LOBBY

Clairvoyance

mecanoo

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HOTELS & RESORTS

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Contributors

In the spirit of all things clairvoyant, we asked four of LOBBY's team members to open up their third eye and give us a prediction: **You look into a crystal and it reveals an image of London in 2115. What do you see?**

Photography: Josh Redman (Daniel Stilwell)

Patch Dobson-Perez, Contributing Writer

A third year undergraduate student at the Bartlett School of Architecture, hailing all the way from Stoke-on-Trent, Patch is working with LOBBY magazine for a second year running. And this practically makes him a veteran. When he's not maniacally trying to print out portfolio sheets the night before hand in, he can be found in a kimono playing with Bonny, his pet royal python. Patch's hobbies include rock climbing and writing about himself in third person.

"A monolithic concrete statue of Kim Jong-Un surrounded by a huge stage on which a botox-ridden, immortal Justin Bieber mimes a dictatorially-approved anthem about world domination. The Shard is dwarfed by enormous nuclear cooling towers and the London Eye has been modified to become an enormous hamster wheel on which any opposers of the realm have to jog for all eternity."

Daniel Stilwell, Social Media
@danieljstilwell

As well as being a writer with a keen interest on etymology and lexicography, Daniel is a beard enthusiast and wannabe farmer. After graduating from his under-graduate degree at Canterbury School of Architecture, he now resides in the Garden of England —aka Kent—where he works in Conservation. Daniel's work, both design and written, stems from a fascination and intrigue into the notions and themes of context, ecology, nature, the environment and the multi-sensory. He can usually be found not too far away from a nice slice of watermelon.

"At this rate just darkness from the million towers ego-ing for light to shine like a bunch of wilting sunflowers. We would have run out of 'good' names for these buildings too so they'd be called 'the Whisk', 'the Pizza Cutter' and any of those obscure kitchen utensil used rarely, like the pestle and mortar—although those forms would be yet more travesty to the skyline."

Yoranda Kassanou, Editorial Assistant

Yoranda studied Architecture in Athens, Greece. Her eagerness to experiment with new technologies in architecture in a more inter-disciplinary environment led her to the MSc. Adaptive Architecture and Computation at the Bartlett School of Architecture in September of 2014. She is a detail freak and is often being referred to as a 'Duracell Bunny'. The speed at which she works at has led our Editor-in-Chief to describe her as having fingers that have "tiny little rockets attached to each of them."

"I look into a crystal ball, and I gaze through a window. A man wakes up, has a shower. He eats breakfast, dresses up in his good suit and goes to work. He sits at his desk, starts working on his computer, has a lunch break and a cigarette. The hard-working man talks to a co-worker, whom he is secretly in love with, and goes back to his desk. The time is now 5 pm—time to go home. He cooks and eats dinner in front of his TV. It is now 9 pm; time to sleep. The year is 2115, and it is an ordinary day, just like any other day."

James Taylor-Foster, Seminar Room Guest Editor
@J_Taylor_Foster

Although James has one foot in architectural research and the other in writing, he also has one hand in spatial design and another in 20th Century art history. He's an Editor for ArchDaily and currently works as a practice researcher for Mecanoo in Delft. In between, he contributes to research collectives in Rotterdam whilst trying desperately to pursue a sideline as an art historian in London. People tend to wildly miscalculate his age (which we won't disclose here). James can also be found trolling art shops pretending to be wealthy enough to buy pieces he can't afford.

"A country within a country, a place that it no longer resembles a capital city but more of an enclosed city-state. A place where you can point at certain areas on a map and state: 'I'll never live there. It's too nice.' At least that's the dystopian nightmare."

Fancy a Reading

Dear Reader,

Please come in and have a seat while I light the candles and the sandalwood. When we set out to produce 'Clairvoyance', we framed the theme parting from the idea that architecture and urbanism are inextricably linked to predictions of the future, at a variety of scales. The end-goal wasn't to necessarily engage in a debate that relied solely on technofetishistic longings nor one that obsessed over catastrophic scenarios, but rather to hold a discussion that was inclusive and respondent to this idea of 'architectural clairvoyance' through its many manifestations.

In reality, it's quite rare to base a design solely on pure intuition or instinct—on solutions or predictions based on a whim. Rather, architects are very much aware of the past and of a historical context. With that in mind, it's funny how—even when an architectural design is based on/mindful of the past—we still talk about it in future's tense, creating narratives that revolve around speculations of how the space will impact/affect/dictate the movement/experience/life of the inhabitant. This future-oriented manner of conceptualising and thinking about architecture is embedded in us from the very beginning. Though at first I was inclined to condemn it, I have to wonder, is there any fault in this? And if so, how much?

The ability to envision the future—whether distant or immediate—is what shapes our actions today, it is part of our ability as humans to survive and adapt, and it's something that has enthralled us throughout history. We can engage in a discussion of the Greek's Oracle at Delphi to reflect on how the future can be so seductive for us, or we can simply think back on the days of playing Ouija (or perhaps even on those not-so-distant moments when we've dusted off the old Magic 8-Ball).

More than a fantastical concept solely useful to fortune-tellers or psychics, clairvoyance can be an inspirational and critical tool for architects. But its condition of being in a state of in-betweenness makes it difficult to define precisely because it doesn't have any borders. Clairvoyance's nuances are what interested us from the beginning: the hybridity between prediction and statistics, as well as prophecy and precedent is what makes it a fascinating lense to see through.

Now, after having worked on this issue, I almost feel that you, dear reader, are expecting me to write my own conclusions of what I think 'clairvoyance' is. But instead, I'll treat the content of the issue as a set of tarot cards—when the cards are laid out, their meanings are interpreted based on their positions and their neighbouring cards. Perhaps it's best that what you pick to read and the order in which you pick it in determine your personal outlook/'reading'. So, dear reader, shuffle wisely, be sure to concentrate and try with all your might to open up your third eye—your reading on 'Clairvoyance' is about to begin.
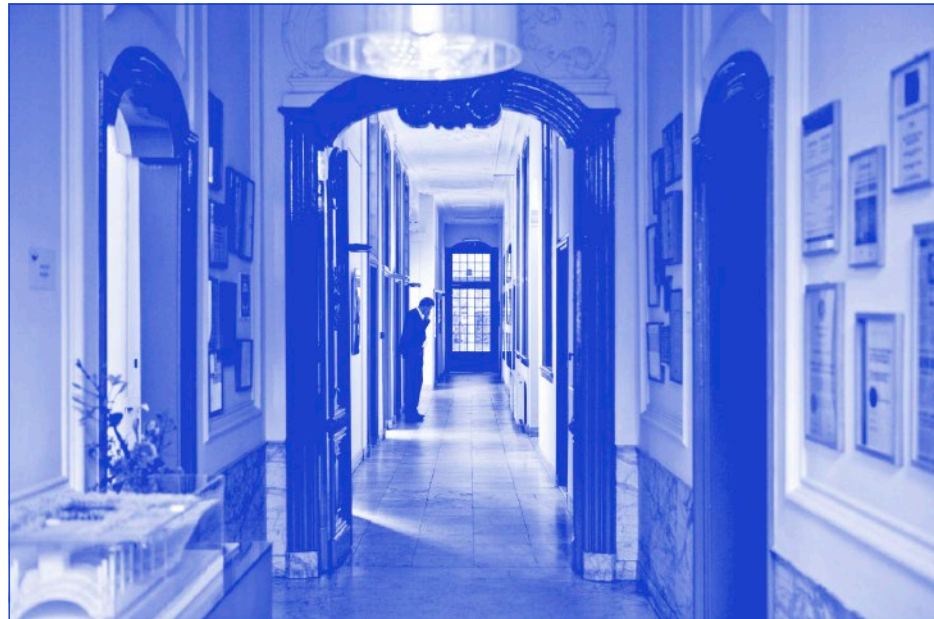
Enjoy the issue,

Regner Ramos, Editor-in-Chief

Visions With Purpose

LOBBY flies to Delft, the Netherlands to visit the offices of Mecanoo—Clairvoyance's main Sponsor—and engage in conversation with its Creative Director, Francine Houben.

Photography: Harry Cock.

Profile by Regner Ramos

A 15 minute train ride from Rotterdam in the direction of The Hague, lies the charmingly Dutch city of Delft, home of international architectural powerhouse Mecanoo. In 1984 its founding partner and creative director, Francine Houben, set up shop in this particular location, and it's been the setting for their work ever since. Now, the firm has expanded to a multidisciplinary staff of over 140 creative professionals who come from all parts of the world. Houben oscillates between calling them "mecanos"—a once popular toy composed of various parts essential to its construction, alluding to the playfulness of building—and her "symphony orchestra", where each person's skill set is essential to producing an oeuvre. Architects, interior designers, urban planners, landscape architects, architectural technicians, visual artists and model-makers are all housed inside Mecanoo's charming little work-palace.

Their studios at Oude Delft 203 present a unique work environment, composed of a collection of buildings—some of them spanning back to the mid-18th century—that have been joined together. The interior's 40–metre long corridor, along with its stairwell, ceilings and doors, are decorated with the stucco work and carvings typical of the Louis XIV style. Garden spaces, nooks, crannies and a panopticon-like mezzanine affectionately called 'the cockpit' ensure that the environment for each member of Francine's

orchestra feels at home. But perhaps it is the meeting room, located in a refurbished church-space complete with pointed arch vaulted ceiling, which was most impressive and representative of the type of work Mecanoo does. Each of their projects is approached as a unique design statement embedded within its context and orchestrated specifically for the people who use it; focusing on the process, not on the form, the practice creates culturally significant buildings with a human touch.

From single houses to complete neighbourhoods and skyscrapers, cities and polders, schools, theatres and libraries, hotels, museums, and evena chapel, Mecanoo's list of projects is only rivalled by the sheer variety of their typologies and programmes. It's no wonder that with the amount of work being done by them, the firm's popularity as a global entity has led them to open new offices in Manchester, Washington D.C. and Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. Stepping inside Oude Delft 203 gives the immediate feeling that you're amongst a group of people that are on the cusp of immortalising the firm's name: each mecano headed in the same direction, conducted by Francine herself.

✦

Mecanoo isn't focused on creating a brand identity in terms of your projects' form or aesthetics but rather uniting each project in terms of their focus on 'People, Place and Purpose'—which also happens to be the name of the firm's book being published in July. How do you create identity in a globalised world, and how do the firm's projects reflect that?

That's what I really like to do. I get inspired by a sense of the local and then interpret it in my own way, and sometimes it can be very personal. I'd say that intuition is also very important. Intuition is very much based on experience, the two go hand in hand. I could not rely so much on intuition when I was young.

Which Mecanoo project, outside of the Netherlands, do you feel most strongly reflects the identity of the place/culture?

There are several of them but maybe at this moment—because it is almost finished—I'd say the National Performing Arts Centre project in Kaohsiung. I think it will be an amazing project! It really is a series of spaces made for the city of Kaohsiung, for this tropical, informal, very pleasant harbour city in the south of Taiwan. Within it is the Banyan Plaza, an enormous public space between the opera houses and concert halls inspired by the structure of the local Banyan Tree. It's about the space underneath the roots, the trunk and the tree's canopy. I'm very proud of it.

Do you think that Mecanoo's potential for creating new, distinct architectures and not sticking to one particular aesthetic is one of the firm's selling points for attracting new talent?

Photography: Kouzi Isita.

National Performing Arts Center, Kaohsiung.

Photography: Christian Richters.

The Library of Birmingham.

"What I like about second cities is that they're places where what you do makes a palpable difference."

I don't know, to be honest, but I imagine it's inspiring. I always call Mecanoo a "symphony orchestra" because we have people with a whole range of different skills, and we try to bring them together. For instance, when I started designing the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Center in Boston, I had no idea that it'd be so reliant on brickwork in the end. We juggled with different materials and had people in the office who were specialists in designing beautiful brickwork patterns. A variety of people help us which is why I say it's like making music. You pick the people you need for the particular song.

With such a strong focus on being multidisciplinary is there such a thing as an ideal, desirable candidate that you want to attract?

I don't have one ideal candidate, but someone who's visionary would be a good fit. We also like having a flow of young people from different countries in our office, because they always bring new skills. **But I think that is still quite broad. Considering the vast amount of people that apply to Mecanoo every day, what sticks out? There's only so much you can say in a CV.**

The community is so international here, and I think we're actively looking for people who are from faraway places. I now want people from the United States since we're working a lot on the Eastern Seaboard. Team work is also an important one as well, because everybody works so closely together here. I think, if you were a single-minded, isolated person you would not do very well.

What's been the biggest difference in Mecanoo's process, philosophy and design from when it started up until this point?

Writing the book *Contrast, Composition, Complexity* was very important, because it put me in the position of having to sit down and not only talk about my projects

but also talk about our philosophy. Being the director of the Architecture Biennale of Rotterdam—the very first one—was important. Before that, there was obviously the start of the practice, which was primarily residential. And then there was a moment where Alvaro Siza was working in the office, and that was a kind of a shift in some ways. He was not famous at that time, but he was always working in our office, and he'd eat in my home. He also inspired in me a new kind of formal freedom so I could get away from the Modernist way of thinking I was taught in at TU Delft (Delft University of Technology).

What city would you be excited to do a project in for the first time?

I would love to do something in New York and Chicago. Also London. We have projects which are just starting in London, but there's more ambition. However, I always say we are specialists in second cities over capitals.

In second cities?

Second cities like Rotterdam, where I live. Amsterdam is the first city, and Rotterdam is the second city. London is a first city, while Birmingham and Manchester are second cities, which is where our newest library opened and where our UK office is located. What I like about second cities is that they're places where what you
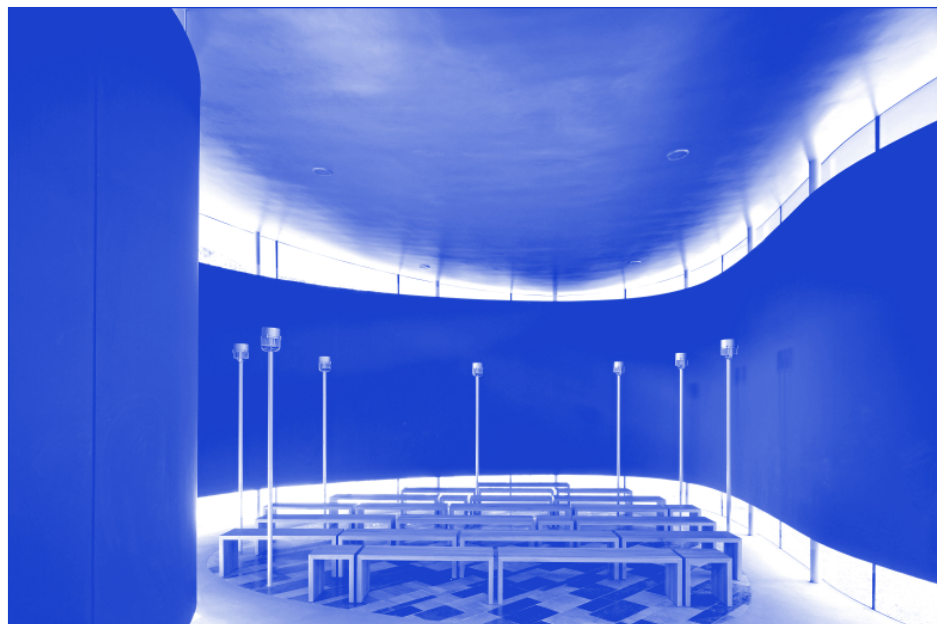
Photography: Christian Richters.

St. Mary of the Angels Chapel.

do makes a palpable difference. In Birmingham, what we did really mattered; we really helped to start to change the cultural identity of the city. Also it's what we're doing now with the new engineering campus for the University of Manchester. There's the feeling that our cultural centre in Kaohsiung City matters, too. It's not yet open but the excitement is building.

You recently won the *AJ*'s Women in Architecture Award. First of all, is the whole idea of 'Women in Architecture' slightly condescending?

To me, honestly, I never spoke about being a woman in architecture until I was 50, and then I said, "okay—I am a woman." I accepted the *AJ*'s award to do my part in putting women in architecture into perspective. Women architects certainly have it more difficult than males. I felt that it was important to support the research that the *AJ* did.

In your acceptance speech you stated, "I feel privileged to be a woman, to be a mother and to be an architect, which was not always an easy combination. […] I strongly believe that architecture is about teamwork, about being visionary and supportive at the same time. Women are especially good at that." I feel like there's more you can say to that; what do females bring to the table that may not come as naturally to a man?

Nothing really! In our office about 40% of the team are females; it is totally not an issue being a male or a female. But there is a difference when you run your own practice. I can tell you—it really means working seven days a week, 16 hours a day, 365 days a year. And to combine that with having three children —and all that that entails—is a challenge, because I want to be a good mother.

I think that women should be made more visible. But is attempting to visibilise the female architect by putting her in the spotlight truly breaking more boundaries between men and women than it is enforcing on them?

That is why I never talk of being a woman myself; I understand this issue, which is partially why I never wanted to talk about it, but I also feel that I've achieved quite a lot and so it's part of my responsibility to be positive and give something back. For a lot of female architects I am a sort of role model for them—or at least that is what they tell me.

In regards to the architectural field, is Mecanoo positioned where you want it to be?

I am very happy with the office. I don't want it growing for the sake of growth, I just want to have my symphony orchestra. We're able to work very close

to each other with this size. I think we are both big enough and still small enough to be Mecanoo.

Do you feel that in the next coming years you're really going to show the world what Mecanoo can do and what it is?

Yeah. I make unforgettable spaces. And why not?

{ *she pauses in contemplation* }
You can already see it. I think actually it's about to go quite big—especially this year, but you never know what can happen. It also depends on the economy and of having clients who want you. Additionally, several years ago it became very clear that to be creative you need good organisation. We now have that, and so I can totally focus on the visionary part; on the creative part. I don't know what will happen. But we are prepared for big things.◇

Photography: Yoranda Kassanou.

Pushing Forward

FEELING A SENSE OF DUTY, CLAIRVOYANCE SPONSORS HLM ARCHITECTS GIVE THEIR TAKE ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN THE UK

Profile by HLM Architects
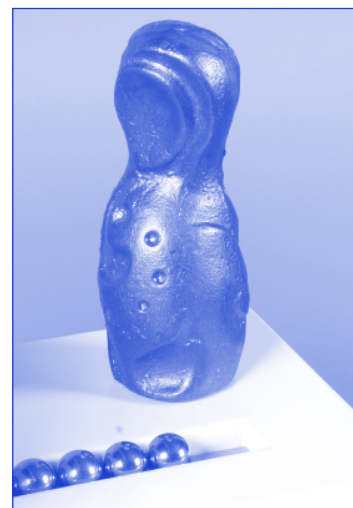
Doll House by HLM

The idea of teaching and training architects through apprenticeships is not a new one but one which has been bandied about again in recent years, particularly in response to the staggering increase in tuition fees. This increase has brought about fresh scrutiny over the quality and content of architectural degrees and diplomas, with RIBA and the profession at large interrogating and questioning the skills and abilities of those leaving the university environment.

In 2012, the *Architectural Journal* published a series of essays entitled *The Big Rethink*, in which Peter Buchanan discusses the problems currently faced within architectural education and, unsurprisingly, concludes with the statement that there is a need for a dramatic shift in architectural pedagogy. The dip in numbers caused by hiked fees has seemingly balanced out, as students are once again flocking to study architecture. And yet we haven't seen much of a change in the nature or content of the courses; we are still finding graduates coming out of universities with architectural qualifications, while not having the necessary basic skills to practice within the profession. It apparently falls on the profession to fill in these gaps, before then mentoring and developing these budding architects into fully-fledged architects.

While HLM is working to push and progress ourselves as a practice with a social agenda, we are extremely concerned with developing individuals—working to push each person so that they progress their careers along whichever path they choose. As a practice that believes in design autonomy, project architects are able to progress their own architectural investigation, allowing them the freedom to grow with the support of surrounding design and technical experience. There is a particular focus with mentoring and training Part 1 and Part 2 graduates within project teams, actively challenging them and providing opportunities to take greater ownership of their work and develop ahead of Part 2 and Part 3, rather than only perform the tedious and repetitive tasks they're sometimes consigned to.

When HLM were invited—alongside 19 other architects—to re-conceptualise a doll's house for the 21st Century, we used this as an opportunity to really push the creativity and skills of an extremely energetic and ambitious Part 1 graduate. The brief was left completely open, with the only directions being the size of the base and the premise that the house must be designed and built for a child with a disability. Discussing the project within the office brought up many ideas and concepts, but the more people that were involved, the more watered down the ideas became. The brief cited the doll's house Edward Luytens built for Queen Mary in the 19th Century as a symbol of true collaboration. When one of the Part 1 graduates suggested the idea of abstracting, translating and reconfiguring the programme of the Luytens house into a 21st Century Doll's House as a starting point, he was given the opportunity to run with the project and develop the idea and concept into a product.

What started out as a concept for a doll's house, soon translated into an interesting comment on cities through an interactive tower for visually impaired children that represented both the urban and suburban house; a series of domestic spaces or urban events linked together by movement routes. While the movement routes are represented through rough industrial negative spaces that speak of the underground, trains and streets, the event spaces are crafted as solid boxes which each contain a different set of architectural elements all created from differing materials.

Working with an artist to design and manufacture dolls for the house, a foundry in Birmingham to cast the metal elements, a carpenter to build the complex marble-machine tower and a very stringent budget and programme, meant working as a team to push the vision forward and create a successful end-product. This provided very clear insight into the world of architecture that many people don't see until later in their careers. While we may still be some time away from actual apprenticeship programmes becoming more mainstream and accepted, it is extremely uplifting to see more practices spending time and resources actively training and developing young architects and helping bridge the rather extensive gaps within the Part 1, 2 and 3 system.◇
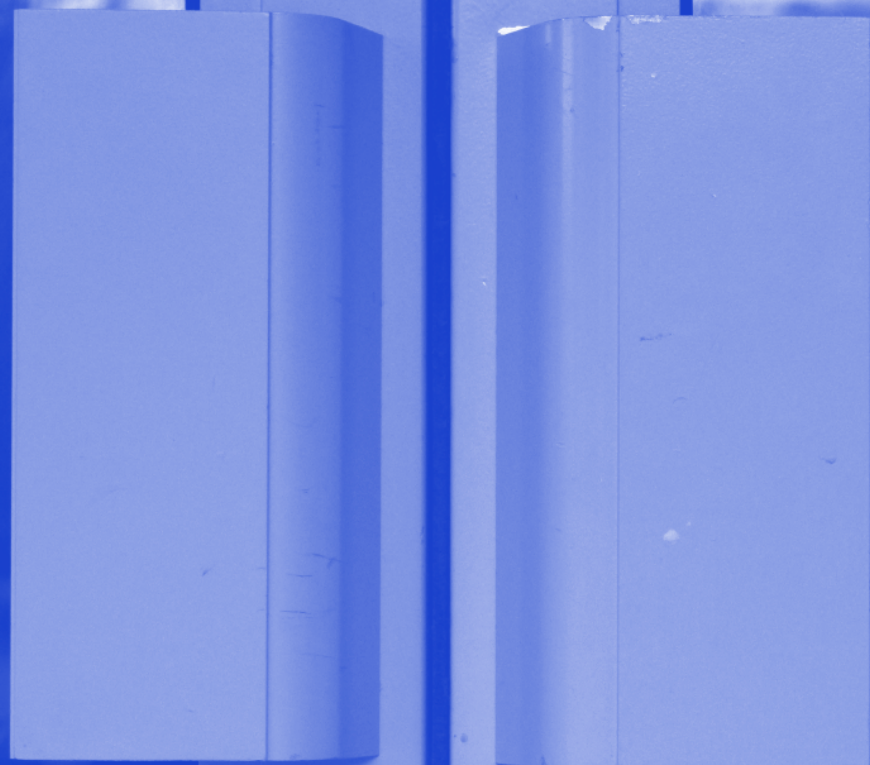
Prepare the drumroll, draw the curtains and *voilá*!

Welcome to The Exhibition Space. In its pages you'll find a selection of conversations, musings and designs that either interpret the future or allude to the past, each with their very own clairvoyant portrayal. Now, dear reader, grab a drink and let your fingers do the walking. As you flick through each page, this issue's Exhibition will gradually take you on a reflective journey of how our days past can impact our years to come.

We'll begin with a visit to Disney and NASA, highlighting the different ways in which the future can be foreseen and approached. Shortly after, you'll come across a familiar face: in a conversation with Daniel Libeskind we dissect the link between memory and prediction in the design process, while also discussing how following one's intuition, forging individual paths and a little bit of luck can lead to a formidable outcome.

A pit stop in the Israeli desert peruses the role of God as a clairvoyant architect through the architecture of the Tabernacle. But don't worry, we won't keep you under the scorching heat for too long. At the intersection between the sensorial and the divine, take a turn towards an exploration on the uncertainties of designing futures due to our inability to predict every variable.

No discussion on clairvoyance would be complete without addressing the mysteries of the future and how chaos can ensue from them. If you've ever seen a sci-fi film you know how, as a species, people can obsess over perceptions —or perhaps misperceptions—of what the future will bring, leaving entire societies feeling uneasy and at times inclining them to take action. For some, like the Prepping Movement of NYC, impending doom is not simply a depiction on the silver screen but a prognosis that they'll prepare for at all costs. Similarly, you'll read about a group of researchers who are doing their part to make sure that social chaos can be avoided, whether by bettering the design of cities or by sending police forces to the locations of riot outbreaks before they even happen.

And as you leave the Exhibition, partake in a debate on whether the architect's gift of clairvoyance may or may not be clouded by their own ambitions and agendas, while also discussing architectural representations of the male—errr —ego. What a shame Freud's no longer with us!

Intrigued, dear reader? Then by all means proceed inside. This Exhibition is now open.

Approaches to Tomorrow

BETWEEN NASA AND DISNEY

Words and Photography by Patch Dobson-Pérez

At the expense of sounding like a kid, last November I went to Disney World, a place in which the future is displayed as a prediction. Disney World invites us to enter a world of infantile fantasy in which brushed metal and neon-purple fragments of a 'world-to-be' surround us. However, they are only (once impressive) façades, and in 2014 they express the unsurprising inaccuracy of Disney's predictions. By contrast, a visit down the road to the Kennedy Space Centre displays the *actors* of clairvoyance. Upon arrival, I entered through the Rocket Garden, where towering technological relics enforce the magnitude of the journey through the making of history which we're witnessing. These were not façades; they were inhabitable, meticulously constructed evidence of humanity surpassing its current capabilities and entering the unknown. NASA were actually creating the future, as opposed to only predicting and showcasing it.

Amidst the joyfully-awakened childhood memories and harrowing insulin-needle disposal bins every 50 metres (diabetes is rife among the Disney World demographic), I couldn't help but think about the temporal context of Disney World's inception. The 27,258 acres of land began to be developed in the 1960s, at a time when the Russian-American space race was already in full throttle. Technology was advancing at a faster rate than ever before and the populous was genuinely excited by the almost weekly displays of tangible progress.

Walt Disney, it seems, was also a technophile, excited by invention's potential, and instead of simply duplicating the already-existing Disneyland (in California), his dream was to create an experimental model community of the future. He named it Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT), also known as Progress City. He envisioned it as a "working city with commercial and residential areas that also continued to showcase and test new ideas and concepts for urban living." When Disney died in 1966, the idea was abandoned and EPCOT became another of the Disney theme parks.

Disney's 'gift' of clairvoyance extends further into the theme park however, with a themed area called 'Tomorrowland'. Tomorrowland was not designed as a community but was still a celebration of the fast-approaching technologies of tomorrow and "an opportunity to participate in adventures that are a living blueprint of our future," according to Walt Disney. The decor of this area has changed over the years to match popular science fiction of the time. In the same way that Fritz Lang's speculative masterpiece *Metropolis* turned out to be a much closer aesthetic prediction to the High-Tech architectural movement of today than Le Corbusier's Modular system from the same time period, the way in which 'tomorrow' was envisioned relied heavily on topical popular culture. Though there have been entire refurbishments of the area, fragments of Jules Verne, Steampunk and Flash Gordon can be seeing coexisting peacefully, like a catalogue of human foresight, coyly correcting itself as time goes on.

Ironically enough, across from Tomorrowland is Frontierland. On the face of it this is merely an ersatz representation of the US Western Frontier, but when juxtaposed with its futurist mirror-image, the human lust for exploration becomes strikingly obvious. One day we conquer the Wild West, the next the moon.

Disney said, "Tomorrow can be a wonderful age. Our scientists today are opening the doors of the Space Age to achievements that will benefit our children and generations to come." The space fever at the time, coupled with Disney's evident interest in technology and society of the future, caused him to seek the help of perhaps the most obvious advisor on the topic: Wernher von Braun. Disney was right to consult this aerospace engineer and space architect on the design of this new world.

> ## "Walt Disney, was also a technophile, his dream was to create an experimental model community of the future."

In the 1940s, von Braun had already been involved with the design of the Nazi V2 rockets, part of Hitler's plan for a 1000 Year Reich—a Tomorrowland of sorts.

Disney's is a world of playful spectatorial predictions, holding the future at arm's length. However, at the same time, only an hour's drive away, in Cape Canaveral, the ubiquitous von Braun and NASA's team of 'scientific psychics' were actually *acting out* these predictions, and flying them out of the earth's atmosphere. They were crossing from Frontierland to Tomorrowland; they had begun to *act* outside of our Earthly domain.

Future's Tense

AN UNGUESSABLE TRANSACTION

Words by Kyle Branchesi and Shane Reiner-Roth

The level of innovation we've achieved comes at a cost, however. Progress requires failure, and the Kennedy Space Centre's history embodies this poignantly. Wes Jones' polished black Space Mirror Memorial was designed to mechanically follow the path of the sun and illuminate the names of the 24 astronauts who've given their lives in various US space expeditions pursuing the unknown. The main question the memorial raises for me is: was it worth it? The rusting remnants of Launch Complex 34 at Cape Canaveral serve as a reminder that we never get it right the first time and that sacrifices are often made. On this site, in 1967, the three members of the Apollo 1 crew burned to death in their cockpit during a launch simulation. Their careers came at a time of rapid change and 'progress', and their Command Module had taken a leap in design size and complexity since the previous model.

Was this a case of NASA biting off more than it could chew in the frantic race to beat the USSR to the Moon? In a story reminiscent of Icarus falling to his death on account of his father's creative daring, I wonder where one is to draw the line when it comes to quantifying the justification of risk. Of course, progress is intrinsically admirable, but I wonder if the piles of high-tech corpses in landfills around

the world stand as triumphant monuments or as omens that plead with us to *slow down.*

We are not strangers to disaster, in a world where the television informs us of an enormous oil-spill in the Pacific, or of the "rigorously-tested safety protocols" of a nuclear power station failing and contaminating the area for many decades, we seem desensitised to it. We do not heed these catastrophic warnings, but instead we opt to maintain the strange equilibrium between production and consumption. In fact, the very system we are a part of is propelled by the certainty that from month to month, a new 'technology' (be it an iPhone or a Lamborghini) will emerge—one step closer to 'perfection'—and condemn its predecessor to its forgotten place in the past as 'dead-tech'. Things are not built to last, and they become as comfortably discarded as the one-use NASA rocket boosters floating down into their watery grave. In the pursuit of progress we've become irresponsible, and it seems as if we are now accelerating entropy, relentlessly using whatever resources we can to keep enacting our own clairvoyance.

Contemporarily, humanity can be categorised as a 'high-risk' species, where we tend to embrace the gamble over precaution. We blindly take from the earth, confident that geo-engineering

will paper over the cracks. I, for one, don't want to rely on the plan B of a solar-shield or a space colony when our principal responsibility lies beneath our feet. What we need is a slight change of pace, a more measured mindset. We have a faith in progress, always assuming that the knowledge of tomorrow will correct the mistakes of yesterday and today. It is acceptable for us to continue our valiant ascension and consciously perpetuate evolution, but perhaps with a more calculating mentality, as well as looking up at the sky and wanting *more,* we cannot neglect the maintenance of what we already have. The worry is that in the race to the top, the bottom of the ladder fades out of view and there's less concern about who's climbing up behind you, or more importantly, what's holding it up.

Disney didn't get us to the moon, but I'm sure 24 people didn't die building a roller coaster. In a world where ambition and innovation are the norm, we can learn to balance the playful innocence and naivety of Disney and the completely necessary daring pragmatism of NASA. Perhaps it's worth pondering whether it's time to take a calm breath and apply some (speculative) clairvoyant means to our (physical) clairvoyant ends. ◇

When describing the potential qualities of their work, architects typically prefer the future tense (it *will be* 1776 feet tall, they *are going to* incorporate the principle of mass-production…). Models and drawings allow the architect to assume a unique position of foresight, but these presentation tools would seem to amount to little without the accompaniment of a language that argues for their full size versions in some distant future.

While architectural presentation has historically used the future tense, writing has famously practiced the opposite, with the past tense (Mr. Bloom looked upon his sigh, glowing wine on his palate lingered swallowed…). This method conveys realism by describing a carefully chosen sequence of events, leading to either the present or alternate present. Even *The Time Machine*, a book that travels roughly 30 million years ahead of our own time, presents its story from the empiricism of a restful conclusion. The past tense is cool, calm, and collected; the future tense appears convoluted and shows signs of insecurity.

Writing rarely makes promises about the future, and at most ruminates over possibilities. Yet Georges Perec is a rare example of a writer that writes like an architect speaks. Guiding with almost as many "will be's" and "going to's" as an architect's proposal for a tower and its considered influence over a neighborhood. His writing on 'The Page' treats three half spreads like a developer treats land, constantly anticipating the future as it appears on the very next sentence. His words seem to be the masters of their own fate, but this was only possible when he could oversee their treatment on the final editing board. Otherwise, when trying to satisfy a second party, writing about architecture takes as much clairvoyance as it does to produce it.

In submitting these words, the mix of vision and unease that comes with the future tense will also be applied: I can only guess how this writing will occupy the spread it will be assigned to, or if the very piece of paper this is written on has another author's writing on the other side, possibly contradicting my own. This text is currently in one column a little under

Photography: TALL
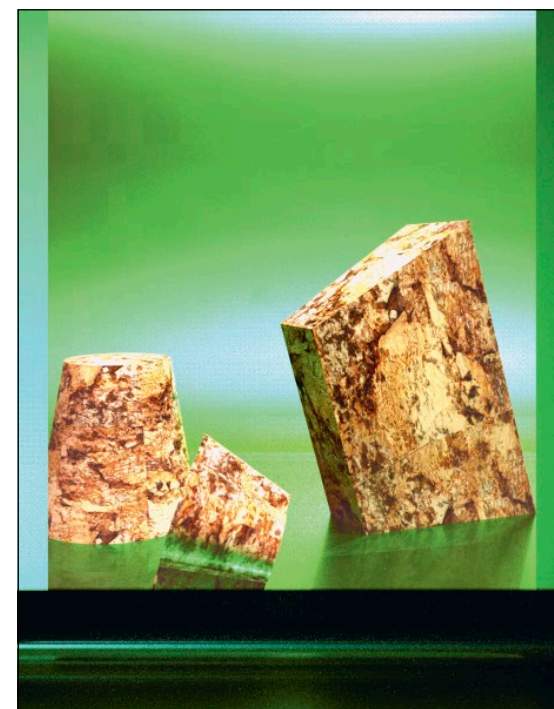
seven inches wide, but elsewhere it might be broken into two, one larger than the other (perhaps the break will start with 'writing rarely makes promises…'). And as for the accompanying image, I can't be sure that it will maintain the saturation level visible on the computer screen, let alone the correct sizing or proportions. Any alteration, as it goes from one pair of hands to another, could either strengthen its message or place it in jeopardy.

An unguessable transaction between parties is not unique to architecture, but, with the exception of a writer like Perec, the use of the future tense as a coping strategy might be. Those involved must know that a place can be a different place within the time a building is planned and a plan is built, yet a more considerate use of our inherited tense will make the future seem clearer. ◇

One of a Libeskind

Illustration by Kaiser Ulla

How related is an architect's sense of clairvoyance to an esteem for the past? A conversation with Daniel Libeskind, touching on the importance of memory alongside optimistic predictions, attests that whether you love him or loathe him, Libeskind's in a league all of his own.

Words by Regner Ramos

If you haven't heard of Daniel Libeskind, chances are you've been living under a rock, a huge, angular, concrete and steel-plated rock. The Polish-born architect has taken the design world by storm for over two decades with a successful practice that *seems* to have blossomed over night. In 1988, after having worked in academia for 16 years, Libeskind entered an architectural competition to design and build the Jewish Museum Berlin. The winning of that commission paved the way for the formation of Studio Daniel Libeskind, his architectural practice, and for the massive amount of criticism as well as praise that ensued. Now, not having ever heard his name is like not having heard of a tiny, modest place called Manhattan; after all, at this point the two are nearly synonymous—for architecture aficionados at least. As the master planner for the new World Trade Centre at Ground Zero, his design has been as controversial as it's been anticipated and, because of the nature of the site, the media has had their eyes on it since day one. I confess that I was living under this rock up until 2008, when in one of my undergraduate courses we watched CNN's 'Daniel Libeskind Documentary' focusing on his Denver Art Museum. More than the visually strong presence of his architecture and the abundance of cold materials like glass, concrete and steel, what struck me most about Libeskind was something completely unexpected especially among architects of his ranks: his smile.

