LOBBY

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Faith

Contents

Contributors

A racehorse's name, often quirky and even inscrutable, can sometimes play a part in which horse we place our bets on —and hold our breath for. For our 'Faith' issue, we asked four of our most notable contributors: **If you owned a champion racehorse, what would its name be?**

Lilliana Ramos-Collado
Contributing Writer

Lilliana's credentials are vast. We're not kidding. When we asked her what she'd like for us to include here, she just said she wanted to be portrayed as blissful. Lilliana's got a PhD in Spanish Literature and teaches at the University of Puerto Rico's School of Architecture. Until recently she was Puerto Rico's Minister of Culture, as well as Curator at the island's Museum of Contemporary Art. Among many other things, Lilliana is an essayist and blogger, with quick wit and a snazzy bow-tie to match—on some occasions, anyway. She describes herself as generally weird, short, chubby, goofy, green-eyed, greying, but she prefers the term 'poet'. You can read Lilliana's article in pages 84–87 of the Staircase.

"I would call my champion horse *Lilliana* just to bemuse my friends and, especially, my enemies. Why not?"

Website: bodegonconteclado.wordpress.com

Josh McKenna
Contributing Illustrator

Josh is Cornish by birth, exotic by nature. He's asked us to specify: "if you don't know it, Cornwall is the California of England!" Josh now lives in east London and works from a studio off Broadway Market. In his illustrations, you'll frequently find a variety of voluptuous and curvy ladies, dudes' bums, as well as asymmetric architectural shapes. To see Josh's illustrations, flick through to pages 40–43 of the Exhibition Space.

"I would name my champion racehorse *Gentrification For The Win*. Why?! Because everybody loves artisan coffee and a higher consciousness when it comes to food. Hipsters may be taking over every run-down, worn-out back alley launderette but they provide me with nice brew, craft beer and a decent magazine to flick through on my lunch break. I can't complain."

Instagram and Twitter: @jshmck

Fani Kostourou,
Contributing Writer

Fani is a Greek architect and urban designer from NTUA, ETHZ and UCL. She's currently doing a PhD at the Bartlett School of Architecture, and she's been writing for us since our very first issue. Fani loves reading up on people's everyday practices in big cities, as well as on mass housing, which makes her end up going late to bed every night, only to realise what a bad idea it was every morning. Fani's article can be found in pages 58–60 of the Exhibition Space.

"I'd name my racehorse *Big Jet Plane*, to glorify our two shared passions: speed and the freedom to run away and travel. Or I'd simply call him *Forrest* only to be able to say, 'Run, Forrest, Run!'"

Twitter: @fani_ko

Micahel Novotný
Contributing Photographer

Michael Novotny is a young photographer from Prague, where he graduated from the Czech University of Life Sciences in 2013 with a Masters in Landscape Architecture. He's always been strongly influenced by nature, something which is clearly reflected in his work. Living what he calls a 'half-nomadic life', Michael spent the last year in Iceland, and currently lives in the Swiss Alps, travelling whenever possible. Using only analogue techniques, over the years he's developed a unique style; during his travels he captures diverse landscapes in their rawness and mixes them with a dreamy and mysterious touch. Take a look at Michael's photo essay in pages 46–53 of the Exhibition Space.

"I don't like to race or compete against people. I just want to enjoy life without the need of being the best. So, if I'd ever get a racehorse I'd call it *Time*. I'd teach it to run as slowly as possible so I could enjoy every moment of the ride while others rush to get somewhere."

Instagram: @hazy_island

LOBBY

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High Stakes

Dear Reader,

What you have in your hands isn't an issue on religious architecture. If you ask me, the acts of faith we perform in our every day lives—faith's most commonplace manifestations—have little to do with religion. Our daily decisions are based on belief that whatever it is we choose is the best solution for the desired outcome—from where we live to how we deal with personal problems; from the partners we pick to why we design the way we do. More than blindly following celestial guidance, when we put our faith in something what we're essentially doing is placing a bet.

Betting, of course, sometimes means being wrong; it involves losing. In this loss we either hold true to our initial beliefs—our gut instincts—and try again, or we reevaluate what we once held true and try something else for a change. As UNStudio's Caroline Bos tells us in this issue's main featured interview, "Faith requires patience, persistence—and yes, also some luck."

LOBBY No.5 is a reflection of how faith can be as much a spatial construct as an overarching zeitgeist. Our opening text in the Exhibition Space, written by architecture critic Hugh Pearman, presents an overview of how architectural styles and discourses resemble religious denominations and sects. But whether through manifestos or academic teaching, these dogmas aren't all imposed by architects and theorists, they can also be shaped by political agendas—such is the case of our discussion on New London Vernacular and its obsession with brick. Similarly, we shed light on the role today's youth is playing in architectural discourse, proposing a new current of thought on the rise—led by underdogs, not 'starchitects'.

In the Seminar Room we'll show you a truly unique (and rare) look into Pritzker Prize Laureate Gottfried Böhm's church of Neviges. To discuss how it represents much more than Catholic credos, we talk to director Maurizius Staerkle-Drux about his personal experiences with the Böhm family and their architecture, through the filming of his stunning documentary *Concrete Love*. In the Staircase, we focus on the power of symbols. From the LGBTQ rainbow flag to the ubiquitous use of emojis, we discuss how these 'images' can be powerful agents for community-formation, spatial organisation and evolving modes of communication.

Taking you to the mountaintops of Iceland and India, in the Lift we tell stories of global wanderers and their encounters with locations loaded with spiritual significance. But these cities attest that faith isn't solely represented through temples, but rather through acceptance, belonging and camaraderie. In this way, faith as a divine construct takes a back-seat to faith as a social and moral responsibility.

In the Library we present a series of books with varying, unique relationships to the theme. From Jason Surrell's *The Haunted Mansion* to St. Ignatius of Loyala's *Autobiography*, we discuss how an audience puts their logic to the side to willingly fall into otherworldly spaces and supernatural experiences, while also looking at how the power of writing an autobiography can help infuse an unwavering sense of conviction to its readers. Finally, the Toilets features stories that'll both uplift you in victory—such as through a remarkable escape from Auschwitz—and leave you with a sense of uncertainty—as in the case of a satirical account of the political, economic and cultural fiasco that we today know as Brexit.

Like betting on horses on a racetrack, uncertainty and victory, as well as risk and loss, go hand-in-hand. In these globally precarious times—architecturally, politically, economically, academically (they're all linked together anyway)—it might perhaps be best to wager our faith on that one racehorse that tugs on our intuition, rather than the one with the impressive pedigree. Sure, we *may* end up with empty pockets, but sometimes—when the stakes are high—that's a risk worth taking.

Enjoy the issue,
Regner Ramos, Editor-in-Chief

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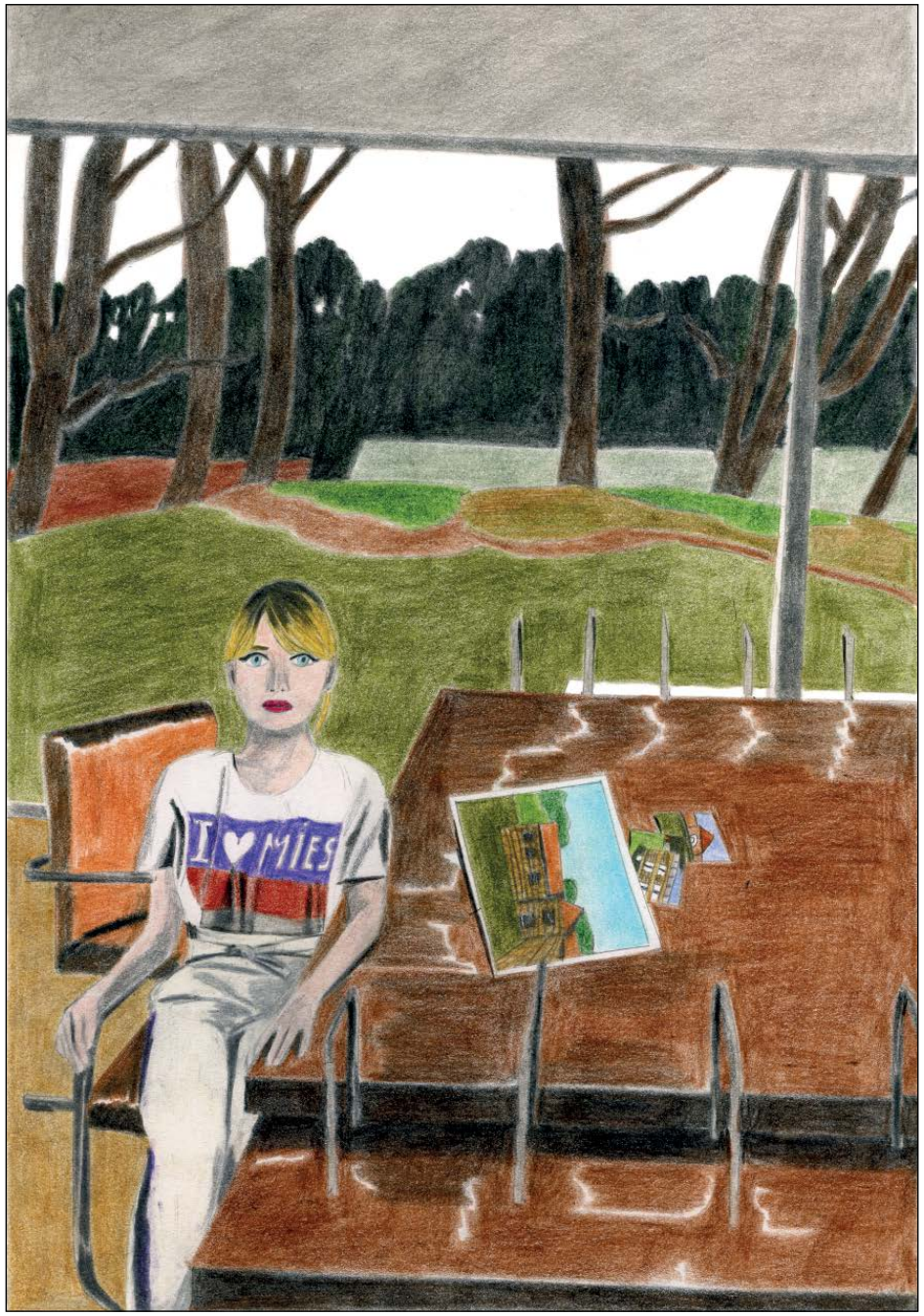
The Tree House

Photography by Märta Thisner

The Exhibition Space

Past Style

ARCHITECTURE AS A SECT



Words by Hugh Pearman
Illustration by Marie Jacotey

It's all about belief, architecture. I know it's one of the great professions formalised in the early 19th Century, and that it's also a business, a science and an art. But the longer I hang around it, the more I become convinced that—if not actually a religion—it shares a remarkable number of characteristics of one. Or of several.

A religion has to have its holy texts; architecture has many, from Vitruvius and Palladio onwards. We have Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*, Pevsner's "Modern Movements in Architecture", Peter Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age,* Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*, *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour —add as many examples as you like.

A religion has to have its sects. Architecture has an ever-increasing number, usually expressed as stylistic variations on every major movement as it emerges, flourishes and eventually declines. It's a complicated business —Neoclassicism, Baroque, Palladianism at the traditional end of things, and an equally bewildering number of takes on 'Modernism' which one must follow through Postmodernism, Deconstructivism, High-Tech, Parametricism and so on. It's rare to encounter total originality —even Le Corbusier's Ronchamp had its earlier influences. But there is a point at which an individual architect's signature style differs significantly enough from the mother lode and can be grouped with the work of like-minded colleagues, becoming a thing in itself.

A religion has to have its high priests. Of course: Loos, Corb, Wright and Mies in the 20th Century, plus minor prophets in the UK such as the Smithsons, with Banham as their disciple. In the 21st, one can perhaps point to the likes of Schumacher, Aravena, Koolhaas or Kundoo—people with strong beliefs or commitment amounting to manifesto positions. All this does not come down to 'style' in the way it once did, but rather approach. And this is interesting. Where does architectural faith go once style is removed from the equation, when architecture is (supposedly) entirely pluralist?

The answer is that two main stylistic faiths have survived largely intact, and it's obvious enough which: Modernism, and Traditionalism. Tellingly, adherents of both faiths deny that this is a matter of style at all. In both cases, theirs is the One True Way.

It's easier to recognise a Traditionalist than a Modernist, given that Modernism has become so diffuse. If it's new but looks old, then you have a Trad at work, and that's all you need to know—whether it's Palladian, Gothic, Italianate, Arts and Crafts or Thatch. But with Modernism (always distinct from merely 'modern')—do we include High-Tech in that, or the eco-look, or neo-vernacular, or Brutalism, or Deconstruction, or the Pop of Archigram? Practitioners of all these might claim broad adherence to Modernism—as scores of religious sects affiliate to their various mainstream sources —but that doesn't mean they are *it*.

It's all increasingly confusing to the outsider, now that it's possible for known Modernists to design buildings with rusticated bases or Neoclassical colonnades; you won't catch the Trads inflecting their buildings with accents of Modernism, but it certainly works the other way round. However, it's not all that confusing to those who believe. And this is why, in my experience, architects often make poor judges of the work of other architects. As with religions, the closer one sect is to another, the more apart they are, the more fiercely they resist any cross-talk. Of course politics—especially left-wing politics with its roots in chapel-going industrial areas—is much the same. Splinters beget splinters which beget other splinters, and in the end it's easier for Far Left to click across to Far Right than it is for either end of the spectrum to talk to the colour band alongside them. If you get my drift.

We end up in a situation in which a fine building is overlooked for an award, say, because it's Postmodern and the most persuasive judge in the group is a committed Modernist. He or she (and I've known both on judging panels to take this view) can see no virtue in any building of that particular style. Other aspects count for nothing: they cannot see past the style, which in their minds is associated with a bad period of architecture in their youth. Worse, that bad period involved apostasy: Modernists renounced their faith and went Postmodern. This cannot be forgiven or forgotten.

Sir Denys Lasdun talked of the 'personal myth' that all architects of ambition need to have: it doesn't matter what it is, he said, you just have to believe in it. That is what makes you *know* that your work is superior to that of others, and that is what makes you design with conviction. Lasdun understood. ◎

Moving

Architecture

Can architects really become the complex, open-minded and adaptable figures we need them to be? Caroline Bos talks to LOBBY about the dynamic, relational and far-reaching architectural ideas which have inspired the pioneering designs of UNStudio.

Words by Gregorio Astengo
Photography by Isolde Woudstra

Speaking with Caroline Bos leaves one with the impression that buildings, no matter how still they may seem, are actually all about motion and change, constantly evolving and adapting to our unstable needs. Nearly three decades of experience in the field later, this mission still identifies Bos's role in architecture as Principal Urban Planner of UNStudio—the Dutch world-renowned practice she founded with architect Ben van Berkel. After meeting in London in 1988 they began working in Amsterdam as Van Berkel & Bos Architectuurbureau. Ever since then, the unique global expansion of their practice has followed a steady and uniquely successful progression. In 1998 it became UNStudio. And in 2009, UNStudio Asia was founded, with its first office in Shanghai, shortly followed by a second office in Hong Kong in 2014. This 'evolutionary' trajectory, unfolding over the past 28 years, mirrors the profound awareness of the time and space ofa world-wide architecture, which marks UNStudio's all-encompassing programme.

In fact, with more than 120 projects all over the globe—including the awarded Mercedes-Benz Museum (2000–2006), Arnhem Central (1996–2015) and Singapore University (2010–2015)—UNStudio is possibly the truest example of what architecture can become once it embraces its worldly dimension. In turn, Caroline Bos can be described as the embodiment of that earthly preoccupation which defines her practice. For her, architecture needs to constantly search for innovative means of expression, it has to be analytical and empirical, serious and playful, operative and theoretical, global and local. Architecture must always look out there for new and unexplored territory to conquest. But according to Bos, it must also keep looking inside of itself, investigating that profound intimacy and relevance that still makes us believe in it.

✌

You came into architecture from a training in history of art and urban studies. Did the intellectual environment of London and Utrecht in the 80s drive your interests and shape the role that you now have in UNStudio?

Living, working and studying in London in the 80s has indeed been deeply formative to me. In actual fact though—academically—I have consistently done everything the other way around. When I acquired my first degree in History of Art at Birkbeck College, I was already writing—together with Ben van Berkel—for Dutch newspapers and magazines. We wrote pages and pages on the cultural milieu of London and about all the great architects we met or heard about at the

> “It’s important not to get stuck in repetitiveness and to see when a particular instrument exhausts itself.”

Architectural Association, like Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and Coop Himmelblau, just to name a few. Some even subsequently got their first small commissions in the Netherlands! Then, some 10 years ago, I went on to study for my degree in urban and regional planning, feeling I needed some different analytical tools. So when I finally qualified as a planner, I had been already practicing for quite a while.

Intellectually, what my studies at Birkbeck imprinted on me was a real understanding of art and architecture as socio-cultural constructs. All my teachers at Birkbeck were steeped into what they called the ‘new history’. For instance, our wonderful professor William Vaughn introduced himself as a marxist with a small ‘m’. This has continued to direct my focus on architecture as a larger cultural construction within society.

At that time, Deconstructivism —and Derrida specifically—dominated the discourse. Ben and I were also very impressed by Paul Feyerabend’s *Against Method*. I would say that my second main influence came through Ben and his experiences at the AA. From that I took a strong belief that real change, real newness, can be brought about. That’s important to believe not just in an experimental approach, but also in architecture: something really new can happen, and there can be true paradigm shifts.

How does your attention to, both, the broader cultural realm and the experimental aspect inform your relationship with van Berkel?

Both of us have a profound appreciation for the other’s talents. I enormously admire Ben’s design-focused, creative and also very intuitive approach, which is strongly centred on architecture and art —of which he, of course, is also very knowledgeable. My approach, on the other hand, is somewhat broader and analytical. These two different ways of experiencing architecture are always deeply integrated. To me, that’s the core of our approach in UNStudio. Even if we come from very different places we always find a way of superimposing our methods, to combine and match our ideas.

One of the most original and unique elements of UNStudio is precisely your adaptive methodological approach to design. For instance, in 1998 you stated that the diagram “allows for endlessly expansive, unpredictable and liberating pathways for architecture.” What’s changed in the ways you explore the possibilities of design tools?

In architecture and design there’s really an infinite number of instruments and tools we can use, but after a certain point we shouldn’t really be focused on the tool itself but on the goal. That quote is very telling because finding expansive and liberating pathways is still what we want to do. The question still is: how can we expand and enrich our profession? As the conditions around us change, our equipment should and will also change. In fact, the diagram was very important in the 1990s but today it’s not as crucial an instrument as it was back then. It’s important not to get stuck in repetitiveness and to see when a particular instrument exhausts itself.

Early on in the life of UNStudio you have been developing a design strategy that you’ve called ‘Deep Planning’ as driving the design process. Is this still valuable today?

Deep Planning describes how studies of movement, aspects of construction, different types of programme and other elements of a project are treated integrally. It tries to articulate a very layered approach, aiming to expose hidden strata of various natures, almost like an x-ray. As such, this approach sets itself up in opposition to a more conventional, flat and, shall we say, ‘shallow’ way of masterplanning that we still often encounter. Deep Planning is also very site-specific, dynamic and informed by parameter-based techniques and a networked approach.

We learnt from one of our first projects—the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam—that there's much volatility on all levels in realising a large urban project. How do you deal with these 'mobile forces', that encompass conflicts of interest, changing economies and differing civic cultures, as well as constructional, functional, programmatic and aesthetic issues? Interestingly, around the same time that we developed Deep Planning, two very influential planners, Patsey Healey and Stephen Graham, also described a similar way of thinking—from a theoretical perspective—as "relational concepts of space and place." This is the most significant aspect of Deep Planning: relations—much more than individual data—form the parameters of a project.

How does your theoretical discourse around complexity, diagrams and fluxes translate into your attention to topology and non-Euclidean geometry?

The interest in knot theory and design models dominated a lot of our work in the 90s. We were interested in exploring abstract, mathematical, but also sculptural models that could be transferred from one project to another. What makes these models so interesting is that they're very mouldable, but they are also imaginary. For instance, the Klein Bottle is a doubled-up, four-dimensional Moebius loop with what mathematicians call a 'non-orientable, continuous surface'. It takes the twist of the Moebius loop to a new height by folding from outside to inside in a smooth, never-ending loop. This is obviously not something that is architecturally possible, but it's a spatial and sculptural thought construct without a specific form attached to it. This makes it adaptable, and made it possible for us to experiment with it.

UNStudio stands for United Network Studio, responding to the collaborative nature of the practice. Now more than ever, interdisciplinary collaborations are crucial within architecture. How do you think this hybridisation will change the way we think about, study and conceptualise architectural spaces?

Since we renamed our practice back in 1998 to reflect the collaborative nature of the profession, the networks we operate in have indeed become increasingly complex, interdisciplinary and expansive. In recent years we've actually undertaken a somewhat radical reorganisation of our practice to better accommodate these changes. For us, this means a very rigorous approach to research and knowledge development, which occurs both within the studio but also in collaboration with external parties. For us, working with experts from other fields and pooling knowledge from different disciplines is essential. A holistic approach to architecture has always been preferable; architecture needs to be relevant—this is its whole *raison d'être*. For that to happen, a more universal and comprehensive approach is necessary. By embracing interdisciplinary collaborations we can become more agile as a profession, not only in order to remain relevant, but also so that we can continue to innovate, discover and anticipate new approaches to architecture.

The dynamic attitude that identifies UNStudio is also described in *MOVE* (1999), which you have described as your manifesto. Could you tell me more about this publication? Why was it significant to your work?

On a personal level, I'm friends with many of my Dutch colleagues, such as Mecanoo's Francine Houben and MVRDV's Nathalie de Vries, as well as many others; in a way, it's a small field and everyone knows each other well. At the same time, however, today we are all locked into our own worlds and an active debate seems to be missing. Much of the excitement that we experienced in the 1990s, when Dutch architecture was going through a boom, certainly feels less intense today. The attention of our culture has shifted to other parts of the world and this is perhaps why we are now more individually focused on our own development. On the other hand, the balances of the world as a whole have shifted so dramatically and we see diverse and truly inspiring approaches.

How can your design philosophy —which you claim is focused on

Photography: Christian Richters.

Moebius House

I think *MOVE* is really a product of our times and of our generation. When we wrote the book we were not alone: Jeffrey Kipnis, Greg Lynn, Jesse Reiser and many others shared several of our experiences, observations, ideas and aspirations. The zeitgeist of the late 1990s is embedded in that book, which I think is one of its strongest points: it really spoke to its time and place. One of the premises of *MOVE* was that building design and construction result from dynamic, highly evolved, interactive processes. However, architects have drifted into these new ways of working in a globalised system without articulating their own policy. We wanted to write that policy, that manifesto, to help prepare ourselves and others for the future. We wrote, "The architect is going to be the fashion designer of the future. The architect's practice will be organised as a limitless virtual studio, like Andy Warhol's Factory scattered; a network of superstars." I believe that was quite a good prediction.

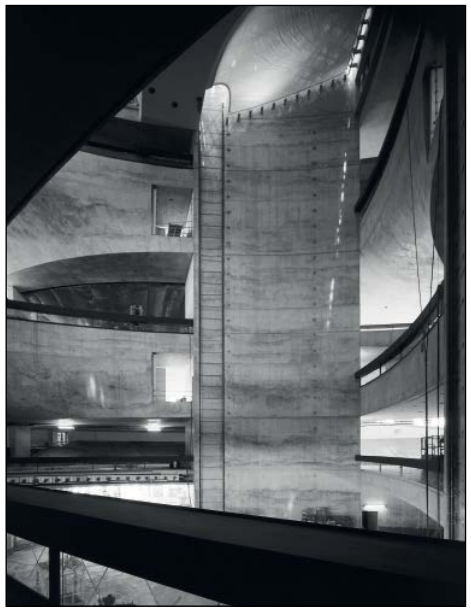
How has the way you and van Berkel developed UNStudio relate to the architecture culture of the Netherlands?

On a personal level, I'm friends with many of my Dutch colleagues,

"Today we are all locked into our own worlds and an active debate seems to be missing."

tangible social realities—provide a future vision for the user to be inspired by today?

For me, the problems that architects need to tackle cannot be as politically identified as they often are. Our language is architectural and we need to express our projects, our ideas and our programmes through that language. It can't just be words and good intentions. Our challenge is



Mercedes-Benz Museum

really to bring life to our built environment and we can only do it through the language of architecture.

Recently, Alejandro Aravena has very explicitly positioned a social agenda onto the architectural discourse. With this Biennale, he has brought forward a way of thinking about architecture which comes less from a design-driven point of view, tending to locate social problems onto the public realm. I think this is very exciting because it's a new way of looking at architecture and it could really bring a paradigm shift —inspiring and new. But for that to happen, we also need to see how this agenda inspires and innovates the discipline itself. The same goes for sustainability, for instance. What we acutely need now is to deeply internalise such positive social and ecological ideologies in the very heart of our discipline. Radically experimental and all-encompassing plans can propose alternative ways for people to live and move. They're a fantastic way to shatter tired patterns formed by risk-avoiding institutionalism and corporatism.

How can such inspiration shape the architects' faith in their own profession? And in return, how can architects then restore such faith for its users?

Faith—what a challenging notion! I have a lot of faith in architecture in general. I've seen how over the past 15 or 20 years architecture has become fantastically vibrant, more dynamic than ever. Grey cities have been enriched by so much beautiful —I use this taboo word deliberately here—architecture, made with passion and love, skill and knowledge of our profession. This I believe to be truly inspiring, for users as well as architects.

The skills and abilities developed in UNStudio—by so many talented people —have allowed us to share our insights with the users of our architecture. We have always tried to evoke their deep, visceral responses rather than focusing exclusively on functional aspects. But the profession does undergo shifts, changing on a fairly regular basis—being affected as it is by so many social, economic and political issues, alongside its own internal forces. In this sense, I would say that faith is a fundamental necessity. You need to firmly believe that the profession can not only accommodate or absorb change, but that it can really grow from it, improve and progress with every twist and turn. You also need to take risks, have confidence and believe that you can play a role in that development.

Photography: Brigida Gonzalez.

With respect to the users of our work, we can only restore their faith if we take every challenge head on. If we continue to demonstrate the relevance of architecture, even the joy of it, regardless of how the profession may expand or contract, then I believe we have a good chance of inspiring faith in what we do. Faith requires patience, persistence—and yes, also some luck.

Over the past decades, one of your strongest personal missions, and perhaps also one of your dearest commitments, has been the reconciliation of architecture and urbanism. What are the design principles that UNStudio adopts towards the infrastructural aspect of the city and towards mobility in particular?

As we have noted in *MOVE*, in architecture, "the traditional procedures of practice are becoming inadequate." Traditional distinctions between typologies and scales —city/nature, public/private, global/local—are becoming blurred, as it's also been remarked by important theorists like Manuel Castells, David Harvey and Saskia Sassen. The question is: how are we dealing with this in practice? In order to play an active role in our cities—with their heavily interconnected mobilities—we need to apply the openness that new concepts such as the creative commons, co-creation and knowledge economy entail. We need to learn to not only develop and valorise our knowledge, but to share it.

For instance, our most challenging project to date is Doha Metro Network in Qatar. The project—which comprises 35 stations with around 60 more at a later stage—aims to integrate all functional and technical aspects of the stations into a coherent expression. In this case, questions arise about identity. Can there be, both, a local as well as a global identity? This is exactly what we're aiming for. Doha is a city that has developed from a small fishing community in the early 19th Century into an emerging urban regional centre with over 1.6 million inhabitants. So even though modern urbanisation is recent, the Qatari cultural and traditional references that we aim to pick up on are deeply ingrained in a long history. At the same time, infrastructure entails connectivity and global flows —which is why we aspire to a thoughtful merger of local and global identity markers. This goal and this way of operating are crucial for UNStudio: we work through the same conceptual detail at many different levels, towards an architecture that can transcend all scales.

The success of UNStudio is strongly linked to your commitment towards an experimental approach, but also towards theoretical awareness. How do you mediate between these two realms?

Well in a word, it's whirlwind. It's always been a whirlwind, for the whole 28 years of our work in UNStudio. Sometimes I can't even keep track of it! Our profession is under an incredible pressure and it comes from every direction, including technology, which often becomes an incredibly expansive burden. The challenge is to always be truly invested in what we do, but at the same time to stay light on our toes. The mediation is really between the commitment to an idea and the continual exploration of different forms of architectural thinking out there, starting from our own fascinations. To me, this is what can really bridge theory and practice. In a sense it's almost like a game that we're playing throughout our life. I think this playfulness is the most important part, and I would recommend everyone to be flexible, free, interested. This is how architecture can really reinvent itself.

"If we continue to demonstrate the joy of architecture, then we have a good chance of inspiring faith in what we do."

Not by Public Space Alone

PROTESTS AND WHERE THEY UNFOLD

Stevan Dohanos. Home Movies, Home Life in America (Beer Belongs). January 26, 1948. LIFE magazine.

