist process. Yet, this societal shift must be driven by social movements, of which universities are a vital catalyst. Our wish is to build shared understanding across all disciplines and institutional members of UCL of the urgency of a low-carbon transition. The university can and must continue to be a force for radical change.

BOOK REVIEW

Beauty, Horror and Understanding



Daniel Stilwell feels enlightened after reading Paul Shepheard's latest book, *How to Like Everything: A Utopia*. What's not to like?

How to Like Everything is not a manifesto for a better way of living nor a soapbox for political or social conjecture, but an informal expression of personal experiences. Taken on board in a similarly colloquial fashion, Shepheard's words can act as signposts to utter tranquillity, bliss and euphoria. The bold bright yellow book cover leaves both little and much to the imagination, effectively acting as a smokescreen for what's to come.

Cynics may be dubious to even pick up said yellow and bold bound prose, but curious and inquisitive natures will only want to approach Shepheard's words head first. For a book of philosophical accretion, it doesn't read like one. Complex phrases and heavily-mulled notions, that only a veteran philosopher would understand, are nowhere to be found. The majesty of Shepheard's style presents emotive and heart-felt recollections, instead of dry and arbitrary bound anecdotes. The book is, in fact, laden with well-strung moments of good will, humour and enlightenment.

Walks through Amsterdam, overtones of love and recollections of strange encounters with even more strange people set the tone. By reading Shepheard's almost micro-autobiography from cover to cover, the reader is left with a perplexing feeling of sheer madness, confusion and amazement. Rather bafflingly, a book supposedly about Architecture, Philosophy and Life contains only the merest of hints to all three of them within its pages.

This truly spectacular feat of writing prowess can only be donned by a mind that belongs to someone of Shepheard's gravitas. The doppelganger within *How To Like Everything* is a textual copy of the author himself. The day-to-day banality expressed throughout is somehow subjected to a form of conditioning whereby the reader comes out stunned at learning how to cope with such materialistic and existential reasoning within the confines of the everyday and the ordinary.

Some would probably lust for a more infra-ordinary and propelled narrative with exclusive insights into how to get rich or how to build a house. Yet, these things are figments of imaginations with no real formulas or algorithms. Just living, walking down a street, reading a child their bed-time story, and talking with friends are all part of the same world going round. Shepheard's inclination teases out the immaterial architectural qualities we so brutishly disregard. This is not a eulogy of dust or anything ephemeral, but a thorough observation of the unseen routines of people. Weave that into the path of a rather assertive and engaging environment, and you have this book.

I can only finish this piece by quoting the end of the book itself. That is truly what the book is, what life is and what architecture is. *How to Like Everything* is not a plea to respect and do everything but rather accept that everything is part of life, architecture and the universal environment we inhabit included. As a concluding verse, Shepheard leaves us with: "We climb into a spaceship and accelerate out into near earth orbit and look back, and see the surface of the earth, and everything on it, a universe in itself."

What more could I want? Well, to put it simply, just more of everything, more of the ordinary, more of the everyday, more of the visceral and personal lenses in which Shepheard poises his memoir-esque narration. What we're given is a vast quantity of feelings and glimpses into architecture in the absence of its matter. Shepheards's attention to detail in everything is his glory!

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