Today, I'm scoping out the lobby and courtyard of London's Savoy Hotel, attempting to find a suitable place to talk to Mr. Libeskind, when a woman wearing a green silk, Japanese-inspired blouse with bright pink sleeves, catches my attention. Her name is Nina Libeskind, and she's far more than Daniel's wife of 46 years; she's also his business partner and the COO of their practice. Upon exchanging hellos, we decide on a spot to conduct the interview: a pair of high-back chairs with brass studs lining the tanned leather, placed next to the glass wall that separates the lobby from the garden/courtyard will do the trick. Nina kindly sits with me as we wait for her husband and partner to finalise a business-related phone call, and she confesses that they've been on a whirlwind of flights in just one week, making appearances and travelling for business. London is their final stop before the couple flies to Italy to meet up with their three children.

"I always knew he was special, his professors and peers held him in high-esteem, and I knew there was something about him," she tells me after I ask if she was living the life she always envisioned. "But I thought I was marrying a quiet academic!" The seemingly passive life alongside her academia-oriented husband would end up with a notable practice with—among many designed products—39 architectural projects, 26 of which have already been built. But our conversation is suddenly brought to a halt as

Nina looks over my shoulder and enthusiastically exclaims, "Hey!" It was Daniel. "I've ordered myself a coke with lemon," she says. "So I'm bestowing it upon you. Have fun!" As she gives him a kiss and walks out, Mr. Libeskind and I exchange beaming smiles, banter and introductions, which fostered a relaxed, friendly ambiance that contrasted highly with how stony some interviews can be. Perhaps I got a bit too comfortable complimenting his smile and how unfeigned it was. "No, no, what you see is what you get," he tells me. "A lot of architects are very self-impressed, but you have to be humble!"

And indeed humble he's got to be; as much as he's been awarded and praised, Libeskind's work has also been highly criticised and questioned. Perhaps some of this has to do with the fact that he had a career as an architectural theorist and professor before making the jump into practice with his own firm, unlike so many architects who dive in to practices as soon as they graduate. After receiving his undergraduate degree from the Cooper Union and his post-graduate degree from the University of Essex, Libeskind worked for Richard Meier and Peter Eisenman, resigning almost immediately. For Libeskind, the path to success was non-linear. His approach to architectural practice contested the status quo, making time his ally, not his foe. And so, at the age of 52, construction was finalised on his very first building. The Jewish Museum

Berlin catapulted Studio Daniel Libeskind to astronomical heights, throwing the Libeskind name in the public eye and placing its reputation amongst the ranks of the most well-known practices of our time.

✦

First you were an academic and then you became a practitioner. How is Studio Daniel Libeskind's work different from other architecture practices because of this?

You have to study before you can practice. It's good preparation, and it took me a long time to get from my drawings to my first building; I was more than 50 years old when I built my first building! But you have to be patient and love what you do. I think of architecture totally differently from others.

I followed a strange path. According to the Greeks, the first part of life should be active, the second half should be the reflection on what you've done; I did it the other way round. If you forge your own path it'll certainly lead you to other places. I've always thought that the gurus of business say you have to have a goal. I have the opposite idea. Don't have any goals, instead have a path and make sure you're not swayed from the path. It's going to take you somewhere, but be true to yourself.

I think that's really important, to be able to adapt to what's thrown your way, because if you're focused on one thing…

…On one goal, you'll…

…be absolutely lost if or when that path is blocked!

I remember Emily Dickinson's beautiful line of poetry, "Success is counted sweetest by those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar requires sorest need." Ah, so beautiful!

{I chuckle as Daniel lets out a loud laugh}

You mention that you have a different way of thinking about architecture. Tell me more about that.

I believe that architecture is grounded in the humanities and the liberal arts. Of course it has a scientific basis, you have to have mathematics and science. But you also need literature, dance, music, and the

Jewish Museum Berlin.

All photographs except on p. 29 courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind.

mother of the muses is memory. How clever were people in the past? They understood it better than we do! The mother of all these things is to remember. Humanistic disciplines have been very much discredited by a lot of people in the 20th Century, when they thought technology would take over, and these things weren't necessary to move forward.

Funny you should mention music, as a past musical virtuoso, you were very much a performer. Do you enjoy having an audience's attention? With such a distinctive style and brand, is your architecture your new performance?

It's true, you're right! Architecture is a performance. If a building performs well it's just like a musical, but it's a lasting performance. Unlike a symphonic work performed in a hall, which ends two hours later. A piece of architecture has to stay there.

To do music you have to work very hard. You have to practice every day. Every note is precise; it can't even be off by a single vibration otherwise you'd be playing the wrong note. But at the same time, you can play all these notes correctly yet perform no music. Music needs an emotional component. There are a lot of similarities between what I did as a musician and what I do now. I think only I changed instruments! Drawings are a code, just like musical notes. They're composed of lines and points of meanings. Whatever the instrument, these codes have to be readable to somebody who's able to interpret them in their own way and perform them according to your accurate notation. Even as a master planner I'm not the one building. I'm more of a conductor of a huge performance —which many people have to interpret according to the plan. There are very,

Archipelago 21 master plan, Seoul.

very close similarities between architecture and music. Plus, music's ultimately not just for the mind, it's for the soul. I mean, if it doesn't touch you, it was then just a bunch of notes played.

Two of your biggest projects thus far have been the Ground Zero master plan in New York City and the Archipelago 21 master plan in Seoul. What do you imagine will be the biggest difference in the way people will inhabit each design?

Well, they are site-specific projects. You can't impose the same project on another place. I've always found it strange that some people take a plan of one city and go to the desert and try to impose the plan there. You have to derive a city's design from its own sense of place and history, so I think the projects are very different. I think the Korean project is really about Seoul—a 700 year old city. The project's

located in the centre, where railway lines used to be. It's a very different project from Ground Zero, which is also a very specific project with a very specific programme. **What are your hopes for them?**

That they will thrive by enlivening people's experiences. My hopes are that they'll contribute in a good way, make people think, make people feel something and that will make people enjoy being there.

You've had quite a successful career. To this day, which project has given you the biggest sense of satisfaction?

Well the fact that I was able to build my first building, the Jewish Museum Berlin, allowed me to build other buildings. To me that was, "Wow what a breakthrough!" Otherwise, I might have never had that chance if it hadn't been for the competition. The subsequent work you do relates to that first thing that you did, it sets you on a certain path.

Then would you say that's the project that has shaped you the most?

Definitely! It taught me to be patient, it taught me not to do too many things and not to run with the crowds.

I want to talk about your views on pessimism in architecture and critique, because a few years ago you said that architecture can't attract a cynic. To me, from our very first experiences in

"The Jewish Museum taught me to be patient, it taught me not to do too many things and not to run with the crowds."

architecture school, the profession seems quite cynical! Have your views changed, or do you still believe that even through the impending cynicism, architects are optimists?

I think *true* architects are optimists! There are architects who might be cynics, who may even run successful practices. But I think you have to be authentically optimistic and believe in the future. Every time you do architecture it's a projection of something; it's not an instant gratification. Some projects may take ten years or more! It's a long term process, and it's even longer when you consider that art itself cannot be judged in its own time. Look at who we consider to be important architects of the 20th Century, for instance.

You're of the belief that architecture is about memory. I think that although memory is part of it, architecture's a discipline that's primarily driven by predictions and speculations—and it's terribly complicated. To design a building by predicting a way people will inhabit it, which will in turn be affected by their past experiences

The Exhibition Space   26   LOBBY № 2   LOBBY № 2   27   The Exhibition Space

and memories. **How do you design a physical, unchanging space with so many unknown variables?**

First of all memories don't just come from some private recollections. There's a whole tradition of how important the memory of a city is, so it's not just about the private recollections and reflections. I do consider memory a ground of architecture in many ways because

"Architecture is an ethical obligation. It's about people. It's about context, fairness and about justice."

without memory you couldn't really have a future—without knowing where you've been, who you are. You can't have a city with a kind of Alzheimers condition, operating as an anonymous non-entity. In truth you're right. One has to be able to harness that memory and also be able to put it forward into new constructive uses—especially in architecture—because architecture is about laying foundations for new things. It's a privileged field because it deals with memory—not in a sentimental way, not in a metaphorical way—but by living out that memory, which is the future. You have to really put your head deep into the ground and listen to the voices that are whispering to you. You have to see things that are difficult to see. You have to see the exceptional things in a site.

You once said that architecture has to evolve on the basis of a powerful idea. Now, this goes without saying, but you're no stranger to design competitions where hundreds of firms participate, each convinced that their idea is the adequate solution, and it's no secret that the

architecture discipline is a battle-ground for rogue egos! Talk to me about where conviction in one's idea crosses the line into narcissism.

I'm a great critic of my work. But you should do what you believe in; even if you lose a competition you should lose it in the right way, and that's with your own ideas rather than trying to win because you want to have the job. I don't want to lose, I want to win. But I've never entered a competition simply to win it. I want to win because I believe in it.

So let's talk about pride and ego. Have you witnessed cases where an architect's ego has breached ethical behaviour?

Oh yeah. Thousands of times in countless buildings in countless cities!

Well you know that several months ago the architecture field underwent a discussion about the ethical obligations of architects regarding the welfare of construction workers. Where do you stand on that?

For my first building in China, the first thing on my list was to make the site safe. How do you assure that no one gets injured on this site? That's not easy for a country that doesn't have any of these laws, but I made sure that was number one. So I must say, I think architecture is an ethical obligation. It's about people. It's about context, fairness and about justice. Without it it's just, to me, something totally different from architecture. If I found out that the construction of one of my buildings was endangering people's safety, I would not work on those projects. Furthermore, I don't want my projects to be a source for people to be exploited, people whose safety is compromised and whose lives are in danger or could be hurt. I would rather do nothing in architecture than do that.

You often make spiritual allusions when speaking about the architecture discipline, using phrases like "aura of the building" and "the sacred nature of the site", when you speak about Ground Zero, for instance. To what degree do you see architecture as something mystical?

That's a great question. Architecture has to be a very empirical art; it is based on something far deeper. I know that the words 'spiritual' and 'mystical' have been

discredited and people would think I'm a lunatic for saying that these words mean something. But I think there is more to it. Shakespeare, one of the smartest people who ever lived, in *Hamlet*, writes, "There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Wow! I think that's a good check on the vanity and on the hubris of people, not just of architects. And maybe that's the part where we call it mystical. There's more to life than what appears to architects.

From our early formational years, architects are taught to design based on predictions. Our designs are rooted on speculation of where and how a user will engage with the space, how they'll move through it, how and where they'll interact with others, how they'll feel, and how they'll inhabit it. But as I mentioned, these are mere predictions. So if we design based on uncertain, intuitive predictions, and these ideas then mould our built environment, we must begin to wonder, are our architectures the solution or the problem? How much of our optimistic prophecies to help society end up creating social and ecological nightmares?

You can't be a prophet in architecture, you have to be an architect. To do architecture you have to be very practical, very pragmatic, but architecture involves another art, which is the civic idea incorporating tradition and history. One has to be able to master these in some way without making a fool out of oneself.

Different kind of projects create different kinds of moods; they bring a different kind of spirit. I don't think every project has to be loved. Sometimes it takes a long time to fall in love. Other times a project can be something that doesn't initially meet your expectations. Look at the Eiffel Tower. All the greatest writers, musicians, philosophers in France—Goethe, Maupassant, Degas—wrote a manifesto take it down. 'Please take down this ugly thing, we don't want it in our city'. How lucky that they didn't manage because the Eiffel Tower is now France. This crazy invention is now Paris. So you have to let things brew in architecture, let time tell you where it goes.

World Trade Center at Ground Zero, New York City.

Do you believe in epiphanies?

I wouldn't design without an epiphany. I wouldn't touch a single building without one, and I've given up some buildings because of it. You have to have an epiphany. An epiphany is not just a eureka moment, because you can't wait for a revelation to come. You have to work hard, and something has to happen between you and this project. It suddenly transforms your idea. It's been the case that I've worked on a project with a fantastic team after a long period and ended up saying, "Just forget it. Drop all of it. I just realised that we're on the completely wrong track."

{*I laugh*}

I don't call them mystical revelations, but you have to have a moment of something that strikes you. That's the most difficult thing to comprehend, because it's your regular job. You don't need to have a revelation to be a doctor, lawyer,

dentist, accountant or even a professor, but you need to have some moment of 'inspiration', let's call it, to build a building, write a piece of music, write a beautiful book, make a film or choreograph a dance. There's got to be a passionate moment of intensity that somehow breaks through something, enabling you to see things afresh. And it should be something fantastic that you're excited about. Without that moment you're just a hack.

And once the building is completed, how does the outcome compare to what you 'predicted'?

It's an adventure. It's never just a predictive thing. You have to go with it all the way, which sometimes involves critics and colleagues. That's where the vulnerability lies. When I designed the Jewish Museum—my first building —every famous critic, the famous

historians and architects were all saying how horrible the building was, that it couldn't work, that if it got built nobody would go see it. Before I even started building it, there was an entire issue of a German magazine full of famous people talking about it!

{*We laugh*}

And I read it, and I said, "Well I think they're wrong. People will come." When

"I wouldn't design without an epiphany. Without that moment you're just a hack."

I designed that museum my client, the Senate of Berlin, said, "Mr Libeskind, no more than 30,000 people will come to this building per year." And I said, "I believe more people will be interested." He responded, "No, sorry. Build a mechanical and heating ventilation system for 30,000 people." A few years later I had to rip out the entire mechanical system because hundreds of thousands—and by now many millions—have come to this museum. So they had to reinvest, make a whole new mechanical and air conditioning system. One should never be too contemptuous of buildings that don't look like the other buildings that are being built.

You've previously expressed that architecture's intended for future generations, which is why some of the greatest architectural works acquire value through the passing of time. But do you think the designers of these timeless buildings, such as the Eiffel Tower, Santa Maria de Fiore, the Pantheon, had a clear vision about what these buildings would do for their cities? What I mean to say is, do you think the buildings' historical/social success were due to the architects' accurate predictions or do you think it was just a matter of luck?

{*He laughs loudly*}

18.36.54 House, Connecticut.

Great question! I don't think it was by chance. I mean we know how controversial buildings were that we now love. There's always controversy because it's a public art, and I think it's not by chance that these things emerge from what they are. Look I'll give you the best example, my favourite one. When Picasso painted the famous portrait of Gertrude Stein, which is now in the Metropolitan Museum, Stein turned to him and said, "You know, Mr. Picasso, it's a very nice painting, but it doesn't look like me." You know what he said? "Don't worry; it will." And sure enough, 100 years later it looks like Gertrude Stein. That's the *only* Gertrude Stein! Forget the photos; *that* is Gertrude Stein! That's the power of art. **At a lecture at NYIT last year, you spoke about your first house commission, the house in Connecticut, and what grabbed my attention was that you said that one of the great things about that house is that you didn't need to convince large amounts of politicians or other influential entities who are present in city master plans for instance. I'm going to ask you to let us peek**

behind the curtains, how do you convince your many clients? What tactics do you use? How much of it is facts and statistics and how much of it is visuals, drawings and other forms of graphic seductions? How does Daniel Libeskind's gift of clairvoyance convince those who seek him?

You have to be an advocate for your projects. I don't do slick presentations. I don't try to *wow* them with animations and with great, wowing renderings, even though that's kind of the way of the world right now. I don't try to do something fake. I try to do what I believe is good! Now that doesn't always succeed! I have to be honest, very often you're rejected. You think 'Did I do the right thing? Or should I really harness all these slick materials and give them the print out of all the economic benefits of the project?' Maybe I'm old fashioned in that way, but I think you have to be yourself and have clients that believe in you.

I'm such a lucky person really, I have to make that clear. I've got projects in South America, Asia, Europe and the United States. I'm a very lucky person!

It's not all about working hard. Luck has to be a part of it! I've also had a chance to work with fantastic people in my office, who are really creative and fantastic young architects. Also, I would never be able to build anything without my wife, Nina, who is my partner. She is not the woman *behind* me but the woman *beside* me. I would never have any idea how to run an office if she was not the person who did it. So how lucky can I be? That's good luck. ◇

The Tabernacle

SENSES AND SYSTEMS

Words by Joshua Broomer and
Louise Bjørnskov Schmidt

Sacred architecture is often known for its grand spaces of light and material, suggestively bringing us, as in the spiritual mind, closer to the heavens and the realm of the non-physical. Many of us will now experience the grandest of religious buildings as tourists or wander into an empty church on a rainy Sunday, yet much sacred architecture finds its roots in bringing us comfort and enlightenment. Clarity of thought and a view beyond our ordinary surroundings is a core element that we can appreciate in great religious architecture, whether grand or small, and whether —in our often secular society—we are there to worship or not.

A strong foundation of this architecture comes from a key moment in the story in Monotheism: that of the Tabernacle in the book of Exodus. Unlike the great foci to religion, which formed core spaces within the fabric of modern day cities, the users of the Tabernacle were constantly on the move. Nevertheless the architecture of the Tabernacle still formed a core stronghold in its shifting settlements, displaying a different form of monument: that of procession, ritual and order.

From an outside perspective the Tabernacle seems nothing more than an enlarged tent, but it was an architecture of divine order, and remnants of its design are still at play in our current times. According to The Book of Exodus,
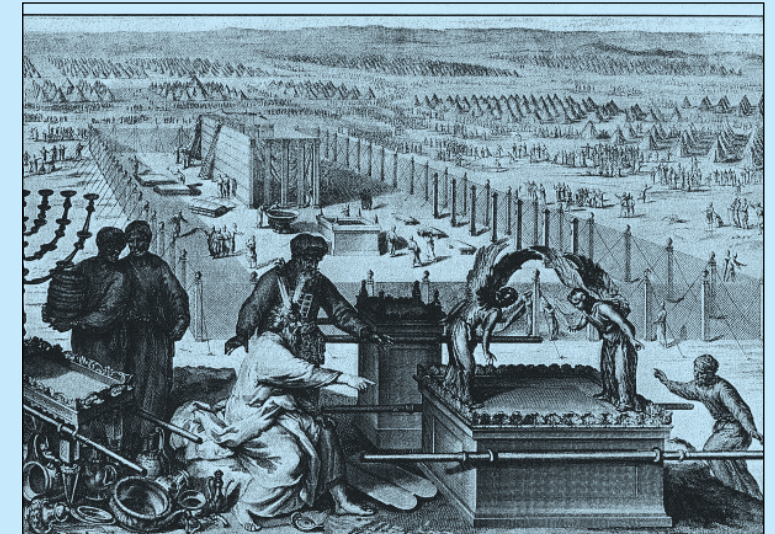
in the Old Testament, God took the role of the architect and gave precise detailed description on the construction of the Tabernacle to accompany the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness.

"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it."
Exodus 25:1–9

This initial idea, an absolute order —divine and unchangeable—may not be seen as desirable today (when adapt-ability is a key word in much contemporary architecture), but it was essential for the

effectiveness of the Tabernacle. It should also be noted that whilst the Tabernacle may not have adapted to specific user needs it was able to adapt to different locations through the clear vision of its architecture. Importantly, the passage states that this was an architecture in which the divine would "dwell" and therefore its treatment had to be one creating something beyond the ordinary. Vital to the design of the Tabernacle was a series of rituals to be set up and used with accurate instruction.

"They will thus make all that I have ordered, the Communion Tent, the Ark of the Covenant, the ark cover to go on it, all the utensils for the tent, the table and its utensils, the pure menorah and

all its utensils, the incense altar, the sacrificial altar and all its utensils, the washstand and its base, the packing cloths, the sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, the vestments that his sons wear to serve, the anointing oil, and the incense for the sanctuary."
Exodus 31:1–11

These specifications take up six chapters in The Bible and range from instructions of the Elements of the Tabernacle to its dimensions and materials. The book of Exodus even details how the curtain veils used to separate its spaces should be hung.

"This combination of Earthly and human elemental properties attest to an architecture which laid at the absolute core of a particular society."

The elements above not only gave a ritual order to the Tabernacle but, as described, they had specific sensory experiences.

First, one (a Priest) would enter through the gate on the Eastern side and pass the alter of burnt offerings. One would then use the Lavar (wash basin) to wash ones hands; this would be done in combination with particular prayers as an act of cleansing oneself before God. Following this, the person would enter into the 'tent' of the Tabernacle which was lit by candles, smelled of incense and featured a table of bread that could only be eaten in the Holy part of the tent. Finally, and past a veil, was the Holy of Holies: the space containing the Ark of the Covenant—a gold

plated acacia chest containing the Ten Commandments passed down to Moses at Mount Sinai.

This ritual gave an order for religious practice, while also using light, smell, touch, taste and spatial sequencing as part of the functions that were practiced. This use of experiences in light and procession are still part of the essential qualities of Churches, Synagogues and Mosques. Further to this some of the elements in the Tabernacle such as an Ark containing Holy Scriptures and a wash basin for ritualistic cleansing are still essential parts of any Synagogue.

The Tabernacle was also directed to the fundamental relationships of the cosmos: one would enter from the East of sunrise and would progress to the West of sunset. Additionally, Judaism uses the position of the Stars for the Hebrew Calendar. Therefore those using the Tabernacle would have used the position of the stars for its timing and orientation. This combination of Earthly and human elemental properties attest to an architecture which laid at the absolute core of a particular society.

Architecture reduced to its fundamental properties is not a subject reserved only for ancient books, it was also an active conversation in influential architectural discussions of more recent times. Examples of this include Archigram's 'Walking City', the architecture of a city that was able to move, and Cedric Price's adaptable 'Fun Palace': an architectural system allowing its users a structure that could change with use and time. With both projects the reduced elements of context and place are reconsidered and their adaptable architecture may seem contradictory to the absolute order of the Tabernacle. Yet, like the builders of the Tabernacle, they were able to keep their architecture whilst changing context. For the Walking City, the context is location, whilst for Price context was inclusive of time.

An architecture to suit a changing context is also at the core in the work of Superstudio, a group of radical thinkers who burst out of Florence in the 1960s. For them the changing context is grouped with a changing society, that of a hyper consumer society that they had become critical of. They called for 'a life without

objects' to reconsider our 'bare knowledge and experiences', 'ordered essence', and architecture as one of the few ways to realise 'cosmic order on earth', all in a reconsideration of 'the system of architecture'.

One of Superstudio's most well-known and controversial projects was their 1969 Continuous Monument, a massive blank gridded face monument unchanging in any circumstance. For the designers it embodied the world rendered "uniform by technology, culture and the other inevitable forms of imperialism". In a way, the tabernacle is both the continuous monument and its antithesis. It was continuously the same, no matter what site, and was monumental in its manner of practice—and perhaps in comparison to the other mobile structures around it. Yet, it is the resistor of cultural values being lost, it gave its users a clear sense of self in a time of anguish and uncertainty during their wandering through the desert.

The Tabernacle held within it the essential ordered placements for those using it to separate themselves from the lost world around them. It does this through order, ritual, sensual experiences and its own self purity. The Tabernacle was the instruction of order, from its structure to the furnishings it held. These elements have been passed down into many of the great and small religious buildings that surround us. What is interesting is that it is not necessarily the formal shapes of the Tabernacle that have survived or been reproduced, it is the structure of its practices and experiences aimed at a heightened state of being. On the other hand it holds relevance as an architecture that was able to face different contexts, whilst keeping the basis of its architecture and the practice of its society. Through the Tabernacle, it is not surprising that we find great experience, peace and clairvoyance, for it is an example of two vital strongholds in architecture: that of sensory experiences and a system for its users. ◇

THE FLOATING CATHEDRAL IN THE CITY OF SLEEP

TOWARDS INHABITABLE INFRASTRUCTURE
FOR THE PILGRIMS IN THE UK

A Project by Woojong Kim

When people think of medieval pilgrimage, usually 'the road to Santiago de Compostela' comes to mind. It's no wonder that these remarkable journeys and pilgrimage cathedrals offer exciting potential for transforming spatial qualities, but in general, the lack of architectural magnificence of local shrines has, in fact, resulted in indifference to them on behalf of architectural and art historians. In his book, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England,* renowned historian Ronald C. Finucane has made the point that most of what we know of medieval pilgrimage shrines comes from the collections of miracles that were recorded at them. Thus, pilgrimages and their cathedrals have an epic grandeur and a transformational potential that speak directly to impulses that are still felt by pious and adventuresome souls today.

The project 'City of Sleep' seeks to examine the spatial quality of the historic pilgrimage cathedrals, to then transform these into a habitable floating infrastructure at Minehead, UK. In line with this, the symbiotic relationship between historic pilgrimages and cathedrals within the historical context of Europe and England was first investigated through studying the concept and patterns of pilgrimages in the medieval period. The project also investigated the historical and contemporary precedents of floating structures to understand the principles of naval architecture. Specifically, the technological challenges of Kansai Airport, in Japan, and floating houses have offered clear evidence of shaping the whole structure of the floating cathedral under the aspects of heavy weather, tie differential, materials, buoyancy and stability. These investigations have been thoroughly applied to the project.

The process of constructing the main floating structure—which will accommodate pilgrims for meditation, living and cryopreservation—can be achieved with precast light concrete and by delivering the main structural component on the exterior of the building. In this way, the main structure is derived from a galleon, which enables floating on the sea.

Another main architectural feature is the cathedral's towers. It is believed that Minehead is one of the habitats for migrating birds in the west of England, so hundreds of thousands of birds stay each year on the seashore of the region. In fact, guano, which is the excrement of seabirds, is possible to use a source of renewable energy, so the bird towers in the floating cathedral can provide a seabird habitat and produce energy from their wastes. Each of the bird towers has an anaerobic digester at the bottom of the structure, so the digestion process can begin with bacterial hydrolysis from the resources of guano. These acidogenic bacteria convert the amino acids into carbon dioxide, so it finally produces methane gas which can be used as a source of renewable energy.

In addition, cryonic technologies and the concept of medical culture were investigated to make an experimental place for freezing pilgrims inside the floating cathedral, and the technological uses of cryonics were adopted by exploring a long lasting freezing facility for pilgrims who hope to transform themselves after the long sleep. The concept of 'sleep' here is portrayed as metaphor for the way in which medieval pilgrims transformed throughout their journey, in a desire to escape the ordinary world. Hence, the notion of immortality within the context of cryonics is adopted and adjusted.

The 'Cryonics Unit' is intended to maintain the human body in a state of refrigeration in a huge chamber located in the middle of the cathedral. The main material for the chamber is similar to a freeze tank, so a continuous flow cryostat transferring liquid helium into a typical laboratory cryostat is proposed to be installed in the chamber. This is fundamental equipment for maintaining the cryopreservation procedure, and the chamber should be made of a highly insulated light concrete and aluminium, two metres thick, so that the cryopreserved body can be maintained for over 100 years before being recovered by highly advanced technology.

The notion of the pilgrim's journey has long been considered as a religious pursuit, so the location between the floating cathedral and the accommodation shows the religious relationship in this proposal. The long walkway provided by the suspended bridge leads to the last space the pilgrims will traverse before going to sleep. The bridge then not only harvests wave energy from the Bristol Channel, providing clean energy to the building, but it also provides a sense of spatial pilgrimage in line with Christian beliefs in medieval ages. ◇

Back to the Future and Back

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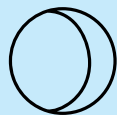
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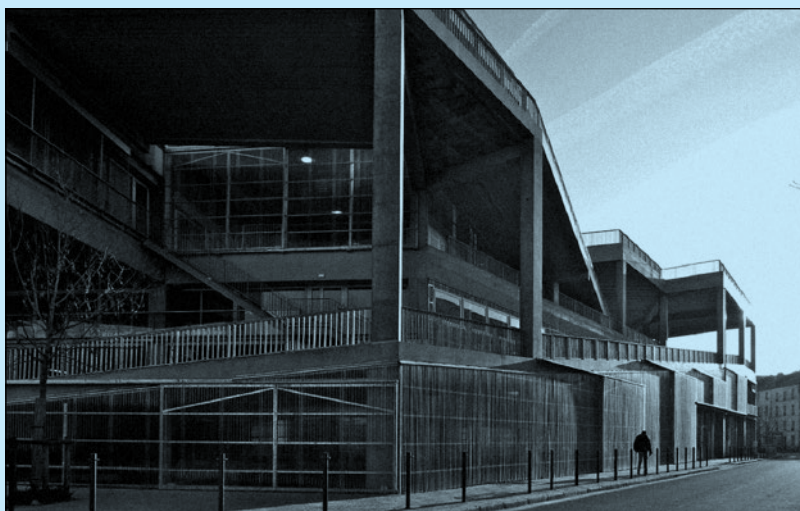
Nantes School of Architecture by Lacaton & Vassal

Words and Photography by Marcela Aragüez

This past autumn, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (ICA) has retrieved one of its landmark exhibitions, 'Cybernetic Serendipity'. Curated by Jasia Reichardt in 1968, it showed the promising possibilities of an emerging technology which, operating by feedback information and control systems, aimed to revolutionise a wide range of fields, including art and architecture. The exhibition illustrated what Simon Sadler considers in his book *Archigram Architecture without Architecture* as one of the first times in which the term 'indeterminacy' was applied in the built environment—*as in* the case of John Weeks' project for the Northwick Park Hospital. Conceived to accommodate unforeseen changes in future user's requirements, Weeks proposed an incomplete structural logic which would have the capacity to hold unequal growths. The possibility of an architecture with an inexorable support of technology to adapt itself to new times constituted the ideal image of a decade that has been many times acknowledged as ground-breaking and revolutionary.

British group Archigram, which stood up for a transformable architecture to be controlled in real time by its users, organised The International Dialogue of Experimental Architecture (IDEA) to take place in Folkestone, England in 1966. IDEA sought to congregate the avant-garde figures whose works integrated this technological vision. The organisers intended to seriously address, as the advertisement claimed, experimental projects and "as many of their creators as possible". Thus, guests included Cedric Price, Paul Virilio, Claude Parent, Yona Friedman and Hans Hollein, among others. Exhibits came also from figures like Frei Otto, Paolo Soleri and the Japanese Metabolists. Although apparently the audience —mostly students—started to express their disillusion for these never-built architectural ideals, the event certainly constituted a congregation of architects who shared this necessity to think about an 'uncertain architecture' capable of changing over time. This hope for a better world rooted in technology, within a highly unstable society, was the kind of common perspective that we, decades later, associate with those times.

Architects love freedom and delight in space —'let me do what I want and let me do it happily.' 'Let me decide.' However, architects should not determine the end of times, but new beginnings —Interaction, participation, community. Are these concepts out of date? Old-fashioned? Clueless? One would rather think the opposite. Nowadays, parallel to the course of the digital revolution, it seems that the golden decade of technological optimism and that idea of open-endedness is living a second youth. What sometimes has been referred to as 'Talkitecture' seems to keep acting repetitively as an inspirational tool in this century, and the production of a non-defined architecture is becoming less and less utopian.

At this point, two different periods in the recent history could be distinguished to explain some contemporary approaches towards uncertainty. The first one is what we can call the 'happy early 2000s'. With publications like *Mutations* and *Far From Equilibrium*, led by gurus of the megacities and unstoppable globalisation such as Rem Koolhaas and Sandford Kwinter, the uncertain was very much focused on the urban realm—which was understood as both product and producer of possibilities of an ever-changing system, adaptable to the existent conditions but also generator of new realities. In these compilations of texts, the city got rid of geometrical impositions and the unforeseen was posed as an inevitable, and desirable, condition —maybe because the urban was starting to be seen as a body of work in which the utopia is, in fact, to control everything.

The second period, commencing with the global economic crisis, has somehow shifted the point of view towards productive uncertainty. Far from being dismissed, indeterminate design is conceived as a convenient strategy to adapt architecture to the unexpected and changing political and social situation also in the building scale. With this respect, OASE magazine brought together in 2011 a range of positions "to pose the question of how the designer can put this uncertainty to productive use." Several authors questioned the role of the architect in terms of change, chance and process. Among them, a revealing interview with John Habraken highlighted the current validity of his ideas towards the limited role of the architect in the design of housing spaces. Similarly, the analysis of the architecture of Lacaton & Vassal was posed as an example of architectural efficiency by means of non-definition, with projects like the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, the Library in Angoulême and the School of Architecture in Nantes. In these projects the architects act rather as facilitators to provide the maximum surface allowed by budgets and regulations. This way they get extra spaces which are not to be filled by any building requirement; in the case of the School of Architecture in Nantes, these spaces are formalised as double-height communal areas where no programme is specified, and where improvised ways of use and practices might be accommodated in the future. Other educational buildings, like The Rolex Learning Centre in Lausanne by SANAA and the new Ravensbourne College in London's Greenwich Peninsula by FOA, seem to achieve a certain degree of 'indetermination' by following this idea of free-learning, non-hierarchical organisation and multidisciplinary education. Thus, a loosely defined program provides ideal conditions to test flexible and adaptable spaces. For instance, in the case of the Rolex Learning Centre, a continuous non-defined and undulated space acts as a kind of substitute to walls, and it is disposed to the inhabitants to be used as pleased, generating informal practices in public rather difficult to be observed in a standard academic environment.

One of the attendees to the IDEA conference, Cedric Price, used to claim that architects' three-dimensional awareness should make them capable of accelerating social progresses by the creation of spaces that generate and enable people's personal growth. To some extent, the production of an uncertain space might provide this potential of growth and social development, inasmuch as people are allowed to set their own spatial rules. One would tend to think that some of the ideas born in the sixties are finally seeing light in the material realm. Perhaps it is time to revisit those ideas which saw, in the lack of clairvoyance, an answer to contemporaneity. The ICA has already made its contribution with the Cybernetic Serendipity's revival. Maybe the next step should be to organise an IDEA conference at Folkestone in order to reinterpret those pioneering positions and revisit their feasibility in today's architecture. ◇

NIGHT SKY OBSERVATORY

A CONTINUATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

A Project by Laszlo Dohnanyi

When arriving at Gravesend's surrounding marshlands, the first impression is that of disassociation and a feeling of the sublime due to the vastness of the horizon. The most prominent features of the marshlands are the feeling of isolation accompanied by sweeping vistas. This is a place that hints at its historic importance in fragmented moments and then confronts you again with the enormity of the landscape. Due to the area's geostrategic relevance one can stumble across many relics from different times of war in England, from abandoned bunkers—reminders of the Second World War—all the way to slowly decaying Viking ships lying in the shallow waters of the river Thames. It is a place with a particular aura.

The site that I identified for my building is located on a little hill, deep within the marshlands between the two villages of Allhallows-on-Sea and Isle of Grain. Two distinct features of this hill made it an advantageous location: the hill's specific ground conditions, and the levels of light pollution on the hill are some of the lowest within the UK. Being a former flood zone to the river Thames estuary, the surrounding landscape is very flat with little to no topographical changes and very little built infrastructure, which marks the site's unique relationship to the sky, allowing people to gaze for miles in every direction.

Amateur astronomy is one of the fasted growing hobbies in the UK today. The building is an astronomical observatory and has been designed to act as a regeneration hub for the Gravesend area, providing educational facilities such as a lecture theatre and library for visiting astronomy novices, as well as professional research equipment for the permanent astronomers in residence. The initial design concept was based on the shape of the star constellation 'the Big Dipper', which is typically an amateur astronomists introduction to the night sky, as it can be used to find the Polaris star.

The building is strategically located within the Cliffe marshes, capitalising on the unique relationship of the area's sky. The absence of any built environment around the Cliffe marshes means usually clear views of the night sky for both unaided and telescopic stargazing. The unspoiled natural environment of this area is precisely what gives it potency as a site for an observatory, so it was of key importance that my design both respected and reflected the intrinsic aura of the marshes. I wanted to maintain the visual appearance of horizontality of the site and avoid the placement of a large monumental structure into this untouched environment. The observatory was therefore designed to be entirely underground, with the roof acting as a continuation of the landscape. By having parts of the roof-shutters opening up to the sky, and platforms and rooms rising and sinking in and out of the ground, a subtle interplay is created between the landscape and building.

Envisaged as a hands-on teaching astronomical observatory, the building provides research and educational facilities for permanent as well as temporary residents, allowing visitors to retreat into the ground and connect back to the night sky, servicing as a celestial retreat for stargazers. There is an interesting dialogue, with the building being almost pressed into the earth's surface by the sky and the inhabitant's intention to simultaneously look up and study that same sky. ◇

Riots

IDEA, ACTION AND FORM

TO BRISKET BUTCHER

Stop Thief !!
109.

Words by Fani Kostourou

"Action causes more trouble than thought."
Jenny Holzer

"If Victor Hugo came back to give a TED talk," says Keller Easterling, an architect and professor at Yale University, "he might assert that architecture, which he once claimed had been killed by the book, is reincarnated as something more powerful still—as information itself." If architecture is information, then human actions are the carriers of this information and those that shape architecture. In a world where broadband communications lead into a global urbanism, media are changing the city, infrastructural models generate forms of polity and spatial formulas are created to model activities and relationships, architecture and information are inextricably intertwined. It's naïve to disregard information when making architecture; it's naïve to overlook actions when making form. The information of these actions is what matters the most. The purpose of any kind of spatial model is to capture these actions that take place in the built environment, translate their patterns into information and attempt to understand the idea behind them so as to inform the design of the built environment, meaning the form. However, when space turns out to perform poorly, the question is, what causes more trouble: the idea, the action or the form?