Words by Kateryna Malaia

In the 21st Century, urban theorists, planners and architects put much of their energy into the making of public space because of its seemingly inherent political nature. The work of the constellation of celebrated architects—Frank Gehry, Renzo Piano, Zaha Hadid—to name a few, barely touches on everyday non-public spaces, and only a minor cast of designers, such as Alejandro Aravena, B.V. Doshi and perhaps Farshid Moussavi draw their attention to the rethinking of private and semi-private spaces where people experience daily politics. As a result, enormous potential for political change embedded in non-public spaces stays largely undeveloped by urban professionals. Their architectural impact remains showcased in the plazas, museum buildings and trade centres—virtually everywhere, except for where people *live*.

In the last decades, professionals involved with the urban environment cultivated a belief in the political importance of public space over everything else. During the 2011 Turin Democracy Biennial, the broadly adored Rem Koolhaas gave a speech on the proposed theme, 'How is the political system reflected in the built environment? What is the role of architecture in the design of public space?' As in other examples of rhetoric on the politics of the built environment, private spaces were not considered. Architects are more eager to question the concept of democracy, than to recognise politics outside of the public space. Firms like Snøhetta, have established their names on socially responsible design (i.e. rethinking gender in King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture), yet have not gone past the limits of public space in their explorations.

The fascination with public space grew from the mid-20th Century writings of Western philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas. Their works outlined the historic and contemporary parity between public space and politics. A typical example used by architectural historians is of the antique agora—an urban plaza in a Greek polis used for trade and political public gatherings—particularly their role in elections, where every citizen had a voice. Except for slaves or women.

The model of the agora has made it into the 21st Century in multiple forms: from a Jeffersonian lawn in the centre of an American university, to weekend farmer's markets adored by western urbanites. The conundrum here is that the mentioned philosophers were themselves aware of the private space's importance for politics. Arendt, for one, wrote that in order to be recognised as a political subject, a citizen of a polis had to own a private space—some land and a dwelling. This important detail largely disappeared from the readings of her work, which gravitated towards the thought that the only space where politics is performed—and in which it is necessary to design and understand accordingly—is the public one. Moreover, in many contemporary realms such as news media, the definition of political space has been narrowed down to two urban types: a public plaza and a major street.

The reality of contemporary urban politics does not match this simplification. Don't we need an address in order to vote in the first place? Our lack of attention to everyday spaces obscures the fact that politics is first and foremost played out in everyday *non-public* spaces. A look to an extreme case of political dissatisfaction —a recent, broadly covered precedent of public protests against police violence in Ferguson, Missouri—can be used as an example of this.

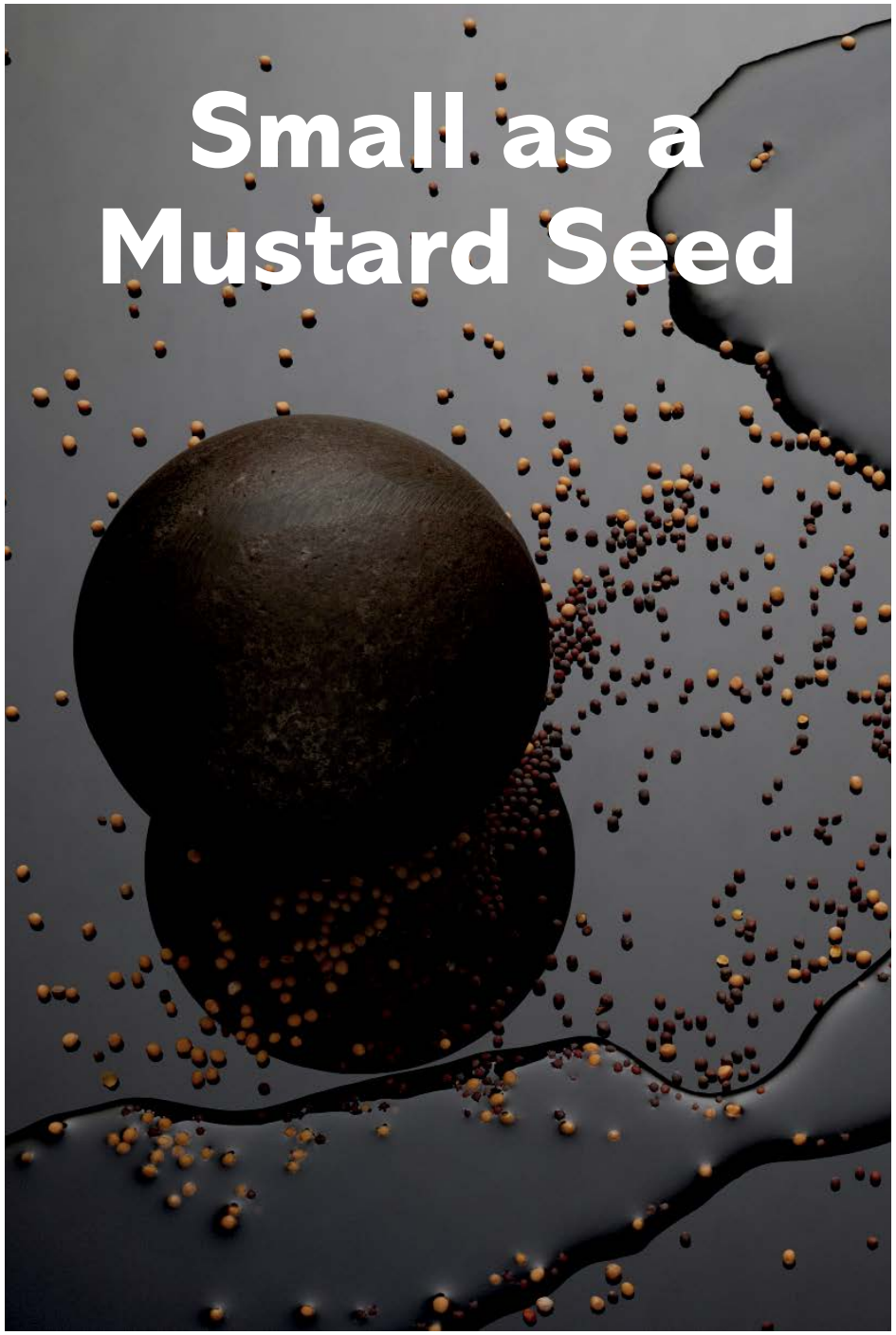
What we see in the media's representations of the Ferguson protests (or any other public protest) is people acting outside of normative public behaviour: shouting, crowding freeways and even setting cars and buildings on fire. Someone unaware of Ferguson life conditions might wonder why these people are being so violent in public. What these observers might not realise is that the people of Ferguson protest the politics of race-based police brutality and segregation that affects them every day, not just in public, but also in private and semi-public spaces. Neither do detached observers realise that they create a political opinion hugely through the media's portrayal—whether television or Internet—within the seemingly apolitical privacy of their homes.

Recent protests in Ferguson, Cairo, Istanbul, New York and Kyiv raise a set of questions. With the illustrative power of public protests in mind, we can look at how the knowledge about public protests is delivered to the world outside of the upheaval. First, most news sources illustrate and discuss events in major public spaces: Taksim in Istanbul, Wall Street in New York, Maidan in Kyiv. But where do all of these protesters come from? Who brings them food and water? Where do they sleep? Most importantly, what's made them come out to the streets in the first place? The answer is found in the privacy of their homes and small residential streets. They come from the inequality and corruption that they experience every day in their dwellings and their workplaces; from the ways potential protesters are redlined into ghettos; and from being mundanely afraid of the state rather than being protected by it.

Protests start at home, and only at a certain breaking point do they spill out into the streets. Urban practitioners underestimate the political dynamics of private space. As a result after Ferguson, many expected the coming of a new Martin Luther King: somebody to powerfully speak on human rights at a public lawn in front of the American White House. Instead, as if out of our dark collective unconscious, we got Donald Trump, produced in the privacy of TV screens, tax returns and fear of the Other.

As the state of political crisis becomes evident in more and more cities around the globe, changes must occur in the design profession. Rather than continuing to talk exclusively about public space, we should extend our vision of politics onto everyday spaces. Nearly forgotten by architects since the times of modernist experiments, everyday spaces carry enormous design potential and offer an unlimited opportunity for new generations of architects to carve their imprint onto the politics of the built environment.

Small as a Mustard Seed

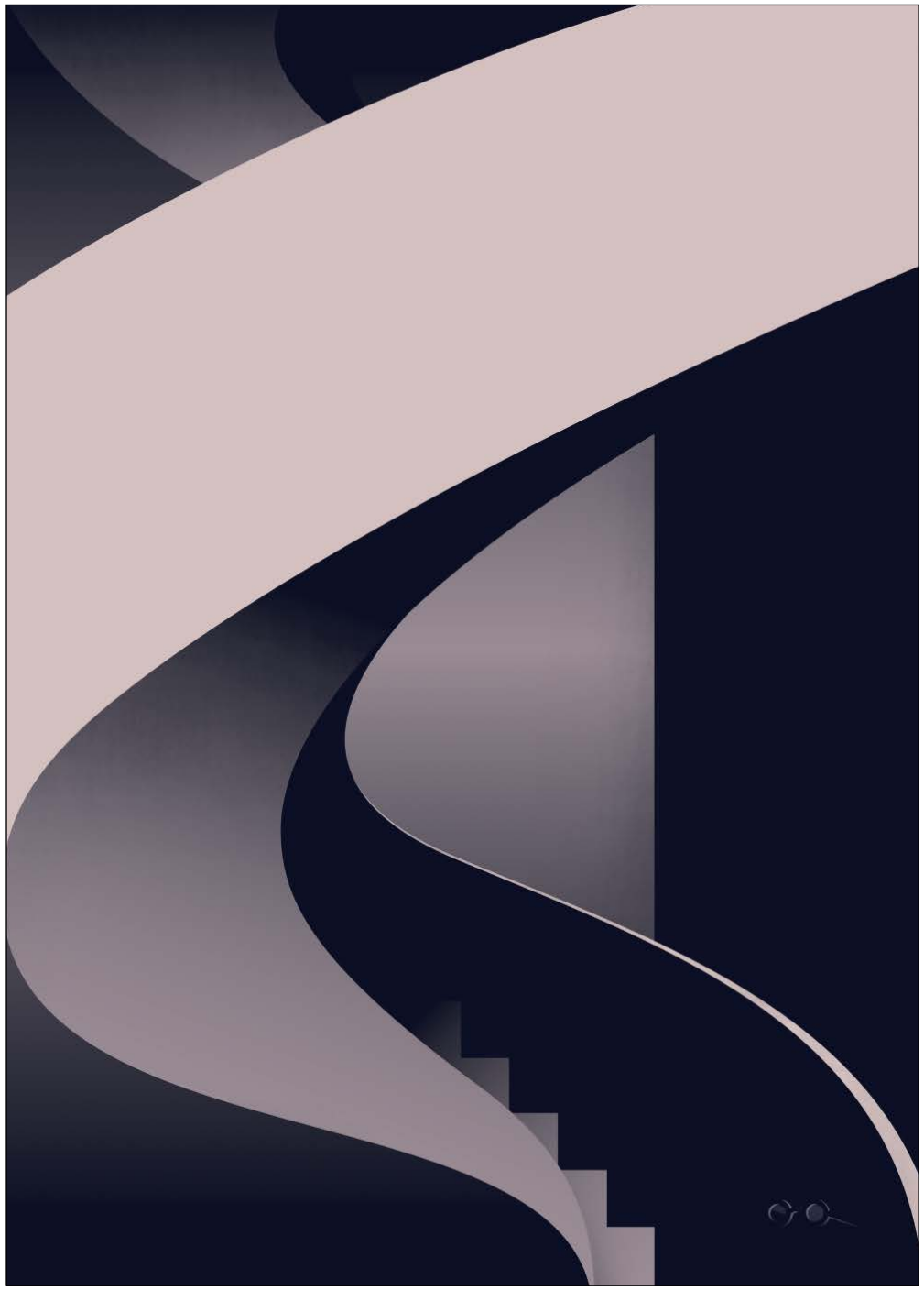


Photography by Gustav Almestål
Words by Regner Ramos

A very long time ago, someone (and by 'someone' I mean Jesus Christ) is rumoured to have said something slightly hazy—one of the few backlashes of speaking in parables. According to the Bible, parables were Jesus's way of communicating complex, spiritual ideas to the uneducated masses; they also had the nifty advantage of being hard to decipher by the Pharisees, who had it out for Jesus and craved any chance they had of incriminating him for the revolutionary—let's say *extremist*—things he proclaimed. Dinner with lepers? Sign Jesus up.

> "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move; Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:14–20)

A mustard seed is merely between one and two millimetres in diameter; an idea or a belief doesn't need to be mighty from the get-go. Instead, it can be tiny, minute, seemingly insignificant. And with the right amount of nurturing, time and patience, it can eventually grow into something vigorous. Through this photo essay, photographer Gustav Almestål narrates a visual parable of the mustard seed with a contemporary twist. Vouching for a faith—in this case, as a seed that is *crushed* and *mixed* with other ingredients—'Small as a Mustard Seed' kindles the idea that whether we contain or exude them, our faiths (regardless of where they come from) leave distinguishable marks—and even if in the end they don't end up moving mountains, they are at the very least as pungent as mustard.



Empty but Full

DEATH, SOLITUDE AND LE CORBUSIER

Words by Federico Ortiz
Illustration by Josh McKenna

Fifty years ago, after a typical morning swim in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin in southeast France, a body was found on the beach. Le Corbusier wasn't necessarily searching for the sublime at the moment of his death, but wasn't he pursuing it before?

In his words, we learnt about the *espaces indicibles* of Ronchamp and La Tourette. We read in his *Poem of the Right Angle*, about flesh, bones and the offerings of the Open Hand. In his work, then, we can trace faith and death as an aesthetic matter in relation to the sublime.

On different occasions, Le Corbusier had supposedly expressed, "how nice it would be to die swimming towards the sun." As if he'd designed his own death, this was exactly how he died at the age of 78. Previously —in life—death wasn't something repulsive for Le Corbusier. When his wife Yvonne died in 1957, he made a sketch of her lying on her deathbed and wrote, "Today, calmly, I have the feeling that death is no horror." The fact that he made a sketch of his dead lover is not surprising if we consider that he had done the same with his dead parents. After his faithful dog Pinceau died, he used his hide to bind one of his favourite books, *Don Quixote*. And on the day of his wife's funeral, Corbu rescued one of her backbones from her ashes' remnants. Apart from their symbolic load, these objects—bodily representations of the experience of death—reminded Le Corbusier, not so much of those that were gone, but more of himself; his own solitude. The passing of his loved ones reminded him of his own destiny and his mortality.

In previous years, Le Corbusier himself had experienced a moment in between life and death. In a letter to his mother in March 1932, he wrote about the dreamlike experience of swimming under a thunderstorm. He said, "The water fell madly. Lightning, thunder. I was completely alone. I never took a bath so calm. The rain crushed the waves. I've never gotten such soft water in the mouth. I got out of the bath like a dream." The fact that he felt so alone and yet so calm reveals the idea of the pleasure in solitude. The storm wasn't important, but the thoughts it incited in him are the ones that count for the experience of the sublime. How could this experience be subsequently

> “The pain of being completely alone arises in oneself the power of reason.”

applied into his architecture? After all, death was no doubt aesthetically relevant in Le Corbusier’s life and his work. He even designed Yvonne’s grave, which in the future would accommodate his own body as well.

In his essay “Machine et mémoire: The City in the Work of Le Corbusier”, Manfredo Tafuri wrote about the pleasure of remaining in the company of one’s own solitude, through the reading of the *chamber à ciel ouvert* —a room without a roof, opened to the sky and designed by Le Corbusier on top of a penthouse in Paris. He also wrote about the Pool of Reflection, an important part in Corb’s design for the new city of Chandigarh in India. Apparently empty in its centre, the final project for the Capitol of Chandigarh consists of four large sculptural buildings trying to establish a dialogue with each other and with the surrounding landscape. The ‘empty’ centre—or the impossibility of containing a centre—become the main issues undermining the wholeness of the composition while at the same time keeping it all together. Similarly, Roberto Gargiani and Anna Rosellini described in their book, *Le Corbusier: Béton Brut and Ineffable Space,* the experience of this void in terms of both sculptural force and existential fragility. This existential fragility might be the most intriguing part of the design. Despite its apparent emptiness, the centre is in fact full. It’s occupied by artificial hills, tree curtains, deep trenches and reflecting pools. These elements —just like the sketch, the book, the bone and the grave—are tools for hollowing the fullness of one’s own existence. The artificial hills are not elements to climb on top to see the vastness of the city. Instead, they’re elements with the purpose of blocking the view and forcing the individual to remain isolated from the city; they’re elements to *not*-see.

Just like in the de Beistegui apartment in Paris, a set of artifices are put to work to create an isolating *chamber à ciel ouvert*, except this time—in India—there are no technological devices. Unlike the penthouse, there are no mechanical periscopes, no sliding chandeliers, no moving hedges, just pure artificial landscapes. Hills, trees, trenches and pools act like white walls intensifying the experience of solitary self-reflection under an infinite sky. The pain of being completely alone arises in oneself the power of reason. Away from metropolitan contingencies, what’s left is the full consciousness of one’s own existence and the experience of the sublime.

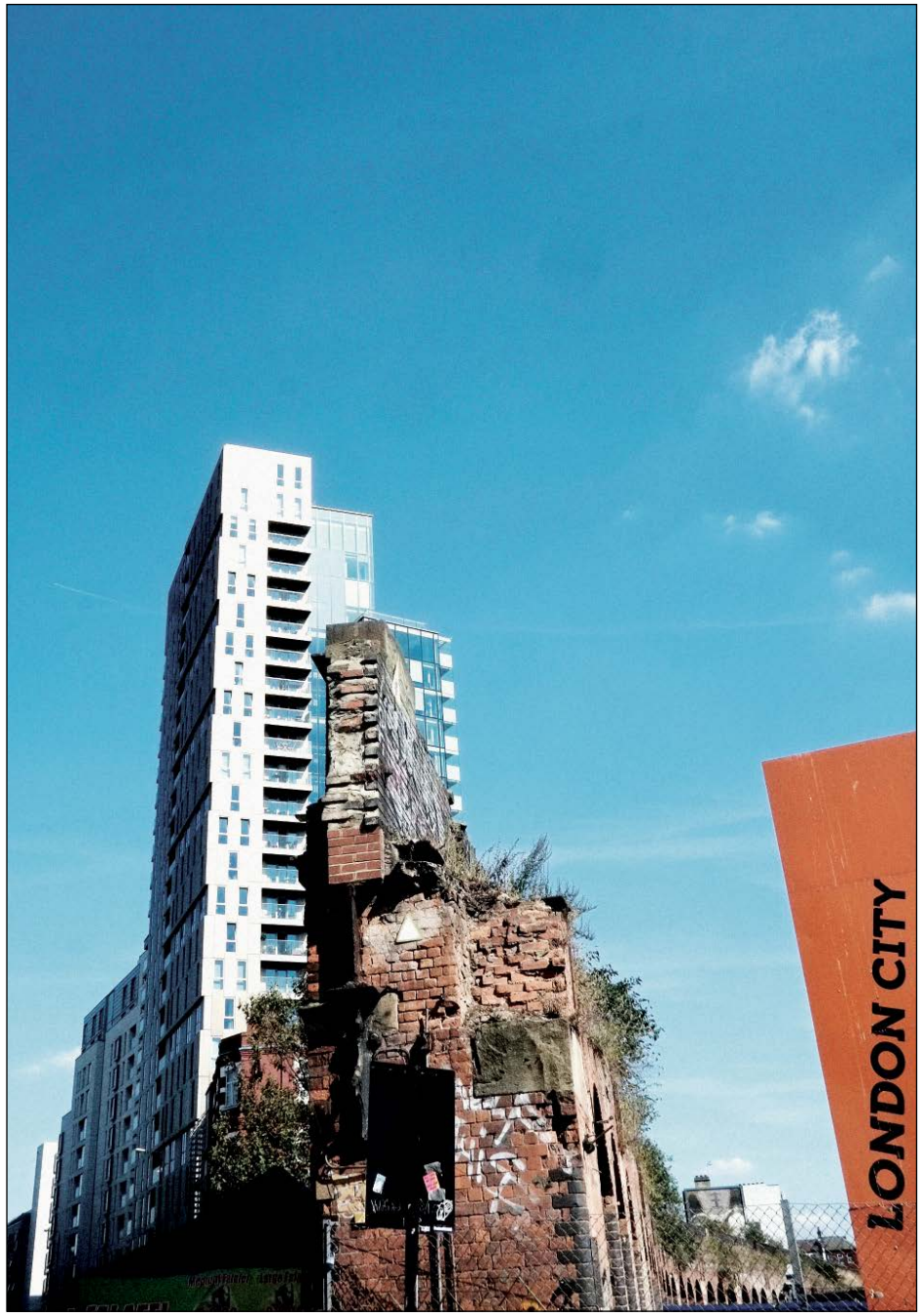
Upon closer inspection of the plans of the project, we can observe the complicated earthwork. The aim of this immense artificial landscape is to trick the eye of the observer, pretending to bring massive, distant objects closer. The result is what Borges would call a ‘garden of forking paths’, a solitary promenade to get lost, to disappear. These images are to be listened to. In listening to —in the words of Le Corbusier—the ‘plastic acoustics’ of this great ‘void’, we hear nothing.

It seems to me that because of fearing death—our own human mortality—we’ve been putting our faith in things that help us delay or hide that unavoidable destiny. We surround ourselves with objects that make us live in a present that seems eternal. However, death is ironically a vital part of life.

What might seem at first a depressing observation, unfolds into a beautiful embracing of our human existence and a full appreciation of life. After all, the sublime is also found in believing in—and being fully conscious of—our capacity to produce life.

Brick

FACE OF A NEW LONDON VERNACULAR



Words by Joanne Preston
Photography by Erik Hartin

London is growing a new skin. Brick clad, high-rise apartment buildings are emerging as the predominant typology of new developments. Coined 'New London Vernacular' by the architectural press, this term describes the stylistic shift away from the steel and glass textures that came to define the architecture of the turn of the millennium. Former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson encouraged architects to move away from designing iconic buildings, instead advocating a policy of 'background architecture' that supposedly champions the public realm.

This shift returns to a material history of the industrial buildings constructed in the mid 1900s. Power stations such as those at Battersea and Bankside were designed to represent profound stability and economic dependability. Today, the reappropriation of these 'brick cathedrals' from defunct industrial ruins into cultural and symbolic mainstays of the city, reinforces the enduring significance of brick.

In New London Vernacular, the historical context of brick is key to its resurgence. Notions of heritage, security and belonging are played out through a pixelated clay flesh that is supposed to miraculously stitch new communities into the social fabric of the city. Here, brick creates a sense of authenticity, which as urban sociologist Sharon Zukin argues, in *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Spaces* (2009), "refers to the *look* and *feel* of a place as well as the social connections that place inspires." These brick-lined realms, which form the background to independent coffee kiosks and stalls selling artisan breads, are designed to appear as vibrant, 'authentic' and organically established public spaces. While these places appear to nurture the kinds of 'local' interventions advocated by the likes of Jane Jacobs, in reality, they have been co-opted and subsumed by private multinational investors and corporations.

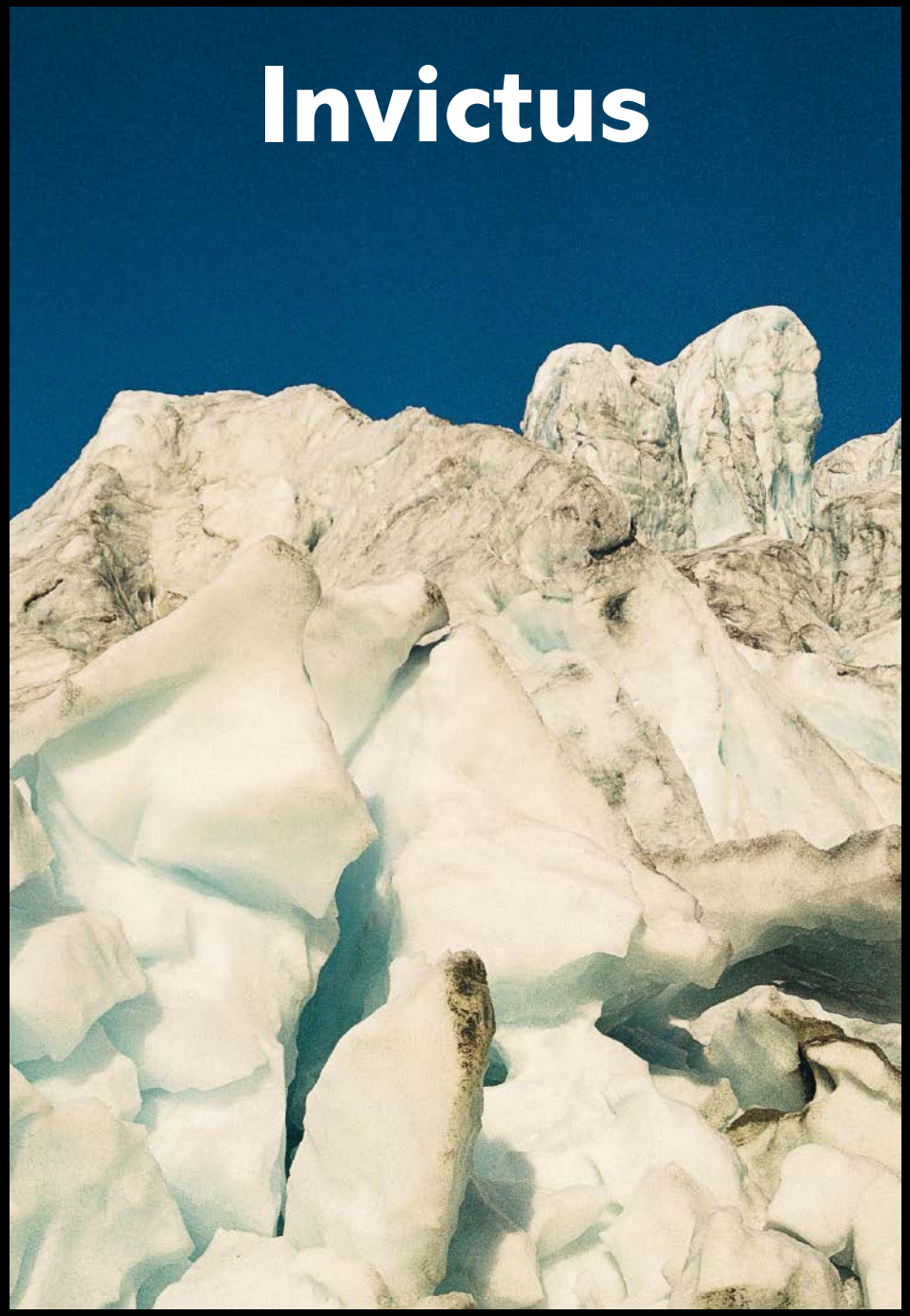
The Mayors' recommendations are born of an understanding that a sense of 'authentic local identity'—expressed visibly through a seemingly established public realm—suggests a community with agency over their environment. The young and aspirational middle class, who literally *buy* into an image of this lifestyle, promise to increase surrounding property values, thus ensuring their own upward social mobility. In other words, New London Vernacular encompasses 'local identity' as a malleable tool for development, signifying the commodification and financial exploitation of desirable forms of social life. Brick walls line the interiors of upmarket estate agents—the defining feature of the city's now primary characteristic as a vessel for real estate capital growth. Here, brick speaks the language of capital investment.

This form of development is in part a reaction to—and reinforcement of—the stigmatisation and regeneration of less profitable forms of social life, such as that of iconic modernist council estates. Ironically, New London Vernacular takes its inspiration from New York loft-style apartments, which have their origins in the illegal squatting of artists in the inner cities of America. These apartments move away from traditional ideas centred around home life, and instead towards the home as a place combining work and leisure. Cultural critic Patrick Wright, in *A Journey Through Ruins* (1991), notes how a legal and "altogether more urbane" version of this style of dwelling was co-opted by the middle classes in UK in the mid 1980s.