In summer 2011, in light of riots breaking out in London and other UK cities, a research group at UCL's Centre of Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA) teamed up with the department of Crime Science and the Metropolitan Police to study the *action* of rioting in an effort to understand the *why* of the riots, as well as the spatial patterns that can emerge from a group of rioters. By simulating rioting with mathematical formulas and drawing analogies with other well-studied behavioural models, the researchers tried to predict how riots spread to inform policy makers and police strategies to prevent rioting from happening again. As a matter of fact, the team lead by Sir Alan Wilson found that there's an analogy between the act of rioting and the everyday act of shopping. For instance, according to Hannah Fry's film, *Can Maths Predict a Riot*, more than 30% of rioters travel less than 1km from where they live—as in the case of London—but are willing to go further if there was a large sized riot—as in the case of Manchester—or little chance of getting caught. The action of rioting had not only distinct spatial patterns but also these patterns were shared with the action of shopping —which space makers know much about. The patterns correlate to findings indicating that people usually prefer to go shopping close to their home but are willing to travel further away for a big department store or an outlet centre.

UCL research also observed that where police were absent, rioting thrived—making certain locations more attractive than others for rioters to get involved, much like the case of a contagion. Not only was the action contagious but so was the decision to riot which goes way before rioters actually get out on the street. According to the data, the way the idea was spread was similar to that of a disease. The way a virus contaminates a foreign organism has certain similarities with the London riots, acting as a sort of infection. Both need causative agents and usually—if not always—both produce noticeable signs of disorder, which in turn stimulates more agents. However, in both cases the spread can be avoided or proven powerless in front of an immunised system. So which rioters can be immunised against the idea of rioting?

This is where the problem shifts from the action to the idea—and to form as well. We can argue that the idea of any kind of action is potentially carried by all of us. It pre-exists within us but only acquires visibility by those that decide to act. In this sense, the idea of rioting constitutes a disposition carried by all of us of a *know/how* to act. One doesn't need to act to know how to act. Yet, in the case of rioting, as the research argued, certain people are more likely to riot than others, and these tend to come from some of the most deprived areas of the city. A resident of a council estate is seven times more likely to be involved in the riots than any of his affluent neighbours, says Hannah Fry, based on data from the police records of all offenders' arrests. According to other research conducted in 2011 by the London-based consulting company Space Syntax Limited, the majority of convicted rioters lived on large post-war housing estates.

But the idea of rioting is related to form. In his early work Bill Hillier, founder of Space Syntax, has suggested that the relationship between rioting and large housing estates may not be result of deprivation but of design. A complicated, unintelligible and segregated form discourages use, and as a result encourages the idea of an anti-social action. Moreover, where CASA research argues for a strong correlation between rioting, retail attractors and poverty, Kinda Al Sayed and Sean Hanna's research on 'How city spaces afford opportunities for riots' as part of a PROXIES project on data, crime and the city, suggests that riots were determined rather by the form of the street network and the natural through-movement, making certain locations more likely to be chosen than others. They think space best forecasts where rioters live and act. In fact, they argue that both actions of rioting and shopping are similarly susceptible to form and this is why analogies were found in the first place.

One way or another the conclusion is the same: form affected the idea of rioting as well as the action itself, even before riots actually occurred. So knowing how the idea and action are prone to the form is essential to understand the action. Information on the action is not enough. We need information on the form that has predisposed it. Hence, the research on UK rioting can help architects understand, firstly, the susceptibility of an *idea*, an *action* and a *form* individually and together, and, second, how architecture as a form-shaping-science has the opportunity to create enormous spatial and social consequences only by privileging or impeding actions. Maybe the riots weren't the real problem all along; maybe the real trouble arises from the probable failure of architects, policy makers and planners to establish a link between ideas, actions and forms. ◇

DIGITAL DETOX

HELIOLITHIC CENTRE
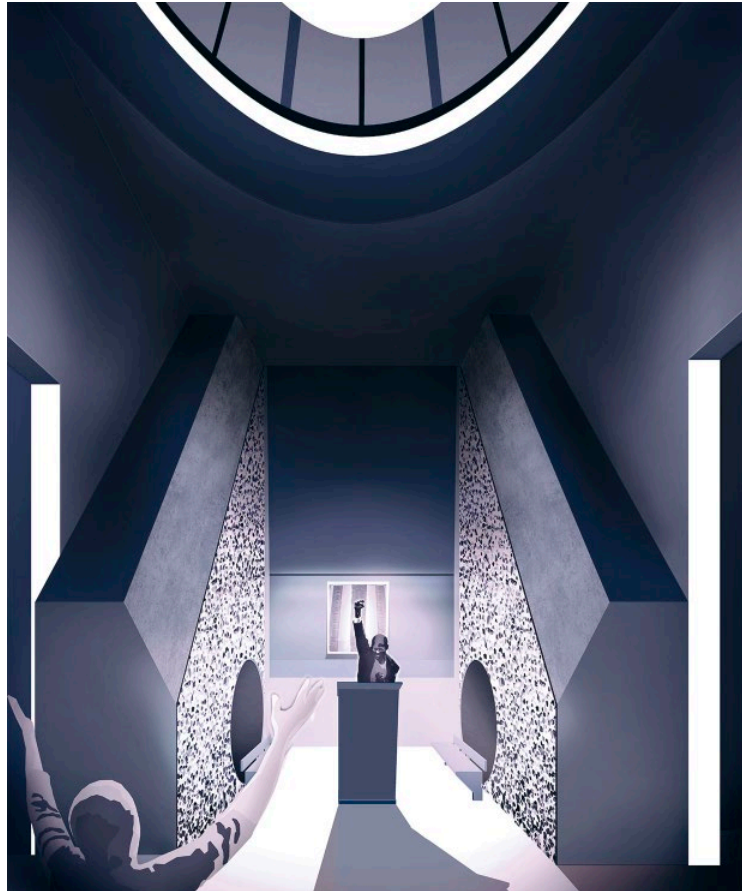
A Project by Laurence Blackwell-Thale

Digital Detox originates in the continually increasing, pervasive influence of technology on the city today. Through redefining notions of identity or security in the face of these technologies, the project examines how an architecture might be designed to counteract, challenge and manipulate changing conditions within the city.

In 2014, Google announced new legislation allowing real-time advertising to be secreted onto the buildings and billboards within Google Streetview. This move to blend the present and the real with a latent and online content suggests a digital world that seeks to redefine the physical, as digital advertising becomes an aggressive form for controlling a consumerist city. Companies are, theoretically, able to buy rivals shop fronts online, placing their branding onto Streetview in order to cover up what is there in reality; a move that would openly question the rivalry between ownership on a digital and a material platform.

As a result, urban spaces would seek to protect themselves from the digital. The Google Streetview camera would become the enemy of the real, an opposition that promotes digital consumerism and stealing space from a physical reality. Businesses and buildings would begin to camouflage themselves from the camera, looking for its blind spots that could hide them from being recorded; consumer districts see shops move to a progressively extrovert display of their own brand culture; cities might morph into a territory of Venturi 'ducks' where companies assert their branding directly as a physical manifestation of the buildings they inhabit; and factories shape themselves into the product they produce: sweet shops into giant lollypops and pet shops into enormous animals, all as an attempt to stop rivals from buying up imagery from the Google camera and placing their name on an ambiguous city structure. The undeniable nature of the form a building takes stops it from loosing its inhabitant's identity.

Yet physical methods for evading digital theft and a loss of a physical identity are underpinned by a more human conflict with the technologies we produce. The device, a piece of kit aimed at the individual, not the collective, governs our technological world. Cities as centres for human interaction become obsolete as an obsession with ones' online profile seemingly takes priority over relationship with the direct environment, nature and people. Set in Chicago, The Heliolithic Community Centre acts as a prosthetic to a population over-exposed to this technology.

The architecture is an interface, but instead of one confined to a phone screen, it is an all encompassing and a collective experience. Using the influence of light wavelengths given out by personal technologies, the building seeks to revert, subvert and accentuate the natural through biologically influencing your daily cadences. An articulated roof-scape alters the surrounding Chicagoan light conditions through lenses, materials and filters, to create zones of circadian rhythm within the building. The building provides a number of different amenities, all attuned to a particular wavelength of light, and the effects this causes in a person's physical and emotional reaction fosters a new sense of community at the block scale of the city.

Shorter wavelengths, created through an embedded semiconductor resin filter, promote concentration and represent the exposure to a computer screen. This leads to a reduction in serotonin and keeps the inhabitant awake and focussed in areas defined for working.

Opposed to this, gradient light filters accentuate the golden-hour of evening sunlight and long-wave light exposure, heightening serotonin secretion and re-engaging a population with the biologically educed social influence of such lighting.

The climax of the building is the main hall, which includes large, hollow cast solar sampling funnels that retain sunlight through photovoltaic caps to illuminate the building in relation to points on the solar azimuth.

The technology used in the building aims to blur the boundaries between being primitive and
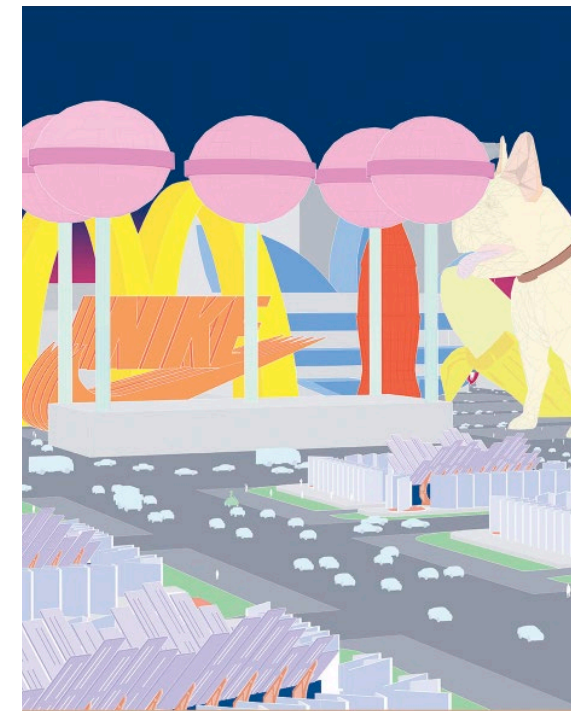
futuristic. At a simple level the building structure also acts as a series of light filters, at a complex one they utilise only recently found properties of natural, organic molecules that alter highly specific wavelengths of light. The centre is thus an organically powered, naturally technological sanctuary away from the digital dystopia of modern life. A place that promotes regaining a sense of the real and the visceral, rather than becoming lost in the 2D plane of augmented, personalised realities within a company controlled, limited infrastructure.

The project suggests that our use of technology has become too focused on the individual; a need for collective experience is being undermined and leading us to see spatial forms as a series of 'actions' mimicking that of a cursor on a screen rather than as an object set in space. An atrophic existence and heightened self-obsession has led to a population wide disengagement with local communities; an act that not only destabilises urban spaces but therefore calls on architecture to force us to re-connect, not only with our wifi routers, but also with our physical worlds. ◇

Preparing for Apocalypse

AN INITIATION INTO THE PREPPING MOVEMENT OF NYC

Words by Hannah Wood

"For as long as movies have been made, New York has been attacked by every imaginable foe: giant spiders and robots, zombies, aliens, an ice age, meteor strikes and debris falling from the moon…"

It's a hazy midsummer afternoon and a distant voice crackles through a worn-out radio in the Tibetan garden of Majnu-ka-tilla, New Delhi. Tuning the dial, I am immediately transported from beneath the breezy prayer flags into a fascinating microcosm of frantic stockpiling and apprehension, a world inhabited by the 'Preppers' of New York City.

It was Lu Olkowski's BBC World Service broadcast through which I was first plunged into the 'Prepping' scene, a small yet growing community of New Yorkers who believe that looming disaster projects far beyond cinematic apocalypse. They can be found plotting escape routes, hoarding supplies, constructing underground bunkers and broadcasting their frustration of the layman's ignorance through various social mediums. If a situation was to occur, Preppers count on having the best chance of survival.

As a movement born out of suburban science fantasy, Preppers were once sidelined as a marginal community of delusional conspiracists latched on to the occurrence of almost inconceivable events. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, economic collapse of a scale unseen since the Great Depression and Superstorm Sandy reaping havoc along the Eastern Seaboard, their concerns may no longer seem as farfetched. This anxiety of impending doom has now filtered past the cosmically conscious into the lives of everyday New Yorkers, swelling the ranks of organisations such as the 'NYC Preparedness Network', initiated by a concerned fireman from the Bronx.

Despite the increasing visibility of the movement, in part due to televised series such as the *Doomsday Preppers*, mainstream media does not seem to share their concerns. Alan Foyer, in a report for the *New York Times,* alludes to the endless unfolding of plans and possibilities as a form of neurosis. "Prepping for the sudden end of civilisation is paranoid, weird, and most of all, delusional." The readiness of a Prepper, and their prestige within the movement, is determined by the contents of their '*bug-out' bag*, a case of pre-packed essentials to aid a smooth escape in the event of an emergency. For those on the outside, it is an exercise in neurotic hoarding: iodine pills, ready-start fuel cubes, UV steriliser, maps of the Tristate region, ammunition, dried food with a 25-year shelf life, Silver Eagles as an inflation hedge, the list goes on and on.

As is the American way, this emerging market has been seized by a new wave of opportunistic entrepreneurs. A gourmet range of bug-out bags including the *'Covert Defender'* ($629.99) and the *'Tactical Traveller'* ($439.99) can be ordered directly to your door. Rising stars in the prepping circuit, such as Aton Edwards, are also beginning to offer consultations to wary new recruits. "Your worst-case scenario is that something goes down at Indian Point," he tells a young couple, referring to the nuclear reactor in Buchanan, "you're in the peak injury zone. You'd get a pretty serious dose of radioactive particulates."

Whether Armageddon is to assume the form of an electromagnetic pulse that knocks out the power grid, a cataclysmic eruption of the Yellowstone Caldera or an unstoppable rise in quantitative easing, the overwhelming consensus is to vacate New York. Doug, a sworn Prepper and many-time summer resident at self-preservation survival camps, informs Olkowski of plan A: "get you a paintball gun with pepper-spray balls, then get to New Jersey, steal a car, and head for the mountains." The fundamental geography of the city, as an archipelago of islands, defies this approach. Long Island for example is a dead end to the Atlantic Ocean and the destruction of just one of its bridges may leave it eternally severed from the mainland. Even if the Preppers did manage to escape on a stand-by raft, satellite communities may not be so welcoming. Dr Redlener, Director at the *National Center for Disaster Preparedness,* issued a statement from a neighbouring sheriff who proposed to block a highway junction with sandbags to prevent vehicles entering his town in the event of a mass evacuation from the city.

Some New Yorkers are taking matters into their own hands. I listen with astonishment to the slow drawl of a gym owner from Long Island, relaying to Olkowski details of the secret compound where his group plans to re-convene and take refuge during an emergency. "We could fit at least 100 people there, no problem. We learn the hard things, how to daisy chain truck batteries, so we can get an electrical grid going; how to purify water: the dark water, the grey water, the clean water and use them accordingly. We have a full medical staff… we can survive indefinitely at this facility. It's that kind of a compound. So if there was a nuclear exchange, it would take us around 25 minutes to get to our location. Then we would have to secure the perimeter and get everybody in there… It's about survival."

The US is known for nurturing the outliers. In the land of opportunity, people aspire to be independent, live outside the mainstream and be critical of governance, all ideas that lead to the formation of many right-wing isolationist movements during the '80s. This '*us vs. them'* mentality was very common among the original Survivalists and often spurned from a deep-rooted distrust of authority. They feared the jurisdiction would fail to act quickly and effectively if a tragedy were to get out of hand, harbouring a strong suspicion of the disarmament program as a premeditated tool to strip agency from the individual. How would they defend themselves when their neighbours turn sour in the cutthroat reality of the post-apocalypse?

It is this threat of vulnerability that today's *Prepping nouveaux* cite as their primary source of anxiety. The complex web of global trade in which many New Yorkers remain heavily intertwined splintered during the credit crunch of 2008. This left their dependency exposed, to companies, the Internet, to outsourced others to take care of their basic needs. Fiscal instability predicated on a singular volatile element such as peak oil could plunge whole communities into darkness and within three weeks even the food supply would grind to a halt. In this sense, crisis no longer seems so distant.

From an aspect only possible from an Indian garden, it seems a more lasting reassurance perhaps could be attained by taking refuge between the extremes of paranoia and mindless complacency; a place where current fragility is recognised, or even addressed, but the worry of immanent catastrophe does not become all-consuming. It is this fear of near impossible futures that drives the Prepping industry and pits people against each other and the authorities. However, if respondents to 2012 survey published by the *National Geographic* are to be believed, 41% of US citizens cite prepping for sudden disaster to be more worthwhile than saving for retirement, it seems America is not going down without a fight. ◇

Seeing is Believing

✧

THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

Words by Lachlan Anderson-Frank

Some mornings during my internship at a well-known Dutch architecture firm, I would scan the online tender lists, looking for opportunities to participate in that most peculiar of architectural institutions; the design competition. Wading through countless calls for entries from across the world, I started to wonder why architects pursue this project format when it is so often vilified for producing spectacularly wasteful, publically unpopular and even highly dysfunctional buildings.

The most recent uproar about competitions surrounds the Guggenheim Helsinki, an open competition (unpaid, that is) for which 1,715 entries were submitted. Apart from the depressing reality of how much work was done by these architects for the tiny chance of being selected for the competition's second round (recently calculated by one *Archdaily* writer to be collectively worth around 18,336,780 euros) one wonders, can anything positive actually be drawn from the situation? The general belief is that competitions promote design innovation and raise the standards of design quality regardless of whether they are built, particularly within a firm itself but also in the world at large. But is it an architect's reaction to a singular brief which really produces innovation as so many competition promoters claim? Do competitions create an environment where architects perform at their very best? And do the short time spans and visual nature of competition materials actually promote high quality architecture and result in high quality buildings?

My interest in assessing the worth of architectural competitions was piqued only further upon seeing the film *The Competition,* at the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam. The Competition, a documentary of sorts, follows Jean Nouvel, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Dominique Perrault and (rather abortively) Norman Foster (all Pritzker Prize winners, a requirement of the competition) participating

in a design competition for a new national museum in the capital city of a small European tax haven, Andora. Foster withdrew from the competition when it was revealed to him that participating meant extensive and invasive filming for the documentary. The film follows the foibles of these five firms in depth, allowing the audience an almost satirical level of insight into the extreme working conditions, and resulting projects, which architectural competitions often create. The film ends with the message "the

> "Architectural competitions preclude a productive, evolving dialogue between client and architect via their standalone, one off briefs."

jury was voted out of office before deciding the results of the competition and the project was dropped." It is an all too familiar fate for a competition entry, and one which provoked me to question the cult of competitions which exists in the archiworld. What is the point of so many unrealised projects, visions of a future not realised?

Farshid Moussavi, formerly a partner of Foreign Office Architects, who famously won the competition to design a ferry terminal in Japan and made their name in doing so, claims that "competitions are driven by the desire to go beyond what already exists —unthought-of architecture—whereas commissions are mostly demand-driven and often by those of the market…. architectural competitions are invitations to make conceptual leaps and to open new frames."

Standard Show Printers, St. Paul, *The brilliant psychic star, Newmann the Great*, 1956.

In other words, they offer us the freedom to imagine the future in some unconstrained way. But I would contest Moussavi's claim that competitions create an environment free from the demands of the market; competitions are in themselves a competitive market for designs, where participants design their project with the aim of winning the contract. Far from being free from market constraints, they actually create their own market. Indeed competitions create an environment where the buildings of the future are designed according to a given set of constraints, with no opportunity for dialogue or negotiation, creating off-the-shelf solutions to design problems, usually made in a just a few short weeks.

Architectural competitions, unlike other forms of project format, preclude a productive, evolving dialogue between client and architect via their standalone, one off briefs. While the brief may be written by the client, perhaps even in collaboration with a team of experts, it equates to just a single meeting between architect and client, a single burst of ideas and requirements leading to expected or

even recycled design solutions as responses. Competitions offer architects a way to imagine the future to be sure. But are they really the best way to do so? In the evolving dance between architect and client over a building brief, can we really rely on them as a source of innovation? Isn't (architectural) design an open and collaborative process between client and designer, which requires more scope for the elaboration of its goals than the competition system provides?

I'm still not sure of the answer. And while I've been figuring it out, I'm sure a few hundred more young architects have poured their blood, sweat and tears into a competition entry, with the hope of making it big. Maybe that's all that competitions are in the end, a big ole' PR tactic. Not so much an unconstrained vision of the future as a cynical business move. Who knows? ◇

My Willy

EGO AS THE ENABLER OF GREAT ARCHITECTURE

Words by Petr Esposito

My willy is, I hope, of adequate size to match my ego, but I suspect my need to exercise some sense of presence within the architectural community may cloud a vision of a better future. The shadow of envy never lurking too far away, my genitalia have become a phallic fusion of confusion. I am an architect in waiting, yet laden with a willy. We wonder if architects are anointed the power of clairvoyance, but as a man I am also loaded with man genes and tendencies that flicker between the lack of multitasking, a lower pain threshold and a Neanderthal compulsion. My power of clairvoyance is therefore clouded.

Penis envy might just be a simple-minded idea from a silly little Austrian with ample beard and a disposition for Greek Mythology, but penis envy in the context of male competitiveness, as well as in its original intention, might also have triggered some architectural blunders so massive (Anish Kapoor's Orbit, Prince Charles's Poundbury, downtown Dubai in general) that the power of clairvoyance is no more relevant to architects of the male persuasion than loft insulation is to the homeless. Then again, the drive for giant, girthy throbbing willies may have blessed us with all sorts

of cloud penetrating gems for us six inchers to gawp and look on lustfully. Stiff and hard from London to Vladivostok, Calcutta to Harare, the dicks are everywhere, glistening in their own awe. The question however remains, were they erected for the titillation of their masters? Or were they the finite answer to challenging 'opportune' architectural puzzles?

Easy adaptations of this notion may bring to mind almost any tower, made more perfect if they have a defined tip. The Gherkin is an obvious choice. Shuttleworth, is now ashamed of his own guile, lamenting "architects are egotistical". It's a therapist's wet dream, if therapists have wet dreams. I'ts architecture screaming Oedipus, but this is perhaps all too much 101. We claim that skyscrapers look like willies, and the arrival of a certain vulva laden starchitect is too producing genetically appropriate genitalia, or so has been pointed out.

The real vulgarity of penis envy takes place in the universities and studios, where female numbers drop from 44% in education to 34% as architects, according to *Architects' Journal* and RIBA. Though not universal, it is not a struggle to hear the discussion in studios of 'which side it swings'. Whilst most point to the towers

claiming crudeness, and snigger and laugh and tweet about symbolism more obvious than a shoe, swathes of manly men are stomping on, chewing through projects and erecting more flags to his name than sperm in a single emission.

"Sexism ain't dead yet, and us men are doing a fine job of keeping it alive."

Perhaps unsubstantiated, but with only around 12% of practice partners being female there is a good chance that women have fewer opportunities to make their architectural mark. The fight for women to join their male counterparts is a continued struggle; sexism ain't dead yet, and us men are doing a fine job of keeping it alive. In teaching architecture, the willies are winning, in practicing architecture, the willies are winning, and the projected future of the mismatched
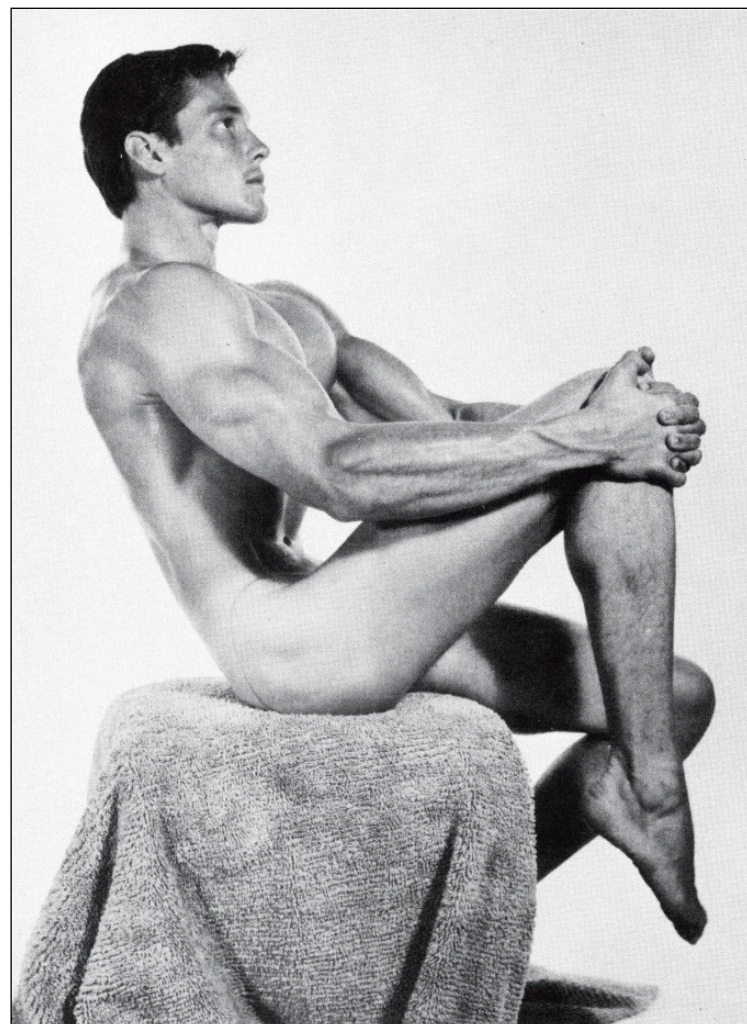
discipline becoming matched is about as hopeful as the rebirth of past voyeur Oscar Niemeyer.

I would say, the importance of gender equality in architecture is no longer just about gender equality; it is about employing more people that might bring an authentic gift of foresight, about employing reason and quality without being swayed by an end declaration of "my willy is bigger"—unless of course we get to a point where it's all women and penis envy may then take a more intense form.

The struggle for men is about being aware of their own inability to be completely subjective, or at least to detach themselves an adequate length from their ego, a suggestion of thumb tip to index finger tip might do the trick. The image of Philip Johnson clutching the shaft of

his AT&T model is all things Freudian, and as Arthur Drexler says, "the AT&T building is too big to be a joke." Today's Johnson is the gloating of overreaching firms charmed by their influx of money —$1 billion architecture companies operating in dubious corners of the world and short-falling their interns; the power of the male ego turning to a pulp the idealised student petrified before a pin-up. Maybe a touch sentimental, but the clairvoyance so anointed to us architects—if it does exist—is not necessarily something to behold and dream and long for. Perhaps the power of foresight does exist, but it is simply to reproduce our own little 1:1s that are erected and razed on a daily basis for the benefit of our own goals of intimate gratification.

And here's the crux of the issue, I'm a self-confessed man with penis wanting to write an article about architecture for architects pontificating about the confused nature of men. Is this an article on clairvoyance, or am I the voyeur on a journey of self-gratification? I'm putting my dick on the table as it were and socking it to them… a sod it and to hell with it. Yes, I want to fight this penis thing, but what do I do about my own? I do have one. ◇

The simplest questions often provoke the most crowded answers.

What is urbanism? Moreover, what are the implications if designers lose the ability to think collectively about our cities? In this incarnation of Seminar Room we read, write and speak about architecture and urbanism through the lens of the contemporary city. In that order.

To do this, we throw ourselves headlong into the past into order to attempt to lend some currency to the present situation at large. The construction of a city is certainly not about totalitarian planning, just as it's not about erecting scattered novelties and one-hit-wonders. As urban territories expand and densify, the spaces in which we spend our lives have, in many cases, become a playground for the dull-fantastical—the isolated novelties, each 'spectacular' in their own right that, when placed all together in a single urban environment, become mundane. Against this backdrop, this seminar tackles our understanding of civic belonging along different written trajectories.

As you enter the space and take your place in the Seminar Room, you'll be presented with extracts from two texts written five decades apart. Elias Canetti's *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*) was penned in 1960. In it he proposed a framework which examined the behaviour of crowds in urban environments—a very early

form of social psychology, otherwise known as 'mob-mentality'. Although the correlations are clearer now more than ever, his texts are rarely read in relation to architecture and urbanism. The second essay, written in 2014 by Peter Carl, sheds a more focused light on how we perceive public space in the contemporary city. Whereas for Canetti the city *is* people, and people *are* space, Carl argues that there are more levels of 'urban depth' at play that we shouldn't ignore.

Moving on to the written responses of the texts, our contributors interpret and uncover five very different understandings of the same core theme, through five very different essays. Following this—and in true seminar form—you'll 'take part' in a round-table discussion between four of our contributors, which swiftly threads its way through the history of architecture in relation to the aforementioned texts. This is accompanied by a drawing which visually narrates our spatial journey from Rome, through Moscow and Klippan, back into the heart of Westminster!

So, dear reader, settle into the Seminar Room: our little archive of observations and predications, provocations and convictions. We think you'll enjoy this seminar—it helps that you're not being marked on it.

Micro Readings of Macro Conditions

THE ARCHITECTS REGARD THE MODEL
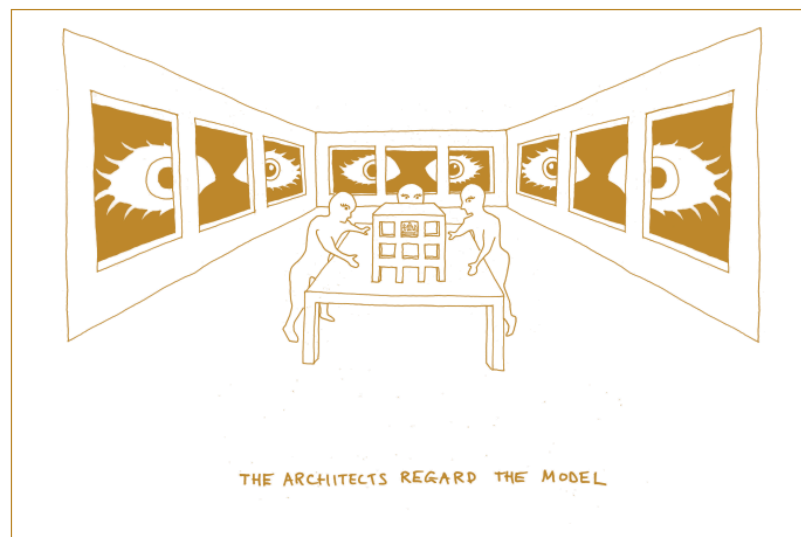
Sam Jacob, *The Architects Regard The Model*, 2015.

A five-decade void: extracts from Elias Canetti's
1960 *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*)
and Peter Carl's 2014 essay, *Civic Depth*.

Crowds and Power

Words by Elias Canetti, 1960

Crowds and Power was originally published in German by Claassen Verlag in 1960. These extracts are from the 1973 Continuum edition, translated by Carol Stewart. It has been reproduced with permission of the parent-publisher.

THE OPEN AND THE CLOSED CROWD

The crowd suddenly there, where there was nothing before, is a mysterious and universal phenomenon. A few people may have been standing together—five, ten or twelve, not more; nothing has been announced, nothing is expected. Suddenly everywhere is black with people and more come streaming from all sides as though streets had only one direction. Most of them do not know what has happened and, if questioned, have no answer; but they hurry to be there where most other people are. There is a determination in their movement which is quite different from the expression of ordinary curiosity. It seems as though the movement of some of them transmits itself to the others. But that is not all; they have a goal which is there before they can find words for it. This goal is the blackest spot where most people are gathered.

This is the extreme form of the spontaneous crowd and much more will have to be said about it later. In its innermost core it is not quite as spontaneous as it appears, but, except for these 5, 10 or 12 people with whom actually it originates, it is everywhere spontaneous. As soon as it exists at all, it wants to consist of more people; the urge to grow is the first and supreme attribute of the crowd. It wants to seize everyone within reach; anything shaped like a human being can join it. The natural crowd is the *open* crowd, there are no limits whatever to its growth. It does not recognize houses, doors or locks and those who shut themselves are in suspect. 'Open' is to be understood here in the fullest sense of the word; it means open everywhere and in any direction. The open crowd exists so long as it grows; it disintegrates as soon as it stops growing.

From just as suddenly as it originates, the crowd disintegrates. In its spontaneous form it is a sensitive thing. The openness which enables it to grow is, at the same time, its danger. A foreboding of threatening disintegration is always alive in the crowd. It seeks, through rapid increase, to avoid this for as long as it can; it absorbs everyone and, because it does so, must ultimately fall to pieces.

In contrast to the open crowd, which can grow indefinitely and which is of universal interest because it may spring up anywhere, there is the *closed* crowd.

The closed crowd renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary. It establishes itself by accepting its limitation. It creates a space for itself which it will fill. This space can be compared to a vessel into which liquid is being poured and whose capacity is known. The entrances to this space are limited in number, and only these entrances can be used. The boundary is respected whether it consists of solid wall or of some special act of acceptance or entrance fee. Once the space is completely filled, no one else is allowed in. Even if there is an overflow, the important thing is always the dense crowd in the closed room; those standing outside do not really belong.

The boundary prevents disorderly increase but also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution. In this way the crowd sacrifices its change of growth, but gains in staying power. It is protected from outside influences which could become hostile and dangerous and it sets its hope on *repetition*. It is the expectation of reassembly which enables its members to accept each dispersal. The building is waiting for them, it exists for their sake and, so long as it is there, they will be able to meet in the same manner. The space is theirs, even during the ebb, and in its emptiness it reminds them of the flood.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CROWD

Before I try to undertake a classification of crowds it may be useful to summarise briefly their main attributes. The following four traits are important:

1. *The crowd always wants to grow.* There are no natural boundaries to its growth. Where such boundaries have been artificially created (e.g. in all institutions which are used for the preservation of closed crowds) an eruption of the crowd is always possible and will, in fact, happen from time to time. There are no institutions which can be absolutely relied on to prevent the growth of the crowd once and for all.

2. *Within the crowd there is equality.* This is absolute and indisputable and never questioned by the crowd itself. It is of fundamental importance and one might even define a crowd as a state of absolute equality. A head is a head, an arm is an arm, and differences between individual heads and arms are irrelevant. It is for the sake of this equality that people become a crowd and they tend to overlook anything which might detract from it. All demands for justice and all theories of equality ultimately derive their energy from the actual experience of equality familiar to anyone who has been part of a crowd.

3. *The crowd loves density.* It can never feel too dense. Nothing must stand between its parts or divide them; everything must be the crowd itself. The feeling of density is strongest in the moment of discharge. One day it may be possible to determine this density more accurately and even to measure it.

4. *The crowd needs a direction.* It is in movement and it moves towards a goal. The direction, which is common to all its members, strengthens the feeling of equality. A goal outside the individual
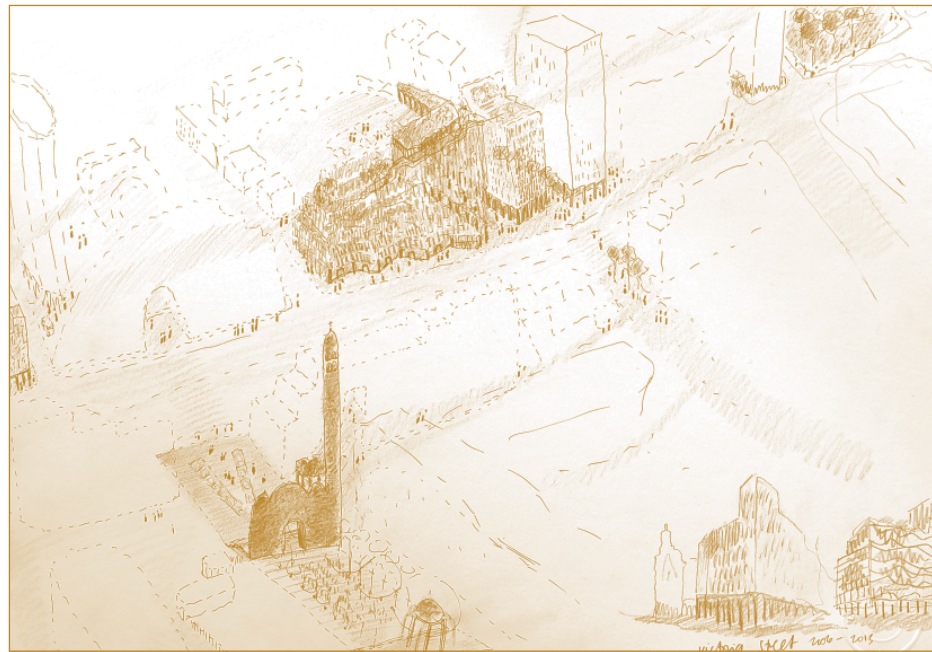
Patrick Lynch, *Urban Rooms*, 2014.

"Density is embodied in the formal recurrence of retreat and approach; equality is manifest in the movements themselves."

members and common to all of them drives underground all the private, differing goals which are fatal to the crowd as such. Direction is essential for the continuing existence of the crowd. Its constant fear of disintegration means that it will accept *any* goal. A crowd exists so long as it has an unattained goal.

There is, however, another tendency hidden in the crowd, which appears to lead to new and superior kinds of formation.

The nature of these is often not predictable. Each of these four attributes will be found in any crowd to a greater or lesser degree. How a crowd is to be classified will depend on which of them predominates in it.

I have discussed open and closed crowds and explained that these terms refer to their growth. The crowd is open so long as its growth is not impeded; it is closed when its growth is limited.

Another distinction is that between *rhythmic* and *stagnating* crowds. This refers to the next two attributes, *equality* and *density*; and to both of them simultaneously.

The *stagnating* crowd lives for its discharge. But it feels certain of this and puts it off. It desires a relatively long period of density to prepare for the moment of discharge. It, so to speak, warms itself with its density and delays as long as possible the discharge. The process here starts not with equality, but with density; and equality then becomes the main goal of the crowd, which in the end it reaches. Every shout, every utterance in common is a valid expression of this equality.

In the *rhythmic* crowd, on the other hand (for example the crowd of the dance), density and equality coincide from the beginning. Everything here depends on movement. All the physical stimuli involved function in a predeter-

mined manner and are passed on from one dancer to another. Density is embodied in the formal recurrence of retreat and approach; equality is manifest in the movements themselves. And thus, by the skillful enactment of density and equality, a crowd feeling is engendered. These rhythmic formations spring up very quickly and it is only physical exhaustion which brings them to an end.

The next pair of concepts—the *slow* and the *quick* crowd—refer exclusively to the nature of the goal. The conspicuous crowds which are the ones usually mentioned and which form such an essential part of modern life—the political, sporting and war like crowds we see on the news are all *quick* crowds. Very different form these are the religious crowds whose goal is a heaven, or crowds formed of pilgrims. Their goal is distant, the way to it long, and the true formation of the crowd is relegated to a far off country or to another world. Of these slow crowds we actually see only the tributaries, for the end they strive after is invisible and not to be attained by the unbelieving. The slow crowd gathers slowly and only sees itself as permanent in a far distance.

This is a mere indication of the nature of these forms. We all have to consider them more closely. ◇

Civic Depth

Words by Peter Carl, 2014

Everyone is generally in favour of 'Public Space', but it is not well understood. It tends to connote crowds going about their business or relaxing, or very occasionally protesting (e.g. Occupy). These spaces comprise a plateau of granite, parks, streets, shopping malls and transport arrival halls (the last two often combined). Under these conditions, the public is seen as aggregates of individuals, exercising their freedom. To be sure, there is much of life that conforms to this vision of mass-culture, mass-consumerism and so forth. However, the more this is the case, the more distant is this conception of public space from the political and ceremonial agora, forum or piazza, to which present-day 'public space' is often compared. We should distinguish between the crowd and the public, reserving 'public' for situations of political import.

It is common to oppose 'public' with 'private', and the use of figure-field plans by architects and planners suggests that public is outdoors and private indoors. Accordingly, urban life is often wrongly understood to prevail between these two modalities. In fact, there is very little of a city that is purely private—except perhaps the domestic loo. This is even truer of the cities of less developed countries. We should think in terms of a spectrum of public situations that penetrates the whole of urban life. Firstly, domestic affairs should not be thought of as a refuge from urban conditions, but part of them. Beyond family politics (never simple), we meet our neighbours in living rooms, kitchens, doorways, yards and streets. At the next level of public meeting, we encounter friends, colleagues and new acquaintances at pubs or cafés, at clubs and associations and at places of work (which would range from hair-salon gossip through to shop floors and offices

to board rooms). At the most ceremonial level—therefore the most profound in terms of civic self-understanding, at least potentially—would fall law courts, parliaments and religious settings.

When they are not simply flows of anonymous individuals commuting or shopping (lost in their mobile phones), crowds offer ephemeral moments of intensity—at events such as rallies, marches, sit-ins, riots football matches or New Year's fireworks. However, it is the deeper institutional structure of public involvement that accounts for the persistent civic ethos. This ethos is not the wandering and relaxing under blue skies usually favoured in the renderings of 'public space' by architects, but proper involvements: conflict, negotiation, accommodation, collaboration. It is therefore necessary to rethink 'public space' as a continuity of different settings; and rather than the bald distinction between private and public, we should think in terms of an urban depth. This is most obvious in the understanding of the street, and in particular the high street. Instead of thinking of it as a canyon between façades, filled with vehicles and crowds, we should imagine it as part of the institutional order of the city, as the seam between the depth of what lies behind the façades.

This depth is marked by narrow streets and courtyards, which serve the diversity of lower-rent activities such as ateliers, clinics, colleges, libraries and archives, galleries, travel agents, eateries, specialty shops, churches, mosques, synagogues, dwellings, the semi-legal entities, etc. These are also the settings whose architecture entertains happy and unhappy accidents, as well as material and spatial phenomena, that tend towards gardens (there is more 'garden' in Paddington Station than in the lawn of the average

housing-estate). On this depth-order a proper urban life depends, meaning a proper spectrum between social life, commercial affairs, political and legal debate and opportunities for reflection.

'Reflection' may seem to be a fragile or even elitist concern. Aristotle was the first, and is still one of the few to ask, what is the ultimate purpose of a city? He argues that a city grants the possibility of profound understanding of one's collective place in reality (not simply the transaction of goods and prevention of crime). The civic rites and ceremonies, which persisted until quite recently, accomplished the same thing: reconciling history with the cosmic conditions. Aristotle elevates this kind of insight, via tragic drama, to philosophical contemplation; but this is only the most articulate end of a spectrum that has its origins in the primordial spatiality of the civic topography. This depth-order is, at present, virtually powerless against the monofunctional developments ('mixed-use' is generally a euphemism for shops) and their wind-blown plazas.

The fuss about high-rise proliferation in London is less about the banality of translucent phalloi, an aesthetic problem, than it is about the loss of the depth-structure that gives proper place to, and therefore empowers, the manifold activities too easily generalised as SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and affordable housing. Their inclusion in the spatial order of a city is a civic responsibility, which many—if not all— institutions appear incapable of understanding, preserving or cultivating, despite the advent of 'localism'. Accordingly, it is wholly commendable to see at Victoria Street, London, this sort of understanding emerging from the initiative of Land Securities, Westminster Council and Lynch architects. ◇

Visions of the City and the People Therein
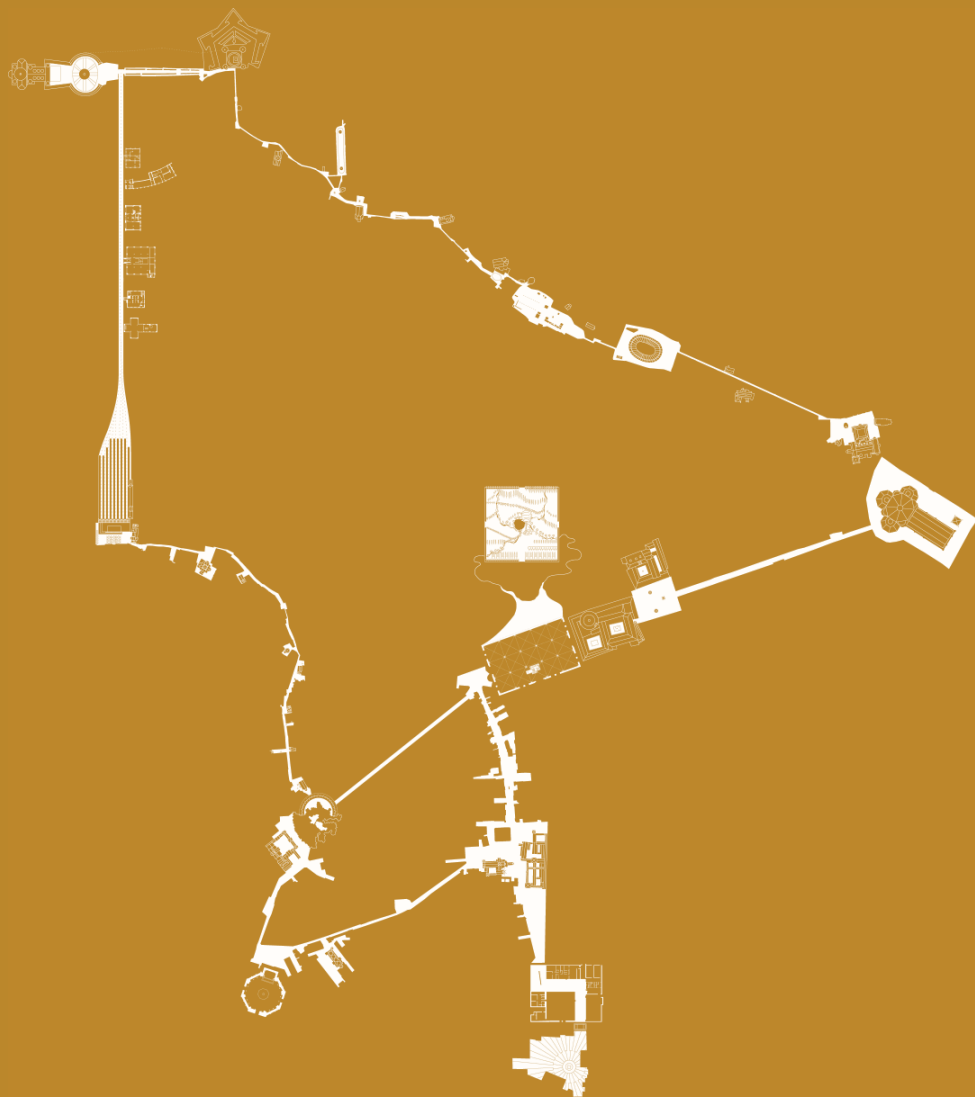
Giovanni Bellotti, Alexander Sverdlov, Shumi Bose, Adam Nathaniel Furman, Sam Jacob and Patrick Lynch weigh in on the relationship between architecture and urbanism in the contemporary city.

This is Water

Words by Sam Jacob

Illustrations by Kaiser Ulla.

Here's a joke David Foster Wallace used to tell, "There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, 'morning, boys, how's the water?' And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and asks, 'What the hell is water?'"

The young fish are unaware that they are 'in' something. They might feel currents, temperature and other qualities that the water might have. But the water itself remains intangible because, as Wallace explains, "the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about."

Architecturally speaking, we might know we are 'in' something by the fact that we are warm, comfortable, that the rain that's falling is not making us wet. But we too are often also unaware that we are 'in' a substance, a thing that envelops us quite as completely as a fish in water. That substance is the very abstract and very real idea of architecture, which remains as invisible to us—or at least as unnoticed—as water is to DFW's talking fish.

The city is the ultimate expression of society. It is the synthetic product of our collectivity, our shared culture, economy, dreams, our conflicts and fears. It is a live document, simultaneously the map and the territory of our democracy, continuously in a state of being re-written, a document written over thousands of years by millions of people. A document that organises us, arranges us, socialises us, separates us, punishes us, rewards us; nothing less than a see-thing political entity rendered in concrete and stone.

We are in it so deep that not only can we not see it, but we can't escape it either. So deep that we can't detach ourselves from architecture, we can't separate ourselves from it, can't look at it objectively from the outside. Which is why, despite its apparent logics and explanations, we can never really know the architecture or the city as the complete material-socio-political-cultural- systemic thing it really is. We're too close—our view is always partial, obscured, cropped. So we always remain inside. There is nothing outside of this imaginary-real world that we have invented anyway.

Unlike the fish's water, the city is our own invention. It is an artificial habitat of our own design which, as a measure of its total success, feels completely natural. We believe in roads, homes, schools, rooms so utterly and completely that they become—to borrow the fishy phrase—'waterlike'.

Yet architecture and the city came from within us. Both are the products of our own imagination projected into the world, our collective interiority made exterior, made into the world. In other words, space is us and we are space. The thing we are 'inside' is the real-fiction of our own imagination, as though we have been turned inside out and made into the water.

Yet at the same time we are so often excluded from it; excluded on economic grounds, because of class, race, sex or a thousand other reasons; excluded precisely because the architectural worlds that we have projected into being map our own internal political psyche so exactly. This is why, for example, public space is both an entirely generic term, encompassing us all, and a highly contested term because of the *realpolitik* of space as we have imagined it.

Architecture makes little worlds, thousands of little worlds, that are multiple and simultaneous. From the scale of a room to a horizon (and even larger than that too) like a proliferating Venn diagram of fish- bowls. These are the worlds we inhabit, the ones we can never escape from. Each is its own environment with its own artificial conditions, its own prescription of the possibilities of our existence, and each determines what (or who) is included and excluded.

The point of this recursive, Russian-doll-like, late-night-stoner talk is to try and think about architecture as an act of collectivity. Architecture, I'm arguing, is the product of human community. It's through architecture that we imagine the possibility of being public and it's how we become social.

But we should never mistake this water as something natural. It's entirely manufactured, a supremely artificial construct (in both senses of the word). And it's important to remember this, important even for architecture to advertise its own synthetic origins in order to distinguish itself from an inert, as-found, immutable nature.

Only by recognising and remaining aware of its fundamental unnaturalness can architecture continue to make us public and social creatures. And to do this, architecture should remind us forcefully, over and over, even as it makes the world, that "this is water, this is water."◇

The Unhappy Pursuit

Words by Adam Nathaniel Furman

"1324a5: [Is] the happiness of the city the same as that of the individual, or different? The answer is clear: all are agreed that they are the same. Those who believe that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, will also believe that the city as a whole is happy when it is wealthy. Those who rank the life of a tyrant higher than any other, will also rank the city which possesses the largest empire as being the happiest city. Anyone who grades individuals by their goodness, will also regard the happiness of cities as proportionate to their goodness."
Extract from Chapter II, Book VII of Aristotle's *Politics*

The analysis of advertising provided a window into the libidinal underpinnings of the 20th Century's irrational consumer mind, while marketing for residential-led developments has more recently proven itself to be an inadvertent insight into property buyers' desires. Because of the yawning gap between the stratospheric prices of many flats in London and their disappointing reality, the intensity and psychological brio of these marketing campaigns has reached a fever-pitch of ideological clarity in a vain attempt at reconciling their valuations and their mediocrity.

Their approach can be roughly divided into the targeting of two areas of desire. On the one hand there is the drive for uniqueness, the need to feel special or better than everyone else, as was traditionally embodied in the notion of 'luxury'. When appealing from this perspective, *L'Oréal*-style exhortations of indulgence and singularity—of both the buyer and their prospective home—are now commonly used. Phrases like "but if it was easy, then it wouldn't feel as good", which have no link

whatsoever with the physical reality of the building, are related solely to how the customer is meant to feel about their purchase.

On the other hand there is a yearning for the opposite of luxurious isolation—a search for its therapeutic amelioration in urban form through the connection with something specific to a given place. It is the instrumentalisation of this kind of artificial authenticity that has seen the greatest proliferation in recent years, with videos of local markets and galleries jostling against phrases about how you will "be enriched by the alluring tapestry of culture and flavours bursting from every direction", and even tabula-rasa behemoths like London's Battersea being "designed to nurture interactions and inspire enduring relationships." They even go so far as to claim that "in and through community lies the salvation of the world."

Through these campaigns it is possible to read the desire for perfectly acceptable—even civic—forms of socially beneficial human fulfilment, whose realisation is being perpetually deferred. Contentment can rarely be achieved through advertisements offering 'fulfilment'. Yes, it is laudable to aim for excellence. Yes, it is a wholly positive impulse to be part of a community and to participate actively in the ballad of perpetual happenstance that we call a city. Yet purchasing a home in one of these developments means that you are not achieving either one of those things. In fact, it is the very object you are purchasing which, in its numerical accumulation across our cities, is gradually eradicating those very things it purports to embody. No-one may uniquely excel in a town in which everyone is identical, of the same income level, with the same kinds of jobs and the same kinds of backgrounds. Any form of 'community' or 'singularity' is eradicated by the disappearance of those who require coming-together to subsist and those who run small, unfashionable enterprises.

Societal pressure to purchase properties of such hyper-inflated value means that people are effectively enslaved to a bank for the rest of their lives, servicing debts that correspond little to any income they are ever likely to achieve. It is, therefore, a sophisticated form of crowd control—one of enslavement and pacification. The populist demagogue of home-ownership is herding the crowd towards a destination that is wholly against its own self-interest. We are witnessing a vast restructuring of our society with the cost of housing fuelling a new rentier class of debtors, shareholders and land owners.

Recalling Aristotle's *Politics*, the happiness of a city has much in common with the happiness of the individuals that constitute that city. The form a city eventually takes will be governed by the characteristics that its populace value most highly. Our cities, and London in extremis, are being

refashioned as constitutional oligarchies in which the many may be democratically represented but, in economic reality, spend their lives servicing the wealth of land owners and lenders.

That does not lead to the kind of city that embodies the values most citizens hold dear, even when judging only by those values emphasised by the adverts for the tools of economic concentration themselves. It is not leading to happier cities, nor is it leading to cities which encourage vigorous meritocratic competition. It is instead moving rapidly towards the total consumption of both the private and the public realms by the ominous forces of speculation. This can only lead to one thing: the death of the liberal city. ◇

The City Scale Narrative

Illustrations by Kaiser Ulla.
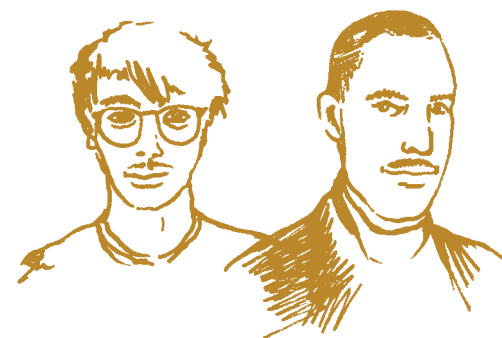
Words by Giovanni Bellotti and Alexander Sverdlov

Alberto Manguel, writer and bibliophile, introduced his 1996 text, *A History of Reading,* with a collection of photographs. All were of readers; one, a heavy hardcover on the lap, the body slightly bowed, an index finger stroking a beard whilst repeatedly scanning the same paragraph. Another, head leaning down so as a curl of hair touches the paper, turning the page of the folio with a slow regular curve. Suspended one metre above the floor, another's hand clutches the railing of a rolling ladder, nose buried in the fold of the thick pages. Another, standing by a lectern with legs crossed, the lithograph illuminated, hands lightly touching the page. These photographs, replicating famous readers in the historical narrative of painting and sculpture, are combined to construct a universal reader through postures, books and furniture.

If Manguel stepped into a library today he would be confronted with far a more diverse array of positions. Someone might be laying on a window sill, the thickness of the wall informally inhabited, wherein they have constructed a self-sufficient camp in which everything is within reach. Books and devices may be spread casually on some pillows, the soft surface of the couch refusing orthogonal order; the body relaxed, buried deep in a soft armchair, a coffee table by the side where phone, glasses and keys are deposited—a soft boundary separating this settlement from the next. A pair of sneakers visible from within a 'cocoon', the interior illuminated from within by LED lights, the surface of the shell stretched under the guest's weight and only dimmed voices coming from within. It appears that the modern library, compared to Manguel's report, can welcome a richer catalogue of readers.

In the library, reading is as much a private exercise as it is a public performance, and the aura of the library derives from the balance and composition of the two. Modern libraries combine these opposing vectors—that of the invisible reader, hidden, free within the capsule, and that of the exposed one, whose gestures are part of a whole, his position and behaviour being the result of subconscious collective interaction (and his understanding of the existing library protocol).

The plain surface of a collective reading table frames its participants. It requires personal objects to be displayed in public, arranged for others to see, requiring people to act interdependently upon a common surface. Reading or studying together on one unified working plane requires more discipline, more attention to the regime of silence, more restrained movements. And yet by imposing these restrictive protocols, concentration becomes a collective act. The capsule, on the other hand, by concealing the reader, doesn't demand an understanding of one's position as part of the whole. In the capsule, people complete the design, just as books complete a shelf.

In the process of modernisation libraries have been devoted to finding new ways of engaging the public. There has been a marked transition from an open archive to a place of personal production and individual creativity. Beyond giving access to knowledge, good libraries are expected to create new networks and build new communities. A list of additional features, delegated to the initiative of the librarian—computer classes, language courses, music lessons, etc. has generally been implemented in order to broaden its audience.

This transition requires spaces that defy the traditional setting of the library, promoting the periphery of the room instead of the centre, darkness instead of light, concealment instead of exposure, clusters instead of lines, couches instead of chairs, capsules instead of tables and desks. The atomisation of the

library floor in isles is now synchronised with the diversification of what it offers. The chair and the table have given way to other, more playful and informal modi of learning and gathering. The design practice contributed to this change with an array of witty and colourful designs, proving that the library is, first and foremost, fun. As the assortment of independent, replaceable fragments wins more weight over the integrity of the whole, library rituals are gradually replaced by a multiplicity of library experiences.

At the level of the city, the public municipal library functions as part of a network. It is through the repetition in different contexts (up to several hundred libraries spread through big cities) the library is elevated from a shared reading room to a civic space. The repetition brings forward the importance of the common denominator, the basic set of rules, essential for the integrity of the system as a whole. At that dimension furniture and, consequently, the posture of the reader prescribe the grammar of the city scale narrative. Intimacy of reading, and the way it is staged, becomes an urban operation. The choice of spatial protocol of the library room balanced between collective ritual and emancipated, individualised experiences will make a definition of what the library is. ◇

Depth Charge

Words by Patrick Lynch

"Our job is to give the client, on time and on cost, not what he wants but what he never dreamed he wanted and, when he gets it, he recognises it as something he wanted all the time."
Denys Lasdun, 1965

"Beauty is mixed up in issues", Eduardo Chillida claimed, suggesting, somewhat more obviously perhaps, that so is the practice of architecture. Although definitions of beauty differ, questions of appropriateness, decorum and scale tend to concern and even to vex the general public, planning authorities, English Heritage, etc. whilst architects tend to remain largely oblivious to the civic character of their designs. Whereas newer cities, such as Dubai, are not (yet) faced so noticeably with the issue of decorum, in most instances architecture is almost always a fundamental part of the problem of the city.

A city is not just a collection of abstract rhythms (as Lefebvre suggests in *Rhythmanalysis*), nor simply the confluence of social and political "networks" (as Latour suggests in *Actor & Network Theory*). Despite the social complexities of any artistic commissions —particularly evident in architectural ones—architects continue to be educated to maintain a solipsistic, and even narcissistic, commitment to 'personal' missions. The obverse tendency is to try to divine design solutions in information flows, data charts and the supposed 'wisdom of crowds;'. The results are strangely similar—design 'methods' are increasingly taught in isolation in terms of metaphors cribbed either from the natural sciences (emerging technologies, etc.), art history (style, type, etc.), neo-community action ('consultation = participation') or bad impersonations of art practice ('what I want, etc.) and in each case what is at stake in an urban commission is largely obscured by rhetoric. What I mean is, architects have a problem of their public image, and also one of self-image, arising, I'd suggest, from their resistance to the directed nature of architectural work.

However, identifying architectural problems does not imply narrowly ergonomic responses to a client's needs, nor uncritical reactions to what the late Townscape Consultant Francis Golding used to call "Banausea". The act of "problematising" something is imaginative, pragmatic and interpretative and it necessitates critical thinking about the constraints and opportunities inherent in a particular situation, the meaning and potential of events.

Critical thinking about cities encompasses the mundane and theatrical aspects of urban life. For example, in his famous essay, *Naples*, Walter Benjamin asked "how much of each weekday is there in each Sunday?" and "how much Sunday in each weekday?" By suggesting that each are imbricated in the other, Benjamin reveals that city life is intrinsically transformational, intimating that civic architecture should be too. Balconies enable individual contributions to the everyday drama of city life, whilst grand porticos act as urban theatres. The structure of the city reveals layers of civic depth. Naples is a city of everyday crowds and sacred festivals, the buildings acting as an agglomerative stage set. This is why the Modernist concept of 'function' cannot describe the theatrical character of urban architecture.

However, it's not enough to say that any sort of life can exist anywhere and of course architecture can also repress activities as much as welcome them (to paraphrase Robin Evans), just as a city can obscure its latent civic depth. This depth is repressed mainly via buildings disconnected from the civic realm and by road engineering that severs connections between urban hinterland and high streets.

Built objects alone are relatively powerless against the destruction of civic depth, regardless of the presence or not of signage or colourful banners on façades, which is why Venturi and Scott-Brown's *Learning From Las Vegas* fails to address the real issues at stake in urban design and in modern architecture—what Peter Carl calls 'civic depth'. Revealingly, perhaps, Scott-Brown describes the city "as a crowd of strangers". The predominance of pseudo high streets with more or less decorated sheds—modern functional-monotypes such as casinos e.g. the Las Vegas Strip—is a specific urban phenomenon that has been replicated across the world as a development model based on the servicing of large retail units, not on any architectural principles that one might derive from a picturesque reading of billboards.

Yet façades are not just billboards to be glimpsed at speed from cars or only there at night, rather, they are thresholds between inner and outer life, linking and relating public and domestic realms, individuals and crowds; ultimately revealing the situational character of civic depth.

"Mass Ornament" (to cite Krakower) is the outward expression of the whole range of situations that constitute popular life (e.g. the law, religion, sport, etc.) which we see represented not only in popular culture (i.e. crowds at football matches, cinemas and theatres—relatively passive groups of people, in fact) but also in situations where people are actively committed to something together and actively participating in it (seminars, religious services, legal cases, planning meetings, all sorts of committees etc.). It is the background structure of the city that supports spatial and cultural continuity and which enables spontaneity and renewal. Architects order and orchestrate spatial situations in respect to this, or they don't. This, for me, is how we can assess the quality of city life and the architects' contribution to this, and this is really what is at stake in architecture today. ◇

Illustrations by Kaiser Ulla.

La Foule

Words by Shumi Bose

Épanouis, enivrés et heureux.
Entraînés par la foule qui s'élance
Et qui danse Une folle farandole
Nos deux mains restent soudées
Et parfois soulevés
[…]
Emportés par la foule qui nous traîne
Nous entraîne Nous éloigne l'un de l'autre
Je lutte et je me débats
Mais le son de sa voix
S'étouffe dans les rires des autres
Et je crie de douleur, de fureur et de rage
Et je pleure
Entraînée par la foule qui s'élance
Et qui danse Une folle farandole

Fulfilled, drunk and happy.
Driven by the rushing crowd
Which dances, a mad 'farandole'
Our two hands remain welded
And at times they were raised
[…]
Taken by the crowd which dragged
Us further away from each other
I fight and I struggle
But the sound of his voice
Is drowned in the cries of others
And I scream in pain, in fury and in rage
And I weep
Carried by the crowd which rushes
Which dances, a mad farandole

Edith Piaf / Michael Rivgauche, *La Foule,* 1957
(my translation).

The lines of Edith Piaf's *La Foule* (The Crowd) advance like a juggernaut, like a manic ferris wheel, a cargo of crazed souls being carried along an inevitable wave.

The crowd—or mob, or horde—is often romanticised, its fluid unity associated with moments of elated intensity and shared experience: we bond in the face of the impossible goal or the all-together rock concert chorus. More recently, its forced contact counteracts our existential solitude, and donating our bodies to the crowd (or even looking at others who have) reassures us that some sort of solidarity is possible, that the atomisation of life can occasionally, and often in response to atrocity, be alleviated.

Yet here in Piaf's song is something terrifying in its dissolute facelessness, in its blind surge, its mad 'farandole'. Suddenly she is alone as she never was before, and in the featureless mass of people her loneliness is all the more profound. You know what's weird about the crowd, or being in one? The contact with other bodies almost causes you to dissolve; you are not you, you are part of the crowd's fluid fabric, existing only on the ecstatic surface where it touches you and the rest of you is smoke. Yet in that liberation, that deliverance from self, there is simultaneously an intimacy which reminds us of our bodily limits. Within the crowd, you are at once given over to the common cause and more conscious of your own skin; the skin, being the very site of the contact-high, is a reminder of one's individual fragility.

Have you ever been groped in a crowd? It is one of the strangest, most disturbing conjunction of feelings. By deciding to enter the crowd your body has been wilfully crushed against others, just as one enters the sea expecting to get wet. In so doing, you have surrendered your privacy in order to join a certain public, to become it, to let go. And so in this letting go, it is not only the physical violation of being groped, but rather the singling out which seems to be disturbing. Here we are, trying to forget ourselves among each other in the cause of something bigger—a crowd which has amassed either in joy or in protest, or in some form of common interest, transcending individual interests. Yet hands which search, trespassing beyond the already-lowered boundaries of physical contact, are explicitly of an individual interest; worse still, they force you to return from a potentially ecstatic plane back to your own individual interests.

Suddenly that absenteeism, that dissolution that allowed you to join the throng, appears menacing. If one loses oneself by the act of joining the crowd, then has responsibility and conscience dissolved too? The comfort provided by being able to join the amorphous mass is flipped; now there is no one to hold to account, no perpetrator (and no victim, because there is no you; you are part of the crowd).

Increasingly I would note the decline of both publicness and privacy, and instead a confusing fudging together of the two. This occurs in the city in many ways: from the coffeeshop commodification of common land, to the unabating use of glass in new 'civic' buildings (allowing a porosity for those within and without), to the skirt-lifting expose of domestic intimacies on airbnb (that first port of call when visiting a foreign city). Our public spaces are becoming more private, and we choose to share our private spaces more than ever. This strange interpenetration—the private control of ostensibly public space against the urge to share even the most sacrosanct of privacies—is currently obscured in the city. Most of us do not know where we stand in space, either physically or morally. And this is where we are, together alone. ◇

Discussion held on 17 January 2015, 140 Hampstead Road

Patrick Lynch, Giovanni Bellotti, Shumi Bose and James Taylor-Foster met up to discuss Canetti, Carl and the five essay responses.

James Taylor-Foster What did you think of the Elias Canetti texts?

Patrick Lynch I think that like a lot of 20th Century writers, Canetti is certainly political, but there's a tension between his individual politics and an ideology. He's a kind of a canonical figure, but not really spoken about in terms of architecture, so I can see why it's a good counterpoint to the typical architectural discourse.

James The tone of his writing is certainly strange; it's very metrical and sterile in the way he talks about people and crowds which, incidentally, he describes as 'packs'. He's essentially likening human society to an organism with flows. It's almost a scientific model for urbanism.

Shumi Bose As a subject you certainly do feel removed, as a subject, from the situation that he's describing.

James Yes, so I wonder, is he talking about crowds of people in relation to the city and to architecture, or is he simply describing them as spatial movements (or flows) that just inhabit the city?

Patrick Lefebvre's *Rhythm Analysis* also has this dichotomy. It's not really about people, nor is it about buildings—it's about the movement of people which seems to elude direct statistical analysis but which, nonetheless, has patterns and cycles.

James I chose these two chapters in particular because in them Canetti makes his position most clear. Namely, that a crowd has to have a goal. For him, if people are just engaging in senseless movement then the act of 'crowding' becomes completely pointless.

Shumi My immediate parallel in images is a corporeal one. The flow of blood doesn't really have a goal, it has a cyclical nature. There isn't an end *per se*…

James Absolutely. And Peter Carl's essay is quite different, not only because it was written fifty four years later in a very different political climate, but also because it directly tackles the question of architecture and urbanism in relation to civic rites and ceremonies, or the ritual use of public space. He uses London as a case-study in this instance, but are the ideas he puts forward more universal?

Patrick Yes, I don't think that Peter's just talking about London. His idea of 'depth' is something that can be immediately recognised as lacking in certain urban situations. I think it's something that you can see in Asia, for example, where the towns that are being created out of petrochemical dollars are creating a new form of urbanism. What is not immediately clear is that it's actually a 20th century form of urbanism; it's car-based, it needs air-conditioned buildings. So there's no real 'depth' to the relation between the building and any civic realm.

Shumi The infrastructure in the end is the organising principle in that context. There are already several organising principles which are laid on top of each other which perhaps produce what Peter describes as 'depth'. Another thing, which I couldn't quite extract from this text of Peter's on which I've heard him speak on it before, is the *political* depth of the city and the opening up of layers of homogeneous political situations.

James Taylor-Foster, *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, 2015.

Giovanni Bellotti Yes, certainly. Infra-structure—trains especially—enormously affected Italian cities, for example. Take Venice: the creation of *Santa Lucia* (train station) meant that visitors entered from the back of the city after passing across a long bridge across the lagoon. This led to the creation of roads above filled-in canals, such as *Strada Nova* which was built under Austrian rule. Venice has always been both lived in and organised as islands in the way it has dealt with people and communities. I think that the train station completely changed this—it added a completely new flow. The only future resource it had was to become a leisure town.

Patrick It's completely changed in the sense that the lived experience of people has changed, but in terms of the architecture it's the same because there was always such richness. Like all catalytic urban events, you often have a gradual change and then a massive one. The Medici family arguably had an enormous effect upon Florence. The creation of banking and the ability to have credit were concepts that were quickly transformed into a semi-industrial product.

It was no mistake that the first generation of the Medici immediately funded an academy to train artists and architects. They understood that the relationship between industry, technology and wealth were integral for the rebirth of the idea of the city as a 'moral spiritual good'.

James This idea can perhaps be encapsulated by what happened in Florence. You mentioned Lorenzo *il Magnifico* and the formation of the garden of *San Marco,* which can also be connected geographically to *Piazza della Santissima Annunziata* and the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*—the first hospital in the world designed to care for orphans and foundlings. Although it was a Servite institution, it was primarily funded by Florentine Guilds pumping their excess cash into the creation of a new sense of urban civic pride. And this all happened in a very short space of time.

I was listening to a podcast recently in which Rory Hyde was asked about what he thought about the pace of densification in contemporary cities. He argued that cities like Shenzhen and Dubai have an understanding of speed that is "completely unattached to the past" which is, he argued, fundamentally liberating.

Shumi He was talking about the pace of development in a positive way?

James Yes, he was suggesting that the layers of 'urban depth' move quicker, I suppose, which creates quite complex infrastructures—especially when densification is happening on such an enormous scale. He was ultimately saying that it's a different form of urbanism but one that shouldn't be dismissed. There are also things to learn from it.

Patrick The *Ospedale degli Innocenti* in Florence is a really good example because what the guilds were doing in medieval culture was challenging aristocrats—up until the advent of capitalism, banking, industrialisation, etc. Workers were making the most of their financial and cultural capital, they were challenging the hegemony of the church and the aristocracy.

Different models of development sprung up all over the place. In Venice it was the *scuole*, something that in England would be called an Alms House, or college. They educated people and promoted cultural organisations. The Guilds of the City of London still exist and are still very powerful. When Norman the Conqueror came to England from France he had his first court in Barking and he had to go into the City of London and ask them to allow him to become their King. They said, 'Yeah, you can be our King but you can't ever come in our city!'

Shumi That's my favourite bit of London history—they basically said that 'This where we make the money, don't get involved!'

Patrick Following World War II architects in Western Europe, alongside local and national governments, seemed to share in a belief that a social democratic government should be more or less capitalistic. St. Peter's Church in Klippan, Sweden (by Sigurd Lewerentz) was partly funded by local government and partly funded by the state, in that case the state church.

This is why I find the *Louis Vuitton Foundation* (2015) in Paris hilarious. Frank Gehry has created a building for the guy that started Hermes bags. It's an attempt to be a philanthropic, to be someone with a public sense of the civic. But it's sat in the middle of a park—it's completely isolated and totally exclusive!

James And also next to some relatively deprived areas.

Patrick And then Jean Nouvel has also just built an opera house which, according to the architect, is designed to summon the youth from the *banlieues* to come to high culture. I mean, there seems to be an urge to do something good. The problem is that if you can't find the architect who knows what that should be and the state has negated any responsibility for it, what do you have?

Shumi Do you think that in the impetus of those buildings there actually is a desire to do something good?

Patrick I think so. Ultimately, people want to spend money. And this attitude is

"That's my favourite bit of London history—they basically said that 'This where we make the money, don't get involved!'"

one which has built a number of the great universities in the US for example. There is certainly a whole philanthropic aspect to culture but the collapse of a social democratic paradigm in Europe has led to this strange situation where people don't quite know how to be a philanthropist.

Shumi When it leads to the creation of exclusive spaces that are built on public land, as I understand the *Louis Vuitton Foundation* in Paris is, it becomes quite sinister. Especially when it's a reasonable amount of money to actually get in and the project itself subverts multiple planning rules, including height. It's supposed to be a single-storey building and it seems like a sneaky move to use ramps to build a 50-metre building and get away with it technically being

'single-storey'. The architect seems desperately to be trying to create public space by creating these ramps around it but they don't go anywhere—they're not connecting to anything but itself!

James This top-down approach to creating civic, public architecture and urban space—masked as philanthropy —is arguably becoming more and more ubiquitous in large cities.

Patrick I agree, and I think that the library is the battleground for all of that. The typology of the library has thematised the enlightenment that books give you, not as something spatial but as a kind of symbol of you rising up from 'ignorance' to being educated. It's not just a façade

> "It's not just a façade of what a building looks like—it's the sense of a joyful, spatial, spiritual ascent."

of what a building looks like—it's the sense of a joyful, spatial, spiritual ascent that is crucial to giving it recognisable…

Shumi …libraryness?

Patrick Yes, libraryness!

Giovanni But the library also needs a lot to survive. This is even truer when you have an expansive weak, diluted network of them. The key is in hierarchy. If the library becomes everything all at once, and we continue to hang more and more things on it, it surely loses something? The main thing which attracts people to the library is the complexity between what is public and private, I suppose. Yet everything that happens in the library can also happen somewhere else, so the entire concept is innately fragile.

James I think that's also a good way of summarising the relationship between civic space and public architecture—intrinsically vulnerable, perhaps more now than ever before.