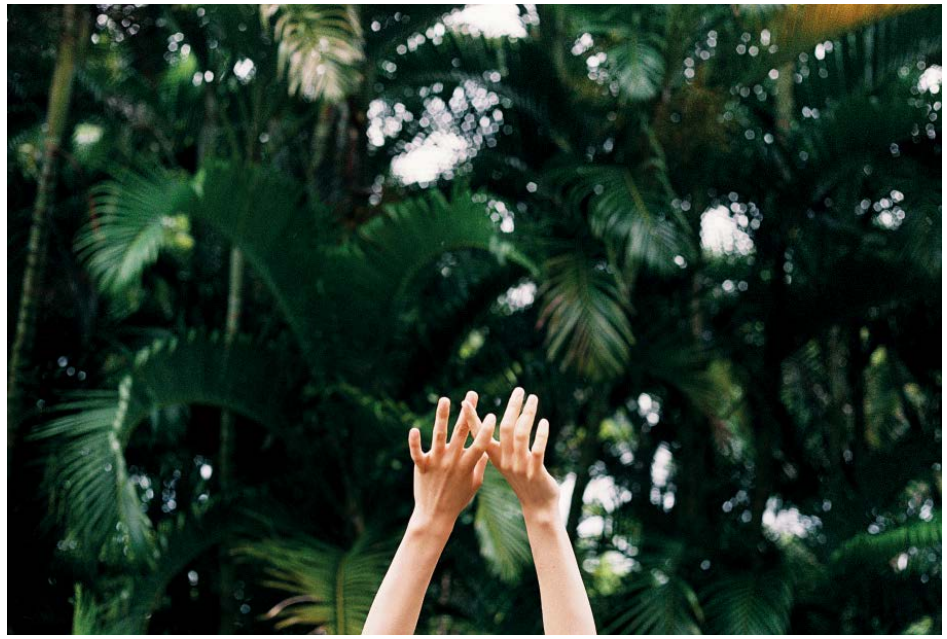
Drawing on Zukin, we can see how the current trend for this type of development results from a "yearning for authenticity" that is bound up with our anxieties around place and belonging, and symptomatic of the temporality of modern life. The implied permanence of brick appears to counteract the precarity that has come to define the experiences of the millennial generation. A polished version of loft-style apartment-living claims to appease these anxieties by supporting a modern metropolitan lifestyle, where convenience is key. At the same time, a muted wash of brick forms the backdrop to an *image* of an 'authentic' social life, supposedly available on its doorstep. As we *picture* ourselves in these spaces, brick takes on spiritual qualities and the city becomes a *screen* onto which we project our desires.

Through developers', investors' and the government's awareness of the potential to generate capital from its immaterial properties, brick has become symbolic of a type of architecture designed to increase its market fluidity. Therefore, it contradicts the very stability and permanence suggested through its physical materiality. The capital logic, operated through New London Vernacular, directly opposes the authentic 'publicness' of the thriving *public* spaces it claims to promote, as it becomes the surface aesthetic of a privatised and commodified pseudo-public realm across London.

Invictus



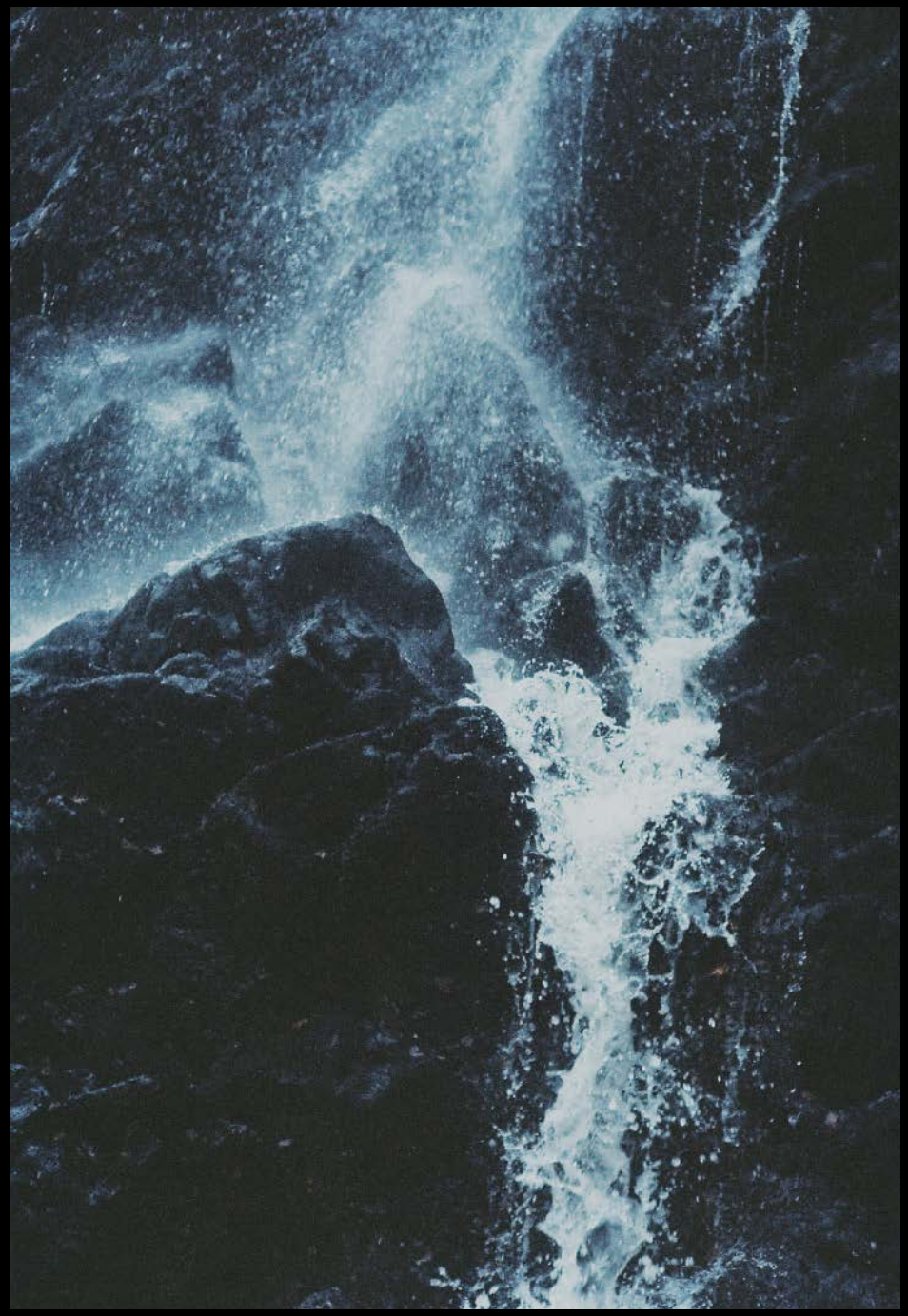
Photography by Michael Novotný
Poem by William Ernest Henley

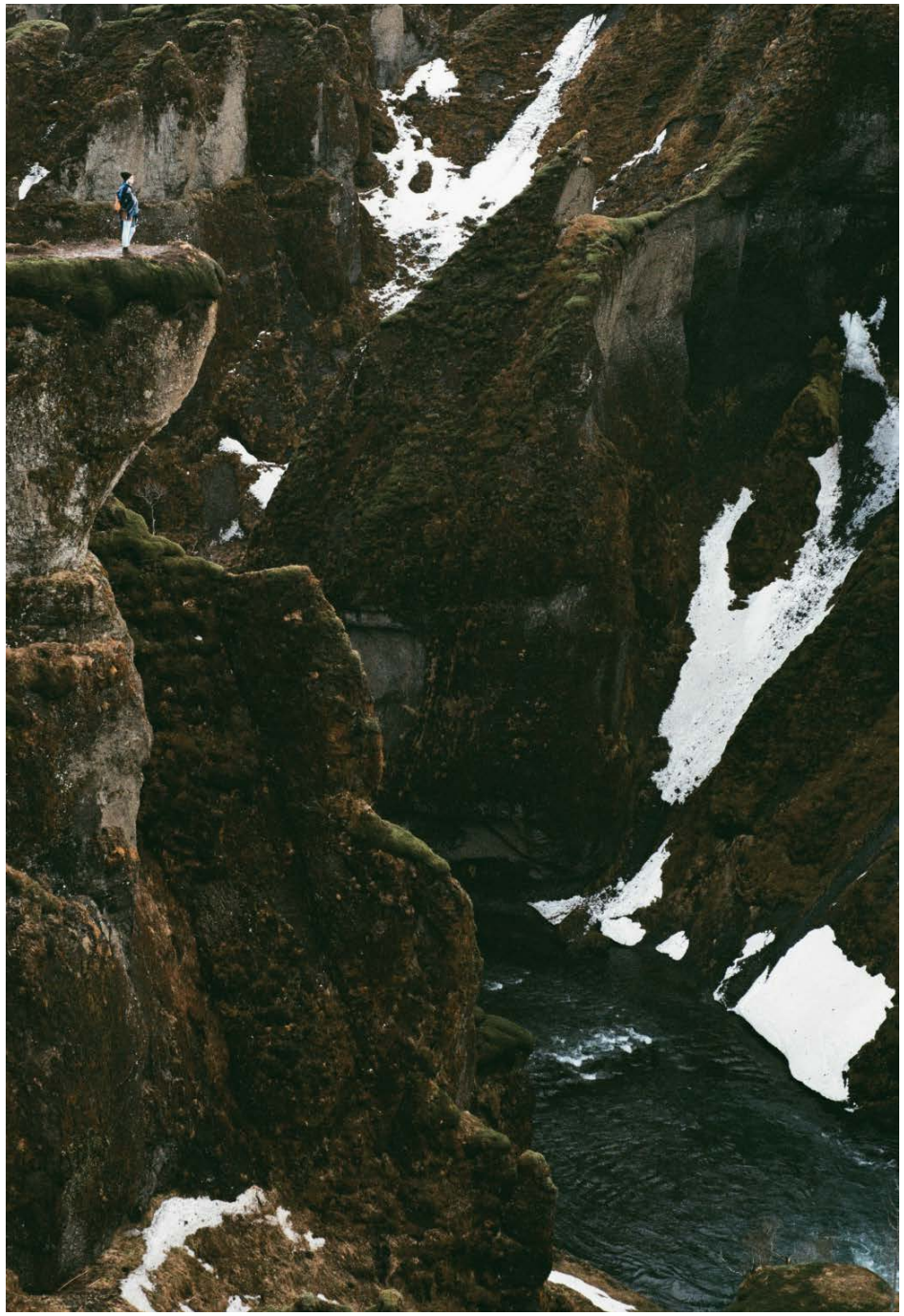


Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

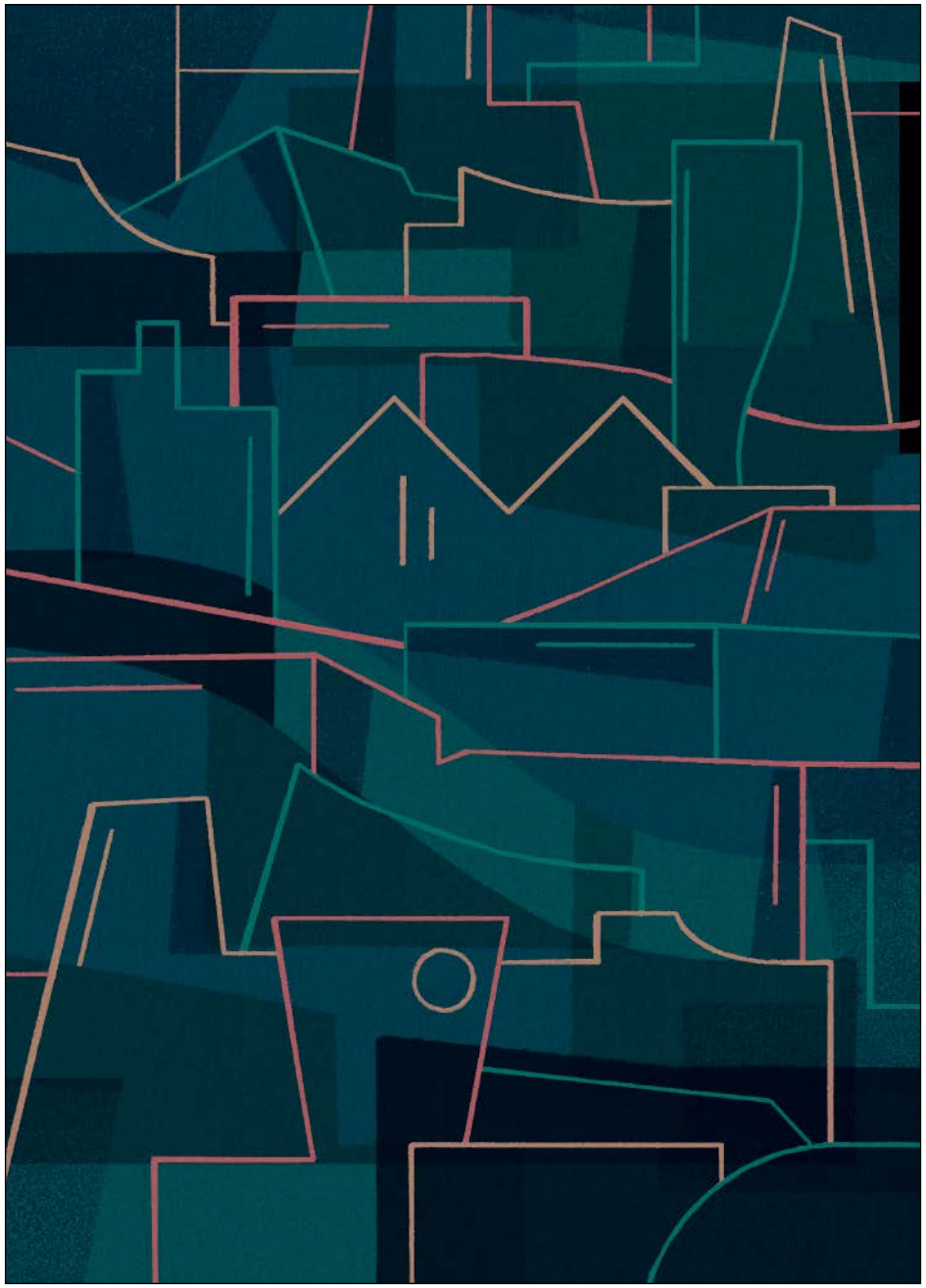




It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

No Church in the Wild

EXPIRED DOGMAS AND THE DIGITAL CODE



Words by Cristina Nan
Illustration by Daniel Clarke

Modernism and Post-Modernism, the two last significant styles of architecture. Both put forward their own manifestos postulating a new era, offering original and distinct types of architectural religion. They demanded faith in their agendas while proclaiming the dawn of a new age and a new ethos. But now, both movements are theoretical and historical artefacts.

We're all familiar with the phrase "the old faith must die, so that the new faith can prosper", so what happened to all of them? Some expired. Others didn't even get started. Since the past few decades, the first condition has been met; the old paradigms are dead. Modernism, Postmodernism, Deconstructionism all faded away, clearing the way for a new fundamental maxim, but no new global dogma seems to have taken over. Today there is no overarching paradigm like the former global styles, no manifesto to be praised and followed. The main common narrative of the discipline and its new actors seems to be the spirit of the digital. Not as a dogma, nor as a hyperbolised redeemer; not as a technofetishistic glorification, but as a reappearing element which acts as a facilitator, deployed according to the personal credo—even code—of the user. The digital revolution presents itself a global vector, not only in terms of economy, politics, science or the social but also for architecture, where it initiated the Digital Turn.

Placed in the broader cultural context of today's digital zeitgeist, the term 'Digital Turn'—incisively coined by Mario Carpo through the publication of the homonymous—offers a frame for a vast collection of simultaneously emerging digital phenomena in architecture during the past two decades. These attempted to either embed or develop digital theories and tools in the discipline. Key figures such as Bernard Cache, Greg Lynn and Peter Eisenman tried to simultaneously engage with and combine Deleuzian theory, theories of complexity, emergence, cellular automata and material computation—on one hand—and coding, parametric software, machines and robots—on the other. Contrasting to Postmodernism, for instance—which admitted and even promoted, a set of subcultures—the Digital Turn seems to merely represent a common playground. From data to code, and scripting to computation, it uses the digital in its various forms as a catalyst.

Thus, a diffused landscape gradually emerged, which some might see as rather scattered, bound together by the digital as a process driver.

Depending on its user, the digital—implemented in combination with a dose of skepticism—has the potential to facilitate, refine or advance new forms of architectural theory and trends, ranging from landscape and urban design, to alternative constructs of spatial theory; from simulation to digital fabrication; from green architecture to ideas of aesthetics (sometimes regrettably generating 'blob-architectures'). The digital acts as a facilitator between apparently opposing concepts, resuscitating craft and reconfiguring the paradigm of the (now 'digital') master builder as pointed out by Carpo.

The emerging 'flora and fauna' thrives on this digital playground, but it stubbornly refuses to be absorbed by a bigger ideology. Theorists like Charles Jencks and Patrik Schumacher go to enormous lengths to offer a unifying epochal theory, indirectly criticising the lack of a consolidating dogma, when in reality we may not even need one.

Architecture has for so long been bound to rigid principles legitimised through the proclamation of new manifestos. But manifestos—through their inherent nature—build up their own boundaries and walls, which in the end they fail to overcome.

We're in the position to make a clean decision or at least dismiss (for a while) the call for the one, unifying theory. We're in the position to recreate our vision for the discipline's future. Today's generation seems to have found a viable way to overcome the dilemma of self-limiting credos: no faith at all. No big paradigm. No big movement.

The absence of a greater scheme can be read as an indicator of a healthy distrust. Faith is good, but principles, conviction and code are even better. The digital appears as the next great facilitator, offering heterogeneity of theoretical, conceptual and technical approaches. It's a principle which offers liberalisation and demo-cratisation, through collaborative digital cultures. For now, anyway. Past generations have shown the ardent demand for a global system of beliefs only to discover that a principle shall suffice. Now, no church is needed in the emerging wild of the digital jungle. All we need is code.

Self-Sacrifice

AN EXPERIENCE OF HEAVEN

Irakischer Maler von. Die Schriften der lauteren Brüder, linke Titelblattseite, Szene: Autoren in ihrem Milieu. 1287.

Words by Maryam Moayery Nia and Hamed Zarrinkamri

During the 12th and 13th Centuries, a mysterious sect arose in the mountains of Iran under the leadership of Hassan-i Sabbah, known as *sayyidna* (our master) or 'the old man of the mountains'. His followers were known for being faithful enough to sacrifice their lives, if it meant carrying out their leader's orders. They were known as *Hashashin* and their unwavering convictions were said to be heavily influenced by a space Sabbah designed and built within their mountaintop fortress.

At the age of 17 Sabbah converted from Shia to Ismaili (a branch of Shia, which believes Ismail-ibn-Ja'far is the seventh spiritual successor after Ja'far al-Sadiq, and not his other son Musa al-Kadhim). He eventually became a missionary, heading for Albania, Palestine, Iraq and finally arriving in Cairo.

After returning to Persia, he looked for a base from which to start his movement against the Saljuqs, who had just occupied Persia in 1035 BCE. It was then that he found Alamut Castle in a very strategic position at the heights of the Alborz Mountains, south of the Caspian Sea. He anonymously entered the castle and began persuading its people into following his beliefs. By the time the castle's leader recognised him, Sabbah had already converted most of the Shia inhabitants to Ismaili. Offering the fortresses's leader 3,000 gold dinars in exchange for the castle, Sabbah founded the Nizari Ismaili sect in 1090 BCE.

Followers of Sabbah—the Nizari Ismailis—were ranked in at least three different groups: *rafiq* (comrade), *lasiq* (adherent), and *fada'i* (an agent of self-sacrifice). While the *rafiqs* and *lasiqs* could teach, preach and take care of the administration of Alamut and the 72 other fortresses they had gradually conquered, the *fada'in* were the strongest forces in the sect with the harshest training and duties. They had a reputation for not only killing enemies, but also readily killing themselves too if they could not escape a dangerous situation. This level of conviction in one's beliefs—to the point of taking one's own life—was not common prior to the days of suicide attacks all around the world.

Based on Marco Polo's reports from his travels to the Middle East, 'the old man of the mountains' is said to have had created a space conceived as a mock-up of heaven within the Alamut fortress. He would bring his *fada'in* to this space just after drugging them with hashish—this is the reason *fada'in* are also known as *Hashashin* (Hashish users). Since the description of heaven in Islam is strongly imagistic, Sabbah would have had solid references from which to build this supposed heaven-on-earth. He provided a garden full of naked women, an abundance of wine, rivers of honey and fruit trees casting their cool shade. Particularly because most of these things were strictly prohibited in Islam, they surely provided a lasting, impressive experience for the *fada'in*.

Although there is no reliable reference available about this space, we can imagine what kind of heaven it could have be. In Islam, heaven is usually defined as a *jannah* (garden), with people sitting permanently on thrones. Also, there are accounts of a heaven with tents, reflecting the common housing of Bedouin Arabs. Because of the Alamut fortresses's enclosed nature and layout, it seems unlikely that the garden was built inside the castle. But noticing the many gardens and woodlands down the fortresses's hills we might be led to believe that the garden was located on its outskirts. If this was so, Sabbah would have needed to drug the *fada'in* not only for the hallucination effect, but also so they could be transferred somewhere else without them knowing.

The Quran upholds that the presence of the virtuous in heaven would be eternal, and upon experiencing it, they would never want to leave. So after experiencing the 'promised heaven' for a short amount of time, *fada'in* were told that the only way to return to heaven once again would be through devoted obedience to their leader—in this case, Sabbah. With this command along with a newfound sense of conviction, the *fada'in* would be less likely to hesitate ending their lives if it meant going back to heaven for all eternity.

Faith acquired by seeing and experiencing is incredibly powerful. Even the most convincing reasoning, the most severe forcing or the most frightening threats cannot be compared to seeing the embodiment of a spatial manifestation of faith. Although the heaven of Alamut was a deception, Islamic architecture never stopped building heavens on earth. Gardens, courtyards, domes, fountains, decorations and tiles—all of them from the largest scale to the smallest details—are translations of heaven. Living in such spaces is a constant reminder of the afterlife that awaits virtuous believers, while also arguably acting as forms of control to keep the faithful obedient. ◎

New Modesty

ARCHITECTURE OF A RISING GENERATION

Words by Fani Kostourou
Illustration by Thomas Hedger

In 1993 the American Institute of Architects established the AIA Young Architects Award, recognising for the first time in the history of the discipline the significance of young creatives' contribution to the profession. It's been a while since then, and for some time little progress was made. Lately, however—especially after the 2008 global financial crisis—young architecture has gained substantial prominence. In the absence of resources and building commissions, the standard big-name architecture found itself challenged. Focus shifted from 'old is gold' to what was being discussed informally and done alternatively.

Young architects started to be cautiously seen as a solution for current problems and as sources for reinvention and redirection within the field. The existence of more than 10 awards for students and young architects today suggests this is now truer than ever. Over the past year, a series of additional events occurred: the prestigious UK Turner art prize was awarded to Assemble; a number of emerging architects stood out in the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale; and the *New Architects 3* publication (by the Architecture Foundation) came out featuring the most imminent British practices. Who are those young architects? How does young architecture define itself? How does it differ from established practices? Does it actually have the answers or is this just another false alarm?

Four articles—by Geraldine Bedell for *The Observer* (2009), Robert Bevan for *The Evening Standard* (2015), Phineas Harper and Phil Pawlett Jackson for *The Architectural Review* (2015) and Nicola Davison for *The Financial Times* (2016)—give some insight:

1 Young architects are pragmatic, enthusiastic, political, modest, tactical and interdisciplinary.

2 They're more interested in looking at existing things, rather than imposing new ones.

3 They're committed and engaged to people's needs getting them involved in the process and without projecting their own egos.

4 Young architecture is temporary, vulnerable, ambitious, minor and fashionable.

In the history of design knowledge, progress often came as a result of questioning the established status quo. Considering the current social and economic conditions, the young generation of architects has become sceptical of the so-called 'starchitecture' because it stopped performing how it was originally meant to: a socially-engaging, financially low-risk, functional architecture respectful of its cultural context.

Since Postmodernism, the formal architecture of spectacle had already faced criticism. Now, this moves one step further. Among young architects, styles have no real meaning. Tradition and history are not among their priorities. "Culture is more complicated than that. We're not as interested in the future as we used to be, certainly not the future as it looked in the 1950s," says Kieran Long, Editor of the *Architects' Journal*. Similarly, Tom Emerson of 6a Architects expresses, "It's not an argument my peers and I discuss [...] It's just not interesting. It belongs to a generation who saw a real opposition between contemporary practice and history."

Writer and critic Geraldine Bedell argues that the young generation of today is neither afraid of history, nor dismissive of it. It's just more pragmatic, accepting and fearless, emancipating from the ghosts of a glorious past. As soon as they graduate, young architects understand that their work isn't going to transcend the norms of the profession overnight—nor are they obsessed with doing so. The past, which includes both history and legacy, is not to be disregarded naively of course: what we are and what we know today, are owed to older generations. For better or for worse, they've defined our existing physical, social and technological contexts. But what matters most is what the young generation will do with the past.

So far, young architecture appears modest. It firstly seeks to deeply understand the context, then going for *subtle* responses to it—avoiding any 'wow' effects. In this sense, buildings are just another layer of the city rather than individual eruptions. Patrick Lynch of Lynch Architects claims that there is a general disappointment with "the kind of thinking that it's OK to go and build for a completely unpalatable regime and fuck up the planet for money, because you're working in your signature style and it's an expression of individual creativity." Carmody Groarke, a London-based architectural

practice founded in 2006, calls this architectural approach as a means to an end, rather than the end result.

New modesty is the new trend: modesty in form, in scope and in cost. Young architects don't claim to have solutions to every problem. Instead they hope that change may come through a number of small, collective acts, while still having political vision. It's not as though young architects have stopped dreaming. They just have different dreams: that of a more sustainable architectural future by and for society—a future that commits to people's needs, involving them in the process. "We create opportunities, we don't tell them [people] what to do," explains Architecture 00's David Saxby. He continues, "We are confident enough not to worry about controlling everything." London practices such as Architecture 00, Carl Turner Architects, Russian for Fish, Studio Weave and We Made That, all have this in common.

This modesty is also a result of cautiousness—an aftereffect of the economic recession that got dumped on our laps. All over the world, small offices struggle to survive, big offices lay off their staff, the construction industry grinds to a halt and recent graduates struggle to be employed. According to Bedell, more than 1,500 architects are currently claiming benefits. Amidst this chaos, some claim recessions are vital for new ideas and practices to emerge. "There is a huge group of people for whom it would seem a rather grim joke to talk of a period of creativity," says Emerson, "but for those who are working, the opportunities are quite interesting and refreshing." It's an opportunity for the young to reflect on the past and present of the profession, seeking new directions for its future.

Young architecture has neither illusions nor great expectations. It knows it's mostly self-initiated, improvised—maybe even temporary. It's often either unbuilt or made out of cheap materials, and without any concrete objective. For some architectural critics and designers, such a future should not be celebrated. But where some see problems, others see opportunities. The greatest achievement of the new emerging architecture is its opening to other disciplines. Young architects no longer claim to be the absolute experts of our built environment, instead calling for interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship and collaboration. Brussels-based KGDVS combines practical work with theoretical research projects; Berlin-based Something Fantastic runs alongside a creative agency working in the publishing and fashion industry; in London, Dyvik Kahlen collaborate with artists, graphic designers and other architects, while Muf architecture is seen both as architecture and art; even more, Assemble is composed of architects, artists, historians and sociologists.

We're dealing with an abolishment of traditional boundaries. A clue of this can be found in the anonymity behind practices' names. You may have never heard of the individuals behind the above mentioned collectives, for instance. Instead, we meet architects that gain prominence through collaborations, who are willing to let go of the traditional role of the architect. A fitting example is Jesko Fezer, a Berlin-based author, artist, exhibition designer, academic, bookshop manager and architect. His example incorporates the versatile interdisciplinarity of young architecture, proving a deep shift from an *authored* to an *author-less* architectural production. New modesty has no name.

Of course, there are people that see inexperience in youth and anonymity, due to a common perception that knowledge and skills take years to consolidate. It's true that often success comes at a later stage of an architect's career. But this isn't always the case. Le Corbusier was 27 when he conceived Dom-Ino House. When they started Hunstanton School in Norfolk, Peter and Alison Smithson were 26 and 21 respectively, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh was 28 when he worked on the Glasgow School of Art. These young, iconic architects weren't discouraged because of their age or inexperience; instead they were proactive, ambitious and innovative.