✦

In our seminar we discussed a number of spaces and places, many of which didn't make it into the fragment that you have just read. Instead, we created a drawing which contains the architectural spaces and urban fragments that would otherwise have existed only in our conversation [see page 56]. Mirroring the format of the Seminar Room itself, this drawing is a *cadavre exquis* (or 'exquisite corpse') —a method by which words or images are assembled into one homogenous object. In this context, it is a visual narrative of our conversation which has been folded and collapsed into a single, surreal, imaginary city.

To give you an indication of what it all means, we enter this fictitious world from the very bottom, in London's Paternoster Square. Passing beneath Temple Bar Gate, we enter Sigurd Lewerentz's Church of St. Peter's at Klippan, before arriving at the southerly end of Victoria Tower Gardens. Passing by the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey we bear left along Victoria towards the octagonal outline of the *Baptistery of San Giovanni* in Florence. Heading north, Buckingham Palace comes into view where, in place of the Victoria Memorial, sits the Talponia semispherical residential complex (Ivrea), and the Mall beyond. At this point, continuing north, we connect to the church of *Santi Apostoli* in Venice and wend our way along the *Strada Nova* towards the train station of *Santa Lucia*. This connects to the *Ponte della Libert*á, opened in 1933 by Benito Mussolini, as it stretches out across the Venetian lagoon. Along this viaduct sit five Soviet-era Muscovite libraries. The tip of the bridge then connects to the urban void between *Piazza San Pietro* (Vatican City) and *Via della Conciliazione* (Rome), which was itself a Fascist intervention completed in 1937. Heading south east, past *Castel Sant'Angelo*, we join the *Via Papale* (also known as the 'lost road of the Popes') —a processional route that once connected the Vatican to *San Giovanni in Laterano*. At this point we are reoriented into *Piazza del Duomo*, Florence, passing along the *Via dei Servi* towards *Piazza della Santissima Annunziata*, site of Brunelleschi's *Ospedale degli Innocenti*.

At the altar-end of the *Basilica della Santissima Annunziata* sits a spatial interpretation of Antonello da Messina's 15th century painting of *St. Jerome in His Study*. At the very heart of this knotted network of rooms and fragments sits the Garden of Eden, as envisioned by Atanasius Kircher in his *Topographia Paradisi Terrestris*. ◇

Doors opening. Lift going up.

With only a few seconds to go before our Lift ride comes to an end, we'll keep it short and sweet, dear reader. And although you probably prefer the awkward silence that's so common between strangers inside one of these contraptions, let's remedy that by *not* being strangers; there's a lot to talk about, after all.

The brevity of lifts and their fundamental relation to movement inform the content of LOBBY's Lift. In it, design projects usually involving machinery, movement and vision are coupled with essays of far-away cities, narrated by writers who share the experience of visiting outside locations as they're lifted away on an airplane or propelled forward on a train.

In this section, peek into 'Eye Catcher', a project whose forward thinking shows how a mechanical entity can mimic the facial expression of the person standing in front of it in the most playful, unthreatening of ways. The two engage in a visual and facial back-and-forth dance that opens up techno-social possibilities for human-machine relations. Read on through—smart phones at the ready—and scan the QR code for 'Ghost Landscapes', to see how technical innovation can reveal the ghosts of the past. How's that for clairvoyance?

As The Lift ascends, you'll be taken on a narrative that spans from South America to Europe, as our writers set out to explore Rotterdam, Rio de Janeiro, Hamburg and Venice. If this trip weren't only in print, you'd be racking up those frequent flyer miles like a jet-setter, dear reader. We apologise for that.

Doors closing. Lift going up.

GHOST LANDSCAPES

VISIBILISING A LONG-GONE URBAN PAST

A Project by Ivo Tedbury

In this age of digital, social communication networks and internet-enabled cameras have given new freedom to the everyday user to autonomously record and transmit their visual experience of cities and architecture. At the same time, the built fabric of cities is also changing quickly but is being driven largely by corporate greed and political scuffling. To set the scene, on one side of the camera lens there is media revolution; on the other side, a disconnect between city inhabitants and city planning. Acting as a secondary technological mediator in the user's experience of the city, 'Ghost Landscapes' is a proposal for an optical interference installation which would form a large scale subversive architectural protest through the hacking of photographs taken in the 2016 Rio Olympic Park.

A starting point for the project was to consider how cities and architecture perform to this new media revolution, both in celebration and protest, on the one hand, large scale, 'spectacular' constructs, such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup have a specific intention to be consumed in this way: stadiums, monuments and plazas, emblazed with sponsors' logos can be pasted over existing fabrics, forming a seamless microcosm of the city 'fit for publicity'. On the other hand, Rio's preparation for the events in 2014 and 2016 have been marked by ongoing protests against the massive investment in construction of these facilities on land acquired in the name of 'urban regeneration', using money which many local people feel would be better spent on housing, healthcare

and education in the existing city. Of particular interest was a small but vocal 'favela' community, Vila Autodromo, located on the site for the proposed 2016 Olympic Park on the north shore of Lagoa de Jacarepagua, which protested tirelessly to keep their homes. This conflict prompted the idea of a dual spatial experience of the site, whereby the two urban fabrics, pre- and post-redevelopment could be seen simultaneously: with the user's naked eye, they would see the new Olympic Park; with a camera, they would see the ghost of the favela.

Luckily, despite other advancements in technology, the act of taking a photo—the relationship between the camera operator, sensor, lens and the scene —remains the same, leaving this process susceptible to interference by optics. Like any other scripted process it can be hacked. If the light value coming from a point in the original 'Olympic' scene is replaced by a light value from a point (with the same spatial relationship to the viewer) in the 'Ghost' scene, the camera is fooled and records the 'Ghost' light values as they reach the sensor so the camera records an image of the ghost landscape.

To maintain the subversive aim of the spatial duality, the key driver was the need to be extremely subtle in the way the devices would appear when the ghost landscapes were not specifically trying to be viewed. Influenced by Sao Paulo's 'Clean City' Law of 2006, where each advertisement could only occupy a certain small proportion of the building façade it was on, the size of the ghost landscape image was cropped to a single vertical strip. Positioned on a rig in front of a camera, this strip moved across the photographic field, depicting each corresponding vertical slice of the ghost image as it went. When captured in a long exposure, the whole ghost image was made visible.

As a spatial proposal so reliant on an experimental application of technology, the built device is not a design for the installation itself but a demonstrative tool to simulate the specific conditions which the installation would create in reality: the device simulates a single LED strip at a 1:1 scale, programmed with a black and white sampled façade from the same Favela, testing the devices within an urban context (Tottenham Court Road) and with members of the public.

If the installation was enacted fully, the hardware would be higher spec (high resolution and full colour) and compacted into a discrete street ornament. Instead, the device itself, designed as a demonstrative prototype, happily shows its inner workings. In targeting a specific 'scripted' architectural interaction—the act of taking a photograph, Ghost Landscapes questions the role technology could or should play as mediator in the built environment.◇

Going Dutch

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A COUNTRY WHERE THE FUTURE STILL EXISTS

Words by Lachlan Anderson-Frank, Photography by James Taylor-Foster

I recently moved back to Rotterdam to escape what I found to be the stifling climate of architectureland in Britain. Despite the British economy being back on track, and housing prices continuing to rise in a way which defies reality, architects have not exactly cashed in on the boom, let alone been called upon to be its champions. Culturally, something has gone amiss. Architects have lost their chance at becoming seers of the future, perhaps having overstepped it in some earlier era with grand visions of tower blocks set in parklands which collapsed into slums. Even more than this, the general mood of doom and gloom in politics and the media bars pretty much any discussion of the future beyond the next election cycle, let alone visionary thinking. But here in the Netherlands, the future is a place which still exists in the country's collective mindset, and it's a space which architects can still enter and imagine for.

It's worth going back a little way in history to understand the origins of Dutch architect's role in shaping their country's future. In 1917 the founding of the Dutch artistic movement *de Stijl* marked the radical proposition of a new way of seeing the world and indeed living in it. The Rietveld Shroder House, a *gesamkunstwerk* (comprehensive body of work), proposed the idea that everyday life could take on the modern aesthetic of industrialised production, not merely utilitarian but emancipating in its

functionality. While at the time, the work was decidedly elitist and avant-garde, it planted the seed for architects and designers to imagine new ways of living. The involvement of Dutch architects in planning their country's future continued after World War II; not least because so much of their built environment was razed to the ground and required rebuilding. While British architects sought to preserve every scrap of history left intact by the bombing, the Netherlands undertook massive rebuilding and housing programs, continuing the evolution of European Modernism's visions for a better future. This interest by architects and urbanists in future planning was as much in grand, sweeping visions for social improvement and change as in the details of the everyday. Housing was designed with large windows and gracious proportions, which continue to be used to this day, so much so that even new homes in Britain offer just 65% of the space of Dutch new builds for the same price, according to a 2007 RIBA survey.

But it's not the price of housing that cuts architects out of the imagining of our collective future, nor simply a reaction against past failures of central government. Today, Dutch architects are actively involved in government spending plans, from infrastructure and transport, to housing and public spaces; they have a place at the discussion table. But in Britain, an enormous gulf has emerged between our profession and the

> "Today, Dutch architects are actively involved in government spending plans, from infra-structure and transport, to housing and public spaces: they have a place at the discussion table."

government, best exemplified by the derogatory comments made by former schools minister Michael Gove that schools shouldn't be designed by architects because that would just be "mak[ing] architects richer". It's a sad day when our government thinks that architects are the ones who are 'creaming off cash' from the public sector through their efforts to design schools. So what can we do to improve our chances of contributing to Britain's future?

The profession has to get back into cahoots with the government. That is, to establish networks and links which lead into the corridors of power, a kind of nepotism even. The only way that architects can envision future ways of living, working and getting between the two, the three most heavy duty functions that our cities must bear, is to have government support. If not in funds, then in a tacitly open door, an ear cocked ready to hear what we have to say. The Dutch have done this incredibly successfully through their Rijksbouwmeester, or Official Government Architect post, whose responsibilities include urban planning, the government estate, architectural education and design quality in buildings. This master architect presents a figure-head for architects to rally around.

So, it's good to be an architect in Rotterdam. In the Netherlands, we're valued contributors to discussions about economic and social development, and how it pertains to spatial planning. We're involved at every level, from the creation of building regulations regarding minimum window sizes in homes, to structural development plans for the city's growth over twenty year periods. Both through a long history of collaboration between architects and government in imagining collective futures, and through contemporary policies such as the office of the Rijksbouwmeester, the Dutch have managed to maintain a connection between architects and government that has otherwise been lost in Britain. Indeed, maybe British politicians could improve their ratings and their engagement with Britain's disaffected young voters, by involving architects in the creation of future visions for society. ◇

EYE CATCHER

AN EMOTION-RESPONSIVE,
EXPRESSION-MIMICKING, INTERACTIVE FRAME
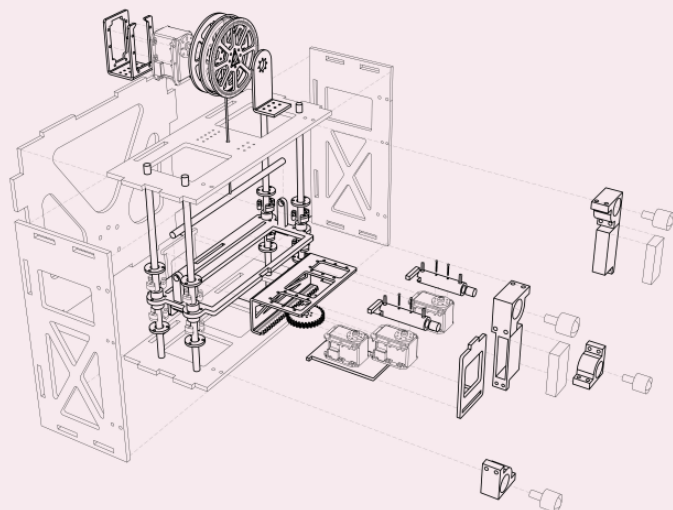
A Project by Lin Zhang and Ran Xie

Eye Catcher is a project that explores the possibilities for building non-verbal interaction between observers and objects, through mimicry of specific anthropomorphic characteristics. It asks to what extent can such mimicry be deployed—specifically utilising eye-like stimuli—for establishing novel expressive interactive interfaces. Research shows that humans perceive dots specifically as eye-like stimuli—a hardwired ability which is inherited from birth. At the age of two months, infants show a preference for looking at the eyes over the rest of the face, and by the age of four months, they develop the ability to discriminate between direct and averted gaze. Therefore, our work addresses the eyes as the foundation of human interaction upon which we build more complex social interactions.

A kinetic picture-frame containing a magnetic fluid is placed on a wall, with the fluid forming the shape of two eyes. Upon detecting a person's presence, the frame moves towards their location for a face-to-face encounter, and the two eyes will start performing depending on the facial expression of who is interacting with them. The height and position of the viewer are calculated by five ultrasonic sensors attached at ceiling level. This information is then communicated to the robotic arm located behind the wall, which drives a magnetic setup behind the frame to align 'face-to-face with onlookers using 'Scorpion'—an open-source robotic control software also developed at the Interactive Architecture Lab (IAL). A wireless pinhole camera in the frame transmits video footage to a computer, which assesses 12 characteristics of the person's facial expression, such as the width of their mouth, the height of their eyebrow, and the location of the faces in the camera view. Different value combinations will trigger the controller for the fluid eyes, which is controlled by magnets.

There are material and software limitations, both in the sensing and actuation part of the project. Facial recognition has been around for a while now, but still there is room for improvement in order for it to be more reliable and consistent. We are also limited with the range of movements that the ferro fluid 'eyes' can obtain, since it is all magnetically puppeteered. The robotic arm that we are using at the moment is not one of the fastest in the industry, and we realised that it cannot always keep up with the swift and unpredictable movements of the viewers. However, these technologies are being developed in other fields such as robotics, computer vision and material science.

The biggest challenge of the Eye Catcher was to design the movement of the frame and the dots, in order to make them appear more animate, as if they are alive. Through a series of experiments, we concluded that a sensitive responsiveness is key in maintaining the viewer's interest. Fabrication provided quite a challenge as well due to the high-precision and low-tolerances required during the making process.

Similarly, designing the emotional responses was another big challenge, which involved a series of iterations informed by experiments. Starting from

> "Every-day products need to be more understanding of users' emotional states. What if they had a life of their own and could understand how we feel emotionally?"

very primitive movements, we carried out experiments in public spaces around UCL to identify people's responses to specific movements. Gradually we started to create more complex responses, based on the feedback we were getting from our experiments. We also noted that people were changing facial expressions too quickly for the machine to react and therefore we had to account for that on the computational side of the project.

We also consider the implication of art that can react to people's emotions. To a certain extent, people's emotions can be read through bio-feedback technology, such as brainwave sensors, heartbeat sensors and facial recognition software, which are increasingly becoming more reliable, cheaper and easier to interface with. We believe that in the near future, every-day products need to be more understanding of the end-users' emotional states and intent. That is what this work implies, what if everyday objects had a life of their own? What if they could understand how we feel emotionally?

For the next stage of the project, we would like to read more than facial expressions from the viewers and intend to include body movements. We also would like to build a more permanent piece using a two-axis rail rather than a robotic arm as a drive mechanism. In theory the frame could then work on a much longer wall which would allow all sorts of new types of interaction to take place.◇

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

Words by Heidi Au Yeung
Photography by Heidi Au Yeung and Ben Sykes-Thompson

In front of us was an infinite horizon, with the waves of the South Atlantic Ocean breaking into splashes at our feet. Beside us were sunscreen coated bodies, stretched across beach towels, tanning under the blue sky and hot summer sun, even though it was already late November. Behind us were neat rows of six storey hotels/apartment/offices with large windows opening up to this priceless sea view. Wide streets lined with lush green trees cut through these neat rows of buildings, forming the grid structure of this planned city. We looked a little further down these streets, turned our gaze a little further up onto towering mountain and the real heart of Rio—the *favelas*.

Like an invasive plant, these favelas climb up the hills of Rio. Red bricks, concrete, plastic sheets and corrugated steel have been craftily patched together over the years to build favela homes. Fearlessly they conquer the heights and dangers of the steep slopes onto which they are built; every unoccupied piece of land is an opportunity for a house. Unregulated and unrestrained, they are built beside and on top of one another, forming an urban maze.

Favelas are the set of many crime scenes, the origin of rising murder rates, the unmarked places on national maps. And these are the places that 22% of the Rio population calls home. "Welcome to Rocinha favela" says Maria, our favela tour guide. And with a strong Brazilian accent, rolling her tongue at each word as though it was a song, she explained, "The favela is in poverty, not misery".

From the rich neighbourhood of Gavea, we crossed the road and entered Rocinha, one of the most established favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Immediately we were caught between people on bicycles, motorbikes, vans, lorries and pedestrians carrying bricks and cement for their home, new batches of clothes for their shop, cans of *Guanabara* (the local fruit soft drink), books from school or the latest mobile phone. We easily blended into this lively crowd as we hurried along with the tour.

The favela homes that rise above these busy streets are continually under development, morphing and adapting to the exact need of its residents. The first floor is usually built by the grandparents, the second floor built a few decades later by the parents as the family grows, and the top floor waiting to be built upon by their children—each favela home becomes the history record of each family.

The ground floor of most homes have now been converted into a shop: barbers, car mechanics, snack shops, clothes stores, groceries stores, cafes, bakeries, electronics, etc. Shopkeepers shout behind their counter, trying to seize every business opportunity they can. Students stand on the corner, reluctant to head home as they gossip away. Boys kick a ball around in any 'residual' space between the favela homes. Elders bring their chairs out to the side of the street for

an afternoon chat with their neighbours, looking after one another's children, watching out for each other's home. Although they lived in separate self-built homes, life spills onto the streets from their doorsteps —they were one, big family.

Just as we were captivated by the scene around us, Maria turns into a smaller street on the side and leads us through narrow corridors formed by the gaps between homes. We were now sandwiched between graffiti covered walls that painted the hopes and dreams, anger and frustrations of the favela residents. Cables and wires, wet clothes pegged on to drying lines weaved into a web above us, filtering the sunlight that lit the path. The occasional opened windows and doors invited a peep into the cosy home of the residents. Despite the desperate-looking exterior walls, they contained comfortable rooms with sofas, refrigerators, television and beds accompanied by a collection of accumulated goods bought with the owner's hard-earned money.

We continued climbing the steep narrow steps, carefully following the footsteps of the person in front of us, trying not to slip or hit our heads on the low-hanging objects. "Remember, poverty not misery", Maria says as she reaches the top of the stairs. In front of us were many homes, densely packed and turning to one another. But in front of us were also opportunities; opportunities to build relationships, to build friendships, to build a family, to build a home, to build a business… opportunities to build better lives in a rapidly developing city. ◇

FOLLOWING CHRISTIAN NORBERG-SCHULZ

Words and Photography by Anna Ulrikke Andersen

I recently came to realise that I've been following Christian Norberg-Schulz for years. Not literally, of course; the architectural theoretician died in 2000, and I never met him in person. But my tedious, year-long research into his life and author-ship—that I had considered as a harmless, even important endeavour—was perhaps better explained as *following*. This in the sense of admiration, or coming after, but also as myself being a physical body of a follower, of walking behind. Historians must be dedicated to their object (or subject) of study, and posses an urge to find answers to their questions. If not, academic life would be quite boring. But as my dedication had led me to a recent project (titled *Following Christian Norberg-Schulz*), in which, through filmmaking, I was re-enacting several of Norberg-Schulz journeys from Norway to Italy, re-enacting events and frames he himself constructed, I started to wonder: what was my position as a follower? What would following entail?

The itinerary of the first stage of my journey, focussing on his 1945 journey from Oslo to Zürich, was constructed from archival material, journals, private photographs, a television appearance from 1992, all backed up with interviews with people who knew him well. Only 19 years old, he travelled with over 100 other aspiring students of architecture through a Europe in ruins. They stopped in Hamburg, where the damages of war must have been over-whelming, and continued south by car. Their destination was the ETH (Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) and Sigfried Gideon's promise of a Europe rebuilt. Norberg-Schulz discussed this journey in a lecture,

where the contrasts of the complete chaos of Germany and peace of neutral Switzerland, where old structures were still standing, made it clear to him the impor-tance of the built environment in creating a meaning-ful existence for human beings. Hamburg was perhaps the journey's turning point (or perhaps a low point?) where the world as he knew it was lost and confused in the rubble.

I possessed this knowledge as I was approaching Hamburg, looking through photographs from World War II. Structural iron arches, stripped of their cladding, piles of bricks, roads obstructed. I imagined his journey as shocking and dramatic. "What will I encounter?" I asked myself. But it was an odd question, this was far from my first visit to the city. Actually, my first ever journey abroad started at Hamburg Hauptbahnhof, when I as a five-year-old. I travelled by train with my grandfather from Norway to Düsseldorf, to bury my great grandmother, the last remaining of the erstwhile vibrant German branch of the family.

Arriving in that enormous station made a huge impression on me at that time, and I remember it vividly. But somehow following Norberg-Schulz made me forget what I already knew, expecting something different of the city and its station. Arriving was therefore a major disappointment, even quite confusing. There was no war. No damages. The motifs from the photographs I wanted to recreate with my own camera were no more. The places were unrecognisable. Hamburg Hauptbahnhof was busy, even cheerful. With my camera I filmed the station, yet the footage was nothing but bland and un-eventful. I zoomed in on a structural detail, parts of a window, without really knowing why. The framing was poorly constructed. The Hamburg Norberg-Schulz had experienced no longer existed. I felt nauseous.

In *Human Space,* phenomenologist Otto Bollnow argues how daylight conceals the world that is experienced in darkness. Did my Hamburg—rebuilt and vibrant—conceal that Hamburg of 1945? Or was that a questionable way of looking at the tragic event of a city destroyed? Had my following, engagement and perhaps obsession lead me into considering things from a perverted and disturbed perspective? I wondered if I'd become as disturbed as Sophie Calle's project *Suite Vénitienne* from 1979, where she follows a stranger from Paris to Venice, stalking and secretly photographing him, crossing all boundaries of what is socially acceptable. To me, my own grand tour had similarities to her twisted version by my following and re-enacting Norberg-Schulz's experiences.

My project, my following, my research could perhaps be described as clairvoyance. As the architect embodies and imagines how the user will experience and use spaces, so did I as a historian visiting geographical locations and re-enacting events to get *closer*. But to me, travelling made distance from, not get closer to, history and protagonist apparent. Re-enactment was shockingly inaccurate; following was perhaps questionable. ◇

NO GUILT

Words and Photograhy by Felipe Lanuza

A comment on the city

Venice gives the impression of having accumulated its history in the damp and decayed surfaces of its buildings. When in her book *Paradigm Islands: Manhattan and Venice,* Teresa Stoppani refers to the "layered reality of Venice that condenses at once a plurality of times", she accurately describes the loaded atmosphere of the city as an outcome of that aggregation produced throughout centuries. Nowadays, however, that process of formation seems to come close to a freezing point. The conservation and restoration efforts to preserve the built heritage of Venice are starting to prevent the natural processes of ruination and change from transforming the city and keeping it alive.

Indeed, one could even think that the ultimate effect of modern times in Venice wouldn't be a radical transformation of its urban fabric as it is in many other cities. On the contrary, it would be an immobilising force turning the city into a frozen scenario that pretends to be almost identical to the shape it had when it was found to be worth preserving. Or at least that's the feeling I left with after living there for a month, while doing research at the Venice Biennale in November 2014.

Does the identity or the value of a city like Venice lie in its actual materiality or on its making throughout time? Rather than taking one position in an already well-developed academic debate, I just want to acknowledge that the first is clearly taking over the second. Either following authentic cultural interest or due to the commodification of heritage for touristic purposes, the frozen (or up-lifted) beauty of Venice seeks to remain identical to its own idealised image. This pleases the eye, of course.

An impression of the city

On that Wednesday morning, the third of November 2014, I walked from the Tolentini library to the *Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezzia* (IUAV) main campus, in the Southwest part of the city, an area separated from the main touristic spots that are so crowded by visitors. What drew my attention the most was the dense fog that covered the city and made the buildings appear as if they were being absorbed in a soft white light. There were no shades, only variations of blurriness and textures, alternating yellow and red stuccoes with naked brick walls. All of that was reflected on the green surface of the canals, and the breeze and the movement of boats drew different vibrations on that inverted cityscape.

The fog also seemed to soften the noise in its more dense and humid atmosphere, together with the odours coming from the water and the dark alleys. But as the hours came closer to noon and I moved to the Cannaregio West area. A stronger sunlight gradually penetrated that immersive and contained environment, opening up to a clear sky. The façades of the buildings started to glow in the hazy air, as did their reflections on the water. At the same time, the increased depth of vision revealed an irregular accumulation of skewed walls, disorganised windows and leaning towers appearing in the distance.

I'm not site writing. I'm only engaging in a retrospective description of my memories, inevitably merged with my imagination and dreams of a place visited, but one that's now away from me.

Some of the photographs I took that morning are presented alongside this text. They capture different moments of that walk, but they are partial views of one single experience. The last image is an overall impression of that place and time, superimposing my photographs. Their transparency allows the illusion of a passing time to come forward as different images corresponding to different moments, becoming evident in simultaneity, not covering but revealing each other. The fog, the water, the walls and windows of the city are condensed and intensified.

I would like to think that the different times of Venice, layered in its urban fabric, are perceived in a similar manner when getting lost in its streets and canals.

A final statement

For long now, Venice has been a place of romantic imagination. Painters like JMW Turner and Canaletto have portrayed this paradigmatic city at different times, capturing its beauty and somehow extending it to its representations. On the contrary, pragmatic views on the cultural and economic value of its built heritage are starting to turn Venice into a frozen representation of itself.

Many architectural discourses deem romantic views as useless, uncritical and only based on aesthetic considerations. There are plenty of contemporary accounts on ruins reflecting that, while claiming that such nostalgic and sentimental approaches need to be overcome to gain a more productive understanding for sustainable development of cities and societies. Although they can be true to some extent, I feel suspicious about most of them. They are normally partial visions tending to obliterate alternative meanings and richer interpretations of place in order to meet quantitative indicators and standards.

I embraced romanticism during my stay in Venice, and I did in a similar manner when representing it in this text and images. I feel no guilt about it. I'd rather like to think that efforts like this could help in looking at the city anew, drawing attention to issues overlooked by more dominant modes of thinking, and going beyond the easy kind of vacation romanticism being served by heritage policies in the city today. ◇

All photographs presented here were taken by the author of this text in Venice, on the 3rd of November 2014. The composite image was also made by the author, of a selection of 20 superimposed photographs taken the same day.

Passion about architecture and design runs in our blood.

Doesn't it, dear reader? We breathe it, we think it, we hate it and we love it all at the same time. Some believe that one is either born an architect or not and that clairvoyance comes as second nature. But if there is such a thing as clairvoyance in architecture, then it surely is a skill that needs to be developed and trained, and nowhere is this more evident than in a Crit Room.

In presentations, tutors and critics drill student projects to the ground to get to root of the design. Architecture is always about reviewing the past, assessing the present and envisioning the future —where the skill of critique is extremely significant in materialising future visions. And LOBBY's Crit Room is no exception.

For this issue, Professor Alan Penn, Dean of The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, gives us his take on the role of the architect in the supposed 'predictions' of future visions and the inability of the architect to truly be critical where it counts. We then open up the doors and pull out a chair for Heatherwick Studio's Jorge X. Méndez-Cáceres and Bartlett School of Architecture tutor Seda Zirek. With four unique and imaginative projects before them, we asked them to grab their Moleskines and discuss: a vision of a happy society called 'PoohTown', an endeavor to save artifacts in the Louvre in preparation for a predicted flood, an alternative method to traditional woodcrafting involving digital fabrication, and finally, a look into the blending of boundaries between architecture and wilderness.
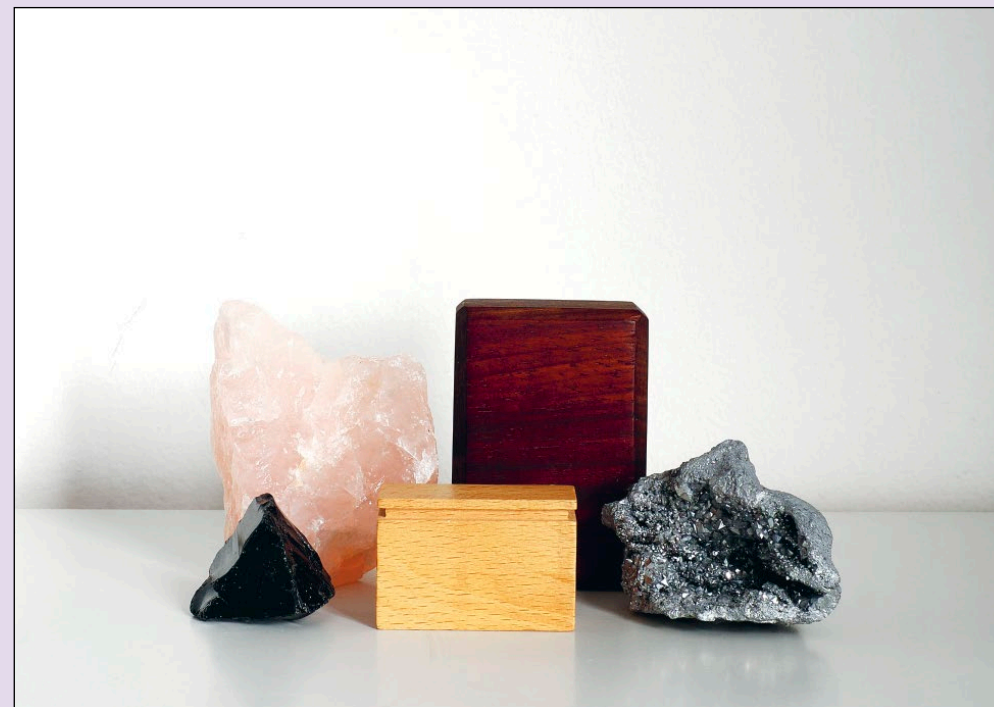
So dear reader, come in to the Crit Room. whether it's to participate and critique, to gawk and marvel or simply to walk through on your way out. But please watch your feet, and don't step on the models.

Jus' Like That?

THE ILLUSION OF CLAIRVOYANCE

**Words by Alan Penn
Photography by Jurgen Landt-Hart**

For the uninitiated, architects seem to require clairvoyance. They envision a world that has yet to exist and then they conjure it into reality. At its best, architecture creates life in a wilderness, havens of peace in a maelstrom. It connects these into complex networks of space that are moved through and appropriated for use by many people in different ways, forming the warp that supports the weft of individual and collective experience; the narratives we weave out of this compose the rich tapestry of culture.

This process of plucking an idea out of one's mind for what a piece of the living world could be, inhabited as it will be by people and communities, and then simply through the placement of material stuff—concrete, stone, ceramic, wood, plaster, metal and glass—make it happen for real, appears close to magical. Unlike the gardener who works by planting and transplanting, fertilising, training, pruning, digging and burning—where the process of life and growth can be seen and responded to over time—with architecture it all happens at once. We go from idea to reality, in the immortal words of Tommy Cooper, "jus' like that".

Architecture, when it works, casts the architect as clairvoyant. Clairvoyance of course is an illusionist's trick. At the risk of being thrown out of the Magic Circle, I will now ask Teller to show you how it is done.

Like illusionists, the best architects depend on exacting observations of the world, understanding the way things function and interact, and predicting the 'what-if' consequences of the many things that they could possibly do. Since architecture is firstly a social art, the illusion depends upon the reactions of people to each other and their environment. In this sense, architecture is not only the mother of the arts, but mother of the social sciences as well. What seems like magic and clairvoyance is actually the result of practiced observation and the training of one's intuition to predict the consequences of complex combinations of design moves on human subjects.

Illusions are built using dexterity and misdirection. Dexterity in this instance relies largely on the way we apply intuition in design. Just like the conjuror's sleight of hand, it seems to be a personal and subjective skill. Identifying the origins of the creative step that resolves elegantly

a complex design problem, often defies rational explanation. We have to fall back on the idea of the creative genius and so the 'great man' theory of creative talent. Our professional organisation, its systems

> ## "The result is that architects are among the least able to explain how they work and tend to fall back on a near mystical account."

of prizes and awards, the critical press and the celebrity culture surrounding 'starchitects' all conspire to support a near mystical status for the individual designer.

Design education is little better. Design is taught through a process of osmosis,

a laying-on of hands, of demonstration of how rather than why, all pervaded by ill-defined language. This is of course how it must be. In a process of training in intuitive dexterity, in reacting without the need to think consciously, understanding intuitively what the effect of a physical reconfiguration of a spatial design will be on the individuals and communities who will, also subconsciously, act and react to it; what other way might there be? The result is that architects are among the least able to explain how they work and tend to fall back on a near mystical account.

Misdirection involves the dominant concern of contemporary architectural culture—with material and aesthetic factors. Faced with an inability to explain rationally their science, architects point instead at the surface features and

distractions that surround architectural culture and its continuously evolving fashion. Of course these features are central to the culture itself, but they serve to distract attention from those aspects of architectural design which inhabitants appropriate for use and which in this way appear to create spontaneous life.

Complicit in this too often are the critics. Hampered as they are by the inadequacies of language to describe either the experiential world of subjects and groups, or the complex relational and configurational aspects of the way architecture affects people, they too fall back on surface features and cultural 'isms. Distracted in this way by material surface features, we miss the dextrous manipulation of space and configuration, which the trained intuition turns to effect.

All too often I must admit, jus' like Tommy, the illusion fails. The architect misdirects so effectively that they distract themselves from the task at hand. Style, surface features and aesthetic concerns dominate and the central plank of the illusion, the life they envisioned and promised, fails to materialise. Then we don't get architecture, we may get building. If it wasn't so important it might, jus' like Tommy, be funny. ◇

POOHTOWN

HAPPINESS IN SLOUGH

A Project by **Nick Elias**
Course **MArch Architecture, Unit 10, Year 5**
Academic year **2014**
Supervisors **CJ Lim and Bernd Felsinger**

Are you happy? Is the world happy? The world may be happy to an extent but the media and disputes between closed denominations arguably encourage the perception of a darker world. Happiness is most often subjective and perhaps more widely spoken of as 'inner peace', suggesting it is a very personal venture. The purpose of architecture is often debated and is becoming something of an emotional prerogative. Architectural projects are increasingly responding to emotional objectives and there is a logical argument for this. Research suggests that happier people generally require less objects, or 'toys' for comfort so if architects design for happiness, our *emotional* state, then users may ask less from the world to satisfy our *physical* state.

Architecture may not necessarily cure personal unhappiness, an individual's emotional state, but it may provide the framework for it. 'PoohTown' establishes the grounds for this, not in a literal manor, but in a thought experiment to question current covert responses to socio-political exclusion in cities such as Slough and other 'depressed' cities. It uses a simple 'happy' premise to explore this potential. Within the fictional spectrum, children's stories offer strong personal experiences. Their worlds are explored at an imaginative and suggestive time in our lives and studies show they are an important mechanism to help us understand the 'real' world.

Winnie the Pooh explores serious moral and political teachings such as love, friendship, keeping active and inventive.

In A.A.Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* a happy world is constructed fictitiously from an unhappy, real, Christopher Robin. During its publishing in the 1920s, industry took off in Slough after the war and the town quickly became a place of unhappiness and social exclusion. For the project, 1920s Slough is revisited to capitalise on the economy of 'happiness' as an alternative industry, using Winnie the Pooh as a metaphorical protagonist for happiness.

Slough and many cities like it ache to be peaceful, happy and socially inclusive. Slough has long since been perceived as being home to much deprivation since the industrial sprawl of the 1920s took place, where hard industry and poor living quality inspired many artists, such as Ricky Gervais and John Betjeman, to evangelize against it's potential. Through my research on Slough I believe an architectural proposal could condition a positive perception, a perception that could be replicated in any city.

PoohTown, aims to re-evaluate existing responses to socio-political exclusion by proposing 'happy' architectures where residents can live, work and play together in a sustainable economic network. PoohTown also philosophises over today's cities' potential to prescribe policies of happiness along-side familiar amenities; a concept worryingly absent in today's city planning. Through empirical research conducted on people from Slough, including children, and other industry towns, it was clear that most people are happiest when playing an idealised,

Can you find Christopher Robin's friends?

COME TO SLOUGH

POOHTOWN MASTERPLAN
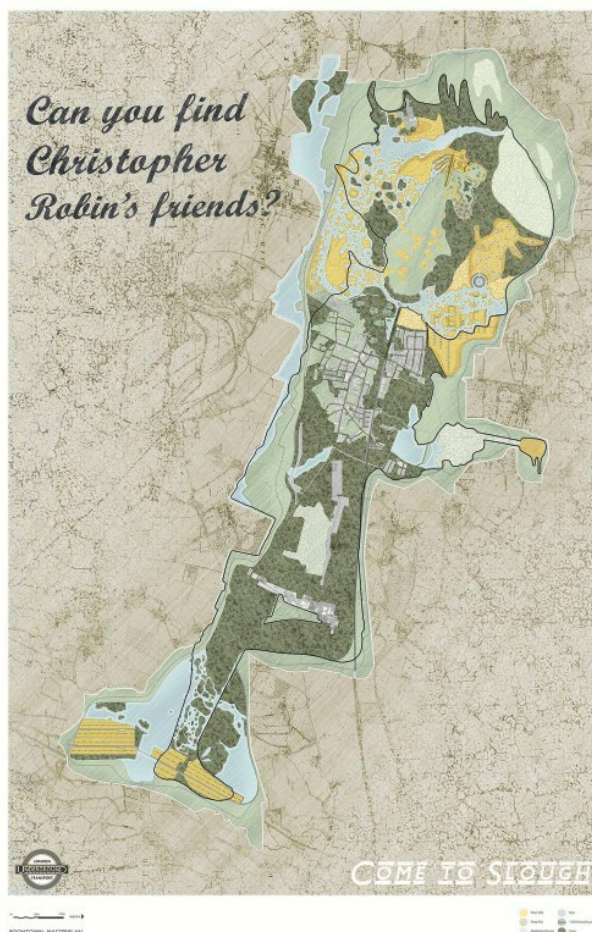
fictional, representation of themselves—from putting make-up on to proving their organic credentials at the farmers' market. Guests to PoohTown indulge in this tendency and become the fictional, happy Christopher Robin by visiting Pooh and friends on a proposed pilgrimage.

Each of Pooh's friends in the book represents a specific type of happiness and become a destination in the city. Research shows that reading fictional books make us happy because we entertain our imagination and massage our potential (eg. wanting to be super-hero), and Owl is an advocate of reading and education in the story. 'Owl's Library' represents this happiness in a designed forest with various 'Ministrees' (sic) as sections of the library. Each 'friend' is explored on a five day pilgrimage in PoohTown and are reached by Boat Bottle (a metaphor of friendship and connection, for in the story Piglet sent a message in a bottle during a flood to Pooh for help!). The boat bottles are dorm-itories that dock into kitchenettes and adventure areas, specific to the characters, around the renovated Slough Industrial Estate. The bottles meander flooded water-

ways which represent Christopher Robin's tears in plan (refer to plan drawing), reminding us of this potential to experience happiness through fictional stories.

After the interactive pilgrimage to 'happy' destinations, guests take to the air in balloons of Pooh's friends and see the friends below in plan before landing in the Emporium to purchase 'happy products', these products are researched from surveys and various papers and take the form of certain 'toys' (for both children and adults). This Emporium is effectively a gift shop at the end of the happy museum to remind us that PoohTown is an industry of happiness. PoohTown therefore argues that designing for happiness may be lucrative system, and that architecture can indeed facilitate this.

PoohTown explores methods of applying knowledge rather than relying on transient technical knowledge to facilitate design. Such a process may expose transferable methods and reasoning that may be applied in other contexts and cities to test the purpose of architecture in a changing world. ◇
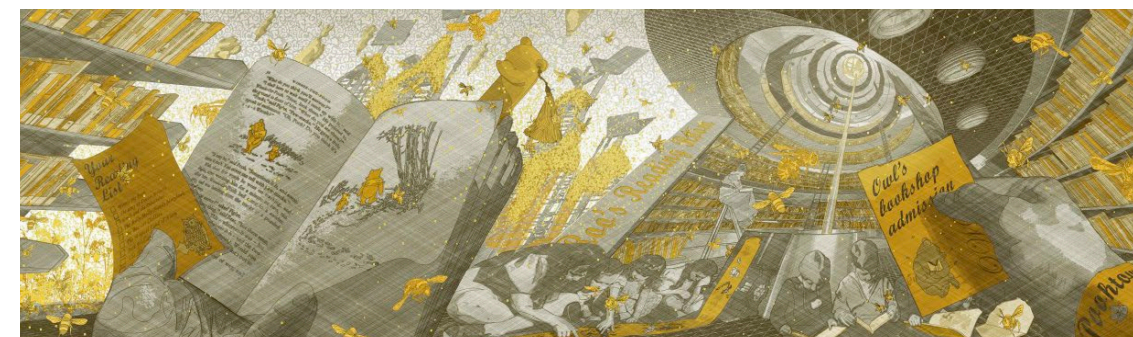
Jorge X. Méndez-Cáceres:

This project uses *Winnie the Pooh* as the driving force to re-think the idea that design can effect, in a positive way, how we experience architecture.

This has been an area of study for many years and yet sometimes we think that, as designers, we have the power to control all of these feelings. I believe that Poohtown has positively nailed the idea of thematic urbanism, from its propaganda posters which successfully 'take us there', to the environmental graphic representations of this town which really make you understand that there is a new way of looking at and developing these sites.

Seda Zirek:

The project plays with the observer's sense of scale, particularly in the aerial perspectives. It makes it difficult to grasp the space and surprises. There is an incredible amount of work in this project. While appreciating the graphic design qualities, I believe the designer could concentrate more on the architectural design from material and structural points of view. Some of the designed pieces, like bottle boats, are explained in detail with sections and perspectives. However, there are no structural explanations combined with its materiality. One keeps asking, are they really buildable or just cartoonish fantasies

FRAGILE THRESHOLDS

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE NEXT GREAT PARISIAN FLOOD

A Project by **Eliza de Silva**
Course **MArch Architecture, Unit 23, Year 5**
Academic year **2014**
Supervisors **Bob Sheil, Kate Davies and Emmanuel Vercruysse**

Harsh winter weather and heavy rainfall set Paris up for a series of catastrophic events that would begin to unravel the shortcomings of the rigid urban city. Remembered as 'The Great Flood of 1910', this centennial event intertwined the River Seine with a complex network of infrastructure, culture, and people that subsequently left behind a legacy of surreal images of a city under water. What made this particular deluge unique, and all the more unpredictable, was how the flood rose from beneath the ground as opposed to overflowing from neighbouring riverbanks. With excess water having nowhere to go but up through urban cavities such as sewer grates and metro stations, there was little locals could do to reduce flood levels except to wait for a natural subsiding, a process that ultimately lasted a month. Hence Parisians faced a critical decision; to leave Paris in temporary abandon or, as the majority of people did, continue life within a flooded cityscape.

Looking through a catalogue of black and white photographs released as postcards in memory of the flood, the continuation of the everyday is revealed through the integration of adaptive structures, boats, and the resilience of the human spirit. Hard to ignore in these frozen moments are the evocative images of a flooded city not in despair, but instead in a state of romanticism through the simple means in which Parisians overcame a dire situation.

At present, the rising waters of the River Seine continue to tease Paris as the city sits in anticipation, awaiting the next great flood. The growth of the French capital as an established centre of culture and history has since provided it a charismatic identity, related in part, to its associated housing of global collections. However the hardline separation between nature and building has left Paris unable to accommodate future flooding, remaining inadequately prepared to deal with a flood of large magnitudes and leaving museums that contribute heavily to the Parisian identity and economy little choice but to redistribute its collections. The *Musee du Louvre* itself has resigned to relocate 90% of it stored collection outside of Paris, bringing up questions about the appropriateness of isolating artifacts in the act of preservation. In opposition of this defensive response, could we instead create conditions that integrate both cultural commodities and people within the uncertain timescale of an impending deluge?

The project explores an alternative landscape of climate change through choreographed infrastructures that accept the changing water levels as the new norm, allowing for spaces to be reassigned and adapted to four flood level scenarios: the 'everyday', 'warning/mobilisation', 'general flood', and the 'worst case conditions'. By addressing the way in which museums could continue to operate in the delicate intersection between the river and the city, the current boundaries between the two must be re-envisioned to allow both systems to co-exist without an oversimplified separation of the two.

Orientating the Musee du Louvre as a focal point of interventions, analogue and digital experimentation are used to develop permeable skins and actuating structures that—through variable buoyancy—allow for museums to actively reorder collections in relation to the rise and fall of water levels. The resilient yet dramatic quality evident in 'The Great Flood of 1910' is an important driver in establishing testing stations that interrogate form and surfaces, aiming to blur the boundaries of an

urban city through performative interventions. A deconstruction of material thresholds in turn develops a language of fragile skins, enveloping art within pocketed structures that allows the flood to travel within chambers, affecting individual buoyancies that reposition work beyond or within the flood.

Unlike the existing organisation of artifacts, which displays work by region and time period, the relationship between art and flood is made central to its preservation. The values and unique material properties of each art piece provide context where new narratives are constructed, allowing artifacts to become protagonists of the flooded landscape. The marble statue of the Venus de Milo is, in this narration, encapsulated within a shell of protective surfaces with specific openings allowing us to view her in the state of flux caused by the river. The multiple internal layers then provide support or reallocate water to let Venus lift above the flood. This intrinsic weaving of nature and museum forms a subsequent series of bespoke anticipatory spaces, a careful orchestration that operates in an indefinite timeline. Whether it is a heroic rise of Hercules or a romanticised sacrifice of Cupid and Psyche, these spaces respond in slow movements, straddling the intersection of a very physical disruption with the mythical status of key cultural commodities. From a re-curation based on new values and retelling of the stories behind each masterpiece, we are thus reminded that we preserve, not through isolation, but through remembrance. ◇
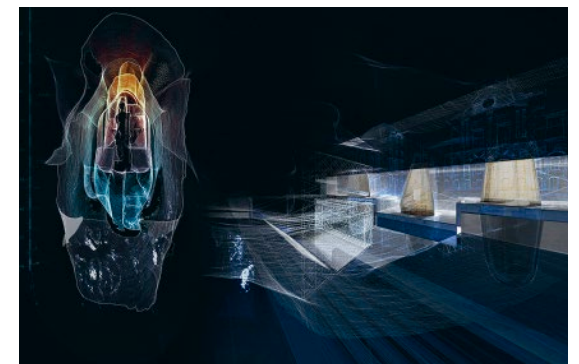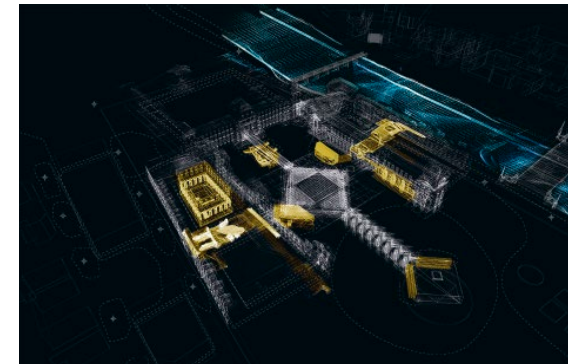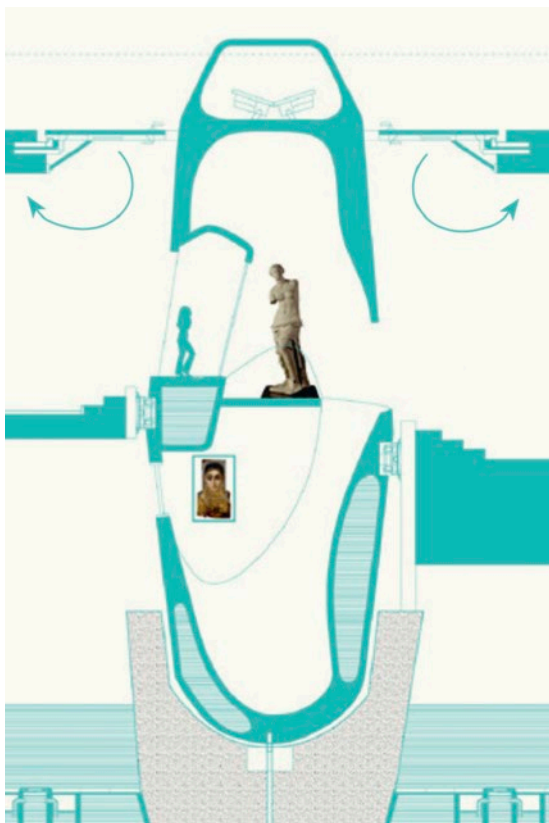
Jorge X. Méndez-Cáceres:

Humans have always attempted to go against the current and alter the flows of nature. In this case, we humans have affected these flows, indirectly causing a chain reaction to occur. This project tests ways to preserve culture by scanning items and defining ways of individually protecting and preserving them. I'm curious whether this idea could have been explored via other items with relatively similar or additional cultural value, one example being the built environment. In general I believe it is a great proposal but I wonder if there was space to understand other ways of remediation, on the macro scale, which current technologies already utilise, in order to preserve overall spaces.

Seda Zirek:

Considering the consequences of different degrees of flooding brings a level of sophistication to this project. The archive photos are great in terms of imagining the overwhelmed effects of a flood in this well-known city. In my opinion, each encapsulation—designed to protect the artwork in case of flooding—creates a room-sized museum rather than freeing the artwork. This is due to the distance between the artwork and the observer. Consequently, the form of the proposed capsules could be reconsidered to unite the two. As it might not be possible to place each artwork in a capsule or some flood-proof platform, what are the criteria to choose which work is saved and which will be sacrificed?

RESOURCEFUL FALLIBILITY

RESEARCHING WOOD-MILLING FABRICATION AND
ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION

A Project by **Wangshu Zhou and Jieru Ding**
Course **MArch Graduate Architectural Design, RC2**
Academic year **2014**
Supervisors **Isaïe Bloch and Moa Carlsson**

Universally, because of the limitation and faultiness of the manufacturing technology from traditional crafting to mass production and even digital fabrication, there is always some dissonance between the design performance and the process of making which is named as the 'misfit', existing in producing, assembling, fabricating, structuring and sometimes in the material behavior and properties themselves. Therefore, realising its designable possibility, we have focused on studying these 'misfits', bringing them into the design process and turning the defects into merits.
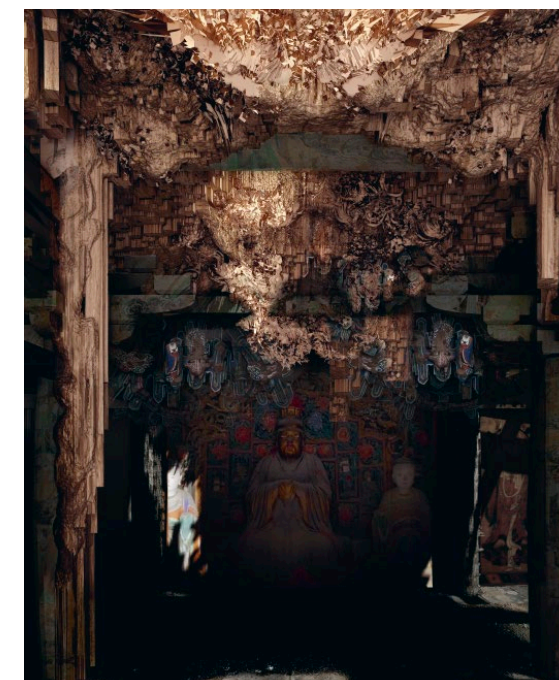
Based on the material study, this project explores the relationship between the material properties of solid wood and the CNC milling technology. Generally in the CNC milling process, the unexpected wastes and inevitable traces will be left on the materials. This 'misfit' universally exists in industrial manufacturing and the common solution relies on increasing mechanical accuracy to avert these by-products and punishing afterwards. However, digitally, as we can easily control the parameters of the CNC machine and shrink the gap between design and manufacturing process through CAD/CAM technology, it is very possible and essential to design the misfit and apply certain meaning to them rather than refining the flaws, which is costly.

In our material study, by means of the prompt feedback on the physical effects of the drilling

water to specific locations of the temple, where new hydroponic vertical gardens are located, and third, to battle the increased wear of the temple due to tourism, provide new interior spaces and a new circulation path with the blossom of milled ornaments.

Therefore regulating the movement and aggregation of rainwater threating the original wooden buildings on the site become the fundamental morphologic generator combining with the result data in the early experiment. In detail, as considering about the priority of water-guiding effect which means the motion and trail of rain flow will influence the design form directly, the morphologic hierarchy of design geometry are systematized and standardized. Firstly, the overall geometry function as the rough guidance of water flow connecting to the existed buildings evolving roof, brick wall and their foundations. And secondly, the basic geometry for the milling process, which is distributed deliberately and digitally to control the expected 'misfits'. And lastly the 'misfit' itself including traces and wooden wastes which are essential for enhancing the water-guiding effect and absorbing high moisture for fostering the vertical garden. These conceptual proposals, with the mutual influence among the hierarchical geometries, are later tested both in the physical experiments and digital simulations.

For constructing and assembling, the modular system of wooden components ensure the morphologic flexibility and aggregated dexterity for design form. These customized cellular wooden bricks embed with milling geometries shape the overall design form and meanwhile determinate the distribution of milling by-products. Comparing with the application of CNC milling to wooden material in large scale, the modular system aims to challenge the typically high material wastage of milling, as well as the relationship between buildability on site and mass customization.

From this project, we believe the wooden fabrication plays a significant role in digital fabricating domain to mediate the great leap from crafting to digital age. Our role as designers in the twenty-first century is to renegotiate the relationship between the technology of digital fabrication (that struggles with predictability and a lack of materiality) and the notions of craftsmanship (which are too time consuming and exclusive). Therefore, we treat the traditional wood material, combined with digital fabricating, as a guidance to give true spirit of craftsmanship to the digital age, namely bespoken manufacturing but with profound precision and less cost consuming. ◇

process, computational control and digital modeling, a design system is proposed to convert these uncontrollable 'misfits' into designable elements within their size and distribution. In the early physical test, firstly, aiming to present and assess the capability of the CNC milling effects with different morphologic properties of traces and wooden wastes, varied parametric setup in CAD/CAM technology including the 'max step-over', the 'max step-down', the size of drill bit etc. are sent to the milling machine. Meanwhile, we try to relate the geometric properties of the milled object characterised by the successive slopes with varied scale and space between each adjacent geometries with the outcome and conditions of the milling surface.

After legible mastering of the milling process with following by-products, we approach further to the architecture domain. Applying these material system to the extension proposal of the Hanging Temple, in Shanxi province, China which consist of the delicate wooden structures, we mainly aim to achieve three architectural purposes. First, to reconstruct the roof structure to regulate the motion of water flow from water damage due to rain. Second, to guide rain
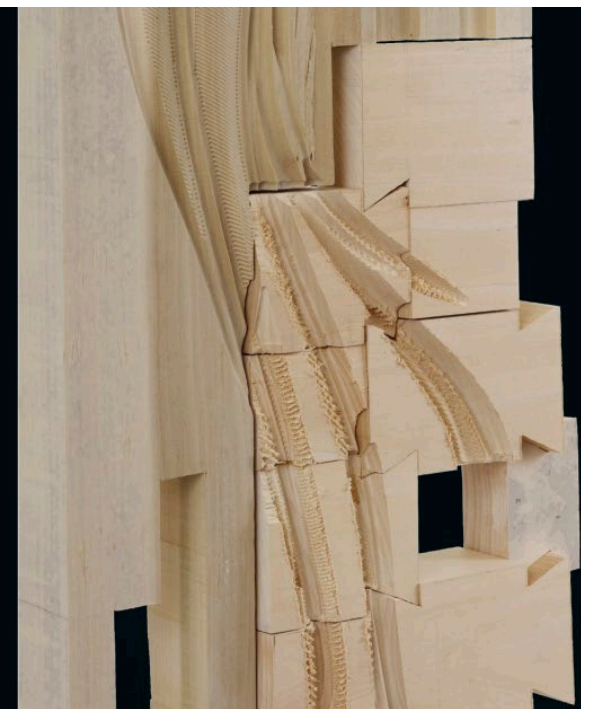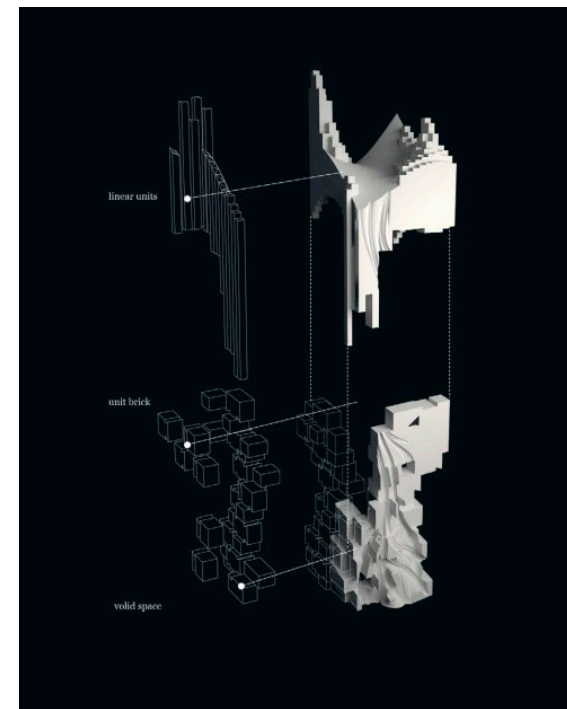
Jorge X. Méndez-Cáceres:

The cross between linear units and unitised bricks successfully addresses the current site issues and brings the idea of customisation to the table by adding another layer of information. The use of the standard unit brick is (conceptually?) stronger than the linear units since post-customisation alters the topology rather than the length of the piece. However, it is understandable why the combination of linear and unitised options were used, considering the selected unit shape and the different adaptations the components have to go through in order to adapt and react to the current conditions on site.

At the micro scale, it is interesting the way that the units are morphed in order to accommodate vegetation and flows of water. This morphing gives rise to a new overall geometry which elegantly mutates and blends the content with the context. It would have been interesting to see more information regarding the different digital simulations that informed the final morphology in order to gain a better understanding of the decision-making process.

Seda Zirek:

This project creates a strategy which can be applied to different sites with different architectural forms. This versatility is due to components with different axis and lengths. The component-based structure is successfully reflected in the interior as well as exterior of the project. Visually, the project is successful in creating an extension which is greatly harmonious with the existing temple. However, there are some decisions which shape the overall form of the temple extension, that are not explained in this project.

The project has two different surface patterning. The first one is a puzzle-like joint system of wooden bricks, and the second one is a surface carving for water flow. These two patterns integrate in some areas, where there are hotbeds for plantation, but the integration of these two patterns could be reconsidered and developed further. For instance, the pattern of the water flow is disintegrated with the existing brick walls. These areas could be designed while considering the connection points within the walls.

THE SUBLIME WILDERNESS INSTITUTE

EVOKING AN EXPERIENCE OF THE SUBLIME IN LANDSCAPE AND ARCHITECTURE

A Project by **Xuhong Zheng**
Course **MArch Architecture, Unit 12**
Academic year **2014**
Supervisors **Jonathan Hill, Matthew Butcher and Elizabeth Dow**

Around the 17th and 18th Centuries, there was a profound transformation in attitudes towards wilderness, which was partly due to its increasing scarcity as more and more land became cultivated. Through transcendent portrayals of wild nature by Romantic painters and writers, previously feared wilderness landscapes became ever more celebrated. This was followed by increasing concern for the protection of nature, with the establishment of nature reserves and national parks.

As a reaction to the failures of the current Green Belt policy and as a strategy to offer intense pockets of wildlife, this project proposes the re-use of brownfield sites (wasteland) across England to become islands of wilderness, by allowing the land to lie fallow and for diverse ecologies to flourish. There are 62,000 acres of brownfield land in England alone. This is the new alternative to the Green Belt.

The disued clay quarries of Stewartby, Bedfordshire become key test sites. Since the brickworks closed in 2008, the surrounding clay pits have become a vegetated, seasonally flooded landscape with qualities of the sublime. As land lies fallow, it may recuperate. The landscape architect Gille Clément describes these brownfield sites as "a paradise of weeds, an artificial ground for unexpected assemblages of species and new aesthetic formations." They become islands of biodiversity and abandoned sites of wonder and enchantment.

Situated on the edge of one of the fallow pits of Stewartby, the Wilderness Institute houses a community of researchers, environmentalists, ecologists and artists who inhabit the wilderness of both the landscape and the architecture. A series of layered spaces form varied levels of enclosure, certain parts inhabitable to animals and birds. The building forms an inhabitable wall around the pit, controlling entry and views into the site whilst acting as a catalyst for wilderness to develop—through actions such as seed release by wind, rainwater collection and release. The Institute also becomes a new centre for planning decisions regarding developments for generating wild landscapes across the Green Belt and a seed bank and seed exchange centre for the region.
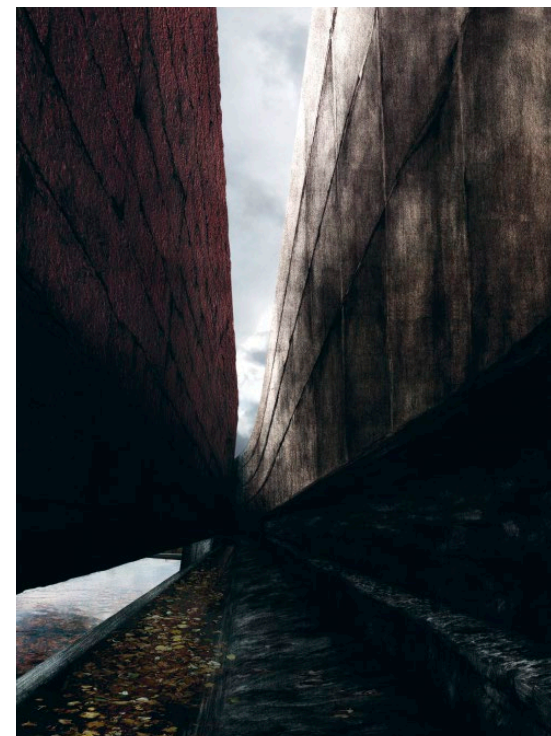
The project investigates the Sublime as a quality of both landscape and building. The Sublime engages with the darkness, obscurity, vastness and terror often associated with natural elements and the wilderness of landscapes. These key aspects of the Sublime are discussed by Edmund Burke in his 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. The project investigates the ways that architectural spaces can evoke an experience of sublime wilderness through manipulations of light and colour, as well as its relationship with the natural elements.

The journey towards the Wilderness Institute begins from a distance, by leaving the village of Stewartby on foot and passing by the neighbouring cultivated fields. Then, one is led by a meandering path through the existing deciduous woodlands before turning to approach the building from its northern corner.

The journey through the building is constructed as a journey through a landscape, a sequence of ambiguous spaces that expand and contract as one moves through, varying in juxtapositions of light and darkness, openness and enclosure. The fluctuations are orchestrated in order to elicit feelings of the tension and release, terror and exhilaration associated with the Sublime. Spaces concerned with obscured views, dark reflections and colour immersion, aim to disorientate the visitor and give suggestions of the outside without direct views. Along the same journey, a series of spaces offer views out towards the landscape of growing wilderness. These act as points of orientation that help the visitor or occupant to relocate themselves in relation to surroundings.

Whilst the viewing of the landscape is important to the project, the relationship between the building and nature extends beyond the purely visual. The building challenges conventions of what we expect from inhabitable spaces, moving away from the Modernist idea of architecture as a sealed enclosure by bringing elements such as water and wind inside. Jonathan Hill's Weather Architecture argues, "The climate and weather were important to the architecture of sensations because the Burkean sublime depended on the drama of natural forces." In this way, the building is greatly affected by the changing weather, allowing for a mixing of elements much like Turner's approach to nature in his paintings. Layered ambiguous spaces along this inhabited wall vary in their levels of enclosure, at times dramatising the experience of weather by funneling wind and allowing rainwater to linger and reflect inside.

By bringing the sensations of 'otherness' associated with wilderness into the architecture, the experience of moving through this new building/landscape is one where natural and constructed elements blur and collide. Proposing an architecture that engages with sublime sensations of wilderness is an attempt towards an architecture that embraces the fact that we exist in nature, always subject to natural forces and elements. Rather than expecting architecture to act as neutral, stable enclosures, the project argues for spaces that are stimulating to the senses and evocative of emotions. ◇
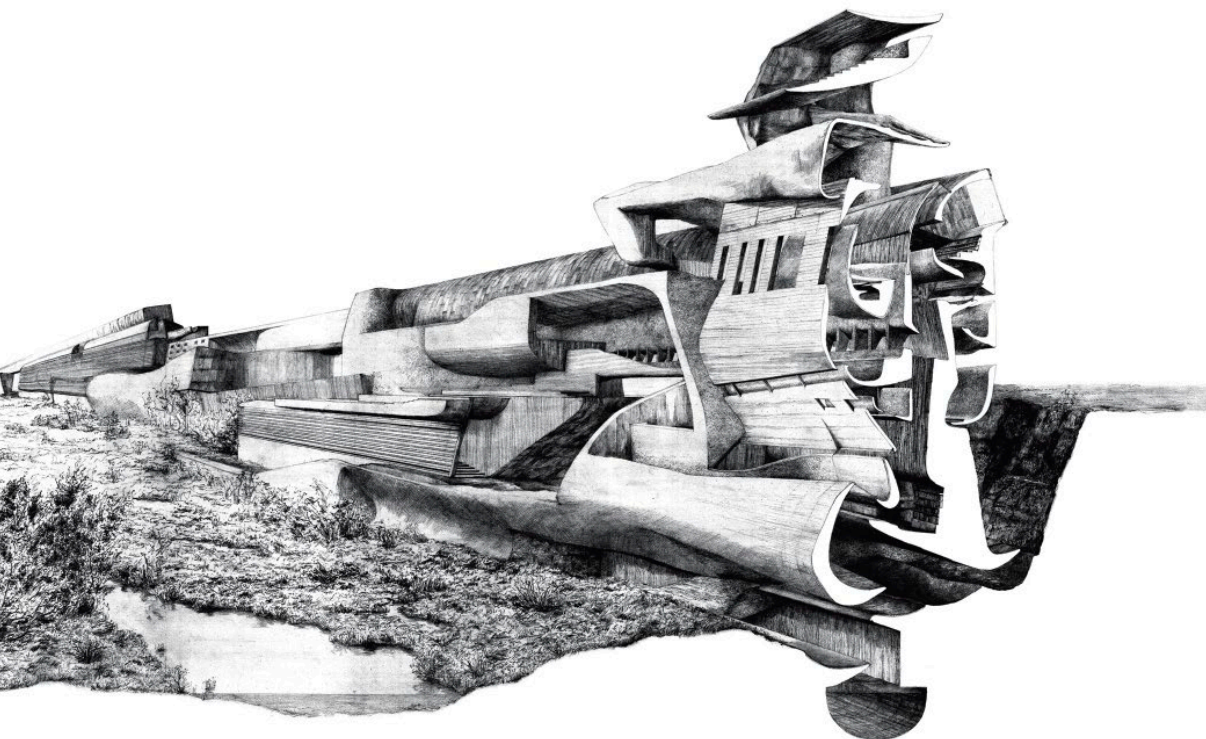
Jorge X. Méndez-Cáceres:

The graphic representation is outstanding in this project but lacks one of the main reasons for which the project was imagined in the first place: Green-ness. The boldness of the proposal successfully revises the idea of controlling issues of urban sprawl and urban density with a new green pause in a sort of mediaeval way which I find highly successful. It would be interesting to see how different beings would inhabit the spaces created, how the vegetation will grow out of control, expanding into cavities where the sun hits. One might ponder how the user and the interface between basic architectural elements and concepts could be affected. This ambiguity leads us to interrogate: what happens in the system if this differentiation of chambers ends up being experientially monotonous after one mile of walking?

Seda Zirek:

What are the implications of the current green belt policies and why does the designer not agree on them?

Does the designer get involved in the transition from a wasteland into a wilderness area? Where does the wasteland go if it is replaced with wilderness? Don't we need them anymore? Did the designer look at the qualities of the land in such areas? Is it more poisonous or actually more nutritious? How does the transition from a wasteland to wilderness work?

Some of the sections of the project are quite interesting in terms of understanding the project's relationship with environmental factors, such as light. A human figure could have been useful to understand the scale. A large-scale landscape plan could have been useful to experience the size of this wilderness area.

One step at a time… tread by tread, riser by riser… up and down…

Most of us have experienced the act of going up a Staircase. The beauty of stairs is that they have no boundaries, they can be endless, and they have infinite possibilities that allow us to move fast or slow, to take one or two steps at a time or pause between stairs. Behind the pages revealing LOBBY's Staircase lay the overlaps between architecture and other disciplines. Different ideas layer themselves onto the study of the built environment, where each staircase metaphorically leads to a different floor, a different strata.

Up first in this issue's Staircase, we'll uncover what the indigenous population of the Andes can teach us about the logic of spatial changeability. We are then beguiled by the idea of what it would be like to take a spin in the not-so-distant-future's car, as we explore how such an automobile would impact urban mobility and user experience. Continuing up the stairs, we'll take you on a journey to explore the sensorial properties of a forest when seen as a city of trees. We'll let you pause and take a breath, before we take you south of the River Thames, to see how Herzog and De Meuron used transitional spaces to connect their newest annex at the Tate Modern to the main museum. And as we make our way up the last flight of stairs, we'll explore the urban implications of an innovative system for mapping crime activities through the use of mobile phones.

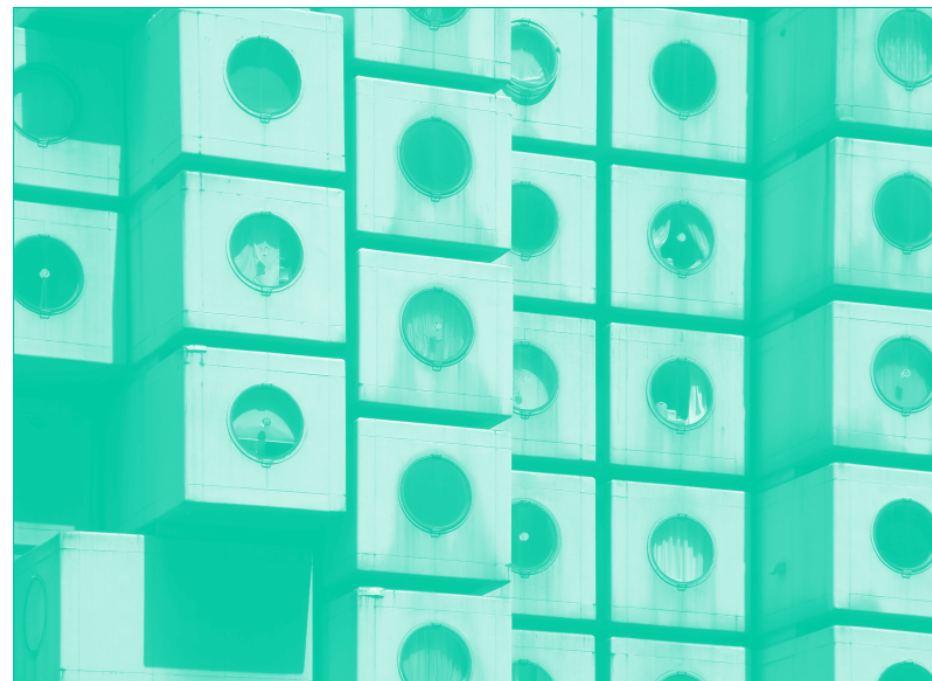Keep a steady pace, dear reader. And don't forget your water bottle.

Reversing to the Future

CHANGEABLE PLANS AND ANDEAN LOGIC

Words by Ilkka Törmä

Nakagin Capsule Tower.

When speakers of Aymara in the Andes talk about the future they point behind their backs. The past they position is in front of their eyes. It is culturally unique, but makes sense; the past is eye-witnessed. From the Altiplano, the Euro-American modernity must appear strange, obsessed with head-long technological advancement as in the image of 'American progress'. After the discontents of 20th century function-alism, avant-garde architecture has turned from revolutionary to evolutionary and now 'involutionary', as Emmanuel Petit, a visiting professor at The Bartlett, describes it. Laying bets on technological progress anew, now in the name of sustain-ability, comfort and security, contemporary architecture shows symptoms of intro-version and resignation from the context as too complex and hostile to deal with. How can architects remain, in the words of Koolhaas, "foolishly optimistic yet relentlessly critical about the future?"

The radical 1960s conceptualised changeability as a future-proof alter-native to the inadequacy of functionalism. Designing changeability is paradoxical. Jacques Ellul, a fervent critic of modern society points out in *The Technological Society* (1967) that planning, by definition, aims at fixing things, therefore flexible plans tend to rigidify or never become reality. Few past experiments that manifest changeability have indeed fulfilled their promises. No capsule has been moved in Kisho Kurokawa's Nakagin famously 'fluid' Capsule Tower. In many of the mid-20th century flexible designs, resurfacing in today's paper architecture, technology offers an illusion of freedom in the form of replaceable or mobile modular elements, for instance, but it is in fact a vehicle of technocratic control; it constrains the user to predetermined scenarios and particular technical systems. Even planned spatial indeterminacy, independent of particular technologies, does not guarantee changeability. Centre Pompidou, designed for flexibility, growth and change, has been rigidified. In the words of the archi-tectural critic Giles Worsley (*The Telegram*, January 26th 2002): "The very freedom it offers seems to sap the creative juices… radical architecture is not of itself cond-ucive to artistic creativity."

The concept of changeability has re-gained momentum from contemporary computational tools. Models that remain changeable till the very moment of their realisation could replace fixed plans. I second the idea, with caveats. Often times computation-inspired designs extrapolate the ideal changeability from digital model to the tangible world, blurring the bound-ary between the two, like in Zaha Hadid Architects' *One North Masterplan*, whose organic forms are claimed to be 'free', while strictly controlled to achieve a particular city-image. Like the experiments of the late 20th century, an adaptable model appears as an organic, scalable system, a deceptively natural and compelling instrument of mastery—but the reality is different. A clairvoyant cultural critic, Walter Benjamin, brought out that montage is truthful as a technique because it renders the denaturalised state of the artwork explicit. The same applies to a building. Reality is messy. Any future-proof design must allow the inevitable bricolage. Dana Cuff, in conversation with Tom Verebes in *Masterplanning the Adaptive City* in 2013, stresses that a key challenge in computational urbanism is whether one can "build in enough uncertainty and contingency… to avoid

Bolivian Altiplano.