The future doesn't have to have a name, and it certainly doesn't need to be old. While the older generation fears letting go, the younger struggles to remain competent in a rapidly changing globalised world. Young architects desire authenticity, but aren't so keen on the idea of revolution; they condemn Asian urbanism as a result of authoritarian capitalism, but downplay West democratic building frameworks; they decry institutionalised architectural elitism but yearn to become part of it as soon as they get the chance. So despite being out of the system, they like to keep one foot within—just in case. Because it's one thing to be enthusiastic and challenge the established status quo in a period of crisis, and a different thing to remain enthusiastic and relevant once you become established. Young architects now act as the opposition while the veterans still hold the office. Maybe this new modesty is a way to play it safe. However, I believe there's more to this. Modesty is a new direction, an attitude that comes from a deep realisation that lessons have been learned, and that amidst a torrent of information and specialised knowledge, no architect is an island. ◎

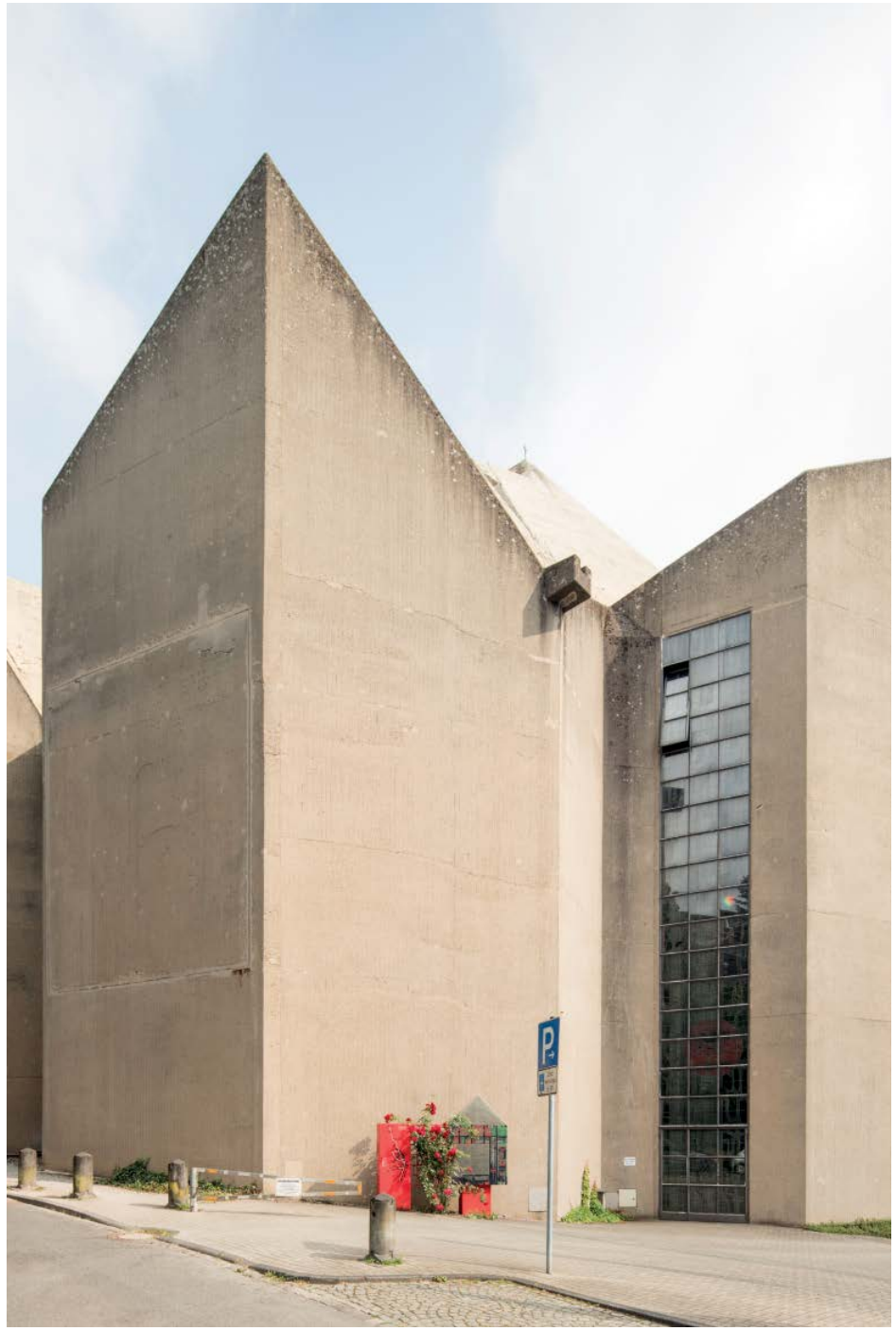
The Seminar Room

Upon This Rock

Photography by Laurian Ghinitoiu
Words by James Taylor-Foster

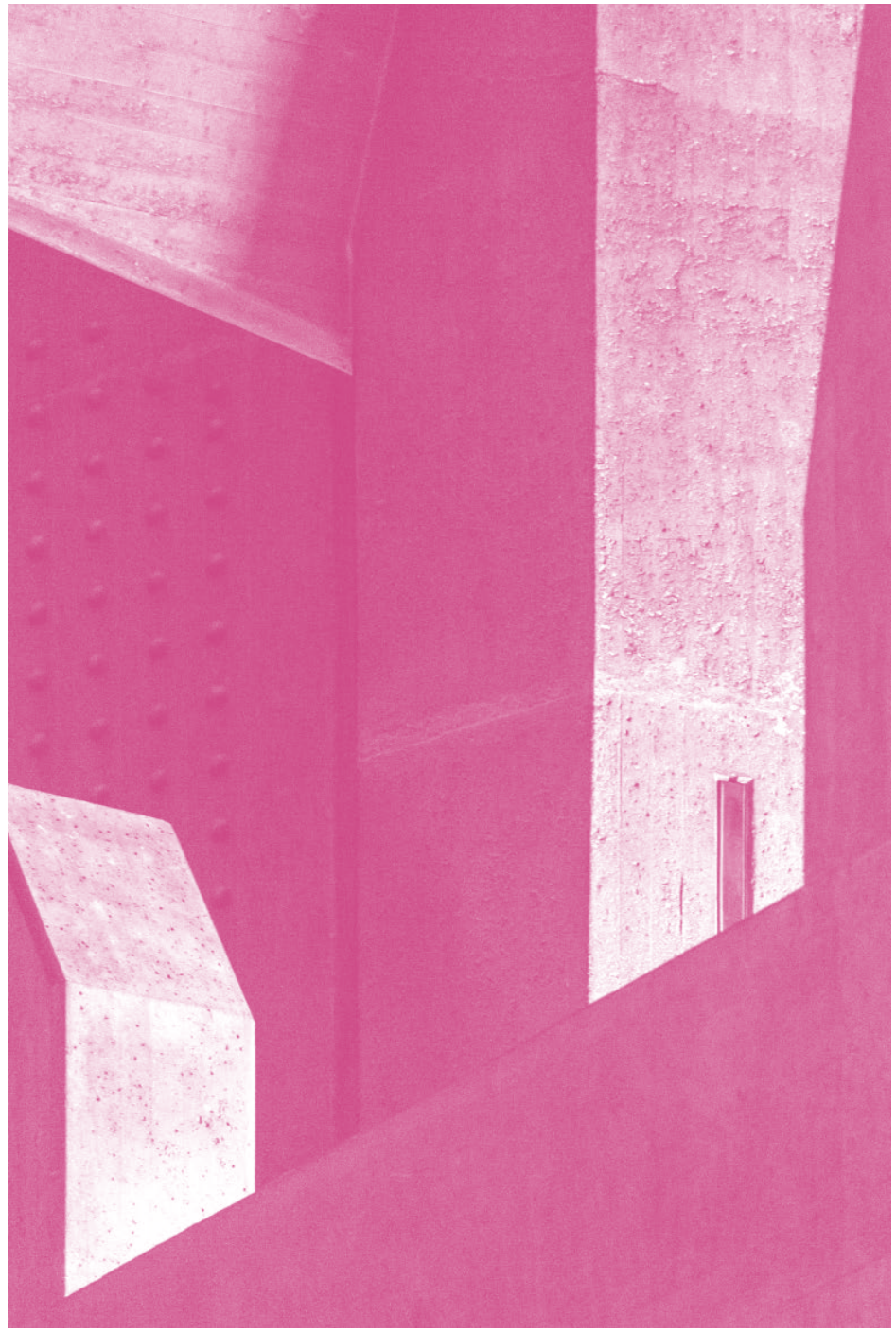
In 1986 the Pritzker Architecture Prize announced their first German laureate. In a speech at the ceremony in London's Goldsmiths' Hall, the Duke of Gloucester suggested that the prize "may not guarantee immorality," inferring, perhaps, that not even the most prestigious award in architecture could compete with an œuvre so compact, focussed and enduring as that of Gottfried Böhm—a "son, grandson, husband, and father of architects."

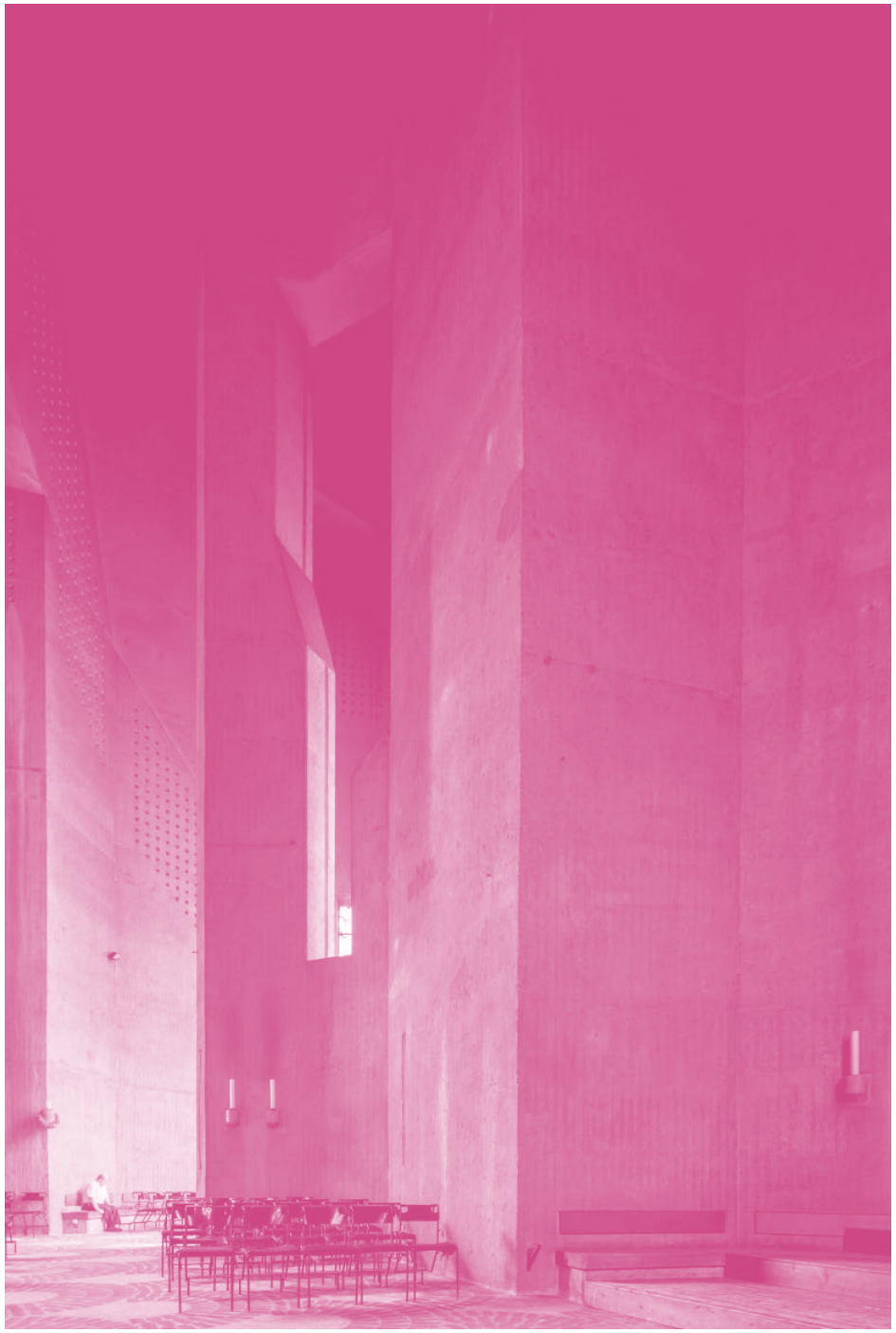
The Pilgrimage Church in Neviges (a small hamlet close to Dusseldorf) was conceived in the context of an invited international competition—issued in 1962—and a progressive client: the Archdiocese of Köln and, to be precise, Archbishop Josef Cardinal Frings. The resulting structure, which required 7,500 cubic metres of concrete and 510 tons of steel-reinforcing bar—along with its *Via Sacra* and surrounding buildings—is one of the most decisive, significant and unsung spaces of the 20th Century.



Carved from (or grafted onto) a hill, the folded roof of the church represents at once a rocky mountain and a nomadic tent; an enduring symbol of faith, as well as a destination for pilgrimage.

Historically, Neviges was deeply Protestant. From the old town, the spire-less Pilgrimage Church, while a defiant symbol of Catholic dominance, asserts its presence with more subtlety.





Inside, the church is cavernous and dimly lit, like a vast and silent grotto—the sheer scale of which takes time to become accustomed to.

The Pilgrimage Church stands adjacent and connected to a far older spiritual complex—namely a Franciscan monastery —which appears to nestle at the foot of an ancient mountain.

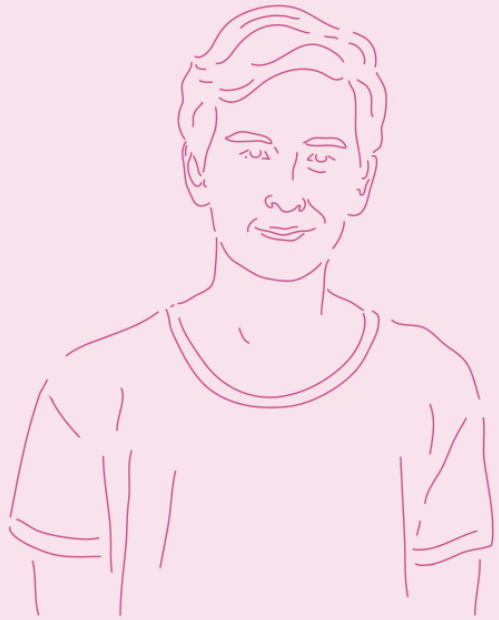
In Pursuit of the Unorthodox

The Pilgrimage Church in Neviges is both unconventional and atypical. Brendan Bashin-Sullivan, Nicholas de Klerk, Sam Gillis, Malin Heyman and James Hamilton reflect on four 'sacred spaces' which follow this trend: from a contemporary Belgian market hall to a far older Swedish anatomical theatre.

Illustration by George Morton

Seabright

NOVA SCOTIA



Words by Sam Gillis

Landward from the high tide mark of a brackish estuary, a collection of humble, hermetic maritime palaces squat among unkempt meadows, snoozing. At the crest of a gentle hill, a land surveyor with a white beard is speaking about Seabright—the name applied to the cluster of houses below—and to his manse, which crowns it.

He entered the world at the same time as GPS, having beheld the earth's surface—already a digital system—as it altogether slipped the oppressive bounds of human perception. As the acceleration of data production suffocates the earth and its orbit with planet-sized hard drives, he anticipates that humanity will seek a transcendent foundation upon which to preserve our divinity—a spaceless domain to match our spaceless communication.

"Once you've built a ship," he says, "building a house is elementary." The handsome ornamentation of the neighbouring houses appears to illustrate his point, but Seabright itself—which he built in 1986 under the direction of the ancient spirit of a tired mariner—is comparatively plain.

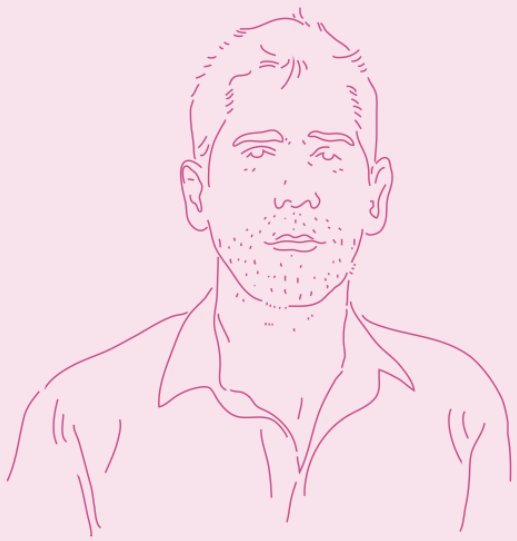
Entering the house through a bright, muddy porch—past closets brimming with overcoats, rain capes, rubber boots, and ski gloves—one encounters a startling depth of field: a void springing inward from the southeast corner of the foundation; a living room. The mundane chatter of windowsills, handrails and cupboards—fashioned disinterestedly according to local postmodern vernacular—is silenced by the embrace of this two-story vacuum. As it soars, it wonders at the memory of the cheerless low ceilings universally tolerated by the past generation. The second floor corridor, formerly little more than a dim crevice, becomes a theatrical balcony freed by a good-natured, reckless gesture that defies stale vernacular convention with impious abandon. The furniture draws from a revered but unremembered history: a coffee table salvaged from the wreck of the Athens Queen, a columnar speaker to which is permanently moored a pink iPod (most recently synced during Seabright's prehistory), and a bookshelf stocked with Kierkegaard. The space has been tamed with religious confidence.

The bearded surveyor is playing a choral strathspey from the iPod: *Take me back to that snug green cove, where the seas roll up their thunder. There let me rest in the earth's cool breast, where the stars shine out their wonder.* It resonates with the room and it becomes clear that the foundation below, whose original structural dependent has long since decomposed is, in fact, a fragment of the cosmic foundation whose invisible piers rise infinitely, eternally—before terminating at the top of the hall.

And the seas roll up their thunder. ◎

Market Hall

GHENT



Words by
Nicholas de Klerk

I spent a recent Saturday participating in a drawing symposium in a converted workshop in west London. Although not an artist, nor a performer, for those few hours I was part of a commons that might not have been possible in that specific form elsewhere at another time.

In *The Action is the Form* architect and writer Keller Easterling speculates on the workings—and, more specifically, on the form—of vast and ubiquitous infrastructural networks and activities, the products of which (housing, office parks, warehouses, free trade zones and even entire cities) are merely markers of their presence. Expanding our view to see cities not just as environments but as *systems* having specific qualities also creates opportunities to conceptualise and occupy the discontinuities between these two conceptualisations.

Robbrecht en Daem and Marie-José van Hee's Market Hall in Ghent is a curious structure some 16 years in the making. Adopting the form of both a cathedral and the primitive hut, it functions at both civic and domestic registers, providing a stage for civic events and a fireplace that suggests more personal encounters. It uses infrastructural scale and technologies (enormous bridge-like spans between its totemic corner columns) to remain completely open at ground level. All of these elements and details are, however, secondary to the structure's inherent ambiguity. It is at once a cathedral, a barn, a hut and none of these things.

Aside from this quality, the space has four other primary characteristics: it has intentionality. It is a found space, transformed—in this case a space of latent potential, simply given form by the architect. It is public, at least putatively, and is of sufficient scale to accommodate a sizeable gathering.

The vexed question of public space in our cities ranges from formerly public spaces gradually appropriated by private interests—through investment, rules, management and surveillance—to private spaces which masquerade as public. It questions the very notions of public and private, which are becoming increasingly troubled and entangled.

As the visible icon of the cathedral in cities is gradually replaced by monuments to capital, its infrastructure and its systems, there is a concurrent dissolution of spaces they might once have enclosed, in which the idea of a collective or common might have been possible. Perhaps as we consider this shift, we might also consider the latent potential for a kind of performative or temporal commons in contemporary spaces like the Market Hall, which appropriate archetypal forms such as cathedrals, halls and workshops.

In creating the potential for collective gathering—in a space shaped by a collection of ambiguous signifiers —this urban room is attuned to these troubled definitions of public and private. Behaviour is circumscribed in the manner of quasi-private 'public' spaces but is not necessarily *prescribed*. Ways of being and collaborating within the space are shaped as much by uncanny interpolations of experiences in similar spaces as anything else.

As Easterling pivots from Victor Hugo's information cathedral to the free trade zone, a diaspora of temporal commons comes into view. ◎

Palace of Weddings

BISHKEK

Words by
Brendan Bashin-Sullivan

The Palace of Weddings is a building of extraordinary legerdemain. Built in 1984 at the crumbling end of the Soviet Modernist tradition, it deftly parts the structure and trappings of a sacred space from any of its religious content. Retaining many architectonic signifiers of sacrality—a strong processional and tall, stained-glass windows—it wryly resists the idea that these should have anything to do with religious faith. This resistance is perhaps helped by its placement in the capital of a satellite republic where indigenous shamanic traditions never truly gave way to either of the conquering abrahamic faiths, but its continued relevance in the lives of Bishkek's inhabitants and the way it has weathered the collapse of the Soviet state, suggest it has more pull than first glance reveals.

Religious authority represented a persistent challenge to the authority of the Soviet state. In the aftermath of the October Revolution, a propaganda campaign against religion played out in the pages of the state-supported magazine Безбожник "Bezbozhnik" (The Godless), which used cartoons and comical blasphemy to attack the various faiths of the USSR. Later, religious groups often caught the brunt of Stalin's purges. But it was Nikita Khrushchev, the chief exponent of Soviet modernism, who happened upon an elegant solution. Rather than punish those who sought ritual in their lives, the state would do what under Khrushchev it did best: it would provision appropriate facilities.

Under this new approach, Soviet leaders encouraged a new infrastructure of ritual to help the aggressively secular state meet its inhabitants' need to mark their personal milestones. From the late 1950s, officially sanctioned secular analogues to baptism, confirmation, marriage and funeral rites were introduced Union-wide, actively encouraging the construction of palaces of weddings, palaces of mourning and palaces of motherhood. Exempt from Khrushchev's obsession with efficient construction and his ban on ornament, wedding palaces often achieved a modest splendour that stood head and shoulders above the drab municipal marriage bureau and its institutional-grade furnishings. The Bishkek palace, a particularly strong incarnation of the type, features tall glass prisms inserted into the building's marble-clad facade, protruding past the roofline. These bring daylight deep into a double-height vaulted room with a wraparound gallery, dominated by a grand staircase. Only the betrothed are allowed to take this staircase to the

second floor and pass through an ornate portal to a private room where they make their vows. The interior spaces—at once opulent and chintzy—feature marble tiles, intricately painted ceilings, plush carpeting and rings of floral plaster-work around the portal to the wedding chamber. Taste notwithstanding, Soviet newlyweds clearly responded to the chance of marking their occasion in slightly elevated surroundings. Secularised marriage rituals outnumbered their religious counterparts by the mid-1960s.

The peculiar morphology of the wedding palace shambles on. Even with the loss of its sponsoring authority, the Bishkek palace remains an extremely popular wedding venue—as do many of its counterparts in the former Soviet republics. This is perhaps what Khrushchev understood all along —that sacred buildings are vessels for the faith we put in them by asking them to contain and elevate our moments of joy and sorrow, and by making the continued choice to measure out our lives by rituals we perform inside them. They mediate not so much between humans and a deities, not between our world and some other, but between ourselves, our communities and the march of time. Many of the Soviet palaces are strange-looking, almost all are architecturally unfulfilled, but in this they remind us of the first tetrapod that lurched onto land from the primordial sea. ◎

Anatomical Theatre

UPPSALA

Words by James Hamilton and Malin Heyman

In the small medieval core of the city, a 17th Century university building faces the narthex of a towering cathedral. It stretches across the cathedral's west-east axis, framing a gently sloping cobblestone square. The copper dome of the anatomical theatre reaches up from the pale stucco university building, disrupting its pitched black roof.

The dome inserts itself into the field of towers previously defined by the church. In contrast to the crosses atop the cathedral's steeples, a sundial crowns the theatre dome, measuring relationships between the earth and the sun.

Turning our backs to the cathedral we enter the university building and ascend the stairs. At the end of a dimly-lit anteroom a threshold creates a forced perspective, pulling us into the bright centre of the theatre's marbled timber rotunda. Deep red and pale blue surfaces, shadowless and flat in the diffused light, enclose the space. We find ourselves standing on a well-tread spruce floor at the foot of an unpainted table. At the height of a workbench, the table top has the proportions of a body. It is surrounded by an octagonal, waist-high railing.

This partition separates the dissection table from the audience, just as the octagonal altar rail of the cathedral separates the chancel from the nave. While the cathedral's axis addresses a singular historic origin, the eight sides of the rotunda correspond to the eight Vitruvian winds.

The rail is duplicated a further six times in steep succession, rising and expanding to form a dramatically vertical space that encourages an upward gaze. There, a gold-leaf representation of the North Star is centred in a ribbed white dome floating above a double clerestory.

The central, vertical axis of the space connects the centre of the human body with the North Star, the fixed point that orients us in physical space. Like the cathedral, the theatre lifts its windows to create an introverted whole, looking into itself in order to understand the world outside.

Looking down from the uppermost tier, the rails vertiginously descend.

At the upper tier, two bodies meet. While the lower is to be filled with people studying the workings of the human interior, the upper allows sunlight to flood the space. Juxtaposing the images of both the earthly and the heavenly body, the theatre models the world by selectively imitating it.

At each of the eight corners, a grey ionic column lifts the clerestories. Gold-leaf characters mark them:

A M

D A

N A

I N

The architect never shared the meaning of the letters – perhaps a symbol of the central role of mystery in the pursuit of knowledge.

At the same time, walls between the pilasters were once used to display contemporary maps and other representations of the natural world.

Like the Stations of the Cross adorning the walls of the cathedral, these representations describe the narrative central to the theatre. Gathering not only students of the university but also members of the public, it is a pedagogical instrument deployed to construct a new worldview.

Above the threshold of the exit sits an inscription:

THEATRUM ANATOMICUM UPSALENSE
OLAUS RUDBECK AEDIFICAVIT 1662–1663

Olaus Rudbeck, the architect of the anatomical theatre and rector of the university, has inserted himself into the world-model that he conceived; where human agency to understand God's creations is proclaimed, as our mortality is explored. ◎

The Architecture of a Family

James Taylor-Foster speaks to Maurizius Staerkle-Drux about the Böhm family, and how he (inadvertently) created a film about architecture—and a great one, at that.

You didn't originally set out to make a film about architecture but about a family of architects: the Böhms. However, it's become one of the most captivating architectural films I've ever watched. *Concrete Love*, it's title, is so apt—how did it begin?

The first time I entered the Böhm family home in Köln, I saw a large picture of the church of Neviges but I didn't realise what I was looking at at the time. It had a caption in German which translates to "concrete mountains" (or something along those lines), and I really enjoyed the combination of words.

I had wanted to make a film about a family ever since I graduated from film school. The idea of a film about architecture hadn't crossed my mind, I had no idea what it was all about. I was also confronted by all the clichés associated with films about architecture—particularly that they're mundane!

When the film finally started to get its form, I called it *Architektur einer Familie* (Architecture of a Family) and this became the main title—and remains so for the German-speaking world. I like the notion of how the families build things together (in this case, literally) and I was always looking for connections between them and what they have built. At its core the film centres around the love between Gottfried and Elisabeth Böhm (*née* Haggenmüller), two people who knew each other for over seven decades. They knew everything about one another, and as time went on I began to compare their love to the enormous concrete walls of their structures. It was a natural metaphor.

But even though love has a powerful ability to endure, it is—to a certain extent—built around tension and friction. Let's rewind to the beginning of the project: how did you initially approach the Böhm family? In other words, how did such an intimate portrayal of a rather private family unit come to be?

To start at the beginning, although I live in Switzerland, I was born in Köln. My mother, also born there, went to school with Peter Böhm [son of Gottfried and Elisabeth] and had known him for a very long time, so it was through her that I initially got access to the family. It was around this time that I was finishing film school, and I really wanted to make a film about family—I just didn't know whether it was about my own, or another. Shortly after, I was introduced to Elisabeth, and I became fascinated by her. I just started to film her and Gottfried together in his working room, with no clue as to a potential narrative. At that time I was interested in their relationship above all else.

What fascinated you in particular?

We were sat in this working room, Gottfried hunched over his desk and Elisabeth on the opposite side of a large table—her memory loss at this point was worsening. Occasionally, their sons would knock on the door, pop in to ask something, and leave again. It was dull, you could say, but I enjoyed it. Nothing really happened, but it allowed me to get to know Gottfried. He's a very quiet person, but deeply interested in everyone around him. He's the type who will ask you many questions but give very little away about himself.

That's part of the beauty of the narrative you weave: that what you, as the viewer, learn about Gottfried and the buildings are not through him but through interviews with his sons, or simply through silent moments during which we simply watch him draw, scratch ink off a sheet of trace or sculpt clay.

Creating such an intimate view meant building a relationship with him and, as with any relationship, you fight for it. You have to try and understand where the boundaries are, how far you can go. I desperately didn't want to push it to the point at which he might no longer be willing to be so open with me.

It sounds like a stressful process?

It was, in fact. I realised that after the three years spent making the film, and feeling the pressure gradually mount, that I wasn't really worried about making a good film or not *per se*, but about keeping this special relationship that we'd built. I didn't want him to see anything relating to the footage we were taking so he wouldn't be aware of himself, which meant that when it came for the film to be screened I had no idea how he would respond.

Let's talk about your process. The narrative of the film works so well—did you film and then shut yourself in an editing room for months to piece together the story, or did you begin to piece it together as you were filming?

I just filmed, which meant there was an enormous amount of material. My producer told me that a standard feature-length film of 90 minutes has about 30 to 40 moments, and encouraged me to mentally retrace the years I had spent filming the family and pick 30 moments that were important to me. So I did. I spent around three days compiling a rough cut. In this process you pick up on lots of little things you didn't originally notice—themes and motifs, like Elisabeth's recurrent red scarf.

What was the most important motif, theme or object that you noticed?