> "No matter
> how successfully
> spatial change
> is parameterised,
> there are cultural
> obstacles."

it becoming a gaming strategy." What is needed now is the Ayamaran view; looking back to understand the future, radical knowledge to understand changeability, excavations into the material past of how things have actually changed and how they have given rise to new forms and typologies. Architecture and urban design have always been about playing with parameters, only their ideals have changed and their processing power and available information has ballooned.

Uncertainty is not randomness, but a question of difficulty—discernible organised complexity. With this challenge I started my dissertation, *Morphology and Adaptation: Case Studies on Demolition, Modification and Use Change,* in 2014 at The Bartlett's Space Syntax Laboratory. I demonstrated how spatio-functional factors influence demolition, modification and change of use in suburban building stock and how their influence changes dynamically as the areas develop. Certain urban forms are more robust or adaptable than others. Notably, some conclusions were against simple deductive reasoning: while spatial centrality is a prerequisite of adaptation, the two are not coupled linearly, but physical adaptation appears to be higher where centrality is not extreme; such a location maintains its rate of

adaptation over time. Above all, the study asserts how spatial changeability is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, but some of it can be grasped. Parameterised, such information can create fuzzy spatial models where contingency is embedded.

No matter how successfully spatial change is parameterised, there are cultural obstacles. The Euro-American culture is intolerant to uncertainty. It values certitude highly, that is how commissions are won. The Aristotelian bivalent logic dominates natural languages, logical conclusions cannot be arrived at from doubtful premises. Aymara is different. Its speakers must express whether they have witnessed a topic or whether it is hearsay. Iván Guzmán de Rojas, a researcher into Aymara, has demonstrated the trivalent logic of the language. Using various linguistic modalities, Aymara can express a variety of probabilities of an action. Incredibly, an Aymara speaker can draw precise conclusion from uncertain premises.

I wish I could present my plans in Aymara.◇

Déjà Vu
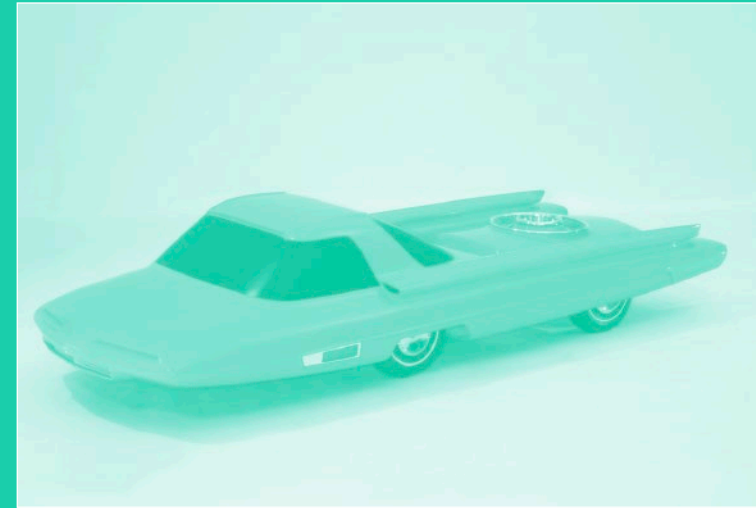
LOBBY meets designer Joe Simpson to talk about how future of movement in cities look like and how new, exciting creations of mobility might seem more familiar than we think.

Words by Laura Narvaez

It's 2015. While we can still imagine Doc Brown's mind-blowing creation of a DeLorean sports car transformed into a time-machine device from 1989's Back to The Future, where a car having the capacity of reaching a speed of 88 miles per hour is fuelled with a plutonium-powered reactor that achieves the "1.21 gigawatts" of power necessary to travel through time. But the truth is that all this fiction contrasts heavily with the reality of what our cities have become today and our role within them. This, in turn, has changed our expectations for the future of our built environment.

From the first 1769 steam-powered

tricycle invented by Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot, to the first gasoline-powered automobile by German Daimler's motorised carriage, to Henry Ford's mass production of the car in the US in 1920, or Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Car in the early 1930s, the vehicle has been the object of design that has had an effect on city life, freeing us from any limitation of any geography. It has created mobility on a scale never known before taking effect on living habits and social customs.

Looking back on its history, the car has shown us the possibilities of growing infrastructure. It has narrowed the gap between rural and urban life, changing

the growth of suburbs and allowing people to work in the city without needing to live in them. Lastly, the automobile has given us the freedom to travel when we want to and where we want to. That freedom of mobility makes us wonder, what will the future of the automobile in cities look like?

To discuss this, LOBBY met with designer Joseph Simpson, who gives us a glimpse of how technology has enabled new options for mobility in cities and what we can expect from the future of the vehicle. Joseph Simpson is Research Lead at Car Design Research and a Tutor at London's Royal College of Art in the Vehicle Design department.

Lamborghini Marzal.

"For me one of the questions is, what are you actually going to be doing in a car that's driving itself?"
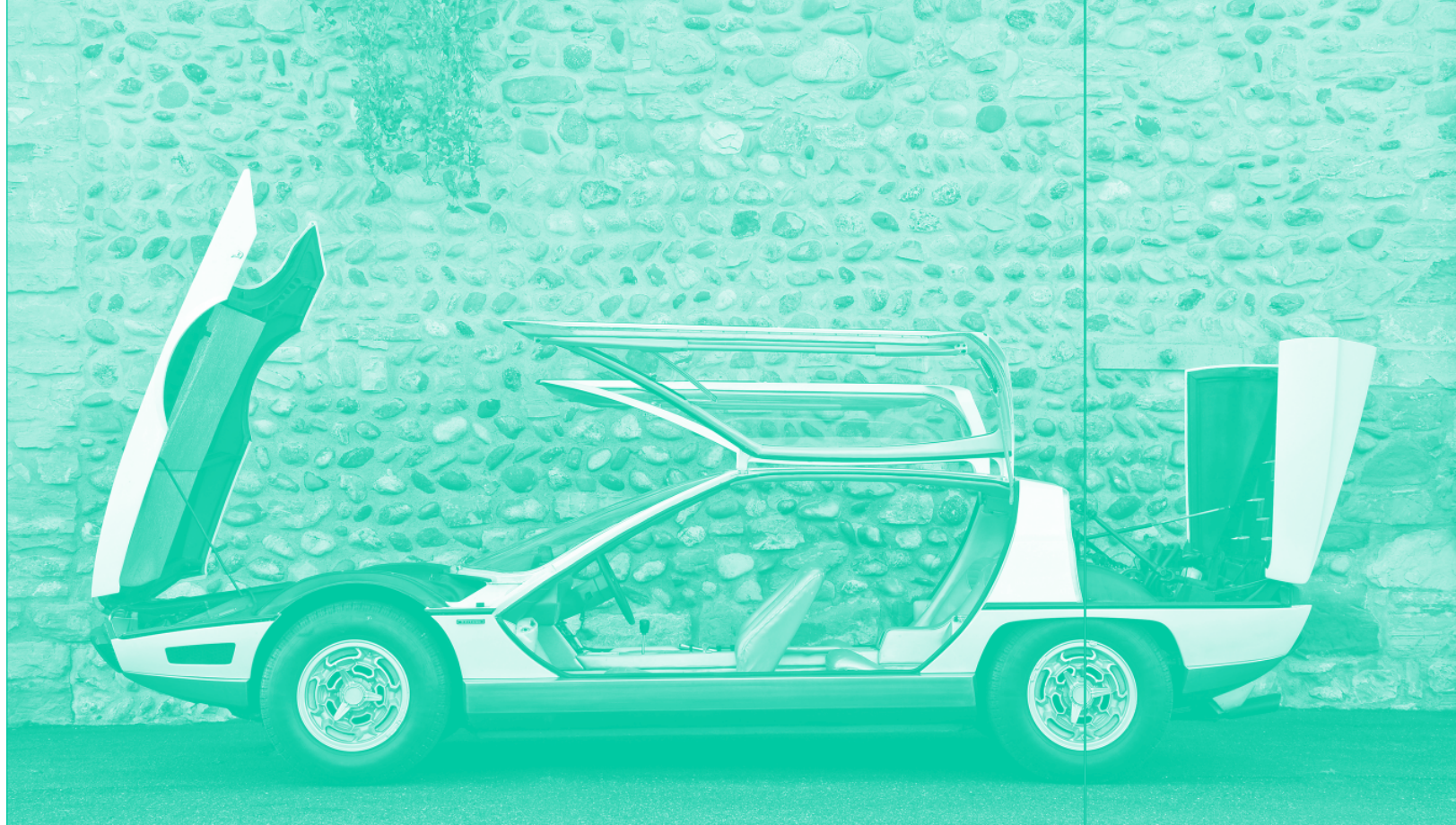
Your area of expertise is on green technology and integrated transport policy. In your own perspective, what would the future of the car in the city look like?

I think the major change—at least in the medium term—won't be a radical change in the look of cars, but in that fewer and fewer people will have the need or desire to own one. You'll just access transport 'on demand'. Mobility providers such as DriveNow and Zipcar have a huge part to play.

In what way do you think the future of the car has an impact on the built environment or the way that cities are planned/designed? For example, some American cities are designed largely based on the automobile.

This question is one of the reasons I jumped over to car design. I was finding, particularly in the work I did on urban design and planning, that there was a 'cars are evil, let's keep them out and discourage them' approach in cities. That argument's simplistic—cars do create clear issues in cities but I think we need to be careful we don't over compensate for the mistakes of the past. I'm thinking 60s urban planning and, as you say, some of middle America's cities. The way people live and behave is changing—with technology leading the push—and I think the built environment and mobility services, including the car, must respond to that. Cities and cars don't need to be thought out and used in the same way as they were in the 1960s. But I fear that's how some city planners and car designers still think.

When a new car is first sketched, do you have to think years ahead to what design might work in the city?

In general no, because most car companies—and car design studios—are outside major mega-cities and are designed for global markets, so the specifics of what might make a car work better in an urban environment is often ignored or simply never thought about. There are exceptions though. The first Smart car and the Renault Twizy are two examples where I'm pretty sure the designers were thinking about the city and how people move around them, from the first time they picked up a pencil.

How does changing technology affect the design process of the vehicle?

Like architecture, the biggest change over the past few decades has been the move to cars designed with CAD. This has reduced the development cycle and has made cars a lot safer and more reliable. If we think of a couple of the technologies on the horizon—electric cars and autonomous cars—then they have the potential to massively change the car, because you're no longer having to package an internal combustion engine up front and, potentially, if cars can't crash you don't need all the masses of heavy crash structure modern cars have. If we do eventually get to a situation where cars are uncrashable, that's when we'll really begin to see the form of the car change both inside and out. That's a long-term vision though.

With the advent of new digital media that has taken part largely in architecture, such as the renowned Smart City or 'smart urban growth', do you think that the new generation of car is responding to these new technologies and ideals?

Absolutely, the car companies are possibly even more into this stuff than those in the built environment. There's lot's on the horizon, from car's being able to talk to your house and turn your heating on remotely, to communicating with one another and the built environment in order to alleviate traffic congestion and find you parking. The whole 'smart cities' revolution is something that you'll see car companies really try to take advantage of. While the first consumer-facing stuff might be banal, cars are going to become massively more sentient, intelligent and communicative with you—the occupant, your devices, the physical environment around them and obviously the cloud. Leading brands like BMW and Tesla are already a long way down this road.

Architects and planners nowadays argue that younger residents demand for more walkable, bikeable, transit-friendly communities. At times, even the car is taken as something that goes against these demands. Do you think that the future of urban mobility will depend on the competition between the innovative actors (designers) who support alternative transport systems? How does the future of the car 'fit' into the future of urban mobility?

It's a very complex question and I don't see a silver bullet answer. I think we'll need both, but then I probably would say that! But honestly, I really hate the car vs public transport debate. I think most people use both constantly, it's not an either-or debate. To me the key things are reducing car dependency—continuing to build sustainable cities where people can live in or close to the centre, not out in suburbs where their only choice to get around is in the car. But that depends as much on building doctors surgeries, primary schools and homes where families can live, as much as it does integrate transport. I speak from the experience of someone who, for years, lived in a city but now lives on the edges—something I had to do in order to find space for a family, find a school for my kid to go to, etc. What I find exciting is that technological connectivity and the collaborative economy are bringing us transport services which bridge the gap between private car vs public transport. Whether these services can reduce congestion and make cities less car-clogged, walkable places, I don't know.

Finally, we know that talking about future models is hush-hush, but is there anything we can expect from the future of the car? Are we ever to see a kind of 'modern' DeLorean, with an electrical 'flux capacitor' taking us to see our cities from the past (or the future!)?

One of the ironies of the car industry is that it's deeply secretive, but rarely brings out a new model which really looks different or is a surprise to anyone! Future cars are going to become much techier, they'll be lighter and more efficient and likely to run on fuels other than petrol and diesel. But your readers probably knew that already—most people have heard of Tesla by now, I suspect? If not, check them out. Beyond that, the big deal today is around autonomous cars. Audi just had an A7 drive itself from Silicon Valley to Vegas—the tech for cars to drive themselves is here and a reality now. The hurdles to overcome are going to be regulation, the sort of smart-city tech infrastructure we talked about before, but most importantly our own psychological issues with not being in control. That's what my company's now involved in helping car companies research and analyse people's attitudes towards cars that drive themselves, and how they gain gradual acceptance. For me one of the questions is, what are you actually going to be doing in a car that's driving itself? If you're just wasting time watching another cat video on Youtube then maybe I'd prefer to still be driving! When that happens cars could radically change their look and become much lighter and therefore more efficient—so that's exciting. But while there's lots of interesting tech on the horizon, sadly I don't think Doc Brown's going to be popping up and whisking us back to 1985 or forward to 2035 anytime soon. I did hear a rumour, however, that hover boards are closer to reality than anyone thinks! For now, I'll content myself with the nearest we can get to the Delorean for 2015, which has got to be the BMW i8—it's even got gull-wing doors! (That's doors that open upwards to you and me). ◇

A Forest of Experiences

VISUALISING SPACES IN NATURE

Words by Benni Allan

What do you see when you look up through the trees? Try to imagine this moment in a pretended place or part of a journey through a particular sequence of spaces. How does one describe this experience? What is it about spaces in nature, for example forests, which make them fascinating yet at the same time unsettling places to inhabit? A forest offers a place of refuge and natural beauty where surprise is all part of the experience. Nature in architecture is something that at times we experience on the periphery and regularly as something subversive. Much of our world, particularly in the architectural discipline, fails to engage with the study of nature, and in particular in forest environments—on a spatial level—choosing to only consider nature as a mere aesthetic appreciation of the built environment. With the advent of cities and human habitation, the relationship between nature and the landscape with society is one that has been unequivocally broken down through the processes of city building. By continuing to colonise the planet we risk endangering and damaging the natural world's its supremacy and its ability to offer good health and opportunities for incredible spatial moments. Interestingly, however, as we experience the decay and abandonment of contemporary cities, one of the most apparent transformations we witness is not just the obvious perception of neglect but more the reintegration of vegetation and natural ecologies. With negligence, grass will eventually grow. It has been recalled that the notion of 'nature taking over' is believed to be for the punishment of our sins. Likewise, when nature appropriates a building, it is as if the architect is being reprimanded for his actions. This re-emergence of nature as a punishment against humans reminds me of the paintings by JMW Turner of the ruins at Tintern Abbey, at a time when he fetishised over nature's power versus man and the ability it had to reclaim its land. The return of this phenomenon in contemporary society generates a misunderstanding of a heterogeneous space left in the wake of urban decay. Similar to the misconception of nature in architecture, we are left with spaces that have no clear definition and no real intention to be experienced spatially. So the question here is, how can we associate or change our understandings of the

definition of a forest in this context? What kind of spaces can emerge from this? In order to draw a picture of the fascinating qualities of forests and the capacity they have to trick one into constructing very different visual imagery, the following account will explore my own experiences of nature in the New Forest, a once populated area in the city of Detroit.
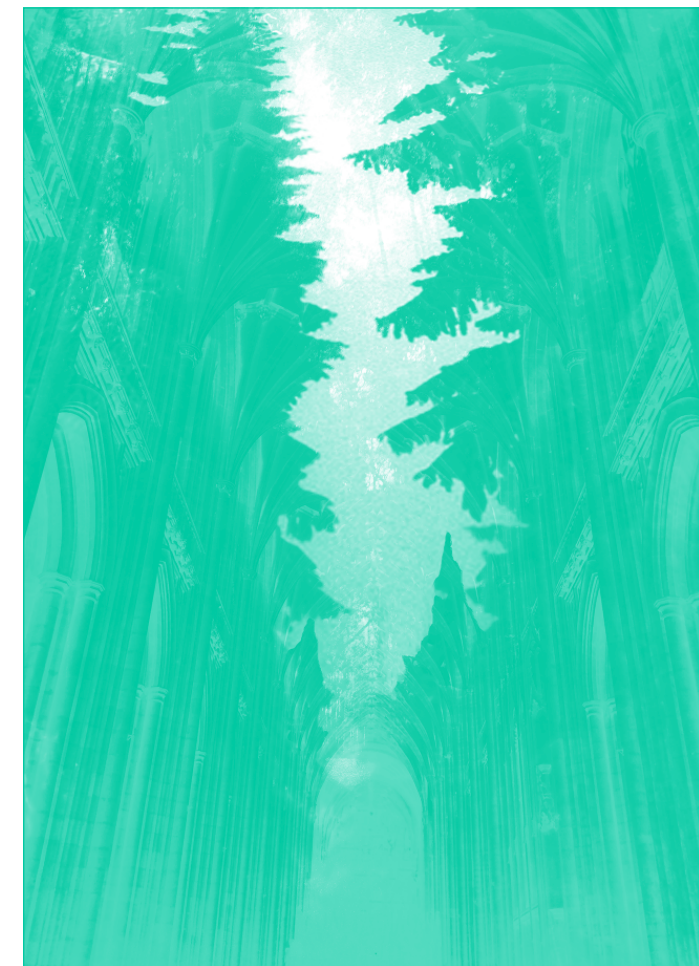
✦

I approached the edge of the New Forest, framed by two large trunks standing tall—like the entrance gates to a newly formed urban jungle. It had clearly once been under the ownership of the city, with the skeletons of built structures left as evidence of the past. As I entered the undergrowth I was welcomed into a dark, great hall-like space, lined by trees obscuring the view beyond. Through the sea of trees I stumbled beyond barriers and descended into ever-greater darkness. A path leading to a narrow tunnel defined by an array of arches, like passages through a church, seemed to form the silhouette of a vast cathedral. The shapes of the trees created a typology of spaces that I had never experienced or could have never really encountered in the built environment. Because of my lack of understanding of these new spaces I was only able to make sense of them through images in my mind of other comparable forms in built places.

Illumination of the ground was intermittent, while the sharp shadows cast from naked branches tried to catch me as I fled. The smallest glimpses of sunlight falling through the canopy above rapidly faded away, bringing a sense of fright as the light was eliminated. The labyrinthine corridors continued to twist and turn as the darkness enveloped me. Openings through the walls led to nothing but small rooms like archives and stores of a library that had been darkened to preserve the pages of precious books. The blackness of these spaces gave a sense of complete loss of orientation, absent of any glimmer of the scale and size of the rooms beyond.

My route followed down along a boulevard of trees and through its screens I could see light like streetlights through blurred windows, allowing me to regain a sense of direction. The tracks in front of me began to brighten as the high roof once again allowed bursts of light to

Benni Allan *Visualising forests as built spaces.*

> "Associating what we know to new forms of experiences is a way to engage with a particular place and give new meaning to unfamiliar surroundings"

Learning From the Past

ENVISIONING THE NEW TATE MODERN

Tate Modern, London, UK, Herzog & de Meuron.

forms of space. Another trick at play here is the almost fictional feeling of the New Forest—an almost illusory setting, inspired by a combination of real and imagined occurrences to create the narrative for understanding different kinds of spatial experiences. As architects, we are not trained to understand or define these kinds of places. One has to imagine ways of relating to the changing typology of spaces experienced to get a sense of the place. In order to do this, we try to associate new environments with already experienced spaces, using a familiar vocabulary in order to describe a new account of the place. Associating what we know to new forms of experiences in our built environment is a way to engage with a particular place, therefore giving new meaning to unfamiliar surroundings. So, given that we all have different kinds of lived experiences, let me ask you again, what do you see when you look up through the trees? ◇

Benni Allan, *Spaces in Nature*.

penetrate within. The shelter above me worked like a refuge that understood its need to protect from the effects of both harsh winters and blistering summers. The feeling of coolness gave the sense of a virtuous space, although the silence made an unnerving, unfamiliar spatial experience. The crack of snapping branches sounded like stepping over broken glass on a hard floor. Every sound reverberated like echoes down long corridors. The feeling of someone watching me was more present than ever, as if the mere act of exploring the unknown forest landscape was akin to trespassing into private land. Finally, breaking out into what appeared to be a square in an opening of trees gave me the sense of safety and at the same time

a sudden realisation of the psychological power of the spatial experiences I had just witnessed.

My attempt to define this forest environment offers a visual understanding but doesn't do the place justice. Unlike buildings and architecture, the ever-changing qualities of forests make them captivating spaces yet frightening at the same time. The obscuring of sight, a blurred sense of direction and an unclear bearing of escape can create both dis-orientation and even unexpected panic. All together they provide excitement and the thrill of uncertainty.
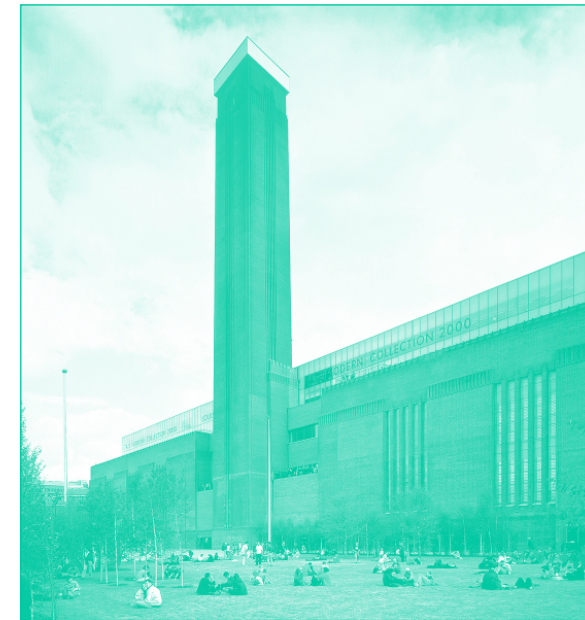
What is clear to me is that a forest is a site that tricks the mind. It is a place that allows you to perceive and interpret new

Words by Fernanda Lima Sakr

When Sir Giles Gilbert Scott first designed the Bankside Power Station, no one imagined how the box-shaped brick building would be reinvented successfully into a piece of architecture that would move away from being just another museum of modern art, but towards a conceptualisation of a building as a place to be explored entirely as an entity itself. This was my thought when I first visited Tate Modern. Whilst having the site of the River Thames in front of it, with the buzz of people walking along and enjoying the scenery of London's towering skyline, the enigmatic presence of the Tate Modern exercises a powerful attraction to people, inviting the passers-by to visit its spaces.

By looking to a series of visual field diagrams, even the most visible access to the building—entering from the River Thames—makes an intriguing statement, whereas the other entrance to the museum is less visible to the public, yet has the grand opening of a large open space.

I must say that the building doesn't seem the greatest work of art at a first sight, but the moment I enter I began to admire how remarkable its spatial layout is composed—with spaces that can be revealed in different ways, connecting to one another and, in particular, the variety of routes with which to go through the building. What intrigues me the most is the architects' (Herzog & de Meuron were charged with the reinvention of the building) vision to show the impact of Tate's circulation on the visitor's experience and how the outside-inside spatial relationships shape patterns of

movement and occupancy. My curiosity took me to Moore & Ryan's book, *Building Tate Modern: Herzog and De Meuron with Giles Gilbert Scott*, in which Herzog & de Meuron express their intention of having the ramp as the building's main spatial element in combination with the monumental open space of the Turbine Hall: "We conceived the building as something permeable, something you walk through, and as something that literally attracts people, a public piazza. And the turbine hall was the obvious place to make that connection between the outside and the inside, the galleries, the people, the art and everything comes from that idea. (...) I think the ramp was very important."

Currently the museum is passing through a process of transformation where spaces will be added and new circulation will be created. According to Herzog & de Meuron, the addition of a third entrance to the

> "The stairs, lift and ramp in both designs will not act only as connectors, but as transitional territories capable of producing unpredictable activities."

Tate Modern, London, UK, Herzog & de Meuron.

building, combined with the ramp, the Turbine Hall and the bridge, will complete the Tate's main public space. For the architects, the configuration of the internal spaces as well as its monumental form aims to engage visitors to experience the building by walking, moving and occupying every connection in its own way. The architectural elements—stairs, escalators, lift and ramp—will not act only as connectors but also as places to meet and to create unexpected events.

Based on previous research I conducted in the Tate Modern, the key architectural element that seems to act as the transitional connection from the 'old' and the future building of the Tate Modern is the bridge. The bridge in Tate's current design functions as an inhabited space where one has the overall visibility of the Turbine Hall, much like a place to be or to be contemplated; it is an empty arena capable of generating someone's presence, maybe without any pre-defined reason to be there. In the 'future' Tate, the bridge will be converted into a passageway—a place of in-between spaces, a structural element that articulates peoples movement flow from a certain origin to a destination —generating different spatial perceptions. From the intimate riverside entrance and glazed shop to the open air piazza, visitors will smoothly shift scales along the grand

Turbine Hall. This intention is perhaps associated with the function of the ramp, which links the western outside spaces to the inside Turbine Hall; the ramp being an extension of the outside—a covered piazza—is a transitional space, as with the bridge, an extension of the open air northern and new southern piazzas.

The presence and absence of people, the ambiguity that exists in the Tate's internal spaces may be based upon the fact that in the new building, the bridge and the ramp are both structural elements that articulate fluxes of movement and they are, at the same time, spaces in-between spaces, transitional territories capable of producing unpredictable activities, both transcending their functionality as circulation systems and turning into two powerful event incubators. The ramp and the bridge reveal themselves as transitional spaces

that connect and permit movement to happen without a pre-defined programme. They both act as connectors but also as distributors of activities that can happen simultaneously. But the interesting thing is that they do not define a particular use. On the contrary, they exist to support the power of conceiving events. Would it be the case that Herzog & de Meuron's successful design of the 'old' and the 'future' Tate lies in its elements of transition, the circulation as the key element of the building's programme? I'm looking forward to find out how people will perceive the new spaces when strolling around the new Tate and what other interesting experiences we might be able to find in its transitional spaces.◇

The Tate Modern Project, London, UK, Herzog & de Meuron.

Jane Jacobs Revisited

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THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES TO EXPLORE URBAN CRIME

Words by Martin Traunmüeller

Crime activity all over Greater London for Dec 2012–2013, where the darker the shade of green, the higher the crime. rate in that area.

With the rise of mobile technology, geo-located data from various online sources offers architects, urban planners and computer scientists novel ways to (a) analyse phenomena found in the urban environment and (b) use findings to inform design processes. Such phenomena are found for instance in the relationship between people dynamics and crime, which has been researched extensively in architectural and urban studies over the last decades. Most influential theories informing urban design decisions all over the world lead back to the 1960s and 1970s—and sometimes appear to conflict with each other: In her work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs suggested that population diversity, activity and a high mix of functions lead to less crime for an area through 'Natural Surveillance', a natural policing mechanism through the people on the street. Oscar Newman hypothesised in *Defensible Space* the opposite, supporting clear separation of public, semi-public and private areas towards urban safety. Each theory has been evaluated and indeed supp-orted by means of qualitative research methods. However, such methods are very expensive and time-consuming to run so that studies are usually restricted to a rather small number of people and constrained geographic areas; furthermore, they are almost never repeated over time, to observe potential changes. It becomes thus very difficult to collect sufficient evidence to explain under what conditions a certain theory holds.

I am proposing here a new method to quant-itatively investigate urban crime theories at scale, using open crime data records and anonymised mobile telecommunication data for Greater London within the course of three weeks in December 2012. From the former, I extracted quantitative information about crime activity as it happens across different urban areas. Raw crime numbers (crime count) were found to be higher in the centre of London, with some other hotspots spread out all over the city, whereas crime activity (that is, crime count divided by people present in that area) is much higher outside inner London.

From the latter, I extracted metrics which act as proxies for previously developed urban crime theories that link people presence in an area with crime. I defined a total of six metrics and associated hypotheses which lead to urban safety. Metrics are based on Jacobs (diversity of people, ratio of visitors and workers), Newman (ratio of residents) and findings from crime science studies (Marcus Felson). Felson suggests that a high ratio of female population found in an area leads to less crime, and a high ratio of young population to higher crime—both metrics were added to the selection.

Looking at the spatial distribution, I observed that the population's age diversity is generally low for Inner London, while it increases towards the edges. A high ratio of visitors is found within the centre of London—which offers points of interest such as attractions and retail, and in some parts of the edges towards the north and the east. Ratios of residents and workers show a clear opposite picture between them: while workers concentrate in the central business districts, residents were found to be more widespread in less central boroughs. I observed generally a higher female population ratio in the south of London, compared to the north part. Finally, a higher concentration of young population was found in the centre of London, spreading outwards the east—which is known to be popular amongst young people.

> "Makes me wonder how from a simple device carrying on in your pocket can offer an exceptional amount of information to understand crime in design practice."

To validate urban crime theories at scale, I analysed the relationship between crime data and the six defined metrics. For diversity of people and ratio of visitors, the results support Jacob's theory suggesting that higher activity in an area leads to less crime, whilst results for ratio of workers was found to less likely impact an area. It was also found that urban areas with higher ratio of residents were associated with a higher probability of crime occurrences than in other places. For ratio of female population, findings do not support Felson's theory, which suggests that a higher ratio of female population leads to less crime. I found quite the opposite, in fact. The higher female population within an area is more likely to lead to crime. Furthermore findings support the theory that a higher ratio of young population leads to crime.

The method outlined here has both theoretical and practical implications for urban studies. From a theoretical standpoint it offers, besides the invest-igation of past crime theories, the development of new ones through re-application in other cities around the world and over time to detect possible changes. From a practical standpoint the method shows how new technologies, such as mobile phones, allows us to gain better understanding of our cities through a fresh perspective. Mobile phones can work as predictors of how urban crime may occur in the future whilst we can also comprehend the causes that generate urban crime. Beyond presenting a method that can be beneficial to architects and city planners, I argue that the different conceptions of crime in design practice have become increasingly necessary with the advancements of new technologies. Mobile phones are just one of the most common cases of such technologies. It makes me wonder how a simple device carrying on in your pocket can offer an exponential amount of information to view crime patterns in relation to the reality of our built environment in its physical and social aspects. ◇

'Tenir un journal pour y voir clair.'

Keep a diary to see clearly; that is what the French historian protagonist of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, Antoine Roquentin, notes as he starts chronicling his recent experience in his new diary. Blimey! Dear reader—yes, you who are just about to enter the LOBBY Nº 2 Library—can you sense the importance of his act? If Roquentin is right, then historiography is the medium of 'voir clair' *par excellence*! And if it is clairvoyance you are after, then congratulations, the Library is indeed the right place to be!

So, please do come in and join us as we discuss and explore the implications of the past for future architectural theory and practice. Have a look at our select group of interlocutors first. It includes renowned architectural historians and practitioners like Adrian Forty, Emmanuel Petit and Sam Jacob, along with a younger generation of researchers, indicatively represented here by Brent Pilkey. Their personal takes on historiography are bound to open you up to a wide range of architectural histories and theories in multiple scales and voices that sometimes start like parables then turn into manifestos.

But don't be mistaken, The Library is not only about architectural history and the queerly diverse ways of writing it. These historiographical enquiries are complemented with thoughtful pieces on books that help determine the extent and nature of architectural change from the days of Vitruvius all the way to the future prospects of our current practices and the cities we live in—including the perpetual remaking and re-branding of London itself. Trust our clever writers to guide you through them, and we can safely predict you will enjoy it!

"The yard of the new station smells strongly of damp wood: tomorrow it will rain over Bouville." At the end of the novel, Antoine Roquentin is obviously clairvoyant. And we hope you will be too.

The Clear Sight of an Architectural Historian

Words by Stylianos Giamarelos

Adrian Forty needs no introduction. Almost synonymous with the Architectural History & Theory programmes at The Bartlett School of Architecture, his research and teaching trajectories have certainly left his unmistakeable mark on the discipline at large. Recently retired after more than four decades of intense academic activity, Forty agreed to be interviewed by LOBBY on the occasion of the publication of the aptly titled *Forty Ways to Think about Architecture* anthology, compiled and edited by some of his many distinguished colleagues, friends and students over the years.

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Did this book really come as a surprise to you?

I knew nothing about it until I was rather mysteriously led into a room one evening last June. I thought I was being taken to something organised by the students of the MA programme. But instead the room contained about 20 people, many old friends, and I was presented with this book. I never guessed that they had been putting this together—it was one of the nicest surprises I have ever had in my life! All those people had written such generous, thoughtful pieces. I was overwhelmed!

What do you think of the book itself?

It's a very nice format, with very short pieces—1000 words or so—and that allows, you know, for a lot of variety. Some of them are directly about me, others are not about me at all, but somehow they all relate to things that I have been interested in or worked on.

Did you find anything you didn't really expect in those pieces, in relation to your work, your thinking and their impact on other people?

Yes, people recalled things that I had forgotten about or they have interpreted things in ways that I could not have anticipated. I can't speak about any individuals, but what struck me was the way in which some people seem to have understood what I have been interested in, without necessarily referring to my work at all, and to

have written pieces that were nothing to do with to my work, yet corresponded to my interests. I have always liked thinking of objects in relation to theories—what does the theory say about this object, but also what does the object say about the theory? I think that the book manages to reflect the fact that my work has been neither entirely empirical, nor entirely theoretical.

How did you see your own work evolving over time? Do your three major books form part of a common research project? Is there a common thread that goes through all of them?

My work has always been about situating architecture within some kind of a social process, and trying to figure out what goes on in that process. All the books I have worked on have really been about that. It's true that I have also sometimes looked at architecture as a practice in its own right, but that has never been a primary concern of mine. I always wanted to know how architecture operates as part of the glue—or is it the lubricant?—of social life. For everyone, whether they are producers, users or consumers, what are its consequences? What does it say about relationships between people, between people and objects, and about people themselves? I have never seen the study of architecture as being just about buildings.

Does this approach relate to your original academic training as a historian?

Partly, yes. Never having formally studied architecture, I suppose I always felt I was an outsider within the field of architecture, and that gave me a slight critical distance.

What was the state of the profession when you took up the organisation of The Bartlett Master's programme in architectural history in the late 1970s?

Well, architectural history was then largely taken up with what architects did—and that still to some extent continues to be true. So my interest in applying Marxist thinking to architectural history was to get away from that. I wanted to find ways to think about architecture in the expanded cultural field. It wasn't obvious how one was to do that, certainly at the time when I started there were rather few precedents. There was this 'factory' in Italy around Manfredo Tafuri,

which was locked into an internal discourse within architecture. Although it claimed to be a Marxist project, it seemed to be more concerned with interpreting architecture within its own terms. Some of what they said was interesting, but it didn't strike me as the way to go.

How did you embody that programme in a certain academic curriculum?

What we did was to look at many different things, you know, I didn't want to teach an orthodoxy, but instead to rethink critically the possible alternatives. I have never been doctrinaire in the sense that 'no, you have to do it like this'. I have tried to be open, looking at different

> "I wanted to find ways to think about architecture in the expanded cultural field."

schools of thought in addition to those of traditional architectural theory and history—and not to fix upon just one, ultimately restricted point of view. I never found that appealing.

And how did you approach teaching first-year students?

I always enjoyed teaching first-year students because you are talking to young people when they are at their most receptive, before their ideas have started to become fixed. I wanted to see if I could show new students starting out how to interrogate buildings and cities, to indicate something of the range of ideas that it is possible to have about them. Objects, buildings are not entirely mute, passive. But what are the means we have in order to think about them? I think I was both modest and probably over-ambitious with this programme. I wanted to introduce students to a field about which there were many different ways of thinking, not all of them now fashionable. That meant returning to texts by people who have been thinking hard about these

Objects, desires, words, buildings, materials, culture: In his lifelong trajectory, Adrian Forty has added whatever it takes in the mix of architectural historiography, in order to help us see our profession as clearly as we possibly can.

"What I have tried to do was to discourage architects from thinking that only architects make architecture."

matters for at least the last 500 years. Let's enjoy this treasure chest of thought, and find out what's in it, what have all those people had to say? Has it all been futile? Hopefully not. I used to introduce the course was by saying, 'If you were students of medicine, the first thing you would do is to dissect a cadaver. You take a dead body and you cut it up and you learn about anatomy. Well, what would be the architectural or urbanistic equivalent of dissecting a cadaver?' In a way, I offered them an analysis of those elements of our built environment (doors, walls, boundaries, etc.) that are something like the body's organs, but an analysis that used the techniques of history, rather than those of anatomical dissection. What you need to know is what questions to ask when you are confronted with any one of those objects. I think there is a set of skills you can acquire, and then you can familiarise yourself with all the alternative ways of thinking that go along with those skills.

How did the Master's programme evolve over the course of more than three decades?