I remember seeing something in the background of one of the shots. I zoomed in to find a sculpted bust of Elisabeth. I later asked Gottfried what it was, and he explained that it was a sculpture of her he made around the time when she began to really lose her faculties. He wanted to capture her in a particular moment, as it were; to keep her alive at a time in which she was increasingly forgetful. I asked him whether he would reenact this for the film, and he agreed. It is one of the most complicated scenes in the film in terms of how we had to shoot it. I set up a table in a darkened room, and the entire crew—of which there were about 10—stood outside. Gottfried was alone.

I get the sense that this was where you as a filmmaker felt most comfortable: scenes with people. But *Concrete Love* features buildings, and quite complex architectural spaces. How did you approach these sorts of scenes?

At first I was really afraid to tackle their œuvre—there are so many projects, and I had never purposely filmed a building before. I felt that I was never going to get it right by myself, so I just put myself in the shadow of Gottfried and Elisabeth; where they went, I went. I would encourage them to take trips to their buildings—whether to church or to a concert. Just by being with them and listening to them talk, I began to understand more about the language of architecture. Before then I didn't have a clue what they were talking about: façades? Connections between old and new? I had no idea.

And I suppose that the family all talk in a sort of archi-jargon?

All the time—they live it. I remember going for beer with Gottfried and our cameraman, Raphael Beinder, in Köln. I was nervous so I started to play with the coaster—you know, ripping it to pieces. Suddenly he picked them up and started to try to piece them back together in the form of a building. And he was serious: when I subconsciously took a piece away, he subconsciously put it back.

> "They sit quietly, holding hands, and all the while I just kept thinking, 'What are they looking at?!'"

They whole family live together just outside Köln, in a home built by Gottfried's father, Domenikus Böhm. Does it feel insular to you?

Yes, and I made a conscious choice to try to create a sense of their home by representing a closed familial universe in which each member rotates around Gottfried in a cosmos of relationships. Watching the film, you're unsure of where the individual rooms are in relation to one another, for instance. They're actually spread across a series of houses close by—but you wouldn't know that from the film, necessarily.

It's as if, in this sense, their projects represent a wider constellation. How did you come to know Neviges?

Before I went, all I knew was that it was important—to German architecture students, at least. I also knew it was a church, but that was it. The first time I went was with both Gottfried and Elisabeth, and it turned out to be the last time that they went there together. I shot a beautiful scene in which they sit together in its vast interior, while Elisabeth is looking up towards the vaults and commenting on how dark it is. Gottfried recalls how it once used to be much lighter, but years of incense burning and candles have left their mark. They sit quietly, holding hands, and all the while I just kept thinking, "What are they looking at?!"

You were too busy looking at *them*!

It's true—I just didn't understand the significance of where we were. This was also around the same time that I was filming their long-time gardener in Köln. I asked him whether or not he knew of any old models or objects relating to Neviges, and he produced a cardboard model of their original competition entry. It was made because the Bishop was almost blind at the time, and so Gottfried wanted him to be able to physically feel the proposal.

I went back to Neviges without Gottfried and Elisabeth on a day when a concert was playing. I make my living as a sound designer—making sounds for films—and as I entered Neviges I remember being unable to locate where the sound from the orchestra was coming from. It was almost a spiritual moment for me; I realised that I was being moved by the building, and the church was making me feel a certain way. I had to locate myself within it, and reconfigure my existence in space. I experienced it through sound, as it were.

The same could also be said for visual senses, too. When I first visited, it took around 15 minutes for my eyes to adjust from the bright, overcast white light outside to the cavernous space of the church. You're initially drawn to a radiant, blood-red rose window in the corner—but the vaults above are pitch black. As they reveal themselves, you start to realise that you're in a far bigger space than you initially realised. But in those early moments, you're relying on your hearing.

Absolutely. I once asked Gottfried to talk a little about how Neviges was built, and he just said how grateful he was that so many people supported such a "crazy idea." I suddenly understood that there were no computer modelling, no digital engineering, no renders to rely on. They had schematic drawings, and then *he* directed the build on site. So the building was somewhat improvised.

It must have taken a great deal of self-confidence.

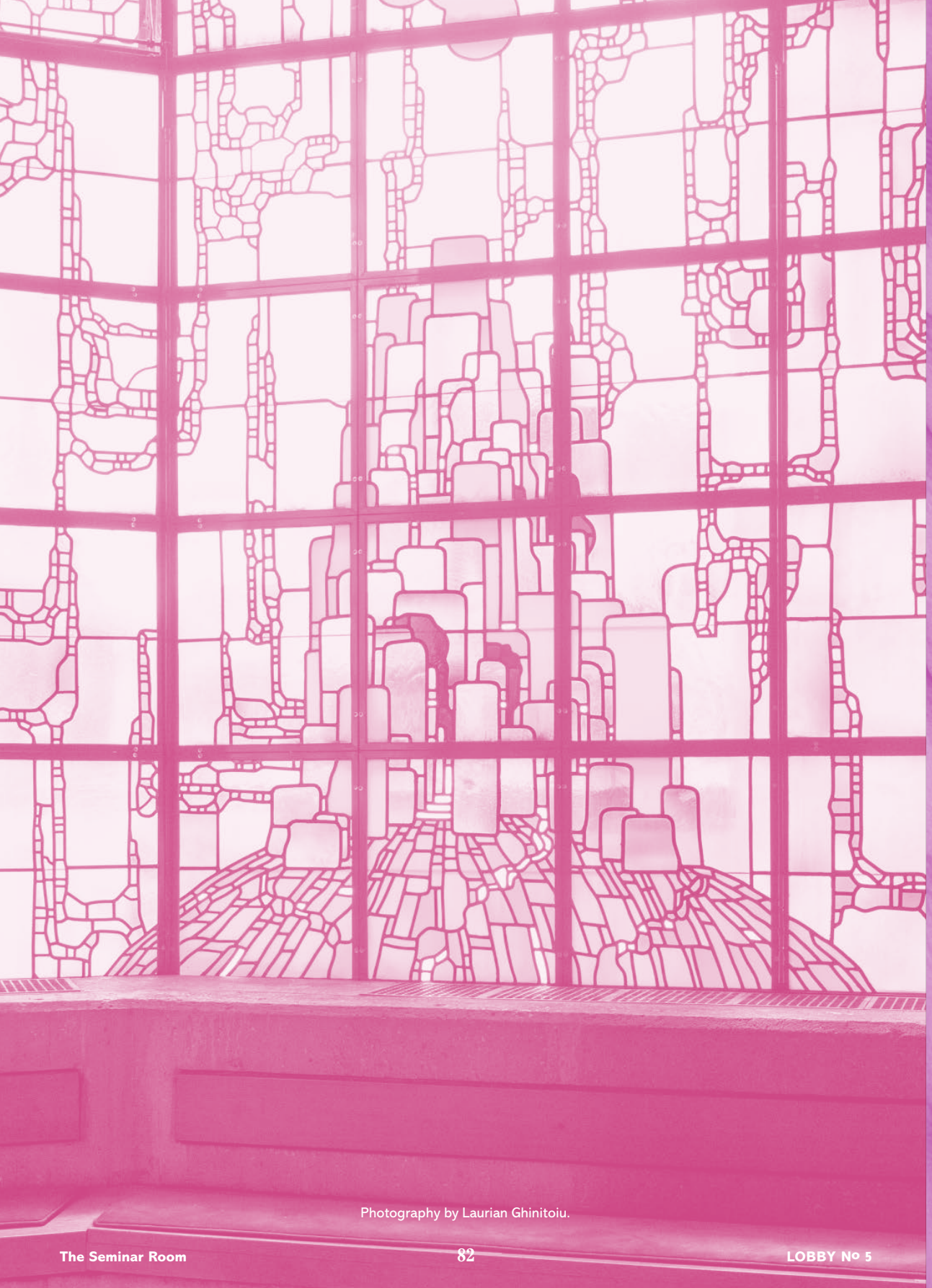
For sure. I once found footage of him as a young boy—really charming and a true extrovert. But now he's the opposite, so to speak—very quiet and somewhat of an introvert. None of his sons could really explain why he changed, when I asked them. But my feeling is that the Second World War changed him. He was part of a very elite, mountaineering force in the German army; part of the group of soldiers that went into battle first.

That must have had a profound impact. And then to return to Köln and see that the city had been bombed to ruins must have been difficult too. With the Madonna of the Ruins church (upon which Peter Zumthor later built the Kolumba Museum), he was one of the first architects to face the challenge of rebuilding the city.

Exactly. He went from soldier to church builder. And Stephan, his son, once noted how even to this day he cannot bear rhythmic clapping at a concert, for instance. He has never spoken about his part in the war, not with his sons nor with Elisabeth, even. But we do know that he spent considerable time in the mountains. He himself is a large-framed, broad, imposing figure; a sort of human mountain. Neviges, in that way, is a concrete mountain and does—to my mind, at least, and in one way or a nother—represent concrete love.

Concrete Love (2014) is a film directed by Maurizius Staerkle-Drux and produced by Carl-Ludwig Rettinger, featuring the Böhm family: Gottfried, Elisabeth, Paul, Peter, Stephan and Anton.

LOBBY will be screening the UK premiere of *Concrete Love* this winter. For tickets and details, follow us on social media.



Photography by Laurian Ghinitoiu.

The Staircase

Queens of the Desert No More

FURTHER WANDERINGS WITH THE RAINBOW FLAG

Words by Lilliana Ramos-Collado
Photography by Erik Hartin

In 1994 I first saw Felicia in drag, riding atop a huge bus while lip syncing the beautiful opera aria *Sempre Libera*—from Giuseppe Verdi's awesome *La Traviatta*—where Violetta, a woman of pleasure, pleads to forever be "*folleggiando di gioia in gioia"*. While Felicia follows the music with his lips, the camera steps far back and we see the bus speeding along a desert landscape. Felicia's silvery gown flaps in the wind, its narrow, seemingly infinite train resisting all the drag force of the bus.

Three drag queens—Felicia, Bernadette and Mitzy del Bra—trailblaze along a bumpy mud road from Sidney to the heart of Australia and encounter indifference, hate, violence, an aboriginal tribe with whom they exchange drag clothes and Lasseter's Hotel Casino Resort where the troupe will stage several shows. The movie climaxes when the protagonists—dressed in full drag regalia—climb to the top of a mountain range and admire the infinite desert. Bernadette, a transsexual past her prime, says: "That's just what this country needs: a cock in a frock on a rock." A few scenes later, they head back home to Sidney, and so ends the movie musical *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, directed by Stephan Elliot—my favourite LGBTQ film ever.

A year later, I went to New York's Pride Parade for the first time. While walking along—and sometimes underneath—a gigantic Rainbow Flag, it struck me that the three drag queens of Priscilla climbed the mountain wearing the colours of the rainbow! Felicia's incipit—in his silver, colourless gown—evolved into the movie's climax when the three friends composed a colourful allegory of the Rainbow Flag atop the high mountain. I clearly saw our quest: the LGBTQ community rising from forced silence and invisibility to its rightful, loftier place. Said Felicia at the foot of the mountain just before climbing: "I had a dream…," quoting Martin Luther King's inspiring phrase. When they reached the top, the dream had become an axiom, and the flag, its symbol.

In 2015, 20 years after my first NY Pride Parade, the NY Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) acquired the Rainbow Flag for its design collection during Pride Month, announcing that it would join "similarly universal symbols such as the @ symbol, the Creative Commons logo, and the recycling symbol." I balked: these three symbols pertain to network domains, intellectual property and adequate waste management. I was shocked with MoMA treating the flag as a logo and not as a flag proper, the symbol of a community, a country, a territory, a movement. I found this gross, impersonal, morally suspect and historically moot. MoMA added: "We're proud MoMA collection now includes this powerful design milestone, and there's no more perfect time to share this news than during global

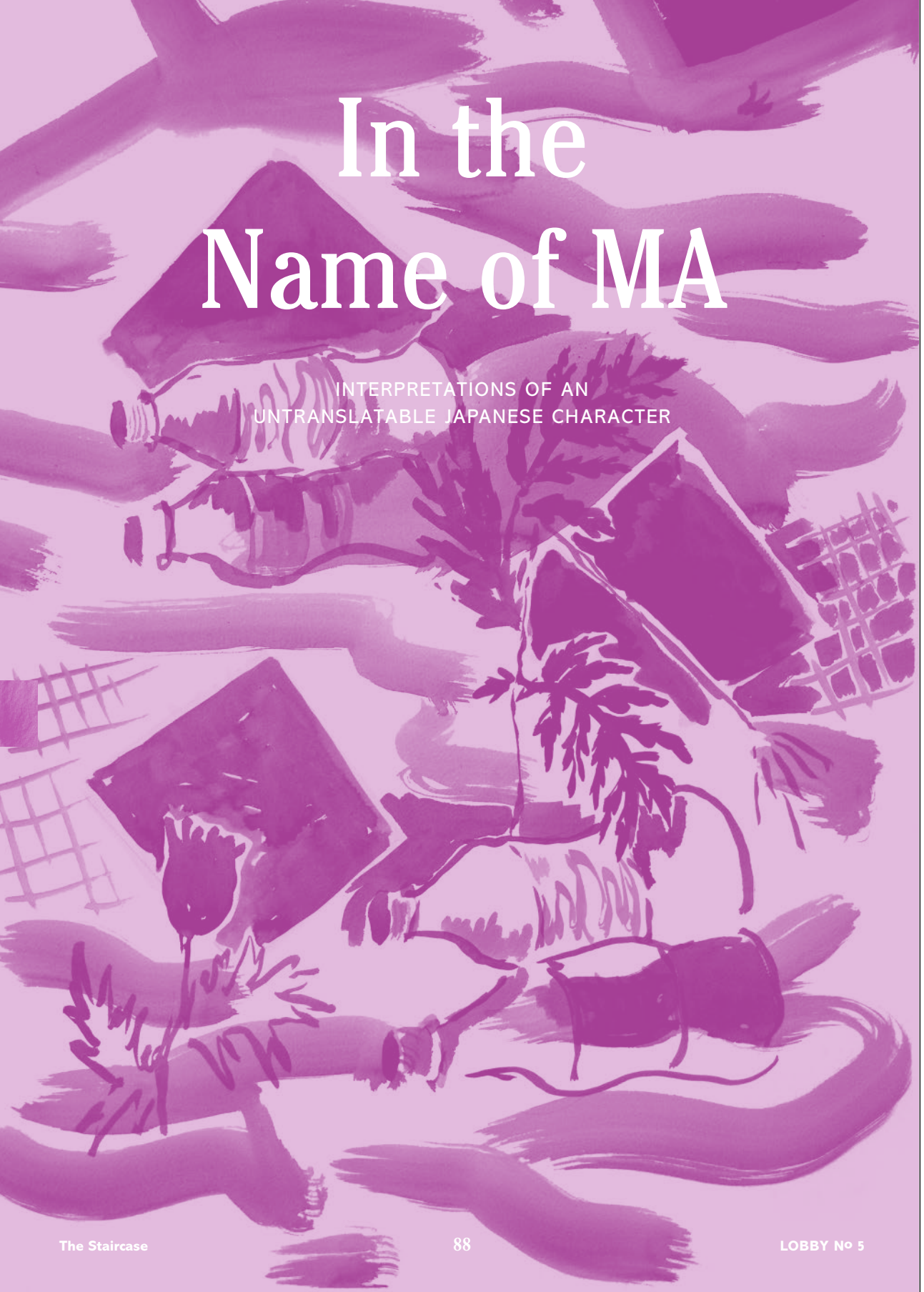
celebrations for Pride Month." To drum up the hype, MoMA staffers interviewed Gilbert Baker, who created the flag in 1978 in San Francisco. According to Baker, his inspiration came from the enthusiasm about the United States flag during the Bicentennial celebration: "I began to notice the American flag—which is where a lot of the Rainbow Flag comes from—in the sense that all of a sudden [I saw] the American flag everywhere— from Jasper Johns' paintings to trashy jeans in the Gap and tchotchkes." To Baker, the flag had many functions. It was not a painting, a cloth or a mere logo. He thought the LGBTQ community needed a symbol that could give us visibility and that could be easily recognised and understood by the general community. Initially, the morning I heard the news about MoMA's acquisition, I was glad. When in the afternoon I read MoMA's blog, I became furious. The Museum tacitly devaluated the flag as a symbol of a specific community—a 'tribe' that strives to become visible—which, for Baker, was the whole point. Why all the hype for the wrong reasons?

Most people who commented on MoMA's blog entry either waxed ecstatic or nitpicked about Baker by bringing up factoids such as: the rainbow has been used in national flags before; Baker failed to set the colours as they are in the real rainbow; Baker lied to the press because the flag had been made by people directly involved, but had been taken by AIDS and were unable to stand up for themselves; it is a symbol of biblical promise found in other movements or rituals, and so on. Art critic Lee Rosenbaum railed MoMA for failing to state that they did not acquire the original version, but a later "mass-produced version… in order to celebrate the accessibility and worldwide adoption of this humble master-piece of design." Most people forgot the flag was meant to give visibility to the terrible AIDS crisis. A shameful oversight!

So what to make of the Rainbow Flag? A logo or brand? A brand dumbs down whatever it represents. Whoever sees it must recognise the product with minimum effort. It pumps up product prestige over other brands. Brands compete to win. Brands flatten and simplify. Brands never tell all. Brands suppress contradictions, obscurities, metaphors. Branding such a complex and diverse community as ours would probably require a detailed 1,000-page marketing 'white paper' on how to 'pitch the product'. Instead, can our flag be seen as an *emblem*? Probably not, unless we aim at abstraction, and I don't think our LGBTQ community will want to remain remote, silent, abstract. After all, our Rainbow *is* a rainbow.

Could the Rainbow Flag mean the same as United States flag? What brings us together as a group? Would such a group need a territory in order to define, contain or defend itself? After all, UNESCO has already acknowledged the existence of peoples that, having a complex culture, lack a material territory. These are usually nomadic peoples who have no literal home. Being nomadic—in our physical location, in our sexual practices, in our ideas of the body—we are always on the move as we keep harvesting new sexualities while going "over the Rainbow". But what if we were land-bound, with our own airport, internet domain and national flag? Would we ever be truly 'out' if we were always surrounded by our sexual peers? We would soon become like Lilliput or, worse, The Closet. How would the signage of our restrooms be? Would there be children? Could the LGBTQ nation impose a mandatory apartheid to protect our practices and our differences from The Others? Would our Flag separate Us from Others? For example, too many homosexual men treat lesbians as Others, as witnessed by the relentless lesbophobia among gays. How would becoming a nation play out our own internal problems like gender bias, class struggle, racism, cultural prejudices, age issues, sexual preference, political persuasion and the adhesion to traditional practices like marriage? Hey, we're prejudiced people, like anybody who's straight! Our own diversity may make any of *Us* an *Other* anytime, for any or no reason.

In the end, the everyday use of our Rainbow Flag is ephemeral, celebratory, a welcome symbol outside a dwelling, a way to identify ourselves, a sign under which to march together. Since we are as diverse as the rest of the population, our pride must be predicated on our coming out to be accepted into the general community. Better 'mingled and equal' than 'separate but equal': visible, a part of the wide world, leading what Judith Butler brilliantly called 'liveable lives'. Nothing to do with Creative Commons, Recycling or being @. That was the last stand of Felicia, Bernadette and Mitzy del Bra: to go out of the wasteland and into the crowd, queens of the desert *no more*. ◎



In the Name of MA

INTERPRETATIONS OF AN
UNTRANSLATABLE JAPANESE CHARACTER

Words by Marcela Aragüez
Illustration by Phil Goss

Thirty spokes meet in the hub, though the space between them is the essence of the wheel.

Pots are formed from clay, though the space inside them is the essence of the pot.

Walls with windows and doors form the house, though the space within them is the essence of the house.

–Lao Tzu

A symbol representing the sun, framed by a double-wing door, shapes the character used in Japanese writing for the term *ma* (間). This is a concept conveying multiple meanings, apparently crucial for the understanding of Japanese culture yet without a proper translation in Western languages. Where should we start to make sense of a term we struggle to directly translate? Western scholars have attempted to interpret *ma* as *interval*, *gap* and *negative space*, often increasing the mysticism of the concept rather than clarifying its meaning. Although definitions of *ma* by Japanese people distance themselves from the rather sophisticated understanding of the foreigners, the concept remains ambiguous, often acquiring both intangible and practical connotations.

According to architect and Japanologist Günter Nitschke—who first brought attention to the concept from a Western perspective with regard to architecture in the 1960s—*ma* is best described as a 'consciousness of place', where time and space are understood as indivisible entities. Nitschke himself acknowledges that the idea of this translation draws upon discussions on the concept of 'place' being held at the time by Team 10 members like Aldo van Eyck and Allison & Peter Smithson, somehow situating *ma* alongside contemporary Western architectural theories. For the Japanese however, *ma* seems to be less theoretical, something imprinted in everyday life in a natural and effortless way. *Ma* is present as one of the ruling elements putting the material world in order by reinforcing the importance of the *in-between*—both in time and space—between two objects, two particular situations, two moments in a conversation, etc. By stressing the gap between elements it also emphasises the link of what it separates. As both distance and emptiness, there is plenty of '*ma*' in *Noh* theatre and traditional Japanese paintings, where silences and blanks are crucial in the composition.

At the same time, something which has *ma* is balanced, harmonic and organised within an apparent disorder. For instance, *ma* can be illustrated with the ancient Chinese game *Go*, a strategy board game in which two adversaries compete to conquer the whole extension of the board by placing a set of stones on a grid. Unlike in chess or draughts, there are no fixed movements, giving players a great degree of freedom and creative possibilities during the course of the game. And in Go, *ma* is defined as the power of balance in an apparently unbalanced and disorganised placement of stones on the board. This balance emerges from the relation of voids and interstices generated

> “When looking at space, *ma* seems to imply the existence of a control system whose rules are not entirely defined and remain indeterminate.”

in-between stones. The end of the game is decided by the players themselves, when they realise that any further movement would either benefit the opponent’s *ma* or would not make any difference. The player who is able to design a better *ma* wins the battle.

Thus, when looking at space, *ma* seems to imply the existence of a control system whose rules are not entirely defined and remain indeterminate. This used to be applied in traditional architecture, especially as a design strategy for the organic spatial configuration of Japanese temples. Their layout is usually organised by a succession of spaces ranging from thresholds between interior and exterior, catwalks creating transitions between areas and rooms with no particularly defined activity. The apparent organic articulation of these elements results in what sometimes has been defined as multi-layered space, in which a potential for experience, perceptual multiplicity and interactions are imprinted. Similarly, in Japanese gardens, beside the beauty of the scenery they provide, the experience of walking over seemingly unstable bridges and catwalks reinforces the awareness of the present moment and a particular appreciation of voids and spaces between placed elements. And for very pragmatic purposes, *ma* is also used as the unit of measure defining the standard dimension of a *Tatami* mat. In turn, this measure is set by the natural span used in timber frame, the distance *in-between* two columns. The surface of a room can then be defined by the number of *ma* contained in its two dimensions.

So is *ma* a concrete or an elusive concept? What does it actually mean? Being difficult to grasp by a foreigner, its translation in spatial arrangements might offer the easiest manifestation for identification and analysis. But *ma* is a blurred concept even for Japanese people, who accept the non-definition and ambiguity of the term as a core element in their everyday life. It seems that the dichotomy in the meaning of *ma* goes in line with what Ruth Benedict implies in her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*: that Japan seems to be, more than any other culture, one of ‘both/and’, and so in the same fashion as Japanese people are perceived in ambiguous ways—rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid—the written character for *ma* conveys this paradoxical idiosyncrasy with a sun shining in a shut room. ◎

The Human Archive

INTERPRETING THE PAST OF A COMMUNITY IN IMBROS

Imbrians at Kastro Por, Imbros and Tenedos Studies Association.

Words by Sevcan Ercan

Archives are as full of promise as newly discovered archaeological remains—partly visible and partly under the soil of passed centuries. In both cases, one can easily dream to achieve a unique discovery of a hidden truth or a new meaning of the past. Evidence-based production of knowledge highlights archives as institutions, yet not as part of memory. Plus, what we actually encounter in an archive is not necessarily the past but most probably a version of the past. As Jacques Derrida states, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation." In fact, as Marlene Manoff also explains, the structure of the archive shaped by social, political and technological forces determines what can be stored, how information is organised and for whom is made accessible. Therefore, the nature of archival inference is contingent not only upon the multiplicity of interpretations of the material but also upon those methods for 'archivisation' by which an archive is constituted.

Three concerns arise when revising a 'standard' archive. First, your research data is usually monitored and probably recorded, which likely restricts your choices of research. Second, in archival record selection, the collection is assembled by administrative bodies. The selection process could be understood as the way in which the past is rewritten and, to some extent, manipulated. Third, ethnographic materials stored in these archives are often decontextualised, isolated from their original location and owners. Partly due to these concerns, the understanding of an archive has recently evolved so as to shelter more diverse meanings and approaches from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.

An example of these alternate approaches is what can be called a 'human' archive—a form of social archive involving a community through contribution and participation. These collections are less decontextualised, facilitating the identification of records with sources. I had the chance to work with a human archive during a recent trip to Imbros, an island located in the North Aegean Sea that has been under the control of the Republic of Turkey since 1923. Imbros used to be overwhelmingly inhabited by the *Rum* community (Greek people from Asia Minor) who are acknowledged to be Greek-speaking, Christian Orthodox and mostlywork in the agricultural sector. Although being exempted from the compulsory movement of minority populations in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, the majority of the *Rum* population had to leave the island until the 1980s.

Displacement stories are often difficult to be followed through national history and public archives, because they are buried and omitted stories from the glorious official version of the past. The archive of the Imbros community—non-institutional by its nature and mostly shaped by the dynamic participation of individuals —is the one and only available source to understand the story of this community. After their displacement, Imbros *Rum* community's relation to the island has entirely changed, and their homeland is now symbolised by a Union building and an archive in Athens.

My first interaction with the community began at the Imbros Union's café, where I began interviewing people who experienced this displacement process. After I received the digital copies of some archival records —old photographs and memoirs to a large extent—the most productive part of my research was listening to the stories behind those pictures, told by community members at the café. This in-person, collective participation gave me the opportunity to bypass the restrictions of typing keywords, draining already manipulated catalogues, and it was key to understand how community participation is essential for the Union and its archive. Even the Union building was designed and constructed by community members. No detail found in the documents and narrated stories was redundant, and the archive continues to accommodate new data gathered from the community and other researchers. One of the most intriguing materials I found was a 20-volume, self-published memoir written by an Imbros *Rum* who currently lives in Australia and brings a finished volume every time he visits the Union in Athens. Unlike institutional archives —which are commonly passive resources waiting to be exploited for historical purposes—both access and contribution to the Imbros' community archive is open to everyone. In the end, the homeland narrative embodied in this archive is inconclusive and fragmentary, but its human participation reconciles anthropological and historical evidence.

The Imbros community represent an archive despite the challenge of its unpredictability and disorganised nature. Like every archival research, this one was a journey of discovery, although essentially different from the ones I used to experience in standard archives. But the point is not to say that one version of archival material is better than the other. It's one thing to follow the official history of the past through state documents; it's another to listen to the story of ordinary people and dig into an archive established by a community. After all, it wasn't just a pile of old photos and documents that I'd found, but a social interaction that also involved questions on whether archives are transforming the way larger masses are represented, and how we, as researchers, are implicated in this transformation.

How Emoji Means

THE RISE AND RISE OF THE NEW GLOBAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Words by Vyvyan Evans
Illustration by Frankie M

An emoji is a glyph encoded in fonts (like other characters) for use in electronic communication. It's especially prevalent in digital messaging and social media. An emoji, or 'picture character', is a visual representation of a feeling, idea, entity, status or event, such as the ubiquitous smiley 'face with tears of joy' emoji, selected by Oxford Dictionaries as its 2015 Word of the Year.

From a historical perspective, the first emojis were developed in the late 1990s in Japan for use in the world's first mobile phone internet system. There were originally around 170 and looked very crude by today's standards.

In 2009, the California-based Unicode Consortium —which specifies the international standard for the representation of texts across modern digital computing and communication platforms —sanctioned 722 emojis. The Unicode-approved emojis became available to software developers by 2010, and a global phenomenon was born.

Today, depending upon operating system, there are anything between 800–1600 emojis available to digital users.

Unlike a naturally-occurring system of communication like English, French or Japanese, emoji is not a language. For one thing, with a limited catalogue of emojis, its reduced vocabulary means that it has a relatively impoverished semantic range. Second, unlike a language, emoji doesn't have a system of grammar that allows complex combinations of the vocabulary items. There are, of course, exceptions to this.

In research involving the relationship between language and emojis based on attitudes to money in the UK—and conducted on behalf of the financial giant Barclays Bank PLC—we discovered that 40% of Britons find talking about money more awkward than a first date or even than bumping into an ex-partner; more than 30% would rather be out-of-pocket than ask for money owed to them, while one in five lost an excess of £100 in the past year for this very reason. In contrast, the same study reveals that nearly half (49%) of young people in the UK—respondents aged 18–25—believe that emojis can make a conversation less awkward. To make life a little easier for Barclays' bashful digital customers, I was commissioned to translate the top finance-related expressions that Brits find most awkward to say, into emoji.

I can't afford it, sorry

That's too expensive!

I'm broke

You owe me money

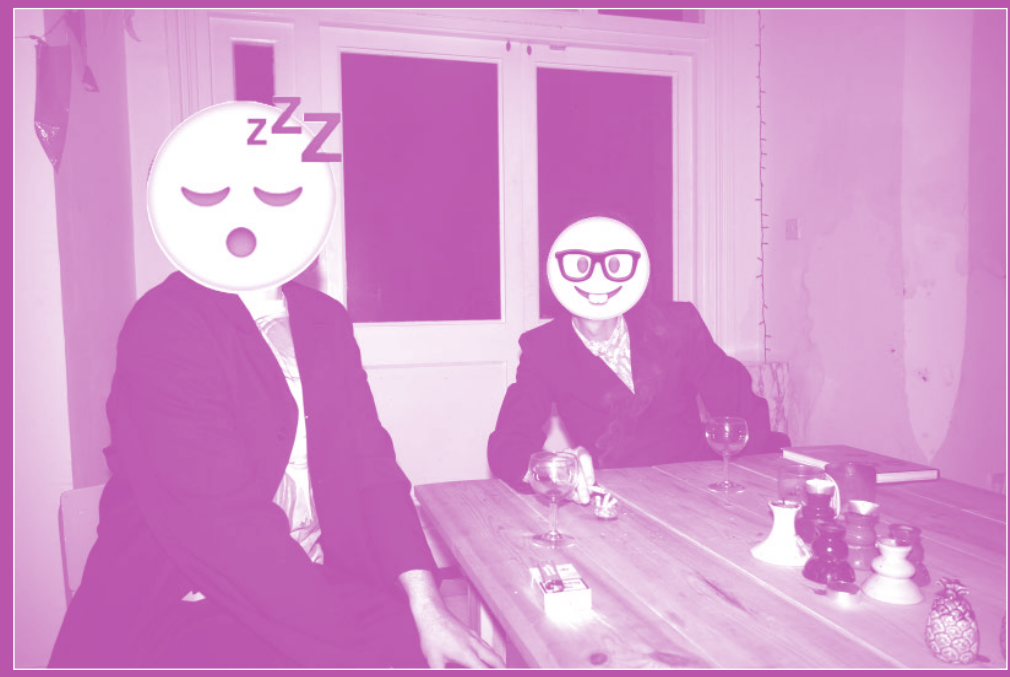
You've added that up wrong/ you've miscalculated that

I don't want to split the bill evenly, I didn't eat or drink

These 'translations' require imbuing emoji with a rudimentary grammatical system; for instance, I used the paperclip emoji to designate a subordinating clause in the penultimate example, and the 'arms crossed no expression' emoji in two of the emoji sentences as a nation marker. But exercises like this, aside, most people don't usually attribute grammatical functions to emojis.

So why has the uptake of emoji grown exponentially? Why is it a truly global system of communication? Some see emoji as little more than an adolescent grunt, taking us back to the dark ages of illiteracy. But this prejudice fundamentally misunderstands the nature of communication, and in so doing it radically underestimates the potentially powerful and beneficial role of emoji in the digital age as a communication and educational tool. All too often we think of language as the mover and the shaker in our everyday world of meaning. However, in actual fact, most of the meaning we convey and glean in our everyday social encounters comes from nonverbal cues. Take gesture: they are minutely choreographed to co-occur with our spoken words, and we seem unable to suppress them. Watch someone on the telephone; they'll be gesticulating away, despite their gestures being unseen by the person on the other end of the line. Indeed, if gestures are suppressed, our speech actually becomes less fluent. We need to gesture to be able to speak properly. And by some accounts, gesture may have even been the route that language took in its evolutionary emergence. Eye contact is another powerful signal we use in our everyday encounters. We use it to manage our spoken interactions with others. Speakers avert their gaze from an addressee when talking, but establish eye contact to signal the end of their utterance. We gaze at our addressee to solicit feedback, but avert our gaze when we disapprove of what they are saying. We also glance at our addressee to emphasise a point we're making.

Eye gaze, gesture, facial expression and speech prosody are powerful nonverbal cues that convey meaning; they enable us to express our emotional selves, as well as providing an effective and dynamic means of managing our interactions on a moment-by-moment time-scale. Face-to-face interaction is multimodal, with meaning conveyed in multiple, overlapping and complementary ways. Digital communication increasingly provides us with an important channel of communication in our connected 21st Century social and professional lives. But the rich, communicative context available in face-to-face encounters is largely absent. Digital text alone is impoverished and emotionally arid. Digital communication, seemingly, possesses the power to strip all forms of nuanced expression even from the best of us. But here emoji can help: it fulfils a similar function in digital communication to gesture, body language and intonation in spoken communication. In so do doing, emoji provides what linguists refer to as 'paralinguistic' cues—essential for supporting language, but being themselves non-linguistic in nature. Emoji, in text messaging and other forms of digital communication, enables us to better express tone and provide emotional cues to better manage the ongoing flow of information, helping to interpret what the words are meant to convey. ◎



Photography: Erik Hartin.

Roman Road, 1 September 2016.

The Lift

IDENTITY THROUGH ACCEPTANCE

MCLEOD GANJ

Words by Vishanka Gandhi
Photography by Ryan Dearth

There is a place in north India called McLeod Ganj, also known as upper Dharamsala. It is the place where the Dalai Lama resides, the place where he took asylum after the Chinese authorities conquered Tibet. Despite being a holy sanctum of Buddhism, Dharamsala is not solely a 'religion' town, in the sense of being a pilgrim destination. It wasn't a tourist's haven to begin with, but was simply a picturesque hill-station blessed with good weather. The locals didn't have anything special to offer, and even the *momos*—the ubiquitous dumplings—came with the Tibetans. But the town's acceptance of the Dalai Lama has given Dharamsala an identity of tolerance which is now preached by its inhabitants.

In Dharamsala, the locals have opened their homes to tourists; visitors from Germany and other European countries have developed an affinity for it, setting up cafés frequented by locals, guests and monks alike. The landscape is thus a collage of diverse cultures. Here, authentic German cafés serve schnitzels with a book on Buddhism, locals speak multiple languages to cater to a diverse crowd and young, robed monks buy groceries from the local bazaar with a cappuccino in hand. In fact, it's not uncommon to see rows of extremely modest, utilitarian metal benches buzzing with chai-drinking monks, easily spotted by the deep red and yellow robes, even as you're still winding up the Dhauladhar mountain range to reach McLeod Ganj or the hilly town of upper Dharamsala.

Meandering your way around the thick Himalayan oak and pine trees, driving rhythmically from windward to leeward side, you cannot hear the chattering on the benches yet. As you draw closer to the not-so-impressive gateway to McLeod Ganj—in this case an extremely ugly car-park building—you notice the diversity of the people the monks are chatting with. It's a mix of local, Pan-Indian and foreign faces from all around the world, either sitting or standing under Airtel and Vodaphone sponsored umbrellas that only partially shade the benches.

This is a prelude to McLeod Ganj—unpretentious spaces acquiring an identity shaped by accepting the Other.

This eccentricity heightens into a chaotic experience as you walk from the town square through the inclined streets of upper Dharamsala. The Kalchakra Temple, replete with murals illustrating scenes from Buddhist scriptures, visually bifurcates the square into the temple road and post office road. Literally translating into the 'Wheel of time' the Kalchakra murals depict phases of the unending cycle of life, from creation to destruction.

A dense mass of tourists shopping for Tibetan craftwork and momos sold at wobbly stalls is interspersed with monks and locals who routinely stop in their tracks to roll the prayer wheels lining the temple walls. In the background you hear the deep monotone of Buddhist chants. This meditative sound, amidst the cacophony on the temple's main road, metaphorically symbolises Dharamsala's place as the 14th Dalai Lama's peaceful abode in the midst of the frenzied Chinese invasion. Down this road, the Tsuglagkhang monastery complex resonates with sounds of monks clapping hands as they debate with one another. Not your usual temple, the visit proves to be a bizarre experience as you try to make sense of the playful banter of monks, and the offerings of Oreo cookies and Cadbury chocolates made at the altar.

Accepting a different culture has essentially put Dharamsala on the world map. The hill-station continues to attract Indian tourists, but the lure of Buddhism and the desire to volunteer in re-establishing an uprooted culture attracts foreigners and volunteers, and are key actants in shaping the fabric and vibe of McLeod Ganj. The result is a plethora of multi-cuisine restaurants and cafés serving Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, American, French and Isreali food, such as the aptly named Common Ground Café. Started by a Taiwanese-American empathetic toward the plight of the Tibetans, the café is dominated by the red and yellow found in the monks' robes. While low, cushioned seating is steeped in most Asian cultures, community tables, free Wi-Fi, walls lined with books, a constant supply of good cappuccino and being surrounded by monks makes this Tibetan-Chinese café a place to acclimatise to the 'McLeod Ganj culture'. If there's such a thing.

With these unlikely peculiarities scattered along the streets of McLeod Ganj, there's a sense of routine in the interaction at the benches which greet you upon your arrival. The repetitive verticality of metal bars forming its backrest is reminiscent of a balcony railing. Being the only form of barrier between the narrow main road and the depths of the valley below, the bench is indeed a railing of sorts. It serves as much as a visual fringe as a symbolic gateway into McLeod Ganj. It's not a sturdy fringe but a porous one nonetheless.

MONUMENTS IN MOUNTAINS

REYKJAVIK

Words and Photography by Danielle S. Willkens

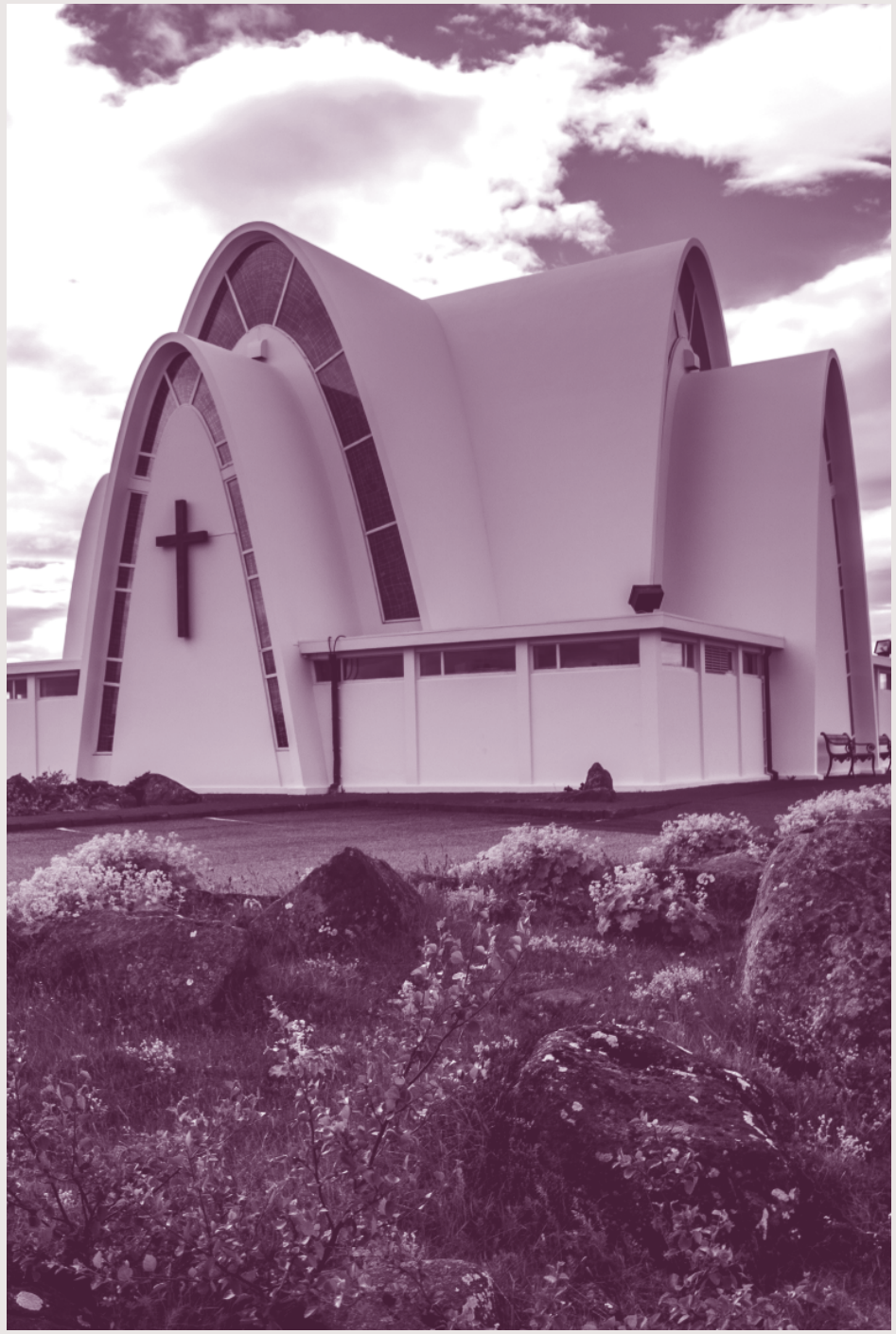
In a November 2015 article for *The Guardian*, Iceland's most famous musician, Björk, said, "[In Iceland] you don't go to church or a psycho-therapist—you go for a walk and feel better." Looking for inspiration, I decided to follow Björk's advice and take a stroll around the coastline of Reykjavik, the capital city. As I watched the sunset around 11:30 PM, I found myself perched on the Þúfa [Thufa]—an art installation by Ólöf Nordal in the form of a manmade turf-mound capped by a reconstruction of a traditional fish-drying shed. From this vantage point, you have an incredible view of the capital and surrounding suburbs. The spires of no fewer than eight churches puncture the skyline and, from my wanderings over the last month, I know that there are at least six other smaller churches woven into the city's fabric.

But, as I watched the red sunset reflect against the crystalline façade of the Harpa Concert Hall, I felt pretty puzzled. During the course of the past few weeks, I discovered a number of incredible churches on the island but I have yet to witness a busy entrance or exodus from a service. The largest crowds I have seen at these places of worship have been tourists taking the lift to experience the panoramic views from the tower of the Hallgrimskirkja, classical concertgoers at the Dómkirkjan or the somber attendees to an afternoon funeral at a church in Hvalnes. Perhaps the peak tourists' season has driven the faithful from the island; a few churches have paper signs taped to windows stating that services would be suspended from mid-June until mid-July. However, these notices do not explain how so many of these churches seems to be missing their congregations.

Of the churches I've visited in Reykjavik and farther afield in the southeast, I've discovered two common building types: the more traditional sturdy, symmetrical and colourful neoclassical constructions with simple naves and flanking side aisles, and the mid-to-late 20th Century, geometrically experimental examples of

Brutalism. The vernacular and modernist churches are found throughout the countryside, next to lava fields and along the coast; even the smallest of towns seems to have a compelling example of religious architecture. Based simply on Icelandic census reports, the plethora of parish churches on the island should be no surprise: according to recent records, about 80% of the nation's population are members of the Lutheran State Church and another 10% are members of other Christian denominations. However, unlike churches in other European cities I've visited, few churches are open during the day for quiet prayer, reflection or inspection from curious visitors. In fact, many churches even block their windows with heavy drapes to prevent glimpses into the sanctuary from the exterior. This practice seems at odds with the otherwise unrelenting faith in humanity that I continually witness in the country. I watched an Icelandic teenager chase an older, foreign gentleman to return the wallet he dropped in a grocery story. Exquisite mountain bikes are commonly left unlocked in the center of the city, whereas in cities like London, even the shabbiest of bikes needs a D-lock.

Whenever I serendipitously encountered a church's caretaker, they have been more than happy to open the doors for me to explore, even offering tea and suggesting other sites to see in the area. But as we part ways, I have often wondered if these churches are now legacies of lost 19th and 20th Century ways of life. Are they simply acting as memorials in cities and expansive landscapes to the higher power[s] that created the fjords, volcanoes and unique moonscapes of the island? These buildings are lovingly looked after, and even in small fishing towns—dotted with homes of rusted metal—the churches have fresh coats of paint or window sash repair projects underway to combat the effects of the harsh winters. Perhaps the rituals of the service within the building have now moved to the exterior: maintenance as a form of penance



and meditation to honor the generations of the past. Or perhaps something less melancholic is at play.

Iceland is a nation of nearly 330,000 people, with approximately two-thirds of the population living in the Reykjavík capital region. In addition to adhering to the strict laws from the Iceland Naming Committee (est.1991) —intended to preserve the Icelandic alphabet and rules of grammar—the National Registry often records parish membership for new babies, meaning that, on paper, Iceland has one of the highest percentages of registered religious devotees, but few are active practitioners. Nonetheless, where traditional expressions of faith are limited (e.g. full pews during Sunday service), Iceland excels expressions of *faithfulness*. As wayfinding monuments from devoted hikers, *steinvarða* [cairns] are scattered around the landscape; even in the capital, small acts of kindness and hospitality are plentiful. And, in late June and early July, Iceland's largest assembly of faith formed on Arnarhóll Hill, the central grassy knoll of the city. Here, a unified congregation of residents and visitors cheered for the national team's extraordinary—and unexpected —rise through the UEFA EURO stages. Although the church aisles and naves may be empty, the Icelandic communion with nature and tithes for tradition are pervasive. As I draw this reflection on a nation I have come to adore to a close, I find it more than appropriate to conclude as Icelanders do in encounters between both friends and strangers, with a salutation of "bless, bless". ◎

MEMENTOS OF THE MATHO MONASTERY

LADAKH

Words and Photography by Beatriz Cifuentes

Nervous excitement quickly gave way to a rather overwhelming set of joyful emotions. Therein followed the kind of peace only felt when one feels accomplished: I'd reached the Himalayas. This region has populated my thoughts since I was a child. It's my love and passion, one which guided my first Himalayan adventure in summer 2013 when I visited determined to immerse myself in its rich cultural and religious traditions. It might've been my first time there, but, surprisingly, nothing actually felt foreign. On the contrary, even when altitude sickness started to cloud my mind and weaken my sea-levelled-self, I remained content and mostly unfazed. I might have been unwell, but I was happy.

Located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in northwest India, Ladakh is a fascinating place with some of the most impressive landscapes in the world. The combination of its geography, religion and culture makes the place unique. With one getting lost in the sound of Tibetan horns being played across the Indus Valley, gazing at medieval monasteries that crown mountains that reach altitudes of over 6,000 meters and witnessing festivals where masked monks dance to the beat of drums as they go into a trance, there really is little doubt that, in Ladakh, religion takes centre stage. Having first witnessed the arrival of Buddhism via Kashmir over 1,500 years ago, and later playing a significant role in the spread of it into Tibet—a place to which Ladakh continues remarkably related culturally—this region remains a stronghold of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism in turn co-exists with Islam, resulting in an incredibly rich religious milieu.

That summer, I'd set off for Ladakh to work in the Matho Museum Project, whose aim is the preservation of the monastery's collection of Buddhist art, and the construction of a museum designed and built following traditional Ladakhi architecture. I'd boarded my

early morning flight from Delhi to Leh, and about an hour later found myself in a world of monks, monasteries, stupas, prayer flags, mosques, chants, butter tea, *dzos* (a hybrid between the yak and domestic cattle) and the roaring Indus River. My temporary home was the 15th Century monastery in Matho.

Every day I'd wake up early to make my trek up to breakfast, spinning prayer wheels as I went along saying '*julley*' (hello) to everyone I crossed paths with. There was no morning coffee, but there was an invigorating view of the Himalayas.

At work, researchers, art historians, conservation specialists and architects from all over the world collaborated with Matho's residents and monks. I engaged mostly with the architectural aspect of the project, learning about local architectural traditions and building techniques, such as building by using stone, clay and wood. Traditionally, larger Himalayan structures are characterised by thick outer walls that are sloped, meaning the buildings are narrower at the top. Windows, on the other hand, are smaller and have simpler designs in the lower floor, whereas they're large and ornate in the upper level. Columns—which in the case of the Matho Museum were carved out of tree trunks—also start off simple to then reach very intricate levels of ornamentation on the top storey.

The team's work routine would sometimes be interrupted by fascinating rituals that would take place in the monastery: prayer chants, preparation of butter lamps, unveiling of a *thangka* (a Tibetan painting on fabric), the visit of a high-ranked lama, the wedding of the local prince or even the inauguration of the monastery's new school. This was a particularly special event, a celebration for the entire village in which a colourful tent was set up, carpets rolled out, flowers were picked and everyone wore their best outfits. As part of the celebrations, women danced in their traditional dresses and impressive headdresses (or *perak*). Having seen these pieces of jewellery in museum collections in London, I was eager to see how they were used in situ. Bursting with curiosity, I approached the dancers after a performance to ask questions. But my inability to speak Ladakhi meant my questions were lost in translation, and they were left with the impression that what I wanted was to wear the headdress myself. I, of course, didn't say no. I tried on the heavy, beautiful, turquoise-covered *perak,* and much to everyone's amusement (myself included), I was soon dancing with and for the whole village.

In Matho, I was welcomed and lived as one of their own. I like to believe that my appreciation for Ladakhi culture and traditions was obvious from the start, and my involvement in a project that focused on the preservation of their heritage gave evidence to that, helping me bridge the language barrier that was at times present. By living in a monastery, I grew to understand Ladakhi people's relationship with their faith. I was reminded of every-day principles that attested to this way of life—principles such as kindness and the limitations of material possessions. This cultural outlook and these maxims birthed a hospitable, joyful and trusting society, something so dissimilar and almost out of character to a city like London. I left Ladakh with a different attitude, particularly to how I value my relationships with people and material things.

I learned how to live life differently. Practicing patience reaped the rewards of being less stressed, with a more balanced understanding of what can and can't be fixed. Endless to-do lists, access to wifi—none of that matters. Life in a place like Matho teaches you—or rather reminds you—of social and values we often disregard: being personable and approachable, for instance. It also deeply instills in you an understanding that material things, as highly as we value them, are just that. *Things*. But nurturing connections with others, with the spaces of our daily lives and with our own selves, that's what's truly important. And it's the one piece of Matho I brought back with me. ◎

The Library

Self-examination in Five Points, from Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, ed. 1673

The Saint and the Architect

CONJECTURES ON THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY FROM LOYOLA TO ROSSI

Words by Andrea Alberto Dutto

Prosaically speaking, the very idea of faith stands for believing in that which is assumed to have no possible rational explanation. At the same time however, faith has the power of rationalising experience or, rather, of expressing the events of life in a logical, convincing and ultimately truthful form. It is for this reason that the *biography* can easily become the narrative of faith, especially the religious one, since it establishes an effective proof on which the worshipper can grasp a reason to believe. Similarly then, the *autobiography* can also be addressed to ground a personal project of faith. Here the description of life events loses its purely documentary quality and rather acquires, for the writer/protagonist, a truly operative value. This condition is famously corresponded in the *Autobiography* (1555) by Íñigo López de Loyola (also known as Ignatius of Loyola), Spanish knight and theologian of the Counter-Reformation, who experienced Christianity first and foremost through his tumultuous life. But the relationship between the experience of faith and the facts of life is also addressed by another champion of modernity. Aldo Rossi's *Autobiography* (1981), written more than 400 years later, mirrors—as we shall see—the Spaniard's embrace of his Renaissance life, while also evoking faith as a metaphor for something else, namely Rossi's autonomous and immortal architecture.

We really couldn't choose a better starting point, for this speculation on self-narrative, than Loyola's *Autobiography*. Loyola wrote this book to describe his approach to Christian religion as a long process mediated by several personal vicissitudes, most notably by the experience of war and prison. In fact, it was over a period of convalescence due to war injuries after the Battle of Pamplona of 1521, that 30-year-old Íñigo discovered Christian literature through attentive reading. It is very possibly at this point that Loyola convinced himself to become a worshipper: a choice started by conflict and enabled by books, more precisely biographical books, such as Jacobus de Varagine's *Golden Legend*—the Medieval bestseller on the life of the Saints. Through such personal readings, Loyola convinced himself to address his own life as a speculative project.

This is probably why he, in his *Autobiography*, decided to refer to himself in the third person, suggesting a shift in point of view, with the writer acquiring a higher position—perhaps that of the

Divinity—and tackling his personal vicissitudes with a degree of distance. Through this method of writing, Íñigo appears as a subject, a token who is only accomplishing the Divine will. Through detachment and a critique of his own existence, Loyola built his faith much like an architect. He made use of other biographies and of his own life experience as tools of construction, maintaining at the same time the familiarity and the aloofness of a designer.

Building an *Autobiography* using external events quickly turns the experience of life into a project, grounded into the specificity of a personal legacy. Curiously enough, a similar vicissitude is remarked, several centuries later, by Aldo Rossi. Already when discussing his imposing bibliographical accomplishments, Rossi stated that many texts he owned were used as "material of construction". And in his *Autobiography* in particular, Rossi skilfully appropriated everything he met along the way, turning it into integral parts of his personal architectural narrative. Fragments of different sources are juxtaposed or joined together, generating new meanings; pieces of forgotten ruins, skeletons and carcasses are all flattened onto the same ground, suggesting that architecture is not only made by objects, but first and foremost by the necessity to build something —whether it is a building, a book or one's own life. Indeed, Rossi's *Autobiography* really turns architecture into life itself. For instance, the 'osteological' architecture of his Modena Cemetery is related to his accident in Turkey where he "identifies death with the morphology of the skeleton and the alterations it could undergo." Hence, for Rossi, architecture replies to the unpredictable circumstances of life, mirroring its volatile accidents.

Through his book, written on the ashes of the Italian neo-romantic Tendenza group, Rossi marks a strong detachment from the Postmodern and rather makes architecture an object of deep intimacy. Indeed, through his biographical oeuvre Rossi truly declares how he sees himself: not as a producer, but rather as a product of architecture. There's no possibility of disjoining the narration of his life from the architectures he mentions, because they all take part in the same experience. Rossi's text makes architecture appear inevitable because it unavoidably embodies the events of life, much like Loyola's mysterious faith drives his capricious existence.

Famously though, Rossi doesn't simply conceive an *Autobiography*, but rather a *scientific* one, inspired by none other than Max Planck, father of quantum physics. Rossi then stresses the precise scientific commitment that underlies the presence of architecture in his own life. It could be daringly argued, however, that Rossi's *Scientific Autobiography* concerns nothing but the accomplished rationalisation of his own faith towards architecture. Indeed, he doesn't simply witness the presence of architecture, but he truly promotes the possibility of grounding the experience of architecture as a fully understandable fact—much like life through faith. Particularly interesting, then, is the way he avoids mentioning himself as a creator of architectures, echoing Loyola's third-person narrative, while at the same time underlining how architecture is something that should be understood through life experiences alone. For Rossi "the dimensions of a table or a house […] permit everything that is unforeseeable in life."

Moreover, Rossi's scientific claim is countered by his numerous references to the transcendental domain of ascetic authors. This link could be ascribed to a quite opportunistic attempt to grasp from this literature a specific language, used in turn to express his own. St. Augustine's *Confessions*, for instance, provide Rossi with a language through which he's able to express the development of life ahead of architecture, much like the *Golden Legend* inspired Loyola's lifelong speculative project.