Well, I think it's become more diverse and open as the programme has very much followed the interests of the people who have taught on the course. For example, when Iain Borden arrived, and he was interested in Lefebvre, this added a whole new dimension to what we read and talked about. And then Jane Rendell joined the

team and introduced feminist philosophy into our discussions of the built environment. So the programme has developed and expanded as a result of those interests —and that is good, because, you know, this programme has always been a loose container, into which people can bring new enthusiasms. This is the advantage of not being doctrinaire.

Do you feel your own research interests shifted along with the MA programme? How did your research relate to your teaching?

I used to keep my research separate from my teaching. The thing about teaching is that you have to have a certain degree of certainty, you have to know what you think in order to teach. Whereas in research, it is all about *not* being sure what you think and being open to doubt. I never really found the two compatible, because each requires a different state of mind. So I would not say there has been any direct relationship, but obviously things that I read and talked about while teaching provoked me and guided me in my research.

What do you yourself think of your earlier work now, in the light of your subsequent development? Is there something you might have done differently?

Well, my earlier works belong in a moment in time, they are of their time, and they should be seen as the result of that. If we think about *Objects of Desire*

(1986), for instance, I started working on it when I was teaching at a School of Design; and I was aware that there was no discussion about the history of the activity within which students were involved except in terms that were moralistic—according to which, you know, design was expected to be 'good' for people somehow (though nobody ever seemed to be able to say what the 'good' was). This ethical view dominated all the discussions about design and I thought it would be very helpful to find another way of thinking about design as a process which changed things in ways that, while they might be good for some people, could also be bad for others. So what I wanted was to offer a view of design as a social process. *Objects of Desire* is not about design as a means of making life more beautiful or stylish, but about design as a necessary stage of production. I wanted to talk about the way in which design is generated through productive processes, and at the same time itself generates processes of production. The book was less about the other end of the process, about users, everyday cultures, it was more about the way design has been used instrumentally by producers, and ultimately capital, in order to shape the world as we know it. The main criticism of the book was that I didn't pay enough attention to consumers, to the extent that culture is made by people in the course of their daily lives. While I acknowledge this

criticism, it is important to stress that at the time when I started, there was no critique at all of design as part of the process of production, and without that, it would not have been possible to go on and present an alternative view of design in terms of the culture of consumption.

Since you mentioned that this all started from your teaching at a School of design, I was wondering what is your take on the relationship between architectural history and practice?

Well, what I have tried to do was to discourage architects from thinking that only architects make architecture. I'd like people to be able to accept that as a reality, without causing them to panic or be plunged into depression. I wanted architects to understand what their part in that process could be, and where there might be room for them to be effective amidst all the things that happen—many of them quite independently of what an architect may intend or desire. I really wanted people to have a sense of the activity of architecture as being part of a larger process. And I suppose the point about *Words and Buildings* (2000) is to show that architects don't control language; language is produced by language users. And that could be taken as a parable for the whole world of architecture—architecture is not made only by architects; it is produced socially. I always wanted architects to see what the consequences of that are for architecture. At the same time, I recognise that if you say to people 'you know, all these things are outside your control', it produces a sense of despair and hopelessness, a reality in which most practising architects live. So, at the same time, people need to have a feeling that what they do is anchored somewhere and is not necessarily entirely pointless or futile. I'd like my students to find that balance and measure the reality of practice against knowledge of the wider processes through which buildings are produced.

Was there a similar drive behind your *Concrete and Culture* project (2012)?

Well, in that case, I was struck by the fact that a group of professionals could be so enthused about a substance —concrete—that was so detested by the general public. How could there be this discrepancy between the professionals'

set of values and beliefs and those of a non-professional public? This mismatch was interesting to me as it has also been a feature of modern architecture in general. I say this to stress that *Concrete and Culture* is not so much about concrete itself as about relationships between groups of people. Concrete as a barometer, if you like, of how values are formed and sustained. The book is about concrete as a belief system; about the place concrete occupies inside our heads, and the way it has caused us to organise our minds.

In a way, this goes back to what has probably been the biggest theoretical influence on me, the work of Roland Barthes. In *Mythologies*, which is the first book of his that I read, he says, "I am not concerned with what things mean; I am concerned with how they mean." That really struck me. How is it that some things have meaning, how do they acquire that meaning, and what is the system within which meanings circulate? These questions have always stayed with me.

In one of your recent keynote speeches, I remember you remarking that architectural historians have not yet found a common disciplinary way to treat time in their work.

Works of architecture have a peculiarity as historical objects in that they exist in the present and are in familiar use in the world that we live in, yet also had a possibly quite different existence in historical time. So, you have to deal with two or more temporalities. People often assume that because buildings exist in the present, that is the sum total of their existence, but that is not the case. You have constantly to mediate between these two different forms of existence for buildings—as they are to us now and as they were at all previous times. I don't think that on the whole architectural historians have found a way to deal with this problem very satisfactorily.

I would like us to close with your thoughts about history and the future of architectural practice.

Over the last twenty years, architecture as a practice has become much more open to historical research. When I started, architectural history was basically regarded as an irrelevance. Many

practicing architects and theorists didn't like history at all, they thought it would contaminate people's minds. I can see now that they were afraid it might undermine their attempts to establish architecture as an agency for social change. Too much looking at history might lead people to realise that architecture's record as a means of bringing about changes in society hasn't been that great. At the time I started out, the confidence of the profession had just climaxed and architects were still regarded as powerful. Well, now architecture is in a more desperate state—people are open to anything that might save architecture. To think about architecture as a discipline with a history no longer runs the risk of damaging its reputation and might even allow us to make a little more sense of what is happening to architecture now.

And what about the future of architectural history itself, especially in the light of recent developments like the last Venice Biennale of Architecture taking the form of a historical research project?

I was at a book launch at the Biennale last summer, and the publisher of the book, the respected Norwegian publisher Lars Müller, said outright, "The architectural monograph is dead." I never expected to hear an architectural publisher say that and certainly not so categorically. He thought that the only way for books to go was to present architectural history through collective, plural voices. And yes, that was the purpose of the Architecture Biennale: to look for other ways of approaching architecture's history. Koolhaas's manifesto for the Biennale was a very inspiring and interesting one. And though the response of the various participants was uneven, I would say that the idea behind the Biennale was important. If it means architectural history becoming non-monographic, then I would subscribe to that. ◇

The Naked Architect

AN ANCIENT ANECDOTE
FOR OUR PRESENT PRACTICES

Dinocrates's audacious design for the Colossus of Mount Athos from a mid-18th century print (Heidelberg University Library).

Words by Gregorio Astengo

Let's face it, Vitruvius is not the man he used to be. He has lost the appeal and charm that used to stun architects all over the world. It seems that our famous ancestor finally got old, and his great treatise, *De Architectura*, has somehow become outdated. After all, it was written more than 2000 years ago. It is true that the book was an uncontested best-seller for at least 400 years, from the late Middle-Ages to the Enlightenment. But, like all things, Vitruvius's rise to stardom couldn't last forever. Architects eventually moved on and his *Ten Books* are now the object of architectural history and theoretical debates, ancient language studies and archaeological research. It certainly doesn't seem likely that a practicing architect could find anything useful in those dusty pages, full of old buildings and ancient rules of proportions. Today's architects are engaged with current, *real* problems, like dealing with clients, creating and building beautiful and complex designs and looking for a fruitful professional identity. In this context, Vitruvius's contribution couldn't possibly be

practical, efficient or up-to-date… Or could it? Well, I would now like to show how this ancient book is actually still very much relevant today and how a practicing architect *especially* still has a lot to learn from Vitruvius, our great contemporary.

So, forget the orders! Never mind the triad! Step aside, Vitruvian man! Let's try to cast a new gaze upon our 'Architecture 1.1'…

In the Introduction to his second book on building techniques, Vitruvius recounts the story of Dinocrates of Rhodes, a Greek architect who lived a few hundred years before him. Dinocrates was a very ambitious man, apparently "full of confidence in his own ideas and skill." He wanted to work for no less than Alexander the Great, possibly the greatest emperor that had ever lived by then. After going through

> "Vitruvius is addressing an issue that has always been extremely delicate among architects: how far are you supposed to go to make an impression?"

the official channels with no immediate result, a frustrated and impatient Dinocrates finally decided to take matters in his own hands. And his plan was just… well, I will let you be the judge: He took off his clothes, rubbed himself with oil, wore a crown of poplar leaves on his head and a lion's skin on his shoulder, and walked straight into the king's palace holding a club in his hand.

A bit crazy? Maybe. But the plan worked like a charm, and Alexander was very much intrigued to meet this naked, confident man, wandering around his premises. After all, Dinocrates was a man "of very lofty stature and pleasing countenance, finely formed, and extremely dignified." Don't forget that the lion skin and the accompanying club were then known as the attributes of Hercules. So, Alexander asked this noble and handsome nudist, disguised as the greatest of Greek heroes, who he was. The architect introduced himself, stating that he wanted to work for him and that he had already made some designs for the emperor. The most notable project in his 'portfolio' was definitely as audacious as his appearance: a gigantic statue of a man, holding a whole city in one hand and a bowl of spring water in the other, to be carved into Mount Athos.

So, just to clarify, what we have here is an oily, naked architect, who wants to work for the emperor and has designed a giant statue, holding a full scale city, to be carved into a mountain… Right.

Alexander was, in fact, very well impressed. From that moment on, Dinocrates worked for the emperor on a regular basis. Even though his giant statue did not get built—I think we would remember something like that—he did get to design a whole city in honour of Alexander's greatness, called Alexandria of Egypt.

Now, taking this episode out of its historical and cultural context would be extremely dangerous. However, Vitruvius's point is quite straightforward: Dinocrates's behaviour was unusual, eccentric and definitely over-the-top. What I would like to stress here is the transcendent, clairvoyant and incredibly modern nature of this story. Vitruvius is addressing an issue that has always been extremely tangible and delicate among architects: how far are you supposed to go to make an impression? Is it good to go to the extremes and ham it all up in order to get your great visions built—bending the rules a little bit (or a lot) —in the process? And, even more importantly, should anyone pay any attention to all *that*? These are of course complex and multifaceted questions, but Vitruvius does give us a little hint. His story tells us how "Dinocrates, recommended only by his good looks and dignified carriage, came to be so famous."

Being himself old, short and ill, Vitruvius's bias seems quite obvious. What he is telling us—here and elsewhere in the book—is that if you are a good architect, your work should definitely speak for itself. His message is one of humility, sobriety, and temperance. He invites us to study and avoid greediness or venality. However simplistic and naïve this may sound, his message is still one we can all relate to. In the end, architectural practice seems to have always produced a certain dichotomy—between the architect's design and his *voice*. Just think of the legendary competition between the exuberant Bernini and the introverted Borromini in 17th Century Rome, or Frank's and Corbu's uncompromising attitudes towards clients and colleagues just to name a few.

Our own architectural idols seem to all be great designers *as well as* exceptional public speakers. During their public lectures and official dinners they are able to capture our attention with what is often a contemporary version of the 'naked architect' paradigm. And for Vitruvius, the incipient risk here is precisely the separation of form from content, design from voice. So if we do indeed have a voice, we should always pay attention to *what* we say as well as *how* we say it. And that, in my view, is possibly Vitruvius's greatest legacy for the present (and the future?) of our profession. ◇

Back to the Future of Formalism!

Emmanuel Petit presents his new edited collection on the work and legacy of Colin Rowe.

While the first half of the 20th century in architecture was, to a large extent, characterised by innovations in aesthetics (accompanied by succinct and polemical manifestoes), the post-war decades witnessed the emergence of a more refined and intellectual disciplinary framework which eventually metamorphosed into the highly theory-focused moment of the 'postmodern'. Colin Frederick Rowe (1920–1999) was a leader of this epistemic shift due to his aptitude for combining his historical and philosophical erudition with the visual analysis of architecture. Rowe's ideas were appropriated by a whole ideological spectrum of architects, who based their pursuits on very divergent deontologies. In particular, two opposed ideological factions would loosely claim ties to Rowe's legacy. In the United States, both the formal experiments out of the neo-avant-garde and the neo-conservative attitudes towards the city could each be traced back to Rowe and his entourage. This book unites ten different perspectives from architects of the former, theory-minded group, whose lives and ideas intersected with Rowe's (Robert Maxwell, Anthony Vidler, Peter Eisenman, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Léon Krier, Rem Koolhaas, Alan Colquhoun, Robert Slutzky, Bernhard Hoesli, and Bernard Tschumi). In their critical assessment of a key twentieth century formalist, these architects reflect on how their own positions came to diverge from Rowe's.

In Rowe's time, the circuits of architectural theory were mostly triangulated between London, Venice and New York—an exchange between Europe and the United States, which historiography recorded as an extremely intense and fruitful episode of architectural culture. Today, the geographical map of architecture has become broader and more heterogeneous, therefore a retreat into the same disciplinary frontiers of architecture and architectural theory—like the ones drawn up by Rowe —would be restrictive. Between Rowe's last lectures and texts in the 1990s and today, architecture and architectural theory have evolved considerably and so have both the technological and cultural grounds of formalism. The cultural episteme has changed.
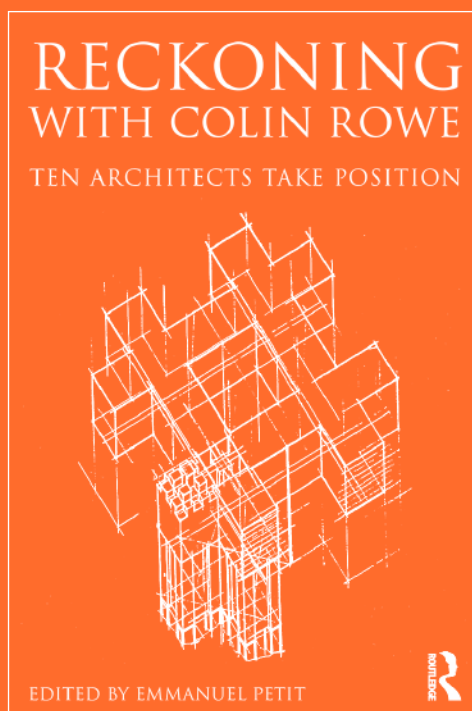
Two lines of investigation of the transformation of the episteme are key to the present condition of formalism, which Rowe would have had to address if he was still alive today.

The first one relates to the development of philosophical attitudes towards the city, history and the question of meaning in architectural theory—especially with regards to the new urban developments in the Near and Far East. Rowe did not face the realities of massive urbanisation and global communication which had only started to emerge at the time of his death —when cultural heterogeneity became the norm rather than the occasional and mysterious manifestation of the 'other', and when the myth of modern progress-ivism, which he so vehemently opposed, had waned.

The second set of developments in the discussions of formalism partly emerges from the former and pertains to the technological and conceptual retooling of the architectural design process; it is determined by the advances of computer-aided design—especially since the last decade of the millennium—as they have revolutionised the methods of form generation and, furthermore, the culture of interpretation in architecture.

Whereas the former evolution reveals Rowe's worn Eurocentrism, the latter has made it increasingly difficult to conceptualise 'disciplinarity', as Rowe did, without pondering the new technologies of form generation and representation, and uncovering an alternative history of precedents for this context. *Reckoning with Colin Rowe* is perhaps a necessary first step in this direction.◇

Historico-Futurism in a Clockwork Jerusalem

A VISIONARY TRADITION OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING IN BRITAIN

Words by Sam Jacob

George Osborne dons a hi-viz waistcoat and wanders around Ebbsfleet. Ed Milliband proposes rent control. Bank of England governor Mark Carney warns house prices might damage the economic recovery. All of us know we're not building enough new homes.

More than a century after Ebenezer Howard delivered his legendary manifesto introducing the idea of the Garden City, we are facing our own built environment crisis, and it is prompting many to ask the very same question Howard posed back then: "The People; Where Will They Go?"

If, as some say, we are entering a kind of neo-Victorian age where issues of housing affordability, inequality and opportunity have returned, perhaps it's no surprise that the idea of the Garden City has re-emerged as well. And with it, an acknowledgement of something long forgotten: that, contrary to popular myth, Britain has a rich and international-ally influential history of urban planning.

The British invented planning in its modern form, then implemented it with such ambition and skill that—from Howard's original garden city all the way to the last (and one of the most successful) new towns, Milton Keynes

—Britain was the global leader. Planning was not just the preserve of professionals; parliamentary stenographers, religious groups, architectural critics, authors, musicians, photographers and film makers all contributed to the collective visions of Britain's possible futures.

A Clockwork Jerusalem, the exhibition we curated for the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture tells the story of this century of planning, starting with Robert Booth's maps of poverty in late-Victorian London that graphically communicated the crisis of urban inequality.

We show early attempts at reform, such as the Boundary Estate in Bethnal Green—where one of London's most notorious slums was cleared and replaced with social housing tenements centred around a circular hill formed out of the rubble of the old slum.

We trace how the bombing during the Blitz violently opened up light and space in the heart of Britain's Dickensian industrial cities and how this was seen by architects, planners and politicians as a new chance. It was this space, literally and metaphorically, that the 'New Jerusalem' promised by the post-war government would occupy. The dreams of social (and moral) reform contained in William Blake's angry, polemical and mysterious poem *And Did Those Feet*… were explicitly referenced by Aneurin Bevan,

linking the practical and moral post-war project to the origins of modern British life, amid the smoke and chaos of the industrial revolution.

This visionary tradition of planning and architecture reached its high point in the second wave of 'new towns' from the 1950s to the 1970s. The fortunes of these places have waxed and waned (sometimes their fate has been even worse than that). However, it is not their perceived success or failure that's in question here, but rather their ability to imagine new ways of life. Each emerged not only from technical and practical expertise, but also from incredible leaps of imagination plugged into the mainline of British culture.

Cumbernauld was the first of these Mark II new towns, designated in 1955. Its remarkable town centre was one of the first British megastructures to be realised. Stacking public and commercial programs, topped by penthouses, perched on a thick bundle of infrastructure, it was designed to be infinitely extended to meet the needs of this growing new town.

Its architect was Geoffrey Copcutt, who drew on a fascination for Minoan citadels and for the then-exotic car culture familiar to the United States to create a concrete, drive-in acropolis atop the hills of which the suburban neighbour-hoods of the new town are embedded. But Cumbernauld town centre's famed

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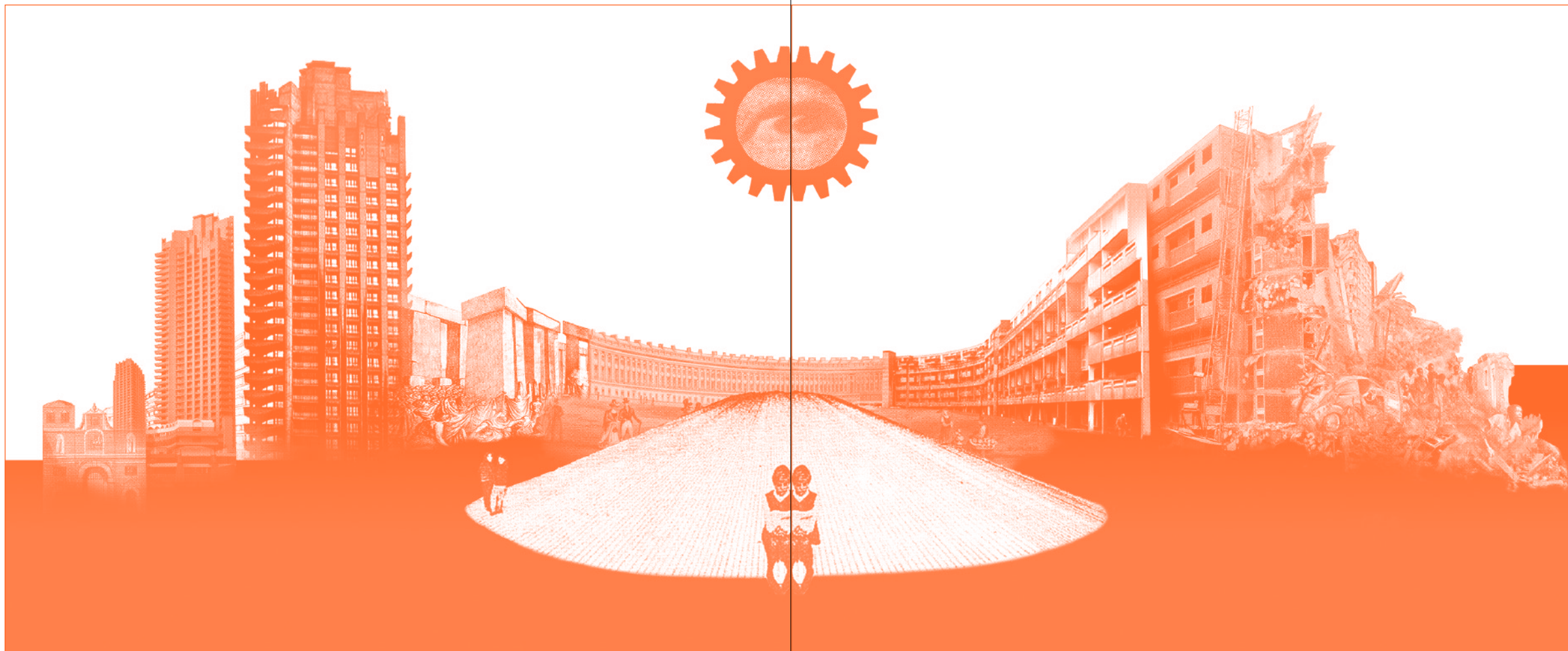
FAT Architecture, *A Clockwork Jerusalem*, 2014.

"flexibility" was also its architectural downfall, as it became swamped in generic shopping boxes, obscuring its antiquarian-futurist silhouette.

At the other end of this history is Milton Keynes, the last of the post-war new towns. When its architects, Hugh Llewelyn Davies and Derek Walker, designed Milton Keynes, they mined the British past of pleasure gardens and the picturesque. They welded these traditions with the endless possibilities of a technology to create a liberating, electric landscape; a place equally science fiction and pastoral whose houses dissolved into treescapes, whose inhabitants could live a life of leisure in the new post-industrial future.

With *A Clockwork Jerusalem*, we want to show that the relevance of the British

tradition in town planning lies not in the actual design models it produced, but in something that is more difficult but crucial to reawaken: imagination.

Howard proposed and realised his Garden City dream without government. Walker and Llewelyn Davies realised theirs through the machinery of state planning at its most powerful and all encompassing. Neither seem to be foremost in the minds of those who wish to start building Garden Cities and New Towns again.

Our show doesn't hold the answers to Britain's future. But we hope it can remind us all that even at the darkest moments, when our built environment seems subject to uncontrollable forces that imagination—both professional and popular—can invent new ways out.

"We know that the problems facing our cities deserve their own big, imaginative, courageous visions of the future."

We know that the problems facing our cities—affordability of housing, social tensions resulting from inequality locally and nationally, the powerlessness of architects and the institutions of public planning, and the less than hopeful outlook for the immediate future —deserve their own William Blakes, Ebenezer Howards and indeed Derek Walkers. Nostalgia for Garden Cities or New Towns won't help. Instead we need big, imaginative, courageous visions of the future of Britain.

Planning must become proactive rather than reactive. It must forward ideas for the future of Britain that are inclusive. It should be open to ideas from all quarters. And it should express these visions in accessible ways to the general public. We should understand the

significance of our built environment as the ultimate embodiment of democracy, the place that all our collective decisions come together to form the places we live and work in.

We also need to visualise the way our nation is changing. How are decisions often made in isolation—say HS2, proposed new towns, energy policy, environmental decisions, education and economic policy—shaping the future of the British landscape? What kind of Britain are we building?

The real skill of planning is to articulate and propose the spatial implications and possibilities of society. It can act as a tool where policy, infrastructure and nature intersect and it can do this in accessible ways. Planning is therefore essential to determine the future

of an open society that we all feel part of as much as it is essential to help us imagine the future of the British landscape.

With Blake's words—"we should not cease … till we have built Jerusalem" —ringing in our ears, the exhibition argues for architecture and planning to use the same imagination to build contemporary New Jerusalems. It's a call for planning to re-engage its visionary, entrepreneurial, sometimes wild past and to regain its role at the centre of democratic society to make Britain a more pleasant land.◇

Branding Remaking on the Urban Scale

Neli Vasileva reads Ben Campkin's *Remaking London* through the lens of Alexander Gutzmer's *Brand-Driven City*, and vice versa.

As a practice of late capitalism, branding goes beyond traditional advertising, in that it aims to immerse people in the process of production, rather than just engage them with a product as mere consumers. In *Brand–Driven City*, cultural theorist Alexander Gutzmer argues that brands need real social processes attached to them in order to survive; they thus exist in a complex relationship with actual spatial structures. Brands both 'actualise' in and transform space. To explore this relation, Gutzmer conducts a multi-faceted investigation of three main case studies of corporate branded space: Volkswagen's Autostad in Wolfsburg, Germany, BMW Welt in Munich, also Germany, and Anting New Town in Shanghai, China. Although he explores a very broad topic, he opts to focus exclusively on giants of the automobile industry as both the car, and the act of driving it, are closely related to everyday life and the production of urban space.

However, urban space offers a multitude of other opportunities to investigate branding and its influence on daily life. For example, the planned transformation of the city could be seen as branding, where the city becomes a place of constant reinvention and perpetual progress. Nowadays we can even witness parts of the city almost turning into products to be consumed, rather than meaningful places to live in. There are also huge negative 'branding' campaigns very often used in order to trigger urban change. Regeneration is usually preceded by a degradation whose image can be invented as much as found. In January 2014 residents of the Aylesbury estate in South London, often called upon to exemplify urban decay in the UK, protested to the way their home was represented on Channel 4. When images of the estate (although not named) were used to illustrate material and social decline, the residents struggled to broadcast their own representation of it. Meanwhile, the Newham of 2015 faces the reality left behind the glossy images that promoted the redevelopment of the area for the 2012 London Olympics.

In *Remaking London*, architectural historian and urbanist Ben Campkin explores both the problems behind, and the latent potential of, regeneration as a metaphor for urban change in London. He does so by investigating representations of the city alongside conceptions of material and social decay in reciprocal relation. Through an interdisciplinary approach, his historical account traces redevelopment programmes from slum clearances in 1920s London and the subsequent renewal of the post-war city, to the pre-2012 London Olympics developments in Newham.

Compared to Campkin's historically grounded tale of a London constantly remade, Gutzmer's case studies are rather used to support an ambitious theoretical framework on the development of brand-driven spatial concepts. Starting from Gilles Deleuze's concepts of the actual and the virtual, Gutzmer argues that brands need space in order for them to 'actualise' both culturally and economically. He then moves on to Peter Sloterdijk's spheres theory, in order to examine the ways in which these efforts of actualisation virtualise our notion of the urban. And for the last step of his argument, he resorts to Sloterdijk's theory of globalisation, while linking the concept of the 'virtual' with Sigfried Kracauer's 'mass ornament'. Through this process, he understands brands as a new medium. Brands thus emerge as structures loaded with content that transform our notions of globality, nationality and locality. As a 'global mass ornament', brand space immerses people into the creation of a mediated urbanity and a novel kind of identity.

On the other hand, *Remaking London* opens with the 1920s slum clearance in Somers Town, led by people close to the local community. Triggered from the inside, most truthful to the meaning of the term 'regeneration' in its biological sense, this redevelopment is instantly highlighted as one to which the chapters that follow more often stand in sharp contrast. This first chapter also introduces the use of the image in processes of urban renewal that is thoroughly explored throughout the book. Campkin then moves on to the consequential redevelopments of the Elephant and Castle area: from the representation of a post-war ruined city in the process of modernisation to the conception and subsequent decline of two buildings central to this very modernisation. Campkin's story climaxes with the case of Aylesbury, one of the largest public housing estates in Europe. Its gradual shift from a promise for order—spatial as well as social, to a representation of decline and stigma-tisation perceived as inherent in its initial design, is presented in the context of political shifts and economic crisis.

The second part of the book opens a more aesthetic discussion on urban dirt and decline. The story of King's Cross before its current major

Photography: Frankie Meinhof.

redevelopment explores the creative reinvention of a place; David Adjaye's Dirty House is interpreted as an intentional image of exterior dirt in the historical context of its site and the artistic work of its owners; and the last chapter explores the ways in which fine art can respond to the image created for pre-Olympic Newham, and its consequences for the local residents. Campkin revisits some of his sites over time in order to illustrate new interpretations of decay, order and hygiene, as well as their gradual evolution and subsequent use in strategies of urban renewal. He aims to draw attention to the commercial and political interest that often hides behind the drive for redevelopment presented to be for the benefit of local residents; or, in his own words: "to the short-termism and neglect or distortion of past lessons."

Brand-Driven City investigates urban space as created to engage with a particular brand and explores the way it functions (or not) for its real inhabitants. Gutzmer argues that brand space, contrary to Castells's 'architectural structures serving as tools of power by exclusion', possesses a power of inclusion, instead. Hence, his book contributes to cultural studies of late capitalism and urban space, focusing on brands, not yet considered to have an independent productive spatial role and offers a cultural interpretation of how brand space and the city interplay, putting a strong emphasis on human agency in the process. *Remaking London* on the other hand is the outcome of years of research on London. Focused on the city, the narrative flows smoothly through time, tracing the reinvention of the city in both spatial and imaginary terms through its numerous representations.

Branding, although a more complex practice than advertising, is still related to a product and its consumption. Gutzmer's *Brand-Driven City* is defined by the automobile industry, freshly invented, it manages to keep its residents and visitors immersed in it. In *Remaking London* Campkin argues that urban regeneration would be truly for the benefit of local populations only when triggered from within a community; unfortunately it has recently become a campaign to attract private investment in areas that struggle to generate profit on their own. Parts of the city are thus reinvented and effectively rebranded, in order to attract 'the right people' who would be more ready to identify with a new 'product'. Read in conjunction, the books have left me wondering, is it now even possible to demand urban regeneration processes that engage local residents with the place they live in? ◇

Queering Architectural History

How heteronormative is your architecture? Brent Pilkey underscores the political significance of seeing through established social norms and the conventions of architectural historiography that accompany them.

Words by Stylianos Giamarelos

Recently completed PhD dissertations often prove to be some of the most exciting reads on offer at The Bartlett Library. In his thesis *Queering Heteronormativity at Home in London*, Brent Pilkey draws from queer theory and geographies of sexualities, among other disciplines, in his quest to challenge the supposed stability of the architectural concept of domesticity. Exploring the everyday homemaking practices of more than 40 non-heterosexual households in London, he argues that queering—challenging convention —at home is a form of political activism. Intrigued by his research, LOBBY invited Brent to talk a little more about his project, and share his thoughts on the future of queer architectural histories.

✦

What was your initial drive for this research project? How did that fit in with your trajectory as a graduate student?

When I was completing my undergraduate and master's degrees in Toronto, Canada, I worked for an architectural firm. It was a place managed and largely dominated by (white) men who tossed around homophobic and sexist language as if it was still the 1950s. Diversity certainly wasn't encouraged and if this is what practicing architecture is like, I wanted nothing to do with it. This experience, which is sadly echoed by more recent research in the *Architectural Journal*, helped push me into academia, which is an amazingly accepting and diverse space. At the same time, I had stumbled upon American architect and critic Aaron Betsky's book, *Queer Space* (1997). This, along with a burgeoning body of literature I was reading in human geography that looked at (largely) gay male experiences of inhabiting the city, was the foundation for a PhD proposal.

I was then aiming to write a contemporary history of largely public and semi-public peripheral zones where same-sex attraction unfolds (think gay villages and cruising grounds), using London as my case study. But I fell into the all-too-common trend of lacking focus and clarity. Perhaps, more importantly though, my own contribution to knowledge was unclear. I had to come to terms with a basic question: what did I have to say that hadn't already been said?

I eventually replied to this question by taking a political activist agenda—which seeks to bring about greater visibility to sexual minority experiences of the city, to investigate not distinct peripheral zones but rather ordinary domestic spaces. So I narrowed my focus by researching LGBTQ-occupied (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) homes in London.

What were the methodologies you explored?

In the main part of the research I conducted 40 in-depth qualitative interviews (both with singles and couples) lasting from one up to three and a half hours. I also interviewed ten tradespeople that work in LGBTQ homes (e.g. gay plumbers and lesbian carpenters). So in total the research brought together 57 sexual minorities in London. I asked participants to submit photographs of their homes and I also had interviewees complete a diary. I deliberately chose not to use plans of the homes I was researching, just like I ignored advice to take detailed photography or conduct sketching while in the domestic spaces. I was keen to let the voices of my research participants speak for themselves. So in part, my project is an oral history that might

Photograph courtesy of Brent Pilkey.

"Showing the queering of heteronormativity at home may work to bring about greater equality for marginalised sexualities."

otherwise not have been recorded. On that point, I do think architectural history could make more use of oral histories.

What if I asked you to summarise your research argument and findings in a few sentences?

My argument is essentially politically motivated. It adds to the queer theorised stance which seeks to challenge heteronormativity. In other words, the approach is one that argues normative heterosexuality is a fundamental cause of inequality. So I make the case that everyday practices of ordinary Londoners at home work to queer/challenge heteronormativity. In the research I found that minority sexual identity at home unfolds in a variety of ways. On the one end of the spectrum people suggest that their home is very visibly LGBTQ-occupied, others absolutely refute this. But it's much more complicated

than this! I also need to cite the theorised feminist argument that suggests 'the personal is political': that every home is shaped by wider discourses, in which the 'split-wall' stands in for the tenuous/ porous divide between inside and outside, private and public. With this porosity in mind, I argue that showing the queering of heteronormativity at home may work to bring about greater equality for marginalised sexualities.

Now that this project is finished, have you considered shifting from private to public spaces?

While I do really enjoy researching domesticity, and I'm continuing to publish from the research project, I'm actually shifting focus completely by moving to research teaching and learning themes. One day I may come back to this area, though. I'd like the opportunity to

research experiences of heteronormativity and homophobia in other cities. I think more needs to be done to draw attention to minority experiences outside of the globalised metropolises like London.

What would you say to someone that suggested this has little to do with architectural history?

I've come up against this before. In short, while my research might sit closely with, say, human geography, queer theory or even theorised feminism, I think it is clearly spatial. I certainly go into depth looking at the production of space or the practice of creating a home, focusing in part on domestic materiality and a bit into interior design.

I have an architecturally-focused article in a special issue of *Home Cultures* that I organised—themed around alternative domesticities. In that piece I highlight a gay architectural aesthetic discourse that circulates at a number of levels (on TV, in media and through a small body of literature in architectural studies). I make the case that there's a relational and complicated link between this public design discourse and how ordinary LGBTQ Londoners make a home. In short, architecture *is* spatial and while a lot of what you'll find in The Bartlett Library focuses on canonical architecture, we can't forget about the practice of everyday life in ordinary domestic space. ◇

Far From Predictions

Blerta Dino explores Rory Hyde's *Future Practice: Conversations from the Edge of Architecture.*

A white flag dominates the cover of Rory Hyde's first book. Was it chosen as a symbol of the pure and limpid intentions of the minds that lay behind architectural creation? Or does it serve more like a meaningful emblem for the authors' debut in print?

Starting with a widely discussed blog-post that dates back to late 2010, *Hyde's book* succeeds in attracting the readers' interest thanks to its straightforward style that presents arguments, current trends and realities as they are, as they are experienced. It provides a broad reading of what 'architecture', that so often elusive word, might realistically mean. The book offers a rich palette of interviews with 17 brilliant architectural minds. By stressing the importance of debate and analysis, Hyde's 'made-to-measure', well-formulated and purposeful questions invite his interlocutors to elaborate their thoughts on emerging architectural trajectories, the possibilities for novel forms of practice, and other innovative approaches to architectural operations. However, "this is not a book of predictions", as Dan Hill is quick to note in his foreword. It essentially aims to gather an array of formulations that might help define the current edge of architectural practice from both sides: within and without the profession.

Hill also points out the contemporary realities and possible futures of a discipline currently dominated by all-purpose design-thinking professionals whose skill-set is no longer unique to architects. In his introduction, Hyde lays down his main concepts, experiences, thoughts and narratives regarding the contemporary reality of architecture (and its practices). The 17 interviews that form the core of the book are also briefly introduced by the author.

The interviews themselves are fairly short—rarely longer than a few pages. They were mainly conducted through Skype and only occasionally as face-to-face conversations. Every single interview offers interesting food for thought for the readers, who seem to be invited to ponder and investigate further for themselves. The interlocutors just provide their

insights as they have seen them develop through their professional practice so far. The readers will not find fully-formed grand visions or specifically formulated arguments on the future of architecture. Although the 17 engaging personalities come from very different backgrounds in this vast field (policy-making, history, community engagement, design, education, activism, academic research), there is one common denominator to them all: architecture, their shared passion!

From Bruce Mau and Reinier de Graaf, to Lilet Breddels and Natalie Jeremijenko, Hyde's interlocutors share and reflect upon their quotidian professional experience. Hyde's thoughtful selection of interviewees ensures that their reality check, and the daily issues arising from the contemporary context of built environment production, is up to date. The relatively small architectural practices represented in the book do not help us draw the "big picture", though. Collecting opinions from star-architects and their studios would have in turn allowed us to critically evaluate the difference between two—or more—visions for the future of our practice.

Perhaps the most encouraging message of the book is that the future of the profession is up to us; while reading it certainly helps us think through it, at the end, we are the ones that will make it happen. ◇

Photography: Frankie Meinhof.

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