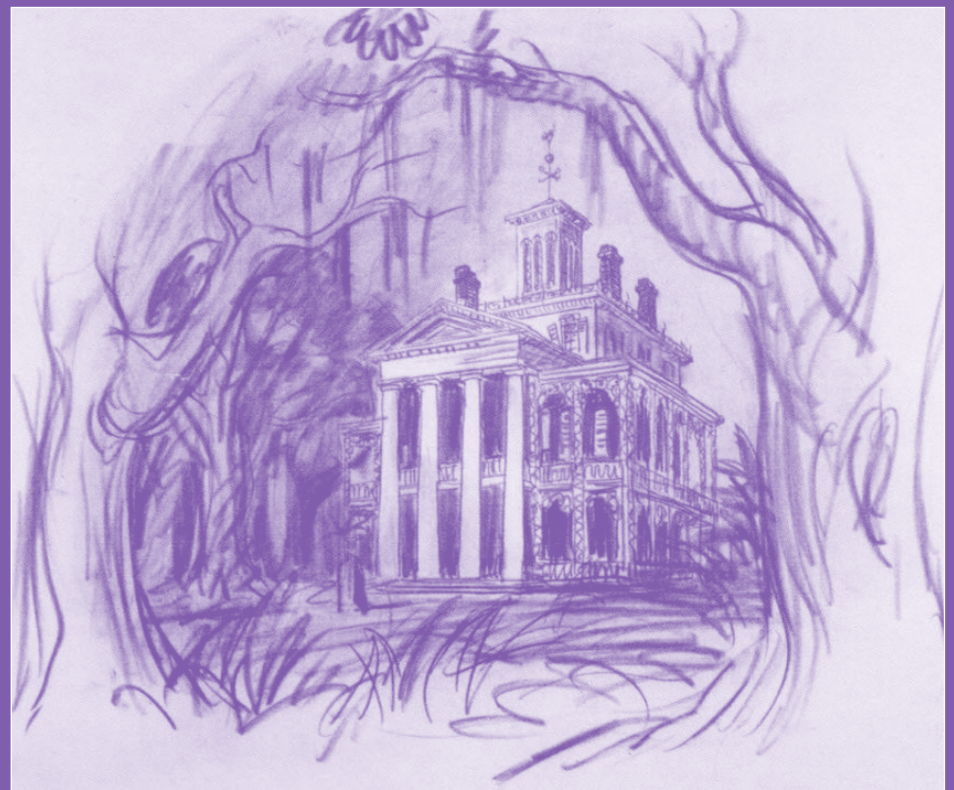
Both Loyola and Rossi embrace the potential of the autobiography as a true project. Both of them, as distant as they are in time and space, have conceived their experiences and circumstances in a perspective wider than an unrelated succession of events. Íñigo sees faith as the only possible way to make a sense of the mysteries of life. Those same mysteries become the very essence of Rossi's architecture, which is made of imperfections, accidents and fragilities. Moreover, it seems that Loyola's intimate detachment towards his own existence becomes—in turn—Rossi's way of approaching and explaining the architecture of his life. Thus, their books are meant to challenge the reader's experience, in an effort to make life itself adhere to a wider architectural project that can overcome our physical finitude. The conjectural thread that unites these two life-long speculators can then shed some light on the importance of architecture as a life commitment, and of faith as the device to make it so. ◎

Ex Voto, Shrine of St. Maria del Pozzo, Capurso 1829

Haunted by Design

Words by Gregorio Astengo
Illustration by George Morton

Every building tells a story, and this is a horror story. Writer and former Disney Imagineer Jason Surrell talks about the Haunted Mansion, the iconic building inspired by Walt Disney's futuristic visions, inhabited by his ground-breaking technologies and ultimately narrated through a successful book, written, of course, by Jason himself.



Ken Anderson's original sketch for the Haunted Mansion, 1958.

Consider for a moment an imposing, dark, empty mansion. Imagine walking up to the entrance and making your way through the large, dusty doors into the silent hall. The creaking of the wooden floors is the only noise you can hear, echoing through the corridors and down into the basement. Suddenly, someone laughs in the distance, a shadow passes by and the chandelier starts swinging mysteriously. You shiver at the realisation that this house is not abandoned at all. Instead, every room is very much alive, but unfortunately your hosts are not from the world of the living…

To think that such a place might actually exist outside of a horror novel, a scary movie or our dark imagination is hard to believe. But as we all know, reality doesn't need to be believable. Today, we can truly live the experience of a good fright not just through scary legends and dark stories, but thanks to the brick walls and wooden floors of a real haunted house. The idea of such a place came out of the visionary mind of Walt Disney himself, sometime during the 1950s.

Designed over the course of more than a decade, Disney's horror vision became a reality in 1969— three years after his death—in Anaheim, California. It's known as the Haunted Mansion and it's still one of the most distinguished and iconic attractions of Disney's dream world, Disneyland. Moreover, the Mansion truly started a typological tradition that today still frightens, amuses and inspires. And, just like any great piece of architecture, the Haunted Mansion has its own historiographer. Jason Surrell—author, creative director and former Disney Imagineer—is the writer behind the homonymous book that brings us inside the dark hallways, spooky rooms and creaking stairways that make the Haunted Mansion so unforgettable. The successful book, which is now at its third reprint, also tells the story of how the building came into being, from the first utopian vision of Disneyland to its final, eclectic and uniquely powerful architectural look. But Disney's theme parks are also about envisioning a future for mankind, restoring our faith in architecture and building a better society.

✌

I find your book particularly fascinating because it offers the first and most comprehensive historiography of the Haunted Mansion. Such researches often entail artistic, historical as well as social objectives. Why did you feel like such a book was interesting and relevant?

The main reason why I wanted to write this book was because it was a narrative that I was interested in reading and nothing like that simply existed at the time. There had been several books, articles and histories published on Walt Disney, his studio and his theme parks but there was nothing that focused on the making of one single building and attraction. That was the story that I wanted to read and I felt that the Haunted Mansion—given its iconic character—was the perfect object for such a project.

In the central part of the book you explore the Haunted Mansion room after room, giving a sort of virtual tour of the building, which in turn seems to reflect the spatiality of the building itself. How would you say your publication can inform the experience of the Mansion?

This reflection was absolutely by design. I truly wanted to emulate the experience of the Haunted Mansion through the book. This is why each section contributes to the story of the building, from its origins to the spaces themselves. Actually, these parts were originally called 'stories', as to reflect the different parts of a building. The central story is then a chronological and architectural step-by-step tour through the Mansion. This is meant to evoke memories, fire imaginations and create interest for the reader.

You often refer to each of these spaces as 'scenes'—pieces of a story which in turn build up the very precise spatial narrative of the Haunted Mansion. What kind of architectural qualities do you think were more important when the team designed the Mansion in the 1960s? I'm thinking not only of style, but also of the technologies, movements and dimension of the place.

In theme park design we present an illusion of reality, and the case of the Haunted Mansion was no exception. The original idea behind the design was to create the sense that guests were travelling through a real house. Therefore, for the most part, corridors and hallways connect actual rooms; floors and walls are real; you can walk up and down stairs and fall through windows. Then, forced-perspective, strategic use of colour and shapes and other spatial tricks were also put in use as part of an eclectic and unique design. But it was all meant to make sense architecturally, and Walt Disney would have never settled for an unconnected, unrelated sequence of spaces, like you would see in a funhouse or at a carnival. The original goal of Disney and of his team was to create three-dimensional storytelling, with an audience taking an active part in it. And a relatable story inevitably calls for a real piece of architecture.

The minds behind the Mansion included artists, sculptors, illustrators and engineers, in what appears to be a sort of work of 'total art'. I'm interested in Ken Anderson, who you said was the true unsung hero of the whole project. He studied architecture in California under Lionel Pries and was the one who came up with the final style of the house, which is a very strange mix of Victorian and antebellum plantation architecture—very specific, unique and localised in character. How did Anderson come into the project and what do you think was his intention for the final design?

"Becket turned down the assignment, saying that what Disney needed were dream weavers, not architects"

Well, when Walt Disney first decided to build Disneyland, he actually contacted a renowned architect, Welton Becket, who was also a good friend of his. Disney wanted Becket to be responsible for the design of the park and its attractions but Becket turned down the assignment, saying that for such a visionary project Disney needed dream weavers, not traditionally trained architects. This is why Disney assembled his team of Imagineers, who were exactly meant to make his dreams come true. So even though today architecture plays a huge part in theme park design, it was an architect himself who at the time turned Disney towards free visionaries in order to make his project a reality.

The reason why I refer to Anderson as the unsung hero is because when the Haunted Mansion opened in 1969, other Imagineers came to be more widely known and associated with the building, such as animator Marc Davis and painter Claude Coats. Anderson's involvement dates back to the late 1950s on a number of different levels: from the architectural aspect to the characters meant to animate the Mansion. As I said, Anderson was also the one who came up with the final, outside look of the building. This was inspired by the Shipley-Lydecker House, a famous plantation house in Baltimore, which ended up being the crucial reference for the exterior design of the house. Anderson found a picture of this house in a catalogue of Victorian architecture in the studios' library, and it immediately struck him as the perfect embodiment of his idea for the Haunted Mansion. The reason I think he chose this particular building is because of its communicative immediacy. Such a strangely creepy but elegant building almost 'spoke' by itself, it conveyed quickly and clearly the architectural intent of the story.

The other unique stylistic aspect of the house is that it's pristine, therefore clearly moving away from the clichés of the gothic, abandoned, ruinous estate which normally inhabits our imaginary. It seems therefore that Anderson wanted to suggest a sort of 'cathartic' architecture, which doesn't just happen to be frightening, but rather it's meant to be so. What would you say is the meaning of this choice, especially considering the role that such aesthetics could play on the audience?

This I think is one of the most fascinating aspects of the attraction and of the Mansion itself. One of the very first versions of the building was designed by Harper Goff, one of the most well-known artists working for Disney. Goff's version followed much more literally the run-down, Gothic-style tradition, almost like in a Charles Addams cartoon. It sat on top of a hill, overlooking a cemetery and a church. When the project truly went into development in the late 50s and mid 60s, it was felt that the conventional spooky building needed more character, also considering the position of the Mansion in the park. Walt Disney was the one who insisted that every building in his Land was to be new and beautiful-looking, with meticulously manicured grounds and well-maintained exterior features. About the Haunted Mansion, he famously stated: "We'll take care of the outside and let the ghosts take care of the inside."

In 1964 and 1965 Walt Disney was notably involved in the New York World Fair, which explored a vision for the future through technological advancement and environmental concerns. One of the most interesting aspects of a place like Disneyland is that it seems to operate—at least on a certain level—similarly to a utopian vision of an ideal dreamland, meant to amuse but also inspire. How did the Expo impact Disney's own utopian project for his Land and for the Mansion in particular?

I don't think you can overstate the importance of that Expo on Walt Disney, on his vision for Disneyland and specifically on his design for the Haunted Mansion. Towards the end of his life, Disney was a bona fide futurist. He was working non-stop on the planning of EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow)—his ideal community built on a foundation of technological innovation—the theme park version of which opened in 1982. He wanted to build this as part of what became Walt Disney World and that informed his motivation to be part of the World's Fair, and to work with corporations. Private enterprises were part of his vision for EPCOT, a vision for the future and for the betterment of our cities. Some of the technologies that came out of this research then became a permanent part of the attractions in his parks, like Audio-Animatronics and the 'ride' systems. All this came specifically after the '64-'65 Fair because it allowed for a much more inclusive experience, which is what you famously have in the Haunted Mansion.

How does the unknown, mysterious and evil spaces of the Haunted Mansion then relate to this idyllic and utopian world envisioned by Disney?

I wouldn't say the Haunted Mansion is evil, I wouldn't call it the villain of Disneyland. Even when he was exploring darker themes, Walt always made sure that there was a bright and light side involved, with humour and music. As you go through the house, there are certainly parts that feel more traditionally dusty and creepy but in the end people feel captured by the fantasy and fall into this world in a truly positive way. Disney also wanted each building and attraction in his park to work as a cohesive ensemble. In film-making terms, each scene had to be a 'dissolve', not a 'cut'. In a way, Disney's parks have a very 'urban' feel, inclusive, cohesive and real.

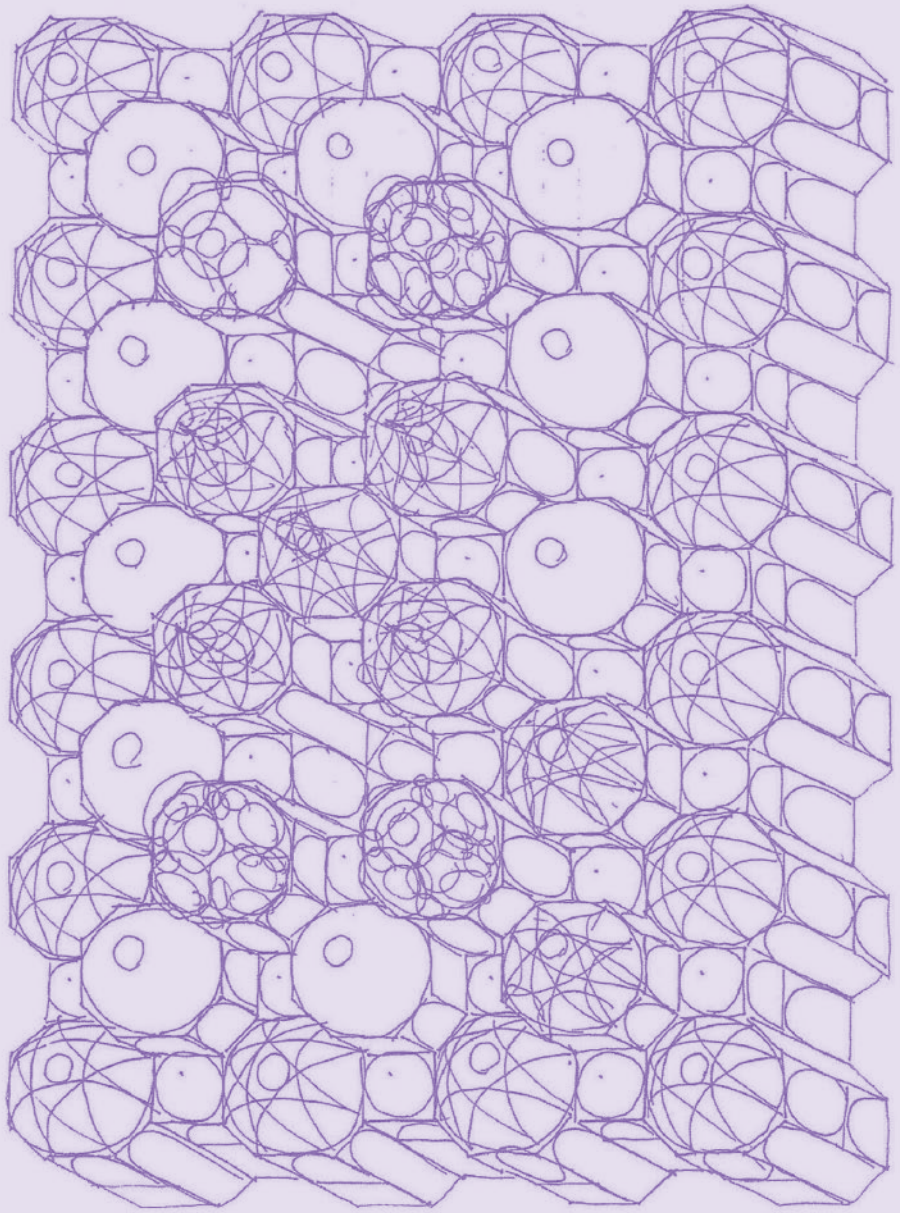
The way that the Mansion operates reminds me of what in story-telling is called 'willing suspension of disbelief', meaning a sort of unspoken pact where audiences accept to stand by the more irrational and imaginary parts of their minds in order to fully immerse themselves in the plot of the story. What kind of relationship do you think gets established between the space and the audience in the Haunted Mansion where the fantasy becomes, so to speak, real?

The 'willing suspension of disbelief' plays a huge part in Disney's theme park experience. He wanted people to forget about the real world and to feel truly immersed in another world. Disney wanted the audience to leave their lives behind and embrace and live their dreams, to suspend their disbelief and to get swept up into another universe. That obviously pertains to the design of the park itself, from the architecture to the art direction. Everything was designed so that people could leave their everyday lives and to be part of the story and of the future.

I'm wondering what happens once people step out of the park. Can Disney's vision of his world —and of the Haunted Mansion in particular—then somehow impact and inform our perception of architecture 'out there', in the real world?

That circles back to the reason I firstly wrote the book. People love and cherish such an experience. Spaces like the Haunted Mansion are meant to restore people's faith, confidence and hope in their built environment and in their life in general. In 1997 the Canadian Centre for Architecture held a fascinating exhibit on Disney's theme parks very appropriately called "The Architecture of Reassurance". That, I think, is a very telling title because it demonstrates how architectural thinking and design are meant to encourage people that everything is going to be ok, that good can still triumph over evil and that dreams can really come true. That I think is what people take once they leave Disneyland. ◎

"Spaces like the Haunted Mansion are meant to restore people's faith and hope in their built environment."



Sketch for an urban project in Samarkand, Uzbekistan 1990

Building a Humane Environment

THE UTOPIAN TRILOGY OF YONA FRIEDMAN

Words by Laura Trovato

Over the past few years, the dynamism of Yona Friedman's architecture has received a widespread and almost unique attention. Exhibits in Shanghai, London and Paris talk about his exceptionally adaptable and flexible designs; books and monographs, such as *The Dilution of Architecture* (2015), narrate his visionary poetics embedded in drawings and models. But what does such resonance really say about Yona Friedman and why does his visions seem to be so relevant and timely today? The answers lie behind his captivating world of moving and evolving architecture, which in turn is made of an incessant theoretical work and an attentive social research. The complexity of Friedman's architectural philosophies and methodologies should be understood as a life-long commitment and as an almost secular on-going process. Such a development can be approached through three words that today still resonate like a tantric mantra: mobility, science, survival.

Published over the arch of almost 20 years, *L'Architecture Mobile* (1958), *Vers une Architecture Scientifique* (1971) and *L'Architecture de Survie* (1977) constitute an apocryphal trilogy that today more than ever seems to invite us into Friedman's own personal and professional mission. These three books, all individually momentous, are also deeply in tune, like a choral ensemble. Once we take a closer look at each one of these small publications as part of a three-step progression, we can really grasp Friedman's utopian architecture as a lifelong journey.

Born as a pamphlet—and originally presented at the last CIAM of 1956—*L'Architecture Mobile* is certainly Friedman's intellectual manifesto. The mission is clear: to find a concrete way of putting the architect truly at the service of the citizen, from the urban to the domestic scale. Undoubtedly, this has always been Friedman's most beloved theme of research. The mobility of indeterminate urbanism, *villes spatiales* and megastructures —often echoing Frei Otto—is summoned as a solution to the problem of post-war expanding societies, investigated through the lenses of Heisenberg's relativism. This, in turn, promotes a profound critique of the city of *loisirs* (leisures), where any artistic creativity becomes alienated by consumerism and superficiality. Such a city is Friedman's battleground and the virtuosities of Mobility become his weapons.

L'Architecture Mobile narrates the ideal of a city moved by the ingenuity of architects and enabled by a flexible and adaptable environment.

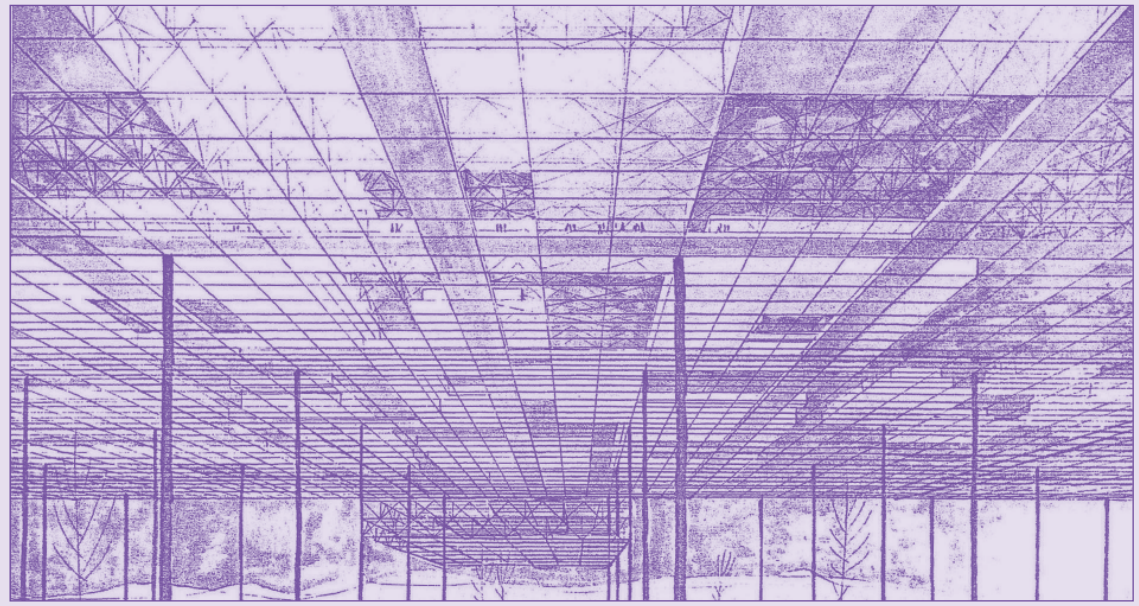
In a sense, this mobile architecture is what precedes a participatory mode of design. Friedman shows his ability to navigate change, defending architecture from desolation, despondency and despair.

We shouldn't, however, stop at this visionary stage. In fact, Friedman avoids any sort of demagogy by immediately pointing us to the very tools of this transformation. And *Vers une Architecture Scientifique* does just that. This second book sums up Friedman's work during the previous 10 years, bringing his more rigorous approach into the picture. Mathematics, schematics, matrixes and graphs become Friedman's instruments for a societal redemption. His famous diagrams and charts resonate like the prophetic visions developed by Christopher Alexander and Nicholas Negroponte. Ultimately, such progress is meant to enable mankind to self-plan their living space. The relationship between architect and citizen is then fully disclosed, with the former acting as nothing more than a drive for the latter. Indeed, the uniqueness of Friedman's 'scientificity' lies in his disenchanted challenging of the architect's profession, which is constantly called into questions with unusual humility.

But such an epistemological approach inevitably calls for a moment of synthesis, which, lastly, *L'Architecture de Survie* is precisely meant to embody. Here, self-planning becomes self-construction and the Mobile Architecture that we started with finally finds its specificity, almost in a deductive sense. And, logically enough, the potential of Third World countries acquires central resonance. Slums become Friedman's social laboratories, where scarceness produces technical efficiency, poverty induces engagement and unity triggers change. Here, every inhabitant is called into action, is required to play a specific role and take active responsibility. A truly functioning architecture operates through collective interests and involves every part of a community. The architect spreads technical knowledge —the simpler the better—as proved through Friedman's manuals developed through the 70s and 80s with UNESCO. From the ideal of mobility, through the instruments of a scientific approach, we come to survival as the facilitator of wellbeing and as an answer to the problem of the habitat.

What we have playfully called here Friedman's trilogy is one of those rare ensembles of texts ultimately made for those architects who are wary of reading indiscriminate definitions of 'sustainable' ways of building. And these three small, humble books arrived well before this term came to define a design trend which is now too often expensive and exclusive. Reading Friedman today has for us a practical utility, exactly because all three books have passed their adolescence —they are now in their 50s, 40s and 30s, like a strange and uniquely diverse family.

Behind all of Friedman's work we can see the strong presence and specificity of time: from the end of the Modulor to Archigram's roving structures and Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture Without Architects*. Yet, these three books somehow also transcend time. They speak to us from beyond that continuum and project onto our time the ideal of architecture as a critical process and as an undertaking. So rarely has an architect dedicated his whole life with such commitment as Yona Friedman to the critique of his own practice and not many other thinkers have built such a coherent and logical stream of architectural philosophy as the Hungarian 93 year-old. Architecture needs to be spontaneous, self-driven, self-planned and self-built. Aware of its own horizon in space and time, such architecture doesn't produce, but more importantly it enables. It makes our utopias for a democratic architecture not only possible, but—to quote another Friedman's classic—truly feasible. So if we should learn one lesson from Friedman today, it would be—using his own words—to never lose faith in "the art of inhabiting our earth." ◎



Sketch for the Ville Spatiale, 1963

Photography: Erik Hattin

Library Dining Room, Whitechapel Gallery.

The Toilets

Martyrdom of an Icon

THE FALL OF THE AMERICAN SHOPPING MALL

Words by Raymond Majewski
Illustration by Percie Edgeler

Driven by optimism and faith, Austrian born architect and planner Victor Gruen thoroughly believed in the potential of the American shopping mall. Visions of mixed-use developments ran throughout his imagination, fancying environments similar to that of Austrian main streets. Utopian in nature, the mall was to alleviate the decentralised sprawl of post-war suburbia and reduce dependence on the automobile. Despite the failure to encourage urban and social reconfigurations, the indulgences and pursuits of social capital thrived —the mall become the epicentre of hangout culture. Yet in 1978, years into retirement and serving as a planning consultant in Vienna, Gruen publicly spoke out against the mall:

> "I am often called the father of the shopping mall [. . .] I would like to take this opportunity to disclaim paternity once and for all. I refuse to pay alimony to those bastard developments. They destroyed our cities."

What had led to this lack of faith and departure of belief in the mall? If Gruen had lived beyond 1980, would his impression of the mall have changed? Would movies such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982) and *Clueless* (1995) be enough to disburden such hatred and embarrassment?

A tad morbid, but perhaps it's best that Gruen had passed away when he did—America's devout cult following of the secular religion of capitalism only intensified. The mall was at the mercy of the free market becoming its church, hosting rituals and services of consumerism, with the mass led by The Man himself. Yet here we are, mid-way through 2016 and identifying what seems to be the decline or end of the mall and the archetype itself.

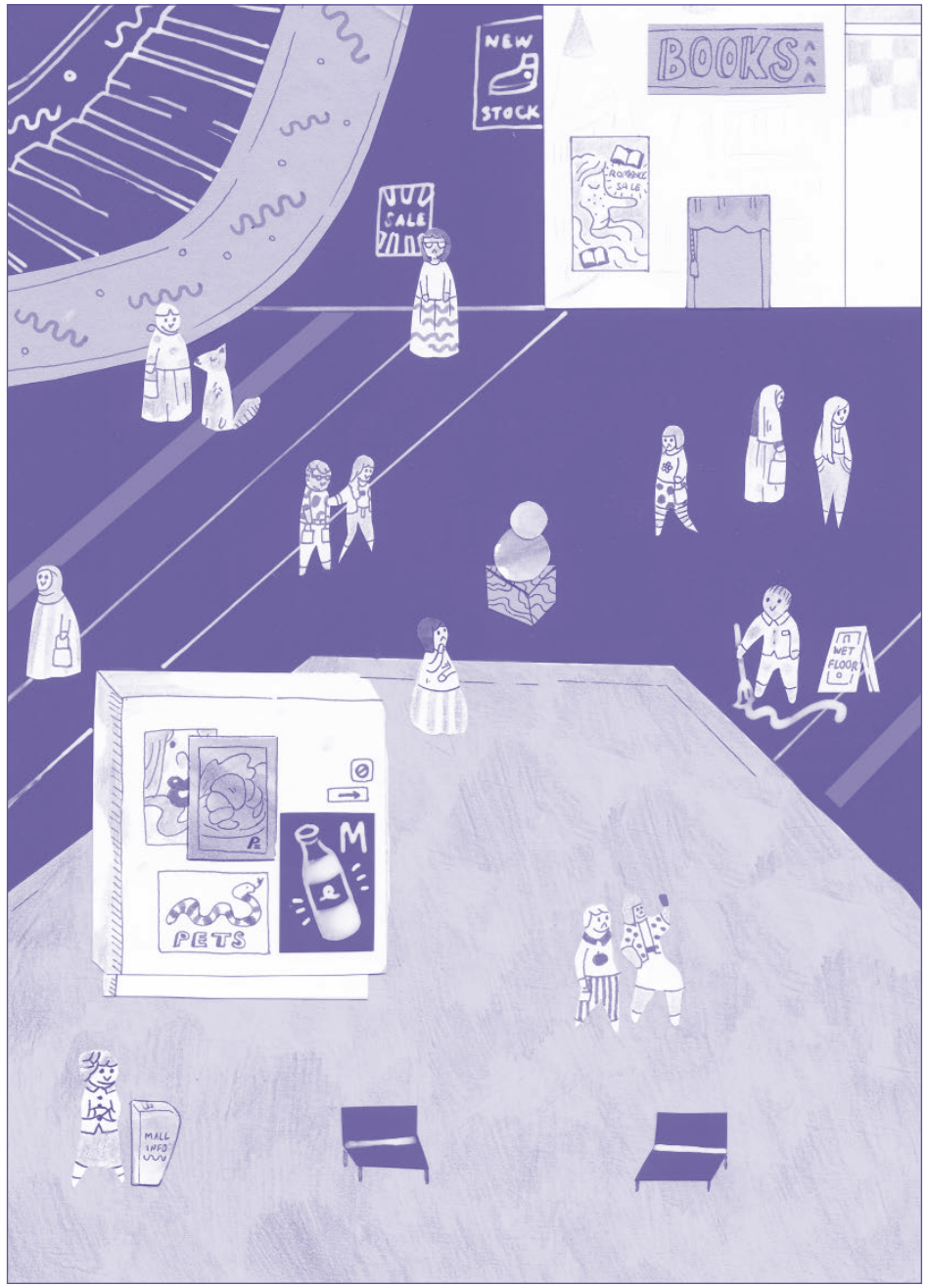
An online search for 'decline of the American shopping mall' brings up numerous reports from various media outlets addressing the American pandemic, comparing the decline of mall attendance to trends such as bedazzled jeans once available at K-Marts nationwide. Somewhere around the turn of the century, notable mall tenants slowly departed, leaving vacant storefronts with signs expressing apologies and promise of trendier shops. Internet junkies pounced on the opportunity to photograph the ruins and decay, posting stories on websites such as www.deadmalls.com and images on 'Dead Malls Enthusiasts',

a Facebook group of 21,041+ members. Mass media outlets such as CNN and *The New York Times* have done a wonderful job documenting the slow death of the mall; their reports have created waves of hysteria within big businesses and chains. Anchor stores close their doors far before sales dwindle, with analytics claiming times of struggle seemingly enough to spook these chain stores.

Is it possible that these reports are all exaggerations? Are the articles slowly committing atrocities far beyond their text, scripting fate of genocide upon the archetype? It seems those responsible for exploiting the mall as a space of consumption are now responsible for the mass propaganda stating the mall is dead. Hidden in the decay one can occasionally stumble upon the rare article raising this exact question. One of them, written by Tim Worstall in *Forbes Magazine*, spoke of these exaggerations, asserting that "the malls that are doing well tend to be destinations. Those that aren't, tend to be places where people just go shopping."

Reflecting upon the age-old question of space and place, is the mall then, a space or a place? The common mall serves the flow of commodity and consumption, feeding into consumer desires. I believe Gruen envisioned the former. Aware of the importance that social interaction plays in design, Gruen was attentive to space and its ability to provide experiences. The potential to spend a day at the mall and the agency to selectively choose your experience is desirable. Today, malls are manipulative, designed to exploit consumer behaviour for maximum profit. Combating the unsustainable approach to the shopping mall, identification of what lies behind the motivations of the community is crucial. Consumer studies have led to market strategies designed to feed on consumer insecurities. Gruen's interventions in mall centres may have been based upon intuition and experiences in thriving social centres, but the push for social spaces was critical. These spaces did not dwell on the consumer but met the social needs of the community. The mall was to offer those who congregate, satisfaction in ways less expensive and materialistic than shopping.

The momentum of the shopping mall's decline may be too great to prevent at this point in time; the propaganda that fed the archetype (Mall of America in mind) has succeeded. The church of capitalism had not needed to pray for forgiveness but simply cast away their sins. In what may be called the greatest coverup of contemporary architecture, one can reflect upon two distinctly different lives the mall lived throughout the decades: a life dedicated to the teachings and following of capitalism, and one deeply invested in the desire to unite the suburban landscape. ◎



Escape from Auschwitz

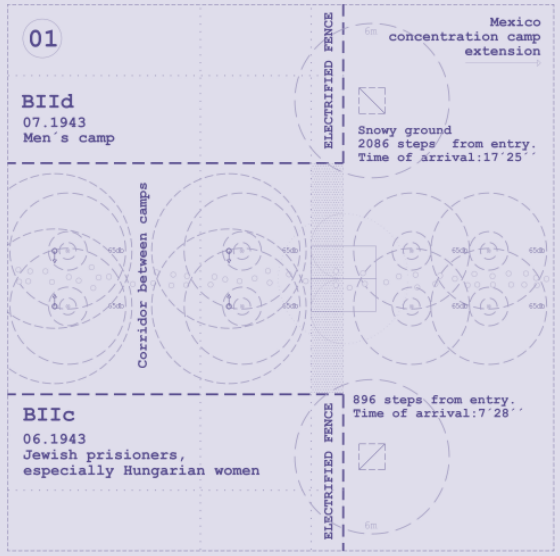
CONVICTION, BODIES AND ARCHITECTURE

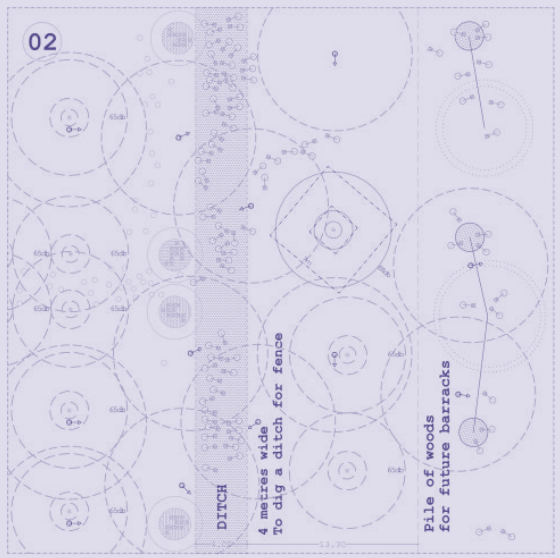
Words and Images by
Víctor Manuel Cano Ciborro

Rudolf Vbra and Alfred Wetzler were two inmates who escaped from the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. This act of hope and conviction is an action that might follow the Baruch Spinoza quote: “nobody knows what the body can do”. Both men were able to escape after two years of preparation, thanks to a spatial knowledge subject to, both, visible and invisible qualities.

In this way, this project tries to visualise this spatial event, an example of survival and faith through six cartographies that illustrate space and architecture as understood by bodies, affects and sensations.

This flight represents not just survival, but the challenge and destruction of an object—the concentration camp —which was constructed from an ideological, ethical, economic, human and spatial perspective, based on a radical understanding of rationalism. Against this idea, Vbra and Wetzler made the only architecture possible—an architecture of flight—which emerged not just from a tangible conception of space, of measure and order (as understood by the Nazis), but included other variables that are also as architectural—keenness of sight, smell, noise, touch, intuition and fear.



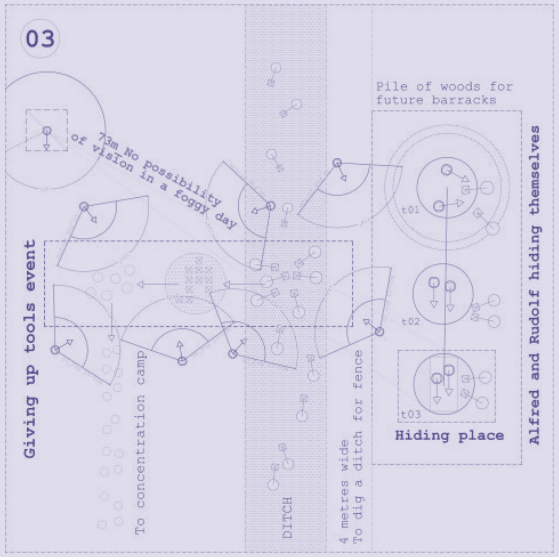


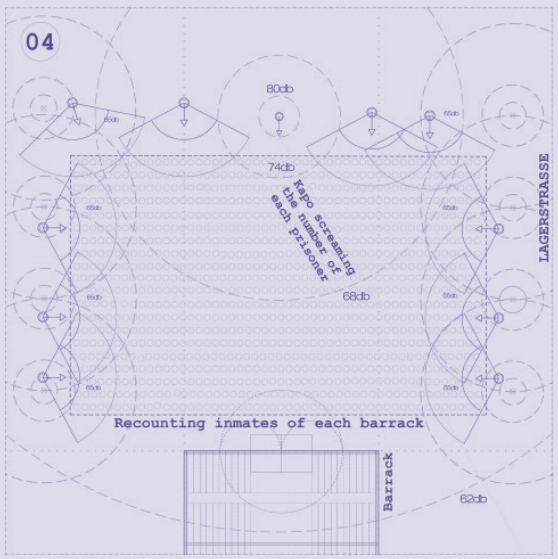
01 7 April 1944. The prisoners—after the morning count at around 0500hrs—leave their barracks to go to the new camp extension called ‘Mexico’. From the different sub-camps, they go to the *Lagerstrasse* (camp street), where they walk between a double-row of Nazi *Kapos*—and their dogs—who watch every step of each inmate. They step through a doorway and they are in Mexico, ready to work.

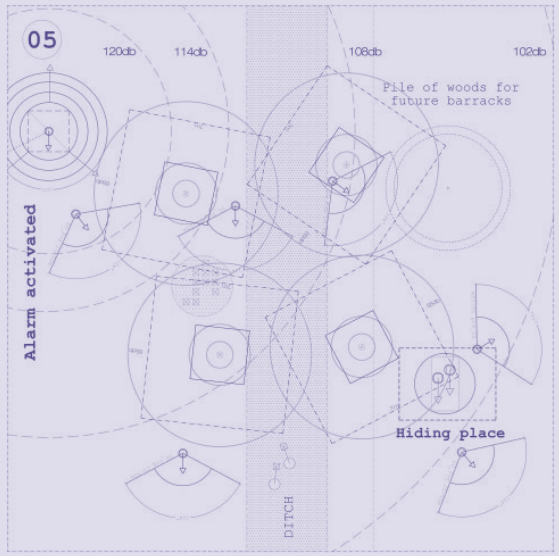
02 On the Mexico side, the row of dogs and guardians stays with them until they reach the place where the inmates pick up their work tools. These tools may potentially be used as weapons and Nazi *Kapos* watch over them carefully. Each prisoner takes a tool and starts to dig the ditch for the soon-to-be fence. There is a place about 14 metres from the ditch where large amounts of wood are piled to construct future barracks.

03 It is a foggy day—a common atmospheric phenomenon since Auschwitz is placed between the Vistula and Sola Rivers. The line of vision in these conditions lies between 25 and 50 metres. Alfred Wetzler (44070) and Rudolf Vbra (29162) take advantage of the temporary chaos when the inmates return their tools. As all the guardians are focused on this act, they hide themselves in a woodpile and spray themselves with petrol, chewing tobacco to throw the dogs off their scent.

04 The inmates go inside the camp and are counted in front of the barracks. Each barrack has between 1,000–1,400 inmates. At around 1800hrs, the disappearance of the prisoners number 44070 (Alfred Wetzler) and number 29612 (Rudolf Vbra) becomes official.







05 The alarm is raised. The protocol in case of an inmate’s disappearance means an active 72-hour search. All *Kapos* and their dogs start hunting for the missing inmates. A few the guardians climb to the top of pile where Alfred and Rudolf are hidden. The fog makes the search more difficult. Wetzler and Vbra hear the dogs panting, but their cover isn’t blown. They are saved by an immaterial spatial quality—smell.

06 After 72 hours the search is called off. At night, Wetzler and Vbra leave their two-body space with a stolen watch, a label from a Zyklon B canister and a plan of the area taken from a children’s atlas. They run towards the river and give their horrifying account of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp after 11 days of walking. ◎

Leave/Stay

IT'S ALL FUCKING GREY
(A TERRIBLE ACCOUNT OF UNCERTAINTY)

Words by Mrinal S. Rammohan
Photography by John Gribben

9 PM

It was late and I wanted to leave. I should have packed up an hour ago, but I just wanted to get one last thing done. Bad decision. The last hour of work—when you're tired, mind and body—is never is your finest hour. You somehow scrape through and delude yourself to thinking you've accomplished something. In the end it's always quite shit. I slammed my laptop shut and picked up my bag. This was not going to work.

As I shut the door behind me for the last time, the only thing I thought of was, "Good riddance!" I was puzzled by how this thought entered my mind surreptitiously and snuck up on me. It wasn't a conscious stream of thought; I felt divorced from my own head, as if someone had planted a seed long ago and it was shooting up years later. A sort delayed reaction. I began to reason with this alien implant—I had had some of the best times of my life, and I met some of my closest friends here. I love this place, but today I just wanted to despise it—a perverse sort of coping mechanism.

I strode across the corridor confidently. I'd done this a million times before: 23 paces to the door on the far end; turn the door knob to the right, step through and take the stairs down; 22 steps; push the do–

It wasn't there. I felt the cool brick against my palm. "Where the fuck is the door!?" I thought to myself.

"Hello," called out a voice from the landing below. I could sense some movement, but couldn't make out who it was.

"That's not the way out any more." My eyes were slowly readjusting to the dim light. It was Ronald, the night security guy. "For fuck's sake, Ronny, you scared me! And since when did this happen?"

"Yesterday"

"What?"

"Yeah, they decided they'd had enough of people walking through that door, so they took a vote at the committee meeting last week to have it blocked permanently."

"But what about all of us who work in the building? Didn't they think to ask us?"

Ronny just shrugged his shoulders. "I guess not. Technically, it isn't your door."

"Whose door is it then—the people who use it most or the one who built it?" Whose building is this—the students who build their lives and careers here, or the fuckers who profit from it? Whose city is this anyway—the id–"

Ronny just disappeared back into the darkness. "Don't shoot the messenger, love."

I walked back up past my room fuming to myself, entering the maze of corridors and access-controlled doors. "The fucking hoops I've had to jump through to get to this place." I finally reached the lift lobby. I flipped out my phone to check how soon the next lift would arrive on the Rydèe app. As part of the efficiency and cost-cutting measures, the lift would only operate

at full capacity. So, if you wanted to go down, you would have to wait until 14 other people also wanted to travel —all part of the sharing economy. You could get a whole lift to yourself, but that would be very expensive—£2.10 was bad enough for a shared ride.

"Due in 34 minutes." This was going to be a long night.

11 PM

The doors whooshed open and mine was one of the last stops. "Typical." I had been to 14 other floors, all in the sequence that the lift rides were requested—14, 24, 55, 6, 12, 7, 8, 76… and then I gave up counting.

I walked to the bus stop nearby, another wait. I was dying for a cigarette. I fumbled with my lighter as I walked down the pavement.

"Spare one?" He said from under the cardboard sheets.

"Yeah, hold on." I offered him one from my pack.

"Cheers." He sat and lit up. His cragged face shone briefly in the flickering light.

"Haven't had one all day."

"What, a cigarette?" I looked incredulously at the pile of butts strewn around.

"No, a conversation."

"What makes you think you're going to have one now?"

"That's what you do, innit? Share a smoke?"

I nodded silently as I took a deep drag. The silent comity of smokers —ever since we'd been banished to the outside, we sought comfort in the company of strangers, linked together tenuously by our nicotine dependence.

"So how long you been sleeping rough?" I asked.

"A year after I bought me home."

"You lost your home in the recession then?"

"No I still own it, technically."

Either this guy was a nutter, or he was taking the mickey… I thought to myself.

"You must think I'm completely batshit."

"Why in the world would you be living on the street if you owned your own house? Is this some sort of reality TV show you're on? Are there hidden cameras recording your every move, to see how long you can last on the streets?"

He just smiled.

"I wish I this was the fucking Truman Show. But unfortunately it's all true. I own me house, it's just south of the river. I've put it up on Rentapad. You can go down for a weekend there if you want."

"But that doesn't explain why you're still here. Why would you put your house up on rent instead of living there?"

"It's the only way I could afford the mortgage payments."

I dropped the whole packet of cigarettes and ran.

1 AM

I must have run two and walked five miles before the bus came up on the horizon. And then there were three in quick succession.

"Six-four-seven to Wippington Park." I climbed to the top deck. It was empty except for two young women on the last seat. I slid into a seat up front and closed my eyes.

I dozed off for a while, but was woken as the bus ground to a stop.

"This bus will wait here for a change of drivers to take place." I heard the bus door slam. Resigned to wait. I looked around the top deck again; the women in the last row were still there.

"In the future, I think they are going make the M25 into a moat. Cut out the rest of the country."

"Yeah, London isn't like the rest of the UK, is it?"

"Personally, I'd move the entire Parliament onto a train too. Have them chugging around the country. At least that way some of them might get to see what a mess they've made."

"Have you heard the latest though? They've started putting microphones and cameras in the trees and hedges. They recording every move we make."

"Fucking hell. I have half a mind to leave this place."

"And go where?" I piped up. The words left my mouth before I could even think. This was the second time this was happening tonight! Both of them shot me a look that suggested they hadn't noticed my presence up until then. One of them replied after an uncomfortably long pause, "I've got cousins in the States."

"Yeah but they've got problems of their own with that guy who thinks climate change isn't real."

"True. Can't go to Europe—they probably hate us there. Australia?"

"Can't. They've got their seasons the other way 'round."

"So that cuts out the Southern Hemisphere. China?"

"Too undemocratic."

"Russia."

"Too homophobic."

"India."

"Too tolerant of riots."

"Sri Lanka."

"Terrible Human Rights record."

"Fuck me. Every place is a shit hole."

"The bus started up again. And we all fell silent."

4 AM

"This bus terminates here. Please take all your belongings with you."

I stepped out wearily and turned to cross the street, only the crossing wasn't where it was supposed to be.

"Blimey! This is like fucking Groundhog Day."

I looked up at the building opposite me. In a few windows that were still lit, I could see people building a prototype of a tent for refugees made from selfie sticks. At the foot of the building, the guy under the cardboard sheets shifted uncomfortably in his sleep.

I was back where I started. A guy on a cycle brushed past me. "WATCH THE FUCK OUT!!" He swore as he swerved and crashed into a tree. The contents of the three cardboard boxes that were precariously stacked on the back of the cycle lay strewn across the pavement.

"What the fuck are you doing hurtling down the pavement?" I blurted.

"Oh brilliant! This is just perfect. Unbelievable. Just my luck."

"Excuse me?"

"No. Yes. No. I'm sorry of course. It's just that we're moving."

"What?"

"Yeah, no. We're moving back to the old building, which is now the new building. I never thought I'd say this, but I'm going to miss this place. In the beginning I hated it, but it sort of grew on me. The temporariness of our stay gave everything an un-preciousness, not in a dispensable cup kind of way, but in a ragged old blanket, fuzzy warmth way."

"You work here?"

"Yes, I teach th–"

"Never seen you before."

"Yes well I blend in with my surroundings very well, it's one of my strengths. I would've become a spy, but there's too much grey for me to handle."

"Grey?"

"Yes, no, in terms of morality. As a teacher you sidestep all these issues —there is a certainty of moral purpose."

"Good for you."

I hesitated as I felt the angry thoughts rush through my head. I tried to stop myself from saying them out loud. It was over, I was leaving, this place was history for me. But then the dam broke.

"And what about the students you teach, the architects of tomorrow that you create? Do they have a certainty of moral purpose? Does architecture have morals? Should we build for despots and dictatorships, or does it even matter what we do? It's going to get built anyway, so you might as well make a few bob while saying it's better to engage in dialogue than to boycott. Is it right for some cities to grow unabated while others languish in decay and despair?" I kept going, "Does the need for growth and development outweigh its potentially disastrous consequences on the environment? Most importantly, do architects have a say in any of this, or are they just small fish forced to swim with the current to stay afloat?"

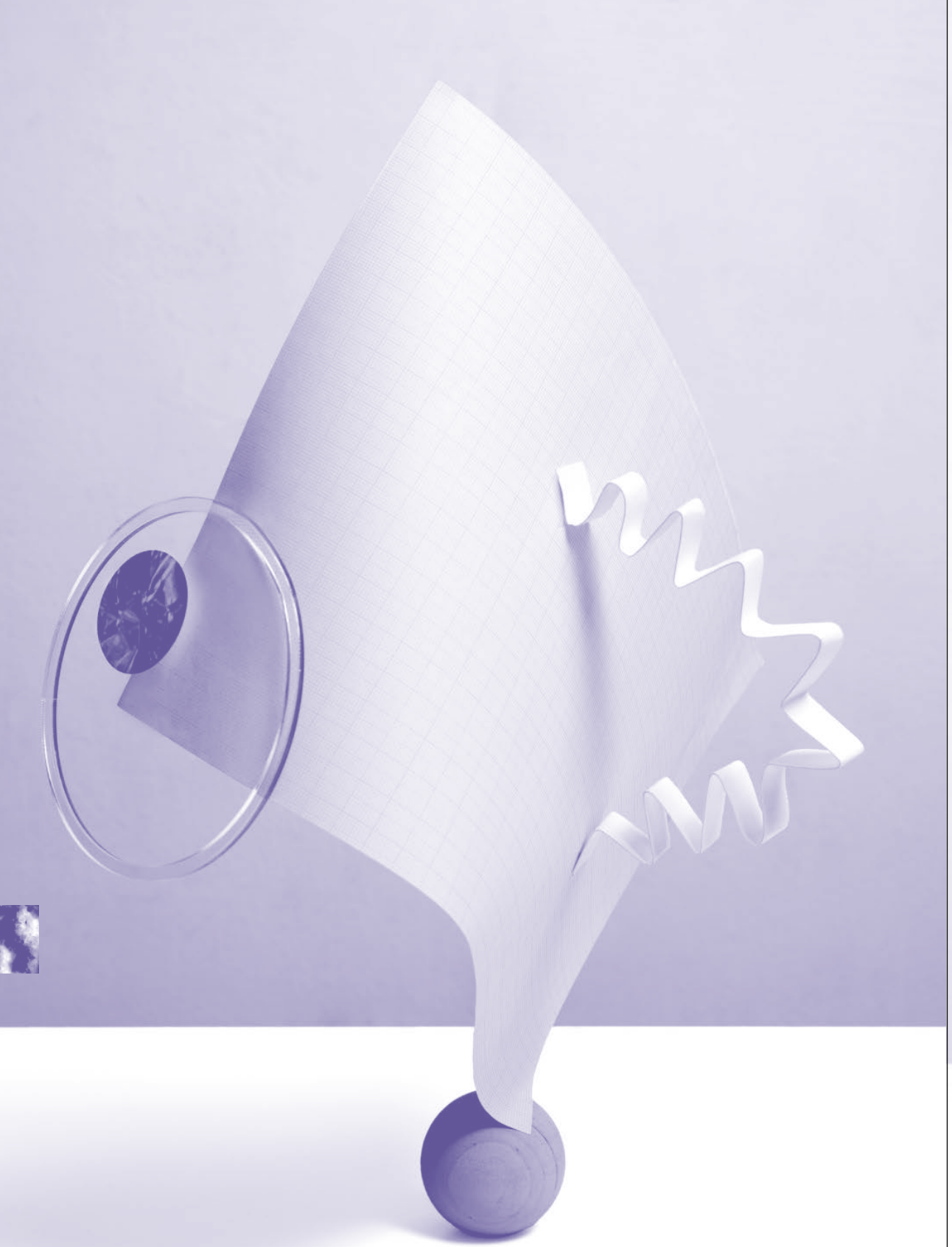
"Yes, no, well, yes…no." He stuttered, totally taken aback by the onslaught.

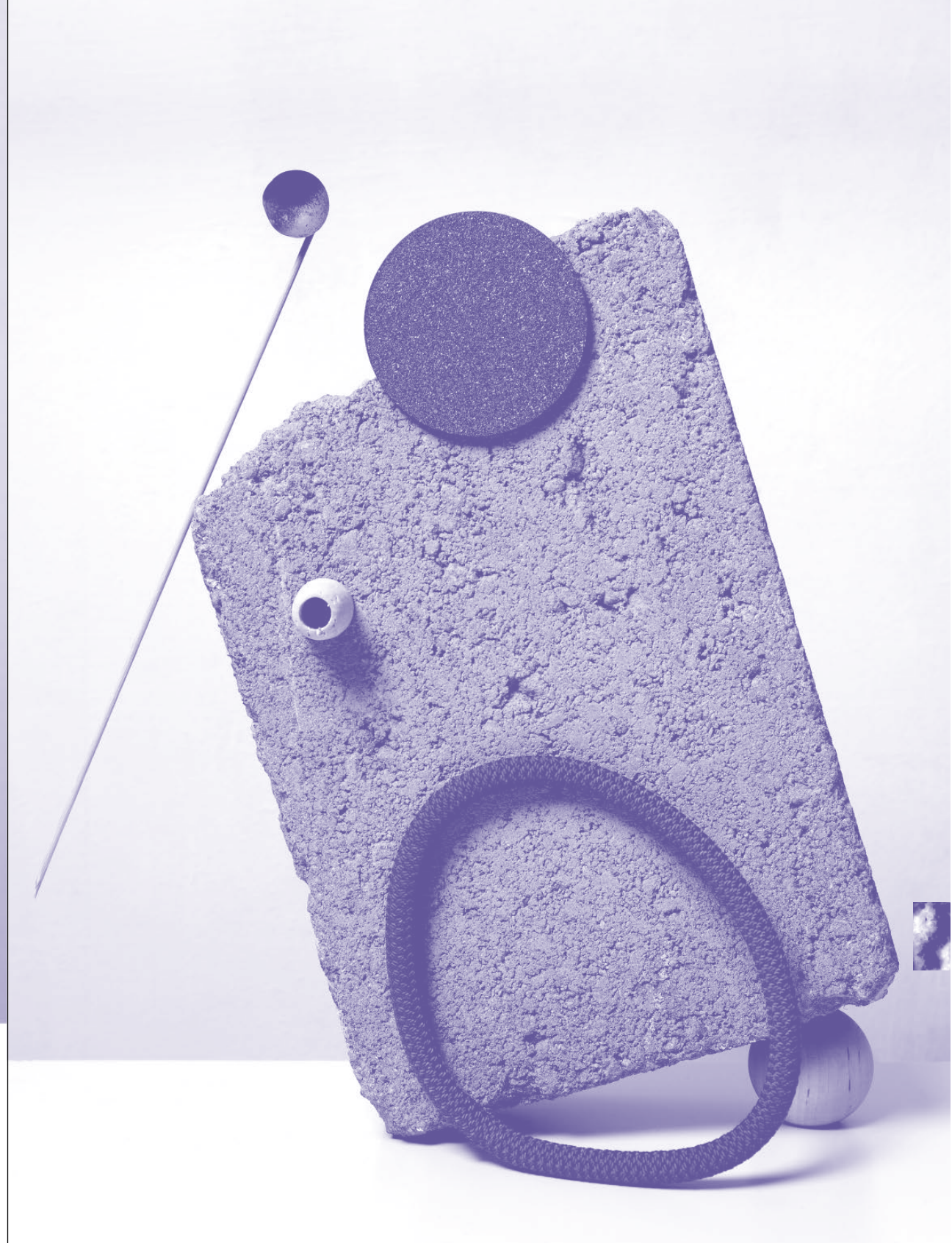
"You have no fucking clue. No one does. We all just make it up as we go along don't we? Acting like we've got all our shit together, when on the inside we're like the person driving a car at top speed down a slope with no fucking brakes or steering."

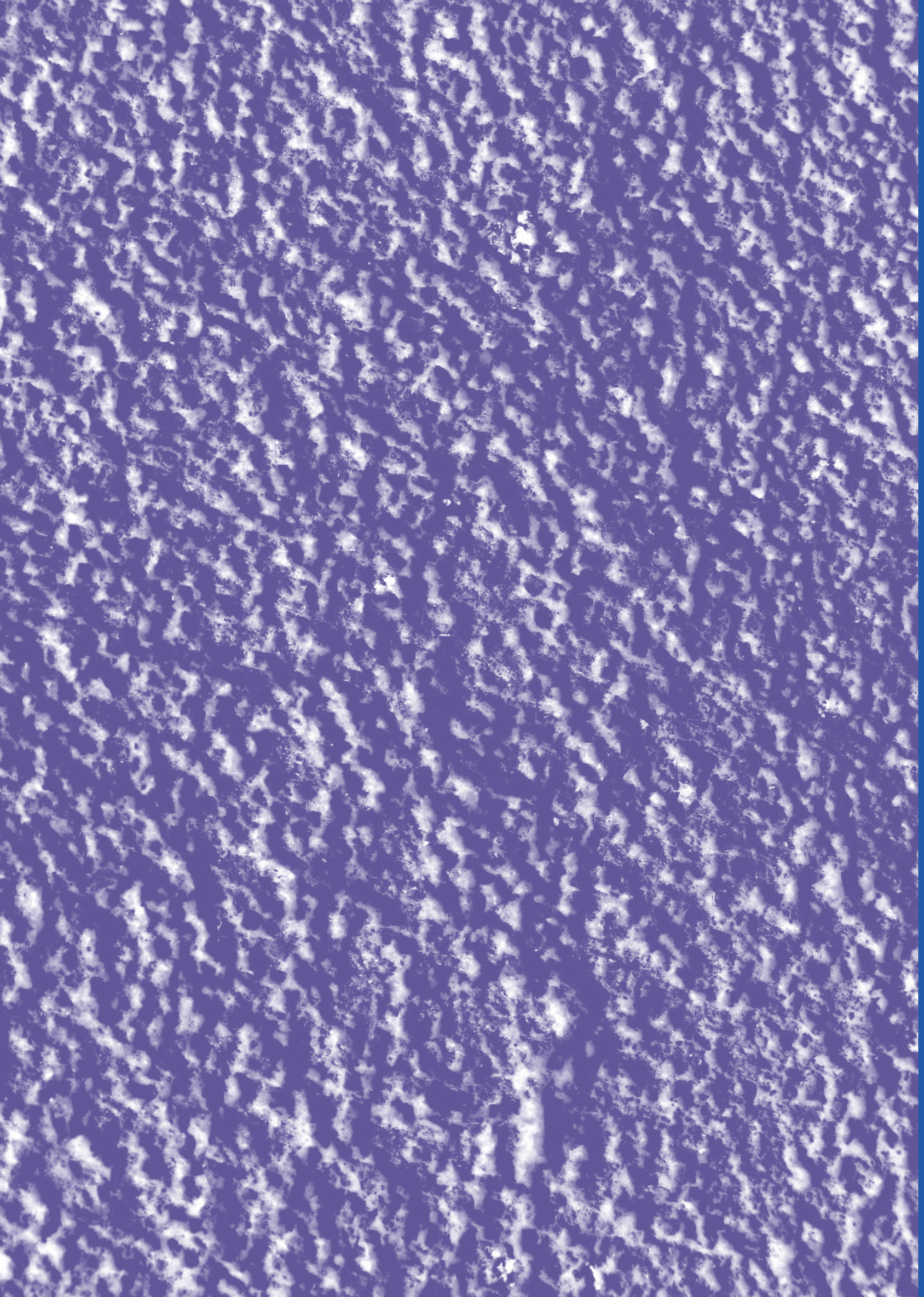
He just watch incredulously, wide-eyed, hoping the ground would open up and swallow him this instant.

It obliged, and he was gone.

"Too fucking grey is right…the whole world is too fucking grey."







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